

# OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT MANUAL

GENESIS-2 SAMUEL



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# **OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT MANUAL GENESIS–2 SAMUEL**

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**Religion 301**

Prepared by the  
Church Educational System

Published by  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
Salt Lake City, Utah

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# Preface

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## The Importance of Studying the Old Testament

The Old Testament has greatly influenced many people down through time. Even today the roots of three of the world's greatest religions—Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—are firmly planted in the richness of its soil. Except for those to whom the books were originally written, their messages are perhaps of greater value to those living in the dispensation of the fulness of times than to any other people. And they are especially valuable to Latter-day Saints.

Some of the lessons and insights that make a careful study of the Old Testament's contents not only meaningful but critical are—

1. The testimony of the existence of God.
2. The history of the beginnings of mankind as a divine race placed on the earth for eternal, divine purposes.
3. The importance of establishing a covenant relationship with God.
4. The history and purpose of the establishment of the elect lineage through which the priesthood would be restored in the last days.
5. The development of that law upon which most civil and criminal laws would be built.
6. The knowledge that God intervenes directly in the lives of men and nations and that through Him many are divinely led, directed, and protected.
7. The consequences of disobedience and rebellion against God and His laws.
8. The baseness of any form of idolatry and the commandments of the Lord against it.
9. The need to endure, even through suffering and pain.
10. The way by which the Saints can escape the major destructions of the last days.
11. The greatness and dreadfulness of the day when the Lord will come in His glory.
12. The testimony that the God of the Old Testament is Jesus Christ and that He came to earth to free men from death and make it possible for men to be freed from sin and thus return to the presence of God the Father.

The gems in the book were meant to be enjoyed. Those whose works are recorded in the Bible were anxious that their message be clear and comprehensible. Through time, translation, and corruption, part of that clarity has been obscured. Fortunately for Latter-day Saints, much of this clarity has been restored by (1) inspired commentary of modern prophets; (2) the guidance of the Holy Ghost; and (3) the revelation of the fulness of the gospel in the other standard works, especially the Book of Mormon.

## What Should Be the Goal or Purpose in Taking This Course of Study?

To Israel Moses declared, "Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him" (Deuteronomy 4:35). This course of study is designed to give you the opportunity to come to know the God of the Old Testament in an intimate, personal, and powerful way. He is our Redeemer, and our goal for this course should be to be able to declare as did Job: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19:25). In the pages of the Old Testament we see the premortal Jesus working with our Heavenly Father's children to save them. From these accounts we can learn much about how to come unto Christ. Moses summed up the process with these significant words: "If . . . thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deuteronomy 4:29). What greater goal could we seek?

## How May This Goal Be Reached Most Effectively?

Through the prophet Jeremiah the Lord declared, "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). Cisterns, as sources of reserve water supply, were extremely important to the ancients, for it was on these that they could rely to preserve themselves against the uncertainties of nature. Cisterns were carved out of rock. On occasion the rock would prove full of fissures and unable to hold water. Using this fact as a metaphor, the Lord brought two accusations against Israel. The first was their lack of trust in Him. Jehovah, as the spring of living water, could always be relied upon, but ancient Israel hewed new cisterns for themselves; that is, they turned to other sources for spiritual life and power. Second, these new cisterns could preserve the Spirit no better than a fractured cistern could hold water. Thus, Israel was like people in a drought who ignored the cistern that held sufficient reserves to help them and trusted instead in sources that could provide nothing.

Each chapter in this manual is designed to help you find the true source of living water—Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament this source is the Lord, and your purpose is to come to know Him better.

Each lesson has a designated reading assignment from the Old Testament. This assignment will be the core of your study and should be read carefully while you are studying each lesson. This manual (Religion 301) covers approximately one-half of the

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Old Testament, from Genesis through 2 Samuel, including excerpts from Psalms. The rest of the Old Testament will be covered in the manual for Religion 302.

The course is not designed to have you read every chapter of this part of the Old Testament. After you complete the parts assigned in the reading blocks, however, you will have read the greater part and acquired the skills necessary to understand the rest on your own. Combined with sincere prayer, scripture study can become the source of personal revelation and an avenue to increased spiritual power in your daily life. It is the way to come to the cistern that will quench your thirst, the one filled with living water.

### Why a Student Manual?

Some parts of the ancient scriptures are not easily understood by today's students. Even the Jews who returned from exile (around 500 B.C.) found it necessary to have assistance. The Bible records that Ezra the scribe "caused the people to understand the law. . . . So they [the scribes] read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused [the people] to understand the reading." (Nehemiah 8:7-8.) Although their problem was primarily because of a change in language, the word of the Lord still needed some explaining. So it is today. Corrupt texts, archaic language, and a lack of understanding of the doctrinal, historical, or geographical setting explain some of the difficulty in reading and comprehending the Old Testament. For these reasons this student manual provides the following to assist you:

1. Background information to help you understand the Middle Eastern world in which the prophets declared their messages.
2. Background information about Old Testament prophets as well as key contemporary political figures.
3. Background information on many of the books in the Old Testament.
4. Interpretive and prophetic commentary on the most important passages and some of the difficult passages.
5. A maps and charts section, which includes helps to identify key geographical places, some of the major activities of the prophets and the Israelites, a time line for the events being studied, and modern equivalents of ancient measurements.

### How the Manual Is Organized

The twenty-eight chapters in the manual are organized to correlate with the order of the books as they are arranged in the Old Testament, except for the book of Psalms. Since many of the psalms were written by David, you will be asked to study them immediately after you have finished your study of the life of David.

Throughout the text you will find special enrichment sections—seven in all—that are designed to provide information to assist you in better understanding the chapters that follow them.

This manual should be used as a resource to help you organize and get the most from your study of the scriptural passages. The chapters are arranged as follows:

1. A short introductory section that sets the stage for the scriptures you will read.
2. A reading assignment.
3. A section of notes and commentary (primarily from Church leaders) that will help with particularly difficult passages.
4. A section of points to ponder that call your attention to some of the major lessons of the part of the Old Testament you are studying and gives you the opportunity to thoughtfully consider how these lessons can be applied in your life.

### How to Use Your Student Manual

The basic text for this course is the Old Testament. This student manual is not designed to replace your reading of the scriptures nor can it be a substitute for inspired guidance of the Holy Ghost as you seek that guidance in humble prayer. Here are some suggestions on how this student manual may most profitably be used:

1. Before actually getting into the scriptures, study the maps to get a feeling for the location of various lands, areas, peoples, geographical features, and cities. Then, throughout your study, refer back to the maps as needed.
2. Read the reading assignment for each chapter. The number of chapters you are asked to read for each class period may vary according to your instructor's wishes and according to whether you are studying on the semester, quarter, or individual study system. Whatever system you are on, you will be asked to complete the reading of the major part of the Old Testament from Genesis to 2 Samuel and selected psalms.
3. Study the enrichment sections as you come to them. You will find that understanding the history, geography, or doctrine explained in these sections will help you better understand the scriptures as you read them.
4. Read the notes and commentary on those passages that are difficult to understand.
5. Complete the assignments in Points to Ponder as directed by your instructor.
6. Use the indexes at the end of the manual in locating a particular scripture, author, or subject.

### Which Version of the Bible Should You Use in Your Study of the Old Testament?

There are a large number of Bible translations now in existence. The translation recommended for Latter-day Saints has been clarified many times by Church leaders. The following are examples of such counsel: "None of these [other] translations surpasses the King James version of the English Bible in beauty of language and spiritual connotation, and probably in faithful adherence to the text available to translators. It is this version which is used by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in all of its official work both

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at home and abroad. The literature of the Church refers invariably to the King James translation. Other translations are used by the Church only to help explain obscure passages in the authorized version." (Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, 1:100–101.)

"This King James or Authorized Version, 'as far as it is translated correctly,' has been the version accepted by this Church since it was organized" (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in Conference Report, Apr. 1954, p. 38).

"The Official Bible of our Church is the King James version" (Editorial, *Church News*, 14 Nov. 1970, p. 16).

This official recommendation does not mean that the King James Version is a perfect translation. Elder James E. Talmage gave a reason why there is not a perfect translation:

"There will be, there can be, no absolutely reliable translation . . . unless it be effected through the gift of translation, as one of the endowments of the Holy Ghost. The translator must have the spirit of the prophet if he would render in another tongue the prophet's words; and human wisdom alone leads not to that possession." (*Articles of Faith*, p. 237.)

Such an effort to translate the Bible scriptures by the power of the Holy Ghost was begun by the Prophet Joseph Smith under the direction of, and at the command of, the Lord (see D&C 45:60–61; 93:53). The following is instructive information concerning the status of the Joseph Smith Translation (formerly called the Inspired Version) in the Church today:

"The Inspired Version [as it is called by its publishers] does not supplant the King James Version as the official church version of the Bible, but the explanations and changes made by the Prophet Joseph Smith provide enlightenment and useful commentary on many biblical passages.

"Part of the explanations and changes made by the Prophet Joseph Smith were finally approved before his death; and some of these have been cited in current church instructional materials or may be cited in future church instructional materials.

"Accordingly, these cited portions of the Inspired Version may be used by church writers and teachers, along with the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price, in connection with Biblical interpretations, applying always the divine injunction that 'whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom.' (D&C 91:5)

"When the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price offer information relative to biblical interpretation, these should be given preference in writing and teaching. But when these sources of latter-day revelation do not provide significant information which is available in the Inspired Version, then this version may be used." (Editorial, *Church News*, 7 Dec. 1974, p. 16.)

References from the Joseph Smith Translation are used throughout this manual for clarification of particularly vague or faulty passages of the King James Version.

In 1979 a new edition of the King James Version was published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It contains an extensive cross-referencing system that includes latter-day and biblical scriptures, alternate renderings of difficult passages, language insights to certain Hebrew and Greek words, and many helpful changes from the Joseph Smith Translation. It also has an appendix, which includes a Topical Guide, a Bible Dictionary, passages from the Joseph Smith Translation too long to include in the footnotes, and a section of maps. Similar Bible study helps have been added to triple combinations in other languages since that time. These are without question the finest collection of study aids designed specifically for Latter-day Saints ever provided with the scriptures. They will prove to be an invaluable aid as you study the Old Testament. A selection of cross-references and significant Joseph Smith Translation changes are also included in this manual.

### Using the Internal References

Numerous works by biblical scholars have been cited throughout the manual. Shortened references to these works have been used in order to interrupt the reading as little as possible. Complete reference data has been given in the Bibliography near the end of the manual.

A special system of referencing was devised for quotations taken from *Commentary on the Old Testament*, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch. The original work was published in twenty-five books, but in the reprint edition they have been combined into a ten-book set. This organization means that in some cases one book may have three different pages with the same number. To keep a shortened reference, a three-number system was devised. *Commentary*, 3:2:51 means that the reference is found on page 51 of the second volume contained in book 3.

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# Maps and Charts

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Elevations of the Holy Land

Old Testament World

The Exodus

The Holy Land in Old Testament Times

Gospel Dispensations

The Family of Abraham

Old Testament Chronology Chart

Old Testament Coinage

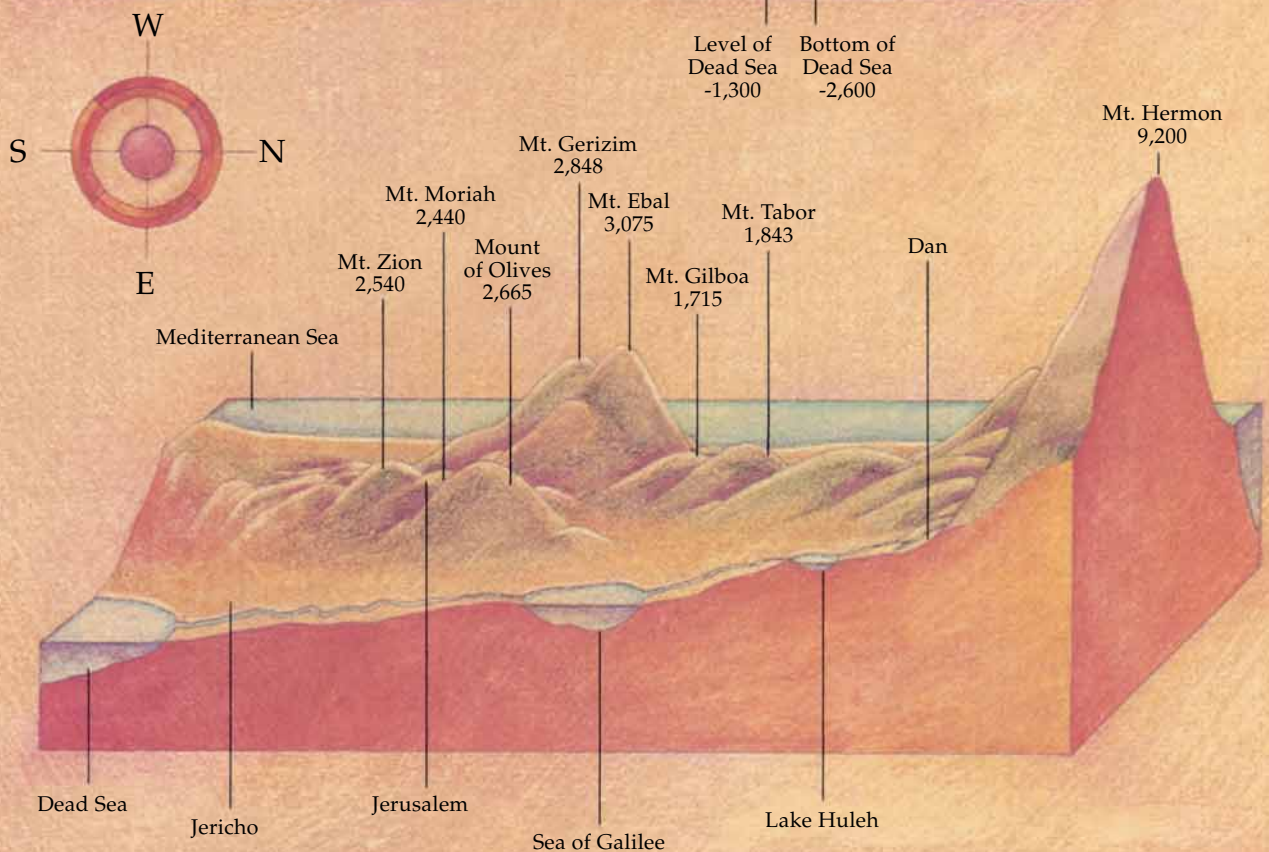
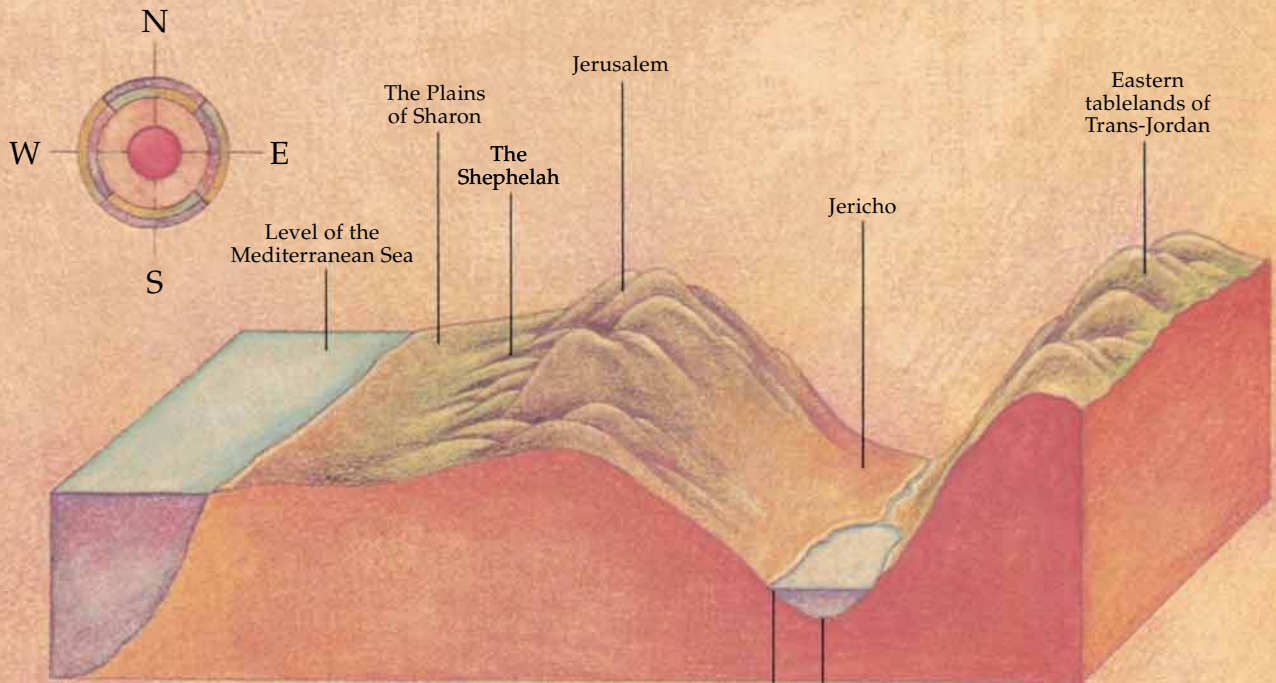
Standard Measures of Volume

Weights and Measures

Linear Measures

Ancient Jewish Calendar

# Elevations of the Holy Land



# Old Testament World

Scale  
0 25 50 75 100 125 Miles

0 25 50 75 100 125 150 175 Kilometers



HITTITES

● Carchemish

● Haran

PADAN-ARAM

KITTIM

● Hamath

● Kadesh

● Tadmor

SYRIA (ARAM)

THE GREAT SEA

● Sidon

● Damascus

● Tyre

▲ Mt. Hermon

BASHAN

● Megiddo

● Samaria

● Shechem

AMMON

● Joppa

● Jericho

● Jerusalem

CANAAN

MOAB

● Beersheba

GOSHEN

● Rameses (Zoan)

● Kadash-barnea

EDOM

● On (Heliopolis)

● Petra

● Memphis (Noph)

SINAI

Wilderness of Zin

● Ezion-geber

EGYPT

▲ Mt. Sinai

MIDIAN

RED SEA



▲ *Mt. Ararat*

CASPIAN SEA

ASSYRIA

● Nineveh

● Asshur

MEDIA

BABYLONIA

● Babylon

*Tigris River*

ELAM

● Susa

*Euphrates River*

● Ur

CHALDEA

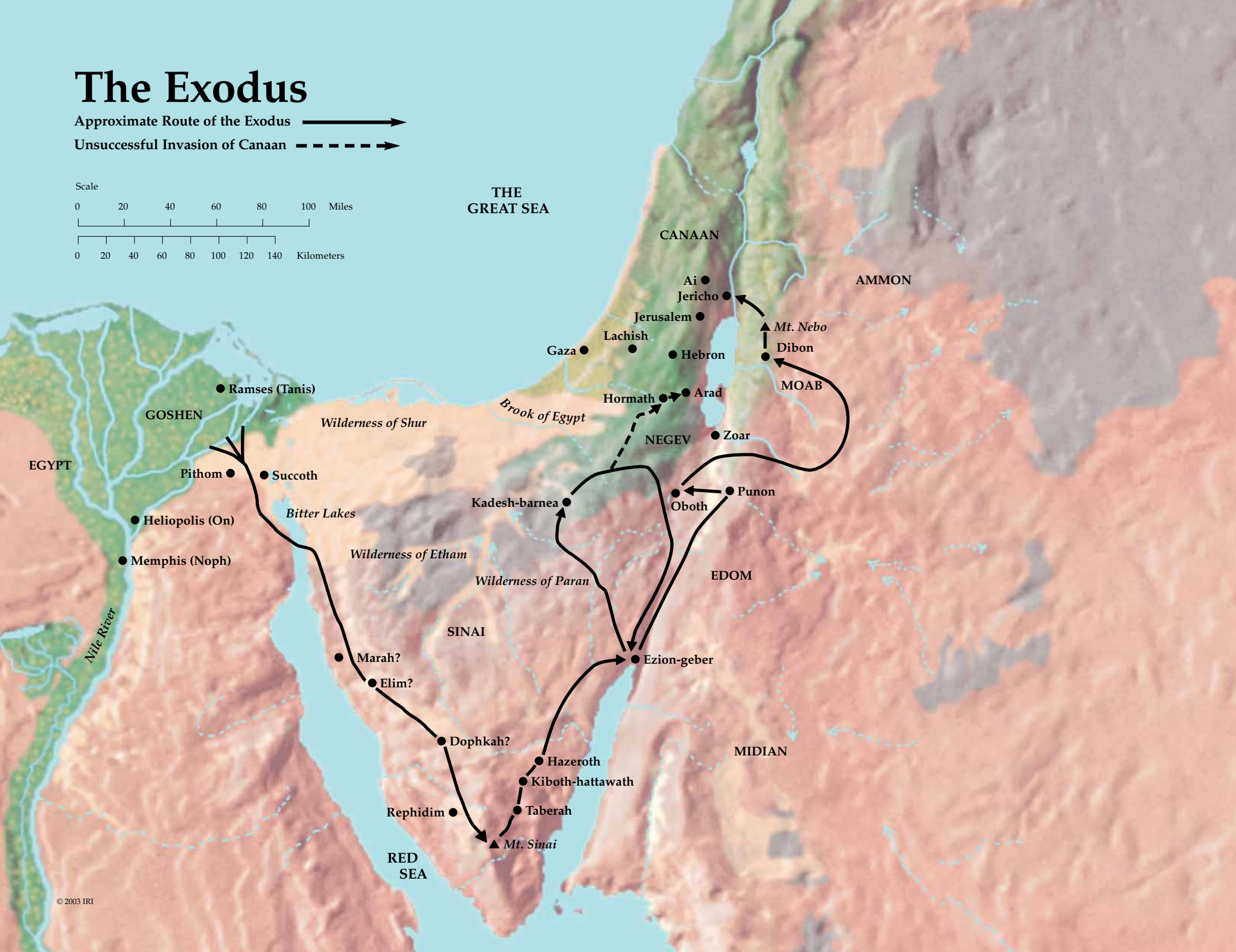
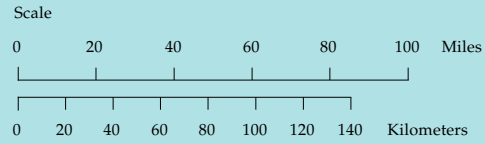
PERSIA

(PERSIAN GULF)

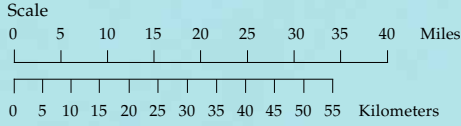
# The Exodus

Approximate Route of the Exodus 

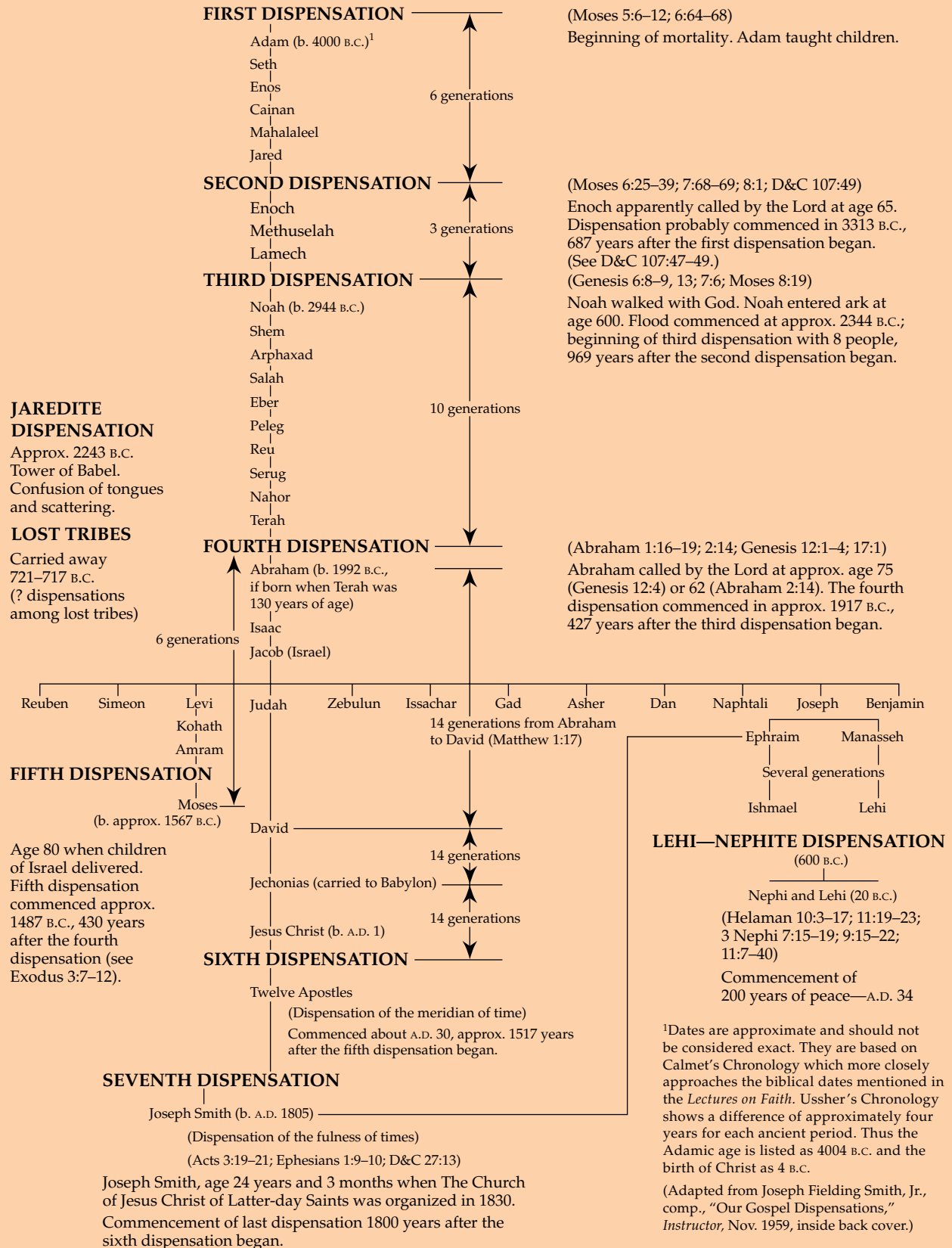
Unsuccessful Invasion of Canaan 



# The Holy Land in Old Testament Times

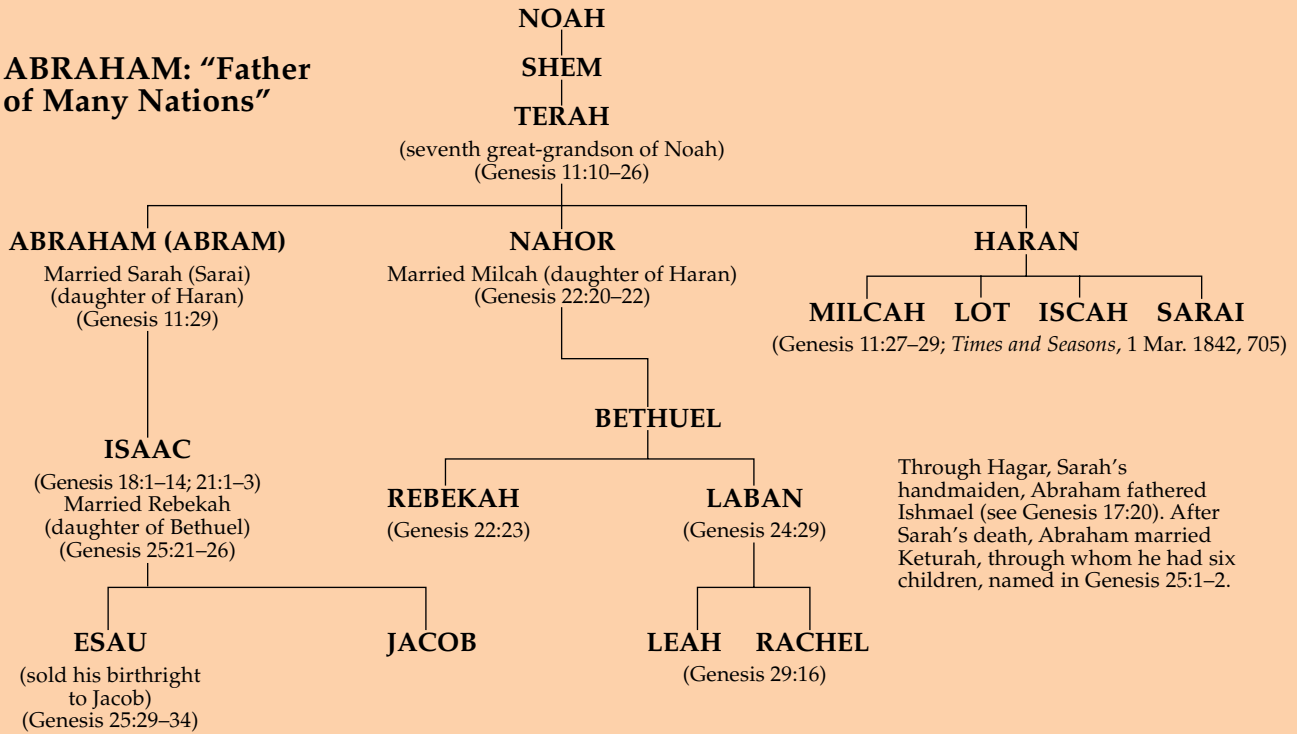


# Gospel Dispensations

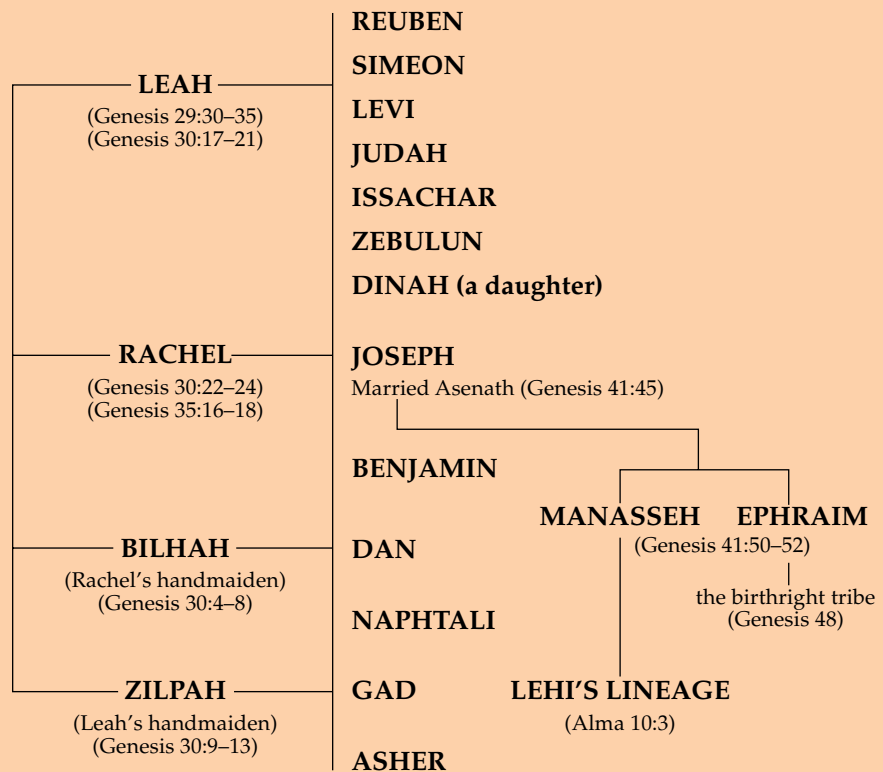


# The Family of Abraham

## ABRAHAM: "Father of Many Nations"

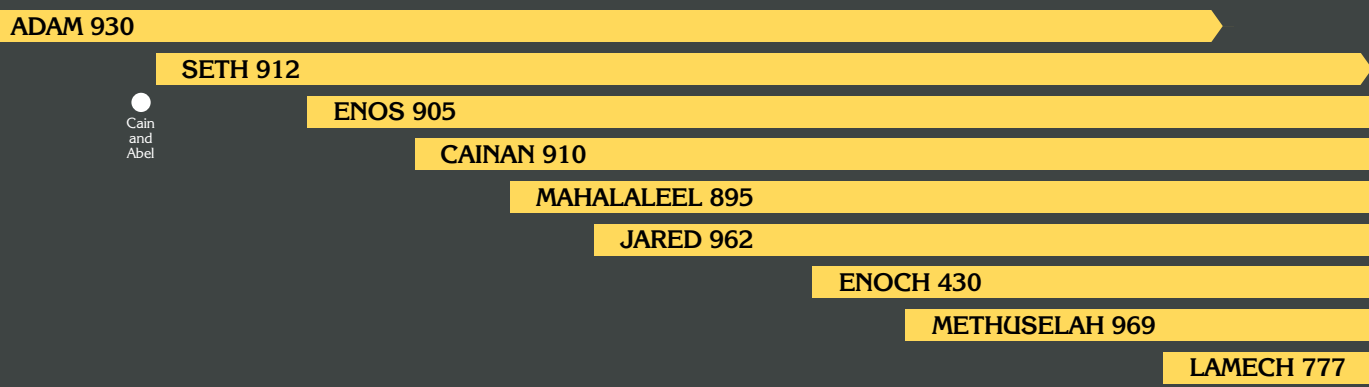


## JACOB: Father of the Twelve Tribes of Israel



(Adapted from Burl Shephard, comp., "The Family of Abraham," *Instructor*, Jan. 1964, inside back cover.)

3900 3800 3700 3600 3500 3400 3300 3200 3100 3000



● Cain and Abel

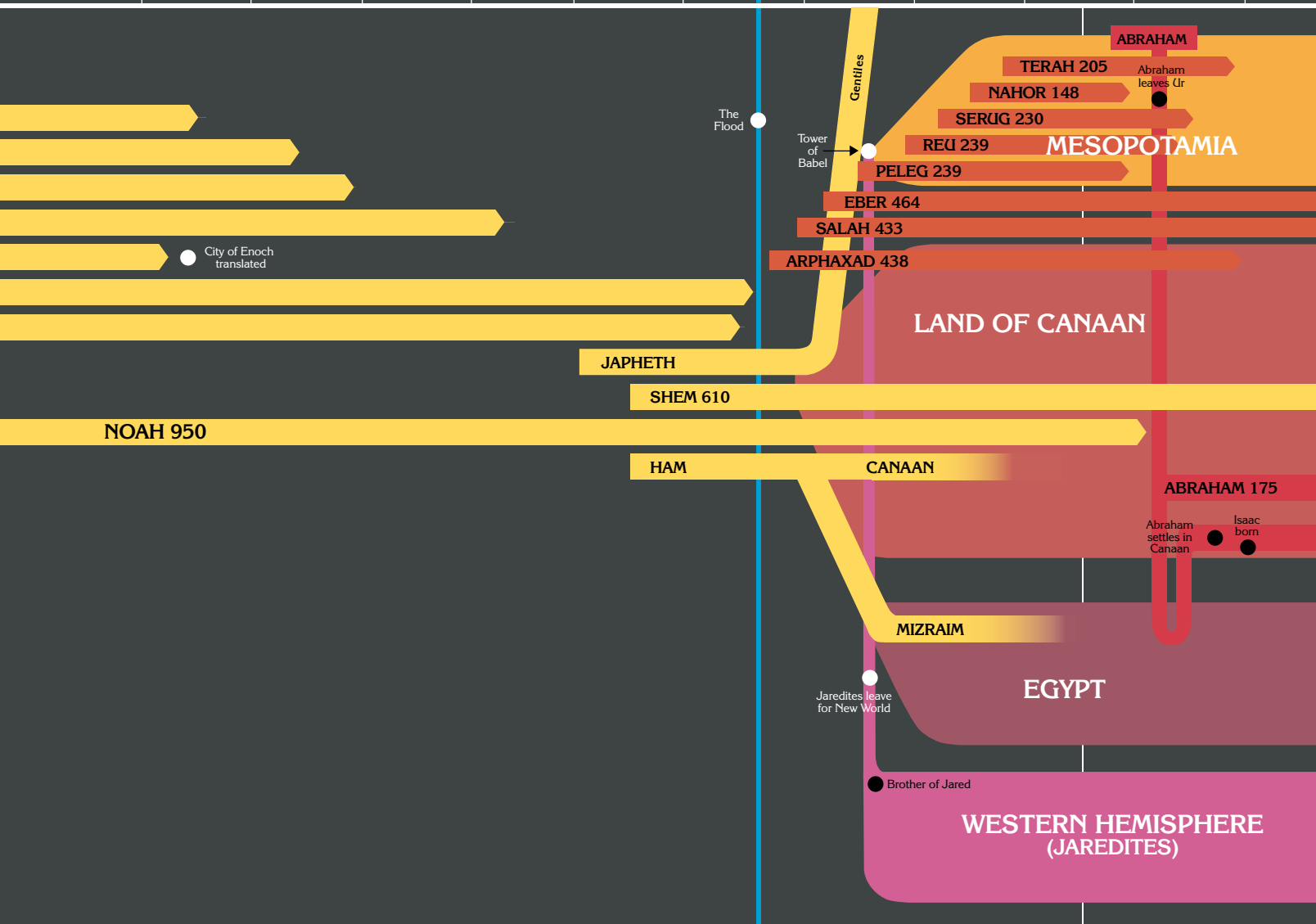
# Old Testament Chronology Chart

Prepared by the Church Educational System

AGE OF THE PATRIARCHS

Books of the Old Testament

2900 2800 2700 2600 2500 2400 2300 2200 2100 2000 1900



AGE OF THE PATRIARCHS

AGE OF ABRAHAM

1900 1800 1700 1600 1500 1400 1300 1200 1100 1000 900

MESOPOTAMIA

MINOR KINGDOMS

LAND OF CANAAN

UNITED ISRAEL

KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

KINGDOM OF JUDAH

ABRAHAM 175

Isaac born  
Esau and Jacob born  
Joseph born

Manasseh and Ephraim  
Israel and family in Egypt

Moses  
Exodus

Gideon  
Israel enters Canaan  
Joshua  
Saul  
David  
Nathan  
Samuel  
Ruth  
Samson  
Jeroboam  
Elijah  
Elisha  
Temple built  
Solomon  
Rehoboam  
Jehoshaphat  
Asa

EGYPT

WESTERN HEMISPHERE (JAREDITES)

AGE OF ABRAHAM

ISRAEL IN EGYPT

RETURN TO CANAAN

REIGN OF THE JUDGES

UNITED KINGDOM

DIVIDED KINGDOM

Genesis

Exodus

Numbers Joshua

Judges

1 Samuel

2 Samuel

1 Kings

Deuteronomy

1 Chronicles

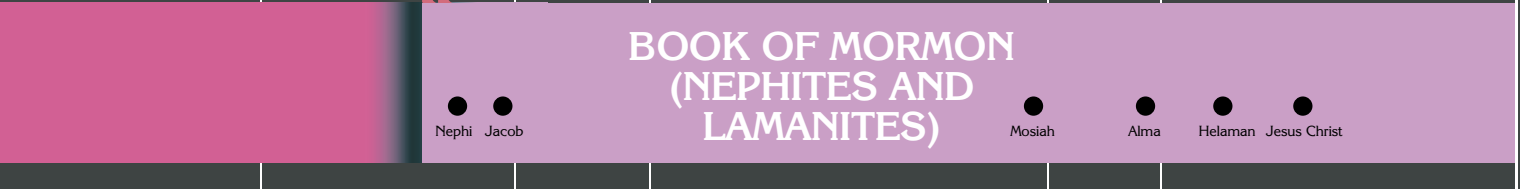
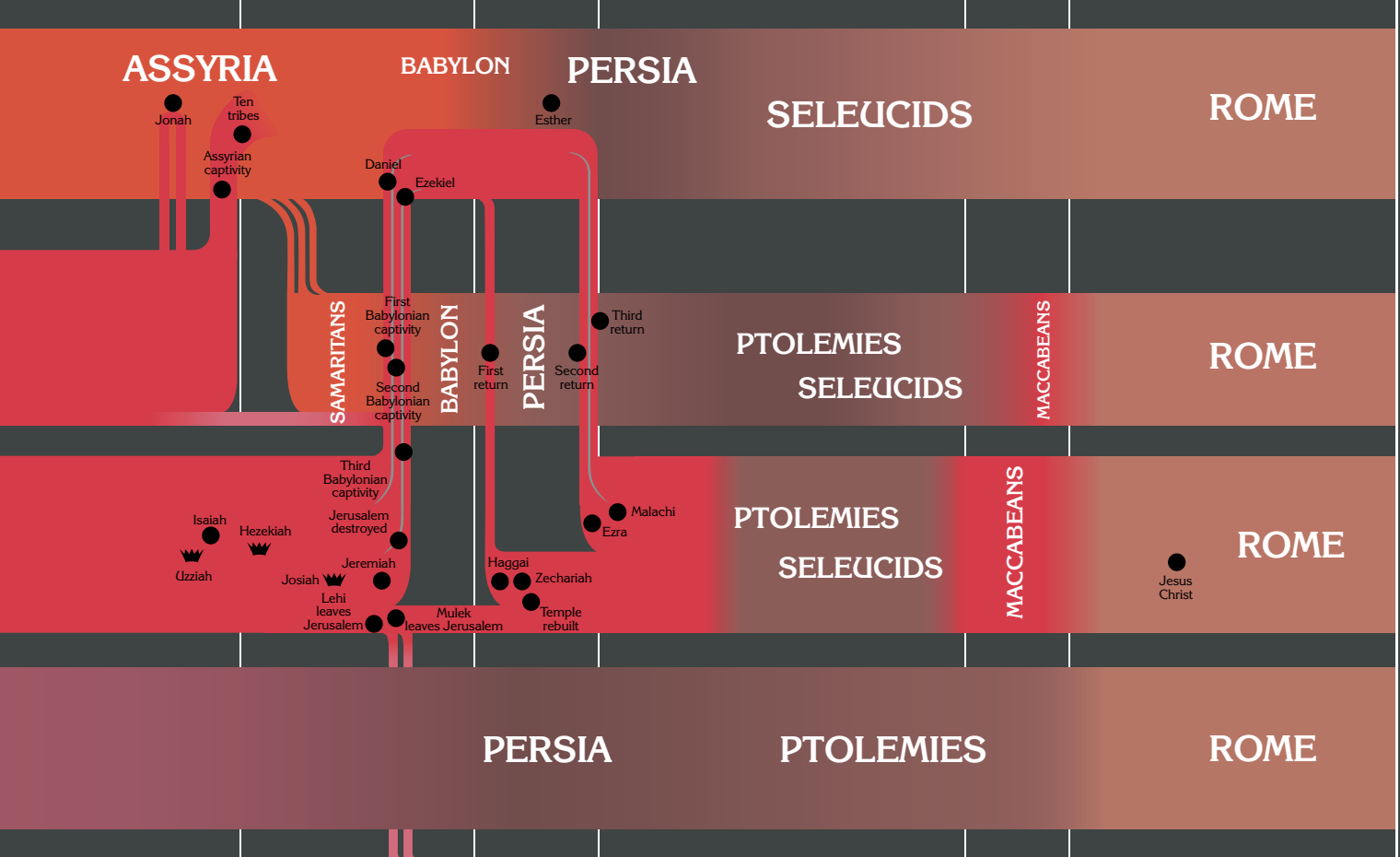
Leviticus

Job?

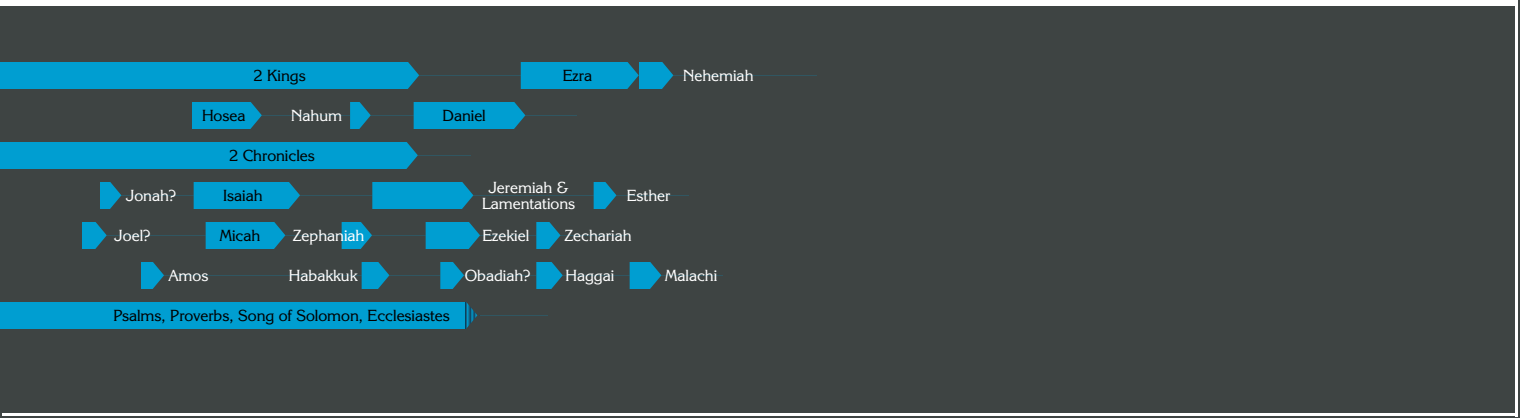
Ruth

Poetry and Wisdom Literature:

800 700 600 500 400 300 200 100 A.D. 1 100



DIVIDED KINGDOM	EXILE	RETURN OF JEWS	GREEK DOMINATION	MACCA-BEANS	ROMAN DOMINATION
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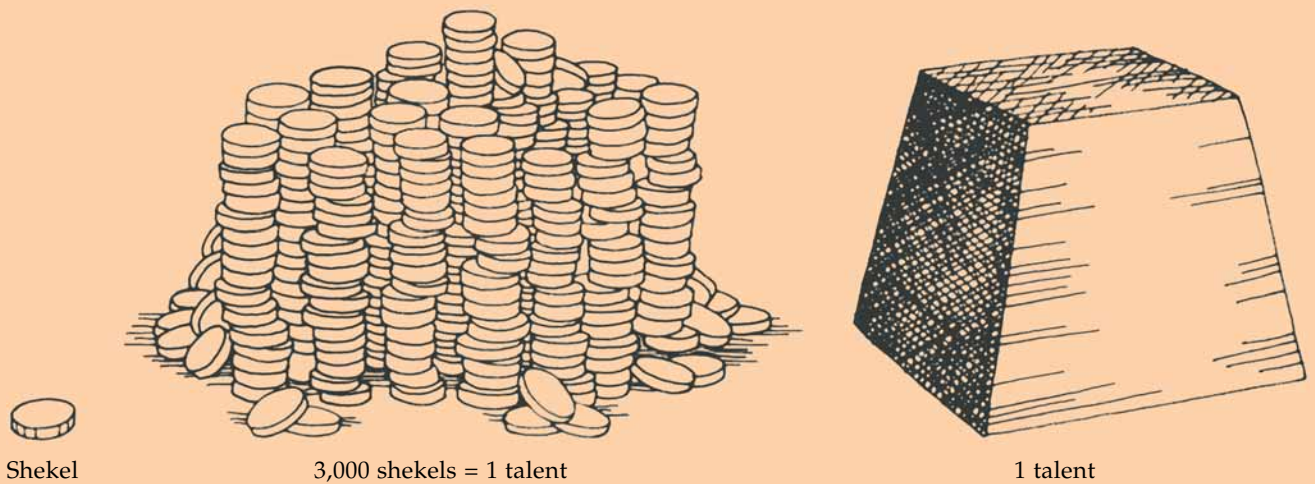


# Old Testament Coinage

Before the invention of coinage, precious metals were used as part of a barter system. Money became popular during the seventh century B.C., but it never completely replaced the old system. From early times, gold, silver, and copper had been popular exchange items. Gradually, a system of standardization developed.

The metals were weighed out and quality checked. Some of the names of metal weights became the names of coins, which at first were roughly circular and impressed with a seal. Their weight seldom exceeded that of the silver or gold shekel.

## Silver coins



## Gold coins



\*A talent of gold was just over one-half the size of a talent of silver, but a talent of gold had the same weight as a talent of silver.

# Standard Measures of Volume

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## Liquid Measures

Bath (22 liters or 5.8 gallons)



Hin (3.66 liters or 3.9 quarts)

Kab (1.2 liters or 2.5 pints)

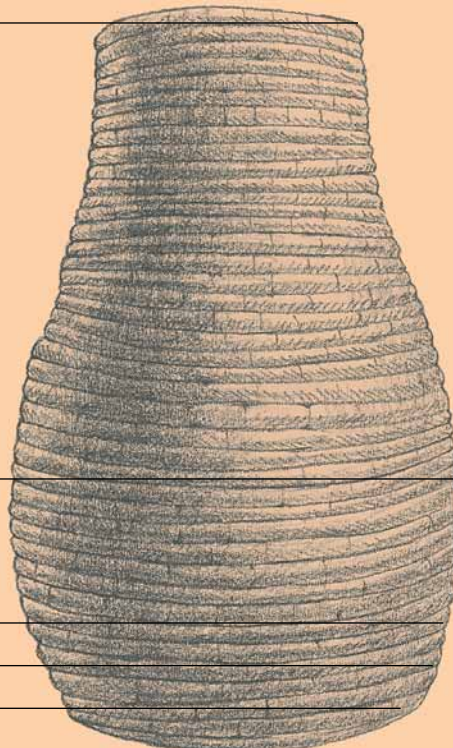
Log (0.3 liter or 1.3 cups)



10 baths = 1 homer (or kor)  
"a donkey load" (220 liters  
or 58 gallons)

## Dry Measures

Ephah (22 liters or .62 bushel)



Seah (7.3 liters or 6.6 quarts)

Omer (2.2 liters or 2 quarts)

Kab (1.2 liters or 1 quart)

Log (0.3 liter or .5 pint)



5 ephahs = 1 lethech (half-homer)  
(110 liters or 3.1 bushels)

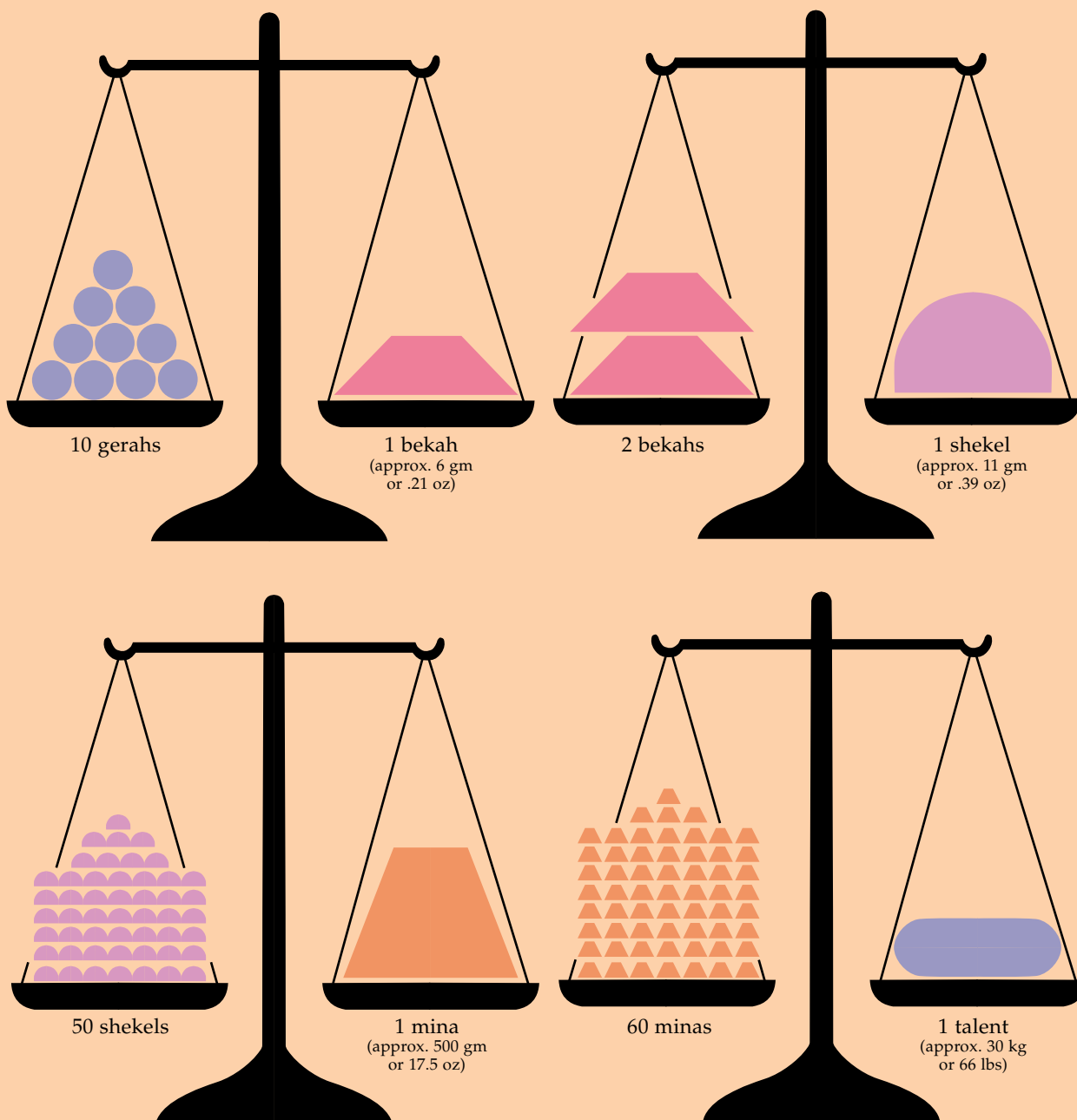


10 ephahs = 1 homer  
(220 liters or 6.2 bushels)

# Weights and Measures

Although both David and Ezekiel attempted to standardize weights and measures, complete uniformity was never achieved. Some of the unscrupulous tried to turn this situation to their advantage by keeping two sets of weights. To

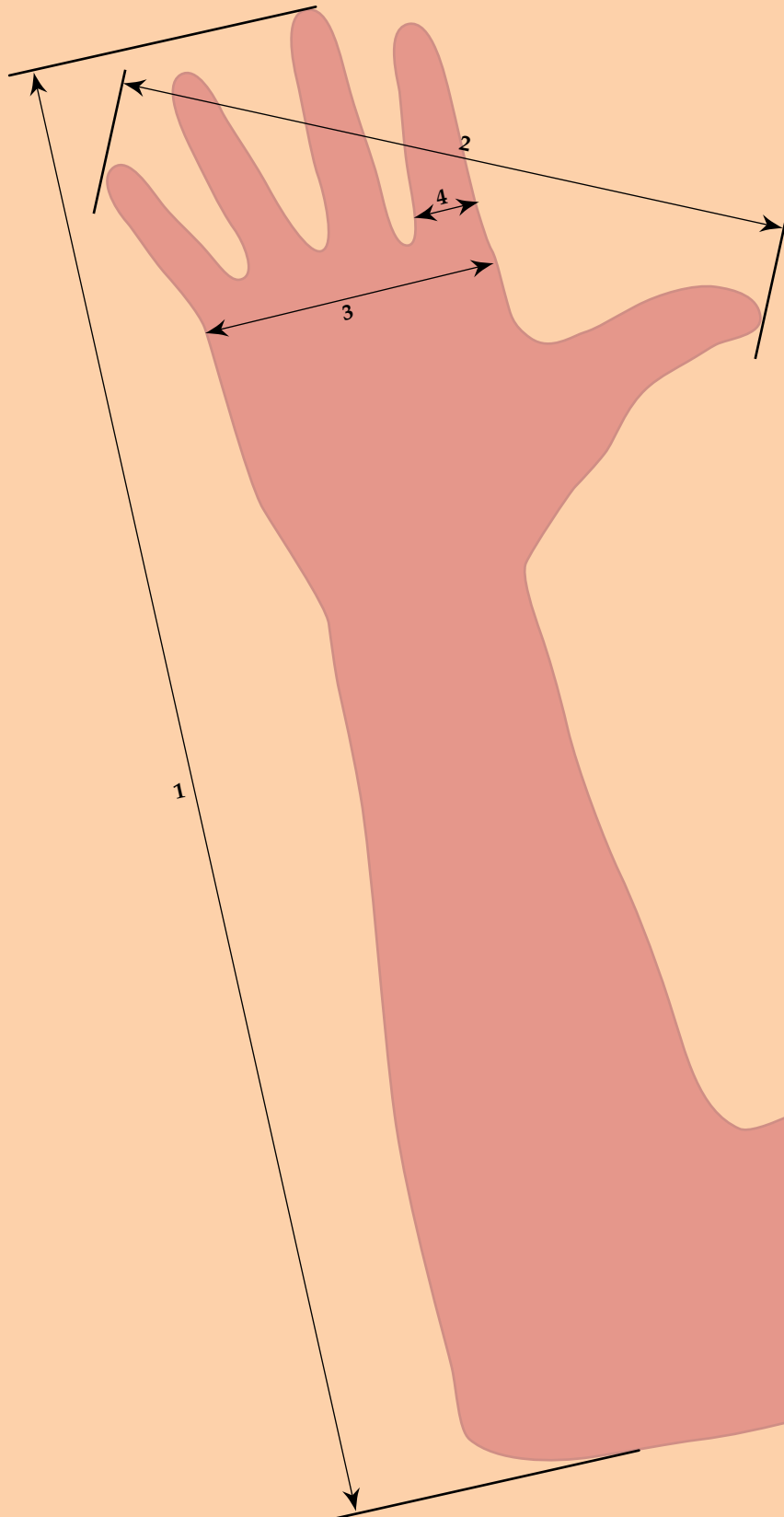
guard against unfairness, it was not uncommon for individuals to carry their own weights with them in a purse or bag. The need for this practice brought strong rebukes from the prophets because it indicated the poor spiritual condition of the Israelites.



The heavy, royal shekel weighed 13 gm.  
The heavy, double-standard talent weighed 60 kg.

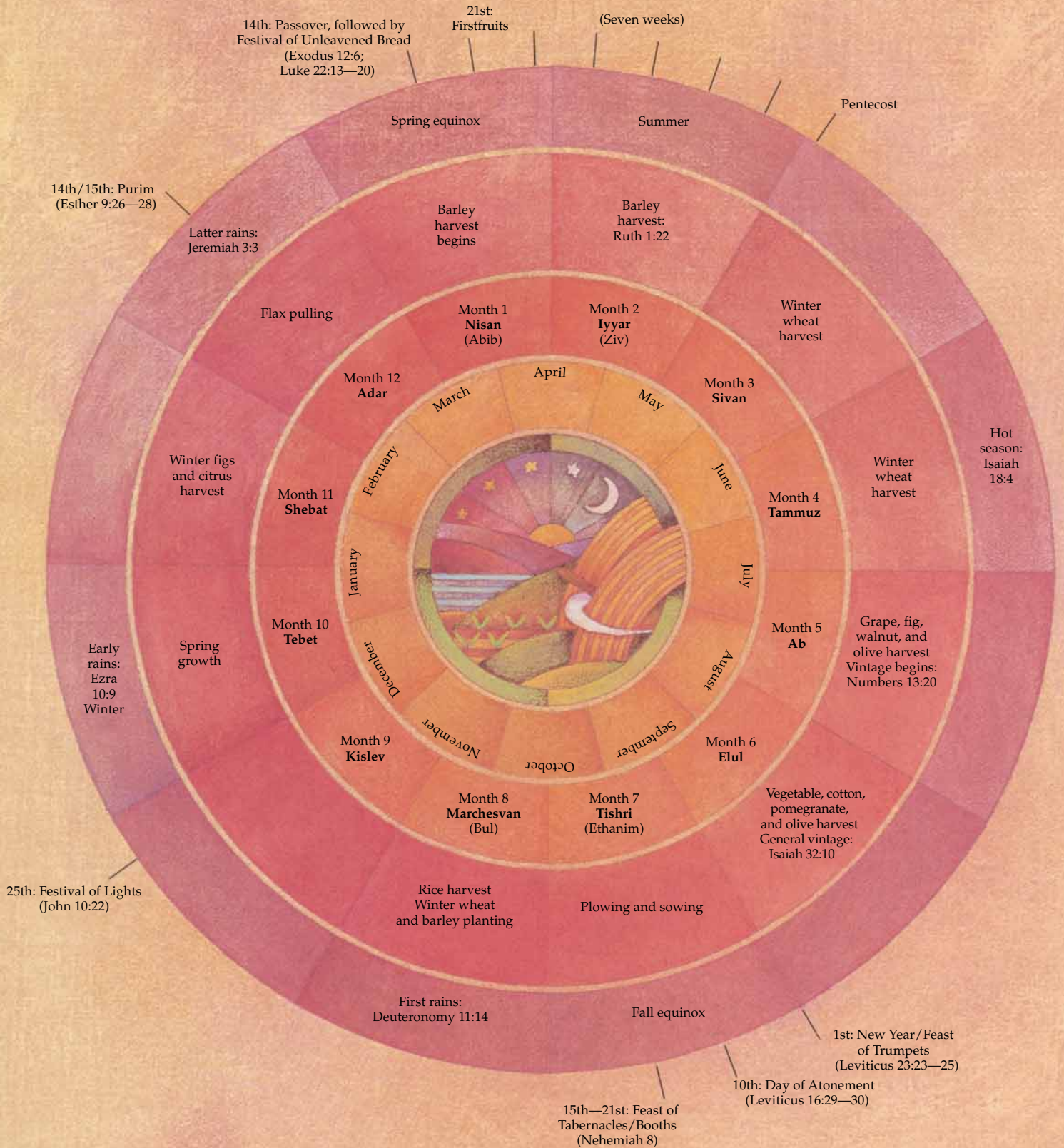
# Linear Measures

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1. Cubit (elbow to finger-tip) 18 in. or 45 cm. The long cubit was a handbreadth longer 20.4 in. or 52 cm. 6 cubits = 1 reed.
2. Span (outstretched hand from thumb to little finger): three handbreadths or half a cubit 9 in. or 23 cm.
3. Palm or handbreadth (width of the hand at the base of the fingers) 3 in. or 76 mm.
4. Finger or digit ( $\frac{1}{4}$  handbreadth)  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. or 19 mm.

# Ancient Jewish Calendar





## EXPLANATION CONCERNING FOOTNOTES

Cross references to related passages throughout the standard works have self-identifying abbreviations for each book cited. Other abbreviations are as follows:

- GR: An alternate translation from the Greek.
- HB: An alternate translation from the Hebrew.
- JST: An explanation of idioms and difficult constructions. *Joseph Smith Translation*. Excerpts from the Prophet Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible. Short excerpts are provided in the footnotes; longer excerpts are provided in the Appendix. Italic type in these JST excerpts is used for words not found in the James Version.
- TG: *Topical Guide*. References to the "Topical Guide with Selected Concordance and Index," given by topic title. This material is in the Appendix.

The word "or" signifies that alternate words follow to clarify the meaning of archaic English expressions.

## THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES CALLED GENESIS

### CHAPTER 1

God creates this earth and its heaven and all forms of life in six days—Creative acts of each day set forth—God creates man, both male and female, in his own image—Man given dominion over all things, and commanded to multiply and fill the earth.

**I**N the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3 And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.

4 And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.

5 And God called the light "Day," and the darkness he called "Night." And the evening and the morning were the first "day."

6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters.

7 And God made the firmament,

and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.

8 And God called the firmament "Heaven." And the evening and the morning were the second "day."

9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so.

10 And God called the dry land "Earth"; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas; and God saw that it was good.

11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth; and it was so.

12 And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind; and God saw that it was good.

13 And the evening and the morning were the third "day."

14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the

1 To 14 To Time.

a Micah 4: 2; Matt. 9: 11; D&C 14: 9; To: 24 (20-24); Moses 2: 3; Abr. 4: 1.  
c DEER SHEEP, FISH, FOWL, CREATED; always ethereal activity; see Abr. 4: 1; Corianton 1: 10; Creation (D&C 82); 4; Moses 1: 27 (26-30); 2: 1; Abr. 4: 1; 10; Astronomy; Hebrew.  
d 10; Hebrew.

20 Abr. 4: 2.

b To Darkness, Physical.  
c To God, Spirit of.  
d Moses 2: 2; Abr. 4: 2; Ps. 33: 9.  
e To Light.  
f Abr. 12: 15; Moses 2: 4; Abr. 4: 4.  
g Moses 2: 15; To Time.  
h To Darkness, Physical.  
i To Time.  
j Moses 2: 3; Abr. 4: 1; Hebrew expression; Moses 2: 2 (20-24); Abr. 4: 1 (20-24); Ps. 7: 29-31.

7a Ps. 148: 4 (3-5).

b To Heaven.  
c Abr. 4: 8.  
d To Earth, Division of.  
e Moses 2: 9; Abr. 9: 9; 10a Moses 1: 26.  
f 11a Moses 2: 11 (11-12); Abr. 4: 11 (11-12).  
g 12a D&C 84: 25.  
h Abr. 12: 14 (12-14); Moses 2: 14 (13-14); To Order.  
i 14a Ps. 104: 19; D&C 82: 9; To Astronomy.

# For Our Profit and Learning: The Value of Studying the Old Testament

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## (1-1) Introduction

It would probably not be incorrect to assume that for many members of the Church the Old Testament is the most neglected book of scripture. This neglect is not difficult to understand. The Old Testament is the longest of all the scriptures, being about twice the size of the Book of Mormon. Its history and culture are farthest removed from our day. The Old Testament contains a precise and involved description of the Mosaic law, some ordinances of which have now been fulfilled and replaced by the ordinances of the restored gospel. Consequently, some parts of the book, such as lengthy genealogical lists, numerical censuses, and detailed descriptions of obsolete rituals, may seem unimportant compared to other scriptures. And sometimes the language of the translation of the Old Testament is archaic and difficult to follow. Little wonder, then, that many in the Church, though familiar with some of the Old Testament stories, have never read the entire book. Yet the prophets, both ancient and modern, have stressed the priceless value of the Old Testament in assisting men to know God.

The Apostle Paul commended Timothy, saying, "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures" (2 Timothy 3:15). As far as we know, the only scriptures available to Timothy were what we know today as the Old Testament. Note what Paul said about these holy writings:

1. They are able to make one wise unto salvation (see 2 Timothy 3:15).
2. They are given by the inspiration of God (see v. 16).
3. They are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (see v. 16).
4. They help the man of God become perfect and fully equipped for every good work (see v. 17).

When the prophet Nephi's rebellious brothers ridiculed the idea that Nephi could build a ship to take them to the promised land, he confounded them with examples from the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 17:17-43). These plates contained writings we have today in the Old Testament. Later Nephi explained that he read many things to his people from the brass plates, including the writings of Moses and Isaiah, in order to—

1. Help them know the doings of the Lord in other lands among people of old (see 1 Nephi 19:22).
2. More fully persuade them to believe in the Lord, their Redeemer (see v. 23).
3. Liken (or apply) the scriptures to themselves for their profit and learning (see v. 23).

Think for a moment about yourself. Does your motivation to study the scriptures come from a desire to learn more about God and His dealings with His children? Are you seeking to draw power from the scriptures in order to perfect your life by coming to Christ? Paul and Nephi have said that, like all other scriptures, the Old Testament will help you accomplish these goals. Do you want to learn more of God and those who were faithful to Him? Then search the stories of the prophets and patriarchs. Would you be inspired by examples of men and women who overcame their weaknesses and went on to perfection? Read of Joseph and Abraham and Sarah and Job and dozens of others. Would you like to find principles of daily living that bring you closer to God? They are there in abundance. Would you like to better know Jehovah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to earth as our Redeemer? Then turn to the Old Testament, for, like the other scriptures, it is a witness of His divinity, His love, and His mercy.

## THE OLD TESTAMENT IS SCRIPTURE

### (1-2) The Old Testament, Like All Scripture, Was Given by God for Our Benefit

"The Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants . . . are like a lighthouse in the ocean, or a finger-post which points out the road we should travel. Where do they point? To the fountain of light. . . . That is what these books are for. They are of God; they are valuable and necessary: by them we can establish the doctrine of Christ." (Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:129.)

### (1-3) Like All Scripture, the Old Testament Is Edifying and Has Great Benefit for Us Today

"The Bible presents a total picture of the life of its characters. We can thus expect human frailties to appear. However, many of these human elements reveal genuine religious purposes when they are understood in terms of the social standards of their own day.

"The student who truly seeks to appreciate the Bible will study it always for the contribution of its message to our religious life today. It is not enough to be entertained by its stories unless these stories can reach deep into our souls to make better persons. The accounts in the Bible were preserved for the help which they can give to man in developing his faith in

God and in following His teachings. The reader who misses the significance of Bible stories in present life is not a true student of the Bible." (Larsen, in Jacob, *The Message of the Old Testament*, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.)

#### **(1-4) Like All Scripture, the Old Testament Is Christ Centered**

"As Jesus testified of Moses, so likewise did Moses testify of Christ, although much of his testimony is not in our present-day Bible. But obviously it was in the scriptures available to the people of Jesus' day.

"It is faith-promoting indeed to note how consistent the various books of scripture are, one with another; how the revelations in the various ages all harmonize; and how the words of the prophets, no matter when or where they lived, testify of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

"When critics attacked him, the Lord responded by saying to them: 'Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and *they are they which testify of me.*' (John 5:39. Italics added.)

"He never would have said that if the scriptures available to the people of that day did not testify of him. He urged them to read the scriptures that they might see how the prophets whom they adored, but now long since dead, actually did foretell his coming. They testified of him—the Savior. And Moses was one of them. . . .

"Note that the Lord quoted both Moses and the other prophets expounding 'in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.'" (Petersen, *Moses*, pp. 148–49.)



Elder Mark E. Petersen testified that all scriptures point to Christ.

#### **(1-5) Being Christ Centered, the Old Testament Reveals Many Things about His Mission**

"Properly understood, the Scripture is all full of Christ, and all intended to point to Christ as our only Saviour. It is not only the law, which is a schoolmaster unto Christ, nor the types, which are shadows of Christ, nor yet the prophecies, which are predictions of Christ; but the whole Old Testament history is full of Christ. Even where persons are not, events may be types. If any one failed to see in Isaac or in Joseph a personal type of Christ, he could not deny that the offering up of Isaac, or the selling of Joseph, and his making provision for the sustenance of his brethren, are typical of events in the history of our Lord. And so indeed every event points to Christ, even as He is alike the beginning, the centre, and the end of all history—'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' One thing follows from this: only that reading or study of the Scriptures can be sufficient or profitable through which we learn to know Christ—and that as 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life' to us. And for this purpose we ought constantly to ask the aid and teaching of the Holy Spirit." (Edersheim, *Old Testament Bible History*, pp. 2–3.)

#### **(1-6) Though Many Plain and Precious Parts Have Been Taken Away, the Old Testament Is Still Remarkably Intact and Valuable**

"The vision of Nephi as recorded in the early part of the Book of Mormon explains that many plain and precious parts of the Bible as it was written originally were taken from that sacred volume before it was circulated among the Gentiles.

"What was it like before it was stripped of so many precious parts? And what made those teachings so precious?

"Certainly the Old Testament was not as fragmentary as it is today. When we look at the volume of information in the present Bible we wonder how it could have contained more, for already it is a library in itself.

"Yet as originally written it did contain vastly more, and made the Gospel so plain for those ancient peoples that a wayfaring man, though a fool, could not err therein.

"What was it like?

"We cannot fully answer that question, of course, but we can find much of the answer in a careful reading of both the Book of Mormon and the Bible.

"The most striking thing about it was that, as originally written, the Old Testament WAS A TESTIMONY AND WITNESS FOR CHRIST!

"It told the story of the preaching of Christ's Gospel to ancient peoples of all dispensations.

"If we had the Old Testament as it was originally written, mankind would have a most powerful—an infallible—witness that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ, that He gave the Law to Moses, that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that His coming into mortality was plainly foretold in a detailed manner, in holy writ." ("Christ and the Old Testament," *Church News*, 22 Jan. 1966, p. 16.)

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“The hand of the Lord has been over this volume of scripture nevertheless, and it is remarkable that it has come down to us in the excellent condition in which we find it” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:191). His hand prepared a way to preserve the essence of its sacred message despite the attempts of men and Satan to destroy it. The Lord did this by cloaking profound truths in the spirit of prophecy (see Alma 25:15–16). In other words, the Lord cloaked much spiritual truth in symbolic and figurative imagery, which can be interpreted only through the spirit of prophecy, which is “the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 19:10). Many of the most precious truths were not stated in plainness so that those who would have tampered with them did not sense their significance and thus left them alone.

In this way a large part of the testimony of Christ was hidden from the enemies of God because the natural man does not have access to “the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). The man of evil might set out to pervert the gospel of the Lord and even may be able to remove many scriptural marks which clearly identified Jesus as the Christ, yet that which requires the Spirit—the symbolic, the subtle, the powerful—would elude him. Therefore, as Elder Mark E. Petersen suggested:

“Regardless of all its problems in the making, the Bible should not be disparaged in any way. It is the word of God, and even though translations have dimmed some of its meaning, and many ‘plain and precious parts’ have been deleted, it still is an inspired and miraculous guide to all who will read it.

“When augmented by modern scripture as the Book of Mormon indicates would be the case, it can direct us into the paths of eternal salvation.” (*As Translated Correctly*, pp. 16–17.)

## SEVEN KEYS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE OLD TESTAMENT

### (1-7) Key 1: Constant, Diligent, and Prayerful Study Is the Major Factor in Understanding the Scriptures

“Search the scriptures—search the revelations which we publish, and ask your Heavenly Father, in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to His glory nothing doubting, He will answer you by the power of His Holy Spirit. You will then know for yourselves and not for another. You will not then be dependent on man for the knowledge of God; nor will there be any room for speculation. No; for when men receive their instruction from Him that made them, they know how He will save them. Then again we say: Search the Scriptures, search the Prophets and learn what portion of them belongs to you.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 11–12.)

### (1-8) Key 2: Coupled with Prayerful Study Must be a Commitment to Live the Commandments

“But reading and knowing the scriptures is not sufficient. It is important that we keep the commandments—be doers of the word and not hearers only. The great promise that the Lord has given us should be sufficient incentive for us to acknowledge him and do his will:

“And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

“And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

“And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

“And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them.” (D&C 89:18–21.)

“May this glorious promise be fulfilled in our behalf as we search the scriptures and find the way to eternal life.” (N. Eldon Tanner, “Right Answers: First Presidency Message,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1973, p. 6.)

### (1-9) Key 3: Latter-day Scriptures Give Many Insights into the Old Testament

“Latter-day revelation is the key to understanding the Old Testament, because it still retains its own original flavor and intent. That is, we can be certain that the text of latter-day revelation gives the inferences and understandings that the Lord wishes this generation to have. The revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith that have direct application to the Old Testament are of at least three different types:

“1. The restoration and translation of ancient documents, such as the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham. These two books had their origin in the same environment and milieu of the ancient world as the Bible and have been translated for our use in this dispensation by a prophet of God. Therefore, we are assured that we have a correct translation.

“2. A restoration of the writings of certain Old Testament prophets, but without Joseph Smith’s actually having the ancient documents in his hands. These writings include the Book of Moses, which contains the visions and writings of Moses and a prophecy of Enoch, revealed to the Prophet Joseph, though not translations of ancient documents in the same sense as were the Book of Mormon or the Book of Abraham.

“3. Divine revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith about Old Testament events and/or personalities. Many of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, though not translations of biblical documents, comment upon and illumine our understanding of biblical personalities and events. These include sections 84, 107, and 132, revelations that give us much assistance in understanding the Old Testament.

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“Thus the Latter-day Saint has a great deal of recorded information at his fingertips relative to the Old Testament, and he is unfair to himself if he fails to utilize all of these sources in his study.

“The revelations given to the Prophet Joseph bear record that the biblical story is essentially correct, although not complete.” (Robert J. Matthews, “Modern Revelation: Windows to the Old Testament,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1973, p. 21.)

#### **(1-10) Key 4: Knowledge That the Gospel Was Known to the Ancients Provides the Means for Accurate Interpretation of Their Teachings**

“Some persons believe that the Old Testament teaches and demonstrates some rather crude theological concepts and ethics. This may seem logical to those who believe that religions are mere social institutions that have evolved and developed over the centuries. But to those who see religion as revealed theology and a divine code of ethics with absolute truths and eternal rights and wrongs, such an estimate of the Old Testament is neither logical nor acceptable. . . .

“ . . . great principles are taught in the Old Testament. During his earthly mission Jesus used them, cited them, and commended their use by others.

“For example, recall the situation when he had just finished chastising some Sadducees for not knowing the scriptures. (See Mark 12:24.) Another interrogator arose ostensibly to find out how Jesus would evaluate the teachings in the Law of Moses, asking, ‘Which is the first commandment of all?’

“‘And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

“‘And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

“‘And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.’ . . .

“Those great principles of love were found in the Old Testament. They are still found in our versions, in Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and Leviticus 19:18. See further pronouncements of them in Deuteronomy 10:12 and 30:6 and in Leviticus 19:34. . . .

“Many today, however, think of these commandments as New Testament teachings. Jesus did indeed originate them, but much earlier than in New Testament times.” (Ellis T. Rasmussen, “The Unchanging Gospel of Two Testaments,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1973, pp. 24–27.)

#### **(1-11) Key 5: Understanding the Nature of God Provides Special Insight**

Many people feel uncomfortable with the God of the Old Testament. They see Him as vindictive, revengeful, and unmerciful, not the loving God of the New Testament. Yet the supposedly harsh deity of the old covenant is the same Person as the forgiving Jesus of the new covenant. The reconciliation of this seeming paradox is that He is the same God, and God

does not change. He is the same today as yesterday and will be so forever (see D&C 20:12). He Himself has declared that He “doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he has said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round” (D&C 3:2; see also James 1:7). Therefore, the Old Testament God is just as kind, just as merciful, just as loving as the God of the New Testament; yet, on the other hand, the God depicted in the New Testament is just as firm and angry at sin as the God of the Old Testament. Why? Because They are the same Being! If we keep this fact in mind, we will be better able to interpret the commandments, actions, and motives of the great Jehovah.

While many modern Bible scholars say that such events as the Flood or the command to destroy the Canaanites when Joshua led the Israelites into the promised land prove that the Old Testament deity is harsh and vindictive, the Latter-day Saint can say instead, “I know that Christ has perfect love for all. What can I learn then about His dealings with people in the time of the Flood or from this commandment?” This learning process becomes very productive in the attempt to come to know God better. (See Enrichment Section A, “Who Is the God of the Old Testament?”)

#### **(1-12) Key 6: The Nature and Purposes of God’s Covenants with His Children Are Important**

Many of God’s dealings with the Old Testament people centered in making and keeping covenants. Because He loved righteousness, He extended to Abraham’s seed the covenant with all its obligations, rights, and powers. Through this covenant they could separate themselves from worldliness, thus becoming holy, or godlike. By keeping the covenant, and extending its blessings to others, they were assured of God’s blessings and protection. Because of God’s mercy, the righteous were promised that the covenant would be maintained if they kept its terms.

On the other hand, if they violated the covenant and rejected God, they not only forfeited blessings but also suffered the wrath of the Lord. It is not surprising, then, to find the prophets continually reminding Israel of their covenants and admonishing them to be faithful to them. This concept becomes a critical key to understanding much of what happens in the Old Testament. (See Enrichment Section B, “Covenants and Covenant Making: Keys to Exaltation.”)

#### **(1-13) Key 7: Putting Ourselves in the Place of the Ancients As We Read the Scriptures Is an Important Part of Studying the Old Testament**

“Do you read the Scriptures, my brethren and sisters, as though you were writing them a thousand, two thousand, or five thousand years ago? Do you read them as though you stood in the place of the men who wrote them? If you do not feel thus, it is your privilege to do so, that you may be as familiar with the spirit and meaning of the written word of God as you are with your daily walk and conversation,

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or as you are with your workmen or with your households. You may understand what the Prophets understood and thought—what they designed and planned to bring forth to their brethren for their good.

“When you can thus feel, then you may begin to think that you can find out something about God, and begin to learn who he is.” (Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:333.)

## POINTS TO PONDER

**(1-14)** A frequently quoted scripture is Isaiah 55:8–9. Many times, however, we stop at those two verses and do not read them in their full context. Read now verses 10 and 11. What does the Lord mean when He says His way of doing things is not like man’s? (Note especially v. 11.) What does He mean when He says that His word “shall accomplish that which I please,” and how does that relate to the Old Testament? How would you now answer someone who says, “The Old Testament is too difficult; it needs to be simplified and made more plain”?

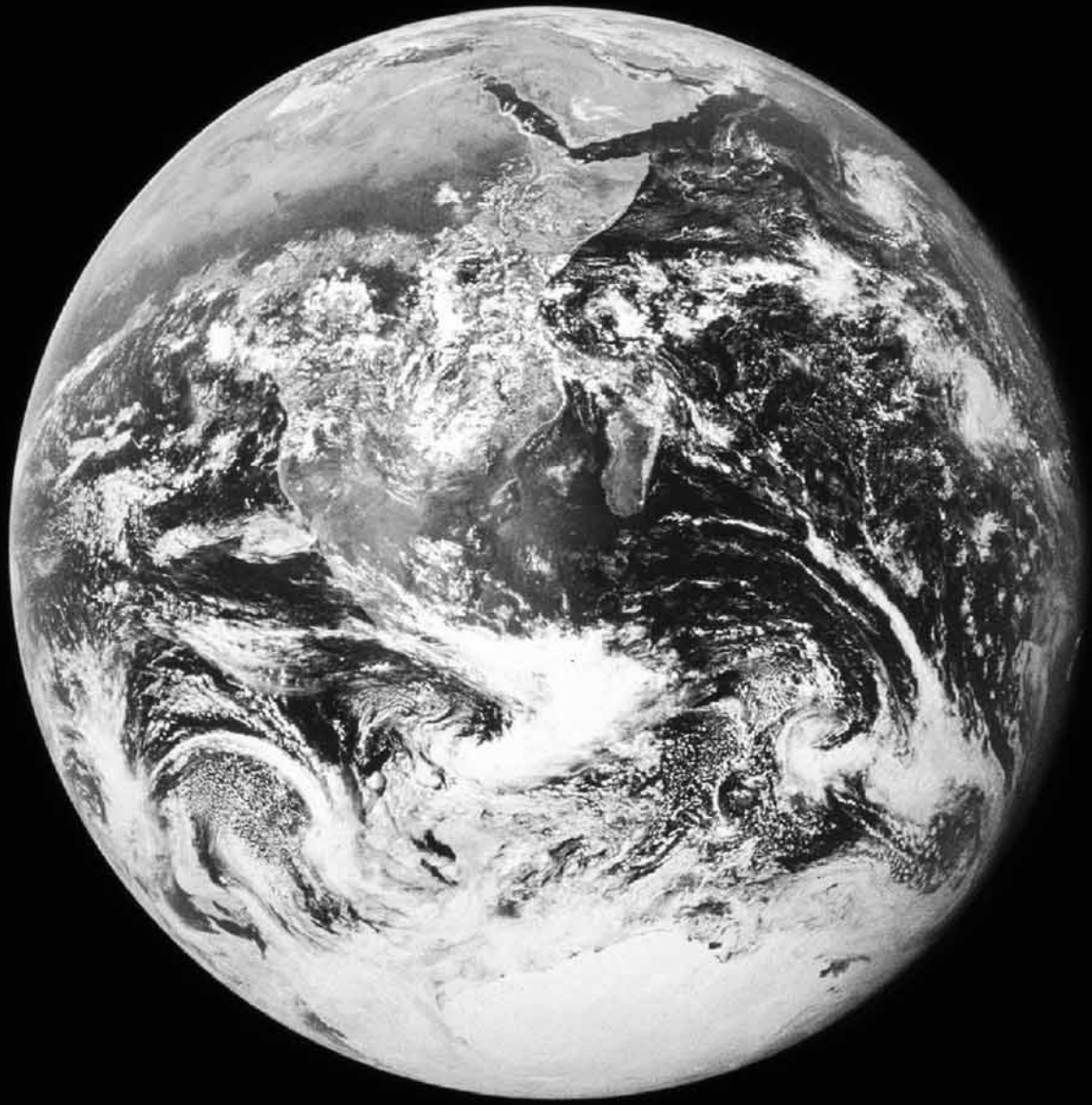
**(1-15)** Read again the second paragraph of Reading 1-3 and all of Reading 1-13. Ponder for a moment how we put ourselves in the place of the ancients and let the scriptures “reach deep into our souls” (Larsen, in Jacob, *The Message of the Old Testament*, p. xxxvi). List some practical things you can do to apply this concept in your own life as you study the Old Testament. Is this application what Nephi meant by “liken[ing] all scriptures unto us” (1 Nephi 19:23)?

**(1-16)** Moroni requested those who want to know for themselves the truthfulness of the gospel to “remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam” (Moroni 10:3). Why did he make this request? What is there in the Old Testament message that is important for a person striving for a personal testimony? List four or five major practical concepts you could take from the Old Testament to learn to be a better Christian.

**(1-17)** President Spencer W. Kimball admonished:

“I urge all of the people of this church to give serious attention to their family histories, to encourage their parents and grandparents to write their journals, and let no family go into eternity without having left their memoirs for their children, their grandchildren, and their posterity. This is a duty and a responsibility, and I urge every person to start the children out writing a personal history and journal.” (“The True Way of Life and Salvation,” *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 4.)

If you have not already begun to keep your personal journal, now is an excellent time to do so. Make your study of the Old Testament a part of your journal. Record special insights, things that impress you, or just the feelings you may have as you study. You will find your study of the Old Testament greatly enhanced by your journal keeping and your journal keeping greatly enhanced by your study of the Old Testament.



# The Creation

## (2-1) Introduction

Adam and Eve were the crowning point of the Creation, but pause for a moment to think of the Creation itself. It was the Father directing the creation of a home for His children. When it was finished, the record states with beautiful simplicity, “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). And so it has been in the thousands of years that have elapsed since. The earth is a place of beauty and abundance, a place of self-renewal and constant re-creation. It has been the mortal home for billions upon billions of people, and yet still it is capable of sustaining billions more.

Ponder for a moment your own relationship to Adam and Eve—your ever-so-great grandparents. Have the ensuing millennia made them seem unreal to you, like fictional characters in a novel? They are real and they are alive. Adam will return to earth prior to the Millennium to preside under Christ at the great council of Adam-ondi-Ahman (see Daniel 7; D&C 116), and he will lead the armies of the Almighty God to battle against the assembled hosts of Satan in the last great battle of the earth (see D&C 88:112–15).

The world would have you believe that Adam and Eve were primitive and superstitious, that they brought about the Fall through immorality, or even that they are imaginary, mythical persons. But as you read about them remember how the Lord views these two great souls. Think of what special qualities they must have possessed to have been chosen to lead the way.

You have probably read the account of the Creation before, perhaps many times. But as you read and study it now, ponder its real significance for you today.

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Genesis 1–2.
2. Because the parallel accounts in Moses 1–3 and Abraham 4–5 contain valuable insights and additions not found in Genesis, they should be read and studied in connection with the Genesis account. (The books of Moses and Abraham are studied in detail in the Pearl of Great Price course, Religion 327.)
3. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON GENESIS 1–2

### (2-2) Genesis 1:1. When Was “In the Beginning”?

At least two important points should be made about these opening words of the Bible:

First, *beginning* is a relative term and does not mean the starting point of all eternity, if indeed there can be such a thing. The Lord told Moses that He would speak only concerning this earth (see Moses 1:40). The creations of God are too many for man to number (see Moses 1:37; 7:30), and many other worlds have already “passed away” (Moses 1:35). Thus, “in the beginning” refers only to this world’s beginning. President Brigham Young explained:

“When was there a beginning? There never was one; if there was, there will be an end; but there never was a beginning, and hence there will never be an end; that looks like eternity. When we talk about the beginning of eternity, it is rather simple conversation, and goes far beyond the capacity of man.” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 47.)

Second, the creation of this world was not the real beginning for those who would come to live here. Before the foundations of the earth were laid, we lived as spirit children of heavenly parents in a premortal state of existence. President Joseph F. Smith said:

“Where did we come from? From God. Our spirits existed before they came to this world. They were in the councils of the heavens before the foundations of the earth were laid. . . . We sang together with the heavenly hosts for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid and when the plan of our existence upon this earth and redemption were mapped out. . . . We were unquestionably present in those councils when that wonderful circumstance occurred . . . when Satan offered himself as a savior of the world if he could but receive the honor and glory of the Father for doing it. . . . We were, no doubt, there and took part in all those scenes, we were vitally concerned in the carrying out of these great plans and purposes, we understood them, and it was for our sakes they were decreed and are to be consummated.” (In Ludlow, *Latter-day Prophets Speak*, pp. 5–6.)

Thus, all men had existence for an unknown length of time before the world was ever created (see D&C 49:16–17). President Spencer W. Kimball explained:

“Life was to be in three segments or estates: premortal, mortal, and immortal. The third stage would incorporate exaltation—eternal life with

godhood—for those who would fully magnify their mortal lives. Performance in one estate would vitally affect the succeeding estate or estates. If a person kept his first estate, he would be permitted the second or the mortal life as a further period of trial and experience. If he magnified his second estate, his earth experience, eternal life would await him. To that end men go through the numerous experiences of earth life—to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.’ (Abraham 3:25.)

“We mortals who now live upon this earth are in our *second estate*. Our very presence here in mortal bodies attests the fact that we ‘kept’ our first estate. Our spirit matter was eternal and co-existent with God, but it was organized into spirit bodies by our Heavenly Father. Our spirit bodies went through a long period of growth and development and training and, having passed the test successfully, were finally admitted to this earth and to mortality.” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 4–5.)

This “long period of growth and development” must surely have had a great influence on what man is now. For example, President Brigham Young pointed out that all men know there is a God even though some have forgotten that they know. He said:

“I want to tell you, each and every one of you, that you are well acquainted with God our Heavenly Father, or the great Elohim. You are all well acquainted with him, for there is not a soul of you but what has lived in his house and dwelt with him year after year; and yet you are seeking to become acquainted with him, when the fact is, you have merely forgotten what you did know.

“There is not a person here to-day but what is a son or a daughter of that Being.” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 50.)

### (2-3) How Old Is the Earth?

Even when it is realized that chapter 1 of Genesis does not describe the beginning of all things, or even the starting point of mankind, but only the beginning of this earth, it cannot be said definitively when that beginning was. In other words, the scriptures do not provide sufficient information to accurately determine the age of the earth. Generally speaking, those who accept the scriptural account subscribe to one of three basic theories about the age of the world. All three theories depend on how the word *day*, as used in the creation account, is interpreted.

The first theory says that the word *day* is understood as it is used currently and therefore means a period of 24 hours. According to this theory, the earth was created in one week, or 168 hours. Thus, the earth would be approximately six thousand years old. (Many scholars agree that there were approximately four thousand years from Adam to Christ and that there have been nearly two thousand years since Christ was born.) Very few people, either members of the Church or members of other religions, hold to this theory, since the evidence for longer processes involved in the Creation is substantial.

A second theory argues that Abraham was told through the Urim and Thummim that one revolution of Kolob, the star nearest to the throne of God, took one thousand earth years (see Abraham 3:2–4). In other words, one could say that one day of the Lord’s time equals one thousand earth years. Other scriptures support this theory, too (see Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8; Facsimile No. 2 from the book of Abraham, figures 1, 4). If the word *day* in Genesis was used in this sense, then the earth would be approximately thirteen thousand years old (seven days of a thousand years each for the Creation plus the nearly six thousand years since Adam’s fall). Some see Doctrine and Covenants 77:12 as additional scriptural support for this theory.



Creation room in the Los Angeles Temple

Although the majority of geologists, astronomers, and other scientists believe that even this long period is not adequate to explain the physical evidence found in the earth, there are a small number of reputable scholars who disagree. These claim that the geologic clocks are misinterpreted and that tremendous catastrophes in the earth’s history speeded up the processes that normally may take thousands of years. They cite evidence supporting the idea that thirteen thousand years is not an unrealistic time period. Immanuel Velikovsky, for example, wrote three books amassing evidence that worldwide catastrophic upheavals have occurred in recent history, and he argued against uniformitarianism, the idea that the natural processes in evidence now have always prevailed at the same approximate rate of uniformity. These books are *Worlds in Collision*, *Ages in Chaos*, and *Earth in Upheaval*. Two Latter-day Saint scientists, Melvin A. Cook and M. Garfield Cook, have also advocated this theory in their book *Science and Mormonism*. A short summary of the Cooks’ approach can be found in Paul Cracroft’s article “How Old Is the Earth?” (*Improvement Era*, Oct. 1964, pp. 827–30, 852).

A third theory says that the word *day* refers to a period of an undetermined length of time, thus suggesting an era. The word is still used in that sense in such phrases as “in the day of the dinosaurs.” The Hebrew word for *day* used in the creation account can be translated as “day” in the literal sense, but it can also be used in the sense of an indeterminate length

of time (see Genesis 40:4, where *day* is translated as “a season”; Judges 11:4, where a form of *day* is translated as “in the process of time”; see also Holladay, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, pp. 130–31). Abraham says that the Gods *called* the creation periods days (see Abraham 4:5, 8).

If this last meaning was the sense in which Moses used the word *day*, then the apparent conflict between the scriptures and much of the evidence seen by science as supporting a very old age for the earth is easily resolved. Each era or day of creation could have lasted for millions or even hundreds of millions of our years, and uniformitarianism could be accepted without any problem. (For an excellent discussion of this approach see Henry Eyring, “The Gospel and the Age of the Earth,” [*Improvement Era*, July 1965, pp. 608–9, 626, 628]. Also, most college textbooks in the natural sciences discuss the traditional dating of the earth.)

While it is interesting to note these various theories, officially the Church has not taken a stand on the age of the earth. For reasons best known to Himself, the Lord has not yet seen fit to formally reveal the details of the Creation. Therefore, while Latter-day Saints are commanded to learn truth from many different fields of study (see D&C 88:77–79), an attempt to establish any theory as the official position of the Church is not justifiable.

#### (2-4) Genesis 1:1. Who Created the Earth?

While the record indicates that God created the heavens and the earth, there is additional information as to exactly who that was. The Prophet Joseph said:

“I shall comment on the very first Hebrew word in the Bible; I will make a comment on the very first sentence of the history of creation in the Bible—*Berosheit*. I want to analyze the word. *Baith*—in, by, through, and everything else. *Rosh*—the head. *Sheit*—grammatical termination. When the inspired man wrote it, he did not put the *baith* there. An old Jew without any authority added the word; he thought it too bad to begin to talk about the head! It read first, ‘The head one of the Gods brought forth the Gods.’ That is the true meaning of the words. *Baurau* signifies to bring forth. If you do not believe it, you do not believe the learned man of God. Learned men can teach you no more than what I have told you. *Thus the head God brought forth the Gods in the grand council.*

“. . . The head God called together the Gods and sat in grand council to bring forth the world. The grand councilors sat at the head in yonder heavens and contemplated the creation of the worlds which were created at the time.” (*Teachings*, pp. 348–49.) The Abraham account of the Creation reflects this idea of the plurality of Gods (see Abraham 4).

Although it was the council of the Gods that supervised the Creation, numerous scriptures indicate that Jehovah, the premortal Jesus Christ, was actually given the responsibility for carrying out the work of the Creation, not for this earth alone but also for

innumerable others. To Moses God explained: “And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten” (Moses 1:33; for an extensive list of other scriptures showing that Jesus is the Creator, see “Jesus Christ, Creator” in the Topical Guide).

Jehovah, or Christ, had the assistance of Michael in creating the earth. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained who Michael was:

“Our great prince, *Michael*, known in mortality as *Adam*, stands next to Christ in the eternal plan of salvation and progression. In pre-existence Michael was the most intelligent, powerful, and mighty spirit son of God, who was destined to come to this earth, excepting only the Firstborn, under whose direction and pursuant to whose counsel he worked. ‘He is the father of the human family, and *presides over the spirits of all men.*’ (*Teachings*, p. 157.) The name Michael apparently, and with propriety, means one ‘who is like God.’

“In the creation of the earth, Michael played a part second only to that of Christ.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed., p. 491.)

Abraham records that in the midst of “many of the noble and great” premortal spirits was one “like unto God,” who said to them, “We will go down . . . and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell” (Abraham 3:22, 24; emphasis added). This passage suggests that others besides Adam may have assisted in the Creation. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith taught:

“It is true that Adam helped to form this earth. He labored with our Savior Jesus Christ. I have a strong view or conviction that there were others also who assisted them. Perhaps Noah and Enoch; and *why not Joseph Smith*, and those who were appointed to be rulers before the earth was formed? [Abraham 3:2–4.]” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:74–75.)

#### (2-5) Genesis 1:1. What Does the Word Create Mean?

The Hebrew word translated as “created” means “shaped, fashioned, created; always divine activity” (Genesis 1:1c). The Prophet Joseph Smith explained:

“You ask the learned doctors why they say the world was made out of nothing; and they will answer, ‘Doesn’t the Bible say He *created* the world?’ And they infer, from the word create, that it must have been made out of nothing. Now, the word create came from the word *baurau* which does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize; the same as a man would organize materials and build a ship. Hence, we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos—chaotic matter, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time he had. The pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed; they may be organized and reorganized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning, and can have no end.” (*Teachings*, pp. 350–52.)

**(2-6) Genesis 1:2. Why Was the Spirit “Moving” upon the Earth Which Was “without Form and Void”?**

“The earth, after it was organized and formed was, of course, not ‘without form and void,’ but rather as understood from the Hebrew and as read in the Abraham account, it was ‘empty and desolate.’ Indeed, at the point that the description of the preparation of the earth to be an habitable abode for man begins, it was enveloped in waters upon which the ‘Spirit of God’ *moved* or *brooded*. (The latter two words are both attempts to translate a Hebrew word which depicts that which a bird or hen does in incubating and guarding her eggs in the nest!)

“The creative force here called the ‘Spirit of God,’ which acts upon the elements to shape and prepare them to sustain life on earth can be the same as is termed in the Doctrine and Covenants in one context the ‘Light of Christ.’ (See D&C 88:7–13.) That that power was exerted by the Son, under the command of the Father, is evident also in such scriptures as John 1:1–4 and Hebrews 1:1–2. (See also the Book of Mormon, Helaman 12:8–14 and Jacob 4:6–9.)” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:11.)



“And God divided the light from the darkness” (Genesis 1:4).

**(2-7) Genesis 1:6–8. What Is the “Firmament” and What Are the Two “Waters”?**

The word translated as “firmament” in the King James Version of the Bible comes from the Hebrew word meaning to stretch or spread out. Many modern versions translate the word as *expanse*. (This word is used in Abraham 4:6–7.) The division of the waters under and above the firmament, or expanse, is explained simply as the natural phenomena of the earth.

“The waters *under* the firmament are the waters upon the globe itself; those *above* are not ethereal waters beyond the limits of the terrestrial atmosphere, but the waters which float in the atmosphere, and are separated by it from those upon the earth, the waters which accumulate in clouds, and then bursting these their bottles, pour down as rain upon the earth. . . . If, therefore, according to this conception, looking from an earthly point of view, the mass of water which flows upon the earth in showers of rain is shut up in heaven [cf. Genesis 8:2], it is evident that it must be regarded as above the vault which spans the earth, or, according to the words of [Psalm 148:4], ‘above the heavens.’” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:1:53–54.)

**(2-8) Genesis 1:11–12, 21, 24–25**

The basic principle of genetics was revealed in all three Creation accounts. In each account (Genesis 1; Moses 2; Abraham 4) the phrase “after his kind” is used several times. Abraham added emphasis in Abraham 4:11–12. Also, Abraham 4:31 seems to emphasize the immutability of the laws the Lord gave to this kingdom (see D&C 88:36–38, 42–43). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

“God has made certain decrees which are fixed and immovable: for instance, God set the sun, the moon, and the stars in the heavens, and gave them their laws, conditions and bounds, which they cannot pass, except by His commandments; they all move in perfect harmony in their sphere and order, and are as lights, wonders and signs unto us. The sea also has its bounds which it cannot pass. God has set many signs on the earth, as well as in the heavens; for instance, the oak of the forest, the fruit of the tree, the herb of the field, all bear a sign that seed hath been planted there; for it is a decree of the Lord that every tree, plant, and herb bearing seed should bring forth of its kind, and cannot come forth after any other law or principle.” (*Teachings*, pp. 197–98.)

**(2-9) Genesis 1:21**

The word *whales* used in this verse translates the Hebrew word *tannanim*, which comes from the verb meaning “to stretch” and means “the long-stretched ones.” This word probably applied to other large sea animals or reptiles such as the dolphin, shark, and crocodile, besides the animal we actually call the whale. (See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:1:60; Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:37.)

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## (2-10) Genesis 1:26–27. “Let Us Make Man in Our Image”

President Brigham Young said:

“Man is made in the image of his maker, . . . he is His exact image, having eye for eye, forehead for forehead, eyebrows for eyebrows, nose for nose, cheekbones for cheekbones, mouth for mouth, chin for chin, ears for ears, precisely like our Father in heaven.” (In Ludlow, *Latter-day Prophets Speak*, p. 278.)

Though President Young spoke of man, this word applies to both male and female. Latter-day prophets have commented on the existence of a mother in heaven. The First Presidency (Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund) stated this doctrine in 1909 in the following words: “All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity.” (In Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:203.)

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, after quoting Genesis 1:26–27, also said, “Is it not feasible to believe that female spirits were created in the image of a ‘Mother in Heaven?’” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 3:144).

## (2-11) What Was the Basis of Adam’s Dominion over the Earth?

“The Priesthood was first given to Adam; he obtained the First Presidency, and held the keys of it from generation to generation. He obtained it in the Creation, before the world was formed, as in Genesis 1:26, 27, 28. He had dominion given him over every living creature. He is Michael the Archangel, spoken of in the Scriptures.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 157.)

## (2-12) Genesis 1:28. What Does “Replenish” Mean?

“It is true that the original meaning of the word *replenish* connotes something is being filled again that was once filled before: *Re*—again, *plenus*—full. Why the translators of the King James Version of the Bible used the word *replenish* may not be clearly known, but it is not the word used in other translations and is not the correct meaning of the Hebrew word from which the translation was originally taken. It is true that the Prophet Joseph Smith followed the King James Version in the use of this word, perhaps because it had obtained common usage among the English-speaking peoples. *Replenish*, however, is incorrectly used in the King James translation. The Hebrew verb is *Mole* [pronounced Mah-lay] . . . meaning fill, to fill, or make full. This word *Mole* is the same word which is translated *fill* in Genesis 1:22, in the King James Bible, wherein reference is made to the fish, fowl, and beasts of the earth.” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:208–9.)

## (2-13) Genesis 1:27–28. “Man,” As Created by God, Refers to Male and Female

“‘And I, God said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning: Let us make man [not a separate man, but a complete man, which is husband and wife] in our image, after our likeness; and it was so.’ (Moses 2:26.) What a beautiful

partnership! Adam and Eve were married for eternity by the Lord. Such a marriage extends beyond the grave. All peoples should call for this kind of marriage. . . .

“This is a partnership. Then when they had created them in the image of God, to them was given the eternal command, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it’ (Gen. 1:28), and as they completed this magnificent creation, they looked it over and pronounced it ‘good, very good’—something that isn’t to be improved upon by our modern intellectuals; the male to till the ground, support the family, to give proper leadership; the woman to cooperate, to bear the children, and to rear and teach them. It was ‘good, very good.’

“And that’s the way the Lord organized it. This wasn’t an experiment. He knew what he was doing.” (Spencer W. Kimball, “Speaking Today,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, p. 71.)

## (2-14) Genesis 1:28. “Be Fruitful and Multiply”

Knowing that the primary work of God is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39) and knowing that without a physical body man could not have a fulness of joy (see D&C 93:33–35) and knowing that coming to earth to prove oneself is a prerequisite to eternal progression (see Abraham 3:25), one could safely say that bringing children into the world is one of the high priorities in the Lord’s plan.

President Spencer W. Kimball spoke of the importance of having children:

“The first commandment recorded seems to have been ‘Multiply and replenish the earth.’ Let no one ever think that the command came to have children without marriage. No such suggestion could ever have foundation. . . .

“I have told many groups of young people that they should not postpone their marriage until they have acquired all of their education ambitions. I have told tens of thousands of young folks that when they marry they should not wait for children until they have finished their schooling and financial desires. Marriage is basically for the family, and when people have found their proper companions there should be no long delay. They should live together normally and let the children come.

“There seems to be a growing feeling that marriage is for legal sex, for sex’s sake. Marriage is basically for the family; that is why we marry—not for the satisfaction of the sex, as the world around us would have us believe. When people have found their companions, there should be no long delay. Young wives should be occupied in bearing and rearing their children. I know of no scriptures where an authorization is given to young wives to withhold their families and to go to work to put their husbands through school. There are thousands of husbands who have worked their own way through school and have reared families at the same time. Though it is more difficult, young people can make their way through their educational programs.” (“Marriage is Honorable,” in *Speeches of the Year*, 1973, pp. 262–63.)

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**(2-15) Genesis 2:5. Is the Genesis Account a Record of the Spiritual Creation?**

“The account of creation in Genesis was not a spirit creation, but it was in a particular sense, a spiritual creation. This, of course, needs some explanation. The account in Genesis, chapters one and two, is the account of the creation of the physical earth. The account of the placing of all life upon the earth, up and until the fall of Adam, is an account, in a sense, of the spiritual creation of all of these, but it was also a physical creation. When the Lord said he would create Adam, he had no reference to the creation of his spirit for that had taken place ages and ages before when he was in the world of spirits and known as Michael. [Moses 2:26–28; Genesis 1:26–28.]

“Adam’s body was created from the dust of the earth, but at that time it was a spiritual earth. Adam

had a spiritual body until mortality came upon him through the violation of the law under which he was living, but he also had a physical body of flesh and bones.

“. . . Now what is a spiritual body? It is one that is quickened by spirit and not by blood. . . . After the fall, which came by a transgression of the law under which Adam was living, the forbidden fruit had the power to create blood and change his nature and mortality took the place of immortality, and all things, partaking of the change, became mortal. Now I repeat, the account in Genesis one and two, is the account of the physical creation of the earth and all upon it, but the creation was not subject to mortal law until after the fall. It was, therefore, a spiritual creation and so remained until the fall when it became temporal, or mortal. [D&C 77:6.]” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:76–77.)



“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

## (2-16) Genesis 2:7. Adam Was the “First Flesh” upon the Earth

Moses 3:7 adds a significant phrase to Genesis 2:7: “And man became a living soul, the first flesh upon the earth, the first man also.” President Joseph Fielding Smith explained what was meant by the term *flesh*.

“So, Adam was the first man upon the earth, according to the Lord’s statement, and the first flesh also. That needs a little explanation.

“Adam did not come to this earth until it was prepared for him. The animals were here. Plants were here. The Lord did not bring him here to a desolate world, and then bring other creatures. It was all prepared for him, just according to the order that is written in our scriptures, and when it was all ready for Adam he was placed upon the earth.

“Then what is meant by the ‘first flesh’? It is simple when you understand it. Adam was the first of all creatures to fall and become flesh, and flesh in this sense means mortality, and all through our scriptures the Lord speaks of this life as flesh, while we are here in the flesh, so Adam became the first flesh. There was no other mortal creature before him, and there was no mortal death until he brought it, and the scriptures tell you that. It is here written, and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ.” (*Seek Ye Earnestly*, pp. 280–81.)



*God made the animals.*

## (2-17) Genesis 2:8. Where Was the Garden of Eden?

“In accord with the revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, we teach that the Garden of Eden was on the American continent located where the City Zion, or the New Jerusalem, will be built [see D&C 116; *History of the Church*, 3:35–36; Dyer, *The Refiner’s Fire*, pp. 17–18]. When Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden, they eventually dwelt at a place called Adam-on-di-Ahman, situated in what is now Daviess County, Missouri. Three years before the death of Adam he called the righteous of his

posterity at this place and blessed them, and it is at this place where Adam, or Michael, will sit as we read in the 7th chapter of Daniel. [Daniel 7:9–14, 21–22, 26–27.]” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:74.)

The Flood and subsequent cataclysms drastically changed the topography and geography of the earth. The descendants of Noah evidently named some rivers, and perhaps other landmarks, after places they had known before the Flood. This theory would explain why rivers in Mesopotamia now bear the names of rivers originally on the American continent. It is also possible that some present river systems are remnants of the antediluvian river systems on the one great continent that existed then.

## POINTS TO PONDER

(2-18) In Genesis and the parallel accounts in Moses and Abraham is a brief record of the creation of the earth and of man who would dwell on it. It is a simple and straightforward account. Although we are not told exactly *how* the Lord brought about the creative processes, we are taught several essential concepts:

First, God, the Father of all men, instituted the creation of this world as a place for men to come to mortality and progress toward their eternal destiny.

Second, man is the offspring of deity.

Third, the world was not created by chance forces or random accident.

Fourth, Adam was the first man and the first flesh on the earth (see Reading 2-16 for a definition of “first flesh” [Moses 3:7]).

Fifth, Adam fell from a state of innocence and immortality, and his fall affected all life upon the earth as well as the earth itself.

Sixth, the Atonement of Jesus Christ was planned before the world was ever created so that men could come to a fallen earth, overcome death and their sins, and return to live with God.

In the world another theory of how things began is popularly held and widely taught. This theory, that of organic evolution, was generally developed from the writings of Charles Darwin. It puts forth different ideas concerning how life began and where man came from. In relation to this theory, the following statements should help you understand what the Church teaches about the Creation and the origin of man.

“It is held by some that Adam was not the first man upon this earth, and that the original human being was a development from lower orders of the animal creation. These, however, are the theories of men. The word of the Lord declares that Adam was ‘the first man of all men’ (Moses 1:34), and we are therefore in duty bound to regard him as the primal parent of our race. It was shown to the brother of Jared that all men were created in the *beginning* after the image of God; and whether we take this to mean the spirit or the body, or both, it commits us to the same conclusion: Man began life as a human being, in the likeness of our heavenly Father.” (First Presidency [Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, Anthon H. Lund], in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:205.)

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“Any theory that leaves out God as a personal, purposeful Being, and accepts chance as a first cause, cannot be accepted by Latter-day Saints. . . . That man and the whole of creation came by chance is unthinkable. It is equally unthinkable that if man came into being by the will and power of God, the divine creative power is limited to one process dimly sensed by mortal man.” (Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, 1:155.)

“I am grateful that in the midst of the confusion of our Father’s children there has been given to the members of this great organization a sure knowledge of the origin of man, that we came from the spirit world where our spirits were begotten by our Father in heaven, that he formed our first parents from the dust of the earth, and that their spirits were placed in their bodies, and that man came, not as some have believed, not as some have preferred to believe, from some of the lower walks of life, but our ancestors were those beings who lived in the courts of heaven. We came not from some menial order of life, but our ancestor is God our heavenly Father.” (George Albert Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1925, p. 33.)

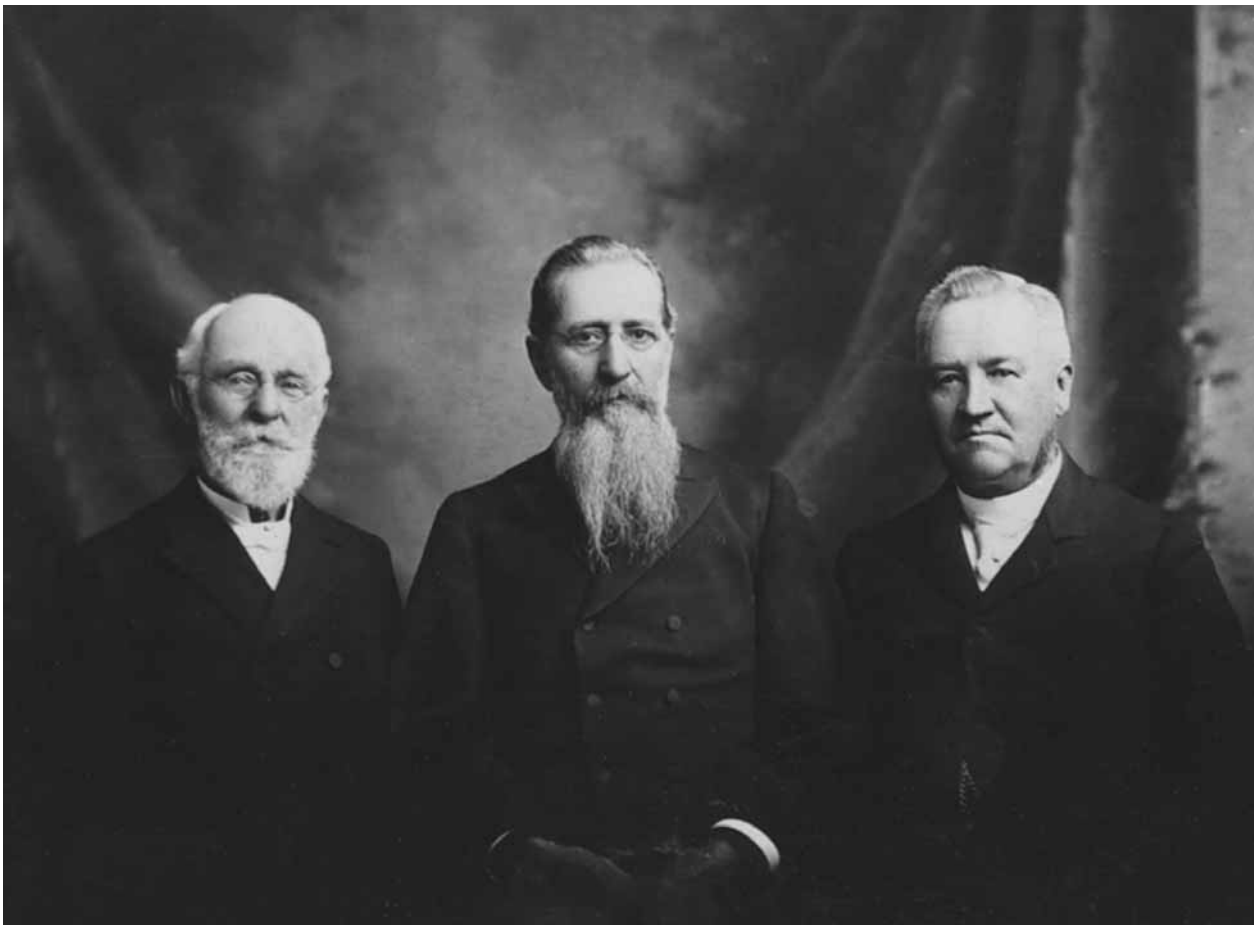
“Of course, I think those people who hold to the view that man has come up through all these ages from the scum of the sea through billions of years do not believe in Adam. Honestly I do not know how

they can, and I am going to show you that they do not. There are some who attempt to do it but they are inconsistent—absolutely inconsistent, because *that doctrine is so incompatible, so utterly out of harmony, with the revelations of the Lord that a man just cannot believe in both.*

“. . . I say most emphatically, *you cannot believe in this theory of the origin of man, and at the same time accept the plan of salvation as set forth by the Lord our God. You must choose the one and reject the other, for they are in direct conflict and there is a gulf separating them which is so great that it cannot be bridged, no matter how much one may try to do so. . . .*

“. . . Then Adam, and by that I mean the first man, was not capable of sin. He could not transgress, and by doing so bring death into the world; for, *according to this theory, death had always been in the world. If, therefore, there was no fall, there was no need of an atonement, hence the coming into the world of the Son of God as the Savior of the world is a contradiction, a thing impossible. Are you prepared to believe such a thing as that?*” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:141–42.)

**(2-19)** But what of the scientific evidence that supposedly contradicts these statements? Isn’t the evidence that all life evolved from a common source overwhelming? Harold G. Coffin, Professor of



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Paleontology and Research at the Geoscience Research Institute, Andrews University in Michigan, presented one scientist's view of how life began. The following excerpts are from a pamphlet on the Creation written by Dr. Coffin.

"The time has come for a fresh look at the evidence Charles Darwin used to support his evolutionary theory, along with the great mass of new scientific information. Those who have the courage to penetrate through the haze of assumptions which surrounds the question of the origin of life will discover that science presents substantial evidence that creation best explains the origin of life. Four considerations lead to this conclusion.

- "1. Life is unique.
- "2. Complex animals appeared suddenly.
- "3. Change in the past has been limited.
- "4. Change in the present is limited.

"Anyone interested in truth must seriously consider these points. The challenge they present to the theory of evolution has led many intelligent and honest men of science now living to reevaluate their beliefs about the origin of life." (Coffin, *Creation: The Evidence from Science*, p. [1].)

#### Life Is Unique

"Scientist Homer Jacobson reports in *American Scientist*, January, 1955, 'From the probability standpoint, the ordering of the present environment into a single amino acid molecule would be utterly improbable in all the time and space available for the origin of terrestrial life.'

"How much organic soup, the material some point to as the source of the first spark of life, would be needed for the chance production of a simple protein? Jacobson answers this question also: 'Only the very simplest of these proteins (salmine) could possibly arise, even if the earth were blanketed with a thickness of half a mile of amino acids for a billion years! And by no stretch of the imagination does it seem as though the present environment could give even one molecule of amino acid, let alone be able to order by accident this molecule into a protoplasmic array of self-reproducing, metabolizing parts fitting into an organism.' [Homer Jacobson, "Information, Reproduction and the Origin of Life," *American Scientist*, Jan. 1955, p. 125.]

"Another scientist, impressed with the odds against the chance formation of proteins, has expressed his opinion as follows: 'The chance that these five elements [carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, sulfur] may come together to form the molecule, the quantity of matter that must be continually shaken up, and the length of time necessary to finish the task, can all be calculated. A Swiss mathematician, Charles Eugene Guye, has made the computation and finds that the odds against such an occurrence are  $10^{160}$  to 1, or only one chance in  $10^{160}$ ; that is, 10 multiplied by itself 160 times, a number far too large to be expressed in words. The amount of matter to be shaken together to produce a single molecule of protein would be millions of times greater than that in the whole universe. For it to occur on the earth

alone would require many, almost endless billions ( $10^{243}$ ) of years.' [Frank Allen, "The Origin of the World—by Chance or Design?" in John Clover Monsma, ed., *The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe*, p. 23.]" (Coffin, *Creation*, pp. [3–4].)

#### Complex Animals Appeared Suddenly

"In 1910, Charles Walcott, while riding horseback across the Canadian Rockies, stumbled onto a most interesting find of sea fossils. This site has provided the most complete collection of Cambrian fossils known. Walcott found soft-bodied animals preserved in the very fine-grained mud. Many different worms, shrimp, and crablike creatures left impressions in the now hardened shale. The impressions include even some of the internal parts such as intestines and stomachs. The creatures are covered with bristles, spines, and appendages, including marvelous detail of the structures so characteristic of worms and crustaceans.

"By examining the visible hard parts of these fossils it is possible to learn much about these animals. Their eyes and feelers indicate that they had a good nervous system. Their gills show that they extracted oxygen from the water. For oxygen to have moved around their bodies they must have had blood systems.

"Some of these animals grew by molting, like a grasshopper. This is a complicated process that biologists are still trying to understand. They had very intricate mouthparts to strain special kinds of foods out of the water. There was nothing simple or primitive about these creatures. They would compare well with any modern worms or crabs. *Yet they are found in the oldest rocks that contain any significant number of fossils. Where are their ancestors? . . .*

"What you have read so far is not new. This problem has been known at least since the time of Charles Darwin. If progressive evolution from simple to complex is correct, the ancestors to these full-blown living creatures in the Cambrian should be found; but they have *not* been found. . . .

"*On the basis of the facts alone, on the basis of what is actually found in the earth, the theory of a sudden creative act in which the major forms of life were established fits best.*" (Coffin, *Creation*, pp. [5–6].)

#### Basic Kinds of Animals Have Not Changed

"Scientists who study fossils have discovered another interesting piece of information. Not only did complicated animals appear suddenly in the lower Cambrian rocks, but the basic forms of animals have not changed much since then. . . . To put it more plainly, this is the problem of the missing links. It is not a case of one missing link. It is not even a case of many missing links. Evolutionists are confronted with the problem of whole sections of the chain of life missing. . . .

"G. G. Simpson, quite aware of this problem also, says, 'It is a feature of the known fossil record that most taxa appear abruptly. They are not, as a rule, led up to by a sequence of almost imperceptible

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changing forerunners such as Darwin believed should be usual in evolution.' [*The Evolution of Life*, p. 149.]

"Thus we see that not only is the sudden appearance of complete and intricate animals a problem for evolution, but the absence of change from one major type into another is equally serious. Again we can say that this is no new problem. Soon after collectors started accumulating fossils, it became obvious that fossils belong in the same major categories as do modern animals and plants. A number of scientists have commented in recent years about the lack of change and the absence of connecting links for specific kinds of animals. . . .

"Every high school student has seen pictures, perhaps in his own biology textbook, of a scantily clad and hairy Neanderthal man with low-slung neck, stooped shoulder, bowed legs, and bestial appearance. Such pictures grew out of the original description of Neanderthal man given by the Frenchman Boule in 1911–1913. [Marcellin Boule, *Fossil Men*.] The picture has passed unchanged from book to book, year to year, for nearly sixty years. But Boule based his description originally upon *one skeleton whose bones have recently been shown to be badly deformed by a severe case of arthritis*.

"William Straus and A. J. E. Cave, the two scientists who discovered this situation, declared, 'There is thus no valid reason for the assumption that the posture of Neanderthal man of the fourth glacial period differed significantly from that of present-day men. . . . Notwithstanding, if he could be reincarnated and placed in a New York subway—provided that he were bathed, shaved, and dressed in modern clothing—it is doubtful whether he would attract any more attention than some of its other denizens.' [William L. Straus, Jr., and A. J. E. Cave, "Pathology and the Posture of Neanderthal Man," *Quarterly Review of Biology*, Dec. 1957, pp. 358–59.] That was written some years ago. Neanderthal man might attract less attention today if he were not shaved!" (Coffin, *Creation*, pp. [6, 10].)

#### Change in the Present Is Limited

"On a television panel celebrating the centennial of Charles Darwin's book *Origin of Species*, Sir Julian Huxley began his comments by saying, 'The first point to make about Darwin's theory is that it is no longer a theory, but a fact. No serious scientist would deny the fact that evolution has occurred, just as he would not deny the fact that the earth goes around the sun.' [Sol Tax and Charles Callender, eds., *Issues in Evolution*, p. 41.] This is a confusing statement that tells only part of the truth. First, the word *evolution* must be defined.

"The word itself merely means 'change,' and on the basis of this definition, evolution is a fact. However, most people understand evolution to mean progressive change in time from simplicity to complexity, from primitive to advanced. *This definition of evolution is not based on fact*. The study of inheritance has revealed principles and facts that can prove evolution—if we understand the word *evolution* to mean 'change.' But the obvious minor changes occurring to living things today give no basis for concluding that limitless change has happened in the past. . . .

"Yes, new species of plants and animals are forming today. The almost endless intergradations of animals and plants in the world, the fantastic degeneration among parasites, and the adaptations of offense and defense, lead to the inevitable conclusion that change has occurred. However, the problem of major changes from one fundamental kind to another is still a most pressing unanswered question facing the evolutionist. Modern animals and plants can change, but the amount of change is limited. *The laboratories of science have been unable to demonstrate change from one major kind to another, neither has such change happened in the past history of the earth if we take the fossil record at face value.*" (Coffin, *Creation*, pp. [13, 15].)

#### Conclusion

"Constant exposure to one theory of origins, and only one, has convinced many that no alternative exists and that evolution must be the full and complete answer. How unfortunate that most of the millions who pass through the educational process have little opportunity to weigh the evidences on both sides!

"Examinations of the fossils, stony records of the past, tell us that complicated living things suddenly (without warning, so to speak) began to exist on the earth. Furthermore, time has not modified them enough to change their basic relationships to each other. Modern living organisms tell us that change is a feature of life and time, but they also tell us that there are limits beyond which they do not pass naturally and beyond which man has been unable to force them. In consideration of past or present living things, man must never forget that he is dealing with life, a profoundly unique force which he has not been able to create and which he is trying desperately to understand.

"Here are the facts; here are the evidences; here, then, are the sound reasons for believing life originated through a creative act. It is time that each individual has the opportunity to know the facts and to make an intelligent choice." (Coffin, *Creation*, p. [15].)





# The Fall

## (3-1) Introduction

Perhaps no other biblical account has been debated more and understood less than that relating to Adam and Eve. Elder Mark E. Petersen wrote:

“Adam, the first man, is a controversial figure in the minds of many people. So is Eve, his wife. Together, they probably are the most misunderstood couple who ever lived on the earth.

“This is hardly to be wondered at, though. Misconceptions and far-out theories have been bombarding the public concerning our first parents for centuries past. Probably the most to blame are teachers of religion themselves. Not knowing the facts about Adam and Eve, they have foisted their own private notions and uninspired creeds upon the people, with the result that a mass of confusion has mounted year after year.” (*Adam: Who Is He?* p. 1.)

One reason the accounts of the Creation and the Fall are misunderstood and misinterpreted is the willful removal of plain and precious things from the Old Testament (see 1 Nephi 13:25–29). Members of the Church have much of what was lost, which was restored in the books of Moses and Abraham, but the world has only the Genesis account in the present Old Testament, which treats the Fall as an event but does not discuss the doctrine of the Fall. In other words, the reasons why the Fall came about and what it meant for mankind are not discussed in the Old Testament the world has today. Some light is shed on this matter in the New Testament, but it is limited. Actually, the doctrine of the Fall is taught most clearly in the Book of Mormon. Thus, it is not surprising that the world should have misconceptions about the Fall when they do not have latter-day scripture to help them. The purpose of the events discussed in Genesis 3 was summed up by Lehi when he taught, “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25).

President Joseph Fielding Smith said: “Let’s thank the Lord, when we pray, for Adam. If it hadn’t been for Adam, I wouldn’t be here; you wouldn’t be here; we would be waiting in the heavens as spirits. . . .

“We are in the mortal life to get an experience, a training, that we couldn’t get any other way. And in order to become gods, it is necessary for us to know something about pain, about sickness, and about the other things that we partake of in this school of mortality.

“So don’t let us, brethren and sisters, complain about Adam and wish he hadn’t done something that he did. I want to thank him. I am glad to have the privilege of being here and going through mortality, and if I will be true and faithful to the covenants and obligations that are upon me as a member of the Church and in the kingdom of God,

I may have the privilege of coming back into the presence of the Eternal Father; and that will come to you as it will to me, sons and daughters of God, entitled to the fullness of celestial glory.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1967, p. 122.)

## Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Genesis 3.
2. Moses 3–4 contains valuable insights and additions not found in Genesis. Although this parallel account in Moses is studied in detail in the Pearl of Great Price course (Rel. 327), these chapters should be read and studied in connection with the Genesis account. Also, Enoch gives important insights into why the Fall came about. Read also Moses 5:4–12; 6:45–62.
3. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON GENESIS 3

### (3-2) Genesis 3. The Fall of Man

Before reading the account of the Fall, consider the following basic principles or doctrines outlined by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith concerning Adam and Eve and the Fall of man.

“When Adam and Eve were placed in Eden they were not subject to the power of death and could have lived, in the state of innocence in which they were, forever had they not violated the law given them in the Garden.

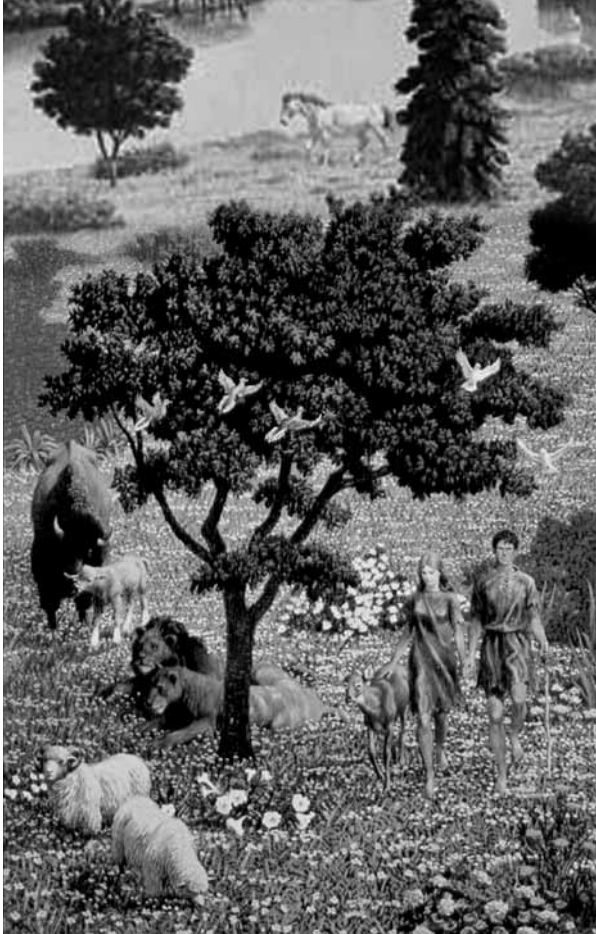
“The earth also was pronounced good, and would have remained in that same state forever had it not been changed to meet Adam’s fallen condition.

“All things on the face of the earth also would have remained in that same condition, had not Adam transgressed the law.

“By partaking of the forbidden fruit, and thus violating the law under which he was placed, his nature was changed, and he became subject to (1) spiritual death, which is banishment from the presence of God; (2) temporal death, which is separation of spirit and body. This death also came to Eve his wife.

“Had Adam and Eve not transgressed the law given in Eden, they would have had no children.

“Because of this transgression bringing mortality, the children of Adam and Eve inherited mortal bodies and became subject to the mortal death.



"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man" (Genesis 2:8).

"Because Adam transgressed the law, the Lord changed the earth to suit the mortal condition and all things on the face of the earth became subject to mortality, as did the earth also.

"To defeat the power which death had gained it became necessary that an infinite atonement be offered to pay the debt and thereby restore Adam and Eve and all of their posterity, and all things, to immortal life through the resurrection." (*Man, His Origin and Destiny*, pp. 50–51.)

### **(3-3) Genesis 3:1. The Serpent Was More Subtle Than Any Other Beast of the Field**

In the Genesis account the serpent speaks to Eve and tempts her to partake of the fruit. The more complete account in the book of Moses points out that Satan is the one speaking, although he does so through the serpent (see Moses 4:6–7). Also, Satan is symbolized elsewhere by the image of a serpent (see Revelation 12:9; D&C 76:28; 84:72; 88:110).

### **(3-4) Genesis 3:3. Adam and Eve Were Not Mortal in the Garden and Did Not Fully Comprehend Good and Evil**

"Adam's status before the fall was:  
 "1. He was not subject to death.

"2. He was in the presence of God. . . .

"3. He had no posterity.

"4. He was without knowledge of good and evil. He had knowledge, of course. He could speak. He could converse. There were many things he could be taught and was taught; but under the conditions in which he was living at that time it was impossible for him to visualize or understand the power of good and evil. He did not know what pain was. He did not know what sorrow was; and a thousand other things that have come to us in this life that Adam did not know in the Garden of Eden and could not understand and would not have known had he remained there. That was his status before the fall." (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:107–8.)

### **(3-5) Genesis 3:4–5. Ye Shall Be As Gods**

"The devil in tempting Eve told a truth when he said unto her that when she should eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they should become as Gods. He told the truth in telling that, but he accompanied it with a lie as he always does. He never tells the complete truth. He said that they should not die. The Father had said that they should die. The devil had to tell a lie in order to accomplish his purposes; but there was some truth in his statement. Their eyes were opened. They had a knowledge of good and evil just as the Gods have. They became as Gods; for that is one of the features, one of the peculiar attributes of those who attain unto that glory—they understand the difference between good and evil." (Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, 1:16.)

### **(3-6) Genesis 3:6. Why Did Adam and Eve Partake of the Fruit?**

The accounts in both Moses and Genesis state only that Satan approached Eve, but latter-day revelation records that he first approached Adam and was refused. Eve, however, was deceived by Satan and partook. Knowing that she would be driven out and separated from him, Adam then partook. Paul the Apostle wrote of the Fall, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Timothy 2:14).

Elder James E. Talmage explained how, even in her being deceived, Eve still brought about the purposes of the Lord:

"Eve was fulfilling the foreseen purposes of God by the part she took in the great drama of the fall; yet she did not partake of the forbidden fruit with that object in view, but with intent to act contrary to the divine command, being deceived by the sophistries of Satan, who also, for that matter, furthered the purposes of the Creator by tempting Eve; yet his design was to thwart the Lord's plan. We are definitely told that 'he knew not the mind of God, wherefore he sought to destroy the world' [Moses 4:6]. Yet his diabolical effort, far from being the initiatory step toward destruction, contributed to the plan of man's eternal progression. Adam's part in the great event was essentially different from that of his wife; he was not deceived; on the contrary he deliberately decided to do as Eve desired, that he might carry out the

purposes of his Maker with respect to the race of men, whose first patriarch he was ordained to be." (*Articles of Faith*, pp. 69–70.)

Brigham Young said that "we should never blame Mother Eve," because through her transgression, and Adam's joining her in it, mankind was enabled to come to know good from evil (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 103; see also Reading 3-12 for a discussion of the greatness of Eve).



"And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree" (*Genesis 2:9*).

### (3-7) Genesis 3:6–7. The Transgression of Adam and Eve Did Not Involve an Offense against the Laws of Chastity and Virtue

Speaking of the transgression of Adam and Eve, Elder James E. Talmage said:

"I take this occasion to raise my voice against the false interpretation of scripture, which has been adopted by certain people, and is current in their minds, and is referred to in a hushed and half-secret way, that the fall of man consisted in some offense against the laws of chastity and of virtue. Such a doctrine is an abomination. . . . The human race is not born of fornication. These bodies that are given unto us are given in the way that God has provided. . . .

"Our first parents were pure and noble, and when we pass behind the veil we shall perhaps learn something of their high estate." (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 30.)

### (3-8) Genesis 3:15. What Is the Meaning of the Curse Put on Satan?

Since Satan has no body and therefore can have no literal children, his seed are those who follow him, both the one-third he led away in the premortal existence and those who follow his enticements in mortality until they come under his power. The seed of the woman refers to Jesus Christ, who was the only mortal born of an earthly mother and a Heavenly Father.

President Joseph Fielding Smith referred to what the Apostle Paul wrote:

"Near the close of his epistle to the Roman saints, he said: 'And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.' [Romans 16:20.]

"The 'God of peace,' who according to the scriptures is to bruise Satan, is Jesus Christ." (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:3.)

The promise concerning the bruising of the heel and head means that while Satan (as the serpent) will bruise the heel of the Savior by leading men to crucify Him and seemingly destroy Him, in actuality that very act of Atonement will give Christ the power to overcome the power that Satan has over men and undo the effects of the Fall. Thus, the seed of the woman (Christ) shall crush the head of the serpent (Satan and his kingdom) with the very heel that was bruised (the atoning sacrifice).

### (3-9) Genesis 3:16. What Is the Significance of the Pronouncement upon Eve?

"The Lord said to the woman: ' . . . in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.' I wonder if those who translated the Bible might have used the term *distress* instead of sorrow. It would mean much the same, except I think there is great gladness in most Latter-day Saint homes when there is to be a child there. As He concludes this statement he says, 'and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.' (Gen. 3:16.) I have a question about the word *rule*. It gives the wrong impression. I would prefer to use the word *preside* because that's what he does. A righteous husband presides over his wife and family." (Spencer W. Kimball, "The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood," *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, p. 72.)



Adam and Eve made all things known unto their sons and daughters.

### (3-10) Genesis 3:16–19. Were Adam and Eve "Punished" for Their Transgression?

"We can picture the plight of Adam and Eve. They had been condemned to sorrows, woes, troubles, and labor and they were cast out from the presence of God, and death had been declared to be their fate. A pathetic picture, indeed. But now a most important thing happened. Adam and Eve had explained to them the gospel of Jesus Christ. What would be their

reaction? When the Lord explained this to them, that a redemption should come through Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten of the Father, Adam exclaimed: 'Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh shall I see God.' (Moses 5:10.)

"And what was the response of Eve, his wife? She 'heard all of these things, and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and . . . eternal life.' (*Ibid.*, 5:11.)

"There is the key to the question of evil. If we cannot be good, except as we resist and overcome evil, then evil must be present to be resisted.

"So this earth life is set up according to true principles, and these conditions that followed the transgression were not, in the usual sense, penalties that were inflicted upon us. All these that I have named to you that seem to be sad inflictions of punishment, sorrow, and trouble are in the end not that. They are blessings. We have attained a knowledge of good and evil, the power to prize the sweet, to become agents unto ourselves, the power to obtain redemption and eternal life. These things had their origin in this transgression. The Lord has set the earth up so we have to labor if we are going to live, which preserves us from the curse of idleness and indolence; and though the Lord condemns us to death—mortal death—it is one of the greatest blessings that comes to us here because it is the doorway to immortality, and we can never attain immortality without dying." (George Q. Morris, in Conference Report, Apr. 1958, p. 39.)

### (3-11) Genesis 3:19. The Fall of Adam Introduced Two Kinds of Death into the World

"Because of Adam's transgression, a spiritual death—banishment from the presence of the Lord—as well as the temporal death, were pronounced upon him. The spiritual death came at the time of the fall and banishment; and the seeds of the temporal death were also sown at that same time; that is, a physical change came over Adam and Eve, who became mortal, and were thus subject to the ills of the flesh which resulted in their gradual decline to old age and finally the separation of the spirit from the body." (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:111; for further information on the principle that spiritual death also resulted from the Fall, see D&C 29:40–41; Alma 42:7.)

Many people of the world teach that physical death has always been here and therefore could not have begun with Adam and Eve. President Joseph Fielding Smith commented regarding this idea:

"Modern education declares that there never was such a thing as the fall of man, but that conditions have always gone on in the same way as now in this mortal world. Here, say they, death and mutation have always held sway as natural conditions on this earth and everywhere throughout the universe the same laws obtain. It is declared that man has made

his ascent to the exalted place he now occupies through countless ages of development which has gradually distinguished him from lower forms of life.

"Such a doctrine of necessity discards the story of Adam and the Garden of Eden, which it looks upon as a myth coming down to us from an early age of foolish ignorance and superstition. Moreover, it is taught that since death was always here, and a natural condition prevailing throughout all space, there could not possibly come a redemption from Adam's transgression, hence there was no need for a Savior for a fallen world." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:315.)



Adam and Eve were cast out of God's presence.

### (3-12) Genesis 3:20. "She Was the Mother of All Living"

"Scant knowledge is available to us of *Eve* (the wife of Adam) and her achievements in pre-existence and in mortality. Without question she was like unto her mighty husband, Adam, in intelligence and in devotion to righteousness, during both her first and second estates of existence. She was placed on earth in the same manner as was Adam, the Mosaic account of the Lord creating her from Adam's rib being merely figurative. (Moses 3:20–25.)

"Eve was the first woman; she became the mother of the whole human race, her very name signifying 'mother of all living.' (Moses 4:26; 1 Ne. 5:11.) . . .

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“Before the fall Eve was sealed to Adam in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, a ceremony performed by the Lord before death entered the world and therefore one destined to last forever. (Moses 3:20–25.) . . .

“ . . . Indeed, Eve is a joint-participant with Adam in all his ministry, and will inherit jointly with him all the blessings appertaining to his high state of exaltation.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 242.)

**(3-13) Genesis 3:24. Cherubim and the Flaming Sword**

For an explanation of why the Lord barred Adam and Eve from the tree of life, read Alma 12:21–27; 42:2–12.

## POINTS TO PONDER

**(3-14)** Perhaps you have wondered about things which are the result of the Fall. Why should you be born into a world filled with both good and evil? Why is there suffering in the world? Why do all men have to die? What about the spiritual death and its effects? These and many other problems are directly related to the Fall. On a separate sheet of paper answer the following questions after carefully reading the scriptures given.

1. What was Satan’s intent in tempting Eve to partake of the fruit?

**Read Moses 4:6–12.**

2. How does Doctrine and Covenants 10:43 apply in this case? Was Satan successful? (See also the statement by Elder Talmage in Reading 3-6.)

3. What positive effects resulted immediately from the Fall?

**Read 2 Nephi 2:19–23.**

4. What did Adam and Eve say about the Fall once they were taught the plan of salvation?

**Read Moses 5:10–11.**

5. Do the effects of the Fall affect all men?

**Read Alma 42:9.**

6. If the plan of salvation, through which Christ atoned for Adam’s transgression as well as our own, had not been brought about, what would have been the result for all men?

**Read Alma 12:21–27; 42:2–5.**

7. What then is the purpose of mortality?

**Read Alma 12:21–27; 42:2–5.**

**(3-15)** How do you now feel about the Fall? Can you see how a correct understanding of the Fall gives purpose and meaning to mortality? Lehi said, “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). Each of us is a spirit child of God. This earth was organized as a place for us to continue our learning and progression. Adam and Eve opened the door to mortality for us and for all of God’s children who earned the right to come here. In the premortal life we shouted for joy at the possibility of experiencing mortality (see Job 38:7). But once we come here great things are expected of us. Mortality is a proving ground. The Fall did not open to us the door to Eden; it opened the door to a knowledge of both good and evil. The experience of mortality is a great blessing for each of us.



# Who Is the God of the Old Testament?

## (A-1) Who Is the Lord?

The hardhearted pharaoh, impudent and proud, asked, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice . . . ? I know not the Lord” (Exodus 5:2). Many people today are just as ignorant of the God of the Old Testament as the pharaoh was. They regard Him as a being created by the minds of the ancients, a God of wrath and low religion who would destroy people with floods and plagues. Could this be the same God as the being of love in the New Testament revealed through the mortal ministry of Jesus Christ? Others contend that the Jehovah of Old Testament times was the same as God the Father in the New Testament. Why all this confusion? Who, really, was the God of Adam, of Enoch and Abraham, of Israel and Moses?

## (A-2) Jehovah, or Christ, Is the God of the Old Testament

Although for many it seems a paradox, Jehovah of the Old Testament was none other than the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He created the world under the authority and direction of God the Father. Later, Jehovah came to earth as the Savior and Redeemer of the world. This truth is one of the most misunderstood doctrines in the history of the world, despite the fact that the Old Testament and the other standard works are filled with evidence to support it.

Before looking at the scriptural evidence, it may be wise first to better understand the names and titles for God the Father and His Only Begotten Son. Generally, two Hebrew words for God are used throughout the Old Testament. These are *Elohim* and *Jehovah*, as it is presently pronounced. (Since the original Hebrew was written without vowels, scholars disagree on the original pronunciation of the name written *YHWH* in Hebrew. In modern revelation, however, Jesus accepted the title *Jehovah* [see D&C 110:3].)

*Jehovah* was the premortal name-title given to the Firstborn Son of God. He is now referred to as Jesus Christ. The meaning of the name *Jehovah* was explained by Elder Talmage:

“*Jehovah* is the Anglicized rendering of the Hebrew, *Yahveh* or *Jahveh*, signifying the *Self-existent One*, or *The Eternal*. This name is generally rendered in our English version of the Old Testament as **LORD** printed in capitals. The Hebrew, *Ehyeh*, signifying *I Am*, is related in meaning and through derivation with the term *Yahveh* or *Jehovah*.” (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 36.)

The Jews regarded the name of Jehovah as so sacred that it could not be spoken. Instead, they substituted for *Jehovah* the word *Adonai*, which signifies “the Lord.” (See Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 37.) The King James translators followed the same practice out

of respect for the Jewish custom. Sometimes the word *lord*, however, is used to refer not to God but to royalty or other important people. To distinguish the sacred name from common usage, the translators capitalized *lord* when it referred to Jehovah and left it in lower case letters otherwise. (See 2 Samuel 15:21 for an example of both uses of the word *lord*.)

The word *Elohim* is a plural form of the Hebrew word for God, although modern scholars agree that it should be taken as a singular noun even though the *im* ending is a plural form. Joseph Smith, however, indicated the significance of the plural form:

“If we pursue the Hebrew text further, it reads, . . . ‘The head one of the Gods said, Let us make a man in our own image.’ I once asked a learned Jew, ‘If the Hebrew language compels us to render all words ending in *heim* in the plural, why not render the first *Eloheim* plural?’ He replied, ‘That is the rule with few exceptions; but in this case it would ruin the Bible.’ He acknowledged I was right.

“In the very beginning the Bible shows there is a plurality of Gods beyond the power of refutation. It is a great subject I am dwelling on. The word *Eloheim* ought to be in the plural all the way through—Gods. The heads of the Gods appointed one God for us; and when you take [that] view of the subject, it sets one free to see all the beauty, holiness and perfection of the Gods.” (*Teachings*, p. 372.)

Elder James E. Talmage explained the special significance *Elohim* has for Latter-day Saints:

“The name *Elohim* . . . is expressive of supreme or absolute exaltation and power. *Elohim*, as understood and used in the restored Church of Jesus Christ, is the name-title of God the Eternal Father, whose firstborn Son in the spirit is *Jehovah*—the Only Begotten in the flesh, Jesus Christ.” (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 38.)

It is vital to remember the place of God the Father: He is the Father of our spirits (see Hebrews 12:9) and is our God. The existence of other Gods cannot alter that fact. He is the author and sponsor of the eternal plan of salvation. It is equally essential to note, however, that the agent by whom He administers His affairs on this earth is His Firstborn Son, known as Jehovah in the Old Testament. He gave Jesus the full “Fatherly” authority to organize and govern the earth, then through the Atonement Jesus became the Father of the faithful. The Savior thus became the chief advocate of the Father’s plan.

Because Jesus is one with God and is also God, the Old Testament prophets sometimes referred to Him as “Jehovah Elohim,” which the King James translators rendered “LORD God.” To avoid awkward repetition, “LORD GOD” was used to translate the Hebrew phrase “Adonai Jehovah,” which otherwise would translate as “LORD LORD” (see Genesis 15:2, 8; Deuteronomy 3:24). Thus, in the King James Version

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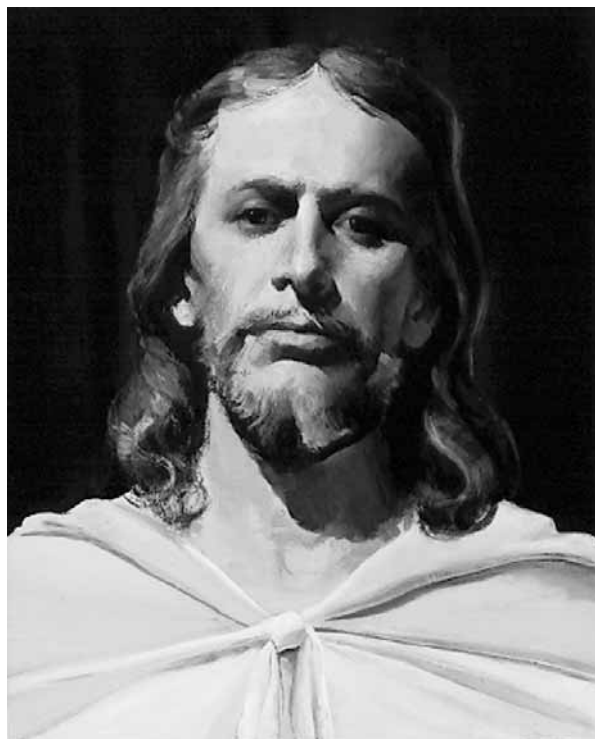
of the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for Jehovah is almost always translated just this way: LORD or GOD.

One other name or title of Jesus needs explanation. He is known as Jesus the Christ. The word *Christ* comes from the Greek word *christos*, which means "the anointed one." The Greeks used the title *Christos* to translate the Hebrew word *meshiach*, which means "the anointed one." The Hebrew word has been anglicized into *messiah*. *Jesus the Christ* means "Jesus the Messiah."

### (A-3) Jesus Christ: The God of This World

There was confusion in the minds of the later Jews, Jesus' own people, regarding the identity of their God because they no longer understood their own scriptures. That is likewise the problem today with most of the Christian world. The mystery of understanding the identity of the God of the Old Testament arose in both cases because of wickedness and the loss of many plain and precious truths from the scriptures. By contrast, Jesus said that life eternal consisted of gaining a full knowledge of the Father and the Son (see John 17:3). In the final analysis the individual comes to know the true God through experiences that train him to be like Him, and thus he understands, or knows, Him (see 1 John 2:3; 3:1-2; Ether 2-3).

By the time Christ came, the Jews had lost the knowledge of the three distinct members of the Godhead. They had lost the truth that Jehovah, who had given them the law of Moses, would come into the world as the Redeemer of all mankind, even though the prophets had clearly taught this principle (see 1 Corinthians 10:4; 3 Nephi 15:10; Isaiah 41:14; 44:6). They yearned for the appearance of the promised Messiah as a political savior to free them from Roman rule. But Matthew testified that John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus, was "he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, . . . Prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Matthew 3:3). This is a reference to Isaiah 40:43, where the word LORD is used to mean Jehovah. Christ Himself told the Jews in Jerusalem that "before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). The people considered this blasphemy and picked up stones to kill Him, because they realized that His using the phrase *I am* in this way was another way of saying "I am Jehovah" (see v. 59).



*All scriptures point to Christ.*

### (A-4) Scriptural Evidence That Jesus Christ Is the God of the Old Testament

Abinadi, testifying before the court of the wicked King Noah, bore witness that all the prophets from the earliest times had testified that God (Jehovah) would "come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man" (Mosiah 13:34; see also v. 33). Latter-day Saints, who have the benefit of additional scripture, are taught this truth very clearly. For example, the Doctrine and Covenants shows that Jesus Christ is Jehovah and the great "I Am" (see D&C 110:3-4; 29:1).

But many in the Christian world have not carefully considered the evidence found in the Bible, which clearly teaches that Jehovah is the premortal Jesus. The following scriptures are only a sampling of the biblical evidence. (Remember that LORD means that *Jehovah* is the Hebrew word used.)

	<b>Old Testament</b>	<b>New Testament</b>
1. Jesus (Jehovah) was the Creator of the world.	"Thus saith the LORD, . . . I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded" (Isaiah 45:11-12).	"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:1, 3.)
2. Jehovah is the Savior.	"Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me" (Hosea 13:4).	"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).
3. Jehovah is the Redeemer.	"Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 43:14).	"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Galatians 3:13).
4. Jehovah will deliver men from death.	"I [Jehovah] will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction" (Hosea 13:14).	"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:20-22.)
5. The Jews will look upon Jehovah who was pierced.	"And I [Jehovah] will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10).	"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. . . . For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced." (John 19:34, 36-37.)
6. Jesus followed Israel in the wilderness during the Exodus.	"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: he took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (Exodus 13:21-22).	"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:1-4).
7. Jehovah is the husband or bridegroom.	"For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called" (Isaiah 54:5).	"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." (Revelation 19:7-8.)
8. Jehovah is the first and the last (alpha and omega).	"Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6).	"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8).

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**(A-5) The Importance of Knowing the Identity of the God of the Old Testament**

Many people, including numerous Bible scholars, have concluded that the God depicted in the Old Testament was the product of the superstitions and primitive beliefs of a primitive and superstitious people. They come to this conclusion because they see things that seem contradictory to their conception of the God of the New Testament. To know that the Lord of the Old Testament was the premortal Jesus Christ has tremendous implications, however, not only for a correct understanding of the Old Testament and the New Testament, but also for a correct understanding of the nature and purposes of God and of man's relationship to each member of the Godhead.

For example, the same Person who said, "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44), said of the Canaanites in the land of promise, "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: but thou shalt utterly destroy them" (Deuteronomy 20:16-17). The same Savior who said to forgive "seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22) destroyed the entire population of the earth with the exception of eight souls (see Genesis 7-8).

On the other hand, the Jesus of the New Testament who said that one who refuses to forgive another's trespasses will be "delivered . . . to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due" (Matthew 18:34-35) is the Lord of the Old Testament who said, "Though

your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). And the Christ depicted in the book of Revelation, who is shown with the great sickle ready to reap the grapes of the earth and tread them in the winepress (see Revelation 14:14, 20), is the same God of the Old Testament who said to Micah, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).

There is no inconsistency in the nature of God. He is always perfectly merciful and loving, but He is also perfectly just and will not "look upon sin with the least degree of allowance" (D&C 1:31). As He said to Joseph Smith, "God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, . . . his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round" (D&C 3:2). In the Old Testament is the same perfectly consistent God found in all scripture. In the Old Testament great richness is added to the understanding of God and how He deals with His children, blessing them according to their obedience and receptivity, or punishing them for rebellion and wickedness. If one would get to know Christ better, one must study the Old Testament, for in His role as Jehovah He permeates the whole record. Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament just as He is the God of the earth today. Keeping this important fact constantly in mind is one of the keys to understanding both the Old Testament and the nature of God.





# The Patriarchs

## (4-1) Introduction

“Perhaps our friends will say that the Gospel and its ordinances were not known till the days of John, the son of Zacharias, in the days of Herod, the king of Judea. But we will here look at this point: For our own part we cannot believe that the ancients in all ages were so ignorant of the system of heaven as many suppose, since all that were ever saved, were saved through the power of this great plan of redemption, as much before the coming of Christ as since; if not, God has had different plans in operation (if we may so express it), to bring men back to dwell with Himself; and this we cannot believe, since there has been no change in the constitution of man since he fell; and the ordinance or institution of offering blood in sacrifice, was only designed to be performed till Christ was offered up and shed His blood—as said before—that man might look forward in faith to that time. It will be noticed that, according to Paul [see Galatians 3:8], the Gospel was preached to Abraham.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 59–60.)

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Genesis 4–11.
2. Moses 5–8 contains valuable insights and additions not found in Genesis. Although this parallel account in Moses is studied in detail in the Pearl of Great Price course (Rel. 327), these chapters should be read and studied in connection with the Genesis account.
3. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON GENESIS 4–11

### (4-2) Genesis 4:1. What Does the Account in the Book of Moses Restore to the Genesis Account?

Between Genesis 3:24 and Genesis 4:1, fifteen additional verses are added which contain the following important points of information.

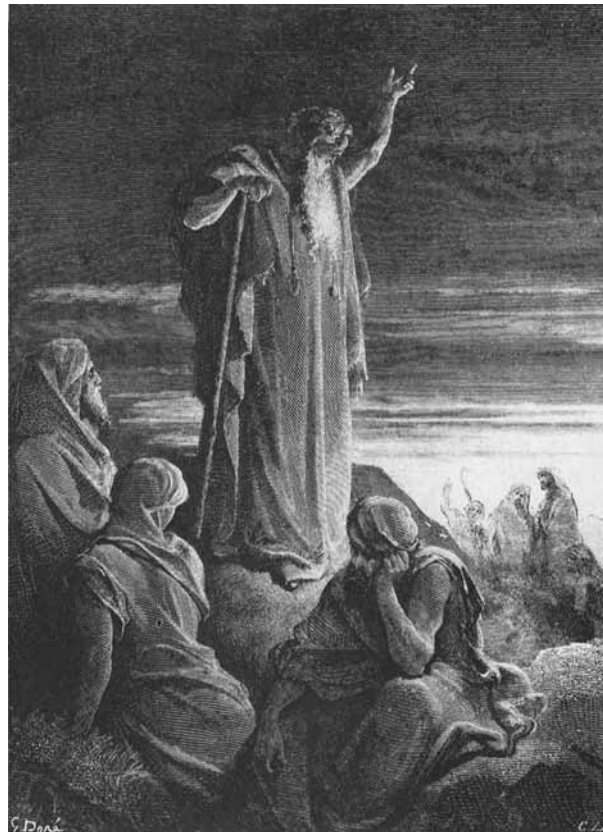
1. After they were driven from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve labored together to make a living for themselves and their children by tilling the soil and raising flocks (see Moses 5:1).
2. Adam and Eve began to have sons and daughters in fulfillment of the command to multiply and replenish the earth. Their children began to marry each other and start their own families (see Moses 5:2–3). This addition in Moses clears up a problem

raised by the Genesis account. In Genesis 4:1–2, it appears that Cain and Abel are the first of Adam’s children, yet, a few verses later, Genesis 4:17 talks about Cain’s wife. The Moses account makes it clear that many children were born before Cain and, therefore, his finding himself a wife would not have been a problem.

3. Adam and Eve called upon the name of the Lord, and though they no longer saw Him as they did in the Garden, He spoke with them and gave them commandments (see Moses 5:4–5).

4. Adam and Eve were obedient to those commandments, which involved sacrificing the firstlings of the flocks as an offering to the Lord (see Moses 5:5).

5. After “many days” of such obedience, an angel appeared and asked Adam why he offered sacrifice (Moses 5:6). When Adam responded that he did not know but was being obedient anyway (a great insight into the faith of Adam), the angel then taught him that these sacrifices were in similitude of the future atoning sacrifice of the Savior and that they were to repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore (see Moses 5:6–8).



Adam

6. After being taught the plan of salvation and being baptized, Adam and Eve had the Holy Ghost come upon them and they began to prophesy. Both understood the purpose for the Fall and rejoiced in the Lord's plan (Moses 5:9–11).

7. Adam and Eve taught these things to their children, but Satan also began to influence their children and sought to persuade them to reject the gospel. From that time forth, the gospel was preached, and those who accepted it were saved whereas those who did not were damned (see Moses 5:12–15).

#### **(4-3) Genesis 4:3. What Do We Know about Abel in Addition to What We Learn in This Scripture?**

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave the following insight about Abel:

"We read in Genesis 4:4, that Abel brought the firstlings of the flock and the fat thereof, and the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering. And again, 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead, yet speaketh.' (Hebrews 11:4.) How doth he yet speak? Why he magnified the Priesthood which was conferred upon him, and died a righteous man, and therefore has become an angel of God by receiving his body from the dead, holding still the keys of his dispensation; and was sent down from heaven unto Paul to minister consoling words, and to commit unto him a knowledge of the mysteries of godliness.

"And if this was not the case, I would ask, how did Paul know so much about Abel, and why should he talk about his speaking after he was dead? Hence, that he spoke after he was dead must be by being sent down out of heaven to administer." (*Teachings*, pp. 168–69.)

Joseph F. Smith's vision of the redemption of the dead (D&C 138) indicates that Abel was among the righteous Saints who were in the spirit world awaiting the coming of the Savior, who visited there while His body was in the tomb (see v. 40).

#### **(4-4) Genesis 4:4–8. But unto Cain and His Offering He Had Not Respect**

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained why Cain's offering was not acceptable:

"By faith in this atonement or plan of redemption, Abel offered to God a sacrifice that was accepted, which was the firstlings of the flock. Cain offered of the fruit of the ground, and was not accepted, because he could not do it in faith, he could have no faith, or could not exercise faith contrary to the plan of heaven. It must be shedding the blood of the Only Begotten to atone for man; for this was the plan of redemption; and without the shedding of blood was no remission; and as the sacrifice was instituted for a type, by which man was to discern the great Sacrifice which God had prepared; to offer a sacrifice contrary to that, no faith could be exercised, because redemption was not purchased in that way, nor the power of atonement instituted after that order; consequently Cain could have no faith; and whatsoever is not of

faith, is sin. But Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God Himself testifying of his gifts. Certainly, the shedding of the blood of a beast could be beneficial to no man, except it was done in imitation, or as a type, or explanation of what was to be offered through the gift of God Himself; and this performance done with an eye looking forward in faith on the power of that great Sacrifice for a remission of sins." (*Teachings*, p. 58.)

Even after the unacceptable offering, the Lord did not reject Cain, but gave him specific warning about the dangerous path he was walking. It was after that counsel was rejected that Cain's rebellion became total. Moses records that "Cain was wroth, and listened not any more to the voice of the Lord" (Moses 5:26).

Genesis 4:7 is not clear, but the Moses account explains that the Lord warned Cain that if he did not repent, he would rule over Satan. Also, the fuller account in Moses records that Cain did not immediately go into the field and kill Abel. After rejecting the Lord, Cain began to communicate directly with Satan, who suggested the means whereby he could kill Abel (see Moses 5:28–31). Step by step Satan engineered Cain's downfall until he reached the point where "he gloried in his wickedness" (Moses 5:31). It was at this point that he killed his brother.

#### **(4-5) Genesis 4:9. "Am I My Brother's Keeper?"**

Sometimes this scripture is cited as evidence that each individual has a responsibility to love and care for his fellow men. Without question that responsibility is taught in the scriptures, but is that what Cain's question really implies? The Hebrew word which is translated as "keeper" is *shomer* and means "a guard or custodian." Thus, with typical Satanic deceitfulness, Cain's question twisted a true principle. No man has the right to be a keeper of his brethren in the sense of becoming their guard or custodian (except as assigned by civil law to guard criminals or in the case of parents and young children). And yet, for Cain to imply that he should have no concern for his fellowman, especially his literal brother, is to deny all gospel principles of love and concern for others.

#### **(4-6) Genesis 5:22–24. What Do We Know about Enoch?**

"Four generations and some five hundred years later, according to Adam's book of remembrance, Enoch, of Seth's line, was called to become a great prophet-missionary-reformer. His ministry was needed, for the followers of the line and cult of Cain had become numerous, and violence was rampant already in the fifth generation after Cain (Moses 5:28–31, 47–57). Unto those who had become sensual and devilish Enoch preached repentance. The sons of God, distinguished from the 'sons of men,' were obliged to segregate themselves in a new home called 'Cainan' after their forefather, the son of Enos. (Do not confuse this Cainan with the wicked people of *Canaan* of Moses 7:6–10).



Enoch

“Against the evils of the time, which he was called to combat (Moses 6:27–29), Enoch was successful; he was able to build up a righteous culture called ‘Zion,’ meaning, ‘the pure in heart.’ (Moses 7:18 ff.) The teachings of Enoch cover some seven major categories and embrace some information found nowhere else in scripture. He dealt with (1) the fall of man and its results; (2) the nature of salvation and the means of achieving it; (3) sin, as seen in the evils of his times, in contrast to the righteousness of the godly who were his followers; (4) the cause, purpose, and effects of the anticipated flood of Noah; (5) the scope of Satan’s triumph and the resultant sorrows of God; (6) the first advent of the Messiah; (7) the second advent of the Messiah and his peaceful, millennial reign. The details of his Gospel concepts are worth careful study and attention. Mention of this great man is also found in the New Testament (Jude 14, 15; Hebrews 11:5) and in the Doctrine and Covenants. (See D&C index. . . .)” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:24–25.)

#### **(4-7) Genesis 5:21, 27. Did Methuselah Die in the Flood?**

A careful examination of the record of the patriarchs in this section of Genesis shows that Methuselah died in the year of the Flood. Some have wondered why he was not taken on the ark with Noah and have concluded that he may have been wicked. The book of Moses, however, shows that the lineage given in this part of the record traces the righteous patriarchal

line (see Moses 6:23), and Methuselah was in that line. Moses 8:3 records that Methuselah was not taken with the city of Enoch so that the line could be continued. Also, Methuselah prophesied that through his own seed would spring all nations of the earth (through the righteous Noah). Clearly, he too was righteous. Then is added this sentence: “And he took glory unto himself” (Moses 8:3). Once his work was done he may have been translated too, for during the nearly seven hundred years from the time the city of Enoch was translated until the time of the Flood the righteous Saints were translated and joined Enoch’s people (see Moses 7:27; see also McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 804).

Although most scholars believe Methuselah’s name means “man of the javelin” or “man of the spear,” one scholar wrote the following interpretation that, if correct, would make Methuselah’s name a prophetic one:

“Methuselah lived till the very year in which the flood came, of which his name is supposed to have been prophetic . . . *methu*, ‘he dieth,’ and *shalach*, ‘he sendeth out’; as if God had designed to teach men that as soon as Methuselah died the flood should be sent forth to drown an ungodly world. If this were then so understood, even the *name* of this patriarch contained in it a *gracious warning*.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:68.)

#### **(4-8) Genesis 6:1–2, 21. What Is Meant by the “Sons of God” and the “Daughters of Men”?**

Moses 8:13–16 further clarifies what is meant here and why this intermarriage is condemned. Commenting on the same verses, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

“Because the daughters of Noah married the sons of men contrary to the teachings of the Lord, his anger was kindled, and this offense was one cause that brought to pass the universal flood. You will see that the condition appears reversed in the Book of Moses. It was the daughters of the sons of God who were marrying the sons of men, which was displeasing unto the Lord. The fact was, as we see it revealed, that the daughters who had been born, evidently under the covenant, and were the daughters of the sons of God, that is to say of those who held the priesthood, were transgressing the commandment of the Lord and were marrying *out of the Church*. Thus they were cutting themselves off from the blessings of the priesthood contrary to the teachings of Noah and the will of God.” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:136–37.)

President Spencer W. Kimball warned Latter-day Saints today of the dangers of marrying outside of the covenant:

“Paul told the Corinthians, ‘Be ye not unequally yoked together. . . .’ Perhaps Paul wanted them to see that religious differences are fundamental differences. Religious differences imply wider areas of conflict. Church loyalties and family loyalties clash. Children’s lives are often frustrated. The nonmember may be equally brilliant, well trained and attractive, and he or she may have the most pleasing personality, but

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without a common faith, trouble lies ahead for the marriage. There are some exceptions but the rule is a harsh and unhappy one.

"There is no bias nor prejudice in this doctrine. It is a matter of following a certain program to reach a definite goal." (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 240.)

#### **(4-9) Genesis 6:3. What Is the Significance of the Promise of 120 Years?**

Many scholars, who have only Genesis to study, believe that this statement prophesied the shortened life expectancy that would take place after the Flood. In the book of Moses, however, it is clear that the 120 years referred to the time when Noah would preach repentance and try to save the world before the Flood was sent (see Moses 8:17). This period would be the time referred to by Peter as the time when "the longsuffering of God waited" (1 Peter 3:20). Because the people rejected the principles and ordinances of the gospel, preached to them by Noah, they were destroyed in the Flood. The Lord gave them more than adequate time to repent.

#### **(4-10) Genesis 6:6–7. How Could the Lord, Being Perfect, Repent?**

See Moses 8:25–26. The Prophet Joseph Smith stated: "I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors. As it read [Genesis 6:6], 'It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth'; also [Numbers 23:19], 'God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the Son of man, that he should repent'; which I do not believe. But it ought to read, 'It repented *Noah* that God made man.'" (*Teachings*, p. 327.)

#### **(4-11) Genesis 6:9. The Man Noah**

"The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith many things in relation to the ancient prophets and the keys which they held. In a discourse on the Priesthood July 2, 1839, the Prophet made known what the Lord had revealed to him in relation to the missions of the ancient prophets and seers. In the course of his remarks he said this:

"... Noah, who is Gabriel; he stands next in authority to Adam in the Priesthood; he was called of God to this office, and was the father of all living in his day, and to him was given the dominion. These men held keys first on earth, and then in heaven. . . .' [Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 157–58.]

"Luke reveals the coming of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias to inform him that his wife would bear a son. He also appeared to Mary and announced the birth of our Lord and Savior.

"Gabriel then is Noah according to this revelation." (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 3:138–41.)

"Noah, who built the ark, was one of God's greatest servants, chosen before he was born as were others of the prophets. He was no eccentric, as many have supposed. Neither was he a mythical figure created only in legend. Noah was real. . . .

"Let no one downgrade the life and mission of this great prophet. Noah was so near perfect in his day that he literally walked and talked with God. . . .

"Few men in any age were as great as Noah. In many respects he was like Adam, the first man. Both had served as ministering angels in the presence of God even after their mortal experience. Adam was Michael, the archangel, but Noah was Gabriel, one of those nearest to God. Of all the hosts of heaven, he was chosen to open the Christian era by announcing to Mary that she would become the mother of the Savior, Jesus Christ. He even designated the name by which the Redeemer should be known here on earth, saying He would be the Son of God. . . .

"... The Lord decreed that [the earth would be cleansed] by water, a worldwide deluge. Therefore, from among his premortal spirit children, God chose another great individual—His third in line, Gabriel—to resume the propagation of mankind following the flood." (Mark E. Petersen, *Noah and the Flood* [1982], 1–4.)

#### **(4-12) Genesis 6:10**

The typical way of referring to Noah's sons is in the order given in Genesis, that is, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The book of Moses, however, records that Japheth was the first one of the three sons born, Shem the second, and Ham the last (see Moses 8:12).

#### **(4-13) Genesis 6:14–16. What Was the Ark Like?**

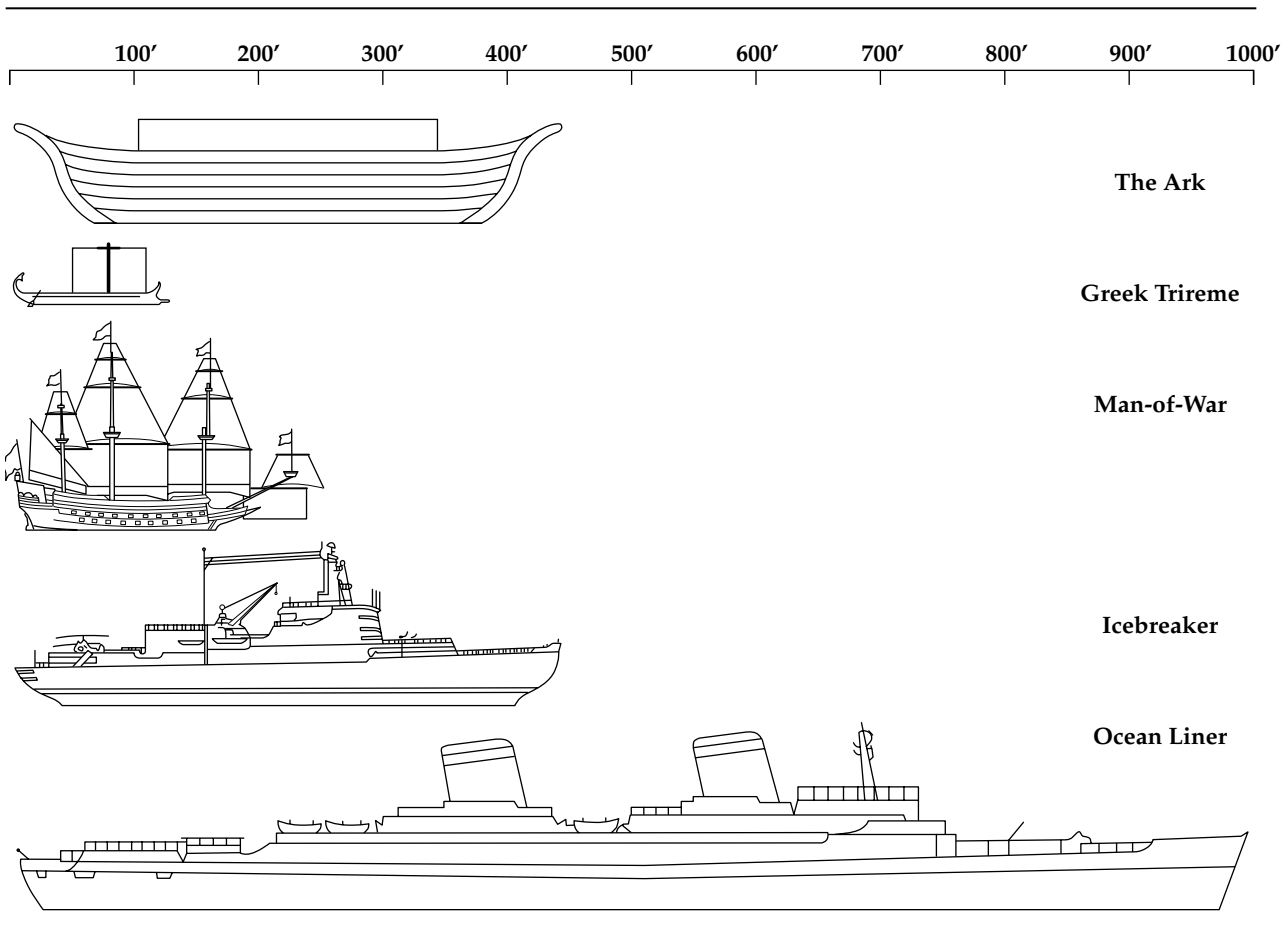
"The ark: the Hebrew word means 'box' or 'chest.' It is used elsewhere only for the watertight 'basket' in which the baby Moses floated on the Nile—an interesting parallel.

"The ark is vast, designed to float, not sail—and there were no launching problems! An 18-inch cubit gives the measurements as 450 x 76 x 45 feet or 137 x 23 x 14 metres." (Alexander and Alexander, eds., *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 132.)

#### **(4-14) Genesis 7:7. Were Any Saved by Means Other Than the Ark?**

"During the first 2200 or so years of the earth's history—that is, from the fall of Adam to the ministry of Melchizedek—it was a not uncommon occurrence for faithful members of the Church to be translated and taken into the heavenly realms without tasting death. Since that time there have been occasional special instances of translation, instances in which a special work of the ministry required it.

"... Methuselah, the son of Enoch, was not translated [with Enoch's city], 'that the covenants of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to Enoch; for he truly covenanted with Enoch that Noah should be of the fruit of his loins.' (Moses 8:2.) But during the nearly 700 years from the translation of Enoch to the flood of Noah, it would appear that nearly all of the faithful members of the Church were translated, for 'the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion.' (Moses 7:27.)" (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 804.)



**(4-15) Genesis 7:19. How Could the Flood Cover the Entire Earth, Including Mountains? What Was the Significance of This Immersion?**

“I would like to know by what known law the immersion of the globe could be accomplished. It is explained here in a few words: ‘The windows of heaven were opened’ that is, the waters that exist throughout the space surrounding the earth from whence come these clouds from which the rain descends. That was one cause. Another cause was ‘the fountains of the great deep were broken up’—that is something beyond the oceans, something outside of the seas, some reservoirs of which we have no knowledge, were made to contribute to this event, and the waters were let loose by the hand and by the power of God; for God said He would bring a flood upon the earth and He brought it, but He had to let loose the fountains of the great deep, and pour out the waters from there, and when the flood commenced to subside, we are told ‘that the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained, and the waters returned from off the earth.’ Where did they go to? From whence they came. Now, I will show you something else on the back of that. Some people talk very philosophically about tidal waves coming along. But the question is—How could you get a tidal wave out of the Pacific ocean, say, to cover the Sierra Nevadas? But the Bible does not tell us it

was a tidal wave. It simply tells that ‘all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits upwards did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.’ That is, the earth was immersed. It was a period of baptism.” (John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:74–75.)

Orson Pratt declared:

“The first ordinance instituted for the cleansing of the earth, was that of immersion in water; it was buried in the liquid element, and all things sinful upon the face of the earth were washed away. As it came forth from the ocean floor, like the new-born child, it was innocent; it rose to newness of life. It was its second birth from the womb of mighty waters—a new world issuing from the ruins of the old, clothed with all the innocence of this first creation.” (In Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:20.)

“The earth, in its present condition and situation, is not a fit habitation for the sanctified; but it abides the law of its creation, has been baptized with water, will be baptized by fire and the Holy Ghost, and by-and-by will be prepared for the faithful to dwell upon” (Brigham Young, in Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:20).

**(4-16) The Flood Was an Act of Love**

“Now I will go back to show you how the Lord operates. He destroyed a whole world at one time save a few, whom he preserved for his own special

purpose. And why? He had more than one reason for doing so. This antediluvian people were not only very wicked themselves, but having the power to propagate their species, they transmitted their unrighteous natures and desires to their children, and brought them up to indulge in their own wicked practices. And the spirits that dwelt in the eternal worlds knew this, and they knew very well that to be born of such parentage would entail upon themselves an infinite amount of trouble, misery and sin. And supposing ourselves to be of the number of unborn spirits, would it not be fair to presume that we would appeal to the Lord, crying, 'Father, do you not behold the condition of this people, how corrupt and wicked they are?' 'Yes.' 'Is it then just that we who are now pure should take of such bodies and thus subject ourselves to most bitter experiences before we can be redeemed, according to the plan of salvation?' 'No,' the Father would say, 'it is not in keeping with my justice.' 'Well, what will you do in the matter; man has his free agency and cannot be coerced, and while he lives he has the power of perpetuating his species?' 'I will first send them my word, offering them deliverance from sin, and warning them of my justice, which shall certainly overtake them if they reject it, and I will destroy them from off the face of the earth, thus preventing their increase, and I will raise up another seed.' Well, they did reject the preaching of Noah, the servant of God, who was sent to them, and consequently the Lord caused the rains of heaven to descend incessantly for forty days and nights, which flooded the land, and there being no means of escape, save for the eight souls who were obedient to the message, all the others were drowned. But, says the caviller, is it right that a just God should sweep off so many people? Is that in accordance with mercy? Yes, it was just to those spirits that had not received their bodies, and it was just and merciful too to those people guilty of the iniquity. Why? Because by taking away their earthly existence he prevented them from entailing their sins upon their posterity and degenerating them, and also prevented them from committing further acts of wickedness." (John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:158–59.)

#### **(4-17) Genesis 8:4. Where Did Noah Land When the Ark Came to Rest?**

It should be remembered that the Garden of Eden was in the land now known as North America (see Reading 2-17). Although it is not known how far men had moved from that general location in the sixteen hundred years between the fall of Adam and the Flood, it is likely that Noah and his family lived somewhere in the general area. The Bible says that they landed on Mount Ararat when the ark finally came to rest. No location for Mount Ararat is given in the scriptures. The traditional site is a mountain found in northeastern Turkey near the border of Russia. Commenting on the distance traveled, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said:

"We read that it was in the seventeenth day of the second month when the great deep was broken up, and the rain was forty days. The Ark landed at

Ararat on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, therefore there were five full months of travel when the Lord drove the Ark to its final destiny. Without any question a considerable distance separated the point where the Ark commenced the journey and where it landed. There can be no question to contradict the fact that during the flood great changes were made on the face of the earth. The land surface was in the process of division into continents. The rivers mentioned in Genesis were rivers that existed in the garden of Eden long before the land was divided into continents and islands. [Genesis 2:11.]" (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:94.)

#### **(4-18) Genesis 9:2–6. What Is the Law of God Regarding the Shedding of Blood?**

In the Joseph Smith Translation of this passage is a significant addition that clarifies the Lord's commandment to Noah:

"But, the blood of all flesh which I have given you for meat, shall be shed upon the ground, which taketh life thereof, and the blood ye shall not eat.

"And surely, blood shall not be shed, only for meat, to save your lives; and the blood of every beast will I require at your hands.

"And whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for man shall not shed the blood of man.

"For a commandment I give, that every man's brother shall preserve the life of man, for in mine own image have I made man." (JST, Genesis 9:10–13.)

This expansion concerning the shedding of the blood of animals is supported by Doctrine and Covenants 49:18–21, which says that the animals are to be used for food, but concludes with this warning:

"And wo be unto man that sheddeth blood or that wasteth flesh and hath no need."

President Spencer W. Kimball spoke at some length in a general priesthood meeting on the practice of killing animals simply for sport (see "Fundamental Principles to Live and Ponder," *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, pp. 44–45.)

#### **(4-19) The Rainbow as a Token of the Covenant**

The following sources shed additional light on the rainbow and the covenant it is meant to signify.

"And I will establish my covenant with you, which I made unto Enoch, concerning the remnants of your posterity.

"And God made a covenant with Noah, and said, This shall be the token of the covenant I make between me and you, and for every living creature with you, for perpetual generations;

"I will set my bow in the cloud; and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

"And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant, which I have made between me and you, for every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

"And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself.

"And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy;

"And the general assembly of the church of the first-born shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch.

"And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will establish my covenant unto thee, which I have made between me and thee, for every living creature of all flesh that shall be upon the earth.

"And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and thee; for all flesh that shall be upon the earth." (JST, Genesis 9:17–25.)

"The Lord hath set the bow in the cloud for a sign that while it shall be seen, seed time and harvest, summer and winter shall not fail; but when it shall disappear, woe to that generation, for behold the end cometh quickly" (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 305).

"I have asked of the Lord concerning His coming; and while asking the Lord, He gave a sign and said, 'In the days of Noah I set a bow in the heavens as a sign and token that in any year that the bow should be seen the Lord would not come; but there should be seed time and harvest during that year: but whenever you see the bow withdrawn, it shall be a token that there shall be famine, pestilence, and great distress among the nations, and that the coming of the Messiah is not far distant'" (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 340–41).

#### (4-20) Genesis 9:20–27. Why Did Noah Curse Canaan in This Event When He Was Not Even Present?

The account of Noah's "nakedness" and the role his sons played in the event is a puzzling one, especially the part in which Noah awakens and pronounces a curse upon Canaan, the son of Ham (see Genesis 10:6), who does not even seem to be present at the time.

Most members of the Church are aware that a priesthood garment, symbolic of the covenants made in the temple, is worn by those who have participated in the endowment ceremony in the temple. This garment is a representation of the coat of skins made by the Lord for Adam and Eve after the Fall (see Genesis 3:21; Moses 4:27). The idea of a garment made of skins that signified that one had power in the priesthood is found in several ancient writings. Hugh Nibley discussed some of these ancient writings and their implications for the passage in Genesis:

"Nimrod claimed his kingship on the ground of victory over his enemies [see Genesis 10:8–10;

Reading 4-21]; his priesthood, however, he claimed by virtue of possessing 'the garment of Adam.' The Talmud assures us that it was by virtue of owning this garment that Nimrod was able to claim power to rule over the whole earth, and that he sat in his tower while men came and worshiped him. The Apocryphal writers, Jewish and Christian, have a good deal to say about this garment. To quote one of them: 'the garments of skin which God made for Adam and his wife when they went out of the garden and were given after the death of Adam . . . to Enoch'; hence they passed to Methuselah, and then to Noah, from whom Ham stole them as the people were leaving the ark. Ham's grandson Nimrod obtained them from his father Cush. As for the *legitimate* inheritance of this clothing, a very old fragment recently discovered says that Michael 'disrobed Enoch of his earthly garments, and put on him his angelic clothing,' taking him into the presence of God. . . .

"Incidentally the story of the stolen garment as told by the rabbis, including the great Eleazer, calls for an entirely different rendering of the strange story in Genesis [9] from the version in our King James Bible. They seemed to think that the '*erwath*' of Genesis [9:22] did not mean 'nakedness' at all, but should be given its primary root meaning of 'skin covering.' Read thus, we are to understand that Ham took the garment of his father while he was sleeping and showed it to his brethren, Shem and Japheth, who took a pattern or copy of it (*salmah*) or else a woven garment like it (*simlah*) which they put upon their own shoulders, returning the skin garment to their father. Upon awaking, Noah recognized the priesthood of two sons but cursed the son who tried to rob him of his garment." (*Lehi in the Desert and the World of Jaredites*, pp. 160–62.)

Therefore, although Ham himself had the right to the priesthood, Canaan, his son, did not. Ham had married Egyptus, a descendant of Cain (Abraham 1:21–24), and so his sons were denied the priesthood.

#### (4-21) Genesis 10:8–9. What Sort of Man Was the Founder of Babylon?

The Joseph Smith Translation indicates, not that Nimrod was "a mighty hunter before the Lord" (Genesis 10:9), but that he was "a mighty hunter in the land" (JST, Genesis 10:5).

One scholar said the following of Nimrod:

"Though the words are not definite, it is very likely he was a very *bad man*. His name Nimrod comes from . . . *marad*, *he rebelled*; and the Targum [ancient Jewish translations or paraphrases of the scriptures], on 1 Chron. i. 10, says: *Nimrod began to be a mighty man in sin, a murderer of innocent men, and a rebel before the Lord*. The Jerusalem Targum says: 'He was mighty in hunting (or in prey) and in sin before God, for he was a hunter of the children of men in their languages; and he said unto them, *Depart from the religion of Shem, and cleave to the institutes of Nimrod*.' The Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel says: 'From the foundation of the world none was ever found like Nimrod, powerful in hunting, and in

rebellions against the Lord.’ The Syriac calls him a *warlike giant*. The word . . . *tsayid*, which we render *hunter*, signifies *prey*; and is applied in the Scriptures to the *hunting of men* by persecution, oppression, and tyranny. Hence it is likely that Nimrod, having acquired power, used it in tyranny and oppression; and by rapine and violence founded that domination which was the first distinguished by the name of a *kingdom on the face of the earth.*” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:86.)

Thus, in the same patriarchal age, Melchizedek (see Reading 5-9) established a Zion after the pattern of Enoch, the prototype of the true city of God, the freest of all societies, and Nimrod established a Babylon that gave its name to the prototype of the kingdom of Satan, the antithesis of Zion (see Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, pp. 154–64).

#### **(4-22) Genesis 10:25. Was the Earth Divided in the Days of Peleg?**

“The dividing of the earth was not an act of division by the inhabitants of the earth by tribes and peoples, but a breaking asunder of the continents, thus dividing the land surface and creating the Eastern Hemisphere and Western Hemisphere. By looking at a wall map of the world, you will discover how the land surface along the northern and southern coast of the American Hemisphere and Europe and Africa has the appearance of having been together at one time. Of course, there have been many changes on the earth’s surface since the beginning. We are informed by revelation that the time will come when this condition will be changed and that the land surface of the earth will come back again as it was in the beginning and all be in one place. This is definitely stated in the Doctrine and Covenants. [D&C 133:18–20 is then cited.]” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5:73–74.)

#### **(4-23) Genesis 11:1–9. The Tower of Babel**

In addition to providing an explanation for the numerous languages now found on the earth, this account of the tower of Babel shows how quickly man forgot the lessons of the Flood and turned again from the Lord. The Book of Mormon shows that the actual confounding of the languages may not have been an instantaneous thing but may have happened over an unknown length of time. Jared asked his brother to call upon the Lord and request that their language not be confounded. This request was granted. Then Jared asked his brother to plead that the language of their friends stay the same as theirs. This request, too, was granted. (See Ether 1:33–38.) These events imply that the confounding of the languages did not happen in an instant. (For more information on the tower of Babel, see Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Babel.”)

#### **(4-24) Genesis 11:10–26**

This chronology of the patriarchs teaches several things. (Compare the scripture account with the chart given in Maps and Charts.) For example, Shem

lived long enough that he was contemporary with the next ten generations. In other words, he was still alive when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were born. This circumstance is one of the reasons why some have wondered if Shem was also Melchizedek. (See Reading 5-9 for a discussion of Shem and Melchizedek.)

Many scholars believe that Eber’s name was used to designate his descendants, called the Hebrews, just as Shem’s descendants were called Shemites (Semite peoples), and Canaan’s descendants were called the Canaanites.

#### **(4-25) Genesis 11:31**

Genesis 11:31 makes it appear that Terah directed his entire family to leave Ur and go to Canaan by way of Haran. Abraham 2:3–5, however, makes it clear that Abraham, under the Lord’s direction, was the leader of the group. (See the map on page 65 for additional help.)

## **POINTS TO PONDER**

**(4-26)** In these eleven chapters of Genesis, which cover the lives of the ancient patriarchs, almost one-third of the total history of mankind is summarized in a brief manner. Obviously, such a limited treatment must omit many details that would be of great benefit to us. When Moses wrote this history, however, he shared with us one of the most remarkable contrasts in the history of the world. From the time of the Fall the people of the world began moving in two opposite directions. One group followed the teachings of Adam and Eve and continually strived for increasing righteousness and perfection. The other group yielded to the deceitful enticings of Satan and his servants and moved deeper and deeper into depravity and wickedness. Both these divergent paths were followed to their ultimate ends. Under Enoch’s direction, a whole society became so perfect that God took it to Himself, and for the next seven hundred years those who qualified themselves were likewise translated into that remarkable city of Enoch (see Reading 4-14). The other group moved downward as surely as Enoch’s city moved upward. Finally they reached such depths of wickedness that it was a blessing for them to be destroyed (see Reading 4-16).

Why is this pattern of significance to you? Because we are in a period of history when the same dramatic contrast and division is taking place. On a separate sheet of paper answer the following questions after reading the scripture references indicated.

1. Jesus taught that the situation in the days of Noah was going to be repeated once more in history. When is that repetition to take place, and what are the implications of that repetition? How does Nephi’s vision relate to this teaching?

**Read Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:41–42;  
1 Nephi 14:10–14.**

2. Zion provided the escape for those who were righteous before the Flood. How will the Saints of the latter days be saved from the coming judgments?

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**Read Moses 7:61; D&C 45:65–71;  
D&C 45:5–6.**

3. What are the conditions for bringing the promise of delivery upon ourselves?

**Read D&C 97:18–27.**

(4-27) The world is again rushing headlong toward destruction, just as it was in the days before the Flood. Once again the avenue of deliverance for the righteous is being provided, and Zion itself will once more be established. After reading the following statements, list on a separate sheet of paper specific steps you can take today to prepare yourself and the kingdom for the establishment of Zion.

“I prophesy to you, in the name of the Lord, that when the Latter-day Saints have prepared themselves through righteousness to redeem Zion, they will accomplish that work, and God will go with them. No power will then be able to prevent them from accomplishing that work; for the Lord has said it shall be done, and it will be done in the due time of the Lord, when the people are prepared for it. But when shall I be prepared to go there? Not while I have in my heart the love of this world more than the love of God. Not while I am possessed of that selfishness and greed that would induce me to cling to the world or my possessions in it, at the sacrifice of principle or truth. But when I am ready to say, ‘Father, all that I have, myself included, is Thine; my time, my substance, everything that I possess is on the altar, to be used freely, agreeable to Thy holy will, and not my will, but Thine, be done,’ then perhaps I will be prepared to go and help to redeem Zion.” (Joseph F. Smith, in *Millennial Star*, 18 June 1894, pp. 385–86.)

“When we conclude to make a Zion we will make it, and this work commences in the heart of each person. When the father of a family wishes to make a Zion in his own house, he must take the lead in this good work, which it is impossible for him to do unless he himself possesses the spirit of Zion. Before he can produce the work of sanctification in his family, he must sanctify himself, and by this means God can help him to sanctify his family. . . .

“My spiritual enjoyment must be obtained by my own life, but it would add much to the comfort of the community, and to my happiness, as one with them, if every man and woman would live their

religion, and enjoy the light and glory of the Gospel for themselves, be passive, humble and faithful; rejoice continually before the Lord, attend to the business they are called to do, and be sure never to do anything wrong.

“All would then be peace, joy, and tranquility, in our streets and in our houses. Litigation would cease, there would be no difficulties before the High Council and Bishops’ Courts, and courts, turmoil, and strife would not be known.

“Then we would have Zion, for all would be pure in heart.” (Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, pp. 118–19.)

“We’re living in the latter days. We’re living in the days the prophets have told about from the time of Enoch to the present day. We are living in the era just preceding the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are told to so prepare and live that we can be . . . independent of every other creature beneath the celestial kingdom. That is what we are to do. . . .

“ . . . the final thing that we are to do is to be able and willing to consecrate all that we have to the building up of the kingdom of God, to care for our fellow men. When we do this we’ll be ready for the coming of the Messiah.” (Marion G. Romney, in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1975, pp. 165–66.)

“In the meantime, while we await the redemption of Zion and the earth and the establishment of the United Order, we as bearers of the priesthood should live strictly by the principles of the United Order insofar as they are embodied in present church practices, such as the fast offering, tithing, and the welfare activities. Through these practices we could as individuals, if we were of a mind to do so, implement in our own lives all the basic principles of the United Order. . . .

“It is thus apparent that when the principles of tithing and the fast are properly observed and the Welfare Plan gets fully developed and wholly into operation, ‘we shall not be so very far from carrying out the great fundamentals of the United Order.’” (*Conference Report*, October 1942, pp. 57–58.)

“The only limitation on you and me is within ourselves.” (Marion G. Romney, in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1966, pp. 100–101.)

In your journal, you may wish to record your feelings about Zion and its significance for you.



# Covenants and Covenant Making: Keys to Exaltation

B

## (B-1) God Works with Men through Covenants and Covenant Making

God the Father enjoys a fulness of eternal glory. It is His plan to provide an opportunity for His spirit children to become like Him. “For behold,” He says, “this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Joseph Smith taught, “God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself” (*History of the Church*, 6:312).

Eternal life is exaltation in the presence of God. It is essential to the upward progress of man that he be given certain basic tools by which he can climb. No one reaches the celestial level in a single leap. Therefore, man has been given the privilege of repentance. This gift, together with the right of free choice, means that each one controls his own destiny. Samuel the Lamanite explained, “Whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves” (Helaman 14:30).

In the plan of God this earth was created as a home for man. It is his proving ground, the place of his mortal probation, the place where he is tried and tested to see if he “will do all things whatsoever the Lord [his] God shall command” (Abraham 3:25).

The ultimate destiny of the earth, like the ultimate destiny of man, is to become celestial. Following its celestialization, the earth will serve as the eternal home of all those who abide a celestial law (see D&C 88:22). “Therefore, it [the earth] must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory; for after it hath filled the measure of its creation, it shall be crowned with glory, even with the presence of God the Father; that bodies who are of the celestial kingdom may possess it forever and ever; for, for this intent was it made and created, and for this intent are they sanctified” (D&C 88:18–20).

In order to help His children become like Him, Father in Heaven admonishes them to observe certain gospel principles by means of covenants and ordinances. The entire gospel itself is referred to in scripture as “a new and an everlasting covenant” (D&C 22:1; see also 133:57). That overall covenant includes a series of other covenants that, if observed, will make man like his divine parents. Covenants, covenant making, and covenant keeping thus become the keys to exaltation, or the kind of life God enjoys.

A covenant is a mutual agreement between two or more persons whereby each contracting party agrees to abide by certain stipulations. Heavenly Father agrees to give to His children all that He enjoys, providing they will keep all of His commandments (see D&C 76:50–60). “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10). Broken covenants have no eternal or lasting value. As Joseph Smith said, “It requires two parties to make a covenant, and those two parties must be agreed, or no covenant can be made” (*Teachings*, p. 14).

## (B-2) Anciently, God Centered His Work in a Covenant People

The covenants of God with man are eternal. As eternal beings, His children existed with their Father in the premortal world. President John Taylor explained:

“We are not connected with a something that will exist only for a few years, some of the peculiar ideas and dogmas of men, some nice theory of their forming; the principles that we believe in reach back into eternity, they originated with the Gods in the eternal worlds, and they reach forward to the eternities that are to come. We feel that we are operating with God in connection with those who were, with those who are, and with those who are to come.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 17:206.)

The gospel covenant is as old as eternity. So far as this earth is concerned, however, it was first introduced to Adam and passed from him to later generations. President Taylor said further:

“What is meant by the everlasting Gospel? I know that some people think there was no Gospel until Jesus came; but it is a great mistake. Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses had the Gospel; and when Jesus came he came to offer himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and to bring back the Gospel which the people had lost. ‘Well,’ says one, ‘do you mean to affirm that the men you have just named had the Gospel?’ I do, and hence it is called the everlasting Gospel.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 13:17.)

To spread the gospel blessings abroad, the Lord has centered his work in a people specially chosen for the task. At first this people were the righteous Saints who followed Adam, Enoch, and the other faithful patriarchs. Around 2000 B.C. Abraham was selected to head this covenant race from that time forward. God, on His part, promised to make Abraham the “father of many nations” and to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed “for an

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everlasting possession" (Genesis 17:4, 8). "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17:7).

But Abraham was also required to make certain promises to God. For one thing, he agreed to walk before the Lord and be perfect (see Genesis 17:1). Thus, he promised to live by every word of God and to perform with exactness every aspect of the everlasting covenant between himself and the Lord. As a token of this promise, Abraham further promised to circumcise himself and every male descendant. The Lord explained: "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee: Every man child among you shall be circumcised. . . . and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." (Genesis 17:10–11; see Reading 5-17 for a discussion of the covenant sign of circumcision.)

Latter-day revelation has clarified the practical purposes of God's choice to do His missionary work through Abraham and his seed. Consider these important words of the Lord to Father Abraham.

#### **Read Abraham 2:8–11.**

#### **(B-3) How Well Did the Ancient Children of Israel Keep Their Covenants with the Lord?**

God remembers all His covenants with men and keeps them faithfully. To ancient Israel Moses said, "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9). According to Jacob, Nephi's brother, the faithfulness of God in keeping covenants is one reason the prophet Isaiah wrote—to show the house of Israel that "the Lord God will fulfill his covenants which he has made unto his children" (2 Nephi 6:12).

Unfortunately, men are not always faithful to the covenants they make with God. It is one thing to know that one is chosen of the Lord, another thing to understand what one is chosen to do, and still another to prove faithful to that mission. In the final sense, many are called into the covenant of the Lord—all, in fact, who will come—but few are chosen, because many do not do well enough to reap all the promised rewards (see Matthew 20:16). Why? Because too many do not keep their covenants with the Lord.

The history of the house of Israel is a fascinating study in covenant keeping and covenant breaking. It is saddening to find that the Old Testament includes accounts of a long series of broken covenants. But it also records great faithfulness and covenants that were kept. Watching for Israel's response to her

covenants with the Lord can be a most significant experience in studying the Old Testament. The Old Testament can provide a vicarious experience for modern Saints and help them evaluate their own covenant-keeping record. In noting Israel's response to the covenant, one can discover the real meaning of Paul's seemingly paradoxical statement to the Saints of Rome, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Romans 9:6).

#### **(B-4) The Modern Covenant People of the Lord**

The purpose of the Lord is to bless all His faithful children with the blessings of exaltation and eternal life. This was the central purpose of the Abrahamic covenant (see Abraham 2:11).

To be chosen of the Lord does not mean to be arbitrarily more loved. "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). He does not offer His acceptance of His children on the basis of whim or arbitrary factors. They must merit His blessings by obedience or they do not obtain them. But being chosen does signify God's confidence in one's willingness to do as He commands. This knowledge He obtained by long experience with His children in the premortal past (see Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 28–29, note 1). Father in Heaven does not decide who His elect will be without some valid basis. A person becomes the elect of God by responding to His proffered gifts. God defines His elect in scripture as those who "hear my voice and harden not their hearts" (D&C 29:7). This principle is precisely the one that Nephi tried to teach his rebellious brothers, Laman and Lemuel.

#### **Read 1 Nephi 17:35, 40.**

Moses taught this precept to the wandering children of Israel, but it seems that they never really comprehended what their great prophet-lawgiver was talking about.

#### **Read Deuteronomy 4:5–8.**

Latter-day Saints are Abraham's seed of the latter days. Their exaltation or eternal life depends on their obedience to the covenants they have made and kept with God. The promises of Abraham are theirs too if they will do the works that Abraham did. Read the word of the Lord in this matter.

#### **Read D&C 132:29–32; 110:12.**

Once the foregoing truths are understood, one is prepared to understand that every law set down by God has as its ultimate reward the exaltation of all who will respond. One may receive or reject as one chooses, but the blessings of God cannot be obtained except in the way revealed by Him. The Lord explains it this way:

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**Read D&C 132:5–6, 8.**

But if everything that brings God's blessings is dependent upon obedience to law, it is likewise true that no one is coerced into receiving that which one does not want. Only if one consciously chooses to develop a celestial spirit can one ever hope to attain all that the Father has. As Alma wrote to his son who had violated sacred covenants, "Therefore, O my son,

whosoever will come may come and partake of the waters of life freely: and whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds" (Alma 42:27).

The covenants of the Lord will bless the lives of those who enter into them in faith and live worthy of the blessings that are promised for obedience.



# Abraham—Father of the Faithful

## (5-1) Introduction

You are “the seed of Abraham” (D&C 84:34; see also D&C 132:30). What does that statement mean? You probably have a similar statement in your patriarchal blessing. What are the blessings of Abraham to which you are entitled, and what do blessings given so long ago have to do with you today? Are Abraham’s blessings essentially any different from the blessings given to Adam, Enoch, or Noah?

The focus of this chapter is on the covenant between Jehovah and Abraham. Emphasis will be given to the elements of the covenant and its blessings and responsibilities. As you study, look for the application of this covenant to you. Because you are a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the covenant is a part of your life; you accepted it at baptism. Your eternal salvation depends on how you keep those promises. It would be very wise to understand this covenant.

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Genesis 12–17.
2. Abraham 1–3 contains valuable insights and additions not found in Genesis. Although this parallel account in Abraham is studied in detail in the Pearl of Great Price course (Rel. 327), these chapters should be read and studied in connection with the Genesis account.
3. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

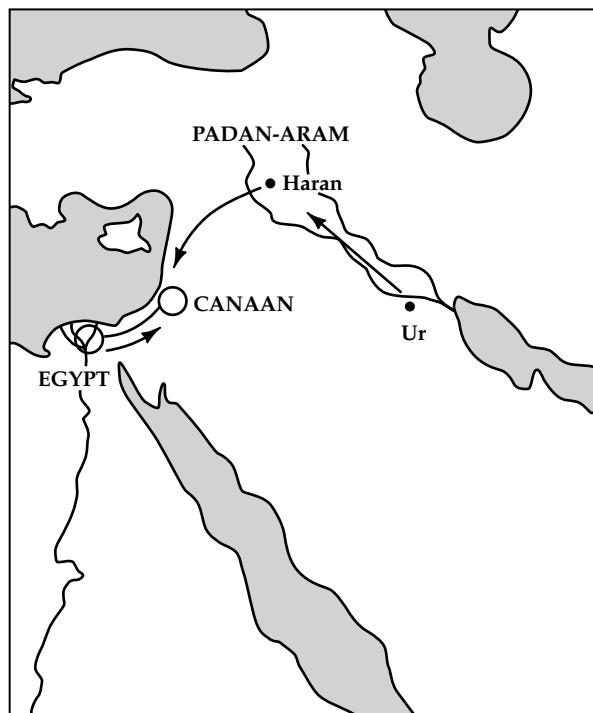
## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON GENESIS 12–17

### (5-2) Genesis 12:1

Doctrine and Covenants 84:14 teaches that Abraham received the Melchizedek Priesthood from Melchizedek. It is not certain when he received it: he may have received it while still in Ur (see Abraham 1:2, 3:1) or at some later date.

### (5-3) Genesis 12:1–4

As recorded in Genesis 12:1, Abraham, while living in Haran, received a call to leave his country and family and go southwest to a new land. He then departed from Haran and went to Canaan. Earlier, as recorded in Abraham 1:15–16, the Lord had called



*Abraham's journey from Ur to Canaan*

Abraham from Ur, which is near the mouth of the Euphrates, and led him northwesterly to Haran. Thus, Abraham was directed by the Lord to move twice in these early years. The Lord continued to lead him from place to place.

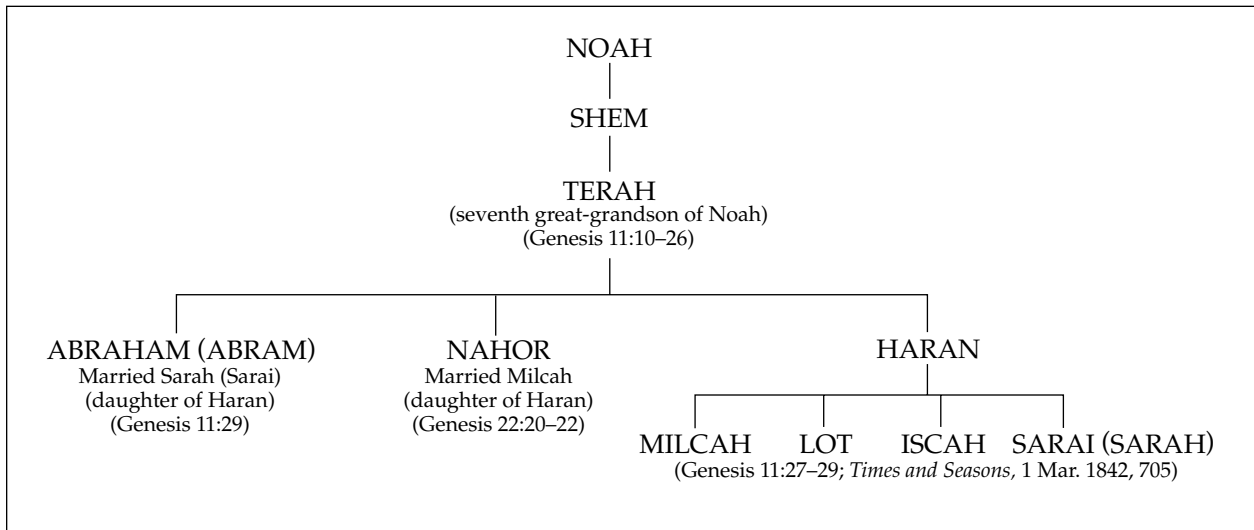
The first intimations of the covenant to be renewed through Abraham are given in verses 2–3, 7. (See Points to Ponder in this chapter for a full discussion of this covenant.)

### (5-4) Genesis 12:5

Given here is evidence that Abraham was a preacher and a gatherer of souls (i.e., he did missionary work) wherever he went (see Abraham 2:15).

### (5-5) Genesis 12:10–20. Why Did Abraham Call Sarah His Sister?

The idea that Abraham, the great man of righteousness, deceived Pharaoh in order to protect his own life has troubled many students of the Old Testament. That his life was in danger because of Sarah’s beauty seems quite clear. It seems peculiar, but whereas the Egyptian pharaohs had a strong aversion to committing adultery with another man’s wife, they had no qualms about murdering the man to free his spouse for remarriage.



“To kill the husband in order to possess himself of his wife seems to have been a common royal custom in those days. A papyrus tells of a Pharaoh who, acting on the advice of one of his princes, sent armed men to fetch a beautiful woman and make away with her husband. Another Pharaoh is promised by his priest on his tombstone, that even after death he will kill Palestinian sheiks and include their wives in his harem.” (Kasher, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, 2:128.)

Abraham could validly state that Sarah was his sister. In the Bible the Hebrew words *brother* and *sister* are often used for other blood relatives. (See Genesis 14:14, in which Lot, Abraham’s nephew, is called “his brother.”) Because Abraham and Haran, Sarah’s father, were brothers, Sarah was Abraham’s niece and thus could be called *sister*. The accompanying pedigree chart shows this relationship.

Another ancient custom that might shed light on the relationship permitted a woman to be adopted as a man’s sister upon their marriage to give her greater legal and social status (see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. “Sarah,” 14:866).

Even though Abraham was correct in calling her his sister, he did deceive the Egyptians. How can this action be justified? The answer is very simple. His action was justified because God told him to do it (see Abraham 2:22–25). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the following:

“That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another.

“God said, ‘Thou shalt not kill;’ at another time He said, ‘Thou shalt utterly destroy.’ This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we

may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire.” (*Teachings*, p. 256.)

Since God is perfect and does not do anything that is not right (see Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 Samuel 15:29; Alma 7:20; D&C 3:2), Abraham’s act was not wrong.

#### (5-6) Genesis 13:1–13. Abraham Was Very Rich

The scriptures warn of the dangers of wealth so often that occasionally some people assume that wealth in and of itself is evil and that all wealthy people are automatically wicked. Without question, the temptation to set one’s heart upon the things of the world is one to which many people succumb. But Paul taught that the “*love* of money is the root of all evil,” not the money itself (1 Timothy 6:10; emphasis added).

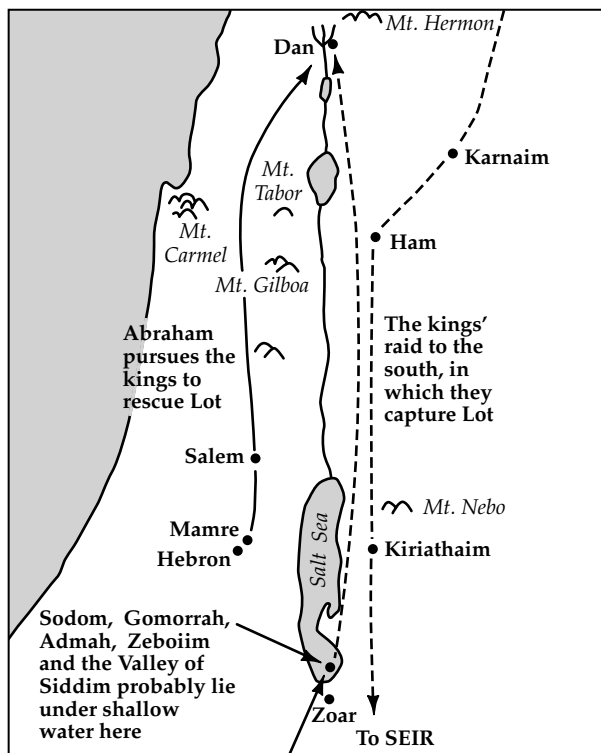
Abraham provides an example of one who had great wealth (see Genesis 13:2) and yet was a man of great faith and righteousness. The incident between him and Lot provides an excellent insight into Abraham’s Christlike nature. By all rights Lot should have insisted that Abraham choose first. Lot had been nurtured and protected by Abraham, and Abraham was the patriarch of the clan. Abraham could have taken his rights and given Lot what was left. Instead, his concern was only that “there be no strife” between them, so he gave Lot first choice (v. 8; see also vv. 9–10). Lot seems to have chosen the best land—the well-watered plains of Jordan—and yet there is not a trace of resentment in Abraham. In fact, in the next few chapters is recorded Abraham’s intervention to save Lot’s life. Here was a man for whom principles came first and material things second. It is not surprising that the Lord should renew the ancient covenant with him and make him father of the faithful.

**(5-7) Genesis 13:14–17. How Can Abraham’s Seed Have the Land “Forever”?**

All those who “receive this Gospel shall be called after thy [Abraham’s] name, and shall be accounted thy seed” (Abraham 2:10). Also, “the meek . . . shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5) when the earth achieves its “sanctified and immortal state” (D&C 130:9) as the celestial kingdom. Thus, Abraham’s seed (the faithful) will have the earth throughout all eternity as well as during mortality.

**(5-8) Genesis 14:1–7**

In this listing of conquests by the alliance of five kings, it must be remembered that anciently the most typical political entity was a small city-state wherein the king presided over one major city and the surrounding area. This territory was sometimes expanded, but kings in those days did not rule over large countries or kingdoms. Sodom had a king, Gomorrah a king, and so on.



*Abraham and the Battle of the Kings*

**(5-9) Genesis 14:18. Who Was Melchizedek?**

“To the man *Melchizedek* goes the honor of having his name used to identify the *Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God*, thus enabling men ‘to avoid the too frequent repetition’ of the name of Deity. (D. & C. 107:2–4.) Of all God’s ancient high priests ‘none were greater.’ (Alma 13:19.) His position in the priestly hierarchy of God’s earthly kingdom was like

unto that of Abraham (Heb. 7:4–10), his contemporary whom he blessed (Gen. 14:18–20; Heb. 7:1; [JST], Gen. 14:17–40), and upon whom he conferred the priesthood. (D. & C. 84:14.)

“Indeed, so exalted and high was the position of Melchizedek in the eyes of the Lord and of his people that he stood as a prototype of the Son of God himself. . . .

“Alma tells us that ‘Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness; But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father.’ (Alma 13:17–18.)

“Paul, very obviously knowing much more about Melchizedek than he happened to record in his epistles, gave as an illustration of great faith some unnamed person who ‘wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire.’ (Heb. 11:33–34.) From the Prophet’s inspired additions to the Old Testament we learn that Paul’s reference was to Melchizedek. ‘Now Melchizedek was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire’ [JST, Genesis 14:26].” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 474–75.)

In ancient Jewish traditions Melchizedek is often thought to be Shem, the son of Noah. *Melchizedek* is a title meaning “king of righteousness,” even though it is also used as a proper name. A modern writer examined the question of whether Shem and Melchizedek could be the same person and concluded that, while we cannot say for sure, the possibility is clearly there. He said:

“Let us examine first what we know about Shem. Although the Bible names Shem as the eldest son of Noah (Gen. 5:32), modern-day revelation places Japheth as the eldest (Moses 8:12). Both reports, however, are harmonious in naming Shem as the progenitor of Israel and in the fact that the priesthood descended through Shem to all the great patriarchs after Noah. (1 Chron. 1:24–27.) In this patriarchal order of priesthood, Shem stands next to Noah. He held the keys to the priesthood and was the great high priest of his day.

“Living contemporary with Shem was a man known as Melchizedek, who was also known as the great high priest. The scriptures give us the details of Shem’s birth and ancestry but are silent as to his ministry and later life. Of Melchizedek, however, the opposite is true. Nothing is recorded about his birth or ancestry, even though the Book of Mormon states that he did have a father. (Al. 13:17–18.) Concerning

his ministry and life we have several interesting and important facts. (Gen. 14:18–20; Heb. 7:1–4; Al. 13:17–18.)

“All of this provokes some questions and calls for answers. Were there two high priests presiding at the same time? Why is the record silent concerning Shem’s ministry? Why is nothing known concerning Melchizedek’s ancestry?

“Because of this state of knowledge on our part, many Saints and gospel scholars have wondered if these men were the same person. The truth is, we do not know the answer. But an examination of the scriptures is fascinating, because it seems to indicate that these men may have been one and the same. For example, here is the case for their oneness:

“1. The inheritance given to Shem included the land of Salem. Melchizedek appears in scripture as the king of Salem, who reigns over this area.

“2. Shem, according to later revelation, reigned in righteousness and the priesthood came through him. Melchizedek appears on the scene with a title that means ‘king of righteousness.’

“3. Shem was the great high priest of his day. Abraham honored the high priest Melchizedek by seeking a blessing at his hands and paying him tithes.

“4. Abraham stands next to Shem in the patriarchal order of the priesthood and would surely have received the priesthood from Shem; but D&C 84:5–17 says Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek.

“5. Jewish tradition identifies Shem as Melchizedek.

“6. President Joseph F. Smith’s remarkable vision names Shem among the great patriarchs, but no mention is made of Melchizedek.

“7. *Times and Seasons* [15 Dec. 1844, p. 746] speaks of ‘Shem, who was Melchizedek. . . .’

“On the other hand, there is a case for their being two distinct personalities. Many persons believe D&C 84:14 is proof that there are perhaps several generations between Melchizedek and Noah. The scripture says, ‘Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah.’

“If it does turn out that Shem and Melchizedek are the same person, this scripture should prove no stumbling block, because it could be interpreted to mean that priesthood authority commenced with Adam and came through the fathers, even till Noah, and then to Shem.” (Alma E. Gygi, “Is It Possible That Shem and Melchizedek Are the Same Person?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1973, pp. 15–16.)

In the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis 14, several verses are added about Melchizedek that greatly increase the available knowledge of this great high priest (see JST, Genesis 14:25–40).

#### **(5-10) Genesis 15:5–6. Abraham Saw Jesus Christ**

In the Joseph Smith Translation, four significant verses are added between verses 5 and 6 of the Genesis account:

“And Abram said, Lord God, how wilt thou give me this land for an everlasting inheritance?

“And the Lord said, Though thou wast dead, yet am I not able to give it thee?

“And if thou shalt die, yet thou shalt possess it, for the day cometh, that the Son of Man shall live; but how can he live if he be not dead? he must first be quickened.

“And it came to pass, that Abram looked forth and saw the days of the Son of Man, and was glad, and his soul found rest, and he believed in the Lord; and the Lord counted it unto him for righteousness.” (JST, Genesis 15:9–12.)

Once again it is clear that the early patriarchs knew far more about Christ and His mission than the present Old Testament record indicates (see Mosiah 13:33).

#### **(5-11) Genesis 15:12. A Horror of Great Darkness Fell upon Him**

For an interesting parallel to the experience Abraham had at the beginning of his vision, read Joseph Smith—History 1:14–16.

#### **(5-12) Genesis 15:13–16. For the Iniquity of the Amorites Is Not Yet Full**

In this prophecy about the future captivity of Israel, the Lord gives an important clue to why He later would command the Israelites to utterly destroy any Canaanites living in the land of promise (see Deuteronomy 7:1–2; 20:16–18). Evidently by that time their iniquity had become full and they were therefore ripe for destruction.

For a full discussion of the destruction of the Canaanites, see Reading 19-15.

#### **(5-13) Genesis 16:1–3**

According to the custom of the time, Sarah’s giving her handmaid, Hagar, to be a wife to Abraham was an expected and logical act (see Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:109–11; D&C 132:1–2, 29–30, 34–35).

#### **(5-14) Genesis 16:10**

The angelic message to Hagar shows that the promises to Abraham go even beyond those which have come through Isaac.

#### **(5-15) Genesis 16:11–12**

The Hebrew word *Ishmael* literally means, “God hears” (v. 11a). In verse 12 he is called a “wild man,” or in Hebrew, a “wild ass,” which metaphor implies one who loves freedom. This metaphor could be a prophetic description of the nomadic life of the descendants of Ishmael (see v. 12a).

#### **(5-16) Genesis 17:1. Walk Uprightly and Be Perfect**

The commandment to Abraham was “thou shalt walk uprightly before me, and be perfect” (JST, Genesis 17:1). This commandment has been given to

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the Saints in all ages (see Deuteronomy 18:13; Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27; D&C 67:13).

“Salvation does not come all at once; we are commanded to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. It will take us ages to accomplish this end, for there will be greater progress beyond the grave, and it will be there that the faithful will overcome all things, and receive all things, even the fulness of the Father’s glory.

“I believe the Lord meant just what he said: that we should be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. That will not come all at once, but line upon line, and precept upon precept, example upon example, and even then not as long as we live in this mortal life, for we will have to go even beyond the grave before we reach that perfection and shall be like God.

“But here we lay the foundation. Here is where we are taught these simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in this probationary state, to prepare us for that perfection. It is our duty to be better today than we were yesterday, and better tomorrow than we are today. Why? Because we are on that road, if we are keeping the commandments of the Lord, we are on that road to perfection, and that can only come through obedience and the desire in our hearts to overcome the world.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:18–19.)

#### **(5-17) Genesis 17:2–14. What Is the Significance of Circumcision as a Token of the Covenant?**

The word *circumcision* comes from the Latin words meaning “to cut around.” It was instituted by revelation as a sign or token that one was of the covenant seed of Abraham. To better understand why the Lord chose this particular sign or token, read the account in the Joseph Smith Translation:

“And it came to pass, that Abram fell on his face, and called upon the name of the Lord.

“And God talked with him, saying, My people have gone astray from my precepts, and have not kept mine ordinances, which I gave unto their fathers;

“And they have not observed mine anointing, and the burial, or baptism wherewith I commanded them;

“But have turned from the commandment, and taken unto themselves the washing of children, and the blood of sprinkling;

“And have said that the blood of the righteous Abel was shed for sins; and have not known wherein they are accountable before me. . . .

“And I will establish a covenant of circumcision with thee, and it shall be my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations; that thou mayest know for ever that children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old.” (JST, Genesis 17:3–7, 11.)

Much additional information is given in this account.

1. Before instituting the law of circumcision, the Lord explained why He was establishing this token of the covenant.

a. The people had left correct principles and forsaken the true ordinances.

b. Baptism was one ordinance being incorrectly observed.

c. The people were washing their children and sprinkling blood in remembrance of Abel’s blood, which they taught was shed for sins.

d. They misunderstood the relationship between accountability of children and the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

2. Because of this apostasy, circumcision was instituted.

a. It was a covenant token.

b. It was for the seed of Abraham.

c. It signified that children were not accountable until they were eight years old.

Other scriptures make it clear that it was not the act itself but rather what it stood for that gave circumcision its greatest significance.

In many places the Lord speaks of true circumcision as being the circumcision of the heart. The heart that is “circumcised” is one that loves God and is obedient to the Spirit. The “uncircumcised in heart” are wicked, proud, and rebellious (Ezekiel 44:7; see also Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; Ezekiel 44:7; Acts 7:51; Romans 2:25–29; Colossians 2:11).

Though a person may have had the token of circumcision in the flesh, unless he was righteous the covenant was invalidated and the circumcision became profitless. Thus, circumcision was only a sign or token of what needed to happen to the inward man. If the inward change had not taken place, then circumcision was virtually meaningless. (See Jeremiah 9:25–26; Romans 2:25–29; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:1–6; 6:12–15; Philippians 3:3–4.)

With the fulfillment of the Mosaic law under Jesus, the token of circumcision was no longer required of God’s covenant people (see Acts 15:22–29; Galatians 5:1–6; 6:12–15).

The Abrahamic covenant makes frequent reference to one’s seed (see Genesis 17:6–12). The organ of the body that produces seed and brings about physical birth is the organ on which the token of the covenant was made. The organ of spiritual rebirth, however, is the heart (see 3 Nephi 9:20). Thus, when a person was circumcised it signified that while he had been born into the covenant, he need not be baptized until he became accountable before the Lord. But spiritual circumcision, or the circumcision of the heart, must take place once one becomes accountable or one is not considered as true Israel. As Paul said so aptly, “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

“But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Romans 2:28–29).

#### **(5-18) Genesis 17:17**

Joseph Smith corrected this verse to say that Abraham rejoiced (see JST, Genesis 17:23). This change is also substantiated by the Hebrew text.



*The traditional burial place of Abraham and Sarah at Hebron*

#### **(5-19) Genesis 17:18–21**

The birthright was given to Isaac, the first son of the first wife, rather than to Ishmael, who was the first son of Abraham and Hagar and was about fourteen years older than Isaac. The Lord made it clear that in accordance with the original promise Abraham's son by Sarah would bear the covenant responsibility. Yet, Ishmael, through his twelve sons, was also to be the father of a great nation.

### **POINTS TO PONDER**

**(5-20)** Though we know from modern scripture that the covenant-making process began with Adam and the other patriarchs (see Moses 6:65–68; 7:51; 8:2), it is from the Abrahamic covenant that we get a fuller idea of what is involved in covenant making. Since righteous members of the Church become the seed of Abraham and thus part of the covenant people (see D&C 84:34), we should understand what is involved in the covenant made with Abraham. Abraham's part of the covenant, which is the same as for us, is that he "walk uprightly before me, and be perfect" (JST, Genesis 17:1). If he would do so, then the Lord's part of the covenant, or His promises to Abraham, constitute what is known as the Abrahamic covenant. Elder McConkie explained Abraham's covenant and its relationship to us:

"Abraham first received the gospel by baptism (which is the covenant of salvation); then he had conferred upon him the higher priesthood, and he entered into celestial marriage (which is the covenant of exaltation), gaining assurance thereby that he would have eternal increase; finally he received a promise that all of these blessings would be offered to all of his mortal posterity. (Abra. 2:6–11; D. & C. 132:29–50.) Included in the divine promises to Abraham was the assurance that Christ would come through his lineage, and the assurance that Abraham's posterity would receive certain choice, promised lands as an eternal inheritance. (Abra. 2; Gen. 17; 22:15–18; Gal. 3.)

"All of these promises lumped together are called the *Abrahamic covenant*. This covenant was renewed with Isaac (Gen. 24:60; 26:1–4, 24) and again with Jacob. (Gen. 28; 35:9–13; 48:3–4.) *Those portions of it which pertain to personal exaltation and eternal increase are renewed with each member of the House of Israel who enters the order of celestial marriage; through that order the participating parties become inheritors of all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (D. & C. 132; Rom. 9:4; Gal. 3; 4.)*" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 13.)

A close analysis of the promises shows both their temporal and eternal significance.

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**The Land Promise. Read Genesis 15:18;  
17:8; Abraham 2:6.**

**Temporal Significance**

The land of Canaan was promised to Abraham and his descendants, even though he never personally possessed it (see Genesis 17:7; 13:15; 17:8).

“The Lord gave the promise to Abraham that he should have Palestine, or the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession. Yet, as Stephen said at the time of his martyrdom, Abraham never received as much as a foot of it as a possession while he lived.

“Then what did the Lord mean in making a promise to Abraham of that kind, giving him that portion of the earth as an everlasting possession for himself and his posterity, the righteous part of it, forever? Simply this, that the time would eventually come, after the resurrection from the dead, when Abraham and his children who have been faithful in the keeping of the commandments of the Lord, should possess that land, and they shall also spread forth as far as it is necessary for them to receive an inheritance.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:88.)

**Eternal Significance**

Abraham’s righteous descendants will inherit the earth.

“Following the millennium plus ‘a little season’ (D. & C. 29:22–25), the earth will die, be resurrected, and becoming like a ‘sea of glass’ (D. & C. 130:7), attain unto ‘its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state.’ (D. & C. 77:1–2.) Then the poor and the meek—that is, the godfearing and the righteous—shall inherit the earth; it will become an abiding place for the Father and the Son, and celestial beings will possess it forever and ever. (D. & C. 88:14–26, 111.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 211.)

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**The Posterity Promise. Read Abraham 2:9;  
Genesis 17:4–6; 16; Abraham 3:14.**

**Temporal Significance**

Abraham was one hundred years old before his covenant son, Isaac, was born. Abraham had eight sons in all; however, from Isaac the covenant people developed; through Ishmael came many of the Arab nations (see D&C 132:34). Through Keturah’s sons came the Midianites and others.

“The vast population of the Arab, Moslem, and Israeli world which claim to be descendants of Abraham numbers approximately one hundred million. When one adds to that figure the deceased ancestors, and the estimates of future posterities of those groups, plus other descendants of Abraham such as the past, present, and future members of the Nephite-Lamanite cultures, the lost ten tribes, and the Latter-day Saints, he sees what the Lord meant concerning the innumerable and unmeasurable blessing of posterity.” (Nyman, in *Sperry Lecture Series*, 1975, p. 13.)

**Eternal Significance**

In a literal sense Abraham’s posterity will have no end because his righteous descendants will go on through eternity bringing forth posterity (see D&C 132:30).

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**The Priesthood Promise. Read Abraham  
1:18–19; 2:9–11.**

**Temporal Significance**

As Noah was given the priesthood and commissioned to preach the gospel, so Abraham received the priesthood that he might preach and bless others with the gospel. The mission of the covenant people is to serve the Lord by blessing others with the gospel.

“We go to the promise made to Abraham, which was that in him and in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. Moses, as I have said was of his seed, and he was the deliverer of the whole of that nation. And who were the prophets that existed among ancient Israel? They were descendants of Abraham; and to them came the word of God and the light of revelation. Who was Jesus? After the flesh of the seed of Abraham. Who were his Twelve Apostles? Of the seed of Abraham. Who were the people that came to this continent—Lehi and his family, about 600 years B.C.? Of the seed of Abraham. Who were the Apostles they had among them that spread forth among the millions that then lived upon this continent? Of the seed of Abraham. Who was Joseph Smith? Of the seed of Abraham.” (John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 20:224.)

**Eternal Significance**

As descendants of Abraham, if we remain true and faithful to our charge to bless our own family and others with the blessings of the gospel, we will continue to do so throughout all eternity. Also, we will be heirs to all that the Father has through Christ. (See D&C 84:38–39.)

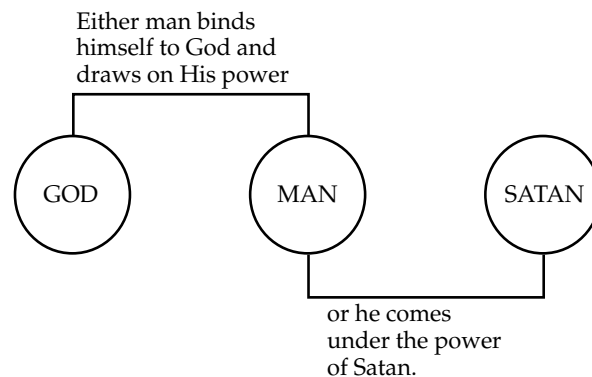
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(5-21) As a second matter for you to consider, note that there are three great intelligent powers in the universe: God, man, and Satan. There is no question about which of those powers is the greatest. God has all power and therefore no one has greater power than He. But of these, who has greater power—man or Satan? Before answering, read the following scriptures, thinking in terms of power.

**Man’s Power. Read D&C 10:5; Ephesians  
6:10–13; Romans 8:35–39.**

**Satan’s Power. Read Moses 4:4; 2 Nephi  
2:29; 28:22–23; Alma 34:35.**

Whether man’s power is greater than Satan’s depends on man’s willingness to bind himself to God and draw on His power. If he does not, then he comes increasingly under Satan’s power and dominion. Man’s choice could be diagramed in this way.



Joseph Smith stated this truth in these words: “The devil has no power over us only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power.” (*Teachings*, p. 181.)  
What is the means of binding oneself to God?

**Read D&C 130:20–21; 82:4–10; 54:3–6.**





# Abraham—A Model of Faith and Righteousness

## (6-1) Introduction

Elder Melvin J. Ballard wrote: “You remember the story of how Abraham’s son came after long years of waiting and was looked upon by his worthy sire, Abraham, as more precious than all his other possessions, yet, in the midst of his rejoicing, Abraham was told to take this only son and offer him as a sacrifice to the Lord. He responded. Can you feel what was in the heart of Abraham on that occasion? You love your son just as Abraham did, perhaps not quite so much, because of the peculiar circumstances, but what do you think was in his heart when he started away from Mother Sarah, and they bade her goodbye? What do you think was in his heart when he saw Isaac bidding farewell to his mother to take that three days’ journey to the appointed place where the sacrifice was to be made? I imagine it was about all Father Abraham could do to keep from showing his great grief and sorrow at that parting, but he and his son trudged along three days toward the appointed place, Isaac carrying the fagots that were to consume the sacrifice. The two travelers rested, finally, at the mountainside, and the men who had accompanied them were told to remain while Abraham and his son started up the hill.

“The boy then said to his father: ‘Why, Father, we have the fagots; we have the fire to burn the sacrifice; but where is the sacrifice?’

“It must have pierced the heart of Father Abraham to hear the trusting and confiding son say: ‘You have forgotten the sacrifice.’ Looking at the youth, his son of promise, the poor father could only say: ‘The Lord will provide.’

“They ascended the mountain, gathered the stones together, and placed the fagots upon them. Then Isaac was bound, hand and foot, kneeling upon the altar. I presume Abraham, like a true father, must have given his son his farewell kiss, his blessing, his love, and his soul must have been drawn out in that hour of agony toward his son who was to die by the hand of his own father. Every step proceeded until the cold steel was drawn, and the hand raised that was to strike the blow to let out the life’s blood.” (“The Sacramental Covenant,” *New Era*, Jan. 1976, pp. 9–10.)

Bear in mind that Abraham was saved from a similar fate instigated in wickedness by his own father. As with most people, Abraham must have abhorred human sacrifice. Why would the Lord require such a trial of his faith? What can be learned from the life of Abraham, who was faithful to the end?

## Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Genesis 18–23.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON GENESIS 18–23

### (6-2) Genesis 18:1–2. Who Visited with Abraham?

“We are not justified in teaching that our Heavenly Father, with other heavenly persons, came down, dusty and weary, and ate with Abraham. This is not taught in the 18th chapter of Genesis. The first verse of that chapter should read as follows: ‘And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre.’ That is a complete thought. The second part of this paragraph has nothing to do with the Lord’s appearing to Abraham . . . : ‘And he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him.’ These three men were mortals. They had bodies and were able to eat, to bathe, and sit and rest from their weariness. Not one of these three was the *Lord*.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:16.)

In the Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 18:23 states definitely that “the angels . . . were holy men, and were sent forth after the order of God.”

### (6-3) Genesis 18:9–15. Sarah Laughed within Herself

Sarah’s astonished laughter at the news that she was to conceive and bear a son should not be interpreted as proving her lack of faith. Often in the scriptures the servants of the Lord are astonished beyond belief at the miraculous goodness of the Lord. Moses could not believe that he was capable of being God’s spokesman with the pharaoh and asked that he receive help (see Exodus 4:10–17). Gideon needed dramatic proof that the Lord wanted him to deliver Israel from the Midianites (see Judges 6:11–24). Hezekiah asked for confirmation that Isaiah’s promise of extended life was really of the Lord (see 2 Kings 20:1–11). Zachariah was struck dumb so that he would know that his wife Elizabeth would conceive (see Luke 1:19–20). And when the disciples saw the resurrected Lord for the first time,

Luke tells us, “they yet believed not for joy” (Luke 24:41). It was the incredible nature of the news that caused Sarah’s response. And after approximately seventy years of childlessness, who could condemn her temporary inability to believe the joyous promise?

#### **(6-4) Genesis 18:16–33. The Power of a Righteous Life**

It is not uncommon to hear a person say, “Can one person really make a difference?” The answer is a definite yes. Alma told the people of Ammonihah that “if it were not for the prayers of the righteous, who are now in the land, that ye would even now be visited with utter destruction” (Alma 10:22). He then warned them, “If ye will cast out the righteous from among you then will not the Lord stay his hand” (Alma 10:23). Like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, the people of Ammonihah refused to repent or recognize that the few righteous among them were their only protection, so they killed them and cast them out (see Alma 14:9–11; 15:1). Therefore, a short time later the entire city was destroyed (see Alma 16:1–3, 9–10). The Lord also indicated that the United States would bring judgments upon itself for driving out the Saints (see D&C 136:34–36).

#### **(6-5) Genesis 18:19. “He Will Command His Children . . . and They Shall Keep the Way of the Lord”**

This verse records one of the keys to Abraham’s righteousness. Not only did he keep the commandments but he taught his household to do so too. Of this fact President Kimball said:

“Abraham’s desire to do God’s will in all things led him to preside over his family in righteousness. Despite all his other responsibilities, he knew that if he failed to teach and exemplify the gospel to his children he would have failed to fulfill the most important stewardship he had received.” (“The Example of Abraham,” *Ensign*, June 1975, p. 5.)

#### **(6-6) Genesis 19:4–11. Why Did Lot Offer His Daughters to the Wicked Sodomites?**

Many scholars have tried to justify Lot’s shocking offer of his daughters as substitutes for the men on the basis of the strict laws of hospitality and protection that prevailed in the ancient Middle East. The Joseph Smith Translation, however, records that when Lot refused to allow the men of Sodom to satisfy their evil and depraved desires, they became angry and said, “We will have the men, and thy daughters also.” Then the comment is added, “Now this was after the wickedness of Sodom” (JST, Genesis 19:11–12; see also vv. 13–15).

#### **(6-7) Genesis 19:13. What Was the Wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah?**

In the Genesis account it is clear that the people of these two cities had become extremely immoral, engaging in homosexuality and other abuses. But the prophet Ezekiel gave greater insight when he said, “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom,



*Mount Sodom, at the south end of the Dead Sea*

pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.” (Ezekiel 16:49–50.) James said that pure religion was to “visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep [oneself] unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). Sodom and Gomorrah not only had partaken of the filthiness of sexual immorality but had rejected their fellow men in need.

#### **(6-8) Genesis 19:26. Lot’s Wife and the Pillar of Salt**

The account of Lot’s wife being turned into a pillar of salt has puzzled many commentators. Was this event a literal thing, or was it figurative? There are two indications in the scriptures that the phrase “looked back” was an idiomatic way of saying “she turned back” or “returned to Sodom.” When warning the disciples of the destruction which was going to come upon Jerusalem, the Savior warned them to flee without delay, not even going into the house to get their possessions. Jesus said, “And he that is in the field, let him likewise *not return back. Remember Lot’s wife*” (Luke 17:31–32; emphasis added). He then admonished them that he who seeks to save his life will lose it, and he who loses his life will find it. Elder Bruce R. McConkie paraphrased those verses in these words:

“Look not back to Sodom and the wealth and luxury you are leaving. Stay not in the burning house, in the hope of salvaging your treasures, lest the flame destroy you; but flee, flee to the mountains.

“Seek temporal things and lose eternal life; sacrifice the things of this life and gain eternal life.” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:645.)

The implication is that Lot’s wife started back to Sodom, perhaps to save some possessions, and was caught in the destruction.

In the Doctrine and Covenants is a scripture that uses the same terminology as Genesis 19:26. After warning the Saints to flee spiritual Babylon, which is wickedness, the Lord says, “He that goeth, let him

*not look back lest sudden destruction shall come upon him*" (D&C 133:15; emphasis added). Again, the implication is that of a return to wickedness.

Most scholars agree that the most probable site of Sodom is now covered by the southern part of the Dead Sea, a body of water with a high salt content. If Lot's wife returned to Sodom, she would have been caught in the destruction. Her becoming a pillar of salt could be a figurative way of expressing this outcome.

But whatever it was that happened to Lot's wife, it is clear that she perished.

#### **(6-9) Genesis 19:30–38. The Sin of Lot's Daughters**

The account of the incestuous seduction of Lot by his two daughters is a shocking one but one which, again, illustrates that the Old Testament records the evils of the people as well as their righteousness. There is no way to justify the wickedness of what the two daughters did, although it may be better understood when it is considered that the daughters may have thought that the whole world had been destroyed in the holocaust that befell Sodom and Gomorrah and that Lot was the only source of children left to them. Moses may have included this account in the record because it shows the beginnings of the Moabites and the Ammonites, two peoples that would play an important role in the history of the people of Israel.

#### **(6-10) Genesis 20:1–18**

For more information on why Abraham called Sarah his sister, see Reading 5-5.

#### **(6-11) Genesis 22:1–19. The Sacrifice of Isaac—A Similitude**

In the Book of Mormon, Jacob clearly teaches that Abraham's willingness to offer up Isaac is "a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son" (Jacob 4:5). A similitude is an object, act, or event in physical reality which corresponds to (is similar to or is a simulation of) some greater spiritual reality. (For a discussion of why the Lord uses similitudes, see Enrichment Section C, "Symbolism and Typology in the Old Testament.")

Most readers of the Old Testament can immediately see the similarities between the test of Abraham and the sacrifice of the Father, but many miss the precise detail of this similitude that God used to teach about the future sacrifice of His only Son. The following are some of these significant details.

Abraham obviously was a type or similitude of the Father. Interestingly enough, his name, *Abram*, means "exalted father," and *Abraham* means "father of a great multitude" (see Genesis 17:5). Both are names appropriate of Heavenly Father.

Isaac was a type of the Son of God. One of the meanings of his name is "he shall rejoice." Like Jesus, he was the product of a miraculous birth. Isaac's birth certainly was not as miraculous as the birth of Jesus through Mary, but at age ninety, Sarah too was a woman for whom birth was not possible

by all usual standards. Yet, through the intervention of God, she conceived and bore a son. Paul called Isaac the "only begotten son" (Hebrews 11:17) when he referred to this event.

The Lord not only asked Abraham to perform the act of similitude of His own future actions but indicated that it had to be in a place specified by Him. This place was Moriah, "upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Genesis 22:2). (Today Mount Moriah is a major hill of Jerusalem.) The site known traditionally as the place where Abraham offered Isaac is now the site of the Dome of the Rock, a beautiful Moslem mosque. A few hundred yards to the north on a higher point of that same hill system is another world-famous site known as Gordon's Calvary. Its Hebrew name was Golgotha. Not only did Abraham perform the similitude, but he performed it in the same area in which the Father would make the sacrifice of His Son.

When they arrived at Moriah, the Genesis account says, "Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son" (Genesis 22:6). The Joseph Smith Translation, however, reads, "laid it upon his back" (JST, Genesis 22:7). Some have seen in this action a similarity to Christ's carrying of the cross upon His shoulders on the way to His Crucifixion (see Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:139; John 19:17).



*"Take now thy son" (Genesis 22:2).*

Isaac voluntarily submitted to Abraham. This important parallel is often overlooked. The Old Testament does not give enough detail to indicate exactly how old Isaac was at the time of this event, but it is possible that he was an adult. Immediately following the account of the sacrifice on Mount Moriah is recorded the statement that Sarah died at the age of 127 (see Genesis 23:1). Thus, Isaac would have been 37 at the time of her death. Even if the journey to Moriah had happened several years before Sarah's death, Isaac could have been in his thirties, as was the Savior at the time of His Crucifixion. Nevertheless, Isaac's exact age is not really important. What is significant is that Abraham was well over a hundred years old and Isaac was most likely a strong young man who could have put up a fierce resistance had he chosen to do so. In fact, Isaac submitted willingly to what his father intended, just as the Savior would do.

Once the event was over and all ended happily, Abraham named the place *Jehovah-jireh*, which the King James Version translates as "in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen" (Genesis 22:14). Adam Clarke, citing other scholars, said that the proper translation should be "on this mount the Lord shall be seen." Clarke then concluded: "From this it appears that the sacrifice offered by Abraham was understood to be a *representative* one, and a tradition was kept up that Jehovah should be seen in a sacrificial way on this mount. And this renders . . . more than probable . . . that Abraham offered Isaac on that *very mountain* on which, in the fulness of time, Jesus suffered." (*Bible Commentary*, 1:141.) Jesus was sentenced to death within the walls of the Antonia fortress, which was only about a hundred yards from the traditional site of Abraham's sacrifice. He was put to death at Golgotha, part of the same ridge system as Moriah.

Scholars not only have noted the significance of the site for the sacrifice of Jesus Himself but also have pointed out that it related to the site of Solomon's temple where the sacrifices under the Mosaic dispensation took place. "The place of sacrifice points with peculiar clearness [to] Mount Moriah, upon which under the legal economy *all the typical sacrifices were offered to Jehovah*; . . . that by this one true sacrifice the shadows of the typical sacrifices might be rendered both real and true" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:1:253; emphasis added).

#### (6-12) Genesis 22:1. Did God "Tempt" Abraham?

The word translated as "tempt" in the King James Version comes from the Hebrew word *nissah*, which means "to test, try, or prove." The test given to Abraham had two aspects. First, he was asked to give up something very precious to him. To kill one's child would be horrible enough but to kill the child that had come after decades of fruitless waiting, the child promised by holy men sent from God, the child in whom the covenant was to be fulfilled, must have been a test beyond comprehension. The willingness of Abraham to give up something as dear as Isaac sharply contrasts with the reluctance of the rich



"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son" (Genesis 22:6).

young ruler who asked the Savior what he must do to be saved. When told he should sell all of his possessions and follow the Master, "he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:22).

But an equally difficult, if not greater, test was what could be described as the question of the integrity of God. Abraham himself had nearly lost his life on an idolatrous altar and had been saved by the direct intervention of the Lord (see Abraham 1:12-20). Abraham knew that the law of God forbids human sacrifice or murder of any sort. Surely one would wonder at such a command, asking himself, "Can this be from God? Does God contradict himself?" And then to know that, additionally, it would mean the end of the very covenant line that God had Himself promised to establish would surely be almost overwhelming.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball commented on this aspect of the test: "Exceeding faith was shown by Abraham when the superhuman test was applied to him. His young 'child of promise,' destined to be the father of empires, must now be offered upon the sacrificial altar. It was God's command, but it seemed so contradictory! How could his son, Isaac, be the father of an uncountable posterity if in his youth his mortal life was to be terminated? Why should he, Abraham, be called upon to do this revolting deed? It was irreconcilable, impossible! And yet he believed God. His undaunted faith carried him with breaking heart toward the land of Moriah with this young son who little suspected the agonies through which his father must have been passing." (In *Conference Report*, Oct. 1952, p. 48.)

Little wonder that throughout the scriptures Abraham is spoken of again and again as a great example of one with faith, of one who was obedient.

**(6-13) Genesis 23:1–2. The Greatness of Sarah**

It is often noted that Abraham is the father of the faithful and a tremendous example of faith and righteousness. Yet Sarah stood by his side throughout his life, not often in the limelight, but always as a great example of womanhood, faith, and righteousness. The Doctrine and Covenants speaks of the righteous as being the seed of Abraham (see D&C 84:34), but Peter also suggested that righteous women can be called the daughters of Sarah (see 1 Peter 3:1–6, especially v. 6).

**POINTS TO PONDER**

**(6-14)** While you ponder the life of Abraham and his marvelous response to the testing of the Lord, remember what the Lord said to the Saints of this dispensation. The Saints in Jackson County had been driven out of their homes into the bitter winter of Missouri. Their suffering was intense and lives were even lost. At that time the Lord spoke to the Saints through Joseph Smith and said: “Therefore, they must needs be chastened and tried, even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son. For all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me, cannot be sanctified.” (D&C 101:4–5.)

A few months earlier He had said: “For he will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you herewith. And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name’s sake, shall find it again, even life eternal. Therefore, be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy. For if ye will not abide in my covenant ye are not worthy of me.” (D&C 98:12–15.)

This seems like such a high standard. Why must one be tested and chastened before he can be sanctified? Why can a person not be worthy of God unless he is willing to abide in the covenant even to death? To understand these questions and to gain greater insight into why Abraham had to prove himself, think in the eternal perspective for a moment. Imagine the disastrous consequences of making a person a god



“And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns” (Genesis 22:13).

who was not perfect in every respect. How would the universe survive if it were controlled by a god who could not withstand even intense pressure? Where would we be now if our God had not been disposed to endure the suffering of seeing His Only Begotten Son go to the cross? If Abraham had failed his test, he would have lost his position. If God the Father had failed the same test there would have been no Atonement and all mankind would have “become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil. . . . And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils . . . to be shut out from the presence of our God.” (2 Nephi 9:8–9.)

As you ponder from this eternal perspective, write a one-page paper entitled “Why Does the Lord Test Us?” As you write this paper, you may wish to consider Ether 12:27; D&C 101:35–38; 122:5–9.

You may also wish to include your thoughts in your journal.

**(6-15)** Another aspect of Abraham’s test has great significance for us. To understand it we must carefully follow the chain of reasoning given in *Lectures on Faith*, compiled under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith, which shows how a person develops faith sufficient to achieve salvation. The major concepts in this chain are as follows:

1. Three kinds of knowledge are necessary if a person is to have faith:

“Let us here observe, that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

“First, the idea that he actually exists.

“Secondly, a *correct* idea of his character, perfections, and attributes.

“Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will. For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (3:2–5.)

2. The knowledge that one’s life is pleasing to God is critical in the development of faith:

“An actual knowledge to any person, that the course of life which he pursues is according to the will of God, is essentially necessary to enable him to have that confidence in God without which no person can obtain eternal life. It was this that enabled the ancient saints to endure all their afflictions and persecutions, and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing (not believing merely) that they had a more enduring substance. . . .

“For a man to lay down his all, his character and reputation, his honor, and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also—counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ—requires more than mere belief or supposition that he is doing the will of God; but actual knowledge, realizing that,

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when these sufferings are ended, he will enter into eternal rest, and be a partaker of the glory of God." (6:25.)

3. The only way a person can know his life pleases God is to be willing to sacrifice whatever God asks of him:

"Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life." (6:7.)

4. Any reluctance to sacrifice whatever God requires will, to that degree, lessen our ability to have faith in God.

"But those who have not made this sacrifice to God do not know that the course which they pursue is well pleasing in his sight; for whatever may be their belief or their opinion, it is a matter of doubt and uncertainty in their mind; and where doubt and uncertainty are there faith is not, nor can it be. For doubt and faith do not exist in the same person at the same time; so that persons whose minds are under doubts and fears cannot have unshaken confidence; and where unshaken confidence is not there faith is weak; and where faith is weak the persons will not be able to contend against all the opposition,

tribulations, and afflictions which they will have to encounter in order to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus; and they will grow weary in their minds, and the adversary will have power over them and destroy them." (6:12.)

Now apply that chain of reasoning to the case of Abraham and answer the following questions.

1. Before the Lord could bless Abraham with absolute faith, what did Abraham have to have?

2. How was Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac related to Abraham's knowledge that his life was pleasing to God?

3. Would you say that Abraham's test was a blessing? In what way?

Note what George Q. Cannon said about why the Lord tested Abraham.

"Why did the Lord ask such things of Abraham? Because, knowing what his future would be and that he would be the father of an innumerable posterity, he was determined to test him. God did not do this for His own sake for He knew by His foreknowledge what Abraham would do; but the purpose was to impress upon Abraham a lesson and to enable him to attain unto knowledge that he could not obtain in any other way. That is why God tries all of us. It is not for His own knowledge for He knows all things beforehand. He knows all your lives and everything you will do. But He tries us for our own good that we may know ourselves; for it is most important that a man should know himself.

"He required Abraham to submit to this trial because He intended to give him glory, exaltation and honor; He intended to make him a king and a priest, to share with Himself the glory, power and dominion which He exercised." (George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, 1:113.)

What implications does the testing of Abraham have for you?

Note also the indication of God's knowledge of Abraham's good character (see Genesis 18:17-19) long before the test. What does His foreknowledge of Abraham have to do with His knowledge of you?





# The Covenant Line Continues with Isaac and Jacob

## (7-1) Introduction

Why did the Lord choose Isaac and Jacob? How were they chosen to perpetuate the covenant the Lord had made with Abraham? The purpose of this chapter is to assist you in picking out the significant events as the God of Abraham became the God of Isaac and Jacob. You will learn that of the eight sons of Abraham recorded in scripture the Lord singled out Isaac to become the heir to the covenant. Later, God chose Jacob over Esau, even though Esau was the firstborn and seemed to be his father's favorite.

Isaac and Jacob were foreordained to their responsibilities. Through their personal worthiness, however, they justified their callings in the covenant line. Since the time of these mighty patriarchs, all of the chosen people of the Lord have come through their lineage or have been adopted into their lineage. In the Old Testament, Jehovah is repeatedly called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Thus, it is significant that you understand not only who Abraham is but also why the Lord chose Isaac and Jacob to be the first of the house of Israel.

As you begin to study the expansion of the covenant line, remember one thing. Sometimes we tend to oversimplify the concept of a covenant people and the heritage of certain groups of people. For example, we tend to think of the Arabs as descendants of Ishmael or Esau, the Jews as descendants of Judah, the American Indians and South Pacific Islanders as descendants of Laman, and so forth. In broad terms all of these statements are true, of course, but through centuries of intermarriage and conversion, the "pure blood lines" (an impossible term in reality) of the various ancestors have been vastly intermingled. Surely down through nearly four thousand years the descendants of Isaac have intermarried with the descendants of Ishmael and the other sons of Abraham. We know that after the ten tribes were taken into captivity the term *Jew* was used in a nationalistic sense (to mean a member of the kingdom of Judah) and not just in a tribal sense (to mean a descendant of Judah, son of Jacob). Thus, Lehi, who was of Manasseh (see Alma 10:3), and Ishmael, who was of Ephraim (see Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:184–85), were Jews, that is, were living in Judah.

In the Book of Mormon, *Lamanite* was used in a spiritual sense (to mean one who had apostatized from the truth), as well as in the sense of lineage from Laman (see 4 Nephi 1:38). A later example of how blood lines mix is found in the conversion of a whole nation to Judaism in the eighth century A.D. The majority of the people in the kingdom of the Khazars, in what is present-day Russia, became Jews

by religion (see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Khazars," 10:944–47). Many modern Jews from Europe can trace their lineage to the Khazars who, before 740 A.D., were Gentiles.

The black Africans of Ethiopia claim to be descendants of King David through the marriage of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (see 1 Kings 10:1–13; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Ethiopia," 6:943). So it is possible that the blood of Israel spread through Africa as well.

Even though there are groups today that could be thought of as predominantly Israel or predominantly Gentile, almost certainly blood of both lines can be found in most peoples of the earth. The important thing is that being Israel, or a covenant person, involves faithfulness as well as blood lineage. Thus, as Nephi said, repentance and faith in the Holy One of Israel is what determines whether one is of the covenant (see 2 Nephi 30:2), a concept also taught by Paul (see Romans 2:28–29). In other words, while the blood lineage is significant, it can be overridden by one's own faithfulness or lack of faithfulness. You will see this concept taught from the beginning as you read the early history of the covenant people.

## Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Genesis 24–36.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON GENESIS 24–36

### (7-2) Genesis 24–28. When and Where Did the Events in the Lives of Isaac and Jacob Take Place?

From chronological information in Genesis and the book of Moses it is estimated that Isaac was born approximately 1900 B.C. Isaac was forty years of age when he married Rebekah. Esau and Jacob were born twenty years later, or about 1840 B.C. Jacob's flight to Padan-aram, or Haran, likely occurred about 1800 B.C., which means the twelve sons would have been born between 1800 B.C. and 1780 B.C. In the line of Adam's royal generations Abraham was the twentieth, Isaac the twenty-first, and Jacob the twenty-second.

According to the information that has come down to modern times, Isaac spent his whole life in an area that could be encompassed by a circle approximately one hundred miles in diameter. On the northern edge of this circle would be Jerusalem, where Abraham took his son. Most of the circle would be in that part of southern Israel known as the Negev. Jacob, on the other hand, traveled much farther, going to Haran in the northern regions of the Euphrates River, and later, down into Egypt where his son Joseph preserved him in his old age.

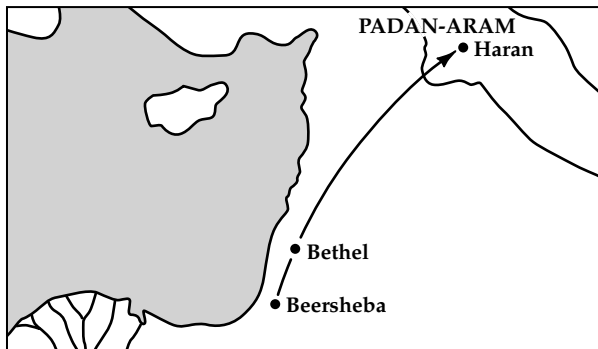
The Negev responds to agricultural pursuits that harmonize with its arid character. It appears that Isaac, a herdsman, and his large household found sufficient pasture and other means of subsistence there. They had to move about, however, because of famines that occurred. Centuries of conflict, neglect, and natural causes have since turned the Negev into a barren area that covers nearly half of modern Israel. In recent years the Israelis have been turning the Negev into a productive area once again.

Chiefly, Isaac lived in three areas of the Negev: Beer-lahai-roi, Gerar, and Beersheba. Like his father, Isaac dug many wells. His tribe and flocks often went where the water was to be found. Isaac was a peaceful man, according to the record, choosing to move on and dig new wells rather than fight for the ones he had already dug. The Lord prospered him exceedingly.

Gerar is southwest of Jerusalem; Beersheba is southeast of Gerar and thirty-five miles due west of the south end of the Dead Sea. Isaac's clan established Beersheba, and the community since then has always been associated with his name. Beersheba is fifty miles south of Jerusalem and in Old Testament times marked the southern border of the Judean kingdom.

While fleeing to Padan-aram (Haran), Jacob had a remarkable vision at Bethel, where his grandfather, Abraham, had built an altar many years before.

Eleven miles north of Jerusalem, Bethel later became the religious center of the Northern Kingdom.



Jacob's journey to Haran in Padan-aram

### (7-3) Genesis 24. Finding a Wife for Isaac

This chapter of the Old Testament contains one of the most remarkable stories of commitment and faith in the scriptures. The following items are of interest:

*Verses 2, 8.* The Joseph Smith Translation account records that the servant put his hand under the *hand*,

rather than the *thigh*, of Abraham. The gesture seems to have been a token of the covenant being made between the two men, perhaps similar to our shaking hands.

*Verses 12–14.* These verses show that the servant, like Abraham, was a man of great faith. Abraham had told him that his errand was a commandment of the Lord (v. 7). So when faced with a tremendously challenging task, the servant turned to the Lord for help. Instead of just asking the Lord to solve his problem, he presented a plan for the Lord to confirm.

*Verse 16.* The King James Version suggests that Rebekah was very beautiful, but the Joseph Smith Translation says that she was the most beautiful woman the servant had ever seen. The Joseph Smith Translation reads, "And the damsel being a virgin, very fair to look upon, such as the servant of Abraham had not seen, neither had any man known the like unto her . . ." (JST, Genesis 24:16).

*Verse 19.* Considering the capacity of a thirsty camel, one can well imagine how much effort it took for Rebekah to draw water by hand for ten camels. Not only was she beautiful but she was a willing worker and was quick to serve.

*Verse 58.* This verse gives a great insight into the faith of Rebekah. For a young woman to leave her home, travel to a new country completely foreign to her, and marry a man she had never met would present a tremendous challenge. One would expect that she would have wanted to stay with her family as long as possible, but when given her choice, she said simply, "I will go."

*Verse 67.* When one contemplates the faith and beauty of Rebekah and how the servant of Abraham was led to her by the hand of the Lord, the comment "and he loved her" is not surprising.

### (7-4) Genesis 25:8. What Does It Mean When the Record Says Abraham "Was Gathered to His People"?

The early patriarchs had a clear knowledge of gospel principles taught to them from Adam down to Abraham. The phrase "gathered to his people" is one more evidence of their gospel knowledge. Two Bible scholars commented on the significance of that phrase: "This expression . . . denotes the reunion in Sheol with friends who have gone before, and therefore presupposes faith in the personal continuance of a man after death, as a presentiment which the promises of God had exalted in the case of the patriarchs into a firm assurance of faith [see Hebrews 11:13]" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:1:263). *Sheol* is the Hebrew word for the world of spirits where one goes when one dies, the equivalent of the spirit world. The Hebrews had not only a concept of life after death but also a correct concept of the intermediate place between death and the Resurrection.

### (7-5) Genesis 25:16. The Twelve Tribes of Ishmael

The twelve tribes who eventually descended from Jacob are much discussed, but it should be remembered that another twelve tribes also came from Ishmael.

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**(7-6) Genesis 25:21. “Because She Was Barren”**

The brevity of the historical account in Genesis tends to compress the time it covers. The simple statement about Rebekah’s barrenness is more poignant when one remembers the great value people placed on childbearing in those times and that Isaac and Rebekah went childless for twenty years (see vv. 20, 26).

**(7-7) Genesis 25:27–28. Jacob Was a Plain Man**

In contrast to Esau, who is described as a “cunning hunter,” Jacob is called a “plain man” (v. 27). The Hebrew word used there means “whole, complete, or perfect,” so it is a very positive adjective.

The *loved* of verse 28 is used in the sense of “favored” or “preferred.” Thus, Isaac favored Esau and Rebekah favored Jacob.

**(7-8) Genesis 25:30**

*Edom* means “red.” The Edomites (descendants of Esau) played a significant role in the Old Testament, usually as antagonists to the Israelites. They inhabited the territory in and about Mount Seir between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea (see Genesis 36). Esau’s descendants today are also found among the Arab nations.

**(7-9) Genesis 25:32**

This rationalization seems to reflect more scorn than hunger. Jacob would almost certainly have succored Esau freely if his life were in jeopardy. The point of this account seems to be primarily to show how little value Esau placed on the birthright. His immediate bodily needs were more important to him than the rights of the covenant. Additional evidence of this attitude is Esau’s marriages to Canaanite women, which broke the covenant line (see Genesis 26:34–35).

The birthright itself should have been a treasured thing. The highly desirable birthright blessing is the right to the presidency, or keys, of the priesthood. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

“It appears that anciently under the Patriarchal Order certain special blessings, rights, powers, and privileges—collectively called the *birthright*—passed from the father to his *firstborn son*. (Gen. 43:33.) In later ages special blessings and prerogatives have been poured out upon *all* the worthy descendants of some who gained special blessings and birthrights anciently. (3 Ne. 20:25–27.) Justification for this system, in large part, lies in the pre-existent preparation and training of those born in the lines destined to inherit preferential endowments.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 87.)

In the patriarchal order this birthright was passed from father to son, who was often, but not always, the eldest son. Righteousness was a more important factor than being the firstborn.

**(7-10) Genesis 27:1–40. Jacob Obtains the Birthright from Esau**

The story of how Jacob obtained the birthright blessing from Isaac with the help of his mother is a troubling one in many respects. Typically, commentators who do not have access to latter-day scriptures come to one of two conclusions: either they emphasize Esau’s unworthiness for the birthright and therefore justify the deception, or else they criticize Jacob’s shrewd and crafty nature.

A more complete knowledge of gospel principles, however, may pose some additional problems. Can a person deceive a patriarch and get a blessing that belongs to someone else? Was Jacob a deceitful and crafty man? Was Isaac blindly favorable to certain children? Can one be dishonest and still get a valid patriarchal blessing? The following points should be carefully considered:

1. As the record in Genesis now reads, there is little option but to conclude that Rebekah and Jacob deliberately deceived Isaac and that Jacob explicitly lied to his father (see v. 24). Rebekah and Jacob believed the deception was necessary because Isaac obviously favored Esau. Joseph Smith, however, taught that certain errors had crept into the Bible through “ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests” (*Teachings*, p. 327). For example, a comparison of the early chapters of Genesis with the fuller accounts revealed to the Prophet (now found in the books of Moses and Abraham) shows how much has been lost. It is possible that the story of Jacob’s obtaining the birthright has also lost much or been changed by unbelievers. These changes could then explain the contradictions.

2. Rebekah knew by personal revelation that Jacob was to be the son of the covenant (see Genesis 25:22–23). Jacob reluctantly gave in to his mother’s wishes after she told him that she would take the responsibility for what they were about to do.

3. Although the early patriarchs and their wives were great and righteous men and women who eventually were exalted and perfected (see D&C 132:37), this fact does not mean that they were perfect in every respect while in mortality. If the story is correct as found in Genesis, Isaac may have been temporarily shortsighted in favoring Esau. Or Rebekah may have had insufficient faith in the Lord to let Him work His will and therefore undertook a plan of her own to ensure that the promised blessings would come to pass. These shortcomings do not lessen their later greatness and their eventual perfection.

4. Whatever the explanation for the circumstances surrounding the reception of the blessing, one thing is perfectly clear. Priesthood holders are given the keys to bind *and loose* on earth and have that action validated in heaven (see Matthew 16:19). Once Isaac learned of the deception, he could have revoked the blessing and given it to Esau. Instead, he told Esau, “Yea, and he shall be blessed” (Genesis 27:33). Later, when Jacob was preparing to leave for Padan-aram to escape Esau’s wrath, Isaac clearly gave him the

blessing of Abraham (see Genesis 28:3–4), an additional proof that Jacob received the blessing meant for him and that Isaac confirmed it upon him. Thus, if the Genesis record is correct as it now is, Jacob, like others, received a call and a promise of eventual blessings because of his potential and in spite of his weaknesses. Like anyone, he had then to live worthily in order to obtain the promised blessings.

**(7-11) Genesis 27:34–46. Subsequent Effects of Jacob’s Blessing**

“Esau was also blessed—with the bounties of the earth, and with the potential to cast off the yoke of oppression; but like most of us he valued what he had lost after it was gone and rued the day he had traded the birthright off to Jacob. He bitterly resolved to get revenge by fratricide when he saw the blessing of transmittal of the birthright actually confirmed upon the head of him to whom he had bartered the right to it. The alert and resourceful Rebekah averted a double tragedy (loss of both sons—one by murder and one by execution, as the law of Genesis 9:6 would require) by proposing to Isaac that they send Jacob away to find a proper wife in her home land. Thus she would remove him from harm proposed by Esau until feelings could cool. The proposition that he be sent for a proper wife apparently was approved immediately by Isaac, for doubtless he saw that it was true, as Rebekah said, that their life’s mission would be frustrated if Jacob married as Esau had.” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:47.)

**(7-12) Genesis 28:10–19. The Vision of Jacob’s Ladder at Bethel**

Two comments by latter-day prophets give a greater understanding of the significance and meaning of Jacob’s experience at Bethel. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, speaking of Paul’s comment about one who was caught up to the third kingdom (see 2 Corinthians 12:2), “Paul ascended into the third heavens, and he could understand the three principal rounds of Jacob’s ladder—the telestial, the terrestrial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms” (*Teachings*, pp. 304–5).

President Marion G. Romney explained why this vision of heaven was shown in the form of a ladder and why the name of the place where it happened was called Bethel:

“When Jacob traveled from Beersheba toward Haran, he had a dream in which he saw himself on the earth at the foot of a ladder that reached to heaven where the Lord stood above it. He beheld angels ascending and descending thereon, and Jacob realized that the covenants he made with the Lord there were the rungs on the ladder that he himself would have to climb in order to obtain the promised blessings—blessings that would entitle him to enter heaven and associate with the Lord.

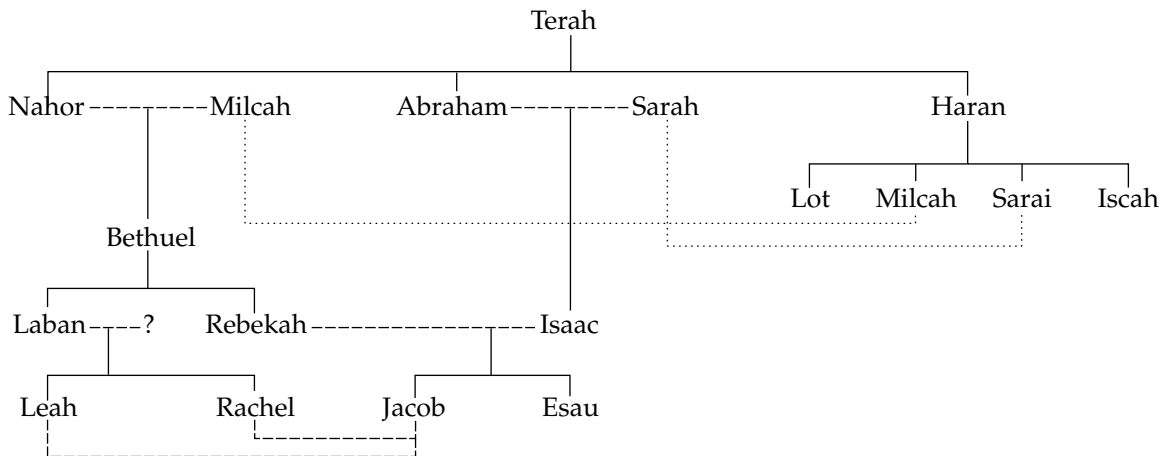
“Because he had met the Lord and entered into covenants with him there, Jacob considered the site so sacred that he named the place Bethel, a contraction of Beth-Elohim, which means literally ‘the House of the Lord.’ He said of it: ‘. . . this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’ (Gen. 28:17.)

“Jacob not only passed through the gate of heaven, but by living up to every covenant he also went all the way in. Of him and his forebears Abraham and Isaac, the Lord has said: ‘. . . because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.’ (D&C 132:37.)

“Temples are to us all what Bethel was to Jacob. Even more, they are also the gates to heaven for all of our unendowed kindred dead. We should all do our duty in bringing our loved ones through them.” (“Temples—The Gates to Heaven,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1971, p. 16.)

**(7-13) Genesis 29:12. How Were Jacob and His Wives Related?**

The following genealogy lines show clearly that each of the three great patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—married relatives. (The broken lines show marriages, and the dotted lines show individuals who are the same.)



Abraham married Sarah, who was his niece; Isaac married Rebekah, who was his first cousin once removed; and Jacob married Leah and Rachel, who were his first cousins.

**(7-14) Genesis 29:17. Leah was “Tender Eyed”**

The Hebrew word translated as “tender” means “soft, delicate, or lovely.” The fact that this trait is emphasized for Leah, while Rachel is described as “beautiful and well-favoured,” that is, beautiful in every respect, seems to suggest that Leah’s eyes were her most attractive feature.

**(7-15) Genesis 29:20–30. The Marriage of Jacob to Leah and Rachel**

Here is given the first glimpse of Laban’s crafty nature. After promising Rachel to Jacob for seven years of service, Laban sent Leah to Jacob’s tent to consummate the marriage. The modern reader may find it hard to believe that Jacob did not discover the switch until it was morning; however, the following possibilities could explain the success of Laban’s ruse. As sisters, Rachel and Leah may have been quite similar in height, weight, and general appearance. Second, the women of Haran sometimes veiled themselves (see Genesis 24:65). Third, Laban was a shepherd. If he was a typical shepherd of ancient times, he dwelt in tents instead of in permanent dwellings. The inside of a tent at night can be very dark. And finally, knowing what the reaction of Jacob would be if he discovered the substitution early,

Laban may have told Leah to speak as little as possible so as not to give the deception away before it was too late to change it.

Though Laban demanded another seven years for Rachel’s hand, he allowed Jacob to marry her once the seven days of wedding feasts for Leah were finished and to fulfill his indebtedness after the marriage. The gift of the handmaidens to each daughter made the servants the direct property of each wife, not of Jacob. Thus, later, when the handmaids had children, the children were viewed legally as the children of Rachel and Leah.

**(7-16) Genesis 29:31. Did Jacob “Hate” Leah?**

The Hebrew word *sahnay* does not mean “hate” as the term is used today, but rather conveys the idea of “loving less.” A better translation would be, “when the Lord saw that Leah was loved less or was not as favored,” he opened her womb.

**(7-17) Genesis 29:31 to 30:24. The Children of Israel**

The scriptures in this chapter indicate that each child born to Jacob was given a name which reflected the feelings of his parents. There was a tremendous competitive spirit between the wives. Being able to bear a male child for their husband was a great honor. Rachel apparently was very sad that she did not have a child until later in her life. When she finally bore a son the name she gave him indicated her feeling for him and the hope she had in the future. The twelve sons of Jacob are listed below.

Mother	Name	Meaning	Reason for Name
Leah	Reuben	See a son	Joy for having a son (see Genesis 29:32).
Leah	Simeon	Hearing	Because the Lord heard that she was hated (see Genesis 29:33).
Leah	Levi	Joined	“This time will my husband be joined unto me” (Genesis 29:34).
Leah	Judah	Praise	“Now I will praise the Lord” (Genesis 29:35).
Bilhah	Dan	Judging	“God hath judged me” (Genesis 30:6).
Bilhah	Naphtali	Wrestling	“With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister” (Genesis 30:8).
Zilpah	Gad	Troop	“Leah said, A troop cometh” (Genesis 30:11).
Zilpah	Asher	My happiness	“Leah said, Happy am I” (Genesis 30:13).
Leah	Issachar	A reward	God hath given me my reward (Genesis 30:18).
Leah	Zebulun	Dwelling	“Now will my husband dwell with me” (Genesis 30:20).
Rachel	Joseph	Adding	“The Lord shall add to me another son” (Genesis 30:24).
Rachel	Benjamin	Son of my right hand	“You are the son of my right hand” (see Genesis 35:18).

**(7-18) Genesis 30:14–22. What Are Mandrakes and Why Did Rachel Want Them?**

Although Bible scholars are not sure exactly what plant is meant by the word *mandrake*, the significance of this plant to Rachel and Leah is clear. “The Hebrew name denotes love fruit. The fruit had a pleasant taste and odor, and was supposed to ensure conception.” (Bible Dictionary, s.v. “mandrakes.”) In other words, the mandrakes were thought to enhance a woman’s fertility and ability to have children. Knowledge of this belief helps explain the interchange between Rachel and Leah. Rachel desired the mandrakes so that she could at last bear children of her own. As has already been seen, there was a fierce competition between the sisters in this regard. Leah’s response was, therefore, equally natural. She indicated that Rachel had already taken her husband, which probably meant only that Rachel had the first place in his affections. (Some scholars, however, believe that this passage means that Jacob actually lived in Rachel’s tent rather than in Leah’s tent.) The one advantage Leah had was her ability to bear children, while Rachel could not. In essence she told Rachel that it would be foolish for her to give Rachel her mandrakes and help her have children, for this would only lessen Leah’s one advantage (v. 15). So Rachel made a counter offer. She promised that she would encourage Jacob to go to Leah that night if she, Rachel, could have the mandrakes (v. 15). Leah agreed and told Jacob. Out of the agreement Leah conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son (vv. 17–18). She later bore another son and Jacob’s daughter Dinah (vv. 19–21).

Although not stated specifically, the record implies that the mandrakes did nothing for Rachel. Finally, Rachel did conceive, but it was not because of mandrakes. Rather, “God hearkened to her, and opened her womb” (v. 22).

**(7-19) Genesis 30:37–43. Did the Peeled Rods Influence the Conception of the Flocks of Jacob?**

Jacob’s peeling of branches and placing them before the animals so that when they conceived they would bear multicolored offspring seems to be a



*Typical Middle Eastern sheep*

reflection of a common superstition that the conception of offspring is influenced by what the mother experiences or sees at the time of conception. Nothing is known by modern science to explain any relationship between what Jacob did and what happened in the hereditary patterns of the animals. Perhaps something is missing from the text. Perhaps the Lord was just taking advantage of the virility of crossbred animals. Divine intervention certainly played a part. In any event, Jacob’s herds grew and the Lord blessed him. Also, Jacob’s separation of the flocks (v. 40) follows principles of good animal husbandry and would have increased the likelihood of having multi-colored animals.

**(7-20) Genesis 31:4**

It is significant to note that Jacob counseled with his wives on the important move he was contemplating. Often modern scholars claim that woman in the Old Testament were of low status and were treated as property by their husbands. But this example, and others like it, show that such was not the case.

**(7-21) Genesis 31:7**

Jacob’s comment that Laban changed his wages ten times cannot be documented in the record—that is, ten times cannot be counted. But the nature of Laban makes it not unlikely that once Jacob began to prosper, Laban kept changing the terms of their agreement. Nevertheless, the Lord continued to bless Jacob temporally.

**(7-22) Genesis 31:14–16. “For He Hath Sold Us, and Hath Quite Devoured Also Our Money”**

It is interesting that both Rachel and Leah agreed that Jacob was justified in leaving Laban. They also pointed out that they had received nothing from their father, because of his covetous nature. One commentator explained their bitterness:

“The dowry was an important part of marriage. We meet it first in Jacob, who worked seven years for Laban to earn a dowry for Rachel (Gen. 29:18). The pay for this service belonged to the bride as her dowry, and Rachel and Leah could indignantly speak of themselves as having been ‘sold’ by their father, because he had withheld from them their dowry (Gen. 31:14, 15). It was the family capital; it represented the wife’s security, in case of divorce where the husband was at fault. If she were at fault, she forfeited it. She could not alienate it from her children. There are indications that the normal dowry was about three years’ wages. The dowry thus represented funds provided by the father of the groom, or by the groom through work, used to further the economic life of the new family. If the father of the bride added to this, it was his privilege, and customary, but the basic dowry was from the groom or his family. The dowry was thus the father’s blessing on his son’s marriage, or a test of the young man’s character in working for it.” (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 176–77.)

### (7-23) Genesis 31:19. What Were the Images of Laban?

There is much debate among scholars about what the images were that were stolen by Rachel and what they represented. The Hebrew word which is sometimes used for small images of false gods is *teraphim*. Some translators render the word as "household gods." Was Laban an idolator? If so, why did Jacob go all the way back to Haran to find a wife if they were idolators like the Canaanites? Others believe they were astrological devices used for telling the future. But this suggestion raises the same question. One scholar theorized that these images were somehow tied in with the legal rights of inheritance (see Guthrie, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 104). If this theory is correct, the possessor of the *teraphim* had the right to inherit the father's property. This circumstance would explain why Rachel stole the images, since her father had "stolen" her inheritance (see Genesis 31:14–16). It would also explain Laban's extreme agitation over their loss and Jacob's severe penalty offered against the guilty party (see Genesis 31:31).

### (7-24) Genesis 32:24–32. The Wrestling of Jacob—What Was It?

Most scholars believe Jacob wrestled with an angel, but President Joseph Fielding Smith explained why this explanation could not be true:

"Who wrestled with Jacob on Mount Peniel? The scriptures say it was a man. The Bible interpreters say it was an angel. More than likely it was a messenger sent to Jacob to give him the blessing. To think he wrestled and held an angel who couldn't get away, is out of the question. The term *angel* as used in the scriptures, at times, refers to messengers who are sent with some important instruction. Later in this chapter when Jacob said he had beheld the Lord, that did not have reference to his wrestling." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:17.)

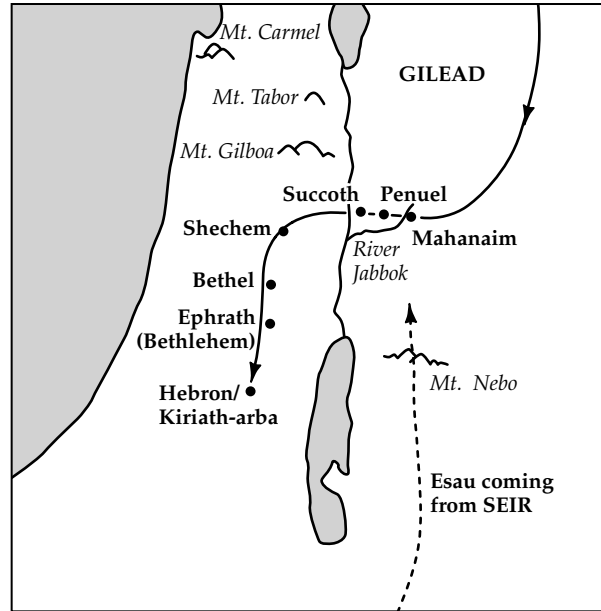
### (7-25) Genesis 33:1–2

Some have criticized Jacob's arrangement of the camp because it appears that he is putting the handmaids and their children in the most dangerous position. It would be a natural thing, however, in the Middle East for a clan leader to show off his family and possessions in such a way that the best and most highly favored is saved until last (see Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:205).

### (7-26) Genesis 34:1–31. The Defilement of Dinah

The Hebrew word that is translated "took" in the phrase "he took her" can mean "to take away, sometimes with violence and force; to take possession, to capture, to seize upon" (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. "take," p. 435). Commenting on the phrase that Shechem "spake kindly unto the damsel" (Genesis 34:3), one scholar said it means:

"Literally, he *spake to the heart of the damsel*—endeavoured to gain her affections, and to reconcile her to her disgrace. It appears sufficiently evident from this and the preceding verse that there had been



Jacob's return from Haran to Hebron

no consent on the part of Dinah, that the whole was an act of violence, and that she was now detained by force in the house of Shechem. Here she was found when Simeon and Levi sacked the city, verse 26." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:207.)

The outrage of Simeon and Levi was justified, but to deceitfully set up a whole town for slaughter on the pretext of bringing them into the covenant was an evil and wicked thing. Jacob's blessings on these two sons just prior to his death (see Genesis 49:5–7) show that neither he nor the Lord condoned this act.

### (7-27) Genesis 35:1–6

Before returning to Bethel, which was the equivalent of a modern temple (see Reading 7-12), Jacob had his family and servants, his household, prepare themselves for the experience much as modern Saints prepare themselves. The earrings probably were more than mere jewelry, possibly amulets with inscriptions to false gods (see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:1:316).

### (7-28) Genesis 35:20–22. Reuben Loses the Birthright

The inclusion of the brief account of Reuben's immorality in the historical account may seem unusual, but it explains why Reuben, the firstborn of Leah, forfeited the birthright. Since Rachel was the second wife, her firstborn would then by right inherit the forfeited blessing. Joseph thus was the next legal heir in line, even though he was the eleventh son born. (1 Chronicles 5:1–3 specifically ties Reuben's loss of the birthright to his transgression and shows how it went to Joseph.) The firstborn sons of the handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah, would not be considered since they were the property of their mistresses and their children were also technically considered Rachel's and Leah's property.

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## POINTS TO PONDER

(7-29) You have now studied the beginnings of the house of Israel, the “chosen people.” Are you somewhat disillusioned by how some of our forefathers fell short of your expectations? As you ponder what you have read consider the following questions:

1. Is there any evidence in the scriptural record that imperfect behavior was in any way overlooked, condoned, or excused by the Lord?

2. Can we learn from the faults and failings of our ancestors as well as from their strengths and successes?

3. Do you see any evidences of growth, development, repentance, and commitment in the record of the earliest covenant people?

4. Do the human interest details, such as the rivalry between Rachel and Leah, make it easier or harder for you to believe that God is a loving and patient Father, and that you, too, in spite of your own failings, may become a covenant person?

(7-30) One thing that comes through abundantly clear in these chapters is the significance that marriage in the covenant had for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Write a short essay entitled “What I Can Learn about Marriage from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Before doing so, consider the following statements from our General Authorities.

Brigham Young: “Be careful, O ye mothers in Israel, and do not teach your daughters in future,

as many of them have been taught, to marry out of Israel. Woe to you who do it; you will lose your crowns as sure as God lives.” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 196.)

Joseph F. Smith: “Some people feel that it does not make very much difference whether a girl marries a man in the Church, full of the faith of the Gospel, or an unbeliever. Some of our young people have married outside of the Church; but very few of those who have done it have failed to come to grief. . . . There is nothing that I can think of, in a religious way, that would grieve me more intensely than to see one of my boys marry an unbelieving girl, or one of my girls marry an unbelieving man.” (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 279.)

Spencer W. Kimball: “Many times, women have come to me in tears. How they would love to be able to train their children in the gospel of Jesus Christ! But they are unable to do so because of religious incompatibility with a nonmember husband. How they would like to accept for themselves positions of responsibility in the Church! How they would like to pay their tithing! . . . How they wish they could be sealed for eternity and have the promise of having their own flesh and blood, their children, sealed to them for eternity! Sometimes it is men in this predicament. But they have locked the doors, and the doors have often rusted on their hinges.” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 241.)





# Joseph: The Power of Preparation

## (8-1) Introduction

“The story of Joseph, the son of Jacob who was called Israel, is a vivid representation of the great truth that ‘all things work together for good to [those] who loved God.’ (See Rom. 8:28.) Joseph always seemed to do the right thing; but still, more importantly, he did it for the right reason. And how very, very significant that is! Joseph was sold by his own brothers as a slave and was purchased by Potiphar, a captain of the guard of Pharaoh. But even as an indentured servant, Joseph turned every experience and all circumstances, no matter how trying, into something good.

“This ability to turn everything into something good appears to be a godly characteristic. Our Heavenly Father always seems able to do this. Everything, no matter how dire, becomes a victory to the Lord. Joseph, although a slave and wholly undeserving of this fate, nevertheless remained faithful to the Lord and continued to live the commandments and made something very good of his degrading circumstances. People like this cannot be defeated, because they will not give up. They have the correct, positive attitude, and Dale Carnegie’s expression seems to apply: If you feel you have a lemon, you can either complain about how sour it is, or you can make a lemonade. It is all up to you.” (Hartman Rector, Jr., “Live above the Law to Be Free,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, p. 130.)

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Genesis 37–50.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON GENESIS 37–50

### (8-2) Genesis 37:3. What Was the Coat of Many Colors?

There is some question as to what Joseph’s coat actually was. The Hebrew word denotes “a long coat with sleeves . . . i.e. an upper coat reaching to the wrists and ankles, such as noblemen and kings’ daughters wore” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:1:335; note also 2 Samuel 13:18, which says that the daughters of King David wore similar coats). The coat may have been of different colors, but its significance

seems to have been far more than its brightness and beauty. One noted scholar suggested that it was “a tunic reaching to the palms of the hands and soles of the feet; the long tunic with sleeves worn by young men and maidens of the better class; in the case of Joseph, supposed by Bush . . . to have been the badge of the birthright which has been forfeited by Reuben and transferred to Joseph” (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “colour,” p. 82).

If indeed this coat signaled that Joseph held the birthright, which may have been in question among the brothers because there were four firstborn sons in Jacob’s family, this fact would explain the intense hostility and jealousy the coat provoked among the other sons of Jacob. The following brothers could easily have thought that they should have had the birthright.

*Reuben.* He was the firstborn of all the sons. Although he had lost the right (see Reading 7-28), he may not have accepted that fact.

*Simeon.* Since he was the second son of Leah and next in line following Reuben, he could have assumed the birthright would come to him after Reuben lost his right to it.

*Judah.* He could have argued that not only Reuben had lost the right, but so had Simeon and Levi, through the massacre of the Shechemites (see Genesis 34). The disqualification of these sons would make him the rightful legal heir.

*Dan.* Because his mother, Bilhah, was considered Rachel’s property, he could argue that he was Rachel’s firstborn, not Joseph, and therefore should have received the birthright when Reuben lost it.

*Gad.* He was the firstborn son of Zilpah and therefore could easily have thought he should have taken the birthright after Reuben forfeited it.

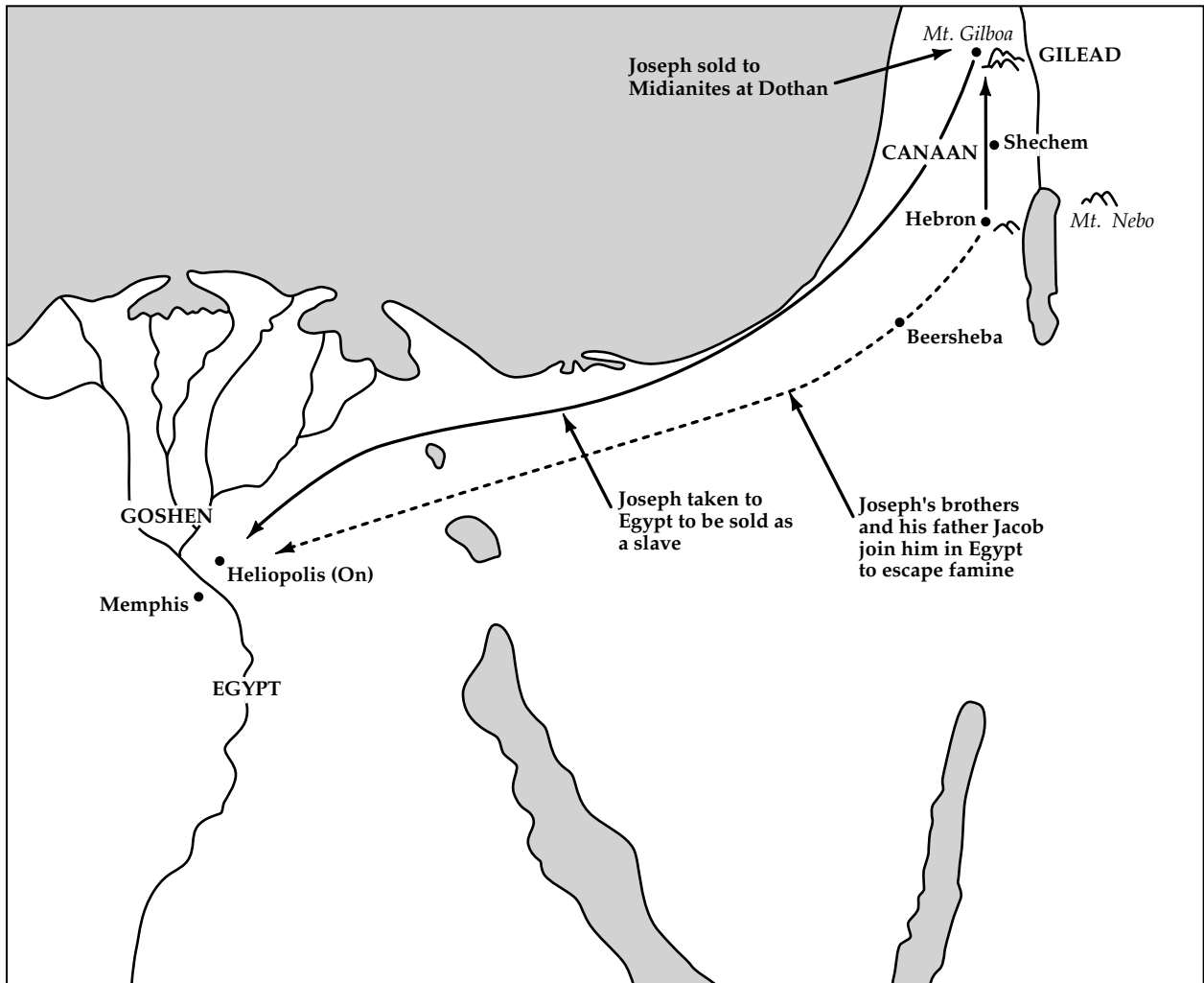
Joseph’s dreams (see Genesis 37:5–11), which clearly signified future leadership, only added to the resentment among the brothers.

### (8-3) Genesis 37:28

The price received for Joseph, twenty pieces of silver, is the same price specified later in the Mosaic law for a slave between the ages of five and twenty (see Leviticus 27:5). Typically, the price for a slave was thirty pieces of silver (see Exodus 21:32).

### (8-4) Genesis 37:32

Mormon recorded in the Book of Mormon that when Jacob saw that a remnant of the “coat of many colours” (v. 32) had been preserved, he prophesied that so also would a remnant of Joseph’s seed be preserved (see Alma 46:24).



The family of Jacob went into Egypt

#### (8-5) Genesis 37:36. What Was Potiphar's Position?

The Hebrew phrase which is translated as "captain of the guards" literally means "chief of the butchers or slaughterers." From this meaning some scholars have thought that he was the chief cook or steward in the house of the pharaoh, but other scholars believe that *butcher* or *slaughterer* is used in the sense of *executioner*, and thus Potiphar was the "commanding officer of the royal body-guard, who executed the capital sentences ordered by the king" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:1:338). Either way, Potiphar was an important man, but the latter position especially would give him great power and status in Egypt.

#### (8-6) Genesis 38:1–30. Judah and Tamar

With typical honesty, the Old Testament includes the sordid tale of Judah's incestuous relationship with his daughter-in-law. There seem to be several reasons for its inclusion here. First, once again are illustrated the effects of the covenant people forgetting the importance of marrying in the covenant.

Unlike his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather (Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham), Judah was not concerned about intermarriage with the Canaanites. The negative results of this marriage out of the covenant are clearly shown here. Second, the story shows the lineage of Judah from which the Messiah would eventually come (see Matthew 1:3; Luke 3:33). An additional lesson here shows that ancestry is not the determiner of one's righteousness. Finally, the truth that failure to honor one's commitments often leads to greater trouble is clearly shown. Had Judah faithfully kept his promise to Tamar, the seduction would never have taken place. Likewise, had Judah been faithful to the laws of morality, he never would have sinned with Tamar.

#### (8-7) Genesis 38:5–11. Why Was Tamar to Marry the Brothers of Her Husband?

Ancient customs of the Middle East provided that a brother of a deceased man should marry his widow. Under Moses this custom became law (see Deuteronomy 25:5–10). The purpose of such a

marriage was to produce a male heir for the dead man and thus perpetuate his name and memory. It was regarded as a great calamity to die without a son, for then the man's lineage did not continue and also the man's property reverted to someone else's family (through daughters, if he had any, or through other relatives). It may be that Onan, who by virtue of the death of his older brother would have been next in line for the inheritance of Judah, refused to raise up seed through Tamar because the inheritance would have stayed with the elder son's family. He went through the outward show of taking Tamar to wife but refused to let her have children. Thus when Judah failed to keep his promise to send the youngest son to her, Tamar resorted to deception in order to bear children.

#### **(8-8) Genesis 38:24**

It is important to note Judah's twisted sense of values. He had no qualms about sending Tamar home with unfulfilled promises nor of picking up a harlot along the road. But when he heard that Tamar was pregnant he was so incensed that he ordered her put to death.

#### **(8-9) Genesis 39:9. What Were Joseph's Reasons for Refusing Potiphar's Wife?**

Joseph's answer to the advances of Potiphar's wife shows his great personal righteousness. King Benjamin taught the Nephites that "when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). If that principle were to be stated negatively, it would read, "When ye are exploiting or sinning against your fellow beings, you are only sinning against God." Joseph understood this principle perfectly and answered Potiphar's wife by pointing out that it would be a terrible thing to take advantage of his master in this way. He took the next logical step when he added, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

#### **(8-10) Genesis 39:20**

Because Potiphar had great power with the pharaoh and perhaps was even head of the royal executioners (see Reading 8-5), it is remarkable that Joseph was only put into prison and not executed. A slave accused of attempting to rape his master's wife would seem to have deserved the most severe punishment, and yet Joseph was only imprisoned. Could it be that Potiphar, knowing of Joseph's character and his wife's character, suspected the truth and, although he felt compelled to take action, chose comparatively lenient punishment? Whatever the case, the hand of the Lord certainly preserved Joseph from what would otherwise have been almost certain death.

#### **(8-11) Genesis 39:21-23; 40:1-23**

The spiritual greatness of Joseph is a remarkable thing. How many people have become bitter over some real or imagined slight, or blamed the Lord for

some personal tragedy? In the very midst of being faithful and holding true to that which is right, Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into prison. How easy it would have been for him to give up, to say, "What's the use of trying to serve God? All He does is punish me." But there was not a trace of bitterness, no blaming the Lord. Joseph just continued being righteous and faithful. Unselfishly he offered to interpret the dreams of his two fellow prisoners, telling them that the knowledge came from God (see Genesis 40:8). He still trusted in the Lord, although he must have felt doomed to spend his life in prison. If any person had cause for discouragement and bitterness, it was Joseph, but he never faltered in his faith. Truly, Joseph is a model to be emulated.

#### **(8-12) Genesis 41:1. How Long Was Joseph in Prison?**

Joseph was in prison for two years after he interpreted the dreams of the chief butler and baker (see Genesis 41:1). He was sold into slavery when he was about seventeen (see Genesis 37:2), and he was thirty years of age when he became vice-regent to the pharaoh (see Genesis 41:46). Altogether he served thirteen years with Potiphar and in prison. The record does not tell how long he served Potiphar before his imprisonment, but that he worked his way up to be the overseer of the prison implies some period of time before the butler and baker joined him. So it is likely that Joseph was in prison at least three years and possibly much longer.



*"And the Midianites sold him into Egypt" (Genesis 37:36).*

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**(8-13) Genesis 41:8. Why Were the Wise Men of Egypt Unable to Interpret the Pharaoh's Dreams?**

Many assume that the dreams of pharaoh were beyond the scope of Egypt's wise men and yet, in some ways, it is remarkable that these magicians could not have come up with some kind of logical explanation using their own well-known symbolism.

"Being troubled about this double dream, Pharaoh sent the next morning for all the scribes and wise men of Egypt, to have it interpreted. . . . [The magicians were] men of the priestly caste, who occupied themselves with the sacred arts and sciences of the Egyptians, the hieroglyphic writings, astrology, the interpretation of dreams, the foretelling of events, magic, and conjuring, and who were regarded as the possessors of secret arts . . . and the *wise men* of the nation. But not one of these could interpret it, although the clue to the interpretation was to be found in the religious symbols of Egypt. For the cow was the symbol of Isis, the goddess of the all-sustaining earth, and in the hieroglyphics it represented the earth, agriculture, and food; and the Nile, by its overflowing, was the source of the fertility of the land. But however simple the explanation of the fat and lean cows ascending out of the Nile appears to be, it is 'the fate of the wisdom of this world, that where it suffices it is compelled to be silent. For it belongs to the government of God to close the lips of the eloquent, and take away the understanding of the aged (Job xii. 20).'" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:1:349.)



Painting by Joe Maniscalco; courtesy of Pacific Press Publishing Association

*Pharaoh Made Joseph Ruler of All Egypt*

**(8-14) Genesis 42:8. Why Did Joseph's Brothers Fail to Recognize Him?**

It had been twenty-two years since the sons of Jacob had last seen Joseph—thirteen years of slavery and prison for Joseph, seven years of plenty, and two years of famine (see Genesis 45:11)—before Jacob's family was forced to go to Egypt for grain. Joseph was a teenager when his family had last seen him. Now he was a mature, middle-aged man. And, even if Joseph still looked very much as he did when he was younger, who would believe that a brother who was sold as a slave to a caravan of Arabians would have become the second most powerful man in Egypt?

**(8-15) Genesis 42:21**

Over twenty years had passed since his brothers had sold Joseph into slavery, and yet they still felt tremendously guilty about what they had done.

**(8-16) Genesis 43:8-9**

By demanding that Benjamin be brought back to Egypt (see Genesis 42:15), Joseph allowed his brothers to show whether or not they truly were sorry for what they had done to him so many years before. Would they now show the same lack of concern for Benjamin? It is significant that Judah, who suggested that Joseph be sold (see Genesis 37:26-27), became the one who was willing to become "the surety" for Benjamin. There does seem to be evidence of sincere repentance on the brothers' part, and Joseph's stratagem allowed them to demonstrate this repentance. When the pressure was on, Judah's change of heart was shown to be complete (see Genesis 44:33).

**(8-17) Genesis 43:28. "And They Bowed Down Their Heads, and Made Obeisance"**

The phraseology in this verse is the same as that used in Genesis 37:7, 9. It had taken over two decades, but the Lord's revelations were now fulfilled.

**(8-18) Genesis 43:32. Why Was It an Abomination for Egyptians to Eat with Hebrews?**

Several Egyptian deities were represented by cattle, especially female cattle. Since the Hebrews were herdsmen who slaughtered and ate cattle, regardless of sex, this practice would have been viewed by the Egyptians as a terrible abomination. Whatever the reason, Joseph seemed to respect the custom of Egyptians and Hebrews eating separately. (See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:1:362; Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:245; cf. Genesis 43:34.)

**(8-19) Genesis 45:4-8. Joseph—A Type of Christ**

This touching scene, in which Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers, demonstrates the Christlike nature of his character. He forgave without bitterness, extended love when undeserved, and saw the Lord's hand in all that happened. But his similarities to Christ go much deeper. As Nephi said,

all things from the beginning of the world were given to typify, or symbolize, Christ (see 2 Nephi 11:4; Moses 6:63). It has already been shown how Abraham was a type of the Father and Isaac a type of Jesus when Abraham was commanded to offer Isaac in sacrifice. This act was “a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son” (Jacob 4:5).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that all prophets are types of Christ: “A prophet is one who has the testimony of Jesus, who knows by the revelations of the Holy Ghost to his soul that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In addition to this divine knowledge, many of them lived in special situations or did particular things that singled them out as types and patterns and shadows of that which was to be in the life of him who is our Lord.” (*The Promised Messiah*, p. 448.)

Likewise, the life and mission of Joseph typifies the life and mission of Jesus. Consider the following:

1. Joseph was the favored son of his father; so was Jesus (see Genesis 37:3; Matthew 3:17).
2. Joseph was rejected by his brothers, the Israelites, as was Jesus (see Genesis 37:4; John 1:11; Isaiah 53:3; 1 Nephi 19:13–14).
3. Joseph was sold by his brothers into the hands of the Gentiles, just as Jesus was (see Genesis 37:25–27; Matthew 20:19).
4. Judah, the head of the tribe of Judah, proposed the sale of Joseph. Certain leaders of the Jews in Jesus’ day turned Jesus over to the Romans. Judas (the Greek spelling of *Judah*) was the one who actually sold Jesus. (See Genesis 37:26; Matthew 27:3.)
5. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver, the price of a slave his age. Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave His age. (See Genesis 37:28; Matthew 27:3; Exodus 21:32; Leviticus 27:5.)
6. In their very attempt to destroy Joseph, his brothers actually set up the conditions that would bring about their eventual temporal salvation—that is, Joseph, by virtue of being sold, would become their deliverer. Jesus, by His being given into the hands of the Gentiles, was crucified and completed the atoning sacrifice, becoming the Deliverer for all mankind.
7. Joseph began his mission of preparing salvation for Israel at age thirty, just as Jesus began His ministry of preparing salvation for the world at age thirty (see Genesis 41:46; Luke 3:23).
8. When Joseph was finally raised to his exalted position in Egypt, all bowed the knee to him. All will eventually bow the knee to Jesus. (See Genesis 41:43; D&C 88:104.)
9. Joseph provided bread for Israel and saved them from death, all without cost. Jesus, the Bread of Life, did the same for all men. (See Genesis 42:35; John 6:48–57; 2 Nephi 9:50.)

#### **(8-20) Genesis 47:9. Were Jacob’s Days “Few and Evil”?**

In comparison with Abraham, who lived 175 years, and Isaac, who lived to be 180, Jacob’s 130 years to this point could be described as smaller or “few.”

The word which is translated as “evil” actually means “sorrowful” or “full of toil and trouble.” Remembering Jacob’s flight to Haran to escape Esau’s wrath, his years of labor for Laban, his wives and their contentions, his pilgrimage in the land of Canaan, the death of Rachel, and his years of sorrowing for the loss of Joseph contributes to a better understanding of why he would say his days were full of trouble and toil.

#### **(8-21) Genesis 48:5–11. What Additional Information about Joseph’s Seed Do We Learn from the Joseph Smith Translation?**

Joseph Smith made the following changes in this passage when he worked on the inspired translation of the Bible:

“And now, of thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, before I came unto thee into Egypt; behold, they are mine, and the God of my fathers shall bless them; even as Reuben and Simeon they shall be blessed, for they are mine; wherefore they shall be called after my name. (Therefore they were called Israel.)

“And thy issue which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance, in the tribes; therefore they were called the tribes of Manasseh and of Ephraim.

“And Jacob said unto Joseph when the God of my fathers appeared unto me in Luz, in the land of Canaan; he sware unto me, that he would give unto me, and unto my seed, the land for an everlasting possession.

“Therefore, O my son, he hath blessed me in raising thee up to be a servant unto me, in saving my house from death;

“In delivering my people, thy brethren, from famine which was sore in the land; wherefore the God of thy fathers shall bless thee, and the fruit of thy loins, that they shall be blessed above thy brethren, and above thy father’s house;

“For thou hast prevailed, and thy father’s house hath bowed down unto thee, even as it was shown unto thee, before thou wast sold into Egypt by the hands of thy brethren; wherefore thy brethren shall bow down unto thee, from generation to generation, unto the fruit of thy loins for ever;

“For thou shalt be a light unto my people, to deliver them in the days of their captivity, from bondage; and to bring salvation unto them, when they are altogether bowed down under sin.” (JST, Genesis 48:5–11.)

#### **(8-22) Genesis 48:22. How Did Jacob Give to Joseph “One Portion” More Than to His Brothers?**

“Joseph, son of Jacob, because of his faithfulness and integrity to the purposes of the Lord, was rewarded with the birthright in Israel. It was the custom in early times to bestow upon the firstborn son special privileges and blessings, and these were looked upon as belonging to him by right of birth.

Reuben, the first of Jacob's sons, lost the birthright through transgression, and it was bestowed upon Joseph, who was the most worthy of all the sons of Jacob [1 Chronicles 5:1-2].

"When Jacob blessed Joseph, he gave him a double portion, or an inheritance among his brethren in Palestine and also the blessing of the land of Zion—the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.' He also blessed him with the blessings of heaven above, of the deep which lieth under, and of posterity [Genesis 49:22-26]. Jacob also blessed the two sons of Joseph with the blessings of their father, which they inherited, and he placed Ephraim, the younger, before *Manasseh*, the elder, and by inspiration of the Lord conferred upon Ephraim the *birthright in Israel*." (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:250-51.)

#### **(8-23) Genesis 49:1-20. What Criterion Was Used in Determining Which Tribes Would Have Prominence?**

"Through a careful study and consideration of the blessings of the Lord pronounced through Jacob, upon his twelve sons, it is evident that they were not to share equally in the promises of the Lord.

"It is evident that the blessings given to Judah and Joseph were choice above the blessings pronounced upon their brothers." (Richards, *Israel! Do You Know?* pp. 9-10.)

One's activities in his premortal life had an influence on his being born into a particular situation on this earth. President Harold B. Lee made this observation:

"When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.' (Deut. 32:8.)

"Now, mind you, this was said to the children of Israel before they had arrived in the 'Promised Land,' which was to be the land of their inheritance.

"Then note this next verse: 'For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.' (Deut. 32:9.)

"It would seem very clear, then, that those born to the lineage of Jacob, who was later to be called Israel, and his posterity, who were known as the children of Israel, were born into the most illustrious lineage of any of those who came upon the earth as mortal beings.

"All these rewards were seemingly promised, or foreordained, before the world was. Surely these matters must have been determined by the kind of lives we had lived in that premortal spirit world. Some may question these assumptions, but at the same time they will accept without any question the belief that each one of us will be judged when we leave this earth according to his or her deeds during our lives here in mortality. Isn't it just as reasonable to believe that what we have received here in this earth life was given to each of us according to the merits of our conduct before we came here?" ("Understanding Who We Are Brings Self-Respect," *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, p. 5.)

In Deuteronomy 33:6-29, Moses recounted again the blessings given to each tribe. This passage should be studied and compared to Jacob's original blessings recorded in Genesis 49.

#### **(8-24) Genesis 49:8-12. What Significant Portion of the Birthright Blessing Was Given to Judah?**

The blessing given to Judah indicates that kings would come from his lineage (see 1 Chronicles 5:1-2; Hebrews 7:14). Old Testament history teaches that this promise was fulfilled. King David, King Solomon, and King Rehoboam are just three of the kings who came through Judah's lineage. The King of Kings, Jesus Christ, referred to here as Shiloh, also came through this line. Elder Ezra Taft Benson said of this promise:

"The great blessing to Judah is that it contemplated the coming of Shiloh who would gather his people to him. This prophecy concerning Shiloh has been subject to several rabbinic and Christian interpretations and the object of considerable controversy. The interpretation given this passage by the Mormon Church is one based on revelation to modern prophets, not on scholarly commentary. It was revealed to Joseph Smith that Shiloh is the Messiah. (See [JST, Genesis 50:24].)" ("A Message to Judah from Joseph," *Ensign*, Dec. 1976, p. 71.)

#### **(8-25) Genesis 49:22-26. What Is the Significance of Joseph's Blessing?**

"There are several things to be understood in the prophecy. First, he should become a multitude of nations. We understand what this means. In the second place, his branches should run over the wall. Now what does this mean? The Lord in ancient times had a meaning for everything. It means that his tribe should become so numerous that they would take up more room than one small inheritance in Canaan, that they would spread out and go to some land at a great distance. . . .

"Joseph's peculiar blessing, which I have just read to you, was that he should enjoy possessions above Jacob's progenitors to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. This would seem to indicate a very distant land from Palestine." (Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:9.)

The seed of Joseph came to the land of America at the time Lehi and his family departed from the Mediterranean world. The land of America is specifically designated by the Lord as the land reserved for "a remnant of the house of Joseph" (3 Nephi 15:12).

#### **(8-26) Genesis 49:26. America Is the Land of the "Everlasting Hills"**

"I suppose that Jacob saw this land as well as Moses, and he designates it a land afar off; the utmost bounds would signify a very distant land. He said this land was over and above, what his progenitors gave to him and he would give it to Joseph. . . . The precious things of heaven were to be given to Joseph on this land. Blessed of the Lord

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be his land for the precious things of heaven, more precious than the fullness of earth, more precious than the productions of the various climates of the earth, more precious than the grain, and the gold and silver of the earth. The precious things of heaven revealed to the people of Joseph on the great land given to them unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills." (Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:167–68.)

### (8-27) Genesis 50:24. The Prophecies of Joseph

In 2 Nephi 3, the prophet Lehi told his son Joseph of the great prophecies of their progenitor, Joseph who was sold into Egypt. These prophecies were evidently on the brass plates that Lehi had but have been lost from our present Bible. Through revelation, Joseph Smith restored the lost scriptures by adding thirteen verses between Genesis 50:24 and 25 of the King James Version. Because of their significance for Saints of the latter days, the verses are reprinted here. (They are also found in the appendix of the LDS edition of the King James Version of the Bible.)

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die, and go unto my fathers; and I go down to my grave with joy. The God of my father Jacob be with you, to deliver you out of affliction in the days of your bondage; for the Lord hath visited me, and I have obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of my loins, the Lord God will raise up a righteous branch out of my loins; and unto thee, whom my father Jacob hath named Israel, a prophet; (not the Messiah who is called Shilo;) and this prophet shall deliver my people out of Egypt in the days of thy bondage.

"And it shall come to pass that they shall be scattered again; and a branch shall be broken off, and shall be carried into a far country; nevertheless they shall be remembered in the covenants of the Lord, when the Messiah cometh; for he shall be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the Spirit of power; and shall bring them out of darkness into light; out of hidden darkness, and out of captivity unto freedom.

"A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins.

"Thus saith the Lord God of my fathers unto me, A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins, and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren.

"And he shall bring them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers; and he shall do whatsoever work I shall command him.

"And I will make him great in mine eyes, for he shall do my work; and he shall be great like unto him whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel, out of the land of Egypt; for a seer will I raise up to deliver my people out of the land of Egypt; and he shall be called Moses. And by his name he shall know that he is of thy house; for he shall be nursed by the king's daughter, and shall be called her son.

"And again, a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins, and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins; and not to the bringing forth of my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them in the last days;

"Wherefore the fruit of thy loins shall write, and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to a knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord.

"And out of weakness shall he be made strong, in that day when my work shall go forth among all my people, which shall restore them, who are of the house of Israel, in the last days.

"And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you; for I will remember you from generation to generation; and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father; and he shall be like unto you; for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people unto salvation.

"And the Lord sware unto Joseph that he would preserve his seed for ever, saying, I will raise up Moses, and a rod shall be in his hand, and he shall gather together my people, and he shall lead them as a flock, and he shall smite the waters of the Red Sea with his rod.

"And he shall have judgment, and shall write the word of the Lord. And he shall not speak many words, for I will write unto him my law by the finger of mine own hand. And I will make a spokesman for him, and his name shall be called Aaron.

"And it shall be done unto thee in the last days also, even as I have sworn." (JST, Genesis 50:24–36.)

## POINTS TO PONDER

(8-28) Write a short essay entitled "Joseph in Egypt—A Model for Personal Righteousness." The purpose of the essay is not to summarize the story of Joseph but to show its application to you today. How might a modern Saint use the example of Joseph in his day-to-day living? As you prepare your essay, consider the following:

"Joseph vividly demonstrated why he was favored of the Lord, or, as the scriptures said, why 'the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man. . . .' (Gen. 39.) His reliance was upon the Lord. His trust was in the Lord, and his allegiance ran to the Lord.

"I believe this is the greatest lesson that can be learned by the youth of Zion—to do the right thing because you love the Lord. It is so vitally important that, I feel, if you do anything in righteousness for any other reason than you love the Lord, you are wrong—at least you are on very shaky ground. And,

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somewhere your reasons for acting in righteousness will not be strong enough to see you through. You will give way to expediency, or peer group pressure, or honor, or fame, or applause, or the thrill of the moment, or some other worldly reason. Unless your motives are built upon the firm foundation of love of the Lord, you will not be able to stand." (Hartman Rector, Jr., "Live above the Law to Be Free," *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, p. 130.)

**(8-29)** As you reflect on what you have just read concerning the sons of Jacob receiving a blessing from their father, ask yourself what great value each son's blessing would have to help him meet the challenge of his life. Contemplate the far-reaching effects of that blessing on his posterity and all mankind. As a descendant of Israel, you have many of the same challenges facing you in your life. How can you best use the great truths your blessing contains to help you achieve your maximum potential and be of greatest service to the Lord?

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has commented on this question:

"Nearly every member of the Church is a literal descendant of Jacob who gave *patriarchal blessings* to his 12 sons, predicting what would happen to them and their posterity after them. (Gen. 49; *Teachings*, p. 151.) As inheritors of the blessings of Jacob, it is the privilege of the gathered remnant of Jacob to receive their own patriarchal blessings and, by faith, to be blessed equally with the ancients. Patriarchal blessings may be given by *natural patriarchs*, that is by fathers in Israel who enjoy the blessings of the patriarchal order, or they may be given by *ordained patriarchs*, specially selected brethren who are appointed to bless worthy church members.

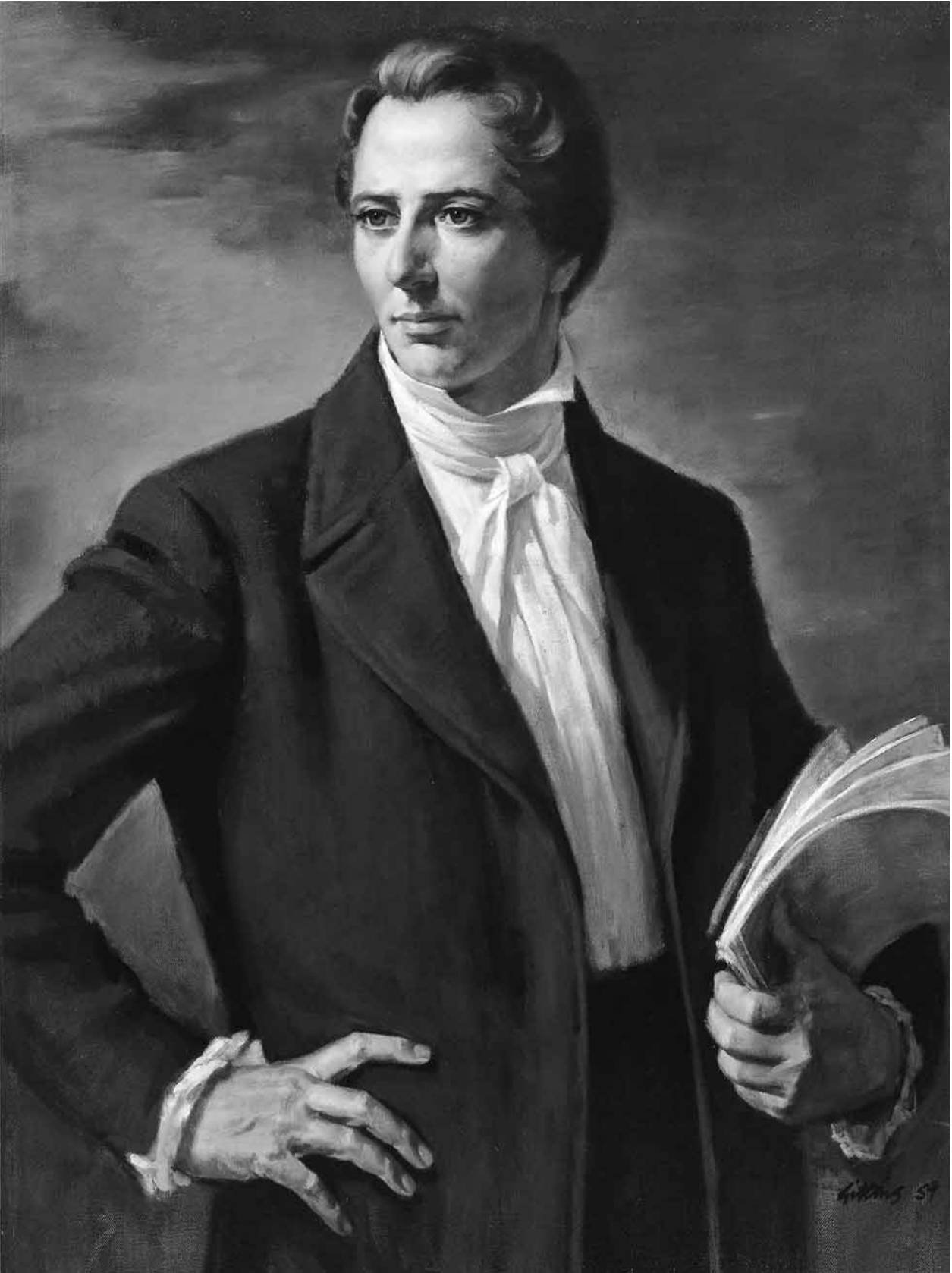
"The First Presidency (David O. McKay, Stephen L. Richards, J. Reuben Clark, Jr.), in a letter to all stake presidents, dated June 28, 1957, gave the following definition and explanation: 'Patriarchal blessings contemplate an inspired declaration of the lineage of the recipient, and also where so moved upon by the Spirit, an inspired and prophetic statement of the life mission of the recipient, together with such blessings, cautions, and admonitions as the patriarch may be

prompted to give for the accomplishment of such life's mission, it being always made clear that the realization of all promised blessings is conditioned upon faithfulness to the gospel of our Lord, whose servant the patriarch is. All such blessings are recorded and generally only one such blessing should be adequate for each person's life. The sacred nature of the patriarchal blessing must of necessity urge all patriarchs to most earnest solicitation of divine guidance for their prophetic utterances and superior wisdom for cautions and admonitions.'" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 558.)

Every person who has a father who can bless his children should ask for and receive a father's blessing when one is needed. In addition, every eligible person in the Church may receive a patriarchal blessing from an ordained patriarch. One's patriarchal blessing should be read and reread with intelligent consideration of its meaning. Just as blessings are given through the inspiration of the Lord, so too will their meaning be made clear by the same power. Their fulfillment will be in His hands. Regarding patriarchal blessings, Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote:

"These blessings are possibilities predicated upon faithful devotion to the cause of truth. They must be earned. Otherwise they are but empty words. Indeed, they rise to their highest value when used as ideals, specific possibilities, toward which we may strive throughout life. To look upon a patriarch as a fortune-teller is an offense to the Priesthood; the patriarch only indicates the gifts the Lord would give us, if we labor for them. He helps us by pointing out the divine goal which we may enjoy if we pay the price.

"Such a blessing, given in the spirit of a father's love, and sealed upon us in the authority of the Priesthood, becomes a power in our lives; a comfort to our days. It is a message which if read and honored aright, will become an anchor in stormy days, our encouragement in cloudy days. It states our certain destination here and hereafter, if we live by the law; and as life goes on, it strengthens our faith and leads us into truth." (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 1:74-75.)



*"Thus saith the Lord God of my fathers unto me, A choice seer will I raise up" (JST, Genesis 50:27).*



# “Let My People Go”

## (9-1) Introduction

The Lord’s concern for His chosen people can be seen in the call of Moses. So great was Moses that forever after the Lord and His people have used him as a standard, or model, of a prophet. Even Jesus Christ was called a prophet like unto Moses (see Acts 3:22; 7:37; Deuteronomy 18:15, 18–19; 1 Nephi 22:20–21; 3 Nephi 20:23–24). Indeed, Moses was a similitude or living symbol of Jesus Christ (see Moses 1:6).

Moses was a man who, like us, possessed both weaknesses and strengths. The key to Moses’ character is his meekness, the capacity to be molded by the Lord and His Spirit. “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3).

In this chapter you will learn of Moses’ foreordination, his youthful preparation, the patient tempering of his character in the desert, his call from God, and his assumption of prophetic leadership. Perhaps it will encourage you to analyze your life so that, like Moses, you can identify your weaknesses, purge yourself of them, and take up the assignment the Lord has for you in this life. Like Nephi, you may be led to say “let us be strong like unto Moses” (1 Nephi 4:2). Elder Mark E. Petersen testified:

“The true Moses was one of the mightiest men of God in all time. . . .

“He walked and talked with God, received of divine glory while yet in mortality, was called a son of God, and was in the similitude of the Only Begotten.

“He saw the mysteries of the heavens and much of creation, and received laws from God beyond any other ancient man of whom we have record.” (Moses, p. 49.)

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Exodus 1–10.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON EXODUS 1–10

### (9-2) Exodus 1:7. “The Children of Israel Were Fruitful, and Increased Abundantly”

“The fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham required that Israel should become numerous. To

accomplish this, the little family, numbering only 70 persons (Genesis 46:26–27), needed sufficient time and a peaceful place in which to grow. Egypt was that place. . . .

“. . . Palestine was a battleground for warring nations that moved back and forth in their conquests between the Nile and the Euphrates. Israel would have found no peace there. They required stable conditions for their eventual growth and development. . . .

“Their bondage certainly was not all on the negative side. It too served a good purpose. The cruelty of the taskmasters, the hatred that existed between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, and the length of their trying servitude fused Jacob’s children into a united people. . . .

“The hatred they felt toward the Egyptians prevented intermarriage between the Hebrews and their neighbors. To reap the benefits of the Abrahamic promises, Israel had to remain a pure race, and the Lord used this means to achieve it. . . .

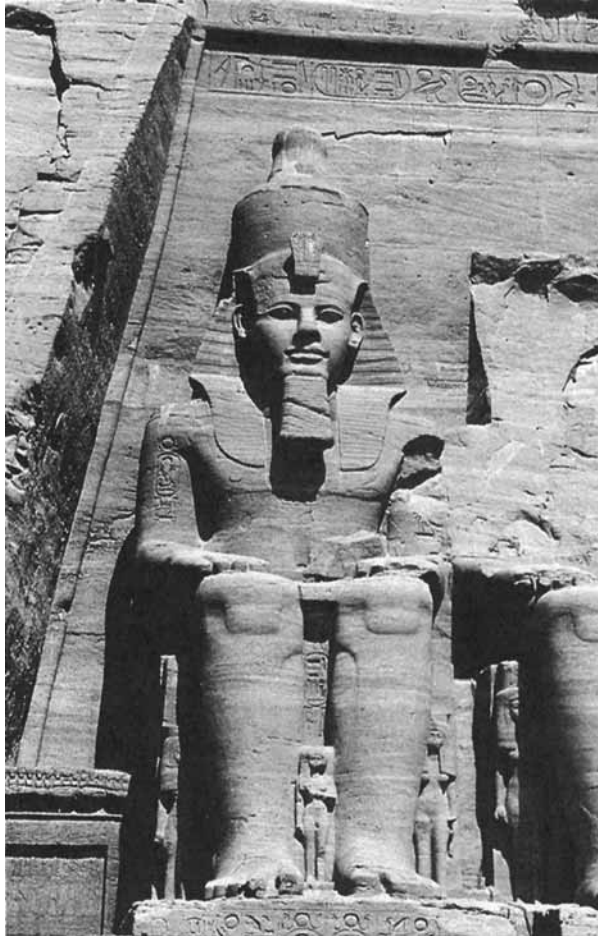
“Yes, Egypt had her role in the Lord’s mighty drama, and she played it well.

“At the end of 430 years, the Lord now decreed that the time had arrived for Israel to occupy her own land and there become that ‘peculiar people’ who would await the coming of their Messiah.” (Petersen, *Moses*, pp. 27–30.)

### (9-3) Exodus 1:8. A Pharaoh Who Knew Not Joseph

Many scholars speculate that Joseph came to power in Egypt while the nation was under the domination of the Hyksos people. The ancient historian Manetho called the Hyksos the shepherd-kings and told how their conquest and dominion were bitterly hated by the Egyptians. The Hyksos were Semitic peoples from the lands north and east of Egypt. Since Jacob and his family were also Semitic, it is easy to understand how Joseph would be viewed with favor by the Hyksos and also how, when the Hyksos were finally overthrown and driven out of Egypt, the Israelites would suddenly fall from favor with the native Egyptians.

Many people have wondered how Joseph could be vice-regent for so many years without having his name in any of the records or monuments of Egypt. If the theory of Hyksos domination is correct, then Joseph’s name would have been purged from records and monuments along with those of the other Hyksos rulers. Nevertheless, one scholar claimed that he found the Egyptian name *Yufni*, which would be the equivalent in Egyptian of the Hebrew *Yosef* (see Donovan Courville, “My Search for Joseph,” *Signs of the Times*, Oct. 1977, pp. 5–8). While the evidence is not conclusive, at least it can be said that there may be extra-biblical evidence of Joseph’s existence.



A colossal statue of Rameses II, who may have been the pharaoh at the time of the Exodus

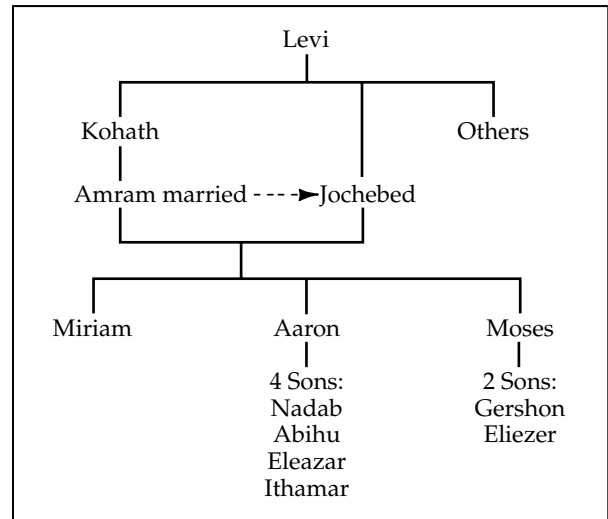
#### (9-4) Exodus 1:15–22

The oppressive measures of the pharaoh were not able to thwart the purposes of God in creating a great nation. Through the courageous faith of the midwives and their refusal to carry out the pharaoh's orders to execute the male children, Israel continued to prosper. The life of Moses, who was a similitude of the Savior (see Moses 1:6), was threatened by the ruler of the land, just as the life of Christ was threatened by Herod, who decreed the death of the children of Bethlehem.

Both the ancient Jewish historian Josephus and Jonathan ben Uzziel, another ancient Jewish writer, recorded that the pharaoh had a dream wherein he was shown that a man soon to be born would deliver Israel from bondage, and this dream motivated the royal decree to drown the male children (see Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 2, chap. 9, par. 2; Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:294).

#### (9-5) Exodus 2:1–2. What Is the Genealogy of Moses?

Moses was a descendant of Levi through both his father, Amram (see Exodus 6:16–20), and his mother, Jochebed (see Exodus 2:1; 6:20).



#### (9-6) Exodus 2:1–10

Both the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (see Genesis 50) and the Book of Mormon (see 2 Nephi 3) show that as early as the time of Joseph, son of Jacob, the future mission of the deliverer had been prophesied. So detailed had been the prophecy by Joseph that even the name of Moses was known, as well as incidents of his ministry (see Reading 8-27 for the Joseph Smith Translation additions to Genesis 50).

#### (9-7) Exodus 2:10. What Training Did Moses Receive as a Youth in Egypt?

In the New Testament Stephen made a lengthy speech about the dealings of the Lord with the house of Israel. Concerning Moses' youth, Stephen related, "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22).

Josephus said that Moses was a very handsome and educated prince and a mighty warrior in the cause of the Egyptians (see *Antiquities*, bk. 2, chap. 9, par. 7; chap. 10, pars. 1–2).

As a prince, Moses may have had access to the royal libraries of the Egyptians as well as the scriptural record of the Israelites as taught by his mother. Quite possibly he read the prophecies of Joseph and was led by the Spirit to understand his divine appointment to deliver his brethren the Israelites. Stephen's address implied that Moses understood his responsibility: "And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. . . . For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not." (Acts 7:23, 25.)

Paul, in Hebrews, added further to the concept, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; . . . esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" (Hebrews 11:24, 26). Moses'

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mother, Jochebed, likely taught him the principles and righteous traditions of the Hebrews as she nursed and cared for him (see Exodus 2:7–9).

#### **(9-8) Exodus 2:11–15. Why Did Moses Slay an Egyptian?**

“‘Smote’ and ‘slew’ in King James English are both translated from Hebrew *nakhah*, meaning ‘to beat down’; it is the word used in describing the action taken by soldiers in combat against each other. It would be correct to say that Moses *slew* a man who was *slaying* another, or took a life in saving a life. His looking ‘this way and that’ before doing so, simply indicates that he was aware that the Egyptians would not condone his defense of a slave.” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:74.)

“However, the historian Eusebius says that the slaying was the result of a court intrigue in which certain men plotted to assassinate Moses. In the encounter it is said that Moses successfully warded off the attacker and killed him. (Eusebius IX:27.)

“In the Midrash Rabbah, the traditional Jewish commentary on the Old Testament, it is asserted that Moses, with his bare fists, killed an Egyptian taskmaster who was in the act of seducing a Hebrew woman. This is confirmed in the Koran.

“Certainly there must have been good reason for Moses’ act, and most assuredly the Lord would not have called a murderer to the high office of prophet and liberator for his people Israel.” (Petersen, *Moses*, p. 42.)

#### **(9-9) Exodus 2:18. Who Was Reuel?**

The more common name for Reuel is Jethro (see Exodus 3:1; Numbers 10:29). Jethro was a descendant of Midian, who was a son of Abraham and Keturah (see Genesis 25:1–6). Through this line Moses received the priesthood (see D&C 84:6–13).

#### **(9-10) Exodus 2:23**

Acts 7:30 indicates that the “process of time” described here was another forty years.

#### **(9-11) Exodus 3:1**

Horeb is the same as Mount Sinai, where Moses received the law from the Lord. Elijah also later sought refuge at Horeb (see 1 Kings 19:8).

#### **(9-12) Exodus 3:1–10**

“A manifestation was given to Moses by a messenger of light, causing a bush to appear to burn; it was really not afire and was *not* consumed. The word ‘angel’ could better have been rendered ‘messenger’ which is the basic meaning of the Hebrew word *malakh*. A flame in a bush, a mighty wind, a small voice, a great thundering, or other phenomena may herald a message from God, as a *malakh* of God. After Moses’ attention was drawn to the bush, the voice of the Lord Himself spoke to Moses; Moses responded in awe and reverence.” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:74.)

The Joseph Smith Translation of Exodus 3:2 reads, “And again the *presence* of the Lord appeared unto him” (emphasis added).

#### **(9-13) Exodus 3:11–18. What Is the Significance of the Title *I Am*?**

When the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush He used the name *I AM* to identify Himself as the God of Israel, the same God who had appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Although this is the first time this name appears in the Bible, it is obvious that if the name had not been known to the Israelites, its value for identifying the Lord would have been useless. Correct identification was crucial to Moses in authenticating his call to the Israelites. This name does not appear frequently in the Bible; however, Jesus (the Jehovah of the Old Testament) used it on other occasions to identify Himself to Abraham (see Abraham 1:16), to the Jews (see John 8:58), and to modern Israel (see D&C 29:1).

Etymologically, the title *I AM* is directly related to the most frequently used name of deity in the Old Testament—*YHWH*. How often the name *YHWH* appears in the Bible may not always be evident in the King James Version, since the translators substituted the title LORD or GOD almost every place it appeared in the Hebrew. This practice shows deference to the reverential feelings of the Jews who never pronounced the name, substituting instead their word for *Lord*—*Adonai*. (Read Genesis 18:1–3 where this distinction between Lord and LORD makes a significant difference in the interpretation. Also see Reading A-2 for a full discussion of this subject.)

*I AM* is the first person singular form of the verb *to be*. Therefore, *YHWH* (which can also be the third person singular) would mean “HE IS” or “HE EXISTS.” The first or third person of the same verb was used by the Lord in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, depending upon whether He wanted to emphasize His own or our own perspective.

#### **(9-14) Exodus 4:10–17. Why Was Moses So Reluctant to Be God’s Spokesman?**

There is some evidence that Moses may have had a mild speech impediment (see Reading 9-22), although some scholars think Moses may only have been suggesting that his facility in both the Hebrew and Egyptian languages was poor after having lived forty years with the Midianites. Whatever the outward cause, the Lord answered Moses with reasoning so simple and yet so profound that it was difficult to refute. Moses’ feelings of inadequacy were so strong, however, that he still insisted he needed help. The Lord became angry at this continued lack of confidence and gave Aaron to Moses as a spokesman. Anyone with normal feelings of his own unworthiness can sympathize with Moses, but all must learn to trust in the power of the Lord. Moroni taught that the Lord specifically gives individuals weaknesses so that they will be humble. But if they have enough faith in God, His grace is sufficient to “make weak things become strong” for them (Ether 12:27). Enoch had a similar response to his own

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feelings of inadequacy, and yet great things eventually came out of that weakness when he turned to God (see Moses 6:31–32, 47; 7:13).

**(9-15) Exodus 4:18**

The great vision Moses received, as recorded in Moses 1, took place after Moses' original call on Mount Horeb and before his arrival in Egypt. Moses 1:17 refers to the burning bush experience in retrospect. Moses 1:24–25 speaks of the delivery of Israel from bondage as a future event.

**(9-16) Exodus 4:19–21. Did the Lord Raise Up the Pharaoh and Did He Harden the Pharaoh's Heart?**

The Joseph Smith Translation of Exodus 4:21 says, "I will prosper thee; but Pharaoh will harden his heart, and he will not let the people go." This truth must be remembered in all subsequent references to the pharaoh's heart being hardened.

**(9-17) Exodus 4:18–28. Why Was the Lord Angry with Moses As He Traveled to Egypt?**

The King James Version lacks detail in this account. The Joseph Smith Translation indicates that the Lord

was angry with Moses for failing to circumcise his son. It appears that Zipporah had not wanted to circumcise Gershom but relented when the Lord expressed His anger to Moses.

"And it came to pass, that the Lord appeared unto him as he was in the way, by the inn. The Lord was angry with Moses, and his hand was about to fall upon him, to kill him; for he had not circumcised his son.

"Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and circumcised her son, and cast the stone at his feet, and said, Surely thou art a bloody husband unto me.

"And the Lord spared Moses and let him go, because Zipporah, his wife, circumcised the child. And she said, Thou art a bloody husband. And Moses was ashamed, and hid his face from the Lord, and said, I have sinned before the Lord.

"And the Lord said unto Aaron, go into the wilderness to meet Moses, and he went and met him, in the mount of God; in the mount where God appeared unto him; and Aaron kissed him." (JST, Exodus 4:24–27.)



*The Great Pyramid of Cheops was nearly a thousand years old when Moses was in Egypt.*

**(9-18) Exodus 4:29–31**

What can be said of the people who had to be converted by signs (see Matthew 12:38–39; D&C 63:7–12)? Although their initial reaction when they saw the signs was very positive, at the first indication of challenge and adversity their commitment began to waver (see Exodus 5:20–23).

**(9-19) Exodus 5:1–23; 6:1**

God gave the pharaoh a chance to let Israel go, of his own free will, to worship God. Through his refusal the pharaoh could blame no one but himself for the consequences.

**(9-20) Exodus 6:1–8**

The eternal gospel covenant that the Lord God established with Adam and all the patriarchs, including Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was, at the time of Moses, established with the whole house of Israel.

**(9-21) Exodus 6:3. Was Jehovah’s Name Known before Moses?**

The King James Version of Exodus 6:3 suggests that the name *Jehovah* was unknown to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This suggestion, however, obviously cannot be the case (see Genesis 4:26 in which the name LORD [Jehovah] first appears). Also, the Lord (Jehovah) appeared several times to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others. Obviously there is something wrong with the King James translation of Exodus 6:3. The problem can be resolved if one knows that the verse can be read as a question in the Hebrew, as well as the English, merely by raising the inflection of the voice toward the end of the sentence. (When one translates a text, not spoken aloud, he may not catch the inflection and may therefore miss the original intention of the writer.) The Prophet Joseph Smith rendered this passage as follows: “And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob. I am the Lord God Almighty; the Lord JEHOVAH. And was not my name known unto them?” (JST, Exodus 6:3.) The answer is yes!

**(9-22) Exodus 6:12, 30**

The King James Version states that Moses had “uncircumcised lips” (Exodus 6:30). The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies this statement by saying that Moses had “stammering lips” and was “slow of speech” (JST, Exodus 6:29). Exodus 4:10 in the New English Bible reports that Moses was “slow and hesitant in speech.” This characteristic may explain Moses’ original hesitation to be God’s spokesman (see Exodus 4:10; see also Reading 9-14).

**(9-23) Exodus 7:1**

The Prophet Joseph Smith corrected this verse to read that Moses was to be a prophet to the pharaoh rather than a god.

**(9-24) Exodus 7:11–12. Did the Magicians in the Pharaoh’s Court Exercise the Power of the Lord?**

“All down through the ages and in almost all countries, men have exercised great occult and mystical powers, even to the healing of the sick and the performing of miracles. Soothsayers, magicians, and astrologers were found in the courts of ancient kings. They had certain powers by which they divined and solved the monarch’s problems, dreams, etc. One of the most striking examples of this is recorded in Exodus, where Pharaoh called ‘the wise men and the sorcerers’ who duplicated some of the miracles the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron to perform. When Aaron threw down his rod, it became a serpent. The Egyptian magicians threw down their rods, and they also became serpents. . . .

“ . . . The Savior declared that Satan had the power to bind bodies of men and women and sorely afflict them [see Matthew 7:22–23; Luke 13:16]. If Satan has power to bind the bodies, he surely must have power to loose them. It should be remembered that Satan has great knowledge and thereby can exercise authority and to some extent control the elements, when some greater power does not intervene.” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:176, 178.)



*A typical purification scene from the temple in Esna*

**(9-25) Exodus 7–10. The Plagues of Egypt**

There have been numerous attempts through the ages to explain the plagues described in these chapters of Exodus. Some have tried to show that the various plagues were the result of some natural phenomenon such as passing meteorites or the explosion of a volcanic island in the Mediterranean Sea. While there is some degree of logical progression in the plagues (the river’s pollution could have driven the frogs out of the marshes to die, and this situation would then have bred lice, flies, and disease), it is not possible at present to explain how the Lord brought about these miraculous events. The fact that the plagues were selective (that is, sent upon the Egyptians but not the Israelites) adds to their



*The sphinx near the mortuary temple of Khafre*

miraculous nature. God often works through natural means to bring about His purposes, but that fact does not lessen the miraculous nature of His work. In the plagues and eventual deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt is a record of remarkable and miraculous intervention by God in behalf of His children. *How* He actually intervened is not nearly so significant as that He *did* intervene.

## **POINTS TO PONDER**

**(9-26)** The two main characters in these chapters are Moses and the pharaoh. We have learned that the Lord knew both of these men before they were born. Both were introduced to the test of mortality at this time with the Lord knowing that they would perform their respective functions.

Moses was meek and allowed himself to be led by the hand of God. Consequently, great and mighty miracles were performed by him to deliver God's chosen people, Israel, from bondage.

The pharaoh, on the other hand, was self-centered, power hungry, cruel, and hard-hearted. He was largely unimpressed with the power of the Lord. He preferred to follow the counterfeit power of Satan, which allowed him the false belief that he was a god on earth.

Assume you were going to give a talk in sacrament meeting entitled "Using Exodus 1-10 as a Source of Wisdom for Personal Growth." What things from the lives of Moses and the pharaoh would you list that we could either emulate or avoid in becoming more Christlike in our characters? Be specific, giving scripture references in each case.





# Symbolism and Typology in the Old Testament

## (C-1) The Importance of Symbols

Thomas Carlyle once wrote: "It is in and through symbolism that man consciously or unconsciously lives, works, and has his being. Those ages, moreover, are accounted the noblest which can best recognize symbolical worth, and prize it the highest." (In Maurice H. Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*, flyleaf.) It should not be surprising, then, that symbolic language and imagery should play a central role in religion, which is concerned with man's eternal destiny. Religious ordinances and rituals are deeply symbolic, and the scriptures, which contain the word of the Lord revealed for His children, abound with similes, metaphors, parables, allegories, types, and symbols. The symbolism is so profound and so extensive that if one does not have an understanding of the meaning of that symbolism, many of the most important and satisfying truths will be missed.

## (C-2) The Law of Moses: A Law of Symbolic Significance

Many in the world and even some in the Church think of the Old Testament as reflecting a pregospel culture centered around the Mosaic covenant that was given instead of the gospel laws. But the Lord said the following about what the Israelites were given when they rejected the higher law: "And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel; which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments" (D&C 84:26–27; emphasis added). The fulness of the gospel was taken, but a preparatory gospel dealing with the basic principles of the gospel was given in its place. Paul taught the Galatian Saints that this action was taken so that the Israelites could be brought to Christ: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." (Galatians 3:24–25.) The Old Testament, especially in its types and symbols, richly reflects this gospel orientation, since it contained the preparatory gospel designed to bring Israel to have faith in the Redeemer.

## (C-3) Why Does the Lord Use So Much Figurative Imagery in the Scriptures?

Why does the Lord use so much symbolic language to teach His children? Why does He not just say clearly what He wants them to know? While one probably cannot understand all of the Lord's purposes

for using symbolism to teach His children, the following reasons seem to be important:

**(C-4)** *Symbolic language and imagery have the power to convey important truths through many languages and cultures with great power and impact.* A figurative image can provide powerful teaching impact. For example, in the midst of lengthy prophecies of judgment upon Israel, Isaiah gave what at first seems to be a difficult and obscure passage: "Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech.

"Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground?

"When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rie in their place?

"For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.

"For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod.

"Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen.

"This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." (Isaiah 28:23–29.)

The imagery Isaiah used unfolds a lesson with great teaching power. Isaiah used the symbol of a farmer and how he deals with his fields and crops to show the purposes of God. Israel is the field of Jehovah. Because of her wickedness and apostasy she has become hardened and incapable of producing much fruit. As the husbandman plows the soil, breaking up the hardness with the blade and turning over the soil in preparation for planting, so the judgments and punishments sent upon the covenant people are the plow and the harrow of God (compare Mormon's commentary in Helaman 12:1–6 on the nature of God's children). But note Isaiah's question, "Does the plowman plow all day to sow?" The answer is no. The plowman does not plow the field over and over and over. He plows just enough to prepare the soil for planting the fitches, the cummin (two kinds of herbs) and the wheat.

Likewise, in the image of the farmer threshing his crops is illustrated the divine discretion of God. Different crops are threshed in different ways. Wheat is threshed with a threshing sled, a heavy instrument dragged behind an ox or a donkey. But other means are used to thresh the more tender fitches and cummin, which would be destroyed by that much weight. So it is with God. His punishments are not

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sent just to grind the people to destruction. If the wickedness of the people requires only the beating “with the staff,” then that is all the Lord sends. If a heavier form of threshing is required, then it is sent. In some extreme cases, such as those of the Flood or of Sodom and Gomorrah, the fields may have to be burned completely so that a new crop can be started.

The Lord could have explained in a more straightforward manner the way He deals with His rebellious children, listing point by point what He wanted all His children to know. But there is more power in imagery than there is in a list. And the power of that imagery carries through numerous translations and various cultures. As Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated:

“To crystallize in our minds the eternal verities which we must accept and believe to be saved, to dramatize their true meaning and import with an impact never to be forgotten, to center our attention on these saving truths, again and again and again, the Lord uses similitudes. Abstract principles may easily be forgotten or their deep meaning overlooked, but visual performances and actual experiences are registered on the mind in such a way as never to be lost.” (*The Promised Messiah*, p. 377.)

**(C-5)** *Couching great truths in symbolic language helped preserve them from those who sought to take away the plain and precious parts of the scriptures.* Unquestionably, many plain and precious things have been taken from the Bible (see 1 Nephi 13:26). The Prophet Joseph Smith said: “I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors.” (*Teachings*, p. 327.)

The Prophet suggested deliberate mutilation of the text. But those truths couched in symbolic imagery that require the “spirit of prophecy,” or the “testimony of Jesus,” to interpret (Alma 25:16; Revelation 19:10) were not understood by these “designing and corrupt priests” and thus were left basically intact.

**(C-6)** *Figurative language can convey truth and meaning to all levels of spiritual maturity.* After teaching the multitude the parable of the four kinds of soil, Jesus admonished them, “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:9). This statement signaled to His listeners that what the Savior had just said was more than just a nice story. The disciples later came to Him and asked, “Why speakest thou unto them [the multitude] in parables?” (Matthew 13:10). The Savior’s answer is at first puzzling. He explained that He taught that way because the multitude refused to see and hear spiritual truths. Elder Bruce R. McConkie pointed out the significance of the Savior’s use of parables:

“Our Lord used *parables* on frequent occasions during his ministry to teach gospel truths. His purpose, however, in telling these short stories was *not* to present the truths of his gospel in plainness so that all his hearers would understand. Rather it was so to phrase and hide the doctrine involved that only

the spiritually literate would understand it, while those whose understandings were darkened would remain in darkness. (Matt. 13:10–17; [JST], Matt. 21:34.) It is never proper to teach any person more than his spiritual capacity qualifies him to assimilate.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 553.)

To the spiritually illiterate the parable of the soils is a lovely little story. To one in tune with the Spirit and full of understanding of gospel truths, it is far more. Thus, symbolic language can both *reveal* and *conceal* truth, depending on the readiness of the individual who hears.

**(C-7)** *Symbols deeply affect the emotions and attitudes of an individual.* The national flag of a country is, in reality, nothing but a large piece of cloth with its colors arranged in a particular pattern. But for such a piece of cloth, people are moved to tears, go to war, risk persecution, or suffer death. It is not, of course, the specific piece of cloth that matters, for that could be easily replaced. What does matter is what the cloth symbolizes to the individual. This meaning can be very profound in its effect on the heart and mind. One need only ponder the effect on the emotions of such symbolic objects or acts as a wedding ring, the temple, baptism, the sacrament, and so on to understand one reason the Lord teaches through symbols.

**(C-8)** *Spiritual power comes when one is forced to ponder and search out the meaning of symbolic imagery in an attitude of quest.* When a price is paid in personal effort and sacrifice for something, it is appreciated far more than when it is received without effort. To unveil great spiritual truths clothed in figurative dress requires that the student of the scriptures search and ponder. A price must be paid, and when understanding does come, it is much more satisfying and appreciated than it otherwise would have been.

Occasionally some try to discourage others from seeking for figurative imagery in the scriptures. Of course, one must not seek to read in meaning that was not intended, but to ignore symbolic meaning where it was intended is to miss much. In *The Promised Messiah* Bruce R. McConkie encouraged people to seek for the symbolic meaning in the scriptures: “It is wholesome and proper to look for similitudes of Christ everywhere and to use them repeatedly in keeping him and his laws uppermost in our minds” (p. 453).

### **(C-9) Some Guidelines for Interpreting the Types and Symbols of the Old Testament**

When is an act or object used in the scriptures to be taken literally and when should it be interpreted figuratively? Symbols can be taken too literally and their true meaning lost in a grotesque parody of reality. On the other hand, sometimes the actual meaning of a passage is explained away by saying it is only figurative. The following guidelines may be helpful in correctly interpreting the types and symbols used in the scriptures.

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**(C-10)** *Look beyond the symbol for its intended meaning.* Symbols both *denote* and *connote* meaning. A symbol's *denotation* is what it is. For example, a picture of the Salt Lake Temple denotes a particular large building with six towers and ornate spires, topped by a golden figure with a trumpet. As a symbol, however, the Salt Lake Temple also connotes meaning. *Connotation* is what a symbol suggests through association, even though such associations may not be part of the symbol itself. For example, the Salt Lake Temple connotes temple marriage, holiness, beauty, reverence, or a place of spiritual comfort. It has also come to represent the Church itself. One does not look at the actual building and see temple marriage as part of the architecture. The idea of temple marriage is only connoted, or associated, with the symbol in one's mind. Often the connotation of a scriptural image gives it more real significance than does its denotation. Thus, one must look beyond the symbol's denotation at what it was meant to connote.

In looking at the symbol, however, one must not become so bound up in one's own culture that one misses the imagery behind the symbol. For example, the fact one has been raised in a large city and has never had farming experience does not mean that one cannot appreciate figures and similitudes drawn from the agricultural life of ancient times. With some study and thought one can sense the significance of sowing, reaping, winnowing, threshing, treading grapes, and so on.

Perhaps a more difficult problem for some is the nature of many symbols used in the Old Testament. Reading about the shedding of the blood of sacrificial animals and how that blood was caught in basins and thrown against the altar, or used in various other ways, may be offensive to some modern readers. In today's world many people come no closer to the slaughtering of animals than the meat department in a supermarket, where the meat is neatly packaged and attractively displayed. The blood and entrails of the animals are never seen, and thus, when they are discussed in some detail, as they are in the Old Testament, the modern reader may experience a squeamish, negative reaction.

Two things should be kept in mind. First, these practices were not offensive to the people of the Old Testament. The killing of animals for food, the sight of blood, the cleansing of the meat were all part of everyday life. The typical family in those times kept animals and slaughtered them for food. Even in large cities people purchased meat in open-air markets where often the animal was killed on the spot so that the meat would be fresh. Such a practice is common in the Middle East to this day. Second, it is the denotation of these practices that may be offensive to today's urbanized reader. But when one looks beyond the symbol itself to what it was meant to connote, then the offense is replaced by appreciation for the spiritual truths being taught.

**(C-11)** *Do the scriptures themselves give the interpretation of the symbol?* Sometimes people debate what a symbol was meant to connote when the answer is given very

clearly in the scriptures. What do the seven golden candlesticks in the book of Revelation signify? The Lord answered that question directly, so there is no need for speculation (see Revelation 1:20). When Jesus talked about the seed falling on four different kinds of soil, what did He mean? He specifically explained the symbolism (see Matthew 13:18–23). What was the meaning of the great image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (see Daniel 2:36–45)? There are hundreds of other examples of such direct interpretations. Through a careful study of the scriptures, many of the interpretations are quickly found. But a price must be paid by the reader if he is to find these interpretations, for often they are given elsewhere in the scriptures.

**(C-12)** *Look for the Savior in the symbols and imagery of the scriptures.* Since Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice are the central and most fundamental part of the Latter-day Saint religion, it is not surprising that virtually all scriptural symbols are Christ-centered. One could say that all of the parables, every simile, each metaphor, and all of the types are designed to teach the children of God what they must do to incorporate the infinite sacrifice of Christ into their own life. This concept is as profoundly true of the Old Testament as it is of all other scripture. Nephi taught the all-embracing pervasiveness of scriptural symbolism when he said, "Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and *all things* which have been given of God from the beginning of the world *are the typifying of him*" (2 Nephi 11:4; emphasis added).

Amulek taught the same principle when he said, "And behold this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal" (Alma 34:14).

King Benjamin taught the same principle (see Mosiah 3:14–15), as did Abinadi (see Mosiah 13:29–31). (See Reading 1-5 for a statement about the pervasiveness of the idea of a divine Redeemer in the Old Testament.)

The key to the true meaning of the law of Moses was suggested by Mormon: "Now they did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses; but the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ; and thus they did retain a hope through faith, unto eternal salvation, *relying upon the spirit of prophecy, which spake of those things to come*" (Alma 25:16; emphasis added). John was taught that the "spirit of prophecy" is "the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 19:10). Without this testimony a person cannot see the full significance of the Old Testament laws and ordinances.

**(C-13)** *Let the nature of the object used as a symbol contribute to an understanding of its spiritual meaning.* The peoples of the East loved imagery and drew figures and similes from the things that surrounded them. They looked for the natural characteristics of something to see if it conveyed spiritual truths. For

example, Psalm 83:13 reads, "O my God, make [Thy enemies] like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind." The word *wheel* translates the Hebrew word *galgal*, which means a large thorny plant, native to the Middle East. One Bible commentator explained the significance of this metaphor:

"*Galgal* is a thorny plant, a member of the Aster family (*Asteracea* or *Compositae*). The *galgal* is inactive during the dry summer months. After the first winter rain, a rosette of leaves develops out of the thick perennial root. . . . The flower clusters, or inflorescences, develop during the late winter and early spring. From the flowers, the fruit with its seeds develops. Then the whole plant dies—part of the process by which the seeds are dispersed. The stem leaves have a stiff blade and veins; these leaves look like wings facing in every direction. The whole plant is round—so that it can roll like a ball. When the seeds of the dead fruit are ready to be dispersed, the base of the stem is disconnected from the thick root by means of an especially weak tissue which develops at just the right time. The plant then rolls, driven by the wind, dispersing its seeds on steppe and field. (*Galgal* also means wheel in Hebrew; the plant's name probably derived from its habit of rolling across the fields like a wheel.)

"Just before the round plant disconnects from the root, the plant appears frightening indeed—full of thistles and strong and stable looking. In fact the base of the plant is extremely weak and the whole plant can be easily driven by the wind. The sound of dry *galgal* plants rolling with the wind is a memorable experience to those who live amid these plants.

"By the metaphor of *galgal*, the Psalmist is asking the Lord to make Israel's enemies like *galgal*: although they look frightening, their base is weak. The whole plant can be driven by the wind and it will be gone.

"*Galgal* is also used in Isaiah 17:13:

"The nations roar like the roaring of many waters, but he will rebuke them, and they will fly far away, chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and like a *rolling thing* before the storm.'

"The 'rolling thing' . . . is *galgal*. A 'rolling thing' is only part of the meaning of the word. The prophet is really forecasting the destruction of the Assyrian empire—a frightening enemy, but with a weak base that may easily be blown away by the wind of the Lord." (Anivoam Danin, "Plants as Biblical Metaphors," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May–June 1979, p. 20.)

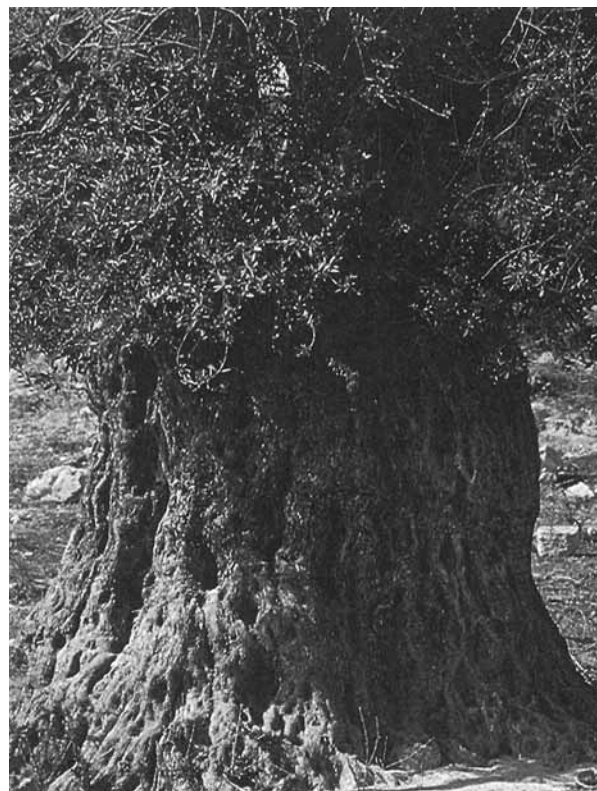
Thus, an understanding comes from an examination of the symbolic object. Studying the history and cultures of these people often helps one to see both the significance of the objects used and their spiritual impact.

**(C-14)** *One truth may be taught by numerous symbols; one symbol may convey numerous truths; and, whereas the Lord may change the symbols He uses to teach truths, the truths never change.* Sometimes when one finds an interpretation of a particular symbol, one tends to be satisfied with that interpretation and does not explore it further, or one may be confused when one finds another symbol conveying the same truth. The vastness

and the depths of the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ are such that a myriad of images, types, and similitudes is required to convey them. For example, there are so many varied aspects of Jesus' life and mission that He is typified or symbolized as the Lamb (see John 1:29), the Light (see John 1:7–8), the Advocate (see D&C 45:3–5), the Rock (see 1 Corinthians 10:4), the Good Shepherd (see John 10:11, 14), the True Vine (see John 15:1–5), the Word (see John 1:1, 14), the Lion (see Revelation 5:5), the Cornerstone (see Ephesians 2:20), the Living Bread (see John 6:51), the Amen (see Revelation 3:14), the Bright and Morning Star (see Revelation 22:16), the High Priest (see Hebrews 3:1), the Bridegroom (see Matthew 25:1–13), the Treader of the Winepress (see D&C 133:50), and a Consuming Fire (see Hebrews 12:29). Careful pondering of the connotations of these titles can provide significant enlightenment about the Savior and His mission.

Likewise, one symbol can convey numerous spiritual truths. For example, the olive tree was used as a symbol of the house of Israel (see Jacob 5:3). Applying the guideline of looking at the nature of the symbol, one finds many significant things in an examination of the olive tree:

1. The olive tree is a living thing and produces much fruit.
2. The olive tree requires constant pruning by a husbandman if the young shoot is to be brought into production. Without this constant pruning, the tree would grow into the wild olive, which is little more than a bushy tangle of limbs and branches that produces only a small, bitter, worthless fruit.



An olive tree

3. To become productive, the wild olive must be cut back completely and then a branch from a tame olive tree must be grafted onto the stem of the wild tree. With careful pruning and cultivating, the tree will begin to produce fruit in seven years and become fully productive in about fourteen to fifteen years.

4. Although it takes a long time to bring the tree into production, once the tree begins to produce it continues to do so for a remarkably long time. Some trees in the Holy Land have been producing abundantly for over four hundred years.

5. When the tree finally grows old and dies, the roots send up a number of new, green shoots which, if properly cultivated, will each grow into a mature olive tree. Thus, the same tree may go on reproducing itself for millennia. (One cannot help but see a symbol of the Resurrection in this phenomenon, and also think of the numerous times when the various groups of the house of Israel seemed to have died and yet new shoots sprang forth from the root to become Israel again.)

6. The fruit of the tree provides the staple of the Middle Eastern diet. In addition to its use as a food, the olive and its oil were and are used for lighting lamps, anointing the body, cooking, as ingredients in cosmetics, and as medicine.

Many of the signs and tokens given under the Mosaic covenant have been replaced, but that fact does not imply that they were inferior. The Lord commanded the Israelites to put fringes on the borders of their clothing as a reminder of their relationship to the Lord (see Numbers 15:38–39; Deuteronomy 22:12). In response to one scholar who called such peculiar dress the coarse rudiments of a spiritually immature people, a Bible commentator wrote:

“Men dress in diverse and strange ways to conform to the world and its styles. What is so difficult or ‘coarse’ about any conformity to God’s law, or any mode God specifies? There is nothing difficult or strange about this law, nor any thing absurd or impossible.”

He then made this significant point about such symbols:

“It [the wearing of fringed garments] is *not* observed by Christians, because it was, like circumcision, the Sabbath, and other aspects of the Mosaic form of the covenant, superseded by new signs of the covenant as renewed by Christ. The law of the covenant remains; the covenant rites and signs have been changed. But the forms of covenant signs are no less honorable, profound, and beautiful in the Mosaic form than in the Christian form. The change does not represent an evolutionary advance or a higher or lower relationship. The covenant was fulfilled in Jesus Christ; but God did not treat Moses, David, Isaiah, Hezekiah, or any of His Old Testament covenant people as lesser in His sight or more childish in ability and hence in need of ‘coarse rudiments.’” (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 23.)

**(C-15)** Before one can fully understand what a symbol is meant to convey, one must understand the spiritual truths being conveyed. The Old Testament is full of types,

symbols, metaphors, and similitudes of Christ, and yet for the most part the leaders of Judah in Christ’s time rejected Jesus when He came among them. They knew the language, the culture, the idioms, and yet they rejected the significance of what the scriptures taught, and they refused to be converted. They were ignorant of the truths of the gospel which gave the symbols their real meaning. One author emphasized this point by use of an interesting analogy:

“The most perfect representation of a steam-engine to [someone living in a totally undeveloped part of the world] would be wholly and hopelessly unintelligible to him, simply because the reality, the outline of which was presented to him, was something hitherto unknown. But let the same drawing be shewn to those who have seen the reality, such will have no difficulty in explaining the representation. And the greater the acquaintance with the reality, the greater will be the ability to explain the picture. The [person] who had never seen the steam-engine would of course know nothing whatever about it. Those who had seen an engine but know nothing of its principles, though they might tell the general object of the drawing, could not explain the details. But the engineer, to whom every screw and bolt are familiar, to whom the use and object of each part is thoroughly known, would not only point out where each of these was to be found in the picture, but would shew, what others might overlook, how in different engines these might be made to differ.” (Jukes, *Law of the Offerings*, pp. 14–15.)

The reality behind Old Testament types and symbols is Jesus Christ and His teachings of salvation. The better one understands Him, the more clearly one will see the meaning of the symbols. Without that understanding, the message will be lost.

#### **(C-16) Search, Study, Ponder, Pray**

One does not go to a great museum such as the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and fully explore its treasure in an hour or two of leisurely browsing. Similarly, one does not exhaust the typology of the Old Testament in one quick reading of the book. A lifetime of exploration and pondering may be required before the Lord will fully reveal the extent to which He has filled the treasure house of symbolic teaching. Note His own words to Adam:

“And behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me” (Moses 6:63).

As one studies the Old Testament, especially the types and symbolism of the Mosaic dispensation, one must pay the price in careful study, pondering, and praying, and he will find the Lord unfolding many precious and plain truths to his eyes. The Old Testament is full of Jesus Christ if one will only have eyes to see and ears to hear.



# The Passover and the Exodus

## (10-1) Introduction

As past chapters have shown, the Lord has often influenced history in such a way that it becomes in and of itself symbolically significant. Jacob in the Book of Mormon taught that the commandment for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac provided a similitude of God's sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son (see Jacob 4:5). Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, provided a type or symbol of Christ and His ministry (see Reading 8-19). Nephi taught that from the beginning of the world all things have been given to typify or symbolize Christ and His Atonement (see 2 Nephi 11:4).

These chapters of Exodus contain one of the grandest and most profound of all historical types. The deliverance of the house of Israel from bondage is not only one of history's most dramatic events, but it is also full of symbolic significance for the Saints of all times.

As preparation for reading the scriptural account of this remarkable event, consider Elder Bruce R. McConkie's summary of the significance of these events:

"At the time appointed for their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, the Lord commanded each family in Israel to sacrifice a lamb, to sprinkle its blood on their doorposts, and then to eat unleavened bread for seven more days—all to symbolize the fact that the destroying angel would pass over the Israelites as he went forth slaying the firstborn in the families of all the Egyptians; and also to show that, in haste, Israel should go forth from slavery to freedom. As a pattern for all the Mosaic instructions yet to come, the details of the performances here involved were so arranged as to bear testimony both of Israel's deliverance and of her Deliverer. Among other procedures, the Lord commanded, as found in Exodus 12:

"1. 'Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year,' signifying that the Lamb of God, pure and perfect, without spot or blemish, in the prime of his life, as the Paschal Lamb, would be slain for the sins of the world.

"2. They were to take of the blood of the lamb and sprinkle it upon the doorposts of their houses, having this promise as a result: 'And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you,' signifying that the blood of Christ, which should fall as drops in Gethsemane and flow in a stream from a pierced side as he hung on the cross, would cleanse and save the faithful; and that, as those in Israel were saved temporally because the blood of a sacrificial lamb was sprinkled on the doorposts of their houses, so the faithful of all ages would wash their garments in the blood of the Eternal Lamb and from him receive an eternal salvation. And may we

say that as the angel of death passed by the families of Israel because of their faith—as Paul said of Moses, 'through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them' (Heb. 11:28)—even so shall the Angel of Life give eternal life to all those who rely on the blood of the Lamb.

"3. As to the sacrifice of the lamb, the decree was, 'Neither shall ye break a bone thereof,' signifying that when the Lamb of God was sacrificed on the cross, though they broke the legs of the two thieves to induce death, yet they brake not the bones of the Crucified One 'that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.' (John 19:31–36.)

"4. As to the eating the flesh of the sacrificial lamb, the divine word was, 'No uncircumcised person shall eat thereof,' signifying that the blessings of the gospel are reserved for those who come into the fold of Israel, who join the Church, who carry their part of the burden in bearing off the kingdom; signifying also that those who eat his flesh and drink his blood, as he said, shall have eternal life and he will raise them up at the last day. (John 6:54.)

"5. As 'the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt' because they believed not the word of the Lord delivered to them by Moses and Aaron, even so should the Firstborn of the Father, who brings life to all who believe in his holy name, destroy worldly people at the last day, destroy all those who are in the Egypt of darkness, whose hearts are hardened as were those of Pharaoh and his minions.

"6. On the first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Israelites were commanded to hold holy convocations in which no work might be done except the preparation of their food. These were occasions for preaching and explaining and exhorting and testifying. We go to sacrament meetings to be built up in faith and in testimony. Ancient Israel attended holy convocations for the same purposes. Knowing that all things operate by faith, would it be amiss to draw the conclusion that it is as easy for us to look to Christ and his spilt blood for eternal salvation as it was for them of old to look to the blood of the sacrificed lamb, sprinkled on doorposts, to give temporal salvation, when the angel of death swept through the land of Egypt?

"It was, of course, while Jesus and the Twelve were keeping the Feast of the Passover that our Lord instituted the ordinance of the sacrament, to serve essentially the same purposes served by the sacrifices of the preceding four millenniums. After that final Passover day and its attendant lifting up upon the cross of the true Paschal Lamb, the day for the proper celebration of the ancient feast ceased. After that Paul was able to say: 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us,' and to give the natural exhortation that flowed therefrom: 'Therefore let us keep the feast,

not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' (1 Cor. 5:7–8.)" (*The Promised Messiah*, pp. 429–31.)

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Exodus 11–19.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON EXODUS 11–19

### (10-2) Exodus 11. What Is the Significance of the Final Plague on Egypt?

In Reading 10-1, Elder McConkie noted the similarities between the smiting of disobedient and hard-hearted Egypt and the spiritual death of those who refuse to hearken to the Firstborn of God. There is, however, one additional comparison that could be made. In the typology of the Passover, the children of God (Israel) are in bondage to an evil power (Egypt). Similarly, all of God's children come into a world of sin and may find themselves in bondage to Satan and the powers of sin. (The terminology of *slavery* is used in such scriptures as 2 Nephi 2:29; Alma 34:35; D&C 84:49–51; Moses 4:4; 7:26.) Thus, the pharaoh could be thought of as a type or symbol of Satan. In light of this truth, it should be noted that what finally released the children of Israel from the bondage of the pharaoh (the symbol of Satan) was the death of the firstborn of Egypt. In like manner the atoning sacrifice of the Firstborn Son of God freed the children of God from death, a bondage to Satan.

### (10-3) Exodus 11:2. Was It Honest for the Israelites to "Borrow" Things from the Egyptians When They Had No Intention of Returning Them?

Adam Clarke, a Bible scholar, commented on the translation of the Hebrew word *sha'al* as "borrow."  
"This is certainly not a very correct translation: the original word . . . *shaal* signifies simply to *ask*, *request*, *demand*, *require*, *inquire*, &c.; but it does not signify to *borrow* in the proper sense of that word, though in a very few places of Scripture it is thus used. In this and the parallel place, chap. xii. 35, the word signifies to *ask* or *demand*, and not to *borrow*, which is a *gross mistake*. . . . God commanded the Israelites to *ask* or *demand* a certain recompense for their past services, and he inclined the hearts of the Egyptians to *give* liberally; and this, far from a matter of *oppression*, *wrong*, or even *charity*, was no more than a very *partial recompense* for the long and painful services which we may say *six hundred thousand* Israelites had rendered to Egypt, during a considerable number of years. And there can be no doubt that while their heaviest oppression lasted, they were

permitted to accumulate no kind of property, as all their gains went to their oppressors." (*Bible Commentary*, 1:307.)

The Egyptians, who seem to have been less hard-hearted than their pharaoh and more impressed with the powers of Moses, responded to this commandment, and the Israelites seem to have taken great wealth with them (see Exodus 12:35–36). Probably some of these spoils were later used in the construction of the golden calf (see Exodus 32:1–4) and in the building of the tabernacle (see Exodus 35:22–24). The wealth of the Egyptians also fulfilled the promise given to Abraham that the children of Israel would "come out with great substance" (Genesis 15:14).

### (10-4) Exodus 12:2. The Beginning of Months

So significant was the event about to take place that the Lord commanded Israel to use this event as the beginning of their calendar. Thus the sacred calendar of Israelite feasts and festivals begins with the month of Abib (later called Nisan), which corresponds to late March and early April. The so-called "Jewish New Year," which may come either in September or October, began while the Jews were captive in Babylon.

### (10-5) Exodus 12:8–10. Instructions for Cooking the Lamb

*Sodden with water* means "boiled or stewed." The lamb was to be roasted, not cooked in water. The phrase "with the purtenance thereof" means that the entrails, or internal organs, were to be roasted with the animal. Keil and Delitzsch translated verse 9 as follows: "They shall eat the lamb in that night . . . and none of it 'underdone' (or raw), or boiled; . . . but roasted with fire, even its head on (along with) its thighs and entrails." They explained that the lamb was thus "'undivided or whole, so that neither head nor thighs were cut off, and not a bone was broken [see Exodus 12:46], and the viscera were roasted in the belly along with the entrails,' the latter, of course, being first of all cleansed. . . . It is very certain that the command to roast was not founded upon the hurry of the whole procedure, as a whole animal could be quite as quickly boiled as roasted, if not even more quickly, and the Israelites must have possessed the requisite cooking utensils. It was to be roasted, in order that it might be placed upon the table undivided and essentially unchanged. 'Through the unity and integrity of the lamb given them to eat, the participants were to be joined into an undivided unity and fellowship with the Lord, who had provided them with the meal.'" (*Commentary*, 1:2:14–15.)

### (10-6) Exodus 12:14. In What Way Is the Passover An Ordinance Forever?

"The Feast of the Passover was fulfilled in that form in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Passover was a law given to Israel which was to continue until Christ, and was to remind the children of Israel of the coming of Christ who would become the sacrificial Lamb. After he was crucified the law was changed

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by the Savior himself, and from that time forth the law of the sacrament was instituted. We now observe the law of the sacrament instead of the Passover because the Passover was consummated in full by the death of Jesus Christ. It was a custom looking forward to the coming of Christ and his crucifixion and the lamb symbolized his death. . . .

"The word forever used in the Old Testament does not necessarily mean to the end of time but to the end of a period." (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5:153–54.)

#### **(10-7) Exodus 12:18–20. What Is the Symbolic Meaning of the Unleavened Bread and Bitter Herbs?**

Leaven, or yeast, was seen anciently as a symbol of corruption because it so easily spoiled and turned moldy. Jesus used this imagery when He warned the disciples of the "leaven of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:6), meaning their corrupt doctrine (see Matthew 16:6–12). In the law of Moses no leaven could be offered with the trespass offering (see Leviticus 6:17), suggesting that the offering must be without any corruption. For the Israelites, eating the unleavened bread symbolized that they were partaking of the bread which had no corruption or impurity, namely, the Bread of Life, who is Jesus Christ (see John 6:35). The careful purging of the household of all leaven (see Exodus 12:19) was a beautiful symbol of putting away all uncleanness from the family. Paul drew on this imagery of the unleavened bread when he called upon the Corinthian Saints to put away sin from their lives (see 1 Corinthians 5:7–8). (Note: Christ's comparison of the kingdom of heaven to leaven does not refer to yeast's tendency to spoil but to the fact it causes dough to rise or swell [see Matthew 13:33].)

The bitter herbs served to remind Israel of the bitter and severe bondage they had endured in Egypt.

#### **(10-8) Exodus 12:37–38. About Six Hundred Thousand Men**

The figure given here of six hundred thousand men agrees approximately with the official census of the Israelites given in Numbers 1:45–46. There, however, *men* means only the males twenty years and older who were capable of going to war. This fact means that the total company could easily have been over two million people. (See Enrichment Section E, "The Problem of Large Numbers in the Old Testament.")

The "mixed multitude" of verse 38 seems to refer to people of other nationalities who attached themselves to the Israelites and accompanied them in the Exodus. These seem to be the same people mentioned in Deuteronomy 29:10–11 who did menial labor for the Israelites. Also, they later joined the Israelites in the rebellions against God (see Numbers 11:4).

#### **(10-9) Exodus 12:40. How Long Were the Israelites in Bondage?**

The Bible contains two versions of how long Israel was in Egypt. According to Exodus 12:40–41, the period was exactly 430 years. Paul, however, in

Galatians 3:17, seems to suggest that it was 430 years from the time Abraham received the covenant to the Exodus, although Paul may have meant something else.

The Samaritan text, one of the oldest manuscripts of the Old Testament, reads, "*Now the sojourning of the children of Israel and of their fathers, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt was 430 years*" (in Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:358). Other equally significant texts do not support this addition, however.

When Abraham was shown the future bondage of Israel in vision, the Lord said, "Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years" (Genesis 15:13; emphasis added). This passage suggests strongly that the captivity would be four hundred years. One scholar wrote a summary of the evidence for both views and concluded that the idea of the longer captivity is the best supported. He said:

"Some years ago it was fashionable to date the Exodus to the fifteenth century B.C. First Kings 6:1 says it was 480 years from the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon's reign. This points to the fifteenth century. Moreover, the discovery of the fourteenth-century Amarna Letters, letters from vassal princes in Canaan to Amenophis IV (the famous Akhenaten) speak of confusion in the land. The disturbance was occasioned by the relaxation of Egyptian rule coupled with marauding bands of brigands who are called 'Hapiru.' The Hapiru were associated in some scholars' minds with the invading Hebrews. Furthermore, Professor John Garstang, the excavator at Jericho, said that that city was destroyed in the Late Bronze Age, a time which would fit with other evidence. This city was, of course, the one which the Bible says was the first to be taken by the Hebrews in Canaan as they marched around its walls and blew their trumpets and the walls came tumbling down. So a number of factors converged to support what seemed to be a Biblical dating for the Exodus. The suggestion was that the pharaoh of the Exodus was either Thutmose III (ca. 1490–1435) or Amenophis III (ca. 1406–1370).

"Today the picture has changed entirely. One by one the factors which pointed to an early date for the Exodus have either been called into doubt or have been shown to have nothing to do with the question. At the same time new evidence has come to light which points to a later date: the thirteenth century, perhaps early in the reign of Ramses II (1290–1224). Exodus 1:11 tells us that the Hebrews' bondage had to do with rebuilding the royal treasure cities of Pithom and Ramses (Tanis). The nature of this bondage as described in Exodus 1:14 strongly suggests that, being nomads close to the building sites, these people were pressed into labor gangs. They were forced to develop the fields which would support the populations of the cities as well as make brick out of which the splendid new royal bastions were being constructed. Archaeologically recovered history of these sites indicates that they went into decline when the Hyksos were driven from the land, but that they

were rebuilt under Ramses II or possibly his father, Seti I (1309–1290 B.C.). There is also the statement in chapters 20 and 21 of Numbers that when the Hebrews sought to cross Edom and Moab they were turned back and had to make their way along the border between these lands. Again archaeological research can now tell us about the history of this Transjordanian area. It did not have a settled population until the thirteenth century. Before that time there would have been no Edom and no Moab to refuse passage to the Hebrews. There has also come to light another written source of interest in dating the Exodus. This is an Egyptian inscription celebrating the victories of Pharaoh Merneptah in Canaan around the year 1220 B.C. This speaks of 'Israel' and is indeed the oldest written mention of Israel we know. Of course, this only shows the latest date one can give for the presence of Israel in Canaan. But the date of the inscription—1220 B.C.—is taken by some to be significant in light of other evidence. A part of that evidence, in addition to what has been mentioned, is the violent destruction of a number of Canaanite cities in the thirteenth century. Was this the work of invading Hebrews?

"Clearly the question of the date of the Exodus cannot be settled decisively. Yet the weight of evidence is strong, and almost all scholars today agree upon Ramses II or possibly his father as the ruler whose heart was hardened against the Hebrews." (Frank, *Discovering the Biblical World*, p. 56.)

#### **(10-10) Exodus 12:43–51. Why Weren't Non-Israelites Allowed to Eat the Passover?**

The Passover was an ordinance and ceremony identifying Israel as a chosen nation, a people selected by Jehovah and a people who had in turn elected to serve Him. The Lord forbade strangers, or "nonmembers" of Israel, from partaking of the Passover just as He has said that partaking of the sacrament is only for those who have repented and are baptized and worthy (see 3 Nephi 18:16, 28–32). To partake of either as a "nonmember" would imply a renewal of covenants which, in fact, had never been made. The Lord has always emphasized, however, that if a stranger "will [desire to] keep the passover" (Exodus 12:48), he must join Israel by circumcision, or, today, be baptized (see 3 Nephi 18:30; see also Elder McConkie's fourth point in Reading 10-1).

#### **(10-11) Exodus 13:1–2, 11–16. Why Did the Lord Ask for the Firstborn of Israel?**

"Again, the Lord, through the sprinkling of the blood of a lamb on the door-posts of the Israelites, having saved the lives of all the first-born of Israel, made a claim upon them for their services in His cause. . . .

"But the first-born of the Egyptians, for whom no lamb as a token of the propitiation was offered, were destroyed. It was through the propitiation and atonement alone that the Israelites were saved, and, under the circumstances they must have perished with the Egyptians, who were doomed, had it not

been for the contemplated atonement and propitiation of Christ, of which this was a figure.

"Hence the Lord claimed those that He saved as righteously belonging to Him, and claiming them as His He demanded their services; but afterwards, as shown in [Numbers 3:12–13]; He accepted the tribe of Levi in lieu of the first-born of Israel; and as there were more of the first-born than there were of the Levites, the balance had to be redeemed with money, which was given to Aaron, as the great High Priest and representative of the Aaronic Priesthood, he being also a Levite. [See Numbers 3:50–51.]" (Taylor, *Mediation and Atonement*, p. 108.)

Of further significance is the truth that Christ is the Firstborn among all of Heavenly Father's spirit children (see D&C 93:21). He came as the Redeemer, paying the price for all, and thus is justified in requesting that they serve Him. As Paul said, all mankind is "bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

#### **(10-12) Exodus 13:9–10**

See Reading 19-12 for an explanation of the commandment to bind the sign on the hand and between the eyes.

#### **(10-13) Exodus 13:17–22**

"The route Israel was to go was indicated by a pillar of fire signifying the presence of the Lord going before them. They would have had a short journey had they been ready and capable of following the coastal route through Philistine lands to Canaan" (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:80). Their faith, however, was not yet sufficient for such a task. God does not require a trial too great for one's faith. (See 1 Corinthians 10:13.) The phrase they "went up harnessed" (Exodus 13:18) seems to imply organization and orderliness and probably preparation for possible attack. Although the logistics of taking up to two million people into the wilderness is absolutely staggering, this verse suggests that it was not a disorganized flight but rather an orderly exodus.

#### **(10-14) Exodus 14:4, 8, 17**

Joseph Smith changed these two verses to show that the pharaoh hardened his own heart (see Reading 9-16).

#### **(10-15) Exodus 14:10–31. Why Did God Lead Israel to the Red Sea?**

Some modern scholars have argued that Moses did not take Israel directly to and then through the Red Sea proper (the Gulf of Suez branch of the Red Sea), but rather through the "Reed Sea," since in Hebrew *Yam Suph* means "The Reed Sea." These scholars believe the area crossed was a marshy lowland near the Bitter Lakes. (See the map of the Exodus in Maps and Charts). They maintain that the chariots of the Egyptians bogged down in the mud and then the soldiers drowned when higher waters came in. But Latter-day Saints have information that the Exodus



*The Red Sea divided at Moses' command*

account is correct. Both the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants state directly that it was the Red Sea (see 1 Nephi 17:24–27; D&C 8:3). Exodus 14:22, 29 says that “the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left,” certainly implying more than passing through a marshy area dried by a sudden wind.

The Lord may have had at least two reasons for taking Israel through the Red Sea. First, the action displayed His awesome and great protective power. He was the only warrior in this battle against one of the most formidable armies in the world. Therefore, this event was the prelude and proof of His demand henceforth for trust and obedience. Second, when that battle was over, the power of the Egyptian army was destroyed. The time necessary for rebuilding Egypt’s power left Israel unmenaced until she became established in the promised land.

Paul taught that the passage through the Red Sea and the overshadowing of the cloud or pillar of fire were clearly types or symbols of the baptism of water and fire (see 1 Corinthians 10:1–4).

#### **(10-16) Exodus 15:24. “And the People Murmured against Moses”**

This verse contains the first of over twenty uses of the word *murmur* in its various forms in the record of Israel’s wanderings. Murmuring seems to have been a dominant part of their natures and a root of some of the problems they faced. The word is used nearly the same number of times to describe the attitude of the rebellious members of the Lehi colony who traveled through the same general wilderness area after leaving Jerusalem (see Topical Guide, s.v. “murmuring, murmur”).

*Murmuring* is defined as “a half-suppressed or muttered complaint” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1979 ed., s.v., “murmur”). Instead of open expression of concern and criticism so a problem can be dealt with, it is behind-the-scenes grumbling. That problem was not unique to the Israelites or to Laman and Lemuel. It is too often prevalent among Latter-day Saints today. Elder Marion G. Romney said:

"I desire to call your attention to the principle of loyalty, loyalty to the truth and loyalty to the men whom God has chosen to lead the cause of truth. I speak of 'the truth' and these 'men' jointly, because it is impossible fully to accept the one and partly reject the other.

"I raise my voice on this matter to warn and counsel you to be on your guard against criticism. . . . It comes, in part, from those who hold, or have held, prominent positions. Ostensibly, they are in good standing in the Church. In expressing their feelings, they frequently say, 'We are members of the Church, too, you know, and our feelings should be considered.'

"They assume that one can be in full harmony with the spirit of the gospel, enjoy full fellowship in the Church, and at the same time be out of harmony with the leaders of the Church and the counsel and directions they give. Such a position is wholly inconsistent, because the guidance of this Church comes, not alone from the written word, but also from continuous revelation, and the Lord gives that revelation to the Church through His chosen leaders and none else. It follows, therefore, that those who profess to accept the gospel and who at the same time criticize and refuse to follow the counsel of the leaders, are assuming an indefensible position." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1942, pp. 17–18.)

President David O. McKay showed the direct relationship between criticism and murmuring in this statement:

"In the Church we sometimes find two groups of people: the builders and the murmurers. Let each ask himself: 'In which class should I be placed?'

"We are called upon to perform duties. When the priesthood and auxiliary leadership introduce new programs, many of the members will say, 'Yes, we will do it. Let us perform in these new programs.' But sometimes we hear a murmurer, a faultfinder, who will say, 'No. We cannot do that.' Misjudging motives, some soon find themselves with Laman and Lemuel instead of with Nephi, whose actions expressed willingness to follow the voice of God. (See 1 Ne. 17:17ff.)

"Let us watch ourselves and be true to the examples set by our leaders. The warning is sometimes expressed: 'Speak not against the authorities.' What does it mean? It means 'be not a murmurer.' Murmuring against priesthood and auxiliary leadership is one of the most poisonous things that can be introduced into the home of a Latter-day Saint. Why are leaders called to their positions? To benefit themselves? No, not once can one point to an instance in this Church where a person was called for his personal benefit. When a call is made, it is made to bless someone, some class, or humanity at large. That is the mission of every member, from the President of the Church down to the latest convert. Everyone holds his position to build up, to bless, to establish righteousness, purity, and virtue among mankind." ("Four Guideposts," *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1969, p. 3.)

### (10-17) Exodus 16:1–35; 17:1–7. What Lessons Did God Seek to Teach Israel by the Way He Gave Them Water and Manna?

"The manna was used by God to teach lessons for spiritual instruction as well as physical sustenance. Israel was told that with the failure of other food ('suffered thee to hunger'), His provision of manna was to 'make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live' [Deuteronomy 8:3, see v. 16]. God used the provision of manna on six days and not the seventh to teach Israel obedience, and convicted them of disobedience [see Exodus 16:19, see vv. 20, 25–30]. Jesus Christ uses the manna, God-given 'bread from heaven', as a type of Himself, the true bread of life, and contrasts the shadow with the substance: 'your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead' [John 6:49], but He could say, 'I am the bread of life . . . which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever' [John 6:35, 51; see vv. 26–59]." (Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "manna," p. 780.)

Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 10:1–4 makes clear what the Lord was seeking to teach Israel regarding Christ when He provided both manna and water for them. Elder Bruce R. McConkie's commentary on Paul's statement is very enlightening:

"Christ is the bread which came down from heaven, the Bread of Life, the spiritual manna, of which men must eat to gain salvation. (John 6:31–58.) He is the spiritual drink, the living water, the water of life, which if men drink they shall never thirst more. (John 4:6–15.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:355.)

The "hidden manna" mentioned by John in Revelation 2:17 was explained by Elder McConkie as being "the bread of life, the good word of God, the doctrines of Him who is the Bread of Life—all of which is hidden from the carnal mind. Those who eat thereof shall never hunger more; eternal life is their eventual inheritance." (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:451.)



An oasis in the Sinai



*Aaron and Hur stay up the hands of Moses (see Exodus 17:12).*

**(10-18) Exodus 17:8-16. Why Did God Command Moses to Destroy the Amalekites?**

The Amalekites may have been descendants of Esau (see Genesis 36:12, 16). They attacked the Israelites in a most cowardly way, killing first the feeble, the faint, and the weary at the rear of the marching nation (see Deuteronomy 25:17-19). For this lack of respect toward God, the Amalekites were cursed by the Lord. The Israelites were subsequently commanded to “utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven” (Exodus 17:14).

In this first battle with other people, only when Moses held up his hand did the Israelites prevail. When Moses’ hands grew weary, Aaron and Hur brought him a stone to sit on and “stayed up his hands” (Exodus 17:12). President Harold B. Lee, who was then First Counselor in the First Presidency, commented:

“I think that is the role that President [N. Eldon] Tanner [Second Counselor in the First Presidency] and I have to fulfill. The hands of President [Joseph Fielding] Smith [President of the Church] may grow weary. They may tend to droop at times because of his heavy responsibilities; but as we uphold his

hands, and as we lead under his direction, by his side, the gates of hell will not prevail against you and against Israel. Your safety and ours depends upon whether or not we follow the ones whom the Lord has placed to preside over his church. He knows whom he wants to preside over this church, and he will make no mistake. The Lord doesn’t do things by accident. He has never done anything accidentally. And I think the scientists and all the philosophers in the world have never discovered or learned anything that God didn’t already know. His revelations are more powerful, more meaningful, and have more substance than all the secular learning in the world.

“Let’s keep our eye on the President of the Church and uphold his hands as President Tanner and I will continue to do.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1970, p. 153.)

**(10-19) Exodus 17:14**

What evidence is there that Moses actually recorded information which was passed down and which would refute the claim by some that the Bible is based on an oral tradition and recorded much later than Moses?

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**(10-20) Exodus 18**

“Jethro made a valuable contribution to Moses in suggesting an organization of leaders over units of ten, fifty, one hundred and one thousand to instruct and to judge the people in all but the most difficult of matters, which would be passed up through the system of inferior and superior courts if necessary, until they reached Moses at the head. Moses showed commendable humility and wisdom in accepting the old Priest’s advice. (A modern use of the same type of organization is seen in D&C 136.)” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:82–83.)

Joseph Smith changed Exodus 18:1 to read “the *high* priest of Midian” (emphasis added), confirming what is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 84:6–7, that Jethro held the Melchizedek Priesthood.

**(10-21) Exodus 19:5. A “Peculiar” People**

Today the word *peculiar* is used to mean something different and unusual. Since Israel was to be a peculiar people in this sense also, Exodus 19:5 and similar scriptures (see Deuteronomy 14:2; 1 Peter 2:9) are often read in that way. The original word in both Hebrew and Greek, however, means “property, wealth, private property, which is laid up or reserved; the leading idea is that of select, precious, endeared; something exceedingly prized and [diligently] preserved” (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “peculiar,” p. 305).

**(10-22) Exodus 19:10–25. “Moses . . . Sought Diligently to Sanctify His People That They Might Behold the Face of God” (D&C 84:23)**

“If they had accepted all of the privileges offered them and followed the instructions which would have qualified them to receive the fulfillment of all God’s promises, they could have been accorded the grandest of all revelations: He offered to come down in the *sight* of all the people *and* let them *hear* when He spoke to Moses that they might know for themselves about His will and His law, and believe in Moses’

future revelations from God, and revere the Lord evermore (cf. Deuteronomy 4:10). Note the need of cleanliness and spiritual dedication in their preparation for this great spiritual experience.

“At the prearranged signal, the sounding of the trumpet ‘exceeding long,’ the people trembled in anticipation and awe, but apparently they were not fully ready to come up ‘in the sight’ of the Lord on the mount where Moses was, for the Lord told him to go down and warn them *not* to come up. Hints as to why this was so are found in the next chapter, 20:18–19, and in D&C 84:21–25. But even though their hearts were not fully prepared to endure His presence, they *did hear the voice* and the words of God as the Ten Commandments were given, as will be seen later when we study Moses’ review of these great events in his valedictory, in Deuteronomy 4:10, 12, 33, 36; 5:22–26.

“(The presentation of the Ten Commandments on the *stone tablets* is recounted a little later in the narrative, in Exodus 31:18; 32:15, 19; and a *second set of tablets*, prepared after the first set were broken, and are spoken of in Exodus 34:1 ff.)” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:83.)

## POINTS TO PONDER

**(10-23)** The Passover happened over three thousand years ago but is still commemorated by Jews all over the world. With Christ’s sacrifice, we no longer celebrate the actual feast but still look to the event as highly significant for Saints of all times. Assume that you were present on that night and on the days which followed and were a faithful journal keeper. On a separate sheet of paper (or in your own journal, if you wish) record the feelings you would have had if you had experienced the great events described in Exodus 11–19. Do not record what happened but rather what you would have *thought* and *felt* during these events. Try as much as possible to keep your writing in the style of a journal entry.





# The Ten Commandments

## (11-1) Introduction

Many in the world today seem to think that the Ten Commandments were part of the Mosaic dispensation only and are not a part of the full gospel. As you begin your study of these ten principles revealed over three thousand years ago, ask yourself how relevant they are today. Do they form part of the gospel, or were they only for the ancient Israelites? This question is critical for you. Cecil B. DeMille, producer of the movie *The Ten Commandments*, made this observation:

“Some, who do not know either the Bible or human nature, may see in the orgy of the Golden Calf only a riot of Hollywood’s imaginations—but those who have eyes to see will see in it the awful lesson of how quickly a nation or a man can fall, without God’s law.

“If man will not be ruled by God, he will certainly be ruled by tyrants—and there is no tyranny more imperious or more devastating than man’s own selfishness, without the law.

“We cannot break the Ten Commandments. We can only break ourselves against them—or else, by keeping them, rise through them to the fulness of freedom under God. God means us to be free. With divine daring, He gave us the power of choice.” (*Commencement Address*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, Provo, 31 May 1957.)

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Exodus 20.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON EXODUS 20

### (11-2) Exodus 20:1–17. The Ten Great Foundation Stones

Perhaps the greatest indication of the importance of the Ten Commandments is that they are found in three of the four standard works of the Church. In addition to the first time they were given (see Exodus 20), Moses repeated them when he summarized the experiences of Israel in the wilderness (see Deuteronomy 5:6–21). The prophet Abinadi quoted them to the wicked priests of King Noah (see

Mosiah 13:12–24), so they are also found in the Book of Mormon. And, although not given in the exact form that they appear in these scriptures, the same principles are also found in the New Testament (see Matthew 5:17–37) and in the Doctrine and Covenants (see D&C 42:18–29; 59:5–9). When the Lord emphasizes something with that much repetition, it must be important. Elder Mark E. Petersen said:

“By his own finger the Lord wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. They represent the basic law of the Almighty and have formed the underlying elements of civil and religious law ever since.

“They are fundamental to our relationships with God. They are an integral part of the restored gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and are essential to our becoming perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. (D&C 42; D&C 59.)

“Variations of these laws are given in the rules laid down in Leviticus and Deuteronomy as they are applied to specific matters, but generally they form the foundation for all proper human conduct.” (*Moses*, p. 110.)

These commandments show us the three great priorities of life. The first four commandments show us our proper relationship to God. The fifth commandment establishes the importance of the family and proper family relationships. The last five commandments regulate our relationships with others. If we are committed to the perfecting of our relationships with God, family, and others, we are well on our way to being perfected in all things.

### (11-3) Exodus 20:2–3. “Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods before Me”

The first commandment gives mankind their first priority in life. If God is not first, then all other things are affected. Nothing in life, not even life itself, can come before God. Christ said: “Be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant even unto death, that you may be found worthy. For if ye will not abide in my covenant ye are not worthy of me.” (D&C 98:14–15.)

“God will not favor us if we put him in second place in our lives and if we follow after worldly things regardless of what they may be.

“The command of the Savior was: ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.’ (Matthew 6:33.) In revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord taught that we must have an eye single to the glory of God. (D&C 27:2; 55:1; 59:1; 88:67.)” (Petersen, *Moses*, p. 111.)

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At first some may think that this demand for exclusive worship and devotion by God for Himself sounds selfish. But two things should be remembered. First, as Lord and Creator of all the universe, and as one who has all power, knowledge, and glory, God does not need man's adoration and worship to add to His state of being. So, His jealousy is not a protective concern for His own status.

The second thing to remember is that the Lord taught Moses that God's work is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). Anytime His children set anything before God in importance, they begin to thwart His work for them. He is the only source of power and knowledge sufficient to save. To set anything above Him lessens their ability to draw on that power and knowledge for their salvation. That is why He says to His children, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

One Bible scholar put it this way: "This commandment prohibits every species of *mental* idolatry, and all inordinate attachment to *earthly* and *sensible* things [things which appeal to the senses]. . . . God is the *fountain of happiness*, and no intelligent creature can be happy but through him. . . . The very first commandment of the whole series is divinely calculated to prevent man's misery and promote his happiness, by taking him off from all false dependence, and leading him to God himself, the *fountain of all good*." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:402-3.)

#### **(11-4) Exodus 20:4-6. "Thou Shalt Not Make unto Thee Any Graven Image"**

In the preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord said that one of the characteristics of the modern world was that "every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own God, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol" (D&C 1:16). Commenting on modern idolatry, Elder Spencer W. Kimball said:

"The idolatry we are most concerned with here is the conscious worshipping of still other gods. Some are of metal and plush and chrome, of wood and stone and fabrics. They are not in the image of God or of man, but are developed to give man comfort and enjoyment, to satisfy his wants, ambitions, passions and desires. Some are in no physical form at all, but are intangible. . . .

"Modern idols or false gods can take such forms as clothes, homes, businesses, machines, automobiles, pleasure boats, and numerous other material deflectors from the path to godhood. What difference does it make that the item concerned is not shaped like an idol? Brigham Young said: 'I would as soon see a man worshipping a little god made of brass or of wood as to see him worshipping his property' [*Journal of Discourses*, 6:196].

"Intangible things make just as ready gods. Degrees and letters and titles can become idols. Many young men decide to attend college when they should be on missions first. The degree, and the

wealth and the security which come through it, appear so desirable that the mission takes second place. Some neglect Church service through their college years, feeling to give preference to the secular training and ignoring the spiritual covenants they have made.

"Many people build and furnish a home and buy the automobile first—and then find they 'cannot afford' to pay tithing. Whom do they worship? Certainly not the Lord of heaven and earth, for we serve whom we love and give first consideration to the object of our affection and desires. Young married couples who postpone parenthood until their degrees are attained might be shocked if their expressed preference were labeled idolatry. Their rationalization gives them degrees at the expense of children. Is it a justifiable exchange? Whom do they love and worship—themselves or God? Other couples, recognizing that life is not intended primarily for comforts, ease, and luxuries, complete their educations while they move forward with full lives, having their children and giving Church and community service.

"Many worship the hunt, the fishing trip, the vacation, the weekend picnics and outings. Others have as their idols the games of sport, baseball, football, the bullfight, or golf. These pursuits more often than not interfere with the worship of the Lord and with giving service to the building up of the kingdom of God. To the participants this emphasis may not seem serious, yet it indicates where their allegiance and loyalty are.

"Still another image men worship is that of power and prestige. Many will trample underfoot the spiritual and often the ethical values in their climb to success. These gods of power, wealth, and influence are most demanding and are quite as real as the golden calves of the children of Israel in the wilderness." (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 40-42.)

#### **(11-5) Exodus 20:5. If Jealousy Is a Negative Trait, Why Is God a "Jealous" God?**

The Hebrew root *kanah* denotes "ardour, zeal, jealousy" (Gesenius, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 888). The implication is that the Lord possesses "sensitive and deep feelings" about idolatry (Exodus 20:5b). The reason seems clear. The only power to save mankind from sin lies with God. Any false worship cuts the sinner off from that power. Since God loves His children and wishes only their best eternal welfare, He is jealous (that is, feels very strongly) about any vain or false worship they perform.

#### **(11-6) Exodus 20:5-6. Does the Lord Punish Children for the Wickedness of Their Parents?**

The explanation given as a footnote to verse 5 is helpful. Commenting on the phrase "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," the note says: "insofar as the children learn and do the sinful things the parents do; but see v. 6 concerning those who repent and serve the Lord" (Exodus 20:5f; see also D&C 98:46-47; 124:50-52).



*The rugged cliffs of Mount Sinai*

**(11-7) Exodus 20:7. “Thou Shalt Not Take the Name of the Lord Thy God in Vain”**

Two aspects of this commandment are important. First, the third commandment implies that His children must have a deep and reverential attitude about God and His name.

“This precept not only forbids all *false oaths*, but all *common swearing* where the name of God is used, or where he is appealed to as a witness of the truth. It also necessarily forbids all *light* and *irreverent* mention of God, or any of his attributes.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:404.)

In an age when profanity dominates so much of the world’s conversation, it is well to remember the Lord’s warning that He will not hold such people guiltless. Elder LeGrand Richards said this of profanity:

“It is difficult to understand how a person may truly and sincerely approach God in prayer, seeking a blessing at his hand, at the same time be so disrespectful as to take his name in vain.

“Profanity is incompatible with reverence. Surely at this critical time in our nation’s history, when we need the sustaining help of God, we should see that we do not offend him by reason of our language. We appeal to our young people everywhere to hold in reverence the sacred name of Deity, that they may walk acceptably before the Lord, so that, should there come a time in their lives when they need his sustaining help, they may go to him with good conscience and call upon him with faith that he will hear their plea.” (In “The Third Commandment,” *The Ten Commandments Today*, pp. 52–53.)

There is an additional implication in the commandment to avoid taking the name of God in vain. An integral part of living the gospel is the making of oaths and covenants with God. When a person is baptized he covenants to take the name of Christ upon himself (see D&C 20:37). If he forgets that solemn oath made at baptism, he has taken the name of the Lord in vain. At temple altars men and women covenant to abide by sacred commitments. If

they leave those temples and live as though the promises have no meaning, they violate the third commandment even though they may not speak actual profanity. Those who take the sacrament each week with little or no thought for the covenant to take His name upon them, keep His commandments, and always remember Him, take His name in vain. Such light treatment of sacred things constitutes vainness in the sight of God. The Lord Himself said in modern revelation, “Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips—for behold, verily I say, that many there be who are under this condemnation, who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority” (D&C 63:61–62).

In addition to religious oaths and covenants, many formal acts in modern society are accompanied by solemn oaths and vows. And yet frequently these oaths are dismissed or set aside. Clearly the violation of such oaths is a violation of the third commandment also.

**(11-8) Exodus 20:8–11. “Remember the Sabbath Day, to Keep It Holy”**

The doctrine of the Sabbath, as taught throughout the scriptures, includes the following important concepts.

1. The commandment has a dual aspect of promoting both work and worship. The commandment is to *labor* six days and *rest* the seventh. Elsewhere in scripture, the idler is condemned and work is encouraged (see D&C 42:42; 56:17; 60:13; 88:69; 2 Nephi 9:27; Alma 24:18; 38:12).

2. The Sabbath was given as a token or sign of the rest of the Gods after the work of the Creation. The Hebrew word *Shabbat* means “rest,” or “the cessation of labor.” The Sabbath is directly tied to the Creation not only in the actual commandment but in such scriptures as Genesis 2:1–2 and Exodus 31:17.

3. Under the Mosaic dispensation, the violation of the Sabbath was a capital crime (see Exodus 31:14–15). A noted Bible scholar made an important point about why this punishment was the case:

“The death penalties attached to the violation of the sabbath in the Old Testament era convey two very obvious assumptions. *First*, the sabbath law involves a principle so important and basic that violation thereof is a capital offense. *Second*, the law conveys also the fact that violation of the sabbath laws involves a kind of death in and of itself, i.e., that violation brings on death. The prophets clearly made this assumption. Obedience, by implication, means life.” (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 137.)

4. The Lord indicates that keeping the Sabbath was a “sign . . . that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth *sanctify* you” (Exodus 31:13; emphasis added). The Lord teaches a similar concept of holiness or spiritual cleanliness in modern revelation: “And *that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world*, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day” (D&C 59:9; emphasis added).

5. The concept of sanctification and the idea of rest as used in the scriptures seem closely related. The rest of the Lord is defined as “the fulness of [God’s] glory” (D&C 84:24). Alma taught that certain early Saints entered the “rest of the Lord” after being made pure through a process of sanctification (Alma 13:12). In other words, God’s *work* is the sanctification of His children to the point where they can enter into the ultimate *rest*, which is the fulness of His glory. Once each week man is commanded to cease his own labors and allow God to perform His work of sanctification on him. Resting on the Sabbath, then, implies far more than taking a nap or stopping normal activities. Mankind must enter into the Lord’s work on that day. This work involves making themselves and others more godlike, another way to speak of sanctification. Doing the work of the Lord (sanctification) often involves great activity on the Sabbath day, and the day may not be restful in the usual sense. One can assume that if doing good to an animal on the Sabbath is approved by the Lord (see Matthew 12:11; Luke 13:15), then doing good to men is an even higher good. The two commandments for the Sabbath are rest and worship (see D&C 59:10). The Hebrew verb *la-avodh*, “to worship,” means also “to work” and “to serve.” This holy work then creates a new and holy man; so the Sabbath is tied into the work of creation.

6. The commandment to observe the Sabbath was not just for an individual himself but included servants (employees), family members, and animals. Under the Mosaic law even the land itself was to have its rest once each seven years (see Exodus 20:10; Leviticus 25:1–7). Imagine the faith required to trust wholly in the providence of God rather than in the labors of one’s own hands every seventh year. (That challenge was given in Leviticus 25:20–22.)

7. Direct promises of temporal plenty, divine protection, and spiritual power are promised in connection with keeping the Sabbath. For example, after giving the commandment for the observance of the Sabbatical year, the Lord promises, “ye shall dwell in the land in safety. And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety.” (Leviticus 25:18–19.) Isaiah promised to those who do not do their own pleasures on the Sabbath, “then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord” (a concept perhaps related to having one’s confidence was strong in the presence of God [see D&C 121:45]), and the Lord “will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob” (Isaiah 58:14). The heritage of Jacob was exaltation, and he was made a God! (see D&C 132:37).

The promises of Doctrine and Covenants 59:16–24 are based on the condition in verse 16. Elder Spencer W. Kimball talked in some detail about the challenges of keeping the Sabbath day holy:

“The fourth commandment is a dual law, both positive and negative. On the negative side: ‘. . . in it (the Sabbath) thou shalt not do any work.’ On the positive side: ‘Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. . . .’

“Every week we find people defiantly carrying on their work and play activities on the Lord’s day. Shops and stores carry large signs: ‘Open Sunday.’ Factories and businesses run with ‘full steam ahead.’ Houses are displayed and sold. Beaches, parks, and other places of amusement enjoy their best business. Long waiting lines of people stand before ticket offices of theatres. The ball games and rodeos attract their thousands and families have their reunions in parks and canyons. Students study their secular lessons. Stockmen round up their cattle. People travel when unnecessary. Farmers plow and harvest and cultivate their crops. Some businessmen close their offices but spend their Sabbaths in streams, fishing, and in mountains, hunting, and in canyons, loafing. Women do their cleaning and other housework. Others explore and hike. The people, as a whole, seem to be on wheels—the highways are crowded. Half-clad men are clipping hedges, cutting lawns. Lunch stands and drive-ins work almost in a frenzy. Women in housecoats and unshaved men spend hours lazing about their homes. The socially elite hold receptions and teas, and week after week the Sabbath is desecrated and the law of God defied.

“It is conceded that many good folk are compelled to labor on Sunday. Their alternatives are to work or lose their employment. But frequently those whose shift work occupies part of the day excuse themselves from Sabbath activities using their work as an alibi. Shift workers seldom work more hours a day than other folk, and if they are determined such people can usually find ample time to render service and to hallow the Sabbath in the hours that remain.

“When employment is at a low ebb and difficult to obtain, some people find they must labor on the holy day as an ‘ox in the mire.’ But when employment is abundant, men can often find work which requires no Sabbath service. This change of employment might entail some financial sacrifice, but the Lord has promised he will bless those who live his laws.” (In “The Fourth Commandment,” Part 1, *The Ten Commandments Today*, pp. 55, 57–58.)

Then, speaking of the positive aspects of the commandment, Elder Kimball said:

“In Hebrew the term *Sabbath* means ‘rest.’ It contemplates quiet tranquility, peace of mind and spirit. It is a day to get rid of selfish interests and absorbing activities.

“The Sabbath day is given throughout the generations of man for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between the Lord and his children forever. It is a day in which to worship and to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Lord. It is a day on which to surrender every worldly interest and to praise the Lord humbly, for humility is the beginning of exaltation. It is a day not for affliction and burden but for rest and righteous enjoyment. It is a day not for lavish banqueting, but a day of simple meals and spiritual feasting; not a day of abstinence from food, except fast day, but a day when maid and mistress might be relieved from the preparation. It is a day graciously given us by our Heavenly Father. It is a

day when animals may be turned out to graze and rest; when the plow may be stored in the barn and other machinery cooled down; a day when employer and employee, master and servant may be free from plowing, digging, toiling. It is a day when the office may be locked and business postponed, and troubles forgotten; a day when man may be temporarily released from that first injunction, 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground. . . .' It is a day when bodies may rest, minds relax, and spirits grow. It is a day when songs may be sung, prayers offered, sermons preached, and testimonies borne, and when man may climb high, almost annihilating time, space, and distance between himself and his Creator.

"The Sabbath is a day on which to take inventory—to analyze our weaknesses, to confess our sins to our associates and our Lord. It is a day on which to fast in 'sackcloth and ashes.' It is a day on which to read good books, a day to contemplate and ponder, a day to study lessons for priesthood and auxiliary organizations, a day to study the scriptures and to prepare sermons, a day to nap and rest and relax, a day to visit the sick, a day to preach the gospel, a day to proselyte, a day to visit quietly with the family and get acquainted with our children, a day for proper courting, a day to do good, a day to drink at the fountain of knowledge and of instruction, a day to seek forgiveness of our sins, a day for the enrichment of our spirit and our soul, a day to restore us to our spiritual stature, a day to partake of the emblems of his sacrifice and atonement, a day to contemplate the glories of the gospel and of the eternal realms, a day to climb high on the upward path toward our Heavenly Father." (In "The Fourth Commandment," Part 2, *The Ten Commandments Today*, pp. 66–68.)

**(11-9) Exodus 20:12. "Honour Thy Father and Thy Mother"**

The fifth commandment establishes very clearly the importance of the family in the sight of the Lord. Proper family relationships constitute one of the ten fundamental principles of law, both in this world and in the world to come. In obedience to this law the family unit and all other parts of society remain stable and healthy. In this day, which was prophesied to be an age when people are "disobedient to parents" and "without natural affection" (2 Timothy 3:2–3), one needs to contemplate seriously the implications of the commandment to honor father and mother and the promise included with it.

When parents are righteous, God-fearing people, children have little problem understanding the commandment to honor them, although they may have difficulty doing it. When parents are not righteous, however, two questions about this commandment are often raised. First, is one still required to honor unrighteous parents and, second, does honor imply obedience if the parents ask for unrighteous behavior?

First of all, though in most cases honor includes obedience, the two are not the same. *To honor* means to "bring honor to or to have an attitude of

honoring." *Obedience* means "to follow direction or example." Paul said, "Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*: for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1; emphasis added), and then immediately thereafter adds, "Honour thy father and mother" (v. 2). This time, however, he added no qualifying statement, describing it only as the "first commandment with promise" (Ephesians 6:2). To obey one's parents in the Lord means to obey them in righteousness (see McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:521). Anytime a child lives righteously he brings honor to his parents, whether those parents are themselves righteous or wicked. The opposite is also true. Anytime a child lives wickedly he brings shame to his parents, whether or not the parents are righteous. So, honoring parents may not always imply obeying them. In those relatively few cases where parents may ask for or encourage unrighteous behavior in their children, the individual brings dishonor to his parents if he obeys them.

But there is no qualification added to the commandment to honor one's father and mother. To understand why, the ultimate model of the parent-child relationship must be examined. Only in the relationship of man's heavenly parents to their children is the perfect model of parenting. They, of course, are perfectly honorable (that is, deserving of honor). If they were the only parents with whom one had to deal, it would be an easy matter to honor them.

But they have, in their infinite wisdom, chosen instead to have mortal parents stand as their representatives in the bringing forth and rearing of children. In other words, parents stand as direct representatives of God in mortality, and therefore, like priesthood offices, the office of parent requires honor. Obviously, an attendant responsibility and obligation goes along with that calling as God's representative. Parents are obligated to strive to be as much like God as possible. The Lord has made it clear that should parents fail in their responsibility, which includes teaching children what He would teach them if He were here, serious consequences will follow (see D&C 68:25–31; 93:39–44).



*Top of Mount Sinai*

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If parents do not fulfill their office and calling (and, of course, no parent can or will do this perfectly), they become accountable to God, but this circumstance does not affect the child's obligation to honor them. Again, the parallels to a priesthood office or calling may be helpful in understanding why. While no priesthood holder perfectly fulfills his office and calling, yet, his office is to be honored in spite of his imperfections. A righteous and capable man also brings honor to himself, but even if a bishop were to be released because of unworthiness, one does not stop honoring his office of bishop.

The story of David and Saul is a classic illustration of this principle. Saul had been chosen and anointed king under direction from the Lord. Then, through pride and foolishness, he fell out of favor with God and eventually sinned grievously and lost the Spirit of the Lord. David, chosen and anointed his successor, had his life threatened time and again by Saul. And yet over and over he refused to lift his hand against Saul. His answer consistently was, "I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed" (1 Samuel 24:10). Saul clearly had failed in his calling, but David wisely understood that that failure made Saul accountable to God, not to David. Similarly, a parent may fail miserably in his office and calling, even to the point where a child cannot follow his example any longer, but the child always has the obligation to honor the parent because of the parent's standing as a representative of God. Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated this principle as follows:

"Children come into mortality with the inborn requirement, planted in their souls by that very Being who gave them birth as spirits, to honor their parents and to obey their counsel in righteousness." (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:521.)

#### **(11-10) Exodus 20:12. "That Thy Days May Be Long upon the Land"**

As noted above, the Apostle Paul referred to the fifth commandment as the first commandment with promise (see Ephesians 6:1-2). How is it that honoring parents would lead to extended life upon the land? The following points should be considered in answer to that question.

1. The Israelites had been promised a particular land as their inheritance, just as the Jaredites and Lehi's colony were given a promised land. In all cases, the Lord clearly taught that such a favored inheritance was not automatic, but depended upon the righteousness of the people, and that wickedness would jeopardize the inheritance (see Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 7, 10; 1 Nephi 2:20-21; Ether 2:7-12).

2. When Moses summarized the law that had been given to Israel, he changed the wording of the fifth commandment slightly. Deuteronomy 5:16 reads: "Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; *that thy days may be prolonged*, and that *it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*" (emphasis added).

3. Moses commanded the parents of Israel to diligently teach their children the laws of God so that "it may be well with thee . . . in the land that floweth with milk and honey" (Deuteronomy 6:3; see also Exodus 20:3-7 for the entire commandment to parents).

4. Earlier, Moses used similar language when he warned the Israelites: "When thou shalt beget children, and children's children . . . and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord . . . I [shall] call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly *perish from off the land*; . . . ye shall not *prolong your days upon it*, but shall be utterly destroyed" (Deuteronomy 4:25-26; emphasis added). Then Moses stated the same principle in a positive way, again using the same language as he used in the fifth commandment: "Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever" (Deuteronomy 4:40).

5. To summarize, the condition for maintaining an inheritance in a promised land is personal righteousness. Only when parents teach their children the law of God and children honor and obey their parents will personal righteousness be maintained. Thus, to stay "long upon the land" (Exodus 20:12), the family unit must be functioning properly and children must honor their parents.

6. There is a personal aspect of the commandment as well. The Lord promised that those who walk "in obedience to the commandments" will enjoy health, vigor, endurance, and shall be passed over by the "destroying angel" (D&C 89:18, 21). Commenting on Paul's phrase that this commandment was the "first commandment with promise" (Ephesians 6:2), Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

"Paul here interprets the promise as a personal one. Obedient and faithful children are to have long lives upon the earth. That is, in the generality of instances, temporal life is prolonged by obedience to gospel laws; but, more particularly and in the ultimate sense, those who are godfearing and righteous—meaning the meek—shall live upon the earth again in its final or celestial state. (D.&C. 88:16-20.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:521-22.)

#### **(11-11) Exodus 20:13. "Thou Shalt Not Kill"**

"One of the most serious of all sins and crimes against the Lord's plan of salvation is the sin of murder or the destruction of human life. It seems clear that to be guilty of destroying life is the act of 'rebellion' against the plan of the Almighty by denying an individual . . . the privilege of a full experience in this earth-school of opportunity. It is in the same category as the rebellion of Satan and his hosts and therefore it would not be surprising if the penalties to be imposed upon a murderer were to be of similar character as the penalties meted out to those spirits which were cast out of heaven with Satan." (Harold B. Lee, in "The Sixth Commandment," Part 1, *The Ten Commandments Today*, p. 88.)

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**(11-12) Exodus 20:13. How Does the Commandment Not to Kill Affect Those Who Engage in War?**

“In a pertinent statement set forth in a message of the First Presidency to the Church during World War II and delivered at the general conference on April 6, 1942, this subject was fully discussed. This was delivered at a time when nearly one hundred thousand Latter-day Saint youths were engaged in or were undergoing training for combat in the most destructive war in all history. I quote here from that message (pages 32–36):

“... the Church is and must be against war. The Church itself cannot wage war, unless and until the Lord shall issue new commands. It cannot regard war as a righteous means of settling international disputes; these should and could be settled—the nations agreeing—by peaceful negotiation and adjustment.

“But the Church membership are citizens or subjects of sovereignties over which the Church has no control. The Lord himself has told us [D&C 98:4–7].

“While by its terms this revealed word related more especially to this land of America, nevertheless the principles announced are world-wide in their application, and they are specifically addressed to “you” (Joseph Smith), “and your brethren of my church.” When, therefore, constitutional law, obedient to these principles, calls the manhood of the Church into the armed service of any country to which they owe allegiance, their highest civic duty requires that they meet that call. If, harkening to that call and obeying those in command over them, they shall take the lives of those who fight against them, that will not make of them murderers, nor subject them to the penalty that God has prescribed for those who kill. . . . For it would be a cruel God that would punish his children as moral sinners for acts done by them as the innocent instrumentalities of a sovereign whom he had told them to obey and whose will they were powerless to resist.



*Traditional site of the camp of Israel while Moses was on the Mount*

“The whole world is in the midst of a war that seems the worst of all time. This Church is a world-wide Church. Its devoted members are in both camps. They are the innocent war instrumentalities of their warring sovereignties. On each side they believe they are fighting for home, and country and freedom. On each side, our brethren pray to the same God, in the same name, for victory. Both sides cannot be wholly right; perhaps neither is without wrong. God will work out in his own sovereign way the justice and right of the conflict, but he will not hold the innocent instrumentalities of the war, our brethren in arms, responsible for the conflict. This is a major crisis in the world-life of man. God is at the helm.’

“There is, then, a vast difference in destroying life while acting under the mandate of a sovereign nation whom we are in duty bound to obey and wantonly killing on our own responsibility. It would be well for every young man called to military service to study carefully the above quoted statement of the First Presidency.” (Lee, in “The Sixth Commandment,” Part 2, *The Ten Commandments Today*, pp. 93–94.)

**(11-13) Exodus 20:14. “Thou Shall Not Commit Adultery”**

“Man must reproduce himself. Man was not of the vegetable kingdom to follow the rules of that form of life. Neither was he an animal to be led by mere instincts. As a child of God, man was given powers not granted to any other form of life. He was of the divine race, and therefore could have many of the privileges and powers related to divinity.

“The power of reproduction must be given to man as it had been given to lower forms of life to perpetuate his species. But whereas the Lord had set up safeguards for this power among the lower forms, barriers which the animals had no tendency to break down because of the manner in which they were made, man was in a different situation. With his right of choice, with his impulses, some for good and some for evil (even Satan had rebelled in the pre-existence), he could now use these divinely-given powers for either good or bad purposes. It was not a matter of instinct with him. It was a matter of choice. He possessed the right of choice before he came into the world. It was not taken from him when he became mortal. The animals would not corrupt their reproductive powers. Instinct took care of that. But what would mortal man do? This question came to the very heart of the purpose for which man was sent here—to try him, and prove whether he was worthy to come back into God’s presence. With his right of choice, he would be at liberty to select his own course. He could do that which would be ennobling, or he could do that which would debase.

“Laws were the answer. How else could God deal with an intelligent person who had the right of choice and who was to be tested to see which he would choose?”

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"So God called before him the first man and the first woman. As male and female, they were to reproduce their species. But they were to do so under divinely prescribed conditions. . . .

"The covenant of marriage, this sacred thing which was to go on eternally, was the heavenly institution which God provided under which his mortal children on earth were to reproduce themselves. There should be no human sex relationship outside of marriage. Children born to man and woman under divinely appointed marriage were to remain as their children forever. Families would continue as a unit even into eternity. The ties of home established in earth life would last forever. It was part of the system of heaven transferred to earth. It must be kept sacred." (Mark E. Petersen, in "The Seventh Commandment," Part 1, *The Ten Commandments Today*, pp. 104–5.)

#### **(11-14) Exodus 20:15. "Thou Shalt Not Steal"**

The Ten Commandments lay down the great foundational principles of righteousness. They are so broad and so profound in their extent that they cover all aspects of moral behavior. The eighth commandment is a good example. It consists of four words, and yet the implications are such as to cover a whole range of human behavior. From the Fall, Adam and all mankind who followed him were commanded to labor for their bread (see Genesis 3:19). When one seeks to reap the benefits of another's labor without adequate compensation, it is theft. Thus, stealing involves far more than just taking the property of another. President Spencer W. Kimball said:

"In public office and private lives, the word of the Lord thunders: 'Thou shalt not steal: . . . nor do anything like unto it.' (D&C 59:6.)

"We find ourselves rationalizing in all forms of dishonesty, including shoplifting, which is a mean, low act indulged in by millions who claim to be honorable, decent people.

"Dishonesty comes in many other forms: in hijacking, in playing upon private love and emotions for filthy lucre; in robbing money tills or stealing commodities of employers; in falsifying accounts; in taking advantage of other taxpaying people by misuse of food stamps and false claims; in taking unreal exemptions; in government or private loans without intent to repay; in unjust, improper bankruptcies to avoid repayment of loans; in robbing on the street or in the home money and other precious possessions; in stealing *time*, giving less than a full day of honest labor for a full day's compensation; in riding without paying the fare; and in all forms of dishonesty in all places and in all conditions.

"To all thieveries and dishonest acts, the Lord says, 'Thou shalt not steal.' Four short common words He used. Perhaps He wearied of the long list He could have made of ways to steal, misrepresent, and take advantage, and He covered all methods of taking that which does not properly belong to one by saying, 'Thou shalt not steal.'" ("A Report and a Challenge," *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, p. 6.)

#### **(11-15) Exodus 20:16. "Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness"**

"*Murder, adultery, and stealing*, dealing respectively with *life, virtue, and property*, are generally considered more serious offenses before the law than the bearing of false witness. And yet, what the latter may lack in severity, it more than makes up for in prevalence. As a matter of fact, most of the readers of these lessons will likely shun—as they would a plague—the first three of these major social offenses; but consciously or unconsciously, we may all at times be tempted into the carelessness of rumor and other forms of bearing false witness. . . .

"To bear false witness is to testify to or to pass along *reports, insinuations, speculations, or rumors* as if they were true, to the hurt of a fellow human being. Sometimes the practice stems from a lack of correct information—sometimes from lack of understanding—sometimes from misunderstandings—sometimes from a vicious disposition to distort and misrepresent.

"Whereas murder involves the taking of human life, *bearing false witness* centers in the destruction of character or its defamation. It reaches to the ruin of reputation." (Adam S. Bennion, in "The Ninth Commandment," Part 1, *The Ten Commandments Today*, pp. 134–36.)

#### **(11-16) Exodus 20:17. "Thou Shalt Not Covet"**

"This is the last of the Ten Commandments, and if it were not so involved with all the others, some might suppose it to be one of the least. But all the commandments are so intertwined that none can be broken without weakening all the others. To illustrate (and to remind ourselves of the other nine):

"He who covets the mere material 'things' of life may have 'other gods before him,' and may 'bow down before them,' in thought and in spirit, if not in physical fact.

"He who covets may become coarse and careless in other things also, such as taking 'the name of the Lord God in vain.'

"He who covets may desecrate the Sabbath day to get gain.

"He who covets may fail to sustain his father and his mother in their need.

"Some who have coveted have killed to get gain.

"Many who have coveted a 'neighbour's wife' have committed the grievous sin of adultery.

"He who covets is more likely to steal (or to swindle or embezzle or engage in sharp practices).

"He who covets may bear false witness to get gain.

"And so again: The tenth commandment is inseparably integrated with all the others, and coveting could lead to infraction of all the others—for there is a wholeness in life in which each part complements the other. And there is a wholeness and harmony in the word of God, and it all comes from the same source. And whenever we ignore any divine counsel or commandment, we can be sure that we weaken ourselves and increase our susceptibility to other sins. . . .

“The commandment against covetousness does not mean that we should not have a wholesome discontent or a wholesome desire to improve ourselves or our situation. It does not mean that we should not have an honest ambition to have more of the better things of life. It does not mean that we may not admire what our neighbor has, and seek by our own industry to earn things of like worth. The earth holds plenty for all—and the urge to acquire for ourselves such good things as other men have is a productive quality of character—provided that we acquire them by honest effort, by lawful means, and by keeping life well-balanced. The danger comes when mere ‘things’ begin to matter too much.” (Richard L. Evans, in “The Tenth Commandment,” Part 1, *The Ten Commandments Today*, p. 142–44.)

The scriptures contain an interesting definition of coveting. Paul, on two occasions, equated coveting with idolatry (see Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). The implication is that when one sets his heart on things of the world to the point that allegiance to God and His principles no longer matters, then material things become as a god to that person; he follows after them or worships them, and this practice is the same as idolatry. The Lord said that idolatry was a major characteristic of this generation (see D&C 1:16). Samuel told Saul that sin and iniquity were also idolatry (see 1 Samuel 15:23).

## POINTS TO PONDER

(11-17) The laws set forth in the Ten Commandments were in effect before this earth was created. All the prophets have taught them. They are the foundation for all civilizations which have been developed. They are also the guidelines for a full and happy life for each individual. If we are wise we will seek after these blessings by obedience to the commandments. The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

“Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God. But we cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them, and we cannot expect to know all, or more than we now know unless we comply with or keep those we have already received. That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another.” (*Teachings*, pp. 255–56.)

It is important to note that even today, in the midst of the dispensation of the fulness of times, the Lord has reiterated every point of the sacred law. Pause for a moment and consider the implications of the Ten Commandments today by reading the scriptures listed below.

### The Ten Commandments Then and Now

Commandment	Then	Now
1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.	Exodus 34:10–14; Deuteronomy 5:6–7	D&C 76:1–4
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.	Exodus 34:17; Deuteronomy 4:15–19	D&C 1:15–16
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.	Leviticus 19:12; Deuteronomy 5:11	D&C 63:61–62
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.	Exodus 31:12–17; Deuteronomy 5:12–15	D&C 59:9–13
5. Honor thy Father and Mother.	Exodus 21:15, 17; Deuteronomy 21:18–21	D&C 27:9
6. Thou shalt not kill.	Exodus 21:12–14; Deuteronomy 5:17	D&C 42:18–19, 79
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.	Exodus 22:16–17; Deuteronomy 5:18	D&C 42:22–26, 74–81
8. Thou shalt not steal.	Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 5:19	D&C 42:20, 84–85
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.	Psalms 101:7; Deuteronomy 5:20	D&C 42:21, 27, 86
10. Thou shalt not covet.	Proverbs 28:16; Deuteronomy 5:21–22	D&C 19:25–26



# The Mosaic Law: A Preparatory Gospel

## (12-1) Introduction

We saw in chapter 11 how the Lord began the revelation of the law for Israel with the ten principles that summarized the way in which men are to deal with God, with their families, and with their fellow men. Immediately after the Ten Commandments, the Lord revealed a whole series of laws and commandments which we now call the Mosaic law.

It is unfortunate that many people, some even in the Church, think of the Mosaic law as a substitute for the higher law of the gospel. We call it a lesser law, and so it was, if the word *lesser* is used in the sense of progressive steps. But some people assume that *lesser* means of lower importance and significance, or of a lesser level of truth and righteousness. Such is not the case. Note what other scriptures teach about the law:

**D&C 84:23–27**

The law of Moses was a “preparatory gospel” that included the principles of repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments.

**Mosiah 13:29–30**

It was a “very strict law” of “performances and ordinances” designed to keep the Israelites “in remembrance of God and their duty towards him.”

**Jarom 1:11; Mosiah 3:14–15; 13:31; 16:14;  
Alma 25:15; 34:14**

The law of Moses was highly symbolic, being filled with types and shadows, all of which pointed toward Christ and His future Atonement.

**JST, Galatians 3:8, 19**

The law of Moses was added to the gospel, not given as a substitute for it.

**Galatians 3:23–24**

The law of Moses was given as a schoolmaster or tutor to bring Israel to Christ.

**Alma 25:16; Revelation 19:10**

The law of Moses is understood through the “spirit of prophecy” or “a testimony of Jesus.”

In summary, when you study the law of Moses you can expect to find (1) a witness of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice and (2) gospel principles illustrated in the laws given. Many of the laws may no longer be required of the Saints, but the principles taught are eternal and will never be set aside. For example, the practice of blood sacrifice was fulfilled when Jesus came and the tokens of the

sacrament were given in place of the old law. But the principle was as true when the tokens were animals offered on the altar as it is now when the tokens are bread and water blessed by the priesthood. The eternal principle is that only in the partaking of the Lamb’s atoning sacrifice are we able to overcome and receive a forgiveness for our sins.

Two other characteristics of the Mosaic law are important for your understanding before you begin to study the actual laws. First, much of the Mosaic code is *case law*. One scholar explained that the law does two things:

“In order to understand Biblical law, it is necessary to understand also certain basic characteristics of that law. *First*, certain broad premises or principles are declared. These are declarations of basic law. The Ten Commandments give us such declarations. The Ten Commandments are not therefore laws among laws, but are the basic laws, of which the various laws are specific examples. An example of such a basic law is Exodus 20:15 (Deut. 5:19), ‘Thou shalt not steal.’ . . .

“With this in mind, that the law, *first*, lays down broad and basic principles, let us examine a *second* characteristic of Biblical law, namely, that the major portion of the law is *case law*, i.e., the illustration of the basic principle in terms of specific cases. These specific cases are often illustrations of the extent of the application of the law; that is, by citing a minimal type of case, the necessary jurisdictions of the law are revealed. . . .

“The law, then, *first* asserts principles, *second*, it cites cases to develop the implications of those principles, and, *third*, the law has as its purpose and direction *the restitution of God’s order*.” (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 10–12.)

We shall see numerous examples of case law as we study the Mosaic code.

Second, the law is primarily negative. Eight of the Ten Commandments and many of the other laws deal with what ought *not* to be done rather than with what should be done. Many today view negative laws with distaste. They feel they are very restrictive, and they often prefer positive laws which, by assuring our rights, appear to grant freedom. The appearance, however, is false. God gave the laws to Israel not to shackle them but to guarantee the greatest individual freedom. Explaining how this is so, one scholar stated:

“A *negative* concept of law confers a double benefit: first, it is practical, in that a negative concept of law deals realistically with a particular evil. It states, ‘Thou shalt not steal,’ or, ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness.’ A negative statement thus deals with a particular evil directly and plainly: it prohibits it,

makes it illegal. The law thus has a *modest* function; *the law is limited, and therefore the state is limited*. The state, as the enforcing agency, is limited to dealing with evil, not controlling all men.

“*Second, and directly related to this first point, a negative concept of law insures liberty: except for the prohibited areas, all of man’s life is beyond the law, and the law is of necessity indifferent to it. If the commandment says, ‘Thou shalt not steal,’ it means that the law can only govern theft: it cannot govern or control honestly acquired property. When the law prohibits blasphemy and false witness, it guarantees that all other forms of speech have their liberty. The negativity of the law is the preservation of the positive life and freedom of man.*” (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 101–2.)

Remember that in God’s preface to the Ten Commandments He said, “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exodus 20:2; emphasis added). In saying this, Jehovah reminded Israel that the very purpose of the law was to make them free and keep them free.

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Exodus 21–24; 31–35.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON EXODUS 21–24; 31–35

### (12-2) Exodus 21:2–11. The Rights of Freedom under the Law

Here is the first example of the case law approach to the Mosaic law. The principle is “thou shalt not steal.” One of the most precious things any man has is his personal liberty. To steal one’s liberty is a serious theft. So, permanent ownership of slaves was not allowed unless the individual himself chose to be a slave for life (see vv. 5–6). As illustrated here, the slave in Israel was really more like a servant. By law he had to be freed after seven years unless he voluntarily chose to remain in servitude.

Although a father could arrange for the marriage of his daughter (that is the meaning of the phrase “to sell her as a maidservant” in verse 7, as is evident from the betrothal mentioned in verses 8 and 9), she too maintained certain rights. The prospective husband could not use her as a slave (“she shall not go out as the menservants do”). If the prospective husband was not pleased with the new bride, the law guaranteed her rights. This legal guarantee was in sharp contrast to the practice of most other people whose women were viewed as property to be bargained away at the whim of men.

### (12-3) Exodus 21:6. Why Was a Slave’s Ear Pierced?

Because of the guidelines of the law, the lot of Hebrew slaves was greatly softened; in fact, they were on almost equal status with hired laborers. Under such conditions, some men were willing to forfeit freedom for security, especially if they had married while in slavery and release from slavery might force them to give up their wives and children.

“In this case the master was to take his servant . . . to God, *i.e.*, . . . to the place where judgment was given in the name of God [see Deuteronomy 1:17; 19:17; cf. Exodus 22:7–8], in order that he might make a declaration there that he gave up his liberty. His ear was then to be bored with an awl against the door or lintel of the house, and by this sign, which was customary in many of the nations of antiquity, to be fastened as it were to the house for ever. That this was the meaning of the piercing of the ear against the door of the house, is evident from the unusual expression in [Deuteronomy 15:17], ‘and put (the awl) into his ear and into the door, that he may be thy servant for ever,’ where the ear and the door are co-ordinates.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:2:130.)

### (12-4) Exodus 21:12–36. Some Case Laws That Clarify Principles

Further clarification of the commandments, or fundamental principles, is given by these specific laws.

1. There is a difference between premeditated murder and accidental death, or manslaughter, as it is called today (see vv. 12–14). “God deliver him into his hand” (v. 13) is an idiom which means that the individual did not actively seek the death of the individual. This case is a further clarification of “thou shalt not kill.”

2. Certain crimes were so serious that they required the death penalty. This fact clearly shows, first, the seriousness of murder, and, second, that the death penalty, when carried out by legally constituted authority, is not a violation of the sixth commandment. Capital crimes listed here included:

- Premeditated murder (see vv. 12–14).
- Attempted murder of one’s parents (see v. 15). The verb translated as “smiteth” comes from the Hebrew verb meaning “to strike deep so as to wound or kill” (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “smite,” p. 401).
- Kidnapping (see v. 16).
- Cursing one’s parents (see v. 17). Here again the Hebrew word is very strong, meaning “to revile” or “to utter violent reproaches” (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “curse,” p. 105).
- Killing a servant (see vv. 20–21). The Joseph Smith Translation changes verse 20 to read, “If a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall surely be put to death.”
- Blatant neglect in the use of one’s property (see v. 29).

Other capital crimes were listed elsewhere in the law.

3. The seriousness of abortion is taught in the case law example given here (see vv. 22–25). If two men are fighting and strike a pregnant woman, causing her to miscarry, punishment is given. If “mischief follow” (a Hebrew idiom for death; see vv. 22–23), then the offending party was punished by death. One Bible scholar suggested that the case law approach illustrates the extent of the law’s application (see Reading 12-1), and this case provides an excellent example of this concept. If an abortion caused by an accident was to be punished severely, one can assume that deliberate abortion without justifiable cause was far more serious.

4. As an expansion on the seventh commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” several cases of just retribution are listed here and in Exodus 22. Again, the cases illustrate the breadth of the law. One can steal from another by direct theft, but one can also steal through negligence or accident. Thus, if one steals physical wholeness from another (see vv. 26–27), restitution has to be made. If one, through neglect, causes the loss of another’s property, restitution has to be made. The law of Moses is therefore not a law of *retaliation*, but a law of *reparation*.

Abinadi said that the law was “a very strict law” of “performances and of ordinances” given because Israel was a “stiffnecked people” (Mosiah 13:29–30). In the law of Christ, a general principle such as “whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matthew 7:12) covered situations similar to those mentioned in Exodus 21. But in the higher law of the gospel specific additional commandments were not required. Under the law of Christ a person does not have to be told to guard against negligence or to make restitution for accidental loss. He will do it because he loves his neighbor. The law of Moses specified how the law was lived in daily, practical situations, *but it still taught the law of Christ*.

#### **(12-5) Exodus 22:1–17. The Law Was Concerned with Making Restitution to the Offended Parties**

“First, the ratio of restitution is established:

“‘If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep’ (Ex. 22:1). Multiple restitution rests on a principle of justice. Sheep are capable of a high rate of reproduction and have use, not only as meat, but also by means of their wool, for clothing, as well as other uses. To steal a sheep is to steal the present and future value of a man’s property. The ox requires a higher rate of restitution, five-fold, because the ox was trained to pull carts, and to plow, and was used for a variety of farm tasks. The ox therefore had not only the value of its meat and its usefulness, but also the value of its training, in that training an ox for work was a task requiring time and skill. It thus commanded a higher rate of restitution. Clearly, a principle of restitution is in evidence here. Restitution must calculate not only the present and future value of a thing stolen, but also the specialized skills involved in its replacement.

“Second, theft could involve problems with respect to defense against the thief: [see Exodus 22:2–3]. A housebreaker at night can be legitimately killed by householders to defend their property; it is part of their legitimate defense of themselves and their properties. There is no reason to assume that this breaking does not cover the barn or, today, a garage. In daylight, however, the killing of a thief except in self-defense is manslaughter. The thief can then be identified and apprehended, so that this in itself is a protection. If the thief cannot make restitution, he is to be sold into slavery in order to satisfy the requirement of restitution. This means today some kind of custody whereby the full income of the convicted thief is so ordered that full restitution is provided for.

“Third, the law specified the restitution required of a thief caught in the act, or caught before disposing of the stolen goods: [see Exodus 22:4]. In such cases, the thief was to restore the thing stolen, and its equivalent, i.e., the exact amount he expected to profit by in his theft. This is the minimum restitution. A man who steals \$100 must restore not only the \$100 but another \$100 as well.

“Fourth, certain acts, whether deliberate or accidental, incur a liability which requires restitution, for to damage another man’s property is to rob him of a measure of its value: [see Exodus 22:5–6]. The restitution in all such cases depends on the nature of the act; if fruit trees or vines are damaged, then future production is damaged, and the liability is in proportion thereto. Criminal law no longer has more than survivals of the principle of restitution; civil suit must now be filed by an offended party to recover damages, and then without regard to the Biblical principle.

“Fifth, in Exodus 22:7–13, responsibility is determined for goods held in custody. . . .

“Property deposited in the hands of another for safe keeping might be so easily embezzled by the trustee, or lost through his negligence, that some special laws were needed for its protection. Conversely the trustee required to be safe-guarded against incurring loss if the property entrusted to his care suffered damage or disappeared without fault of his. The Mosaic legislation provided for both cases. On the one hand, it required the trustee to exercise proper care, and made him answerable for the loss if a thing entrusted to him was stolen and the thief not found. Embezzlement it punished by requiring the trustee guilty of it to “pay double.” On the other hand, in doubtful cases it allowed the trustee to clear himself by an oath (verse 10), and in clear cases to give proof that the loss had happened through unavoidable accident’ (verse 12).

“Sixth, in case of rental, or of loan, certain principles of liability are at work: [see Exodus 22:14–15]. If a man borrows and damages the property of another, he is liable for the damages; he has destroyed or harmed the property of another man and is thereby guilty of theft; restitution is mandatory. If the owner came to assist him voluntarily, as a good neighbor, the damage is the owner’s, because his

property was damaged while under his own supervision. This is all the more true if he was working for hire, because his rental of his services, with ox, ass, tractor, or any other equipment, includes the wear and tear, the maintenance and damages, to his working equipment.

“*Seventh*, seduction is not only an offense against the seventh commandment, but also against the eighth, in that it involves robbing a girl of her virginity (Ex. 22:16, 17). Compensation or restitution meant that ‘he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.’ Significantly, the word translated *pay* is in Hebrew *weigh*; money was then by weight, a weight of a shekel of silver or gold. . . .

“In all these cases, there is not only judgment by God against the offender but also restitution to the offended. Restitution thus is closely linked to atonement, to justice, and to salvation.” (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 459–62.)

#### **(12-6) Exodus 22:18–24. Additional Capital Crimes Are Listed by the Lord**

In the midst of the laws of restitution, the Lord lists several other crimes worthy of death. In other words, some crimes were so serious that restitution had to be made with one’s own life. These crimes included—

1. Witchcraft (see v. 18). One commentator explained why:

“From the severity of this law against witches, &c., we may see in what light these were viewed by Divine justice. They were seducers of the people from their allegiance to God, on whose judgment alone they should depend; and by impiously prying into futurity, assumed an attribute of God, *the foretelling of future events*, which implied in itself the grossest blasphemy, and tended to corrupt the minds of the people, by leading them away from God and the revelation he had made of himself. Many of the Israelites had, no doubt, learned these curious arts from their long residence with the Egyptians; and so much were the Israelites attached to them, that we find such arts in repute among them, and various practices of this kind prevailed through the whole of the Jewish history, notwithstanding the offence was capital, and in all cases punished with *death*.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:416.)

In the Joseph Smith Translation, however, the word *witch* is replaced by the word *murderer* (see JST, Exodus 22:18).

2. Sexual perversions with animals; one of the most evil of sexual sins (see Exodus 22:19).

3. Idol worship (see v. 20). Worship of a false god is to the spiritual man what murder is to the physical man, direct and devastating death. Alma the Younger understood this principle when he said of his period of apostasy, “Yes, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction” (Alma 36:14; emphasis added).

4. Neglect of widows and orphans (see Exodus 22:22–24). In this case, however, rulers were not

allowed to impose the death penalty. The Lord reserved that right to Himself (see v. 24).

#### **(12-7) Exodus 22:25–27. Why Was Keeping a Man’s Coat Overnight Prohibited?**

“The real point is that in his relations with a poor man, possibly his own employee, an Israelite must be generous. If he gives him an advance payment on his wage, he must not insist on payment by the end of the day at the risk of the man’s doing without the garment he has given as pledge for the loan (v. 26). The original admonition was not so much a prohibition of interest as a demand that one be ready to ‘risk an advance’ without material security. Amos 2:6 condemns Israelites for having treated such advances in a strictly legal manner, even at the cost of making the poor destitute. As a barter economy developed into a money economy the problem of interest became increasingly acute (Deut. 23:19–20; Lev. 25:26); between Israelites interest on commercial loans was prohibited. (In Hebrew the word ‘interest’ means ‘bite!’) To take a neighbor’s garment in pledge for any time longer than the working hours of the day, when he does not wear it, is equivalent to making him pledge his life ([see] Deut. 24:6, 17). This prohibition ultimately makes enslavement for debt impossible.” (Buttrick, *Interpreter’s Bible*, 1:1008.)

#### **(12-8) Exodus 22:28**

The Joseph Smith Translation says, “Thou shalt not revile against God, nor curse the ruler of thy people” (JST, Exodus 22:28).

#### **(12-9) Exodus 22:29–31**

The word translated “liquors” comes from a Hebrew word meaning “to weep” and denotes the juice of the vine or oil of the olive, not necessarily fermented juice. These laws were to symbolize the willing consecration of the people of Jehovah.

#### **(12-10) Exodus 23:1–8. Laws of Righteous Living**

Many people think of the law of Moses as being summarized by the requirement of “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (Exodus 21:24). They picture a system of fierce retaliation and brutal punishment. In Exodus 23:1–8 is an excellent example of the inaccuracy of that conception. Here are laws requiring a high degree of morality, justice, and righteousness, and requirements to do good to one’s neighbor. In an age where wickedness abounds, where gossip and slander are commonplace (see v. 1), where men follow the fads and fashions of evil and greedy men (see v. 2), where evil men (Joseph Smith corrected the word *poor* in v. 3 to read *wicked*) are often supported and even glorified, where many people refuse to get involved in the problems or misfortunes of their neighbors (see vv. 4–5), where exploitation of the poor and ignorant is widespread (see vv. 6–7), and when bribery and corruption are daily fare (see v. 8), the world would do well to turn to such laws and follow them.

### (12-11) Exodus 23:8–19

For a more detailed treatment of the various holy days mentioned here, see Enrichment Section D, “Feasts and Festivals.” The purpose of the holy days was two-fold: first to help Israel remember their deliverance from bondage through the power of God; and, second, to assist them in continuing the covenant relationship with Jehovah. The heart of the practice was to promote trust in the Lord.

### (12-12) Exodus 23:20–31

God promised five things to Israel for their obedience. First, an angel of the Lord would lead them into the promised land (see vv. 20–23). Second, they would be blessed with good health (see vv. 24–25). Third, they and their flocks would be greatly multiplied (see v. 26). Fourth, they would be successful in their fight against heathen nations (see vv. 27–30). Fifth, they would ultimately inherit everything from the Red Sea to the Euphrates River (see v. 31).

### (12-13) Exodus 24:1–8. Before Moses Ever Went into the Mount, Israel Was Instructed in the Law and Covenanted to Obey It

“The people, in anticipation of having Moses and the seventy special witnesses go into the presence of the Lord, were instructed in the laws. They accepted them with a covenant to keep them, accepted a copy of them as binding, and their covenants were sanctified by a sacrifice. Notice the promise the people made: ‘All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.’” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:88–89.)

The instructions Israel received before Moses went up to Mount Sinai were kept in the “book of the covenant” (v. 7):

“But as no covenant was considered to be ratified and *binding* til a sacrifice had been offered on the occasion, hence the necessity of the sacrifices mentioned here.

“Half of the blood being sprinkled on the altar, and half of it sprinkled on the people, showed that both God and they were mutually bound by this covenant. God was bound to the people to support, defend, and save them; the people were bound to God to fear, love, and serve him.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:425.)

The instructions given to Israel ensured that she would not be forced into a relationship she did not understand or want. Once Israel expressed her willingness to receive the law and covenanted to live it, Moses was free to act for Israel in the presence of the Lord.

### (12-14) Exodus 24:9–11

For a discussion of this and other visions of God, see Reading 12-23.

### (12-15) Exodus 25–30

These chapters contain the Lord’s revelations on the tabernacle and its furnishings. These instructions will be discussed in the next chapter.

### (12-16) Exodus 31

The Lord works through talented individuals to bring about His purposes (see vv. 1–6). For commentary on the Sabbath (see vv. 12–17), see Reading 11-8.

The nature of the tablets (see v. 18) is discussed in Reading 12-24.

### (12-17) Exodus 32:1–6. Why Did the Israelites Desire to Worship a Gold Calf?

“The whole of this is a most strange and unaccountable transaction. Was it possible that the people could have so soon lost sight of the wonderful manifestations of God upon the mount? Was it possible that Aaron could have imagined that he could make any god that could help them? And yet it does not appear that he ever remonstrated with the people! Possibly he only intended to make them some *symbolical* representation of the Divine power and energy, that might be as evident to them as the pillar of cloud and fire had been, and to which God might attach an always present energy and influence; or in requiring them to sacrifice their *ornaments*, he might have supposed they would have desisted from urging their request: but all this is mere conjecture, with very little probability to support it. It must however be granted that Aaron does not appear to have even designed a worship that should *supersede* the worship of the Most High; hence we find him making proclamation, *To-morrow is a feast to the LORD [Jehovah]*, and we find farther that some of the proper rites of the true worship were observed on this occasion, for they brought *burnt-offerings* and *peace-offerings*, ver. 6, 7: hence it is evident he intended that the true God should be the *object* of their worship, though he permitted and even encouraged them to offer this worship through an idolatrous medium, *the molten calf*.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:463–64.)



The children of Israel worshiped a golden calf.

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**(12-18) Exodus 32:9–14. Was God Really Going to Destroy the Israelites, and Did He “Repent of the Evil”?**

The Joseph Smith Translation corrects this verse to show that Moses said: “Turn from thy fierce wrath. *Thy people will repent of this evil*; therefore come thou not out against them.” Then the Prophet corrected verse 14 to clearly show the condition for the Lord’s sparing the people: “And the Lord said unto Moses, if they will repent of the evil which they have done, I will spare them, and turn away my fierce wrath; but, behold, thou shalt execute judgment upon all that will not repent of this evil this day. Therefore, see thou do this thing that I have commanded thee, or I will execute all that which I had thought to do unto my people.”

**(12-19) Exodus 32:15–35. Moses, the Mediator**

Moses’ role in the whole event is significant. In his great vision of the Lord, Moses was told that he was “in the similitude” of the Only Begotten Son (Moses 1:6). That similitude is shown clearly here. As the people faced destruction because of their wickedness, Moses became their mediator with God. He pleaded their cause and even offered his own life to appease the divine justice (see Exodus 32:31–32). After the constant murmuring and rebellion of the people, any usual leader would likely have said, “Yes, they are a wicked people. Go ahead and destroy them.” But Moses, like Christ whom he emulated, loved his people in spite of their hardheartedness and wickedness. He interceded in their behalf and saved them, but only on the condition of their repentance.

For an explanation of what was on the tablets Moses first received, see Reading 12-24.

**(12-20) Exodus 32:25–30**

“Moses sought out those who were ‘on the Lord’s side’ from those whom Aaron had made ‘naked.’ (The Hebrew word used here may mean either ‘bare, uncovered’ or ‘unruly, broken loose.’) ‘Naked’ can be understood in the same sense as when Adam was ashamed and hid himself from God because he was naked. The expression can also mean ‘exposed in guilt before God’s wrath.’ Compare the feeling of Alma as he described such exposure, in Alma 36:14–22. On the other hand, that Israel had ‘broken loose’ and become ‘unruly’ under Aaron’s lead was obviously true. Both conditions would be to the shame of a people who were supposed to be religious.” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:93.)

Some have wondered why Aaron, who played a key role in the golden calf episode, came out with no condemnation. Though it is not recorded in Exodus, Moses later indicated that Aaron also was nearly destroyed and was saved only through Moses’ intercession in his behalf (see Deuteronomy 9:20).

**(12-21) Exodus 33:1–3**

For a modern parallel to this rebuke, see Doctrine and Covenants 103:15–20.

**(12-22) Exodus 33:4–7. What Was the Tabernacle That Moses Pitched outside the Camp?**

“Moses then took a tent, and pitched it outside the camp, at some distance off, and called it ‘*tent of meeting*.’ The ‘tent’ is neither the sanctuary of the tabernacle described in [Exodus 25–30], which was not made till after the perfect restoration of the covenant [Exodus 35–40], nor another sanctuary that had come down from their forefathers and was used before the tabernacle was built, . . . but a tent belonging to Moses, which was made into a temporary sanctuary by the fact that the pillar of cloud came down upon it, and Jehovah talked with Moses there, and which was called by the same name as the tabernacle, . . . because Jehovah revealed Himself there, and every one who sought Him had to go to this tent outside the camp.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:2:233–34.)

**(12-23) Exodus 33:19–23. Is It Possible for Anyone to See the Face of God and Live?**

There is obviously something wrong with Exodus 33:20, for verse 11 of this same chapter clearly says, “The Lord spake unto Moses *face to face*, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (emphasis added). Also, Exodus 24:9–11 records that Moses and seventy of the elders of Israel saw God. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith commented on the problem in Exodus 33:20 and in John 1:18 in this way:

“There are too many passages which declare very definitely that God did appear, ‘face to face,’ with his ancient servants. Therefore, passages which declare that no man has seen him, must be in error. For instance, the passage in John 1:18, . . . is likely due to the fact that a translator in more recent years did not believe that God was a Personage and therefore could not be seen. This notion has come down to us since the introduction of the Athanasian Creed in 325 A.D. The Prophet Joseph Smith has given us a correction of this passage as follows:

“‘And no man hath seen God at any time, except he hath borne record of the Son; for except it is through him no man can be saved’ [JST, John 1:19].

“‘Again in 1 John 4:12, the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith the following correction:

“‘No man hath seen God at any time, except them who believe. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfect in us.’

“‘Now let us consider other verses from John’s Gospel . . . :

“‘It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

“‘Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.’ [John 6:45–46.]

“‘If we were not aware of the fact that mistranslations exist, it would appear that our Savior contradicted himself. The latter verse (John 6:46) does not harmonize with John 1:18.

“‘We read that Abraham talked with God face to face, and he also talked with Enoch and others. The modern world, however, will have none of it and

have rejected the living God for one who cannot be seen or heard." (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:162–63.)

Thus, it is clear that Joseph Smith was inspired when he corrected this verse to read:

"And he said unto Moses, Thou canst not see my face at this time, lest mine anger be kindled against thee also, and I destroy thee, and thy people; for there shall no man among them see me at this time, and live, for they are exceeding sinful. And no sinful man hath at any time, neither shall there be any sinful man at any time, that shall see my face and live." (JST, Exodus 33:20.)

#### (12-24) Exodus 34:1–4. Did Both Sets of Tablets Contain the Same Material?

Before this question can be fully answered, one must carefully examine what was on the first plates. One Bible scholar offered this analysis:

"The following is a general view of this subject. In [Exodus 20] the ten commandments are given; and at the same time various *political* and *ecclesiastical statutes*, which are detailed in chapters [21–23]. To receive these, Moses had *drawn near unto the thick darkness where God was*, [20:21], and having received them he came again with them to the people, according to their request before expressed, ver. 19: *Speak thou with us—but let not the Lord speak with us, lest we die*, for they had been terrified by the manner in which God had uttered the ten commandments; see ver. 18. After this Moses, with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and the seventy elders, went up to the mountain; and on his return he announced all these laws unto the people, [24:1], &c., and they promised obedience. Still there is no word of the *tables of stone*. Then he wrote all in a book, [24:4], which was called the book of the covenant, ver. 7. After this there was a second going up of Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders, [24:9], when that glorious discovery of God mentioned in verses 10 and 11 of the same chapter took place. After *their* coming down Moses is again commanded to go up; and God promises to give him tables of stone, containing a *law* and *precepts*, ver. 12. This is the first place these tables of stone are mentioned; and thus it appears that the *ten commandments*, and several other precepts, were given to and accepted by the people, and the covenant sacrifice offered, [24:5], before the *tables of stone* were either written or mentioned.' It is very likely that the commandments, laws, &c., were first published by the Lord in the hearing of the people; repeated afterwards by Moses; and the *ten words* or *commandments*, containing the sum and substance of the whole, afterwards written on the first tables of stone, to be kept for a record in the ark." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:474.)

This analysis would answer a frequently asked question, How did the Lord put the whole law of Moses on two tablets? The tablets, it seems, contained only the divine summary called the Ten Commandments. Joseph Smith added additional information when he reworked the first two verses of this chapter:

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two other tables of stone, like unto the first, and I will write upon them also, the words of the law, according as they were written at the first on the tables which thou brakest; but it shall not be according to the first, for I will take away the priesthood out of their midst; therefore my holy order, and the ordinances thereof, shall not go before them; for my presence shall not go up in their midst, lest I destroy them.

"But I will give unto them the law as at the first, but it shall be after the law of a carnal commandment; for I have sworn in my wrath, that they shall not enter into my presence, into my rest, in the days of their pilgrimage. Therefore do as I have commanded thee, and be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me, in the top of the mount." (JST, Exodus 34:1–2.)

At first reading, this passage may sound contradictory. The Lord says He will write on the second tablets "according as they were written at the first on the tables which thou brakest" (v. 1) but then He says, "but *it* shall not be according to the first" (v. 1; emphasis added). The problem lies in determining what "it" refers to: the writing on the tablets, or the new order of things introduced because of the rebellion of Israel. The information following the "it" seems to refer to the new order and not the new writings. But the Joseph Smith Translation of Deuteronomy 10:2 makes it clear that the two sets of plates contained the same thing, with one exception:

"And I will write on the tables the words that were on the first tables, which thou brakest, *save the words of the everlasting covenant of the holy priesthood*, and thou shalt put them in the ark" (JST, Deuteronomy 10:2; emphasis added).



Moses received the tablets on Mount Sinai.

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**(12-25) Exodus 34:29–35. What Is the Significance of the Radiance Moses Exhibited or the Veil He Wore?**

“After such prolonged time and such experiences in God’s presence, it is no wonder that Moses’ face shone with divine glory when he returned, and the people fell back in fear of him. This phenomenon of light radiating from heavenly beings and earthly beings who are under heavenly influence is not unique here. Compare the descriptions of the Apostles on the day of pentecost, when ‘tongues of cloven fire’ radiated from them (Acts 2:3).

“The Hebrew word here rendered ‘shone’ is *qaran*, a denominative verb from a noun meaning ‘horn,’ denominating radial beams of light, like the ‘horns’ or rays of morning seen over the horizon before the sun rises. From this phenomenon, the Arabs call the sun at its rising a ‘gazelle.’ (A mistranslation from Hebrew to Latin caused Michelangelo to put actual horns on the head of his heroic statue of Moses!)” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:95.)

## **POINTS TO PONDER**

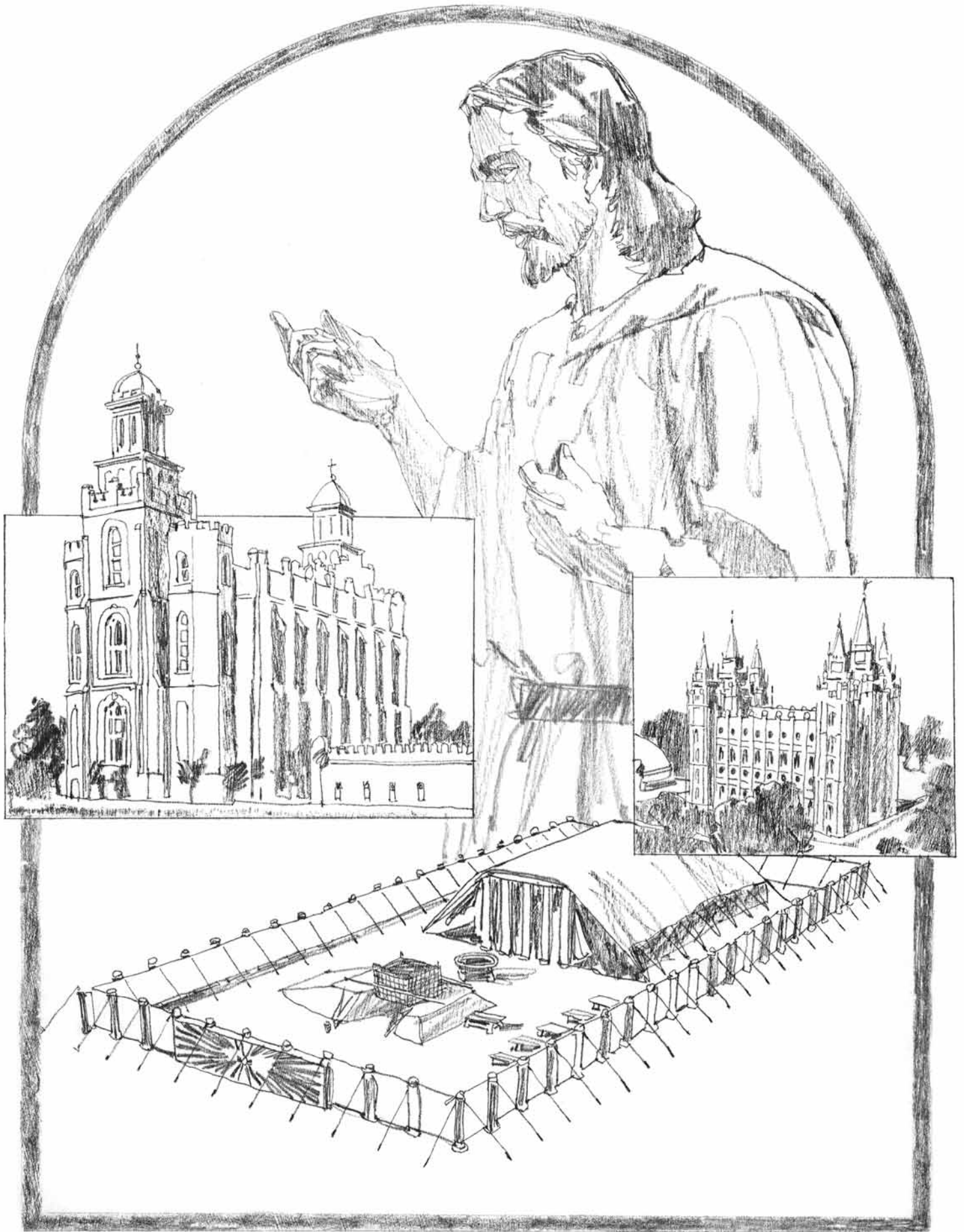
**(12-26)** Ancient Israel was made to understand clearly that the earth was the Lord’s. He is its Sovereign and King. As such, He not only can dictate its laws but establish peoples on its lands. The Book of Mormon joins with the Bible in witnessing this fact. Pause for a moment to consider these scriptures: 1 Nephi 17:36–39; 2 Nephi 1:7; Deuteronomy 4:20, 37–38.

From these scriptures you can see that a nation’s right to land is guaranteed only by obedience to the laws of Him whose land it is. Though man was given dominion over the earth through Adam, that dominion was under God. Therefore, man is responsible to set up God’s laws and establish His order. Since that is the case, consider these questions: Over whom do God’s laws extend? Is anyone excluded? Does violation of God’s laws between consenting adults (a popular phrase in today’s world) nullify the law? Is there such a thing as a sin that hurts only the individual? How is any sin a violation of God’s order? How are all sins against God even if they seem to hurt no one else? How should we answer the person who says, “It’s my life; I can live it as I choose”?

**(12-27)** Read again carefully Doctrine and Covenants 84:23–27; Mosiah 13:29–30; JST, Exodus 34:1–2 (see Reading 12-24); and Alma 25:15–16. Now answer the following questions:

1. Why were the ancient Israelites given this stricter law?
2. What could they have enjoyed if it had not been for their wickedness?
3. If they had been obedient to the law given them, what would have been the results?
4. Are there any members of the Church today who are in a condition similar to that of the ancient Israelites?
5. Of what value, then, is a study of the law of Moses to a modern Latter-day Saint?





# The House of the Lord in the Wilderness

## (13-1) Introduction

Out of the thunders of Sinai the Lord revealed a glorious plan by which He could redeem the children of Israel. The Lord opened the heavens to Moses and through him extended to Israel the opportunity to come to a fulness of His glory, taste of His love, and truly become a Zion people (see Exodus 25:8; 29:43; D&C 84:23–27). During his forty-day fast upon the mount, Moses received every detail needed for the construction of a tabernacle, a house of the Lord, where Israel could come and receive the keys of salvation and exaltation.

The tie between this tabernacle and latter-day temples is unmistakable. Like modern temples, the tabernacle was to be a house wherein “every needful thing” could be found (D&C 109:15). It would be a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of glory and of God, so that “all the incomings of thy people, into this house, may be in the name of the Lord; that all their outgoings from this house may be in the name of the Lord” (D&C 109:16–18; see also Leviticus 9:23; 10:8–11). Thus, through the power of revelation, Israel could be “taught words of wisdom” and “seek learning even by study, and also by faith” (D&C 109:14).

Deep meaning is associated with the physical dimensions and plan of the tabernacle. They were meant to reflect spiritual patterns that are also reflected in temples today. Prayerful study and meditation will help you to comprehend the importance of this ancient dwelling place of the Lord.

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Exodus 25–30; 35–40.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON EXODUS 25–30; 35–40

### (13-2) Exodus 25–30; 35–40. Why Are There Two Accounts in Exodus of the Tabernacle?

While on Mount Sinai, Moses received the revelation detailing the plans for the tabernacle (see Exodus 25–30). When he came down, Moses gathered Israel and they began the actual construction

of the tabernacle (see Exodus 35–40). Since Moses used the revelation to guide the construction, there is a close parallel between the two descriptions in Exodus. (*Note:* For purposes of commentary here, the focus will be on Exodus 25–30, the revelation chapters, and significant additions recorded in the construction chapters will be noted as necessary.)

### (13-3) Exodus 25:1–9. A Willing Heart

It is significant that, before revealing the pattern of the tabernacle itself, the Lord told Moses that Israel had to demonstrate a willingness to sacrifice to build His sanctuary (see v. 2). Mormon taught that if a gift of sacrifice is offered to the Lord with a grudging attitude, not only is it not acceptable to the Lord, but it becomes an evil act (see Moroni 7:6–10). Unless Israel had the right attitude about the sacrifice of their materials, it would do them no good. Modern readers should remember that despite their other faults and failings (the golden calf episode took place while Moses was on the mount receiving this revelation), when Israel heard what the Lord asked, they responded with joyous liberality. Their hearts were indeed touched (see Exodus 35:20–22, 25–26, 29), and finally Moses had to restrain them, for they gave far more than was needed for the tabernacle (see Exodus 36:5–7).

In Exodus 25:8 the Lord clearly revealed the purpose for the tabernacle—it was to be the house of the Lord. The Hebrew word which is translated “tabernacle” actually means “tent” or “dwelling” (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “tabernacle,” p. 434).

The phrase “according to all that I shew thee” (v. 9), seems to indicate that Moses was actually shown the tabernacle and its furnishings and not just given a verbal description.

The ephod (pronounced in Hebrew *ay’fode*) mentioned in verse 7 is discussed in detail in Reading 13-13.

### (13-4) Exodus 25:10. What Do the Terms *Shittim* and *Cubit* Mean?

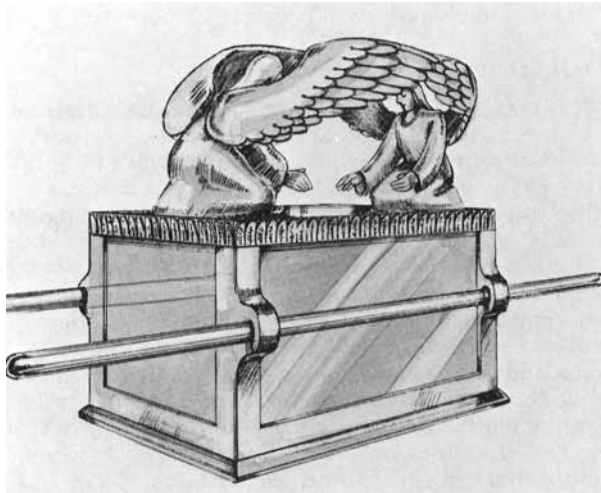
*Shittim* is pronounced *shee-teem’* in Hebrew and is used to designate a desert acacia tree known throughout Egypt and the Near East (see Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “shittah tree, shittim,” pp. 624–25). Because its hard wood endured well and also took a high polish, it was ideal for the construction of the tabernacle.

The dimensions of the tabernacle are described in a unit of measure called a cubit, which is about eighteen inches in length. (The student should refer to the chart on weights and measures in Maps and Charts.)

Much of the furniture of the tabernacle was constructed of shittim wood and covered with gold leaf to give it the appearance of gold. Had the furnishings been made of solid gold, they would have been far too heavy to carry.

### (13-5) Exodus 25:10–22; 37:1–9. The Ark of the Covenant

The ark of the covenant was a chest, or box, of shittim wood overlaid with gold. It was approximately three feet nine inches long, two feet three inches wide, and two feet three inches high.



The ark of the covenant

Staves, or poles, on both sides allowed the priests to carry it without actually touching the ark itself. Inside, the tablets of the law given to Moses on Mount Sinai were placed (see v. 16). Hence, it was called the ark of the testimony or ark of the covenant. Later, a pot of manna and Aaron's rod, which miraculously bloomed, were also placed inside the ark (see Hebrews 9:4). The ark was placed inside the inner room of the tabernacle known as the most holy place, or Holy of Holies. The ark was viewed with the greatest reverence by the Israelites, and prayers were recited before it was moved or placed in position (see Numbers 10:35–36).

The lid, or covering, for the ark is described in Exodus 25:17–22. The King James Version translates the Hebrew word *kapporeth* (which means "seat of atonement") as "mercy seat." The covering was made of solid gold and on it were formed two cherubim with wings which came up and overshadowed the lid or mercy seat.

The word *cherubim* usually refers to guardians of sacred things. While the exact meaning of the word is not known, most scholars agree that these cherubim represented "redeemed and glorified manhood" or "glorified saints and angels" (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. "cherubim," p. 75). Since Latter-day Saints do not believe that angels have wings, as they are often shown in religious art, the commandment to form wings on the cherubim

may raise some questions. Another revelation indicates, however, that wings symbolically represent the power to move and to act (see D&C 77:4). Between these cherubim on the mercy seat, God told Moses, He would meet with him and commune with him. Latter-day revelations state that angels stand as sentinels guarding the presence of God (see D&C 132:19).

The blood of the lamb of Jehovah was sprinkled upon the mercy seat during the sacred day of Atonement. (For a complete discussion of the sacred significance of this event, see Reading 15-8.) Paul and John both spoke of Jesus as being "the propitiation" for our sins (see 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Romans 3:25). The Greek word *hilasterion*, translated "propitiation," was also used to translate the Hebrew *kapporeth* ("seat of atonement") in the Greek Old Testament. One scholar discussed the significance of the word *hilasterion*:

"All Greek nouns which end in *-erion* mean the place where something is done. *Dikasterion* means the place where *dike*, justice is done, and therefore a law court. *Thusiasterion* means the place where *thusia*, sacrifice is done, and therefore the altar. Therefore *hilasterion* can certainly mean the place where *hilasmos*, expiation, is done and made. Because of that, both in the Old and New Testament, *hilasterion* has a regular and a technical meaning. It always means the lid of gold above the ark which was known as the *mercy-seat*. In *Exodus* 25:17 it is laid down of the furnishings of the tabernacle: 'Thou shalt make a mercy-seat (*hilasterion*) of pure gold.' In only one other place in the New Testament is the word used, in *Hebrews* 9:5, and there the writer speaks of the cherubim who overshadow the mercy-seat. The word is used in that sense more than twenty times in the Greek Old Testament. . . .

"If then we take *hilasterion* to mean the mercy-seat, and, if we call Jesus our *hilasterion* in that sense, it will mean, so to speak, that Jesus is the place where man and God meet, and that specially He is the place where man's sin meets with the atoning love of God." (Barclay, *The Mind of St. Paul*, pp. 87–88.)

Clearly, then, the ark of the covenant was one of the most significant features of the tabernacle, both in its importance to ancient Israel and also in its symbolic significance.

### (13-6) Exodus 25:17. What Was the Significance of the Use of Gold in the Tabernacle and Its Furnishings?

Gold has been highly treasured by men from the earliest times and thus has symbolic as well as monetary significance. "Gold is often employed in Scripture as an emblem of what is divine, pure, precious, solid, useful, incorruptible, or lasting and glorious" (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "gold," 2:723). This symbolism clearly explains the use of gold in the ark of the covenant.

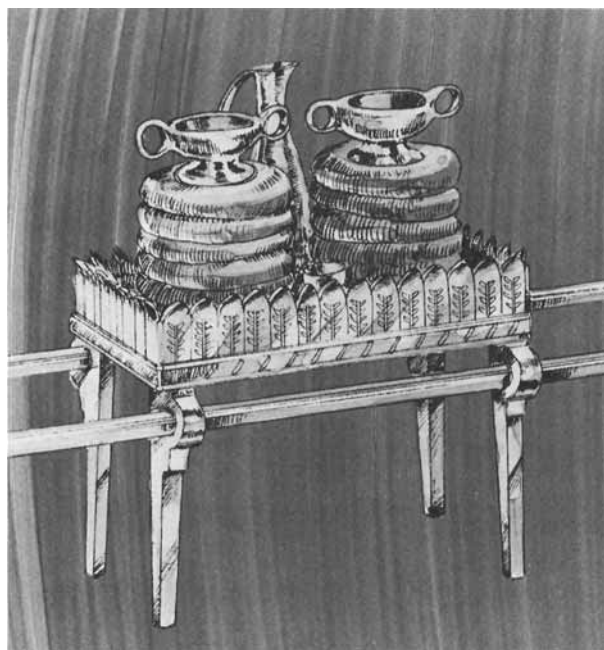
Silver and brass also were used in other parts of the tabernacle and its furnishings. These two metals have symbolic as well as functional significance. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* notes:

“The relativity of holiness was further pointed up by the materials. Fine or pure gold was used for the Ark, the propitiatory, the table of the Presence and its vessels; for the lampstand and its accessories; for the altar of incense; and for the high priest’s garments. Ordinary gold was employed for the moldings, the rings, and the staves of the Ark, of the table, and of the incense altar; for the hooks of the curtains; for the frames and bars; for the pillars of the veil and screen; and for other parts of the high priest’s vestments. Silver was reserved for the bases of the frames, for the pillars of the veil, and for moldings in the court. Finally there was bronze, of which metal the altar of burnt offering and its utensils, the bases of the court, and the laves were made. The same principle applied to the embroidered stuff and linen.

“The theme of gradation was continued in respect of the three divisions of the people. The Israelites could enter the court only; the priests could serve in the Holy Place; the high priest alone could enter the Holy of Holies but once a year—on the Day of Atonement.” (S.v. “tabernacle,” 15:687.)

#### (13-7) Exodus 25:23–30; 37:10–16. The Table of Shewbread and Its Instruments

The second article of furniture described by the Lord was the table of shewbread. Like the ark of the covenant, it too was to be made of shittim wood with a gold overlay (see vv. 23–24). It had a crown and border (probably a rim) of gold on the top, or surface, of the table and had rings and staves to provide for easy transport. It was about three feet long, eighteen inches wide, and twenty-seven inches high. Various vessels of gold, called the spoons, dishes, covers, or bowls in the King James Version of the Bible, were made for use with the table.



The table of shewbread

This table got its name from the twelve loaves of bread which were placed upon it. The Lord called it “shewbread” (v. 30), which translates literally the Hebrew word meaning “the bread of faces,” or “the bread of the presence,” signifying that this bread was placed before the face of the Lord or in His presence (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “shew, shew-bread,” p. 388; Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “shewbread,” p. 847). The bread was made of fine flour (that is, the wheat had been very finely ground and not left with the kernels partially intact) into twelve loaves of considerable size—two-tenths of a deal would be about a fifth of a bushel of flour (see Leviticus 24:5; Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “shewbread,” p. 847). Thus, the cakes would likely have weighed over ten pounds each. The loaves were put into two stacks, and upon each pile was placed pure frankincense that was later burned on the altar of incense “an offering made by fire unto the Lord” (Leviticus 24:7; see also v. 6). The bread was changed each Sabbath and the bread that was removed was eaten by the priests (see Leviticus 24:8–9). This was the bread given to David when he fled from King Saul (see 1 Samuel 21:1–6; Matthew 12:4).

Most scholars and old Jewish traditions agree that wine was also placed on the table along with the bread, although it is not mentioned specifically in the biblical account. The spoons were actually vessels or cups, rather than spoons as they are known today, and were probably the containers for the liquid. (See Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “shewbread,” 3:1576; Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “shewbread,” p. 847.) Thus, the items placed on the table of shewbread have distinct parallels in the emblems of the sacrament.

#### (13-8) Exodus 25:31–40; 37:17–24. The Golden Candlestick

The source of light for the tabernacle was the sacred candlestick. Called *menorah* in Hebrew, which means the “place of lights” (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “candlestick,” 1:332), it held not candles but rather seven cup-shaped containers filled with pure olive oil into which a wick was inserted and lit. Made of solid gold, the *menorah* was supported by a base which rested upon three feet. Its shaft rose from the base which was decorated by knobs (spherical ornamentations), bowls (enlargements proportionate in size to the knobs and upon which were almond blossoms), and flowers (disc-like enlargements representing the shape of an almond flower petal). Each of the branches of the *menorah* was crowned with a light which illuminated the holy place, or first room of the tabernacle.

The number seven has sacred significance in the Old Testament, connoting wholeness or perfection (see Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “seven,” pp. 607–8; Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “numbers,” p. 898). Thus, the light provided in the house of the Lord symbolized the perfect light.

The oil for the seven lamps had to be pure olive oil (see Exodus 27:20) that had been consecrated



*The menorah, or sacred candlestick*

for that purpose. The Jewish festival of Hannukah, or the festival of lights, celebrates the time when Judas Maccabeus finally drove the Greeks from the temple in Jerusalem around 165 B.C. According to Jewish tradition, the Maccabees found only enough consecrated oil for the sacred lamps to last one day.

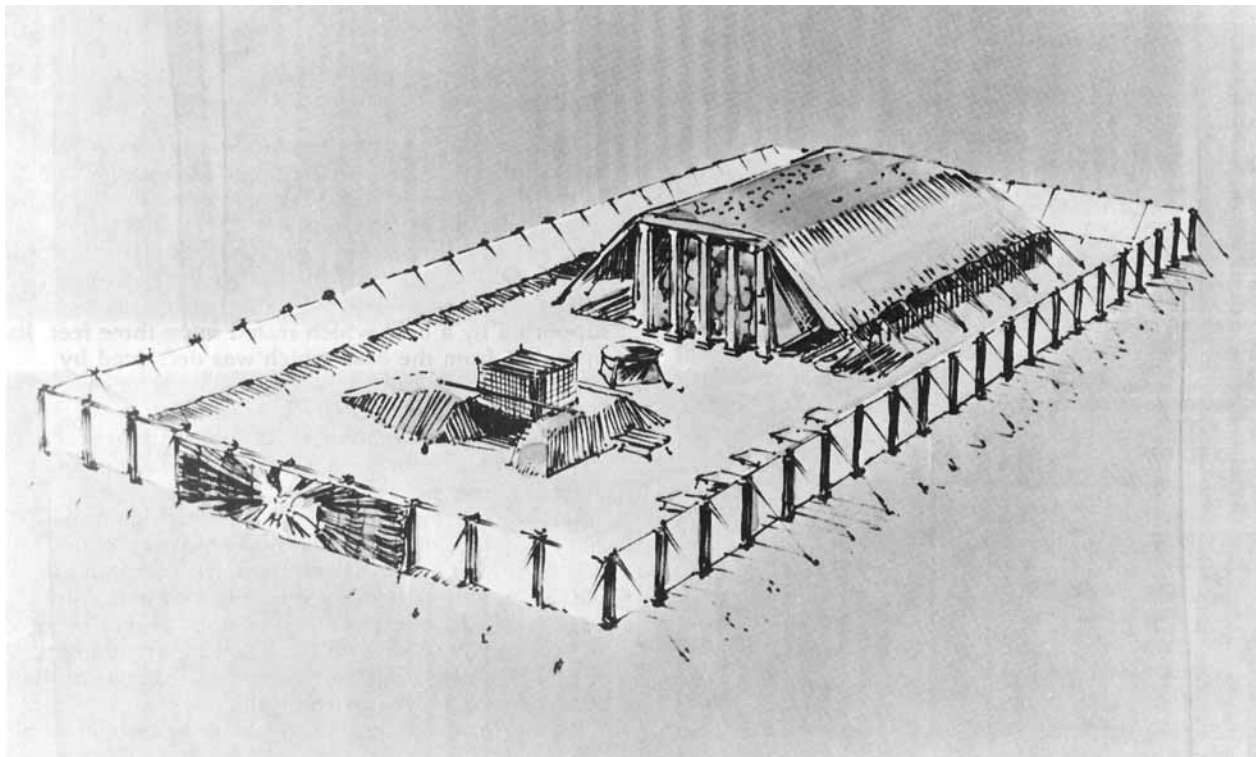
The consecration of new oil took eight days; yet miraculously, the meager supply burned until a new supply could be properly prepared. (See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 12, chap. 7, par. 6.)

Other scriptures indicate that olive oil represents the Holy Spirit, probably because it provided fire, heat, and light when burned in the lamps (see D&C 45:56–57). Thus, the sacred *menorah* was a type or symbol of the true source of spiritual light, namely the Holy Ghost as He bears witness of the Father and the Son.

#### **(13-9) Exodus 26:1–14; 36:8–38. The Coverings for the Tabernacle**

Because the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness at this time, the tabernacle had to be portable. The walls were formed of panels that could be joined together (see Exodus 25:15–16). Then the walls and open ceiling were covered with four different layers of fabric.

The inner fabric was made of fine-twined linen. The Hebrew word translated “linen” signifies not only the fabric but also “whiteness” (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “linen,” p. 255; see also Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “linen,” 2:1068). Scholars believe it was either a fine cotton fabric or one made from flax. Because of the length of the tabernacle, ten curtains, or pieces of fabric, were needed to cover it. This inner layer was to have cherubim (angels) embroidered upon it and was to incorporate, besides the whiteness, the colors blue, purple, and scarlet.



*The tabernacle in the wilderness*

The selvage of these curtains was a special border at the edge of each woven piece that prevented raveling. This border was usually of different size threads and was sometimes of a different weave than the rest of the curtain.

By means of golden clasps or pins called taches, the selvages of adjacent curtain segments were joined together, creating the appearance of a single drape over the tabernacle.

The other three fabrics consisted of goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins (see Exodus 26:7, 14). The nature of the last kind of fabric is not clear; scholars seem to agree only that it was not the skin of badgers. The Hebrew word implies the color of, more than the kind of, fabric (see Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. "badger," p. 27). Some scholars believe it may have been the skins of porpoises or seals from the Red Sea which would have given the tabernacle a waterproof outer covering (see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:2:163).

#### **(13-10) Exodus 26:15–30. What Were the Tenons and Sockets?**

The tenon was one of two large rectangular dowels at the bottom end of each board. The tenon fitted into a double base support called a socket that could slip up and down each tenon independently. Since all of the boards were fastened firmly side to side, making a rigid wall, every socket could rest on the ground even when it was irregular. One is immediately impressed with the detail that the Lord gave Moses concerning His dwelling place.

#### **(13-11) Exodus 26:31–37**

The two veils, or hangings for the door, described here are the outer door to the tabernacle (the front entrance) and the veil which separated the holy place, or first room, from the inner Holy of Holies. This latter veil is properly called the veil of the tabernacle.

#### **(13-12) Exodus 27:1–19; 30:17–21; 38:1–20. The Outer Courtyard and Its Furnishings**

Surrounding the tabernacle itself was a large enclosed area protected by woven hangings attached to a movable wall. In this courtyard was located the altar of burnt offerings (altar of sacrifice) and the laver of water for the symbolic cleansing of hands and feet. Into this courtyard anyone of Israel could bring sacrifices, but only the priests could enter the tabernacle itself. (Sometimes, however, the tabernacle referred to in the Old Testament means the whole complex, including the courtyard, and not just the tent itself.)

Each pillar of the court of the tabernacle was ringed horizontally by silver fillets, which were rectangular bands around each pillar to both protect the wood and beautify it. The hangings, or the fabric which formed the outer walls of the court, were attached to the top of each pillar and were secured at the bottom by ties to the brass pins which were

firmly driven into the ground. The following were the furnishings of this outer court:

*Altar of burnt offerings.* All burnt offerings performed within the tabernacle took place on this altar. It was hollow, five cubits square and three cubits high, or about 7 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 5 feet in dimension. It was made of shittim wood overlaid with brass plates.

It had four horns on its corners. Upon these horns the blood of the sacrifice was to be smeared. By laying hold of these horns, a person could find asylum and safety (see 1 Kings 1:50; 2:28), although not if he was guilty of premeditated murder (see Exodus 21:14). Sometimes the horns were used to bind the animal or intended sacrifice.

*Holy instruments of sacrifice.* The pan was a large, brazen dish placed under the altar to receive the ashes as they fell through.

Brazen fire shovels were used for emptying the pans.

The basons were receptacles used to catch the blood from the sacrifice.

The fleshhook was a three-pronged hook that the priest used to dip into the sacrificial container. That which he brought up was to be kept for himself.

The firepan was the container in which was kept the continuously burning fire for sacrifice.

*Laver.* This, like the altar of sacrifice, was made of brass. It stood between the altar of sacrifice and the tabernacle. It was used by the priests for cleansing, preparatory to entering the tabernacle.

In Solomon's day, when a permanent temple was constructed, the laver was set on the backs of twelve oxen (see 1 Kings 7:23–26).

#### **(13-13) Exodus 28; 39. The Priesthood Garments and Their Significance**

When the children of Israel forfeited their right to the higher priesthood and its associated blessings and responsibilities, the Lord established the Levitical Priesthood among them (see D&C 84:18–27). Through this order of the priesthood Israel enjoyed the principles of the preparatory gospel. They were reminded continually of the atoning sacrifice of the Savior, who was symbolically represented before them in the person officiating as priest (see Leviticus 8:5–10; 21:10; Hebrews 5:4; 7:11–12, 21; D&C 107:1, 13–20; JS—H, 1:68–72).

The pattern for the official clothing of the high priest, or presiding head of the Aaronic Priesthood (not the Melchizedek Priesthood office of high priest), was given by revelation and had symbolic as well as practical significance. It consisted of the following items:

*Ephod.* "The ephod [pronounced *ay'fode* in Hebrew] was an article of sacred clothing worn by the high priests of the Levitical Priesthood. The Lord directed that they were not to wear ordinary clothing during their service, but they were to have 'holy garments' made by those whom the Lord had 'filled with the spirit of wisdom.' (Exod. 28:2–3.) These sacred garments were to be passed from father to son along with the high priestly office itself. (Exod. 29:29.)

"The ephod, worn over a blue robe, was made of blue, purple, and scarlet material, with designs of gold thread skillfully woven into the fabric. This garment was fastened at each shoulder and had an intricately woven band with which it could be fastened around the waist. In gold settings on each shoulder were onyx stones engraved with the names of the 12 sons of Israel as a 'memorial' as the priest served before the Lord. (See Exod. 28:6–14 and 39:2–7). Fastened to the ephod was a breastplate into which the Urim and Thummim could be placed. (Exod. 28:15–30.)

"The exact function of the ephod is not known. As President Joseph Fielding Smith observed, information concerning these ancient ordinances 'was never recorded in any detail, because such ordinances are sacred and not for the world.' (*Improvement Era*, November 1955, p. 794.)" (Richard O. Cowan, "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, Dec. 1973, p. 33.)

This "apron," as it is sometimes translated, signified a beautiful symbolic concept. With the two onyx stones, which fastened the ephod on the shoulders, the high priest (a type of Christ and also of His authorized representatives) entered the tabernacle (the house of the Lord, or God's presence) carrying Israel on his shoulders (see Exodus 28:12).

*The breastplate.* Attached to the ephod with golden chains and ouches (sockets or fasteners) was the breastplate (see vv. 13–29). The breastplate worn by Aaron and subsequent high priests should not be confused with the one used by the Prophet Joseph



*The clothing of the high priest*

Smith in translating the Book of Mormon. Aaron's breastplate was made of fabric rather than of metal and was woven of the same material that was used in making the ephod (see v. 15). It was twice as long as it was wide and when folded became a square pocket into which the Urim and Thummim was placed. Upon the exposed half of the breastplate were precious stones inscribed with the names of each of the tribes of Israel. Thus, the high priest bore "the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart . . . for a memorial before the Lord continually" (v. 29).

The symbolism of the high priest carrying Israel next to his heart lends added meaning to the promise that the Lord will some day select His "jewels" (D&C 60:4; 101:3).

*The Urim and Thummim.* As noted above, the Urim and Thummim was carried in the pouch formed when the breastplate was folded over (see Exodus 28:30).

"A Urim and Thummim consists of two special stones called *seer stones* or *interpreters*. The Hebrew words *urim* and *thummim*, both plural, mean *lights* and *perfections*. Presumably one of the stones is called Urim and the other Thummim. Ordinarily they are carried in a breastplate over the heart. (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8.) . . .

" . . . Abraham had them in his day (Abra. 3:1–4), and Aaron and the priests in Israel had them from generation to generation. (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8, 1 Sam. 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65.) . . .

" . . . Ammon said of these . . . stones: 'The things are called interpreters, and no man can look in them except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not and he should perish. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer.' (Mosiah 8:13; 28:13–16.)

"The existence and use of the Urim and Thummim as an instrument of revelation will continue among exalted beings in eternity." (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 818–19.)

The Urim and Thummim of Aaron was not the same as that used by Joseph Smith, for the Prophet received the Urim and Thummim used by the brother of Jared (see McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 819).

*The robe.* This robe was blue and was woven without seams with a hole for the head to go through (see Exodus 28:31–32). Jesus, the Great High Priest, was clothed in a similar seamless garment prior to His Crucifixion (see John 19:23). Along the hem of the robe were placed, alternately, bells and fringes woven to look like pomegranates. One scholar noted the significance of the robe and its ornaments:

"[The robe was] woven in one piece, which set forth the idea of wholeness or spiritual integrity; and the dark-blue colour indicated nothing more than the heavenly origin and character of the office with

which the robe was associated. [The true significance of the robe] must be sought for, therefore, in the peculiar pendants, the meaning of which is to be gathered from the analogous instructions in [Numbers 15:38–39], where every Israelite is directed to make a fringe in the border of his garment, of dark-blue purple thread, and when he looks at the fringe to remember the commandments of God and do them. In accordance with this, we are also to seek for allusions to the word and testimony of God in the pendant of pomegranates and bells attached to the fringe of the high priest's robe. The simile in [Proverbs 25:11], where the word is compared to an apple, suggests the idea that the pomegranates, with their pleasant odour, their sweet and refreshing juice, and the richness of their delicious kernel, were symbols of the word and testimony of God as a sweet and pleasant spiritual food, that enlivens the soul and refreshes the heart [see Psalms 19:8–11; 119:25, 43, 50; Deuteronomy 8:3; Proverbs 9:8; Ecclesiastes 15:3], and that the bells were symbols of the sounding of this word, or the revelation and proclamation of the word. Through the robe, with this pendant attached, Aaron was represented as the recipient and medium of the word and testimony which came down from heaven; and this was the reason why he was not to appear before the Lord without that sound, lest he should forfeit his life [see Exodus 28:35]. It was not because he would simply have appeared as a private person if he had gone without it, for he would always have the holy dress of a priest upon him, even when he was not clothed in the official decorations of the high priest; but because no mere priest was allowed to enter the immediate presence of the Lord. This privilege was restricted to the representative of the whole congregation, viz. the high priest; and even he could only do so when wearing the robe of the word of God, as the bearer of the divine testimony, upon which the covenant fellowship with the Lord was founded." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:2:202–3.)

*The golden diadem and the mitre.* The mitre (or hat) was made of fine linen (see Exodus 28:39), and each priest wore one. In addition, the high priest wore a golden band on the front of his mitre on the forehead. Engraved on the band were the words "Holiness to the Lord" (v. 36; see also vv. 37–38), signifying first that the high priest should be characterized by this attribute, and second that Christ, the Great High Priest, would be perfectly holy before God.

#### (13-14) Exodus 29

For clarification of the rites of purification for the priests and the explanation for the day of Atonement, see Enrichment Section D, "Feasts and Festivals."

#### (13-15) Exodus 29:7

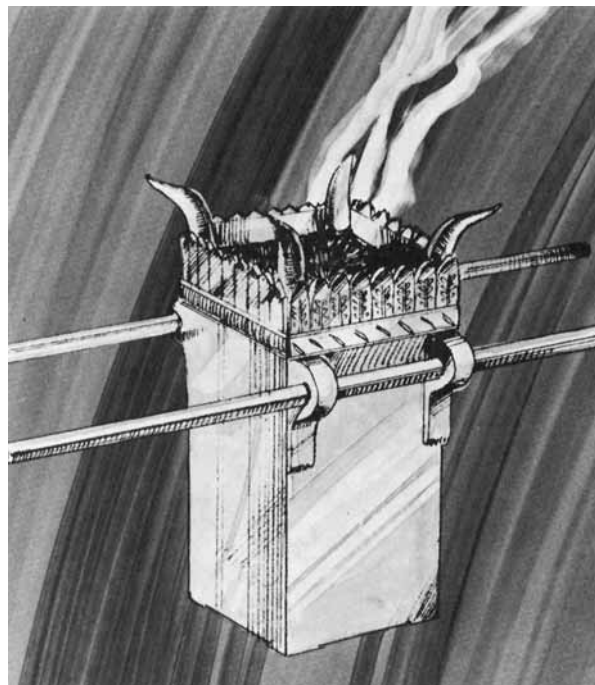
For the significance of the anointing with oil, see Reading 13-18.

#### (13-16) Exodus 29:20. What Is the Meaning of Touching the Ear, Thumb, and Toe with Blood?

"The priest put some of [the] blood [from the offering] upon the tip of the right ear, the right thumb, and the great toe of the right foot of the person to be consecrated, in order that the organ of *hearing*, with which he hearkened to the word of the Lord, and those used in *acting* and *walking* according to His commandments, might thereby be sanctified through the power of the atoning blood of the sacrifice" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:2:387–88, emphasis added).

#### (13-17) Exodus 30:1–10. The Altar of Incense

The third piece of furniture found in the holy place along with the sacred candlestick and the table of



*The altar of incense*

shewbread was the altar of incense. It stood directly in front of the veil (see v. 6). Like the ark of the covenant and the table of shewbread, it was made of shittim wood covered with gold and had rings and staves for carrying. Hot coals were placed on the altar, and each morning and evening (see vv. 7–8) the high priest would burn incense. This ritual seems to signify that one can approach the presence of God only through prayer, for scriptures elsewhere indicate that incense is a symbol of prayer (see Revelation 5:8; 8:3–4; Psalm 141:2).

#### (13-18) Exodus 30:22–33. Why Did the Lord Tell Moses to "Anoint the Tabernacle" and All Its Furnishings?

Pure olive oil was a sacred symbol of the Spirit of the Lord (see D&C 45:56–57), and its use signified the sanctification of the person or object anointed (see

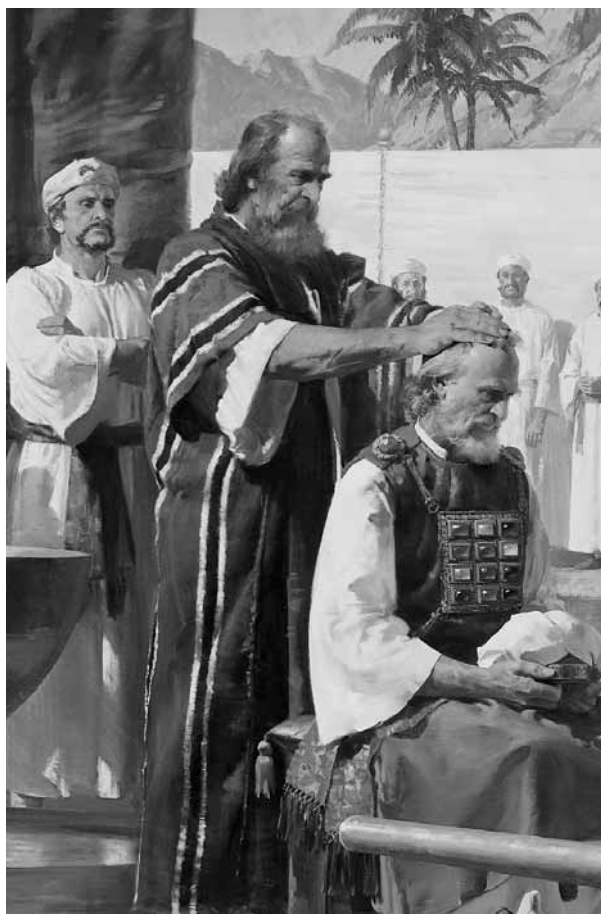
Exodus 30:29). The use of the oil can also be an indication of the existing purity of the person, since the Spirit of the Lord will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle. President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“The olive tree from the earliest times has been the emblem of peace and purity. It has, perhaps, been considered more nearly sacred than any other tree or form of vegetation by the inspired writers of all ages through whom we have received the word of the Lord. In parables in the scriptures the House of Israel, or the people who have made covenant with the Lord, have been compared to the olive tree.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:180.)

Thus, to anoint even these inanimate objects with oil suggests that the tabernacle and all connected with it were sanctified by the Spirit in preparing them for service to God.

## POINTS TO PONDER

(13-19) In his opening address in general conference in October 1978, President Spencer W. Kimball charged the Church with the responsibility to become perfect. He said that such a goal is possible, inasmuch as each of us has the power to become like our



*Moses ordained Aaron to preside over the priesthood.*

Heavenly Father. However, some would grow faint at the thought because the Lord has declared, “Behold, the mystery of godliness, how great is it!” (D&C 19:10). Consequently, we may feel that the “mystery of godliness” is too great for mortals to consider, let alone achieve.

The truth is that unless we turn our vision toward the temple, the mystery of godliness will forever be a stranger.

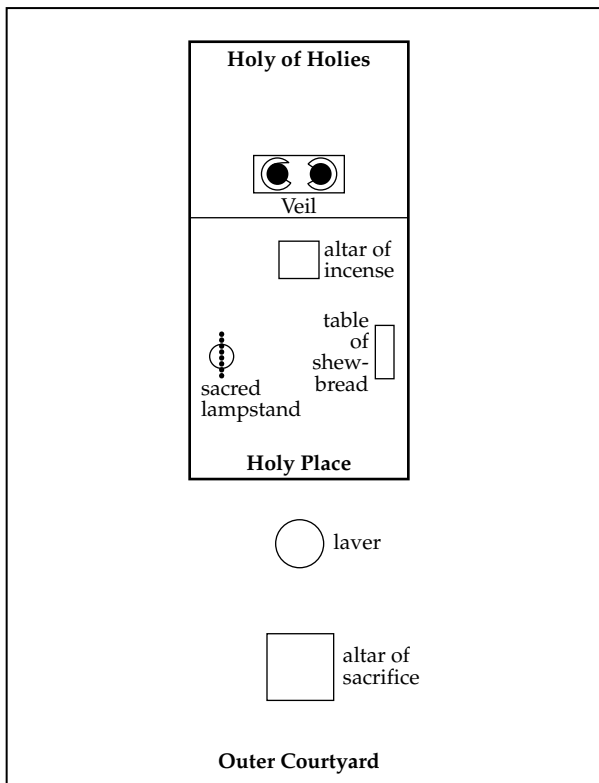
“It was of this subject that the Prophet Joseph Smith spoke when he said: ‘The principle of salvation is given us through the knowledge of Jesus Christ’ (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 297), and that ‘knowledge through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the grand key that unlocks the glories and mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.’ (. . . p. 298.) . . .

“These revelations, which are reserved for and taught only to the faithful Church members in sacred temples, constitute what are called the ‘mysteries of Godliness.’ The Lord said He had given to Joseph ‘the keys of the mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed. . . .’ (D&C 28:7.) As a reward to the faithful, the Lord promised: ‘And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old. . . .’ (D&C 76:7.)” (Lee, *Ye Are the Light of the World*, pp. 210–11.)

Even from days of old the Lord has desired to reveal Himself to the children of men. This chapter shows just how carefully He made such plans with ancient Israel through the prophet Moses.

Set forth in symbolic representation and beautifully portrayed in progressive splendor, the tabernacle and its court became a school in which the things of heaven were to be revealed to the Lord’s people. It was originally intended that an Israelite could move from the outer court of the tabernacle to its inner and more holy precincts and observe, in so doing, that the handiwork and ornamentation became progressively more intricate, ornate, and secluded until at last the ritual placed them before the holy presence, even the Holy of Holies. Sacred beyond description, protected from the eyes of the unworthy, these ordinances were designed to be the cement or bonding agent between Israel and her God. This symbolic journey, however, was denied Israel because of her pride and rebellion (see Exodus 20:18–20; 32:1). Israel lost these higher blessings and became dependent on the officiating priests who acted as proxy through a lesser order of priesthood.

But that loss of privilege in no way implies that the tabernacle lost its significance for Israel. We saw in Reading 12-1 that the law of Moses was added to the gospel and was indeed called a preparatory gospel. Though the fulness of the priesthood endowment was withheld from Israel, the layout and construction of the tabernacle itself symbolized our progress toward perfection so that we could enter into the presence of God. Note the layout of the tabernacle and its furnishings.



There are three major divisions or areas in the tabernacle: the outer courtyard; the first room of the tabernacle proper, or holy place; and the inner room, or Holy of Holies. In modern temples three levels of life are also depicted by rooms in the temple: the world, or teletial, room; the terrestrial room; and the celestial room. The significance of these rooms is described thus:

"[The world] room depicts the world in which we live and die. Here instruction is given regarding man's second estate and the manner in which he may overcome the obstacles of mortality.

"The terrestrial room is symbolic of the peace that may be attained by men as they overcome their fallen condition through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

"The celestial room symbolizes the eternal joy and peace found in the presence of God. Something of the spirit of God's infinite promises to the obedient has been captured in the design of this beautiful room." (Narrative for *The House of the Lord: Filmstrip Script*, frames 43, 48, 51.)

If we compare the three divisions of the tabernacle with these three levels of spiritual life, we find some interesting parallels and insights.

*The outer courtyard (the world or teletial room).* The first thing encountered as one entered the main gate was the altar of sacrifice. Here the various animals and other offerings were slain and offered to the Lord. Strict obedience and sacrifice were thus required as the first step in the symbolic progression toward perfection and entry into God's presence.

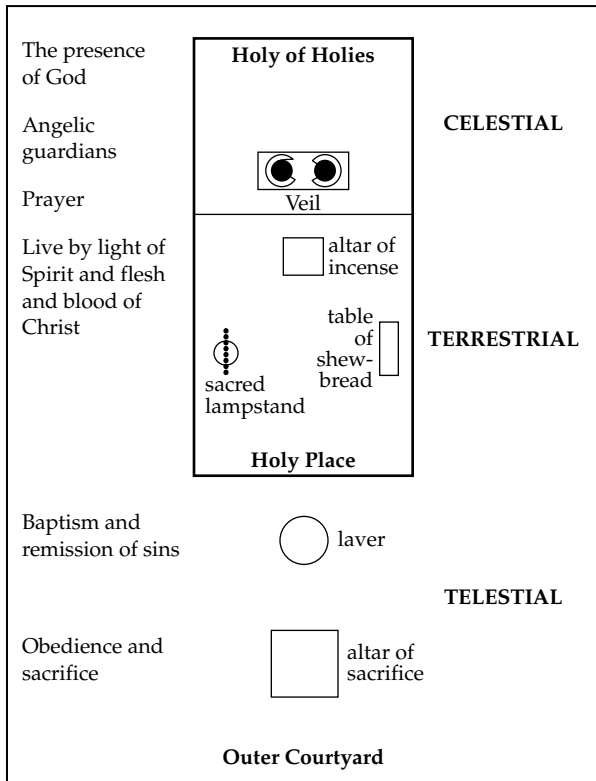
This first step could be likened to having faith in Christ (looking to the Great and Last Sacrifice) and repentance. Jesus taught the Nephites that He had fulfilled the law of Moses, and now the sacrifice required of them was "a broken heart and a contrite spirit," which would lead to the baptism with "fire and with the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 9:20). The sacrificial fires of the great altar thus signified that "spiritual purification would come by the Holy Ghost, whom the Father would send because of the Son" (McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, p. 431).

Directly in line next in the courtyard was the laver, or basin of water, which was used for washing and cleansing (see Exodus 30:19–20). As was mentioned, when Solomon built a permanent temple, he placed the laver on the backs of twelve oxen (see 1 Kings 7:25), a symbolism carried on in modern temples and clearly related to baptism. Since the baptismal font itself is a "similitude of the grave" (D&C 128:13), where the "old man" of sin is buried (Romans 6:1–6), the symbolism of the laver seems clear. Once the "natural man" (Mosiah 3:19) is sacrificed (put to death through a broken heart, or sincere and deep repentance), he is cleansed by both the waters of baptism and the fires of the Holy Ghost (see 2 Nephi 31:17). Once this cleansing is done, he is prepared to leave the world, or a teletial way of living, and "be born" (John 3:5) into a higher state of spiritual life.

*The holy place (the terrestrial room).* Three articles of furniture were found in the first room of the tabernacle: the table of shewbread, the sacred candlestick, and the altar of incense. Each article had its own significance. The table of shewbread, which had the bread and wine changed each Sabbath day, was a symbol similar to the sacramental emblems of today. They typified the body and blood of the Son of God, of which the spiritual person partakes consistently so that he can have spiritual life in Christ (see John 6:53–56). The candlestick, or lampstand, with its seven branches and its olive oil symbolized the perfect light of the Spirit (see D&C 45:56–57) through which the spiritually reborn person sees all truth (see John 14:16–17; 15:26). In the sacramental covenants there is a strong tie between the emblems of the body and the blood of the Savior and the power of the Spirit, for the Lord promises that as one always remembers Him, He will always have His Spirit to be with Him (see 3 Nephi 18:7, 11).

The third article in the holy place was the altar of incense, a symbol of prayer (see Revelation 5:8), which stood directly in front of the veil. This altar suggests the third dominant aspect of the person living by the principles and ordinances of the gospel, that is, constant seeking of the Lord's power and revelation through prayer. The fact that the incense was consumed on coals of fire would suggest that even our prayers should be directed and influenced by the Holy Ghost (see 3 Nephi 19:24; Romans 8:26).

*The Holy of Holies (the celestial room).* Just as the celestial room in modern temples symbolizes the kingdom where God dwells, so did the holy of holies in the ancient tabernacle. The only article of furniture



in this inner room was the ark of the covenant, which the Lord Himself said was the place where He would meet Moses and commune with the people (see Exodus 25:22). Both on the veil, separating the holy place from the most holy, and on the lid of the ark were cherubim, or angels. This use of angels provides a beautiful representation of the concept taught in latter-day scripture that one passes by the angels on his way to exaltation (see D&C 132:19).

In summary, the tabernacle and its plan and the ordinances thereof illustrate the grand and glorious symbolism of mankind's progress from a state of being alienated from God to one of full communion with Him.

Keep the following diagram in mind as you carefully read Hebrews 9–10 in which the Apostle Paul discusses the spiritual meaning of the tabernacle of ancient Israel.





# A Law of Performances and Ordinances, Part 1: Sacrifices and Offerings

## (14-1) Introduction

*Question.* Wasn't the law of Moses given as a genuine rebuke to Israel and imposed upon them as a punishment for rejection of the higher law?

*Response.* Admittedly, God does chasten His people for disobedience, but the giving of laws is not a punishment. His commandments are, as Moses said, "for our good always" (Deuteronomy 6:24). Every law is meant to lift and inspire, reconcile and perfect. That principle includes the law of Moses. It was a punishment only in the sense that it was less than they could have received. But it was a means for accomplishing God's ends, as are all His commandments. As the Lord told the early Saints of this dispensation, if they obey His gospel they will "be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with commandments not a few" (D&C 59:4).

*Question.* But wasn't the law of Moses at least a great step backward?

*Response.* No. It was a great step forward, not as great as Israel could have taken, but a great step nevertheless. We know from the record that Israel was in poor spiritual condition when they came out of Egypt. They had lost the prophetic office, prophecy, and the spirit of revelation and had become steeped in Egyptian tradition and idol worship. The Lord commanded Israel to give up their abominations and idols when He first came to deliver them from Egypt, but the people would not listen: "They did not every man cast away the abominations . . . [nor] forsake the idols of Egypt" (Ezekiel 20:6–8). Had it not been for His mercy and the covenants made with the early patriarchs, the Lord could have justly vented His anger against Israel and destroyed them all (see Exodus 32:7–14). Instead, He blessed them with a law suited to help them grow spiritually, starting from where they were.

*Question.* Then the turning of the Hebrews to Egyptian gods in the wilderness was not a new experience for them? The golden calf was actually carried there in the hearts of an Israel that was spiritually weak and immature?

*Response.* Yes. It was a far greater challenge to get Egypt out of Israel than it was to get Israel out of Egypt. Consider, too, that Moses had to use signs to convince not only pharaoh but also Israel. And when signs have to be used as proof of authority, that is the mark of an evil and adulterous generation (see

Matthew 12:39). Moses declared, "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you" (Deuteronomy 9:24).

*Question.* Then when you said that the law was not a punishment but a means to an end, you meant that it was a deliberate and carefully designed plan to bring Israel to Jehovah?

*Response.* That, and more. The law not only would bring them to Christ but would also be the means through which a covenant relationship could be developed to increase their spiritual power so that they could enjoy the gifts and manifestations of the Spirit, gain a perfect brightness of hope, and have a love of God and a love for all men. And, if they continued to press forward and endure to the end, they would receive the assurance of eternal life (see 2 Nephi 31:20).

*Question.* I never understood that the law of Moses could do all that. How was it possible?

*Response.* It is easier to see when we consider the relationship of all the aspects of the law to the spiritual progress of the individual. The problem is that we generally think of the law of Moses as only that part dealing with performances and ordinances.

*Question.* What are the other aspects of the law?

*Response.* The basic elements of the law are defined under the keys of authority of the lesser priesthood (see D&C 13; 84:26–27; 107:14, 20). These are as follows.

- **Faith:** Though never referred to directly in these scriptures, this principle is implied since faith is absolutely necessary in all acts to please God and fulfill His purposes (see Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:23). Amulek clearly taught that faith was a prerequisite to the law bringing one to repentance (see Alma 34:15).

- **Repentance:** The sacrificial systems of Israel were expressly designed to help bring about a repentant attitude by teaching the people of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Then, if they exercised faith in Him and repented of their evil works, their sins were remitted, not by the law of Moses but through their faith in the future Messiah, which was demonstrated by their obedience to the law of Moses (see Mosiah 13:28).

- **Baptism by immersion:** Baptism was the most important outward ordinance of the law, being the means by which the individual established a covenant relationship with Jehovah. Unfortunately, any reference to baptism in the Old Testament has

been lost, but from other sources we learn that it was part of the Mosaic law (see 1 Corinthians 10:1–4; 1 Nephi 20:1; D&C 84:26–27).

- The law of carnal commandments, or the law of performances and ordinances (see D&C 84:27; Mosiah 13:30): In our day the word *carnal* has sexual connotations, but the Latin word from which it is derived means “flesh.” Therefore, these commandments deal with actions in mortality. As Abinadi taught, these commandments were designed “to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him” (Mosiah 13:30).

- The ministration of angels: This administration is expressly to prepare men to have faith in Christ so that they may receive the Holy Ghost (see Moroni 7:30–32).

*Question.* Then the Mosaic law really embraced all the basic principles of the gospel?

*Response.* More accurately, the Mosaic law is called the “preparatory gospel” (D&C 84:26). Because Israel lost the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood, they could not have the fulness of the law of Christ. And when the Lord fulfilled the law, the preparatory gospel was brought under the law of Christ and the carnal commandments were done away.

*Question.* Can we see these things in the Old Testament as it is today?

*Response.* Yes, once we know what to look for and how to look. Mormon taught that the converted Lamanites properly understood the law of Moses because they had the “spirit of prophecy” (Alma 25:16; see also v. 15). The spirit of prophecy is the “testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 19:10; see also Alma 6:8). The law of Moses was a “schoolmaster” to bring Israel to Christ (Galatians 3:24); however, it was given in “types, and shadows” (Mosiah 3:15; see also 13:31; 16:14). Only those with the spirit of prophecy can understand these symbolic teaching devices. For, as Amulek said, “Behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice” (Alma 34:14).

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Leviticus 1–10.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON LEVITICUS 1–10

### (14-2) Leviticus 1:1. What Is the Major Importance of the Book of Leviticus?

The book of Leviticus contains direct revelation from God through Moses to Israel. It was the priesthood handbook of that generation. This fact makes the book of great interest, for whenever God speaks to man He reveals Himself. Through the pages of Leviticus one can come to understand Him and His

purpose better. The modern reader may feel the contents of the book are outdated, especially those that deal with blood sacrifice, yet all were designed, as Amulek said, to point to the infinite Atonement of Christ (see Alma 34:14). One scholar noted the following about the various sacrifices and offerings:

“The first point, then, which requires our notice is this:—In each offering there are at least *three distinct objects* presented to us. There is the *offering*, the *priest*, the *offerer*. A definite knowledge of the precise import of each of these is absolutely requisite if we would understand the offerings.

“What, then, is *the offering*? what *the priest*? what *the offerer*? Christ is the offering, Christ is the priest, Christ is the offerer. Such and so manifold are the relations in which Christ has stood for man and to man, that no one type or set of types can adequately represent the fulness of them. Thus we have many distinct classes of types, and further variations in these distinct classes, each of which gives us one particular view of Christ, either in His character, or in His work, or person. But see Him as we may for sinners, He fills more than one relation. This causes the necessity of many emblems. First He comes as offerer, but we cannot see the offerer without the offering, and the offerer is Himself the offering, and He who is both offerer and offering is also the priest. As man under the law, our substitute, Christ, stood for us towards God as offerer. He took ‘the body prepared for Him’ as His offering, that in it and by it He might reconcile us to God. Thus, when sacrifice and offering had wholly failed,—when at man’s hand God would no more accept them,—‘then said He, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O God: yea, Thy law is within my heart.’ Thus His body was His offering: He willingly offered it; and then as priest He took the blood into the holiest. As *offerer*, we see Him *man under the law*, standing our substitute, for us to fulfil all righteousness. As *priest*, we have Him presented as *the mediator*, God’s messenger between Himself and Israel. While as *the offering* He is seen *the innocent victim*, a sweet savour to God, yet bearing the sin and dying for it.

“Thus in the selfsame type *the offerer* sets forth Christ *in His person*, as the One who became man to meet God’s requirements: *the offering* presents Him *in His character and work*, as the victim by which the atonement was ratified; while the *priest* gives us a third picture of Him, *in His official relation*, as the appointed mediator and intercessor. Accordingly, when we have a type in which the *offering* is most prominent, the leading thought will be Christ the victim. On the other hand, when the *offerer* or *priest* predominates, it will respectively be Christ as man or Christ as mediator.” (Jukes, *Law of the Offerings*, pp. 44–45.)

### (14-3) Leviticus 1:2–3. What Made an Animal Acceptable for an Offering to God?

The Hebrew word translated “without blemish” means to be sound or whole. In addition to this requirement, all sacrificial animals had to meet two other requirements. They had to be of the category

that the Lord declared clean (see Leviticus 11), and they also had to be from domesticated herds and flocks (see Leviticus 1:2).

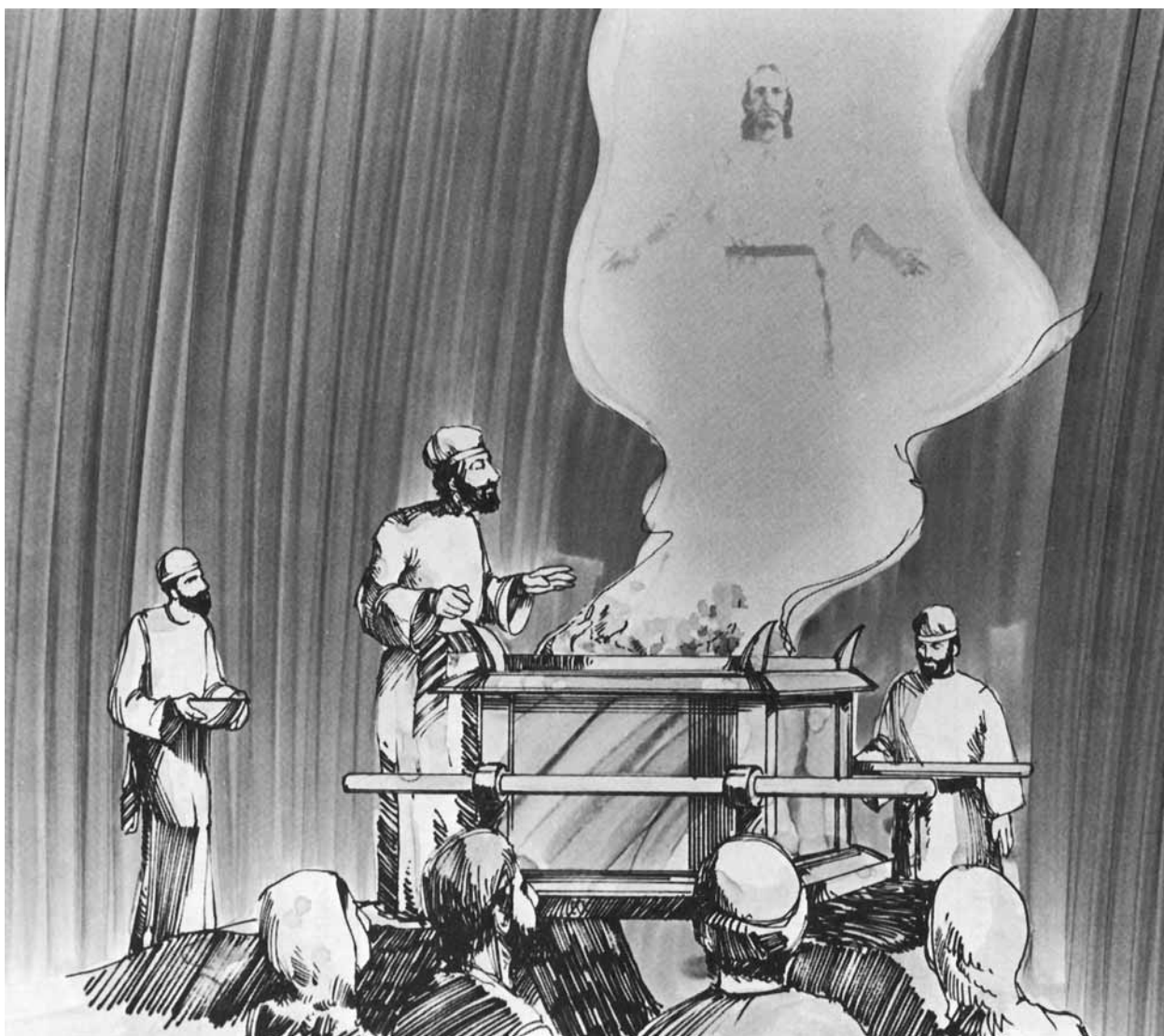
"In the clean animals, which he had obtained by his own training and care, and which constituted his ordinary live-stock, and in the produce obtained through the labour of his hands in the field and vineyard, from which he derived his ordinary support, the Israelite offered . . . the food which he procured in the exercise of his God-appointed calling, as a symbol of the spiritual food which endureth unto everlasting life [see John 6:27; 4:34], and which nourishes both soul and body for imperishable life in fellowship with God. . . . In this way the sacrificial gifts acquire a representative character, and denote the self-surrender of a man, with all his labour and productions, to God." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:2:275–76.)

This offering was to be "voluntary" (Leviticus 1:3). It was not forced, but served as a free expression of

gratitude on the part of the individual. Anything less would violate a basic principle of free will offerings (see Moroni 7:6–10).

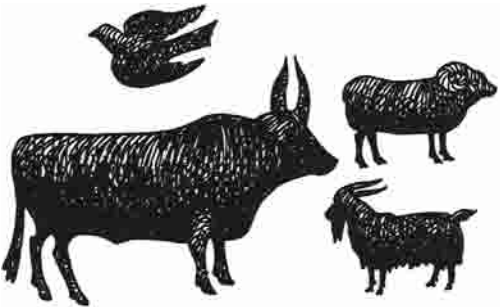
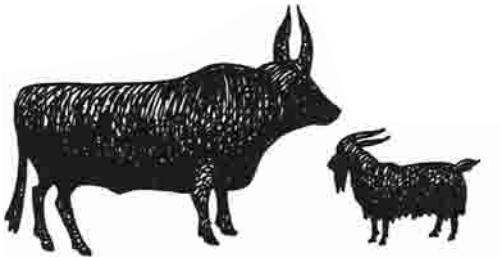
#### (14-4) Leviticus 1:3. Was the Burnt Offering Actually Slain at the Door of the Tabernacle?

To assist Israel in overcoming idolatry, the Lord specified that offerings be sacrificed in one place, "at the door of the tabernacle" (v. 3). This place was specified because it was here (technically, a few yards in front of the door of the tabernacle or temple) that the altar stood on which the sacrifice or a portion of it would be burned. (*Note:* This verse and the following verses describe the burnt offerings. Other offerings had different requirements. For a complete description of all the various offerings, see the accompanying chart, which was adapted from Edward J. Brandt, "Sacrifices and Offerings of the Mosaic Law," *Ensign*, Dec. 1973, pp. 50–51.)



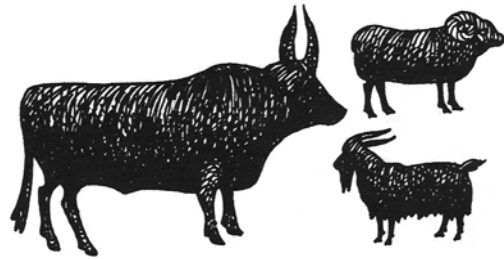
*Sacrifice symbolized atonement for sins.*

# SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS OF THE MOSAIC LAW

NAME OF THE ORDINANCE AND TYPE OF OFFERING	EMBLEMATIC OBJECTS USED FOR THE ORDINANCE	PURPOSE OF THE ORDINANCE	WHEN ADMINISTERED
<p><b>BURNT OFFERING</b> (Lev. 1; 6:9–13)</p> <p>This is another name for the ordinance of sacrifice practiced by the patriarchs from Adam down to Israel.</p>	<p>Male animal without blemish (Exod. 12:5; Lev. 1:3; 22:18–25; Num. 28:3–4; Deut. 15:21; 17:1).</p> <p>Originally the animal was to be a firstborn (Gen. 4:4; Exod. 13:12; Lev. 27:26; Num. 3:41; 18:17; Deut. 12:6; 15:19–21).</p> <p>The animal used varied according to the position and personal possessions of the individual, as well as the occasion of the sacrifice: bull, ram, he-goat, turtledoves, or young pigeons (Lev. 1:5, 10, 14; 5:7; Gen. 15:9).</p>	<p>“This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father” (Moses 5:7; see also Lev. 1:4, 9; 14:20; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2 Ne. 11:4; 25:24–27; Jac. 4:5; Jar. 1; Mosiah 3:15).</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC OFFERINGS</b></p> <p>Regularly appointed times: Daily—morning and evening (Exod. 29:38–42; Num. 28:3–4). Sabbath—double portion given (Num. 28:9–10). New Moon—monthly (Num. 28:11–15).</p> <p>Seasonally appointed times: Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, Feast of the Harvest, Feast of the Tabernacles, New Year, and the Day of Atonement</p>
			
<p><b>PEACE OFFERING</b> (Lev. 3; 7:11–38)</p>	<p>Male or female animal without blemish (Lev. 3:1, 12) and cattle, sheep, or goats, but no fowl or other substitutes (Lev. 22:27). The animal was to be meat for a sacrificial meal. The fat and inward portions were burned upon the altar (Lev. 3:3–5), a specified part was given to the priests (see Heave and Wave Offerings), and the remainder was used for meat in the special dinner (Lev. 7:16).</p>	<p>The threefold purpose of peace offerings is suggested in the following titles or descriptions given.</p> <p><b>THANK OFFERING</b> is given to thank God for all blessings (Lev. 7:12–13, 15, 22:29).</p> <p><b>VOW OFFERING</b> (Lev. 7:16; 22:18, 21, 23; Num. 15:3, 8; 29:39; Deut. 12:6) signifies the taking or renewing of a vow or covenant.</p> <p><b>FREE-WILL OFFERING</b> (Lev. 7:16; 22:18, 21, 23; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Deut. 12:6, 17; 16:10; 23:23) suggests voluntary receiving of covenants with attendant responsibilities and consequences.</p> <p>An individual could seemingly give the offering for any of the above declared purposes separately or together.</p>	<p>These were private offerings or a personal sacrifice for family or individuals (see Private Offerings).</p>
			

**SIN OFFERING**  
(Lev. 4; 5:1-13; 6:25-30)

Male or female animal or fowl without blemish. The offering varied according to the position and circumstances of the offerer: the priest offered a bull (Lev. 4:3; Num. 8:8), the ruler among the people a he-goat (Lev. 4:22-23), the people in general a she-goat (Lev. 4:27-28), the poor two turtledoves or two young pigeons (Lev. 5:7), and those of extreme poverty an offering of fowl or meal (Lev. 5:11; Num. 15:20-21). The offering is not consumed by fire, but is used by the Levitical priesthood as a sacrificial meal. The meat and hide are for their sustenance and use. (Lev. 6:25-30; 7:7-8; 14:13.)



Sin offerings were given for sins committed in ignorance (Lev. 4:2, 22, 27), sins not generally known about by the people (Num. 15:24), sins in violation of oaths and covenants (Lev. 5:1, 4-5), and ceremonial sins of defilement or uncleanness under the law of carnal commandments (Lev. 5:2-3; 12:1-8; 15:28-30). The purpose of sin offerings, after true repentance on the part of the parties involved, was to prepare them to receive forgiveness as a part of the renewal of their covenants. (Lev. 4:26, 35; 5:10; 10:17; Num. 15:24-29.) This same blessing is possible by partaking of the sacrament today. (JST, Matt. 26:24.)

A special sin-offering for all the people was offered on the Day of Atonement (Exod. 30:10; Lev. 16:3, 6, 11, 15-19).

All other sin offerings were private and personal offerings, most often given at the times of the appointed feasts.

**TRESPASS OFFERING**  
(Lev. 5:15-19; 6:1-7; 7:1-10)

Ram without blemish (Lev. 5:15, 18; 6:6; 19:21). A leper was to offer a lamb (Lev. 14:12), and a Nazarite was also to give a lamb (Num. 6:12).



Trespass offerings were given for offenses committed against others: i.e., false testimony (Lev. 6:2-3), forceful and unlawful possession of property (Lev. 6:4), disrespect for sacred things (Lev. 5:16-17), acts of passion (Lev. 19:20-22). The purpose of the trespass offering was to bring forgiveness. (Lev. 6:7.) This was possible after repentance (Lev. 26:40-45) and after fulfilling the law of restitution that required, where possible, that the guilty individual restore completely the wrong and an additional 20 percent (Lev. 5:16; 6:5-17; 27:13, 15, 19, 27, 31; Num. 5:6-10).

All trespass offerings were private and personal offerings, most commonly given at the times of the appointed feasts.

**MEAL OR MEAT OFFERING GIFTS**  
(Exod. 29:40-41; Lev. 2; 6:14-23; 7:9-10; Num. 15:4-24; 28; 29)

An unleavened bread. Few ingredients were permitted with the basic flour: salt (Lev. 2:13), oil (Lev. 2:5), even incense (Lev. 2:15), but no leavening or honey (Lev. 2:11). However, it could be baked or fried in various ways.

This offering completed the sacrificial meal of the burnt and peace offerings. It was then given to the priests for their service and sustenance. (Lev. 7:8-10.)

This offering was always given with the burnt offerings and peace offerings and could even substitute for a sin offering in the stress of poverty. (Num. 15:28-29.)

**HEAVE OFFERING**  
(Exod. 29:26-27; Lev. 7:14, 32-34; Num. 18:19)

The heave offering is the right shoulder and the wave offering the breast of the peace offering animal given in payment by the offerer for the services of the priest.

Whatever the Levites received for their priesthood service—heave or wave offering, meat offering, or tithe (Num. 18)—they were required to offer to the Lord in sacrifice a portion as a memorial offering (Lev. 2:2, 9, 16; 5:12; 6:15; Num. 5:26; 18:26-29).

“Heave” and “wave” refer to gestures of lifting the offerings up and extending them toward the priest who received them on behalf of the Lord.

This is the priest’s portion. (Lev. 7:35-36; Deut. 18:1-8.)

This memorial offering was a type of peace or thank offering to the Lord, as well as a remembrance of God and service to Him.

The Levites also received the hides of all the animals sacrificed for their labors and services. (Lev. 7:8.)

These were given at the times of burnt offerings and peace offerings.

(Adapted from Edward J. Brandt, “The Priesthood Ordinance of Sacrifice,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1973, pp. 50-51.)

#### **(14-5) Leviticus 1:4. Why Did the Offerer Place His Hands on the Offering, and How Did This Offering Make Atonement for Him?**

The laying on of hands was an important part of every sacrifice. "This meant transmission and delegation, and implied representation; so that it really pointed to the substitution of the sacrifice for the sacrificer. Hence it was always accompanied by confession of sin and prayer. It was thus done. The sacrifice was so turned that the person confessing looked towards the west, while he laid his hands between the horns of the sacrifice, and if the sacrifice was brought by more than one, each had to lay on his hands. It is not quite a settled point whether one or both hands were laid on; but all are agreed that it was to be done 'with one's whole force'—as it were, to lay one's whole weight upon the substitute." (Edersheim, *The Temple*, pp. 113–14.)

This practice shows that the sacrifice had a dual symbolism. First and foremost, it represented the only sacrifice that could ultimately bring peace and remission of sins, namely that of Jesus Christ. But the laying on of hands showed a transfer of identity; that is, the offerer put his own identity upon the sacrificial animal. Thus, the slaying of the animal implied symbolically one of two things, depending on the kind of offering. First, it implied that the sinful self, the "natural man," as King Benjamin called it (see Mosiah 3:19), was put to death in order that the spiritual person could be reborn. Paul used this terminology in Romans 6:1–6, and the baptismal font is compared to a grave in Doctrine and Covenants 128:13. Why? Because the "old man" of sin is buried there (Romans 6:6). Second, if it was not a sin offering, the death of the animal would imply a giving up of one's life, that is, a total sacrifice of one's self to God.

The word translated "atonement" comes from a Hebrew word meaning "to cover over or hide." The connotation is not that the sin no longer exists but that the sin has been covered over, or, more scripturally, blotted out before God through His grace or loving kindness (see Alma 7:13). That is to say, the power of sin to separate man from God has been taken away (see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:2:276). Thus, the word *at-one-ment* was used to show that man becomes one with God again.

#### **(14-6) Leviticus 1:5. Why Is There Such Emphasis on Blood?**

Of all the elements of the ordinance of sacrifice, nothing played a more prominent part than the administration of the blood of the offering. The manner of its offering was minutely specified by the Lord. Depending on the offering, the blood was dabbed upon the horns of the altar, sprinkled or splashed upon all four sides of the altar, or dumped out at the base of the altar.

The Lord chose blood to dramatize the consequences of sin and what was involved in the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. Therefore, blood symbolized both life (see Leviticus 17:11) and



*The blood symbolized atonement for sins.*

the giving of one's life. Death is the consequence of sin and so the animal was slain to show what happens when man sins. Also, the animal was a type of Christ. Through the giving of His life for man, by the shedding of His blood, one who is spiritually dead because of sin can find new life. Out of this truth grows a spiritual parallel: "As in Adam, or by nature, all men fall and are subject to spiritual death, so in Christ and his atoning sacrifice all men have power to gain eternal life" (McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, p. 259).

The purpose of the shedding of blood was to bring expiation, or atonement (see Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22). As noted in Reading 14-5, the Hebrew verb which is translated by the English word *atonement* means "to cover." Thus, the smearing, splashing, or daubing of blood "covered" sins and thus brought about atonement. There is a beautiful paradox in the idea that the righteous are those "whose garments are white through the blood of the Lamb" (Ether 13:10; see Alma 5:21). It is the blood of Christ that covers sins and makes us pure so that we can receive at-one-ment with God.

Thus, the blood was a symbol for the whole process by which we become reconciled with God. "From all of this it is apparent that those in Israel who were spiritually enlightened knew and understood that their sacrificial ordinances were in similitude of the coming death of Him whose name they used to worship the Father, and that it was not the blood on their altars that brought remission of sins, but the blood that would be shed in Gethsemane and on Calvary" (McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, p. 258).

#### **(14-7) Leviticus 1:6–9. What Was the Purpose of Dividing the Animal?**

The unique aspect of the burnt offering was the dividing of the animal into various parts and the washing of the inwards and legs of the bullock in water. Yet it is this very thing which gave this sacrifice its own significance apart from the others. One author described the symbolism thus:

“Man’s duty to God is not the giving up of one faculty, but the entire surrender of all. So Christ sums up the First Commandment,—all the mind, all the soul, all the affections. ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all thy heart*, and with *all thy soul*, and with *all thy mind*.’ I cannot doubt that the type refers to this in speaking so particularly of the parts of the Burnt-offering; for ‘the head,’ ‘the fat,’ ‘the legs,’ ‘the inwards,’ are all distinctly enumerated. ‘The head’ is the well-known emblem of *the thoughts*; ‘the legs’ the emblem of *the walk*; and ‘the inwards’ the constant and familiar symbol of *the feelings and affections of the heart*. The meaning of ‘the fat’ may not be quite so obvious, though here also Scripture helps us to the solution. It represents the energy not of one limb or faculty, but *the general health and vigour of the whole*. In Jesus these were all surrendered, and all without spot or blemish. Had there been but one thought in the mind of Jesus which was not perfectly given to God;—had there been but one affection in the heart of Jesus which was not yielded to His Father’s will;—had there been one step in the walk of Jesus which was taken not for God, but for His own pleasure;—then He could not have offered Himself or been accepted as ‘a whole burnt-offering to Jehovah.’ But Jesus gave up all: He reserved nothing. All was burnt, all consumed upon the altar.” (Jukes, *Law of the Offerings*, pp. 63–64.)

The washing of the inwards and legs suggests the need for one to be spiritually pure not only in what he does but also in what he desires (see Ephesians 5:26; Jukes, *Law of the Offerings*, p. 71).

Taken together, these things reveal the quality of the life the Lord lives. His feelings, thoughts, activities, and whole life were placed in submission to God. At the same time, the sacrifice stressed the idea that only when the offerer yields himself to God is his life sweet or satisfying to the Lord.

#### **(14-8) Leviticus 1:10–17. Why Did the Lord Allow for Various Grades of Offerings?**

Acceptable sacrifices were from these groups: a male ox or bull, a male sheep or goat, a turtle dove or pigeon. The economic situation of the individual determined which animal was sacrificed. That each of these animals was totally acceptable to God is indicative of His mercy. With Him it is not the gift that counts but the intent of the giver’s heart.

#### **(14-9) Leviticus 2. What Was the Meat Offering?**

The word translated “meat offering” is a Hebrew word meaning “a gift” (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “meat,” p. 271). Used in a sacrificial sense, the word refers to a gift of grain, flour, or breads. (One meaning of the word *meat* is “food.”) Through this offering the individual acknowledged God as the giver of all things and surrendered what had been designated (that is, the fruit of the field) in supplication for power to fulfill his duty. Wheat, or products made from wheat, with the addition of oil, frankincense, and salt constituted each offering (see vv. 1, 13). In each case the wheat had to be prepared in some way. “Fine flour” (vv. 4, 5, 14) required the

greatest effort in an age when grain was ground mostly by hand. Thus, the offerer’s time, symbolic of his whole life, was invested in the offering.

The bringing together of the oil, frankincense, and grain in this offering is instructive (see v. 1). Oil was used in the scriptures to symbolize the Holy Ghost (see D&C 45:56–57), grain to symbolize the word of God (see Mark 4:14), and frankincense to symbolize prayer (see Revelation 8:3). As man was meant to live physically by eating bread, so too was he meant to live spiritually in Christ by partaking of the word and Spirit of the Lord through prayer.

Only a portion of the offering was burned (see Leviticus 2:2, 9). This requirement was true of all the offerings except the sin offering and burnt offering. The remaining portion became the property of the priests, and they were allowed to share it with members of their families (see vv. 3, 10). In this way the priesthood was supported by the Lord during their time of service.

Those portions of the sacrifice that were burned were designated as “holy,” whereas those portions to be eaten were designated as “most holy” (vv. 3, 10). The distinction appears to be a safeguard. Little could happen to the portion of the sacrifice that was burned, but the portion that was left, if not carefully guarded, could be desecrated.

The oblation of first fruits was not a sacrifice but rather a gift of thanks and praise to the Lord for the harvest (see v. 12). If the offerer wanted to use a portion of this oblation as a meat offering, the Lord designated how it was to be done (see vv. 14–16).

#### **(14-10) Leviticus 2:11, 13. Why Were Leaven and Honey Prohibited and Salt Required?**

The prohibition against leaven also extended to honey. The ability of these elements to produce fermentation and spoilage made them excellent symbols of corruption, something which had no place in the refining and purifying effects of the law which the sacrifices symbolized (see Reading 10-7).

“Whilst leaven and honey were forbidden to be used with any kind of [meat] because of their producing fermentation and corruption, salt on the other hand was not to be omitted from any sacrificial offering. ‘Thou shalt not let the salt of the covenant of thy God cease from thy meat-offering,’ i.e. thou shalt never offer a meat-offering without salt. The meaning which the salt, with its power to strengthen food and preserve it from putrefaction and corruption, imparted to the sacrifice, was the unbending truthfulness of that self-surrender to the Lord embodied in the sacrifice, by which all impurity and hypocrisy were repelled. The salt of the sacrifice is called the salt of the covenant, because in common life salt was the symbol of the covenant; treaties being concluded and rendered firm and inviolable, according to a well-known custom of the ancient Greeks . . . which is still retained among the Arabs, by the parties to an alliance eating bread and salt together, as a sign of the treaty which they had made. As a covenant of this kind was called a ‘covenant of salt,’ equivalent to an indissoluble covenant [Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5], so here the salt

added to the sacrifice is designated as salt of the covenant of God, because of its imparting strength and purity to the sacrifice, by which Israel was strengthened and fortified in covenant fellowship with Jehovah." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:2:295.)

### (14-11) Leviticus 3. The Peace Offering

The name of this sacrifice in Hebrew is *shelamim*, a plural form of *shalom*, or "peace."

"The plural denotes the entire round of blessings and powers, by which the salvation or integrity of man in his relation to God is established and secured. The object of the *shelamim* was invariably salvation: sometimes they were offered as an embodiment of thanksgiving for salvation already received, sometimes as a prayer for the salvation desired; so that they embraced both supplicatory offerings and thank-offerings, and were offered even in times of misfortune, or on the day on which supplication was offered for the help of God." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:2:299.)

Female animals were allowed to be used as peace offerings (see vv. 1, 6), but they still had to be without blemish. No birds could be used.

Only the fat and kidneys of this offering were burned. This action fulfilled the purpose of the sacrifice since the fat (as noted in Reading 14-7) was indicative of the well-being of the whole animal. It came to represent the consecration of the whole life of the individual to God.

A species of sheep common in the Near East has a very fat tail. This fact seems to explain the Lord's instructions about the "rump" (v. 9) and implies that the whole tail was to be offered up (see Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. "rump," p. 363).

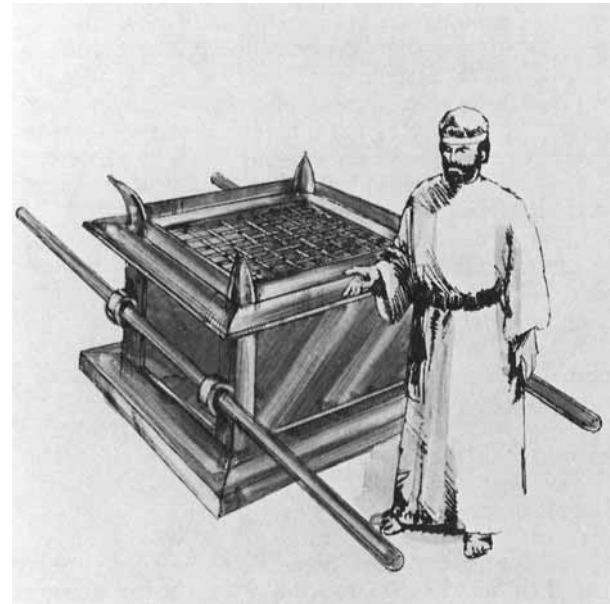
### (14-12) Leviticus 4:2. What Does It Mean to "Sin through Ignorance"?

The Hebrew word *chata't*, used for this sacrifice, comes from a root meaning "to miss, not to hit the mark" or "to stumble and fall" (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. "sin," p. 395). The word interpreted "ignorance" means "to err" (s.v. "ignorance," p. 225). Thus, the sins which were expiated by this offering were those committed by mistake, error, or oversight; that is, sins committed unintentionally. In other words, this offering covered those sins which came from weakness of the flesh as opposed to those committed deliberately while in a state of rebellion. This sacrifice illustrates the fact that sin, even when not deliberately committed, places one under the demands of justice. The prophet-king Benjamin explained, "For behold, and also [Christ's] blood atoneth for the sins of those . . . who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned" (Mosiah 3:11).

For this offering, the offerer was allowed to bring many different kinds of offerings (see Leviticus 4:3, 13-14, 22-23, 27-28; 5:6-7, 11-12). From your understanding of the law of Moses, why do you think the Lord allowed so many acceptable offerings to expiate sins of ignorance?

### (14-13) Leviticus 4:5-7. Why Was the Blood Carried into the Tabernacle and Sprinkled before the Veil and Also Placed upon the Horns of the Altar?

The blood of all offerings was the direct symbol of expiation or atonement (see Reading 14-6). The number seven was a symbol of perfection (the number coming from the Hebrew root meaning "whole" or "complete", and also, probably, from the idea of the Creation being completed in seven days).



The horns of the altar

Thus seven became a symbol of the covenant. (See, for example, Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "numbers," p. 898.) Through sin, Israel stood in danger of losing their covenant relationship with Jehovah. Indeed, they were sinners and those sins were ever before the Lord. Though Israel might forget them, God could not. Nevertheless, just as unforgettable was the fact that Christ had atoned for those sins which resulted, not from rebellion, but from weaknesses of the flesh. The blood of the sin offering (symbolic of the Atonement of the Lord), when taken within the veil by the high priest, remained there where it was ever present before the eye of God (see Jukes, *Law of the Offerings*, pp. 153-54).

The horns on the altar of sacrifice and the altar of incense were a symbol of power (perhaps because many animals with horns have greater power; see Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "horn," 2:827; see also Psalm 75:4, 10; Jeremiah 48:25; Habakkuk 3:4 for examples of the use of horns as symbols of power). Thus, the horns on the altars suggested symbolically that in these two altars there was power to save. (In Luke 1:69 Christ is called the "horn of salvation.") To put the blood of the sin offering on the horns of the altar of incense signified that the atoning blood had power to make Israel's prayers to God more effectual.

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**(14-14) Leviticus 4:12. What Is the Significance of Burning the Sin Offering outside the Camp?**

The offering of the fat and inwards upon the altar demonstrated that the offering itself was acceptable to God. Because this sacrifice represented the effects of sin, however, the offering itself could not come upon the altar. It may be puzzling at first that Christ could be typified as a sin offering. Again, Jukes offered valuable insight into how the sin offering differed from the sweet savor offering (the burnt offering, meat offering, and peace offering).

"Hitherto we have met no thought of Sin in the offerings. The Burnt-offering, the Meat-offering, and the Peace-offering, much as they differed, were yet alike in this, that in each of them the offering was the presentation of something which was sweet to Jehovah, an oblation to satisfy His holy requirements, and in the acceptance of which He found grateful satisfaction. But here, in the Sin and Trespass-offerings, we read of Sin in connexion with the offering. Here is confessed sin, judged sin, sin requiring sacrifice and blood-shedding; yet sin atoned for, blotted out, and pardoned. . . .

". . . The Sin-offering shews that sin has been judged, and that therefore the sense of sin, if we believe, need not shake our sense of safety. Sin is indeed here pre-eminently shewn to be exceeding sinful, exceeding hateful, exceeding evil before God: yet it is also shewn to have been perfectly met by sacrifice, perfectly borne, perfectly judged, perfectly atoned for. . . .

". . . The sweet-savour offerings are, as we know, Christ in perfectness offering Himself for us to God *without sin*: the others, on the contrary, as we shall see, represent Him as offering Himself as our representative for *sin*." (Jukes, *Law of the Offerings*, pp. 137–39.)

The atoning sacrifice which began in Gethsemane and ended on Golgotha the next day could be thought of as an offering for sin, for that was its purpose. Elder James E. Talmage wrote:

"Christ's agony in the garden is unfathomable by the finite mind, both as to intensity and cause. . . . He struggled and groaned under a burden such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible. It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused Him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from every pore; but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing. . . .

"In some manner, actual and terribly real though to man incomprehensible, the Savior took upon Himself the burden of the sins of mankind from Adam to the end of the world." (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 613.)

In other words, to pay the demands of justice, Christ stood before the law as though He were guilty of all sins, even though He was guilty of none. He became a sin offering for all mankind. This sacrifice involved more than the suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. The completion of the sacrifice took

place on the cross outside the city walls. Thus, Paul saw in Christ's sacrifice a fulfillment of the typology of the sin offering being burned outside the camp:

"For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." (Hebrews 13:11–13.)

**(14-15) Leviticus 4:25, 30, 35**

The blood of the sin offering for the ruler and common people was not sprinkled upon the sides of the brazen altar but, rather, dabbed upon its horns. The horns symbolized the might and power of Jehovah (see Reading 14-13). Placing the expiating blood upon them suggested that forgiveness could come only through the power of God.

**(14-16) Leviticus 5:1–13**

These verses are a continuation of the requirements for a sin offering. The sins specified here as needing expiation are those of omission (failure to report a crime one has witnessed), oversight (unconscious defilement), and rashness (thoughtless oath making).

Though referred to as trespass offerings (see v. 6), this sacrifice should not be confused with the trespass offering proper discussed in Leviticus 5:14–19. The trespass offering here is to atone for those acts which came under the sin offering (ignorance, minor offenses, and ceremonial uncleanness).

**(14-17) Leviticus 5:14–19; 6:1–7. What Is the Difference between a Sin Offering and a Trespass Offering?**

The Book of Mormon prophets taught that those who have not been "born of the Spirit" or "changed from their carnal and fallen state" (Mosiah 27:24–25) are in "rebellion against God" and indeed are "an enemy to God" (Mosiah 16:5; see also 3:19). This fallen or sinful nature, termed the "natural man" (Mosiah 3:19) is a serious state. This "natural man" must be considered in an attempt to distinguish between the sin offering and the trespass offering.

"With our shortsightedness, our inability to see beyond the surface, we naturally look at *what man does* rather than at *what he is*; and while we are willing to allow that *he does evil*, we perhaps scarcely think that *he is evil*. But God judges *what we are* as well as *what we do*; *our sin*, the sin in us, as much as *our trespasses*. In His sight sin in us, *our evil nature*, is as clearly seen as our trespasses, which are but *the fruit* of that nature. . . .

"Now the distinction between the Sin and Trespass-offerings is just this:—the one is for sin in our nature [i.e., the "natural man"] the other for the fruits of it. And a careful examination of the particulars of the offerings is all that is needed to make this manifest. Thus in the Sin-offering *no particular act* of sin is



*The blood shed in Gethsemane and on the cross atoned for the sins of the world.*

mentioned, but a *certain person* is seen standing confessedly as a sinner: in the Trespass-offering *certain acts* are enumerated, and *the person* never appears. In the Sin-offering I see a person who needs atonement, offering an oblation *for himself* as a sinner: in the Trespass-offering I see certain acts which need atonement, and the offering offered *for these particular offences*." (Jukes, *Law of the Offerings*, pp. 148–49.)

**(14-18) Leviticus 5:16. Why Was a “Fifth Part” Added to the Trespass Offering?**

“In the case of sin—that is, our sinful nature, where no actual robbery or wrong had been committed against any one—justice would be fully satisfied by the death and suffering of the sinner. But the mere suffering and death of the sinner would not make satisfaction for the wrong of trespass. For the victim merely to die for trespass, would leave the injured party a loser still. The trespasser indeed might be punished, but the wrong and injury would still remain. The trespasser’s death would not repair

the trespass, nor restore those rights which another had been robbed of. Yet, till this was done, atonement or satisfaction could scarcely be considered perfect. Accordingly, to make satisfaction in the Trespass-offering, there is not only judgment on the victim, but restitution also: the right of which another had been defrauded is satisfied; the wrong fully repaid.” (Jukes, *Law of the Offerings*, p. 179.)

**(14-19) Leviticus 6:13. Why Was the Fire on the Great Altar Never Allowed to Go Out?**

The first fire on the first altar made under Moses’ direction was kindled by direct action of Jehovah (see Leviticus 9:23–24). It was the duty of the priest to keep this fire burning, symbolizing the continuation of the covenant which made the ordinance of sacrifice everlastingly valid. Also, as explained in Reading D-5, the fire symbolized the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, which is never extinguished.

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**(14-20) Leviticus 7:11–27. Why Did the Offerer Partake of the Peace Offering?**

Once the fat, kidneys, breast, and upper part of the back leg were removed, the rest of the animal was returned to the offerer. Upon returning home, he used it in preparing a feast to which his family, friends, and the poor were invited. Since the sacrifice served as a major part of this feast, birds were not acceptable because they provided too little meat. This feast became a holy covenant meal participated in with joy and thanksgiving because it represented fellowship with the Lord. The earthly food symbolized the spiritual power through which the Lord satisfied and refreshed His Saints and led them to victory over all their enemies.

All participants shared in this offering. The Lord specified His portion, that which was given to the priest, and that shared by the family. Therefore, all enjoyed the spirit of the fellowship meal just as all partake of the work of Christ in bringing about salvation to the faithful and victory over death and hell.

To knowingly partake of the peace offering while in a condition of uncleanness was grounds for excommunication (see v. 21). One cannot be in a state of sin and be at peace with God at the same time.

**(14-21) Leviticus 7:28–34. What Is the Heave Offering and the Wave Offering?**

The Lord declared that two portions of the animal would be the priest's. The first was the heave offering, which was the upper portion of the back leg. The term *heave* means, in Hebrew, "to lift off or remove." This portion was given by the offerer to the priest in payment for his assistance. The "wave breast" (v. 34) was the brisket or lower chest. This choice piece of meat, along with the fat and kidneys, was the Lord's. The brisket was presented to the Lord through the act of waving. To do this the priest placed the offering in the hands of the offerer and then placed his own hands beneath it. They then moved the brisket in a horizontal motion toward the altar (symbolically transferring to the Lord) and then back again, representing God's acceptance of the offering and its transference to his servant the priest. (See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:2:330.)

**(14-22) Leviticus 8–9**

These chapters record the actual setting apart of Aaron and his sons and the sanctification of the tabernacle that were commanded in Exodus 28–29. For the significance of blood on the ear, thumb, and toe, see Reading 13-16.

**(14-23) Leviticus 10:1–7. What Was the Strange Fire Offered by Aaron's Sons?**

The Hebrew word translated "strange" means "to be alien . . . as opposed to that which is holy and legitimate" (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. "strange," p. 422). Thus, the idea is not that the fire was strange or unusual, but that these two sons

of Aaron engaged in an unauthorized form of worship. Whether they took fire (actually hot coals) from another source than the great altar which God Himself had kindled (see Leviticus 9:24), or whether they used an incense not prepared as specified (see Exodus 30:34–37) is not clear from the account. But after revealing the proper preparation of the incense, the Lord warned, "Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people" (Exodus 30:38). Aaron's other sons were forbidden to officially mourn the death of their brothers, for this action would imply that the Lord had been unjust in the punishment (see Leviticus 10:6).

**(14-24) Leviticus 10:16–19. Why Was Moses Angry with Aaron and His Sons?**

Part of the sin offering was specified for the use of the priest who administered the offering, thus "bearing the iniquity of the congregation" (v. 17); however, Eleazar and Ithamar had burned all of it rather than eating their portion. This was the second time the sons of Aaron had not followed the law. Moses rebuked them, but Aaron withstood the rebuke.

"The excuse which Aaron makes for not feasting on the sin-offering according to the law is at once appropriate and dignified; as if he had said: 'God certainly has commanded me to eat of the sin-offering; but when such things as these have happened unto me, could it be good in the sight of the Lord? Does he not expect that I should feel as a *father* under such afflicting circumstances?' With this spirited answer Moses was satisfied; and God, who knew his situation, took no notice of the *irregularity* which had taken place in the solemn service. To human nature God has given the privilege to weep in times of affliction and distress. In his infinite kindness he has ordained that *tears*, which are only external evidences of our grief, shall be the *outlets* to our sorrows, and tend to exhaust the cause from which they flow." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:539.)

## POINTS TO PONDER

**(14-25)**

*Question.* Did you not say that the law of Moses would be a great step forward? Did you mean only for ancient Israel or for us today as well?

*Response.* Consider for a moment the effect on the world today if people were willing to really live the principles taught in the Mosaic law. Even some members of the Church do not live up to the standards of that law, let alone the higher law we have been given.

*Question.* But we have the fulness of the gospel and that does away with the law of Moses for us, doesn't it?

*Response.* Of course, but let's look at it another way. The law of performances and ordinances, admittedly, is no longer required. And the perfection we seek was not possible under the lesser priesthood (see Hebrews 7:11). But the principles which

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undergirded and overarched that law are just as vital and indispensable today as they were then. These principles, which were part of the preparatory gospel, were also incorporated into the higher law by which perfection will come. But I was not thinking of just that when I said we are not living up to the standards of the law. I'm also including the social and moral aspects of the law under Moses.

*Question.* What do you mean?

*Response.* Perhaps the best way for me to answer would be by reversing the procedure. Let me share some concepts that bring the principles of the law into your own life. These ideas will point out not only what living the law of Moses could have generated in the heart of a faithful Israelite anciently but also what living the principle behind the law can generate in the heart of a modern Israelite.

- Concept 1: The law says to serve (see Leviticus 19:13–18, 32–37). What is the nature of your service? Is it out of duty—sometimes wearisome or fitful? Or have you felt the kind of power and knowledge that whole-souled service was designed to bring? Have you received “grace for grace” and “continued from grace to grace” so that “you may come unto the Father in [Christ’s] name, and in due time receive of his fulness”? (D&C 93:12–13, 19). Indeed, can the Lord commend in you what He did in Nephi, son of Helaman, “unwearyingness”? (Helaman 10:4).

- Concept 2: The law suggests prayer (see Deuteronomy 26:13–15). What is the nature of your prayer life? Can you pray as the Nephites did, “filled with desire” and with the Spirit such that “it was given unto them what they should pray”? (3 Nephi 19:24). Do you ever feel, in the course of your prayers, the overwhelming influence of the Spirit quietly assuring you that your prayers are heard?

- Concept 3: The law implies forgiveness (see Leviticus 19:17–18). Do you ever find yourself unwilling to forgive, or doing so grudgingly? Or are you anxious to forgive, feeling as did the Prophet Joseph Smith that “the nearer we get to our heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls; we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, and cast their sins behind our backs”? (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 241).

- Concept 4: The law says to worship God (see Deuteronomy 6:3–11). Do you seek the Lord “to establish his righteousness,” or do you walk in your own way, after the image of your own God, “whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol”? (D&C 1:16). Can you feel, as the Prophet Joseph expressed, that “we can only live by worshiping our God”? (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 241). Or as Elder B. H. Roberts said, because God is all-wise, all-loving, and completely unselfish, “other Intelligences worship him, submit their judgments and their will to his judgment and his will. . . . This submission of mind to [God] is worship.” (In Smith, *Teachings*, p. 353, fn. 8.)

- Concept 5: The law says to love (see Leviticus 19:18). Have you felt the vital force in you that Joseph Smith said is “without prejudice,” which “gives scope to the mind,” and “enables us to conduct ourselves with greater liberality toward all”? This principle, he stressed, was “nearer to the mind of God, because it is like God” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 147). Indeed, John the Beloved said, “God is love” (1 John 4:16). Have you felt the fulfillment of his promise that “if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us,” that “he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him”? (1 John 4:12, 16). Can you “have boldness in the day of judgment” because of the perfection of that love so that “as he is, so are we in this world”? (v. 17).

*Question.* I see. Then the principles incorporated within the law really are a step forward and are of value to me today?

*Response.* Yes. Whatever God gives His children is uplifting and edifying, though in some cases, because of their own unworthiness, He cannot give them all He would like. Never view the law of Moses as some primitive, lesser law. It is the handiwork of God and, like all His works, bears the mark of perfection. Let us rather be like the psalmist who cried, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. . . . Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. . . . Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart” (Psalm 119:97, 105, 111).





# A Law of Performances and Ordinances, Part 2: The Clean and the Unclean

## (15-1) Introduction

The prophet Abinadi characterized the law of Moses as being “a very strict law; . . . yea, a law of performances and of ordinances . . . to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him” (Mosiah 13:29–30). But then he immediately added, “But behold, I say unto you, that all these things were types of things to come” (Mosiah 13:31).

By now you have studied enough of the law of Moses to understand what Abinadi meant. The law had two primary functions: to teach the people obedience so that they could progress spiritually, and to point their minds toward the ultimate source of salvation in Jesus Christ. We have seen both these functions in the commandments of the law, in the plan of the tabernacle and its furnishings, and in the sacrifices and offerings. Now we turn to the laws regarding clean and unclean things. As with the other laws, you must try to look beyond the outward commandments and rituals for what they were meant to teach about spiritual realities.

Take, for example, the laws of clean and unclean animals. There were practical reasons for these laws related to health and sanitation. The flesh of swine is highly susceptible to trichinosis, a malady easily transmitted to man. Shellfish can develop a deadly poison if they are not killed and handled properly, and so on. But the Hebrew word for *clean* used in the dietary law means more than just physically clean. It carries the connotation of being “clean from all pollution or defilement . . . and implying that purity which religion requires, and is necessary for communion with God” (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “clean, cleanse, clear,” p. 78). As one Orthodox Jewish author noted, *kosher* (the Hebrew word for what fits or meets the demands of the law) means far more than just cleanliness.

“A hog could be raised in an incubator on antibiotics, bathed daily, slaughtered in a hospital operating room, and its carcass sterilized by ultra-violet rays, without rendering kosher the pork chops that it yields. ‘Unclean’ in Leviticus is a ceremonial word. That is why the Torah says of camels and rabbits, ‘They are unclean *for you*,’ limiting the definition and the discipline to Israel. Chickens and goats, which we can eat, are scarcely cleaner by nature than eagles and lions, but the latter are in the class of the unclean.” (Wouk, *This Is My God*, pp. 100–101.)

If the dietary code is seen both symbolically and as part of a system of laws that covered all the

customary acts of life, it becomes apparent how it served. God was using the diet as a teaching tool. People may forget or neglect prayer, play, work, or worship, but they seldom forget a meal. By voluntarily abstaining from certain foods or by cooking them in a special way, one made a daily, personal commitment to act in one’s faith. At every meal a formal choice was made, generating quiet self-discipline. Strength comes from living such a law, vision from understanding it. Further, the law served to separate the Hebrews from their Canaanite neighbors. Each time they got hungry they were forcibly reminded of personal identity and community bond. Indeed, they belonged to a people set apart. The law therefore acted as a social instrument for keeping the Hebrew nation intact, a psychological instrument for preserving the identity of the individual, and a religious instrument for keeping the people in remembrance of Jehovah.

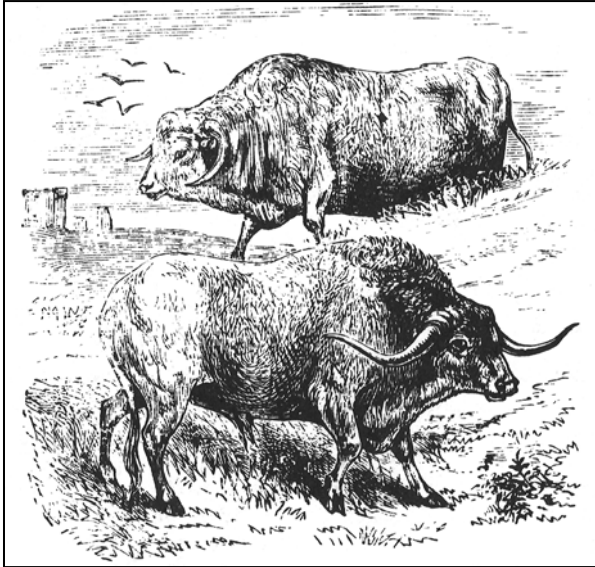
### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Leviticus 11–18.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON LEVITICUS 11–18

### (15-2) Leviticus 11. Clean and Unclean Food

Two conditions determined the cleanliness of animals. They had to be cloven-footed (that is, the hooves had to be separated into two parts), and they had to chew their cud (see v. 3). Seafood was limited to those that had scales and fins. This requirement eliminated all shellfish, such as lobster and shrimp, and fish such as sharks and dolphins, as well as other sea creatures such as the eel (see vv. 9–12). Birds forbidden were generally birds of prey that lived on carrion, or, as in the case of the stork and heron, those that may have eaten other unclean creatures (see vv. 13–20). The ossifrage is thought to be a species of vulture, as is the gier eagle. Most flying insects were also forbidden. The phrase “going upon all four”



*Cattle used in sacrifices*

(see v. 21) indicates insects that have four short legs and two long legs used for hopping. Of these, four are suitable for food. All are members of the locust family.

#### **(15-3) Leviticus 11:24, 31. Why Did Contact with a Dead Body Cause One to Be Unclean?**

The law specified that contact with the carcass of an unclean animal (or a clean animal that had died in some way other than by proper slaughter) caused one to be unclean. "The human corpse was the most defiling according to Old Testament regulations. In all probability it epitomized for the people of God the full gravity and ultimate consequences of sin." (Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "clean and unclean," p. 239.) That the unclean person was barred from temple service and fellowship with other Israelites seems to bear out this assumption. The symbolism suggests that contact with sin leaves one tainted, and from this taint there had to be a period of cleansing. This period was symbolized by the restrictions placed on the individual "until the even" (v. 24), at which time the new Israelite day began.

#### **(15-4) Leviticus 12–15. Further Laws for Dealing with Uncleaness**

This section of the Levitical law deals with aspects of what could be called uncleaness in the flesh due to infections or secretions of the body, including the expulsion of fluids associated with birth (see 12:1–8), sores or skin infections found with such maladies as leprosy and boils (see 13), running infections (see 15:1–15), the "seed of copulation" (15:16–18), and menstrual fluids (see 15:19–33).

This part of the law raises some questions in the minds of many readers. The most obvious question is, Why should natural bodily functions render one unclean? First, *unclean* in the Mosaic sense did not suggest something disgusting or filthy, nor did it

imply that the body or the natural functions of the body, such as childbirth or sexual relations, were inherently evil. "The term *unclean* in this and the following cases, is generally understood in a mere legal sense, the rendering a person *unfit for sacred ordinances*" (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:559). This point is very important to understanding the Lord's revelations on these matters. The ordinances of the Mosaic law were all designed to symbolize spiritual truths. The more nearly one approached perfection in the performance of the law, the more closely one approached the true symbolic meaning of the ordinance. The physical body and its natural functions remind one that he is of the earth, of the physical. Therefore, to say that a man or woman was unclean (that is, not to perform sacred ordinances) at certain times was to suggest to the mind that the natural man must be put aside in order to approach God.

There was a similar teaching in the requirements for the high priest (see Reading 16-9). Any person with a physical handicap was barred from being the high priest (see Leviticus 21:17–21). God does not view such persons as spiritually inferior. Rather, this requirement was a teaching device. The high priest was a type of Christ, the Great High Priest (see Hebrews 4:14), and the requirement for physical wholeness was to typify Christ's perfection. The laws of natural uncleaness should be viewed in a similar light.

There were certain practical or sanitary aspects of these laws as well. The strict rules about contact with an infected person or objects with which he had come in contact have modern hygienic parallels. One commentator summed up both aspects in this way:

"In Canaan, prostitution and fertility rites were all mixed up with worship. In Israel, by sharp contrast, anything suggesting the sexual or sensual is strictly banned from the worship of God. . . . The intention is not to write off this side of life as 'dirty', as is plain elsewhere in Scripture. The purpose is to ensure its separation from the worship of God. The rule of strict cleanliness in all sexual matters was also a positive safeguard to health." (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 176.)

#### **(15-5) Leviticus 12:5–6. Why Was the Period of Uncleaness Longer When a Female Child Was Born?**

Many things in the Mosaic law are puzzling at first but become clear and understandable upon further investigation. This question, however, is one that seems to have no key at present for its correct interpretation. An obvious implication, quickly taken up by some modern critics, is that this rule is a reflection of the inferior status of women anciently, a status which they regard as supported by the law. This conclusion is fallacious for two reasons. First, elsewhere in the law and the Old Testament, there is evidence that women had high status and their rights were protected. In fact, "women appear to have enjoyed considerably more freedom among the

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Jews than is now allowed them in western Asia" (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "woman," 3:1733; this reference includes numerous scriptural references in support of this statement; see also Hastings, ed., *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "woman," pp. 976–77). Second, these laws were not the product of men's attitudes but were direct revelation from the Lord. God does not view women as inferior in any way, although the roles of men and women are different. Speculation on why the Lord revealed different requirements for ceremonial purifying after the birth of male and female children is pointless until further revelation is received on the matter.

#### (15-6) Leviticus 13. What Is Meant by Leprosy?

The Hebrew root *tzarah*, which is translated into the English words *leper* and *leprosy*, means "to smite heavily, to strike," because a leprous person was thought to have been "smitten, scourged of God" (see Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. "leper," pp. 248–49). Although it included modern leprosy (Hansen's disease), leprosy also seems to have designated a wide range of diseases and even such physical decay as mildew or dry rot. The common characteristic seems to be decay and putrefaction, and thus leprosy became a type or a symbol of sin or the sinful man.

Classical leprosy was a dreaded disease that required exile from society and isolation (see Leviticus 13:45).

"When a man has the mark of leprosy, he must go about like a mourner, i.e., he must tear his clothes, leave his hair unkempt, and cover his mustache; and he must be segregated from ordinary human society.

"The disease popularly known as 'leprosy' may have two forms known respectively as 'tubercular' and 'anesthetic.' The tubercular form manifests itself first by reddish patches in which dark tubercles are later found; as the disease develops there occurs a swelling and distortion of the face and limbs. Anesthetic leprosy affects primarily the nerve trunks, particularly of the extremities. They become numb and ultimately lose their vitality. We may ask whether the various forms of leprosy are covered and intended in this chapter of Leviticus. A certain answer cannot be offered. A modern doctor would not diagnose leprosy on the symptoms given here. It seems probable that many skin diseases, some of them of relatively little importance, were called leprosy. It may be argued, on the other side, that we are here given only the very earliest symptoms for which the priest must be on the alert, and further, that since leprosy (in our sense) was almost certainly known in Palestine in biblical times and was pre-eminently a disease that would render a man 'unclean,' it must have been meant here, though other skin diseases are also included under the same name.

"Certainly the priests were using sound scientific measures in isolating adults who developed chronic skin diseases that might be transmitted to others. Isolation was the very best method for prevention of the spread of contagion. Furthermore, it is clear that

if the individual recovered later—and thus had had some mild recoverable skin disease—then he could be declared cured, and in due time could return to his family and friends." (Buttrick, *Interpreter's Bible*, 2:66–67.)

#### (15-7) Leviticus 14. The Cleansing of a Leper

"In Leviticus 14 we have a detailed description of the ritual that was to take place when a person's leprosy had been healed. Because of the nature of the ritual, many people have seen it as a primitive, superstitious, and abhorrent rite which supports the notion that the Israelites were primitive and superstitious pagans. However, when one applies the guidelines for interpreting symbols as given above, he finds that the ritual is a beautiful representation of gospel truths. But one must first understand the true meaning of the various symbolisms used in the rite. These include the following:

"1. *The leper.* Leprosy in its various forms was a disease that involved decay and putrefaction of the living body; also, because of its loathsomeness, it required the person to be ostracized and cut off from any fellowship with the rest of the house of Israel. Because of these characteristics, leprosy was seen as an appropriate type or symbol of what happens to a man spiritually when he sins. Sin introduces decay and corruption into the spiritual realm similar to what leprosy does in the physical realm. Also, a sinful person was cut off from a fellowship with spiritual Israel and could not be a part of the Lord's true covenant people. So the leper himself provided a type or similitude of what King Benjamin called the 'natural man.' (See Mosiah 3:19.)

"2. *The priest.* The priest served as the official representative of the Lord, and he was authorized to cleanse the leper and bring him back into full fellowship.

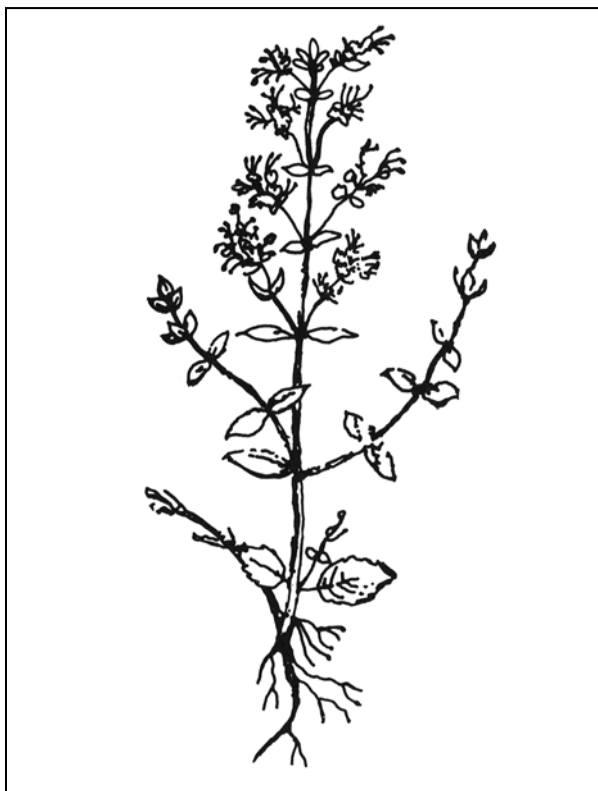
"3. *The birds.* As the only living objects used in the ritual, the birds symbolized the candidate. Because of the two truths to be taught, two birds were required. The first bird was killed by the shedding of its blood, signifying that the leper (the natural man) had to give up his life. The second bird, after being bound together with other symbols, was released. This signified that the man had been freed from the bondage of sin.

"4. *The cedar wood.* The wood from cedar trees is still used today because of its ability to preserve surrounding objects from decay and corruption. So the cedar tree symbolized preservation from decay.

"5. *The scarlet wool.* The word *scarlet* (Leviticus 14:4) really meant a piece of wool dyed a bright red. Red reminds us of blood, which is the symbol of life and also of atonement. (See Leviticus 17:11.)

"6. *The hyssop.* Though we are not sure exactly why, we do know that in the Old Testament times the herb hyssop carried with it the symbolism of purification. (See Exodus 12:22; Psalm 51:7; Hebrews 9:19.)

"7. *The basin of water.* Notice that the blood of the bird was mixed with the water. In Moses 6:59 we



Hyssop

learn that blood and water are the symbols of birth, both physical and spiritual. Also, we know that the place of spiritual rebirth, the baptismal font, is a symbol of the place where the natural man is put to death. (See Romans 6:1–6; D&C 128:12–13.) Over the basin of water the first bird was killed, symbolizing the death of the natural man and the eventual rebirth of the spiritually innocent person.

“8. *The washing of the leper.* This clearly was a symbol of cleansing.

“9. *The shaving of the hair.* One cannot help but note that the shaving of the hair of the body (even to include the eyebrows) would bring a person into a state of appearance very much like that of a newborn infant, who is typically virtually without hair. Thus, after going through the process of rebirth symbolically, the candidate graphically demonstrated on his own person that he was newborn spiritually.

“10. *The sacrifice of the lamb.* The typology is clear, since the lamb offered had to be the firstborn male without spot or blemish. It symbolized the offering of the Son of God.

“11. *The smearing of the blood on the parts of the body.* In Hebrew the word which is usually translated ‘atonement’ literally means ‘to cover.’ Thus, when the priest touched something with the blood, his action suggested the sanctification of or atonement made for that thing. In this case we find the blood of the lamb sanctifying the organ of hearing or obedience (the ear), the organ of action (the hand), and the organ of following or walking in the proper

way (the foot). Thus, every aspect of the person’s life was touched and affected by the atonement of Christ.

“12. *The oil.* ‘The olive tree from the earliest times has been the emblem of peace and purity’ (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols., comp. Bruce R. McConkie [1954–56], 3:180). For this reason, and also because the olive oil was a symbol of the Holy Ghost (for example, see D&C 45:55–57) the oil has deep symbolic significance. To touch with oil suggested the effect of the Spirit on the same organs of living and acting. Thus, the blood of Christ cleansed every aspect of the candidate’s life, and then the process was repeated with the oil to show that the Spirit too affected everything he did. In this manner, the person received peace and purity (symbolized by the olive tree and its fruit).” (Lund, “Old Testament Types and Symbols,” *Symposium*, 184–86.)

### (15-8) Leviticus 16. The Day of Atonement and Israel’s Forgiveness

“The Day of Atonement, which took place in the fall of the year, was the most sacred and solemn of all the Israelite festivals. In it we most clearly see the typology or symbolism of Christ’s work for Israel. It was a day of national fasting and one that signified that the sins of Israel had been atoned for and that the nation and its people were restored to a state of fellowship with God. The feast included the following major items (see Leviticus 16 where the details are given):

“1. The high priest had to go through meticulous preparation to be worthy to act as the officiator for the rest of the house of Israel. This included sacrifices for himself and his house, as well as washing and purification through the sprinkling of sacrificial blood on various objects in the tabernacle.

“2. The high priest put off the official robes he normally wore and clothed himself in simple, white linen garments. (See Revelation 19:8 for the significance of white linen garments.)

“3. Two goats were chosen by lot. One was designated as the goat of the Lord, and one was designated as the scapegoat, or in Hebrew, the goat of *Azazel*. The goat of Jehovah was offered as a sin offering, and the high priest took its blood into the holy of holies of the tabernacle and sprinkled it on the lid of the ark of the covenant (called the ‘mercy seat’), thus making atonement for the sins of Israel.

“4. The other goat, *Azazel*, was brought before the high priest, who laid his hands upon its head and symbolically transferred all of the sins of Israel to it. Then it was taken out into the wilderness and released where it would never be seen again. One commentator explained the significance of *Azazel* by saying that it represented ‘the devil himself, the head of the fallen angels, who was afterwards called Satan; for no subordinate evil spirit could have been placed in antithesis to Jehovah as *Azazel* is here, but only the ruler or head of the kingdom of demons.’ (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, bk. 1: The Pentateuch, ‘The Third Book of Moses,’ 10 bks. [n.d.], p. 398.)

“. . . The book of Hebrews [draws] heavily on the typology of the Day of Atonement to teach the mission of Christ. In that epistle he made the following points:

“a. Christ is the great high priest (Hebrews 3:1) who, unlike the high priest of the Aaronic Priesthood, was holy and without spot and did not need to make atonement for his own sins before he could be worthy to officiate for Israel and enter the holy of holies (Hebrews 7:26–27). His perfect life was the ultimate fulfillment of the symbol of wearing white garments.

“b. The true tabernacle (or temple, or house of the Lord) is in heaven, and the earthly tabernacle made by Moses was to serve as a shadow or type of the heavenly one. (See Hebrews 8:2–5; 9:1–9.)

“c. Christ is the Lamb of Jehovah as well as the High Priest. Through the shedding of his blood he became capable of entering the heavenly Holy of Holies where he offered his own blood as payment for the sins of those who would believe in him and obey his commandments. (See Hebrews 9:11–14, 24–28; 10:11–22; D&C 45:3–5.)” (Lund, “Old Testament Types and Symbols,” *Symposium*, 187–88.)

Notwithstanding the symbolic significance of the ritual of this holy day, the ritual did have the power to bring about a forgiveness of Israel’s sins. Elder James E. Talmage said:

“The sacred writings of ancient times, the inspired utterances of latter-day prophets, the traditions of mankind, the rites of sacrifice, and even the sacrileges of heathen idolatries, all involve the idea of vicarious atonement. God has never refused to accept an offering made by one who is authorized on behalf of those who are in any way incapable of doing the required service themselves. The scapegoat and the altar victim of ancient Israel, *if offered with repentance and contrition*, were accepted by the Lord in mitigation of the sins of the people.” (*Articles of Faith*, p. 77; emphasis added.)



Wild goat of the Sinai

### (15-9) Leviticus 17:1–7. Why Did the Israelites Have to Slay All Domestic Animals, Even Those Intended Only for Food, at the Tabernacle Altar?

“As *sacrifice* was ever deemed essential to true religion, it was necessary that it should be performed in such a way as to secure the great purpose of its institution. God alone could show how this should be done so as to be pleasing in his sight, and therefore he has given the most plain and particular directions concerning it. The Israelites, from their long residence in Egypt, an idolatrous country, had doubtless adopted many of their usages; and many portions of the Pentateuch seem to have been written merely to correct and bring them back to the purity of the Divine worship.

“That no blood should be offered to idols, God commands every animal used for food or sacrifice to be slain at the door of the tabernacle. While every animal was slain in this sacrificial way, even the daily food of the people must put them in mind of the necessity of a sacrifice for sin. Perhaps St. Paul had this circumstance in view when he said, *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God* [1 Corinthians 10:31]; and, *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God and the Father by him* [Colossians 3:17].

“While the Israelites were encamped in the wilderness, it was comparatively easy to prevent all abuses of this Divine institution; and therefore they were all commanded to bring the *oxen, sheep, and goats* to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, that they might be slain there, and *their blood sprinkled upon the altar of the Lord*. But when they became settled in the promised land, and the distance, in many cases, rendered it impossible for them to bring the animals to be slain for domestic uses to the temple, they were permitted to pour out the blood in a sacrificial way unto God at their respective dwellings, and to cover it with the dust [see Leviticus 17:13; Deuteronomy 12:20–21].” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:566–67.)

### (15-10) Leviticus 17:7. “After Whom They Have Gone a Whoring”

The concept that Israel went “a whoring” after false gods is a common one in the scriptures and continues the metaphor that Jehovah was the husband to whom Israel was married. Isaiah said, “For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name” (Isaiah 54:5). When Israel looked to false gods, she was unfaithful to the marriage relationship she had with the true God, and thus was depicted as playing the part of a prostitute.

Jeremiah wrote: “Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. . . . And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

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And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks." (Jeremiah 3:6, 8–9.)

In New Testament times, the same figurative imagery was used when the Church of Jesus Christ was depicted as the bride of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7–8; 21:2, 9).

So, in the scriptures, idolatry was often depicted as spiritual adultery. One Bible scholar added this insight to the phrase "gone a whoring":

"Though this term is frequently used to express *idolatry*, yet we are not to suppose that it is not to be taken in a *literal* sense in many places in Scripture, even where it is used in connection with idolatrous acts of worship. It is well known that *Baal Peor* and *Ashtaroth* were worshipped with unclean rites; and that public prostitution formed a grand part of the worship of many deities among the Egyptians, Moabites, Canaanites, Greeks, and Romans." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:567.)

### (15-11) Leviticus 18. Purity in All Sexual Relationships

"The prohibition of incest and similar sensual abominations is introduced with a general warning as to the licentious customs of the Egyptians and Canaanites, and an exhortation to walk in the judgments and ordinances of Jehovah [Leviticus 18:2–5], and is brought to a close with a threatening allusion to the consequences of all such defilements [vv. 24–30]." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:2:411–12.)

The phrase "to uncover their nakedness" (v. 6; see also vv. 7–19) was a Hebrew euphemism for sexual intercourse, and thus all kinds of incestuous relationships were forbidden, including "(1) with a mother, (2) with a step-mother, (3) with a sister or half-sister, (4) with a granddaughter, the daughter of either son or daughter, (5) with the daughter of a step-mother, (6) with an aunt, the sister of either father or mother, (7) with the wife of an uncle on the father's side, (8) with a daughter-in-law, (9) with a sister-in-law, or brother's wife, (10) with a woman and her daughter, or a woman and her granddaughter, and (11) with two sisters at the same time" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:2:412).

The injunction against letting any children "pass through the fire to Molech" (v. 21) is explained:

"The name of this idol is mentioned for the first time in this place. As the word *molech* or *melech* signifies *king* or *governor*, it is very likely that this idol represented the *sun*; and more particularly as the *fire* appears to have been so much employed in his worship. There are several opinions concerning the meaning of *passing through the fire* to Molech. 1. Some think that the *semen humanum* was offered on the fire to this idol. 2. Others think that the children were actually made a *burnt-offering* to him. 3. But others suppose the children were not *burnt*, but only passed through the fire, or *between two fires*, by way of consecration to him. That some were *actually burnt*

*alive* to this idol several scriptures, according to the opinion of commentators, seem strongly to intimate; see among others [Psalm 100:38; Jeremiah 7:31; Ezekiel 23:37–39]. That others were only *consecrated* to his service by *passing between two fires* the rabbins strongly assert; and if Ahaz had but one son, *Hezekiah*, (though it is probable he had others, see [2 Chronicles 28:3]) he is said to have *passed through the fire to Molech* [2 Kings 16:3], yet he succeeded his father in the kingdom [2 Kings 18:1], therefore this could only be a *consecration*, his idolatrous father intending thereby to initiate him early into the service of this demon." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:570–71.)

Other abominations involving sexual perversions such as homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22) and bestiality (Leviticus 18:23) were forbidden with equal severity. These very abominations of the Canaanites caused them to be cast out of the promised land Israel was about to inherit (see Leviticus 18:24–25; 1 Nephi 17:32–35).

## POINTS TO PONDER

(15-12) What appears at first to be only a series of outdated laws given as part of the Mosaic covenant on uncleanness upon closer examination carries a powerful message to Saints of all ages. If we are to be God's people, we must become different from other peoples. We must be set apart, or separated, from the influences of the world. To ancient Israel God gave commandments not only to help them remain physically and spiritually clean but also to help them learn of and remember Him. Now, with an understanding of how that law served to strengthen them, write a short paper entitled "The Value of the Mosaic Law for a Latter-day Saint." Assume that God had given modern Israel a *preparatory gospel* today, instead of the fulness of the gospel that He has given us. In other words, suppose it was today's society that was not ready for the full gospel law but instead received a law of strict "performances and of ordinances" (Mosiah 13:30) related to our modern culture and life-style. The following points or questions may help stimulate your thinking as you write this paper.

1. In the higher gospel law, broad principles are laid down and the people interpret and apply these principles to their daily living. In the Mosaic law, specific principles and interpretations were given that related to the actual culture and daily life of the people involved.

2. What specifics would God give today in terms of remaining morally clean? We know the broad principles—keep the law of chastity, stay morally clean, and so on—but what specifics would God give to a Mosaic society today? Would there be commandments about music? entertainment? literature?

3. What modern equivalents of Molech would God warn us about?

4. What kinds of things in modern society could add to a state of "spiritual leprosy"? Are there modern equivalents to clean and unclean objects?





# Feasts and Festivals

# D

## (D-1) The Purpose of Holidays

Almost universally mankind looks forward to its holidays, for they represent a break in the usual rigors of sustaining mortal existence. The Lord Himself has acknowledged their benefit from the earliest times. Knowing that an endless procession of days filled with toil can cause man to become hardened and insensitive to the things of the Spirit, the Lord instituted holidays. The word is important. It means "holy day," that is, "a day marked by a general suspension of work in commemoration of an event" (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v., "holiday"*). Rather than simply designating special days only to break the routine, however, in the Mosaic dispensation the Lord established holy days that would accomplish a spiritual purpose as well. The feasts and festivals were given by revelation to lift the spirit as well as rest the body. Like all other parts of the Mosaic law, the feasts and festivals also pointed to Christ.

## (D-2) The Sabbath (*Shabbat*)

The most important and most frequent of the Lord's holy days was the Sabbath. It was a regular break in what otherwise could have been arduous monotony. On this day, as on all His holy days, the Lord gave mankind a respite from the commandment He gave to Adam to earn his bread by toil "all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:17; emphasis added). Mankind was permitted one day in seven to rest, renew, and remember. On the Sabbath he was to remember three important events: (1) that the Creation was an act of the Lord Jesus Christ for the advancement of mankind; (2) that the release of Israel from Egyptian bondage was accomplished through the power of Jehovah; and (3) that the resurrection of Christ would bring the promise of immortality for all mankind. (See McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 394–96; see also Reading 11-8 for extensive commentary on the Sabbath.)

By ceasing from his own work and remembering the Lord's work, which is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39), man would be drawn to God. This was the purpose of all the feasts and festivals as well as the purpose of the Sabbath. In all the holy days can be seen the ordinances and rites that helped Israel *remember* their Deliverer and Redeemer and *renew* their covenants with Him. Each holy day was a celebration observed by feasts and festivities or solemn convocations, fasting, and prayer.

## (D-3) The Holy Days of Ancient Israel

Although the ancient Israelites had many days in the year set apart for festivities or fasting and prayer,

four besides the sabbaths were of particular importance: the feast of Passover, the feast of Pentecost, the day of Atonement, and the feast of Tabernacles. The feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles were joyous festivals having their origins deep in historical events or the cycle of the harvest. The day of Atonement was a period of national contrition and repentance.

These holy days were set down for Israel by the Lord. During these days every male Israelite was commanded to appear "before the Lord thy God" (meaning at the tabernacle, or, later, the temple) as a symbol of his allegiance to his Maker (Deuteronomy 16:16; see also Leviticus 16:29–34). In this way Israel was given a chance four times a year to pause and reflect on the blessings of God. Further, each holy day was organized to emphasize a particular aspect of the nature and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## (D-4) The Feast of Passover (*Pesach*)

The feast of Passover, together with the feast of Unleavened Bread, commemorated the Israelites' deliverance from Egyptian slavery. The festival began on the fifteenth day of Nisan (the latter part of March) and continued for seven days. The main part of the celebration was the eating of the paschal, or Passover, meal of bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and roasted lamb. The lamb was slain the evening before the celebration began, and the father of each household sprinkled its blood on the door posts and lintel of the home. Strict rules governed the preparation and eating of the paschal meal. The lamb was to be roasted whole, care being taken not to break any of its bones. The members of the family stood and ate hastily. Any portions of the lamb remaining from the meal were to be burned.

The ritual reminded Israel of the days of bondage in Egypt when life, like the herbs, was indeed bitter, and helped them remember their deliverance by the Lord when unleavened bread was eaten for seven days and the people awaited the signal to begin their journey to freedom.

But the chief significance of the ritual was not historical. The details of the performances involved were arranged to bear witness not merely of Israel's deliverance but also of her Deliverer. (See chapter 10 for further discussion of the purpose of the Passover celebration.)

## (D-5) The Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*, or Pentecost)

The second great annual feast commemorated in ancient Israel was the feast of Weeks, known to Christians as Pentecost. The word *pentecost* comes from the Greek and means "the fiftieth day." The festival, one day in length, came seven weeks, or forty-nine days, after Passover. It fell in the latter

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part of May or early June. Its timing was important, for it marked the beginning of the harvest of the new wheat. The offerings placed upon the great altar on that day included sheaves of wheat and signified to all present that while man plows the ground, sows the seed, and reaps the harvest, God is the real giver of the increase. It is He who created the earth and gave it productive strength. It is He who sends the rain and causes the sun to shine for living things to grow. One purpose of the festival was so that all Israel would truly say, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1).

In the sacrifices of the day, however, a greater importance can be seen. On this day two lambs, a young bull, and two rams were offered as sin and peace offerings, and burned on the altar of sacrifice. These sacrifices indicated that the purpose of the feast was for Israel to gain a remission of sins and obtain a reconciliation with God. The sacrifice of animals could not actually bring about this atonement and reconciliation, but rather typified the atoning blood and sacrifice of Christ and the sanctifying, purging influence of the Holy Spirit, which is likened to the cleansing fire that consumes all corruptible things. Burning the sacrifices on the great altar thus signified the way in which Israel's sins would be truly remitted. Elder Bruce R. McConkie commented on the symbolical significance of the feast and what happened shortly after the Resurrection on the day of Pentecost.

"With the closing of the Old and the opening of the New Dispensation, the Feast of Pentecost ceased as an authorized time of religious worship. And it is not without significance that the Lord chose the Pentecost, which grew out of the final Passover, as the occasion to dramatize forever the fulfillment of all that was involved in the sacrificial fires of the past. Fire is a cleansing agent. Filth and disease die in its flames. The baptism of fire, which John promised Christ would bring, means that when men receive the actual companionship of the Holy Spirit, then evil and iniquity are burned out of their souls as though by fire. The sanctifying power of that member of the Godhead makes them clean. In similar imagery, all the fires on all the altars of the past, as they burned the flesh of animals, were signifying that spiritual purification would come by the Holy Ghost, whom the Father would send because of the Son. On that first Pentecost of the so-called Christian Era such fires would have performed their purifying symbolism if the old order had still prevailed. How fitting it was instead for the Lord to choose that very day to send living fire from heaven, as it were, fire that would dwell in the hearts of men and replace forever all the fires on all the altars of the past. And so it was that '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.' (Acts 2:1-4.)" (*The Promised Messiah*, pp. 431-32.)

#### (D-6) The Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*)

Of all the religious days in the Hebrew calendar, the day of Atonement was the most solemn and sacred. All manual labor stopped, and there was no feasting or frolicking. It was, instead, a time to "afflict" one's soul by fasting, a day to cleanse oneself from sin, a day for prayer, meditation, and deep contrition of soul (Leviticus 16:29).

In the observances of the day of Atonement is the heart and center of the whole Mosaic law, namely, the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"This is what the law of Moses is all about. The law itself was given so that men might believe in Christ and know that salvation comes in and through his atoning sacrifice and in no other way. Every principle, every precept, every doctrinal teaching, every rite, ordinance, and performance, every word and act—all that appertained to, was revealed in, and grew out of the ministry of Moses, and all the prophets who followed him—all of it was designed and prepared to enable men to believe in Christ, to submit to his laws, and to gain the full blessings of that atonement which he alone could accomplish. And the chief symbolisms, the most perfect similitudes, the types and shadows without peer, were displayed before all the people once each year, on the Day of Atonement.

"On one day each year—the tenth day of the seventh month—Israel's high priest of the Levitical order, the one who sat in Aaron's seat, was privileged to enter the Holy of Holies in the house of the Lord, to enter as it were the presence of Jehovah, and there make an atonement for the sins of the people. In the course of much sacrificial symbolism, he cleansed himself, the sanctuary itself, the priesthood bearers as a whole, and all of the people. Sacrificial animals were slain and their blood sprinkled on the mercy seat and before the altar; incense was burned, and all of the imagery and symbolism of the ransoming ordinances was carried out. One thing, applicable to this day only, is of great moment. Two goats were selected, lots were cast, and the name of Jehovah was placed upon one goat; the other was called Azazel, the scapegoat. The Lord's goat was then sacrificed as the Great Jehovah would be in due course, but upon the scapegoat were placed all of the sins of the people, which burden the scapegoat then carried away into the wilderness. The high priest, as the law required, 'lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat' and confessed 'over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat.' The goat then bore upon him 'all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited,' even as the Promised Messiah should bear the sins of many. 'For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you,' Moses said, 'that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.' (Lev. 16.)

"Knowing, as we do, that sins are remitted in the waters of baptism; that baptisms were the order of the day in Israel; and that provision must be made for repentant persons to free themselves from sins committed after baptism—we see in the annual performances of the Day of Atonement one of the

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Lord's provisions for renewing the covenant made in the waters of baptism and receiving anew the blessed purity that comes from full obedience to the law involved. In our day we gain a similar state of purity by partaking worthily of the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

"The symbolism and meaning of the ordinances and ceremonies performed on the Day of Atonement are set forth by Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews. He calls the tabernacle-temple 'a worldly sanctuary,' wherein sacrificial ordinances were performed each year by Levitical priests to atone for the sins of men and prepare them to enter the Holy of Holies. These ordinances were to remain 'until the time of reformation,' when Christ should come as a high priest of 'a greater and more perfect tabernacle,' to prepare himself and all men, by the shedding of his own blood, to obtain 'eternal redemption' in the heavenly tabernacle. The old covenant was but 'a shadow of good things to come, . . . For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. . . . But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.' (Heb. 9 and 10.) How perfectly the Mosaic ordinances testify of Him by whom salvation comes and in whose holy name all men are commanded to worship the Eternal Father forevermore!" (McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 435–37.)

#### **(D-7) The Feast of Tabernacles (*Succoth*)**

The feast of Tabernacles (also called the feast of Booths or the feast of Ingathering) occurred five days after the day of Atonement on the fifteenth day of Tishri, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar, which corresponds to our late September or early October. The feast of Tabernacles began and ended on a Sabbath and so was eight days in length.

A distinctive part of this celebration was the erecting of temporary huts or booths (*succoth*, in Hebrew) made from the boughs of trees. The people stayed in these huts for the duration of the feast. This requirement reminded the people of the goodness of the Lord during their forty-year sojourn in the wilderness of Sinai and the blessing that was theirs to live permanently, if they were obedient, in the promised land.

"More sacrifices were offered during the Feast of the Passover than at any other time because a lamb was slain for and eaten by each family or group, but at the Feast of Tabernacles more sacrifices of bullocks, rams, lambs, and goats were offered by the priests for the nation as a whole than at all the other Israelite feasts combined. The fact that it celebrated

the completion of the full harvest symbolizes the gospel reality that it is the mission of the house of Israel to gather all nations to Jehovah, a process that is now going forward, but will not be completed until that millennial day when 'the Lord shall be king over all the earth,' and shall reign personally thereon. Then shall be fulfilled that which is written: 'And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations . . . shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.' (Zech. 14:9–21.) That will be the day when the law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Manifestly when the Feast of Tabernacles is kept in that day, its ritualistic performances will conform to the new gospel order and not include the Mosaic order of the past.

"Included in the Feast of Tabernacles was a holy convocation, which in this instance was called also a solemn assembly. In our modern solemn assemblies we give the Hosanna Shout, which also was associated with the Feast of Tabernacles anciently, except that ancient Israel waved palm branches instead of white handkerchiefs as they exulted in such declarations as 'Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna, to God and the Lamb.' By the time of Jesus some added rituals were part of the feast, including the fact that a priest went to the Pool of Siloam, drew water in a golden pitcher, brought it to the temple, and poured it into a basin at the base of the altar. As this was done the choir sang the Hallel, consisting of Psalms 113 to 118. 'When the choir came to these words, "O give thanks to the Lord," and again when they sang, "O work then now salvation, Jehovah;" and once more at the close, "O give thanks unto the Lord," all the worshippers shook their lulavs [palm branches] towards the altar,' which is closely akin to what we do in giving the Hosanna Shout today. 'When, therefore, the multitudes from Jerusalem, on meeting Jesus, "cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way, and . . . cried, saying, O then, work now salvation to the Son of David!" they applied, in reference to Christ, what was regarded as one of the chief ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles, praying that God would now from "the highest" heavens manifest and send that salvation in connection with the Son of David, which was symbolised by the pouring out of water.' (Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 279.)" (McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 433–34.)

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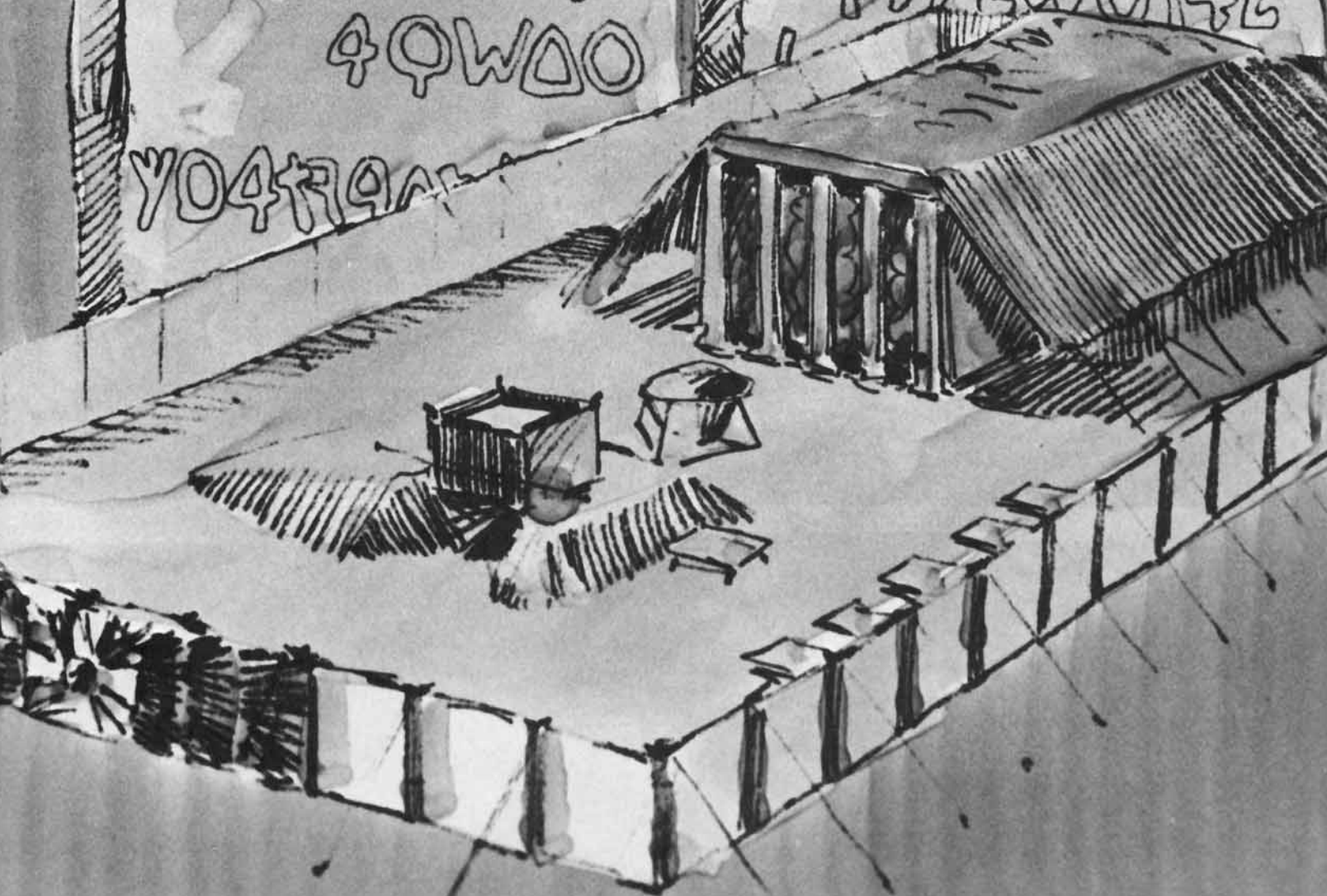
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# A Law of Performances and Ordinances, Part 3: Laws of Mercy and Righteousness

## (16-1) Introduction

In this assignment you will read what has been termed “the heart of the ethics of the book of Leviticus” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:105). These ethics are the heart not only of Leviticus, but also of the entire Old and New Testaments. Recorded here for the first time is the revelation of the one principle that governed all the laws dealing with proper social relationships: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18). Thus viewed, it is easy to see that all the other laws were merely the application of the law of love under various circumstances. This law, being both timeless and of universal application, is the seamless fabric on which not only the Old and New Testaments are richly embroidered but our own modern scriptures as well.

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Leviticus 19–27.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON LEVITICUS 19–27

### (16-2) Leviticus 19:2–18. “Ye Shall Be Holy: For I the Lord Your God Am Holy”

The last chapter examined in some detail the laws of cleanliness and uncleanness in both their physical and spiritual senses. The closing chapters of Leviticus focus on laws that defined how one under the Mosaic law lived righteously and in a manner pleasing to God. Leviticus ends with essentially the same message with which it began, namely, the all-important admonition that men are to be holy, even as God is holy. The laws that follow this commandment may seem at first to be without logical arrangement or interconnection, but they are unified when one considers them in light of the injunction to be holy given in verse 2. Note also the strong relationship to the Ten Commandments in what immediately follows (see vv. 3–12). The fifth

commandment (honoring parents) and the fourth commandment (keeping the Sabbath day holy) are joined in verse 3, followed immediately by the second commandment (no graven images). In verse 11 the eighth commandment (stealing) is joined with the ninth (bearing false witness), and then again is immediately connected to the third commandment (taking God’s name in vain) in verse 12. By this means the Lord seems to indicate that what follows the commandment to be holy is directly related to these fundamental principles of righteousness. The specific laws that follow the commandments define principles of righteousness that follow naturally from the Ten Commandments. For example, the commandment is not to steal, but these laws show that the commandment means far more than not robbing a man or burglarizing his home. One can steal through fraud or by withholding wages from a laborer (v. 13). The commandment is to honor one’s parents, but here the Lord used the word “fear” (v. 3), which connotes a deep respect, reverence, and awe, the same feelings one should have for God Himself. The example of the gossiping “talebearer” (v. 16) shows that there are ways to bear false witness other than under oath in court. And the concluding principle summarizes the whole purpose of the law. If one is truly holy, as God is holy, then he will love his neighbor as himself (see v. 18).



Moses the Lawgiver

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### (16-3) Leviticus 19:18. What Commandments Underlie All Others?

During His earthly ministry, the Master was asked by a scribe which of all the commandments was the greatest. The Savior's reply is well known: Love God and love your neighbor. Then He said: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40; see also vv. 35–39). Or, to put it another way, those two principles are the foundation for all the writings of the Old Testament. All principles and commandments stem either from the need to love God or to love our neighbor.

Both of the laws cited by Jesus are found in the Old Testament, but not together. The first is found in Deuteronomy 6:5 and the second in Leviticus 19:18. The wording of the second commandment is instructive. The statement that one is to love his neighbor as himself moves the idea of love in this case from a state of emotion to one of will. Love is that emotion which one naturally feels for oneself. Simply expressed, it is a desire one has for his own good. To love or care for oneself is natural and good, but in addition, one must feel this same emotion for others. Each must desire the good of others as well as his own. This desire is not innate but comes through a conscious act of will or agency. The commandment thus implies that one should work both for his own good and the good of others. He should not aggrandize himself at another's expense. This commandment is at the heart of all social interaction and becomes the standard by which every act can be judged.

Any person who truly understands the implications for daily living that are part of the commandment to love God with all his heart, might, mind, and strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, can function well with no additional laws. One does not need to warn a person who loves God properly about idolatry, for any act of worship not devoted to God would be naturally offensive to him. The prohibitions against stealing, adultery, murder, and so on are not required if a person truly loves his neighbor as himself, for to injure his neighbor in such ways would be unthinkable. But, of course, the vast majority of men fail to understand and keep these two commandments, and so the Lord has revealed many additional laws and rules to show specifically what the commandments require. But truly, all such commandments do nothing more than define and support the two basic principles: all the law and the prophets are summarized in the two great commandments.

### (16-4) Leviticus 19:23–25. What Is "Uncircumcised" Fruit?

"The metaphorical use of circumcision is thus explained by the text itself: it denotes the fruit as disqualified or unfit. In [Leviticus 26:41] the same metaphor is used for the heart which is stubborn or not ripe to listen to the Divine admonitions. And in other passages of Scripture it is used with reference to lips [Exodus 6:12, 30] and ears [Jeremiah 6:10] which do not perform their proper functions."

(C. D. Ginsburg, in Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 147–48.)

Exactly why the fruit produced for the first three years of the tree was to be treated as unfit is not clear, but in this context of laws of righteousness and sanctification, this prohibition could suggest that until the first-fruits of the tree were dedicated to God, just as the firstborn of animals and men were (see Exodus 13:1–2), the tree was not viewed as sanctified, or set apart, for use by God's people. Because the ground had been cursed for man's sake when Adam fell (see Genesis 3:17), this law could have served as a simple reminder that until dedicated to God and His purposes, all things remained unfit for use by God's holy people.

### (16-5) Leviticus 19:26–31. Setting Israel Apart from the World

At first, the laws found in these verses may seem to have little application for the modern Saint, and may even seem puzzling as requirements for ancient Israel. What, for example, would the cutting of one's hair and beard have to do with righteousness? But in the cultural surroundings of ancient Israel, these specific prohibitions taught a powerful lesson related to the practices of Israel's heathen neighbors.

For example, the Hebrew word *nachash*, translated as "enchantment" (v. 26), meant "to practice divination," and the phrase "observe times" (v. 26) comes from the Hebrew word meaning "to observe clouds" (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. "enchantment," p. 144). In the ancient world, sorcerers and necromancers often claimed to read the future through various omens or objects. Their methods included watching the stars (astrology), observing the movements of clouds and certain animals, tying knots, casting lots, tossing arrows into the air and then reading the pattern of how they fell, and so on. (See Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "magic, divination, and sorcery," pp. 566–70.) Thus, verse 26 forbade any use of the occult to read the future.

Another Bible scholar gave an important insight about why cutting the hair and beard was forbidden.

"[Leviticus 19:27] and the following verse evidently refer to customs which must have existed among the Egyptians when the Israelites sojourned in Egypt; and what they were it is now difficult, even with any probability, to conjecture. *Herodotus* observes that the Arabs *shave* or *cut their hair round*, in honour of Bacchus [the god of wine] who, they say, had his hair cut in this way. . . . He says also that the *Macians*, a people of Libya, *cut their hair round*, so as to leave a *tuft* on the top of the head. . . . In this manner the Chinese cut their hair to the present day. This might have been in honour of some idol, and therefore forbidden to the Israelites.

"The *hair* was much used in divination among the ancients, and for purposes of religious superstition among the Greeks; and particularly about the time of the giving of this law, as this is supposed to have been the era of the Trojan war. We learn from *Homer* that it was customary for parents to dedicate the hair of their children to some god; which, when they

came to manhood, they cut off and consecrated to the deity. *Achilles*, at the funeral of Patroclus, cut off his golden locks which his father had dedicated to the river god *Sperchius*, and threw them into the flood. . . .

"If the hair was *rounded*, and dedicated for purposes of this kind, it will at once account for the prohibition in this verse." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:575.)

In forbidding the cutting of the flesh and the tattooing of marks in the flesh, the Lord again clearly signaled that Israel was to be different from their heathen neighbors. Wounds were self-inflicted in times of grief for the dead and during worship (see 1 Kings 18:28). Also, "it was a very ancient and a very general custom to carry marks on the body in honour of the object of their worship. All the castes of the Hindoos bear on their foreheads or elsewhere what are called the *sectarian marks*, which distinguish them, not only in a civil but also in a religious point of view, from each other.

"Most of the barbarous nations lately discovered have their faces, arms, breasts, &c., curiously carved or *tatoored*, probably for superstitious purposes. Ancient writers abound with accounts of marks made on the face, arms, &c., in honour of different idols; and to this the inspired penman alludes [Revelation 13:16–17; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4], where false worshippers are represented as receiving in their hands and in their forehead the marks of the beast." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:575.)

Sacred prostitution was a common practice among heathen worshippers, and often priestesses in the temples to such goddesses of love as Venus or Aphrodite were there only to satisfy and give religious sanction to immoral sexual desires. God strictly forbade these practices.

"Familiar spirits" (Leviticus 19:31) connoted those who today would be called spiritualists, or spirit mediums. They supposedly had the power to communicate through a seance with departed spirits. The Hebrew word for *familiar spirit* means "ventriloquist," suggesting in the very name itself the fraudulent character of such people (see Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. "ventriloquist," p. 157).

Clearly, the laws prohibiting such idolatrous practices were designed to set Israel apart from the world and its false worship. And therein is an important lesson for modern Saints. The world has not changed, although the specific practices of evil and debauchery may be different. Today the Lord still directs His people through living prophets to avoid the customs and practices of the world. It should be no surprise, then, that prophets speak out against certain hair styles, fashions in clothing, passing fads, or such practices as sensitivity groups, gambling, couples living together without marriage, and so on.

#### **(16-6) Leviticus 19:35–36. What Are "Meteyards," "Ephahs," and "Hins"?**

A meteyard signified such Hebrew measures of length as the reed, the span, and the cubit, while the

ephah and the hin were measures of volume. By specifying both kinds of measures, the Lord clearly taught that honesty in all transactions was required. (See Bible Dictionary, s.v. "weights and measures.")

#### **(16-7) Leviticus 20**

This chapter specifies some of the sins so serious that they were worthy of death. (For an explanation of what it means to give one's seed to Molech, see Reading 15-11.) The Lord clearly stated again and again that the purpose of these laws was to separate Israel from other people so that they could be sanctified and become holy unto God (see vv. 7–8, 24, 26).

#### **(16-8) Leviticus 20:22–24. "Ye Shall Not Walk in the Manners of the Nation, Which I Cast Out"**

When the Jaredites were brought to the land of promise, the Lord warned them that if they did not worship the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, they would be "swept off" (Ether 2:10). Lehi's colony was also warned that they would occupy the promised land only on condition of obedience; otherwise, they too would be "cut off" (1 Nephi 2:21; see also v. 20). The Israelites were warned that if they were not willing to separate themselves from the world, the land would "spue" them out (Leviticus 20:22).

Nephi told his brothers that the only reason Israel was given the land and the Canaanites driven out was that the Canaanites "had rejected every word of God, and they were ripe in iniquity" (1 Nephi 17:35). Because of their extreme wickedness God required Israel to "utterly destroy them" (Deuteronomy 7:2; for further discussion about why God required the Canaanites to be destroyed, see Reading 19-15). Nephi asked, "Do you suppose that our fathers [the Israelites] would have been more choice than they [the Canaanites] if they had been righteous? I say unto you, Nay." (1 Nephi 17:34.) The same message was clearly revealed to Israel. The Canaanites were cast out because of their wickedness. Either Israel would remain separated from that wickedness, or they would suffer the same consequence.

#### **(16-9) Leviticus 21–22. The Laws of Cleanliness for the Priesthood**

In these two chapters are special rules and requirements for the Levitical Priesthood, especially the high priest. Here, for the first time, the title "high priest" was used (Leviticus 21:10). The Hebrew literally means "the Priest, the great one." As the chief priest, he was the representative of Jehovah among the people. As such, he was required to guard against all defilement of his holy office. (The Old Testament high priest was an office in the Aaronic Priesthood, not an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood as it is today. The high priest was the presiding priest, or head, of the Aaronic Priesthood. Today the presiding bishop holds that position.) All members of the priesthood had to marry virgins of their own people. Prostitutes, adulterous women, or even divorced women, were excluded, thus avoiding the least doubt about personal purity. The priests

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could not marry “profane” women (non-Israelites; v. 7), be defiled by contact with a dead person other than close relatives (see vv. 1–3), or allow a daughter to be a prostitute (see v. 9).

In other words, all of Israel was called to a special life of separation and holiness, but the priests who served as God’s authorized representatives to the people had to maintain an even higher level of separation and sanctification. The high priest, who was a symbol or type of Jesus, “the great high priest,” had to meet a still stricter code (Hebrews 4:14). In addition to meeting the requirements of the regular priesthood for marriage and defilement, he had to be without any physical defects (see Leviticus 21:16–21). Such strictness was to remind the people that Christ, the true Mediator between God and His children, was perfect in every respect.

#### **(16-10) Leviticus 23**

In this chapter the Lord indicated five holy days or feasts that were to be observed by all Israel. These were the Sabbath (see vv. 1–3), the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread (see vv. 4–14), the feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, as it was called in the New Testament (see vv. 15–23), the day of Atonement (see vv. 26–32), and the feast of Tabernacles (see vv. 33–44).

The sabbaths, of course, were weekly; the others are listed in the order in which they occurred. Passover was in late March or early April (corresponding to Easter), and Pentecost followed seven weeks later in May. The day of Atonement, which occurred in late September or early October, was followed five days later by the feast of Tabernacles, or feast of Booths. (For more details on the feasts and festivals, see Enrichment Section D and the Hebrew calendar in Maps and Charts.)

#### **(16-11) Leviticus 23:27**

To afflict the soul means to be humble or submissive to the Lord. The Hebrew term carries with it the idea of discipline. Therefore, on these days, Israelites were to devote themselves completely to the Lord in fasting and prayer.

#### **(16-12) Leviticus 23:37**

The offerings specified for the feast days were all voluntary. These were the times to celebrate and freely show one’s gratitude to the Lord.

#### **(16-13) Leviticus 24:17–22. Was the Law of Moses Really an Eye for an Eye?**

This passage has come to be regarded by many as the substance and summary of the Mosaic law: “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (v. 20). This misunderstanding is unfortunate because it makes the law appear cold, unbending, and revengeful. This misconception has resulted from a failure to distinguish between the social law and the criminal law. The social law was based on love and concern for one’s neighbor (see Leviticus 19:18). The criminal law was not outside that love, but was made to stress absolute justice.

Even then, however, three things must be noted about this eye-for-an-eye application:

“First, it was intended to be a law of exact justice, not of revenge. Secondly, it was not private vengeance, but public justice. Thirdly, by excluding murder from the crimes for which ransom is permissible (Nu. 35:31f.) it makes it probable that compensation for injuries was often or usually allowed to take the form of a fine.” (Guthrie and Motyer, *Bible Commentary: Revised*, p. 164.)

The same law that required just retribution and payment also required a farmer to leave portions of his field unharvested so the poor could glean therein (see Leviticus 19:9–10; 23:22), demanded that the employer pay his hired labor at nightfall rather than wait even until the next day (see 19:13), commanded men, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart” (19:17), and summarized the ideal by saying, “Be ye holy” (20:7).

#### **(16-14) Leviticus 25. The Sabbatical and Jubilee Year**

Many today look upon the law of Moses as a primitive, lesser law designed for a spiritually illiterate and immature people. This chapter illustrates the commitment of faith and trust in God that was required of one who truly followed the law. The Israelite was told that once in every seven years he was to trust wholly in God rather than in the fruits of his own labor for sustenance. The land, too, was to have its sabbath rest, and no plowing, sowing, reaping, or harvesting was to take place. Further, once each fifty years the land would have a double rest. The seventh sabbatical year (the forty-ninth year) was to be followed by a jubilee year. God had delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt, forgiven their numerous debts to Him, and given them an inheritance in the land of promise. To demonstrate their love of God and fellow men, Israel was to follow that example during the jubilee year. Slaves or servants were to be freed, the land returned to its original owner, and debts forgiven (see vv. 10, 13, 35–36).

Modern followers of the higher gospel law would do well to assess their own commitment to God and their own love of neighbor by asking themselves if they could live such a law. Is their faith sufficient to trust in the Lord for three years’ sustenance as was asked of Israel? (Note vv. 18–22.)

One Bible scholar suggested two important ideas symbolized in the requirements of the jubilee year: “The jubilee seems to have been typical, 1. Of the great time of release, the Gospel dispensation, when all who believe in Christ Jesus are redeemed from the bondage of sin—repossess the favour and image of God, the only inheritance of the human soul, having all debts cancelled, and the *right* of inheritance restored. To this the prophet Isaiah seems to allude [Isaiah 26:13], and particularly [61:1–3]. 2. Of the general resurrection. ‘It is,’ says Mr. Parkhurst, ‘a lively prefiguration of the grand consummation of time, which will be introduced in like manner by the *trump of God* [1 Corinthians 15:52], when the children and heirs of God shall be delivered from all their

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forfeitures, and restored to the eternal *inheritance* allotted to them by their Father; and thenceforth rest from their labours, and be supported in life and happiness by what the field of God shall supply.'

"It is worthy of remark that the jubilee was not proclaimed till the tenth day of the seventh month, on the very day when the great *annual atonement* was made for the sins of the people; and does not this prove that the great *liberty* or *redemption* from thralldom, published under the Gospel, could not take place till the great *Atonement*, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, had been offered up?" (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, p. 1:592.)

Or, as C. D. Ginsburg put it: "On the close of the great Day of Atonement, when the Hebrews realised that they had peace of mind, that their heavenly Father had annulled their sins, and that they had become re-united to Him through His forgiving mercy, every Israelite was called upon to proclaim throughout the land, by nine blasts of the cornet, that he too had given the soil rest, that he had freed every encumbered family estate, and that he had given liberty to every slave, who was now to rejoice his kindred. Inasmuch as God has forgiven his debts, he also is to forgive his debtors." (In Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 141.)

#### **(16-15) Leviticus 26. Blessings or Cursings: An Option for Israel**

Leviticus 26 is one of the most powerful chapters in the Old Testament. The Lord put the options facing Israel so clearly that they could not be misunderstood. If Israel was obedient, they would be blessed with the bounties of the earth, safety and security, peace and protection from enemies. Even more important, the Lord promised: "My soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." (Vv. 11-12.) Those promises could be summarized in one word: Zion. If Israel was obedient, she would achieve a Zion condition.

If Israel refused "to hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments" (v. 14), however, then the blessings would be withdrawn, and sorrow, hunger, war, disease, exile, tragedy, and abandonment would result.

Modern Israel has been given the same options.

In the winter of 1976-77, the western United States faced a serious drought. A living prophet saw in that and other natural phenomena a warning related to that given in the Old Testament.

"Early this year when drouth conditions seemed to be developing in the West, the cold and hardships in the East, with varying weather situations all over the world, we felt to ask the members of the Church to join in fasting and prayer, asking the Lord for moisture where it was so vital and for a cessation of the difficult conditions elsewhere.

"Perhaps we may have been unworthy in asking for these greatest blessings, but we do not wish to frantically approach the matter but merely call it to the attention of our Lord and then spend our energy to put our lives in harmony.

"One prophet said:

"When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them:

"Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.' (1 Kings 8:35-36.)

"The Lord uses the weather sometimes to discipline his people for the violation of his laws. He said to the children of Israel: [Leviticus 26:3-6.]

"With the great worry and suffering in the East and threats of drouth here in the West and elsewhere, we asked the people to join in a solemn prayer circle for moisture where needed. Quite immediately our prayers were answered, and we were grateful beyond expression. We are still in need and hope that the Lord may see fit to answer our continued prayers in this matter. . . .

"Perhaps the day has come when we should take stock of ourselves and see if we are worthy to ask or if we have been breaking the commandments, making ourselves unworthy of receiving the blessings.

"The Lord gave strict commandments: 'Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.' (Lev. 19:30.)

"Innumerable times we have quoted this, asking our people not to profane the Sabbath; and yet we see numerous cars lined up at merchandise stores on the Sabbath day, and places of amusement crowded, and we wonder. . . .

". . . The Lord makes definite promises. He says:

"Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.' (Lev. 26:4.)

"God does what *he* promises, and many of us continue to defile the Sabbath day. He then continues:

"And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.' (Lev. 26:5.)

"These promises are dependable. . . .

"The Lord . . . warns: [Leviticus 26:14-17, 19-20.]

"The Lord goes further and says:

"I will . . . destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate.' (Lev. 26:22.)

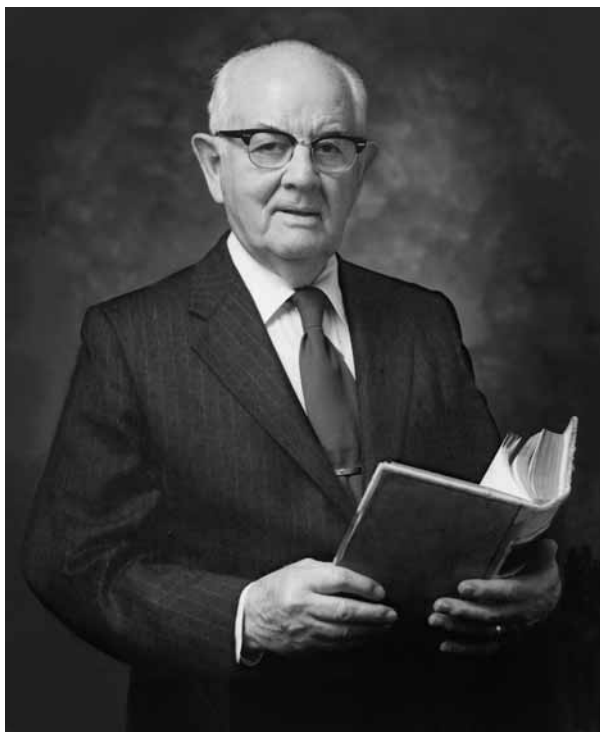
"Can you think how the highways could be made desolate? When fuel and power are limited, when there is none to use, when men will walk instead of ride?

"Have you ever thought, my good folks, that the matter of peace is in the hands of the Lord who says:

"And I will bring a sword upon you . . . ' (Lev. 26:25.)

"Would that be difficult? Do you read the papers? Are you acquainted with the hatreds in the world? What guarantee have you for permanent peace?

". . . and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.' (Lev. 26:25.)



President Spencer W. Kimball warned that *Leviticus* applies to Latter-day Saints.

“Are there enemies who could and would afflict us? Have you thought of that?”

“‘And I will make your cities waste,’ he says, ‘and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation. . . .’

“‘Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies’ land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.

“‘As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest [when it could] in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.’ (Lev. 26:31, 34–35.)

“Those are difficult and very serious situations, but they are possible.

“And the Lord concludes:

“‘These are the statutes and judgments and laws, which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.’ (Lev. 26:46.)

“This applies to you and me.

“Would this be a good time to deeply concern ourselves with these matters? Is this a time when we should return to our homes, our families, our children? Is this the time we should remember our tithes and our offerings, a time when we should desist from our abortions, our divorces, our Sabbath breaking, our eagerness to make the holy day a holiday?”

“Is this a time to repent of our sins, our immoralities, our doctrines of devils?”

“Is this a time for all of us to make holy our marriages, live in joy and happiness, rear our families in righteousness?”

“Certainly many of us *know* better than we *do*. Is this a time to terminate adultery and homosexual and lesbian activities, and return to faith and worthiness? Is this a time to end our heedless pornographies?”

“Is this the time to set our face firmly against unholy and profane things, and whoredoms, irregularities, and related matters?”

“Is this the time to enter new life?” (Spencer W. Kimball, “The Lord Expects His People to Follow the Commandments,” *Ensign*, May 1977, pp. 4–6.)

#### (16-16) Leviticus 26:34–35, 43

To see how this prophecy was fulfilled, see Jeremiah 25:9, 11–12; 29:10; 2 Chronicles 36:21.

#### (16-17) Leviticus 27:1–34. What Is Meant by a Man Making a “Singular Vow”?

Special vows were a part of the Mosaic law. In that day it was possible for a man or woman to dedicate a person to the Lord, for example, Jephthah’s daughter or the child Samuel (see Judges 11:30–31; 1 Samuel 1:11). Here the Lord was saying that when a man made such a vow, the persons involved had to be reckoned as the Lord’s and could not be taken by another. A person could also vow (that is, dedicate to the Lord) his personal property. These laws governed the making of such vows.

#### (16-18) Leviticus 27:32. “Whatsoever Passeth under the Rod”

“The signification of this verse is well given by the rabbins: ‘When a man was to give the tithe of his sheep or calves to God, he was to shut up the whole flock in one fold, in which there was one narrow door capable of letting out one at a time. The owner, about to give the tenth to the Lord, stood by the door with a rod in his hand, the end of which was dipped in vermilion or red ochre. The mothers of those lambs or calves stood without: the door being opened, the young ones ran out to join themselves to their dams; and as they passed out the owner stood with his rod over them, and counted one, two, three, four, five, &c., and when the *tenth* came, he touched it with the coloured rod, by which it was distinguished to be the tithe calf, sheep, &c., and whether poor or lean, perfect or blemished, that was received as the legitimate tithe.’ It seems to be in reference to this custom that the Prophet Ezekiel, speaking to Israel, says: *I will cause you to pass under the rod, and will bring you into the bond of the covenant—you shall be once more claimed as the Lord’s property, and be in all things devoted to his service, being marked or ascertained, by especial providences and manifestations of his kindness, to be his peculiar people.*” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:604.)

## POINTS TO PONDER

(16-19) Pause for a moment to read Psalm 24:3–5 and Leviticus 26:11–12. Then answer the following questions.

1. What did God want for Israel?

2. What qualities are necessary for you to enjoy a close personal association with the Lord?

Notice that two of the qualifications are cleanliness and purity. The use of these two words is important. Pure connotes that which is unpolluted and consistent

throughout. In and of itself, however, it does not imply that which is wholly good. For example, there are poisons which are pure. The idea of cleanliness must be added to purity. The term *clean* indicates that which is free from contamination and defilement, or, in a spiritual sense, freedom from worldliness and sin.

Using the law as a schoolmaster, the Lord symbolically stressed the importance of purity and cleanliness. Consider the following performances in this light: the breeding of cattle, the planting of trees, the sowing of seeds, the texture of garments, the manner of worship, the making of contracts, and betrothal and marriage. Can you see that God's

demands move the idea of cleanliness and purity from a merely religious setting to a part of everyday life? Can you see that in this way God is telling both ancient and modern Israel that consistency, in every phase of life, is a key to developing a strong and enduring relationship with the Master?

**(16-20)** The heart of Leviticus, and of much of the Mosaic law, is the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18).

To illustrate this concept, read the following Mosaic requirements and then, in the space provided, write the gospel principle taught by the law. The first two are completed as an example.

*The Law*

*The Principle*

1. Exodus 21:33-34; 22:6

1. *I have a responsibility to avoid harming my neighbor through negligence or neglect.*

2. Exodus 23:4-5

2. *I should have as much regard for my neighbor's property and valuables as my own.*

3. Leviticus 19:13

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Leviticus 19:15

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Leviticus 19:33-34

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Deuteronomy 19:16-20

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Deuteronomy 22:1-3

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. Deuteronomy 22:8

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. Deuteronomy 23:24-25

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. Deuteronomy 24:6, 10-13

10. \_\_\_\_\_



# The Problem of Large Numbers in the Old Testament

(E-1) A recurring question in the study of the Old Testament has to do with the accuracy of the numbers used in the text. Some of these numbers seem too large in light of known facts. Sometimes parallel accounts use significantly different numbers. (For example, 1 Chronicles 21:5 records that David's census counted a total of 1,570,000 men of military age. In 2 Samuel 24:9 the total given is only 1,300,000.) Also, numbers were particularly susceptible to errors in translating.

"Apart from any question as to the accuracy of the original figures, the transmission of the text by repeated copying for hundreds and thousands of years introduces a large element of uncertainty. If we assume that numbers were denoted by figures in early times, figures are far more easily altered, omitted, or added than words; but, as we have seen, we have at present no strong ground for such an assumption. But even when words are used, the words denoting numbers in Hebrew are easily confused with each other, as in English. Just as 'eight' and 'eighty' differ only by a single letter; so in Hebrew, especially in the older style of writing, the addition of a single letter would make 'three' into 'thirty,' etc. etc. And, again, in copying numerals the scribe is not kept right by the context as he is with other words. It was quite possible, too, for a scribe to have views of his own as to what was probable in the way of numbers, and to correct what he considered erroneous." (Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "number," p. 659.)

## (E-2) A Problem with Numbers

"The Old Testament at various places records numbers which seem impossibly large. It has often been assumed that these figures were simply invented, and are evidence that the Bible is historically unreliable. But who would make up figures which are patently absurd? Would any man in his senses invent a story of a bus crash in which 16,000 passengers were killed? It is much more likely that these Old Testament numbers were faithfully copied out, despite the fact that they did not seem to make sense. Invention does not satisfactorily account for them. The explanation must lie elsewhere. And in fact patient research has gone a long way towards resolving this knotty problem." (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 191.)

## (E-3) The Corruption of Numbers

"There is evidence that the Old Testament text is on the whole marvellously well preserved. There is

also evidence from the parallel passages in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles and (especially) in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 that numbers were peculiarly difficult to transmit accurately. We have instances of extra noughts being added to a number: 2 Samuel 10:18 reads '700 chariots', 1 Chronicles 19:18 reads '7,000'. A digit can drop out: 2 Kings 24:8 gives the age of Jehoiachin on accession as 18, whereas 2 Chronicles 36:9 gives it as 8. An entire numeral can drop out. . . . In Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 the digits often vary by one unit. And there are other errors of copying, many of which are easily explained." (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 191.)

## (E-4) The Confusion of Words

"In the modern Hebrew Bible all numbers are written out in full, but for a long time the text was written without vowels. The absence of vowels made it possible to confuse two words which are crucial to this problem: 'eleph' and 'alluph'. Without vowel points these words look identical: 'lp. 'eleph is the ordinary word for 'thousand', but it can also be used in a variety of other senses: e.g. 'family' (Judges 6:15, Revised Version) or 'clan' (Zechariah 9:7; 12:5, 6, Revised Standard Version) or perhaps a military unit. 'alluph is used for the 'chieftains' of Edom (Genesis 36:15-43); probably for a commander of a military 'thousand'; and almost certainly for the professional, fully-armed soldier." (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 191.)

## (E-5) Military Statistics

"At certain periods warfare was conducted by two sharply distinguished types of fighting men—the Goliaths and the Davids—the professional soldiers who were fully armed, and the folk army, whose only weapons were those of the peasant shepherd. It seems clear that in a number of places the word for professional soldier has been misunderstood as meaning 'thousand'. Take, for example, the attack on the little town of Gibeah in Judges 20. Verse 2 says that 400,000 footmen 'that drew the sword' assembled. If these were in fact 400 fully armed foot-soldiers, the subsequent narrative makes excellent sense. The Benjamite forces (verse 15) consist of 26 soldiers armed with swords, together with 700 men armed only with slings. At the first attack (verse 21) the Israelites lose 22 of their crack soldiers, the next day (verse 25) they lose a further 18; on the third day (verses 29, 34) an ambush is set, consisting of, or led by, 10 of them. (Could 10,000 men take up their

positions undetected?) The losses begin again (verse 31) 'as at other times'—and in this case the scale of loss has been clearly preserved, for about 30 Israelites (not apparently sword-armed soldiers), 25 Benjamite soldiers and 100 others are killed. Eighteen of them were killed in the first stage of the pursuit, 5 were later 'cut down in the highways' and 2 more at Gidom. The remaining 600 slingers took refuge in the rock of Rimmon. Similarly, in the assault on Ai (Joshua 7–8) the true proportions of the narrative become clear when we realize that the disastrous loss of 36 men is matched by the setting of an ambush, not of 30,000 men of valour, but of 30.

"David's feast in Hebron in 1 Chronicles 12 appears to be attended by enormous numbers, not of ordinary men, but of distinguished leaders—some 340,800 of them. In this case it looks as though in fact there were 'captains of thousands' and 'captains of hundreds', and that by metonymy or by abbreviation 'thousand' has been used for 'captains of thousands' and 'hundreds' for 'captains of hundreds.' 'Thousand' and 'hundred' have been treated as numerals and added together. When these figures are unscrambled, we get a total of roughly 2,000 'famous men', which seems eminently reasonable.

"Along these lines most of the numerical problems of the later history fall into place. In 1 Kings 20:27–30, the little Israelite army killed 100 (not 100,000) foot-soldiers, and the wall of Apeh killed 27 (not 27,000) more. The Ethiopian invasion had a thousand, not a million, warriors (2 Chronicles 14:9). 10 (not 10,000) were cast down from the top of the rock (2 Chronicles 25:12)." (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, pp. 191–92.)

#### (E-6) The Size of the Israelite Nation

"The most interesting, most difficult and (from the historian's point of view) the most important question is the size of the Israelite population at the different stages of its history. The present texts indicate that the 70 souls of Joseph's day had risen to two or three million at the time of the Exodus (Numbers 1) and to at least five million in the time of David (2 Samuel 24:9; 1 Chronicles 21:5). With regard to the latter, R. de Vaux rightly says: '(2 Samuel) lists 800,000 men liable for military service in Israel, and 500,000 in Judah. . . . The lower total, in 2 Samuel, is still far too high: 1,300,000 men of military age would imply at least five million inhabitants, which, for Palestine, would mean nearly twice as many people to the square mile as in the most thickly populated countries of modern Europe.'

"The solution of the problem of the Exodus numbers is a long story. Suffice it to say that there is good reason to believe that the original censuses in Numbers 1 and 26 set out the numbers of each tribe, somewhat in this form:

Simeon: 57 armed men; 23 'hundreds' (military units).

This came to be written: 57 'lp; 2 'lp 3 'hundreds'.

"Not realizing that 'lp in one case meant 'armed man' and in the other 'thousand', this was tidied up to read 59,300. When these figures are carefully decoded, a remarkably clear picture of the whole military organization emerges. The total fighting force is some 18,000 which would probably mean a figure of about 72,000 for the whole migration.

"The figures of the Levites seem consistently to have collected an extra nought. The mystery of Plato's Atlantis has been solved by recognition of this same numerical confusion. Plato obtained *from Egyptian priests* what now turns out to be a detailed account of the Minoan civilization and its sudden end. But as all the figures were multiplied by a factor of ten, the area was too great to be enclosed in the Mediterranean, so he placed it in the Atlantic; and the date was put back into remote antiquity, thousands of years too early. This same tenfold multiplication factor is found in the figures of the Levites in book of Numbers. When it is eliminated Levi fits into the pattern as a standard-size tribe of about 2,200 males. These figures agree remarkably well with the other indications of population in the period of the conquest and the judges." (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 192.)

#### (E-7) David's Census

"The discrepancy between the two sets of figures for David's census can be accounted for by recognizing at different stages in transmission, first, the addition of noughts, and then, a misunderstanding of 'lp. If we postulate original figures: Israel: 80,000 plus 30 'lp; Judah: 40,000 plus 70 'lp, the present text of both Samuel and Chronicles can be accounted for thus:

#### CHRONICLES

Stage	Israel	Judah
1	80,000 plus 30 'lp	40,000 plus 70 'lp
2	800,000 plus 300 'lp	400,000 plus 70 'lp
3	1,100,000	470,000

#### SAMUEL

Stage	Israel	Judah
1	80,000 plus 30 'lp	40,000 plus 70 'lp
2	800,000 plus 30 'lp	470,000

At this stage it would seem that the copyist was perplexed by the floating '30 'lp', which he took to be 30,000. He wrongly combined it with the Judah figure, so producing:

3	800,000	500,000
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If the original figures totalled 120,000 men of military age, together with 100 professional soldiers, the entire population would have been nearly half a million, which again tallies well with other indications in the text.

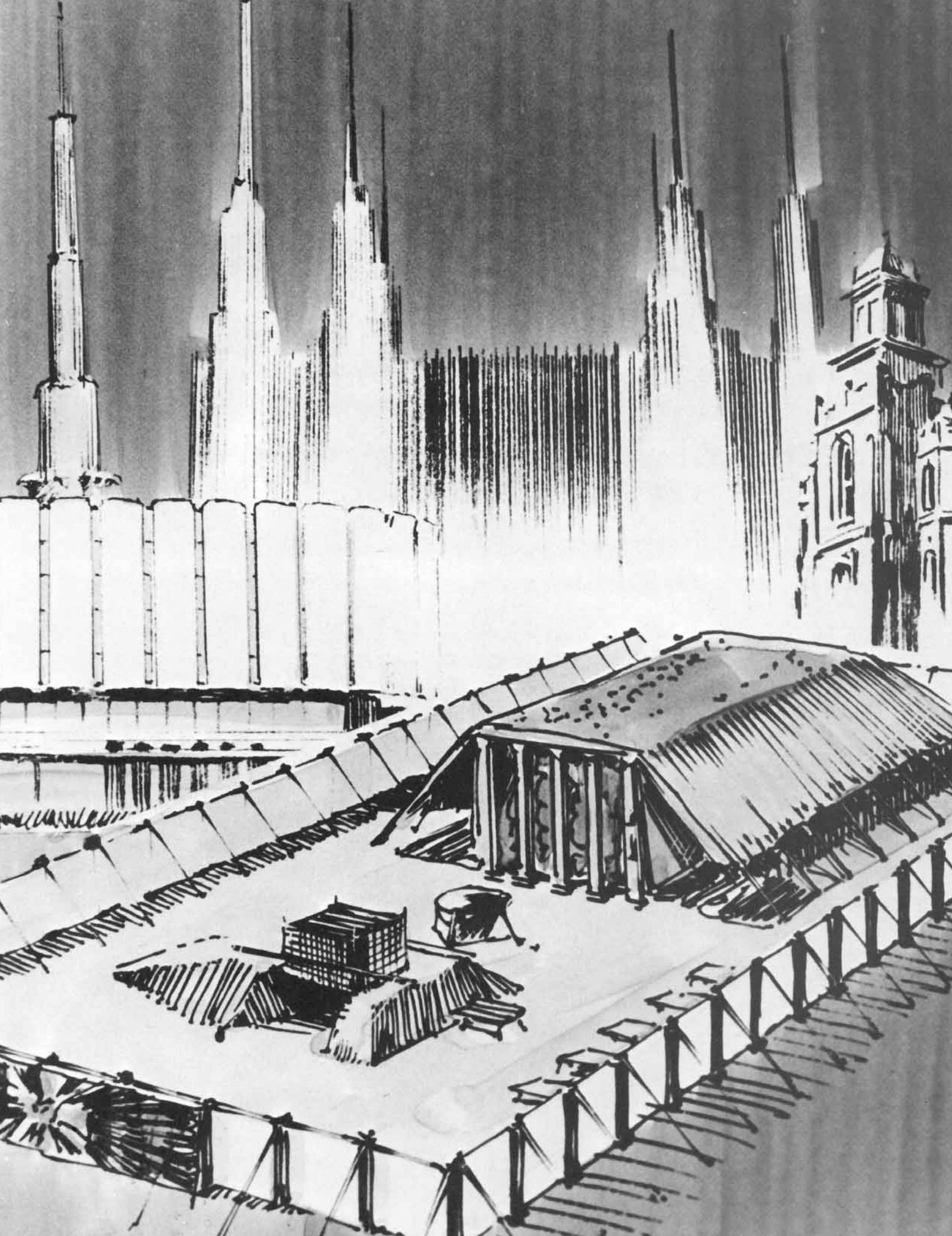
"By the use of these methods a very large proportion of the numerical difficulties can be resolved." (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 192.)

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**(E-8) Conclusion**

The scholars are not suggesting that all numbers in the Old Testament are inaccurate, or even that all the large numbers are inaccurate. Joseph Smith stated, "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly" (Articles of Faith 1:8). Also,

transmission errors have corrupted the text to some degree. It should not surprise us, then, to think that translation and transmission problems may have changed some of the numbers given in the Old Testament text.



# Wilderness Wanderings, Part 1

## (17-1) Introduction

The title of the book of Numbers in the King James Version comes from the Latin Vulgate *Numeri* (“Numbers”), which is descriptive of the census given in the first three chapters of the book rather than of its content in general. Therefore, *Numbers* is strictly the Christian name for this section of the Torah, or first five books of Moses.

The Hebrews most often chose from among the first words of the text for a title for each of the books in the Bible. Thus, the Jews have called this book either *Vayedabber* (“And He Spoke”), which is the first Hebrew word of the book, or, more commonly, *Bemidbar* (“In the Wilderness”), which is the fifth word in the first verse.

This part of the work of Moses records the movement of the children of Israel from Mount Sinai to Mount Pisgah, which was on the east side of the Jordan River and overlooked the promised land. The book includes an account of the numbering of Israel, the Levitical preparations for moving the tabernacle, why Israel was cursed with forty years of wandering, the second numbering of Israel after those above twenty years of age at the time of the Exodus had died, the choosing of Joshua to lead Israel, and a description of some land inheritances by the various tribes.

The book does not have many doctrinal discourses, but it gives the necessary understanding to key historical events in the story of the family of Jacob. Some of the doctrinal implications of these historical events are of great worth. Be alert to the major events and specific preparations Israel underwent before they were ready to realize their promised reward.

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Numbers 1–12.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON NUMBERS 1–12

### (17-2) Numbers 1:1–46. How Many People Did Moses Lead through the Wilderness?

The first census of Israel after the Exodus numbered 603,550 men over twenty years of age who could go to war (see v. 3). This included none of the Levites

(see v. 47) who numbered 22,000 (see Numbers 3:39). It also excluded all females, old men, boys under twenty years of age, and men unable to bear arms. This record has caused some scholars to estimate the total number of the children of Israel to be over two million souls (see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:4–5). Other scholars believe that there have been textual errors in the transmission of numbers down through the centuries and that the total number of Israelites would be closer to half a million (see Enrichment Section E, “The Problem of Large Numbers in the Old Testament”). Whatever is correct, the task Moses faced was incredibly huge. To lead even five hundred thousand people into a harsh and barren wilderness and attempt to keep their hunger and thirst satisfied, their needs for shelter and protection from the elements met, as well as bring them to a state of spiritual maturity and obedience—no wonder Moses cried out, “I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me” (Numbers 11:14).

### (17-3) Numbers 1:32–35

The blessing of Ephraim was here fulfilled in having thousands more sons able for war than had his older brother, Manasseh (see Genesis 48:19–20).

### (17-4) Numbers 1:47–54

Those of the Levitical Priesthood were assigned particularly to care for the house of the Lord: to officiate in it on behalf of the children of Israel and to disassemble and reassemble it in times of movement. They were its protectors, so their tents encircled the sanctuary.

### (17-5) Numbers 2. Why Was There a Specific Order of March and Camping?

God’s house is a house of order (see D&C 132:8). In symbolic representation thereof, so was the camp of Israel. Order was maintained in both their encampments and marches.

The tribes were deployed in four groups of three tribes. On the east side of the camp and at the front of the moving column were Issachar and Zebulun with Judah at the head. On the south side in second position were Simeon and Gad under the leadership of Reuben. In the middle were the Levites. On the west and fourth in the line of march were Manasseh and Benjamin led by Ephraim. On the north and in the rear were Asher and Naphtali with Dan at the head.

The places of honor, at the head of the hosts and immediately following the tabernacle, were held by Judah and Ephraim, respectively. Judah camped directly east of the tabernacle entrance.

### (17-6) Numbers 3

The Levites were not counted with the other tribes of Israel because of their divine stewardship to act in the stead of the firstborn son (see vv. 12–13). Joseph, however, had already been assigned a double portion, and both Ephraim and Manasseh became full and independent tribes (see Genesis 48:22). A distinction was also made between the sons of Aaron and other Levites (see vv. 2, 8–10; Reading 17-15). Descendants of Aaron were designated as priests, and they were the ones given the stewardship to preside in the ordinances of the tabernacle. The other Levites assisted in maintaining the tabernacle and its services, but they could not actually perform the ordinances of sacrifice, burning incense, and so on. Although all the Levites camped around the tabernacle, Aaron and his sons, along with Moses, were placed in the favored position directly in front of the tabernacle entrance (see v. 38).

### (17-7) Numbers 3:51. Why Were the Extra Levites Redeemed with Money?

The total number of Levites in religious service closely approximated the number of firstborn among the children of Israel. The excess 273 firstborn who were not redeemed man for man by a Levite substitute were redeemed by a five-shekel offering each. President John Taylor explained why this procedure was required:

“The first-born of the Egyptians, for whom no lamb as a token of the propitiation was offered, were destroyed. It was through the propitiation and atonement alone that the Israelites were saved, and, under the circumstances they must have perished with the Egyptians, who were doomed, had it not been for the contemplated atonement and propitiation of Christ, of which this was a figure.

“Hence the Lord claimed those that He saved as righteously belonging to Him, and claiming them as His He demanded their services. . . . He accepted the tribe of Levi in lieu of the first-born of Israel; and as there were more of the first-born than there were of the Levites, the balance had to be redeemed with money, which was given to Aaron, as the great High Priest and representative of the Aaronic Priesthood, he being also a Levite. [See Numbers 3:50–51.]” (*Mediation and Atonement*, p. 108.)

### (17-8) Numbers 4. What Is the Significance of the Sons of Kohath?

Chapter 4 of Numbers explains the duties and responsibilities of the branches of Levites with respect to the tabernacle. Moses and Aaron were sons of Amram, a grandson of Levi through Kohath (see Numbers 3:19; Exodus 6:18, 20). Aaron and his sons were set apart to the priesthood and were given the other sons of Levi to assist them in the movement and functions of the tabernacle (see Numbers 3:5–13).

Kohath seems to have been the second son of Levi (see Numbers 3:17), but was probably mentioned first because of his grandsons Moses and Aaron and also because his male descendants were the bearers

of the sacred furniture of the tabernacle (see Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 104).

The sons of Levi began their ministry in the tabernacle, at the age of thirty, the same age as the Savior was when He began His earthly ministry (see Numbers 4:3, 23, 30; Luke 3:22–23).

### (17-9) Numbers 5:1–4. Separation of the Unclean from the Camp

Those with leprosy or running sores were not allowed to march or camp with the rest of Israel (see v. 2). To be put out of the camp implied only a separation from the main body, not a total rejection or abandonment. A noted Bible scholar suggested why this isolation was required.

“The expulsion mentioned here was founded, 1. On a pure *physical* reason, *viz.*, the diseases were *contagious*, and therefore there was a necessity of putting those afflicted by them apart, that the infection might not be communicated. 2. There was also a *spiritual* reason; the camp was the habitation of *God*, and nothing impure should be permitted to remain where he dwelt.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:631.)

### (17-10) Numbers 5:11–31. The Trial of Jealousy

This law for determining the guilt or innocence of an adulterer is puzzling in many respects. At first it seems heavily biased against the woman for there is no similar requirement for the man. A close examination of the law will show what was involved in it and why the Lord revealed it.

“The rabbins who have commented on this text give us the following information: When any man, prompted by the spirit of jealousy, suspected his wife to have committed adultery, he brought her first before the judges, and accused her of the crime; but as she asserted her innocence, and refused to acknowledge herself guilty, and as he had no witnesses to produce, he required that she be sentenced to *drink the waters of bitterness* which the law had appointed; that God, by this means, might discover what she wished to conceal. After the judges had heard the *accusation* and the *denial*, the man and his wife were both sent to Jerusalem, to appear before the Sanhedrin, who were the sole judges in such matters. The rabbins say that the judges of the Sanhedrin, at first endeavoured with threatenings to confound the woman, and cause her to confess her crime; when she still persisted in her innocence, she was led to the eastern gate of the court of Israel, where she was stripped of the clothes she wore, and dressed in black before a number of persons of her own sex. The priest then told her that if she knew herself to be innocent she had no evil to apprehend; but if she were guilty, she might expect to suffer all that the law threatened; to which she answered, *Amen, amen*.

“The priest then wrote the words of the law upon a piece of vellum, with ink that had no vitriol in it, that it might be the more easily blotted out. The words written on the vellum were, according to the rabbins, the following:—‘If a strange man have not

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come near thee, and thou art not polluted by forsaking the bed of thy husband, these bitter waters which I have cursed will not hurt thee: but if thou have gone astray from thy husband, and have polluted thyself by coming near to another man, may thou be accursed of the Lord, and become an example for all his people; may thy thigh rot, and thy belly swell till it burst! may these cursed waters enter into thy belly, and, being swelled therewith, may thy thigh putrefy!

“After this the priest took a new pitcher, filled it with water out of the brazen bason that was near the altar of burnt-offering, cast some dust into it taken from the pavement of the temple, mingled something bitter, as *wormwood*, with it, and having read the curses above mentioned to the woman, and received her answer of *Amen*, he scraped off the curses from the vellum into the pitcher of water. During this time another priest tore her clothes as low as her bosom, made her head bare, untied the tresses of her hair, fastened her torn clothes with a girdle below her breasts, and presented her with the tenth part of an ephah, or about three pints of *barley-meal*, which was in a frying pan, without oil or incense.

“The other priest, who had prepared the waters of jealousy, then gave them to be drank by the accused person, and as soon as she had swallowed them, he put the pan with the meal in it into her hand. This was waved before the Lord, and a part of it thrown into the fire of the altar. If the woman was innocent, she returned with her husband; and the waters, instead of incommoding her, made her more healthy and fruitful than ever: if on the contrary she were guilty, she was seen immediately to grow pale, her eyes started out of her head, and, lest the temple should be defiled with her death, she was carried out, and died instantly with all the ignominious circumstances related in the curses.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:634.)

Several points should be noted.

1. Although this ritual focused on the woman, it in no way implied that men who committed adultery were to be excused, for the law clearly stated that adulterers of both sexes were to be stoned (see Leviticus 20:10).

2. In a way, the law provided protection of two different kinds for a woman. First, without this law it is possible that a husband could unjustly accuse his wife of infidelity. If his word alone were sufficient to convict her, she would be in a terrible state indeed. Putting the determination of guilt or innocence into the hands of God rather than into the hands of her husband, or even other men, ensured that she could vindicate herself if she were innocent.

The second positive benefit is more subtle but probably is of even greater value. If a husband suspected his wife of adultery, one result would be a terrible strain in the husband-wife relationship. In today’s legal system, with no witnesses to prove her guilt, the court would probably declare her not guilty. But the basis for her acquittal would be a lack of positive evidence of her guilt rather than proof of her innocence. Such a legal declaration, therefore, would do little to alleviate the doubts of the husband

and the estrangement would likely continue. Neighbors and friends also would probably harbor lingering suspicions about her innocence. With the trial of jealousy, however, dramatic proof of God’s declaration of her innocence would be irrefutable. The reputation of the woman would be saved and a marriage relationship healed. Thus, true justice and mercy were assured, and the whole matter would be laid promptly to rest.

3. Those who ask why there was no parallel test a woman could ask of her husband should remember that if the accused woman refused to undergo the trial by drinking the water, her action was considered a confession of guilt. Thus, *she and her partner* in the evil act would be put to death (see Leviticus 20:10). If she attempted to lie and pass the test, but brought the curses upon herself, this result too was considered proof of the guilt of her male partner. It is possible that a wife who believed her husband guilty of infidelity could ask that his suspected partner be put to the trial of jealousy. The outcome would immediately establish the guilt or innocence of her husband as well as that of the other woman.

Thus, in a world where the rights of women were often abused, the Lord provided a means for protecting their rights as well as seeing that evil was put away and justice done.

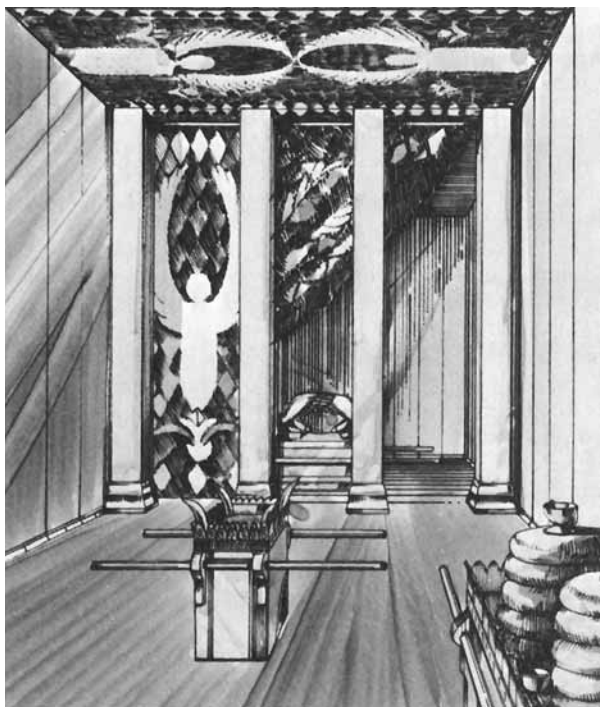
#### (17-11) Numbers 6:1–21. What Was a Nazarite?

A Nazarite was a man or woman who took a voluntary vow to separate his life for the service of the Lord, or to live consecrated unto Him (see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:34). Being a Nazarite had nothing to do with coming from the town of Nazareth.

A Nazarite took three vows: he would abstain absolutely from wine or strong drink, including any products of the vine in any form (see Numbers 6:3–4); he would not let a razor touch his head, but would let his hair grow naturally as a crown to God (see Numbers 6:5); and he would not allow himself to draw near a dead person, even a member of his own family (see Numbers 6:6). His life and all his efforts were completely and expressly dedicated to the Lord. This consecrated life bore some resemblance to that of the high priest (see Leviticus 21:10–12). Those who seem to have taken such vows, or had parents who made the vows for them, include Samson (see Judges 13:5), Samuel (see 1 Samuel 1:11, 28), and John the Baptist (see Luke 1:15). In some cases, these Nazarite vows were for life, but more often they were for a specific period of time, after which the person returned to a normal life. (Two instances in the New Testament that seem related to this vow taking are recorded in Acts 18:18–19 and 21:23–26.)

#### (17-12) Numbers 7

The word *prince* in the Hebrew means “a leader or ruler of the tribe.” For a discussion of the utensils of the tabernacle see Readings 13-7 through 13-12. For the worth of a shekel see the table of weights and measures in Maps and Charts.



The sanctuary, or holy place

**(17-13) Numbers 8:1-4. What Is the Meaning of “Over against the Candlestick”?**

In the Hebrew *over against* means that when the lamp was lighted, its light illuminated whatever was on the opposite side of the room (“over against the candlestick”) [v. 2]. In this case, the table of shewbread was opposite the lamp.

**(17-14) Numbers 8:5-22**

The Levites entered into their service in the tabernacle just as a baby comes into the world—clean and pure (see vv. 6-7). In addition, the people laid hands upon the priest (see v. 10), who was then set apart for his service. When an Israelite brought an offering to the tabernacle, before he offered it in sacrifice, he laid his hands upon the animal and symbolically transferred his identity to it (see Reading 14-5). For the people of Israel to lay hands on the priest thus suggests that he took upon himself their identity; that is, he became their representative before the Lord.

**(17-15) Numbers 8:19. What Is the Distinction between the Aaronic and the Levitical Priesthood?**

“The Aaronic Priesthood is divided into the *Aaronic* and the *Levitical*, yet it is but *one* priesthood. This is merely a matter of designating certain duties *within* the priesthood. The sons of Aaron, who *presided* in the Aaronic order, were spoken of as holding the *Aaronic Priesthood*; and the sons of Levi, who were not sons of Aaron, were spoken of as the *Levites*. They held the *Aaronic Priesthood* but served under, or in a lesser capacity, than the sons of Aaron.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:86.)

**(17-16) Numbers 8:23-26. What Was the Stewardship of the Levites?**

Chapter 4 of Numbers speaks of the Levites’ role in transporting the tabernacle, and these verses in chapter 8 refer to their stewardship and service in it. Since they had been given to Aaron and his sons to assist them as they administered in the sacred ordinances, the Levites were assigned to set up and take down the tabernacles, clean it, carry wood and water, and slay animals to be used by their brethren in these sacrifices. They were allowed to begin such service five years earlier than those who transported the tabernacle. (See Numbers 8:24; 4:3.)

After the age of fifty the Levites were to “minister with their brethren,” Aaron and his sons, in caring for the furniture of the tabernacle (Numbers 8:26; see also 3:7-9). This voluntary service was a crown to their advancing years.

**(17-17) Numbers 9:1-14**

The crucial concept taught by the Passover feast was that Israel, through an exacting ceremony, had a type and a reminder of the Only Begotten Son of God, whose blood would save man spiritually as the blood on the door posts in Egypt had saved them physically. (Review Readings 10-1 and 10-6.)

**(17-18) Numbers 9:15-23. What Is the Significance of the Cloud over the Tabernacle?**

This statement is the most comprehensive on the law of the Lord concerning the movement of the camp of Israel. Since the cloud of smoke and fire was a visible sign of God’s presence, Israel learned to literally follow the Lord. They made camp, broke camp, traveled, and performed their services at the command of the Lord—the Hebrew reads, “at the mouth of Jehovah” (see v. 18). In very deed they were schooled to follow Jehovah, who has ever directed His church and kingdom, and yet many of them did not transfer the meaning from this miraculous physical demonstration to its more important spiritual corollary.

**(17-19) Numbers 10:1-10**

The trumpets of beaten or hammered silver were used on seven special occasions: to call the general assembly, to assemble the princes or tribal leaders, to sound the signal for breaking camp, to sound an alarm for war, to announce the days of celebration and gladness, to announce solemn feast days, and to announce the start of the offerings and sacrifices at the beginning of each month. It is evident that some far-reaching means was essential to calling such great numbers to action.

**(17-20) Numbers 10:21**

The Kohathites were Levites of the same family as Moses and Aaron, Kohath being their grandfather and a son of Levi (see Numbers 4:15, 18; Exodus 6:18, 20). They were the only Levites whose burden (the tabernacle furniture) was so important that they were required to carry it by hand (see Numbers 7:9).

**(17-21) Numbers 10:29–32. Who Was Hobab and What Did Moses Mean When He Said to Him, “Be to Us Instead of Eyes”?**

*Raguel* is an alternate spelling of *Reuel* (see Exodus 2:18), who was Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law.

“Hobab, brother-in-law of Moses was persuaded, though at first unwilling to accompany Israel and to be to them ‘instead of eyes’ or to serve as a guide. Although Jehovah gave general directions, Hobab knew the area and could help locate specific trails, campsites, etc. That he and his family went and did become heirs to lands in the land of Israel is apparent later from Judges 1:16 and 4:11; also I Sam. 15:6, II Kings 10:15, I Chronicles 2:55, and as later as Jeremiah 35, wherein that prophet cites them as exemplary for integrity.” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:115.)

**(17-22) Numbers 11:16–17, 24–29. What Special Gift Were the Seventy Given?**

“In answer to Moses’ request for help, seventy men were chosen and endowed with the ‘spirit that was upon him’ (i.e., upon *Moses*; it means they were endowed with some of the same authority and spiritual gifts) so that they were able also to ‘prophesy.’ When some people objected that two of the men were prophesying who did not come out for the ceremony of installation, Moses said wishfully, ‘Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!’ He refused to forbid them to prophesy.

“(Note that we live in a dispensation when *all* members of the congregation of the Lord *may* have the gift of prophecy, and other gifts, by virtue of the fact that all who are baptized are given the ‘Gift of the Holy Ghost.’ Probably some of us do not exercise it however.)

“On such spiritual gifts in Paul’s time, see I Corinthians 12:4–10.” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:115.)

In this material is another evidence of Moses’ greatness. Some leaders would be threatened if subordinates evidenced gifts and abilities similar to their own because then their own status and position would be jeopardized. Not so with Moses. In answer to Joshua’s complaint, Moses asked, “Enviest thou for my sake?” (Numbers 11:29). Not only was he not threatened by this remarkable sharing of his spiritual power, but he expressed the desire to have every single Israelite share the same power with him.

**(17-23) Numbers 11:19–20, 31–35**

When God sent the quail in answer to Israel’s longing for something other than manna, the people turned gluttonous. The smallest catch equaled about one hundred bushels, far beyond normal need. The greedy lust for more than they could use brought a just punishment upon the people. How many died in the plague is not recorded, but the place was called “Graves of the Craving” or “The Graves of Lust” (see v. 34).



*Desert quail*

**(17-24) Numbers 12:1–11. Why Did Miriam and Aaron Oppose Moses?**

According to Josephus, when Moses was a general of the Egyptian army in the attack against the Ethiopians, he married an Ethiopian woman as a political alliance to end the war (see Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 2, chap. 10, par. 1).

The ostensible reason for Miriam’s and Aaron’s complaining was that the Ethiopians were non-Israelite descendants of Cush. The real reason for the complaint, however, seems to have been jealousy motivated by Moses’ position as spiritual leader and prophet of Israel.

“This elevation of Moses excited envy on the part of his brother and sister, whom God had also richly endowed and placed so high, that Miriam was distinguished as a prophetess above all the women of Israel, whilst Aaron had been raised by his investiture with the high-priesthood into the spiritual head of the whole nation. But the pride of the natural heart was not satisfied with this. They would dispute with their brother Moses the pre-eminence of his special calling and his exclusive position, which they might possibly regard themselves as entitled to contest with him not only as his brother and sister, but also as the nearest supporters of his vocation. Miriam was the instigator of the open rebellion, as we may see both from the fact that her name stands before that of Aaron, and also from the use of the feminine verb.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:75.)

Today some members of the Church fall into a similar trap. Because the Lord blesses them with the gifts of the Spirit, they think that they have equal or superior status to the presiding priesthood authority. Soon they are led into apostasy if they do not humble themselves and submit to the Lord’s servants called to preside. Even if Moses’ wish had been granted and every soul in Israel had received the gift of prophecy



*Miriam, a rebellious prophetess*

(see Numbers 11:29), Moses would still have been the one chosen by the Lord to preside. One question that arises is, Why was only Miriam, and not Aaron, punished with leprosy when both had participated in the opposition? There are two possible reasons. First, as Keil and Delitzsch pointed out, Miriam was the instigator of the attack on Moses' right to preside. Thus, her sin was the more grievous. Second, for Aaron to seek priesthood leadership demonstrated pride and self-aggrandizement. He aspired to a position to which he had not been called. When Miriam sought that position, she not only demonstrated pride but also sought to set up an order contrary to God's system of government. From the beginning, the priesthood callings and the right to preside were given to men. Miriam's attempt to achieve equality with Moses was a serious breach of that divinely instituted system of order.

## POINTS TO PONDER

(17-25) Often teachers of the Old Testament separate Numbers 11 and 12 and treat them as if they are two different stories when actually a powerful lesson comes out of seeing the relationship between the two. Answer the following questions as you study these two chapters again.

1. What event immediately preceded the complaints about the food? (see Numbers 11:1-3). What does that suggest about Israel's unwillingness to learn from experience?

2. When the Israelites complained about the monotony of their diet, who were they really complaining about? (see 11:20).

3. *Manna* was the people's name for the food sent from God and was derived from the Hebrew word meaning "What is this?" (see Exodus 16:15 and explanatory footnotes to that verse). What was God's name for the food? (see Exodus 16:4).

4. What typological significance do you see in the fact that Israel tired of the food sent from heaven and "fell a lusting" (Numbers 11:4) for the food of Egypt? (see John 6:30-35, 51). Remember that Egypt, like Babylon, is a type of the world (see Revelation 11:8).

5. The Lord eventually gave Israel their wish and provided the flesh of quail for them, but before doing so He granted Moses his wish for help in the burdens of leadership. Instead of just calling additional help, how did the Lord choose to share the burden of Moses? (see 11:16-17, 24-25).

6. The seventy elders of Israel were granted one of the gifts of the Spirit, the gift of prophecy (see D&C 46:22). Of what, do you suppose, did they prophesy? (see Mosiah 13:33-35).

7. Carefully read John 6:33-34, 47-51 again. Do you now see any significance in the fact that the Lord sent the gift of prophecy among the Israelites who were complaining that they were tired of manna?

8. Note the language related to eating in such scriptures as 2 Nephi 9:51; 32:3; Jacob 3:2; Isaiah 40:11; John 21:15-17; D&C 20:77. Who was more truly fed that day, the Israelites who collected the quail or the seventy who feasted on the fruits of the Spirit? How do these events add poignant meaning to Moses' cry, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!?" (Numbers 11:29).

9. What is the eventual end of those who seek to feast only upon the flesh of the world? (see Numbers 11:31-34).

10. Now think of the rebellion of Miriam and Aaron in the context of what had just happened. Almost certainly Aaron would have been one of the seventy leaders of the people chosen to receive the gift of prophecy (see 11:16). Miriam also had the gift of prophecy, not given on this occasion, but previously, for she was called "a prophetess" (Exodus 15:20). Is there any danger that a person who feels the marvelous power of the gift of prophecy might think he was suddenly equal in power to the prophet who is the presiding priesthood officer? Why?

11. Suppose that Moses' wish that all Israel were prophets (see Numbers 11:29) had been realized. Would that event have meant that Moses was no longer the prophet, or presiding priesthood officer, in Israel?

12. Miriam's sin was not in seeking to be like Moses in terms of spiritual gifts but rather in seeking to share with him the calling of presiding priesthood officer. What lesson is there in that event for modern Israel?

13. We saw in Leviticus that leprosy was in and of itself a type (see Reading 15-7). What then is the symbolic significance of Miriam's punishment for rejecting Moses' position of leadership? How is that punishment related to the warning given in Doctrine and Covenants 1:14?





# Wilderness Wanderings, Part 2

## (18-1) Introduction

The Old Testament has some stories of great and marvelous men and women. Abraham, Sarah, Ruth, Moses, Adam, Eve, Enoch, and many others provide inspiration to all who desire to achieve true greatness. But the Old Testament also records many tragedies. The tragedy was not so much in what happened, but in what was lost, in what could have been, compared to what was. King David lost his exaltation because of his foolish attempt to cover his sin of adultery through murder. Saul, called by the Lord to be the first king of Israel, soon forgot who was the true king and ended his life in a frantic search for tranquility. Samson had unusual powers given him, and yet he wasted them in frivolous and self-centered actions.

In this chapter you will study another Old Testament tragedy, but in this case it was a national tragedy. The Israelites had been led out of the power of the greatest empire in the world at that time. They had been personal witnesses to plagues that afflicted the Egyptians but left Israel untouched. They had with their own hands smeared blood on the doorways of their homes and then heard the cries of the Egyptians as their firstborn fell. They had walked between towering walls of water that divided at the command of Moses, then watched as those walls collapsed on the armies of the pharaoh. They ate bread that miraculously appeared each morning, drank water gushing from a rock, felt Sinai quake, and saw it glow with fire. What people in all of history had greater witness that God was with them and would use His unsurpassable power in their behalf? They had so much and were promised so much more. Then came the choice. In one foolish, blind, faithless choice this generation of Israel lost it all.

Read now the tragedy of Israel. It should make every righteous soul of every age weep for these foolish people. Look into your own heart and see if the tragedy of Israel could not be repeated in your own life.

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Numbers 13–36.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON NUMBERS 13–36

### (18-2) Numbers 13–14. The Spies and Their Evil Report of the Land

At this point in history, Israel was just a few months out of Egypt, and they had been given the law of God. The Lord indicated that it was then time to go in and possess the promised land. He commanded that a reconnaissance group be sent into Canaan to reconnoiter the land. The evidence of the richness of the land was irrefutable, and the spies even brought back a cluster of grapes carried on a staff between two men to demonstrate the beauty and richness of the produce (see Numbers 13:23). Yet the spies, except for Joshua and Caleb, reported that, despite the richness of the land, there was no hope for driving out the inhabitants. The exaggerated tone of their negative report shows in the use of such words as “*very great*,” the land “*eateth up the inhabitants thereof*,” “*all the people . . . are men of great stature*,” “*we saw the giants*,” “*we were . . . as grasshoppers*” (vv. 28, 32–33; emphasis added).

Such an exaggerated report of itself was bad enough and demonstrated the lack of faith of the ten men who gave it. But the national tragedy began when Israel hearkened to their report. They openly rejected the numerous evidences of God’s power that had been almost daily fare and began to cry out that it would have been better for them never to have left Egypt. Nor did the murmuring stop there. A movement was started to reject Moses and choose a leader that would take them back to Egypt (see Numbers 14:4 and Nehemiah 9:17, which suggest that they actually chose the leaders who would take them back). When Joshua and Caleb tried to counteract the effect of the negative report, the congregation sought to have them stoned (see Numbers 14:10).

Little wonder that the anger of the Lord was kindled. In a great intercessory prayer, Moses pleaded for mercy for his people (see Numbers 14:13–14). He did not excuse the behavior of his people, but only emphasized the long-suffering mercy of the Lord. Israel was spared destruction but lost the privilege of immediately entering the promised land. For the next thirty-eight years they were to wander in the harsh wilderness of Sinai. During that time they could have conquered the inhabitants of the land of promise,

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built cities, eaten the fruit of the land flowing “with milk and honey” (Numbers 13:27), and raised their children in comfort and peace. But they would not, and so all above the age of twenty who had repudiated the power of the Lord, except Joshua and Caleb, were to die in the wilderness.

### **(18-3) Numbers 14:40–45. Can Israel Prevail without the Lord?**

When Moses told the Israelites all the words of the Lord, he records that they “mourned greatly” (Numbers 14:39). And yet, their mourning was not that of true repentance, as the events which immediately follow show. Like immature children who missed the whole point of parental punishment, Israel suddenly decided they would go up against the Canaanites, “for we have sinned” (v. 40). But Moses indicated that it was too late. The Lord had retracted the commandment to go up and possess the land, and, therefore, if they went up then, they would go without His power.

Then came the second stage of the tragedy. The Israelites had just lost the right to enter the promised land because they had refused to follow the Lord. Now, in an attempt to show how “repentant” they were, *they refused to follow the Lord*. With sorrowful brevity Moses simply said, “Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them” (v. 45).

### **(18-4) Numbers 15:1–26**

Recorded here is the actual application of the various sacrificial offerings prescribed in Leviticus 1 through 7. The laws of sacrifice, which brought about atonement and reconciliation with God, were reiterated at this point in Moses’ account because in Israel’s state of rebellion they provided the way to come back into God’s favor.

### **(18-5) Numbers 15:27–31**

Persons who sinned willfully in ancient Israel were to be “cut off” (v. 30). That is, they were to be excommunicated from the camp of Israel (see v. 30). In some cases the sin also required the death penalty. This extreme action was necessitated because the sinner “despised the word of the Lord” (v. 31). It was not a sin committed in ignorance or weakness, but a deliberate refusal to obey the word of the Lord. This law thus teaches, on an individual basis, the same lesson taught Israel collectively; that is, when persons or nation despise the word of the Lord and willfully sin, they will be cut off from God and not be counted part of His covenant people. They will suffer spiritual death.

### **(18-6) Numbers 15:32–36. Is Picking Up Sticks on the Sabbath Worthy of Death?**

To stone a man for violation of the Sabbath seems a harsh punishment. But in its historical context, two things are significant. Moses had just given the law for willful rebellion against God. Did this man know the law of the Sabbath? Moses had clearly taught earlier that one who violated the Sabbath was to be

put to death (see Exodus 31:14–15; 35:2). Obviously, here is an example of one who “despised the word of the Lord” (Numbers 15:31).

But think for a moment of what had just happened to Israel. They, as a nation, had despised the word of the Lord, first, by refusing to go up against the Canaanites when the Lord had told them to, and second, by going up against them after the Lord had told them not to. Thus Israel had been denied entry into the promised land. Now, an individual despised the word of the Lord and refused to enter the rest required on the Sabbath. Just as Israel was to suffer death in the wilderness for their rebellion, so a rebellious individual must be punished with the same punishment. Otherwise, God would be inconsistent.

### **(18-7) Numbers 15:37–41. What Were the Fringes on the Garment?**

A symbol is one thing that represents another. One use of symbols is to remind us of our important commitments. For example, the bread and water of the sacrament are symbols that remind us of Jesus’ sacrifice for us and of our covenants with Him. Israel practiced the law of sacrifice for a similar reason.

Similarly, the Lord commanded wandering Israel to fringe the borders of their garments so that when they looked upon the fringes they would be reminded of the commandments of the Lord (see v. 39).

Clothing is used to cover, protect, and beautify. To put fringes on an article of clothing symbolized that an individual is clothed, or covered, with the commandments of God.

The ribbon of blue also symbolically suggested concepts of deep importance. Blue signifies the heavens and so symbolizes the spiritual realm or godliness (see Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “colors,” 1:440).

“The *zizith* [tassel] on the sky-blue thread was to serve as a memorial sign to the Israelites, to remind them of the commandments of God, that they might have them constantly before their eyes and follow them, and not direct their heart and eyes to the things of this world, which turn away from the word of God, and lead astray to idolatry.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:104.)

### **(18-8) Numbers 16:1–40. The Rebellion of Korah and Other Leaders of Israel**

In Korah’s rebellion is a direct challenge to Moses’ and Aaron’s leadership. Up to this time, Israel was constantly murmuring and complaining, but apparently this was a greater attempt to replace Moses as the one chosen by God to lead His people. (Miriam’s and Aaron’s rebellion was an attempt to be equal with Moses, but it did not seek to overthrow him.) Korah, a Levite, had two hundred and fifty of Israel’s most prominent leaders behind him when he accused Moses and Aaron of taking too much upon themselves (see vv. 2–3). Korah’s statement that “all the congregation are holy, every one of them” (v. 3) is similar to that of the apostate Zoramites who, in their great wickedness, thanked God that they were His “holy children” (Alma 31:16).

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Had the insurrection been led by just any Israelite, it would have been serious enough, but Korah was a Levite, one who held the holy priesthood, and should therefore have been one of those in the forefront of obedience rather than of rebellion. Moses' questions to him in verses 9 and 10 are very pointed ones. The Prophet Joseph Smith made a significant change in verse 10. It should read, "Seek ye the *high* priesthood also" (JST, Numbers 16:10; emphasis added). Instead of having a sense of awe and gratitude that he had the honor of being a Levite, Korah and those with him sought to take the higher priesthood and the leadership of Israel unto themselves. This was a serious crisis in the political and religious life of Israel, and the Lord chose to deal with it in a direct and dramatic manner.

The Lord commanded both Aaron and the legitimate priesthood holders and Korah and those who followed him to bring censers and incense to the tabernacle. A *censer* was a small metal container made to hold hot coals taken from the altar of the tabernacle. During the tabernacle service, the officiating priest was required to sprinkle incense on the burning coals on the altar of incense, which stood directly in front of the veil of the tabernacle. Other scriptures indicate that the burning of incense was a symbol of prayer (see Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4; Psalm 141:2), suggesting that God can only be approached in holy supplication. By asking each group to bring censers and incense, the Lord set up a test very similar to that of Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal (see 1 Kings 18:17-40). In that instance, false worshipers were asked to call upon God for a sign that Baal had power. When they failed, the Lord gave a dramatic physical witness that He was God—fire from heaven consumed not just the sacrifice but also the altar.

Here, Korah and his supporters were asked to bring fire before the Lord as a symbol of their prayers and supplication for His support of their cause. Instead, the earth opened up and swallowed the leaders of the rebellion (see Numbers 16:31-33), and fire came down and consumed the other two hundred and fifty who presumed to take priesthood power unto themselves (see v. 35).

#### **(18-9) Numbers 16:41-50. The Children of Israel Murmured**

One cannot help but stand in disbelief at the hardness of the hearts of Israel. They had seen an incredible demonstration of the Lord's power that directly supported the call of Moses and Aaron as leaders of Israel. Yet, in the face of that miraculous power, they murmured and said that Moses and Aaron had killed the true servants of the Lord (see v. 41). No wonder Abinadi described them as "a stiffnecked people, quick to do iniquity, and slow to remember the Lord their God" (Mosiah 13:29). One also cannot help but marvel at the patience and long-suffering of the Lord.

#### **(18-10) Numbers 17:1-13. What Is the Significance of the Budding of Aaron's Rod?**

In the rebellion against the leadership of Moses and Aaron, the Lord gave two miraculous demonstrations that showed Israel without question whom He had chosen to lead His people. First, Korah and those who joined him in the rebellion were killed by being either swallowed in the earth or consumed by fire. Second, those who still continued to sustain his evil leadership, even after Korah's death, were killed in a plague (see Numbers 16:49). The scriptures state that nearly fifteen thousand people died trying to prove that Moses and Aaron were not the ones who should lead Israel. Then the Lord offered one more miracle to further demonstrate who was chosen to hold the priesthood. Bible scholars have explained the significance of this miracle in this way:

"The miracle which God wrought here as the Creator of nature, was at the same time a significant symbol of the nature and meaning of the priesthood. The choice of the rods had also a bearing upon the object in question. A man's rod was the sign of his position as ruler in the house and congregation; with a prince the rod becomes a sceptre, the insignia of rule [see Genesis 49:10]. As a severed branch, the rod could not put forth shoots and blossom in a natural way. But God could impart new vital powers even to the dry rod. And so Aaron had naturally no preeminence above the heads of the other tribes. But the priesthood was founded not upon natural qualifications and gifts, but upon the power of the Spirit, which God communicates according to the choice of His wisdom, and which He had imparted to Aaron through his consecration with holy anointing oil. It was this which the Lord intended to show to the people, by causing Aaron's rod to put forth branches, blossom, and fruit, through a miracle of His omnipotence; whereas the rods of the others heads of the tribes remained as barren as before. In this way, therefore, it was not without deep significance that Aaron's rod not only put forth shoots, by which the divine election might be recognized, but bore even blossom and ripe fruit. This showed that Aaron was not only qualified for his calling, but administered his office in the full power of the Spirit, and bore the fruit expected of him. The almond-rod was especially adapted to exhibit this, as an almond-tree flowers and bears fruit the earliest of all the trees, and has received its name [in Hebrew, which means] 'awake,' from this very fact [cf. Jeremiah 1:11]." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:114).

#### **(18-11) Numbers 18. The Levitical and Aaronic Priesthoods**

Here a distinction is made between the two orders of the Aaronic Priesthood. Although the terms *Aaronic* and *Levitical* are sometimes used interchangeably (see D&C 107:1, 6, 10), there were differences in duties. The lesser priesthood was given to those of "the tribe of Levi" (Numbers 18:2), to which Aaron and his sons

belonged. The Levites performed the housekeeping chores of the tabernacle, such as filling and lighting the lamps, carrying the ark of the covenant, assembling and disassembling the tabernacle, and so forth. The priests, who were chosen from Aaron's sons alone, were appointed to offer sacrifice, burn incense, instruct in the law, and so forth. Presiding over all the priests, or sons of Aaron, was a firstborn son. He served as high priest or president of the priests (see Numbers 3:5–10; 18:1–7; 1 Chronicles 23:27–32).

Those selected to minister in the offices of priest and Levite were to be supported from the tithes and offerings made by the children of Israel (see Numbers 18:21, 24). The Lord said to Aaron, "All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the first fruits of them which they shall offer unto the Lord, them have I given thee" (v. 12). These, like everything else in Israel, were to be tithed (see v. 26).

In addition, the Levites had to have a place to live. They were not given land as the other tribes were because their inheritance was the priesthood instead (see v. 20). In order to scatter them among the tribes and provide homes for the Levites, Moses commanded that forty-eight "Levite cities" be established for those who ministered to Israel's spiritual needs (see Numbers 35:1–8). This Levitical inheritance was provided when the land of Canaan was conquered under Joshua (see Joshua 21).

#### **(18-12) Numbers 19. Laws of Purification**

Anciently, an Israelite who had been in the presence of one who died or had been dead was held to be defiled (see Reading 15-3). This chapter in Numbers describes the way in which such a person was purified. First, a red heifer was slain, burned, and the ashes laid aside. Then the ashes were placed in pure water and the mixture sprinkled upon those who had been defiled. This was known as "the water of separation," since by it one was separated, or purified, from sin (v. 9). Failure to avail oneself of the cleansing power in this way resulted in being "cut off from among the congregation" (v. 20).

Much vital symbolism can be found in this ordinance. One who defiles himself with sin undergoes a spiritual death and is cut off from God's presence through the loss of the Holy Spirit. Recovery from spiritual death is obtained by faith in Christ's Atonement (symbolized by the death of the red heifer), repentance from sin, baptism in water, receiving the Holy Ghost, and obedience to God's commandments. All who thereafter commit certain serious sins and refuse to repent are likewise "cut off from among the congregation," that is, excommunicated (v. 20).

#### **(18-13) Numbers 20:2–13. Why Was Moses Not Allowed into the Holy Land?**

Rebellion among the children of Israel was not at all uncommon in their desert wanderings. The rebellion described in these verses, however, was especially serious because it apparently led Moses, the prophet of God, to momentarily forget what the Lord had commanded him to do. The Lord had told

Moses to provide water for murmuring Israel in a special way. Pointing out a certain rock, the Lord told Moses, "Speak ye unto the rock before their [Israel's] eyes; and it shall give forth his water" (v. 8). But Moses was weary and angry with Israel. "Hear now, ye rebels," he said. "Must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" (v. 10; emphasis added). Then, instead of speaking to the rock as God commanded, Moses "smote the rock twice" and water gushed forth (v. 11). The Lord then chided Moses and Aaron for their failure to sanctify Him in the eyes of the people and told both men that neither of them would be allowed to bring Israel into the promised land (see v. 12). Not only did they not follow the Lord's instructions carefully but they also suggested by the use of *we* that they were the ones who provided the water.

This incident, taken together with other scripture, creates a number of questions. Did Moses really sin against the Lord? Was that the reason Moses was not permitted to enter the promised land? Did Moses really assume glory to himself, or was he simply angry with the lack of faith exhibited by the children of Israel? Was this one error enough to cancel out years of great faith, obedience, and devotion?

At least two other Old Testament passages indicate that Moses did sin in striking the rock at Meribah (see Numbers 27:12–14; Deuteronomy 32:51–52). Other passages, however, help to clarify the matter. Deuteronomy 3:26 and 4:21 indicate that the Lord told Moses that the reason he could not enter the promised land was that the Lord was angry with him "for your sakes" (emphasis added). This statement could imply that there were reasons other than the error of Moses for the prohibition. Two other facts strengthen this supposition. First, both Moses and the higher priesthood were taken from Israel because of the people's unworthiness, not Moses' (see D&C 84:23–25). Second, Moses was translated when his mortal ministry was finished (see Alma 45:19). In other words, Moses was privileged to enter a land of promise far greater than the land of Canaan. He had finished his calling in mortality, and a new leader was to take Israel into the promised land. And, Moses was translated—hardly a punishment for sinning against God.



*Wilderness of Edom*

#### (18-14) Numbers 20:14

Moses referred to his people as “brother Israel” when he addressed the king of the Edomites (v. 14) because the Edomites were direct descendants of Edom (Esau), the brother of Jacob (Israel), from whom the Israelites descended. There was therefore a blood relationship between the two peoples. The things that Moses said imply that the Edomite king was well aware of the relationship. Still, he refused to let the Israelites pass through his lands.

Between the rebellion of Korah (chaps. 16–17) and the request for passage through the land of Edom (chap. 20), thirty-eight years of wandering had transpired. For reasons not known to us now, Moses did not describe those years in this record.



Near the King's Highway

#### (18-15) Numbers 20:17. To What Does the Phrase “King’s High Way” Refer?

“The ‘king’s way’ is the public high road, which was probably made at the cost of the state, and kept up for the king and his armies to travel upon, and is synonymous with the ‘sultan-road’ (*Derb es Sultan*) or ‘emperor road,’ as the open, broad, old military roads are still called in the East” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:134).

The highway ran along the highlands of present-day Jordan from the Red Sea up into Syria. On the east it paralleled the Dead Sea and the River Jordan.

#### (18-16) Numbers 20:22–29. What Is the Significance of Moses’ Removing Aaron’s Clothes and Placing Them on Eleazar?

“This was, in effect, depriving him of his office; and putting the clothes on his son Eleazar implied a transfer of that office to him. A transfer of office, from this circumstance of *putting the clothes* of the late possessor on the person intended to succeed him, was called *investing* or *investment*, (*clothing*;) as removing a person from an office was termed *divesting* or *unclothing*.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:682.)

The same custom continues to this day in some institutions. When an officer is installed or removed from office, ceremonial clothing is either put on or taken off, symbolizing a transfer of authority. When one departs in dishonor, he is literally stripped of his gown or robes. In the military, the cutting off of one’s epaulets or insignia of rank is the same thing.

Aaron, however, was not retiring in dishonor or disgrace. His death was imminent (see v. 28), and it was time for new and younger leadership.

#### (18-17) Numbers 21:4–9. The Brazen Serpent in the Wilderness

For the typological significance of this event read John 3:14–15; 2 Nephi 25:20; Alma 33:19–20; Reading 18-26.

#### (18-18) Numbers 22–24. The Story of Balaam

When the two mighty kings of the Amorites were defeated by the irresistible might of Israel, the Moabites, with their Midianite confederates, were filled with such alarm that Balak, their king, sought assistance. It was not from his own god, Baal, who had proven impotent against Israel during the Amorite conflict, that he sought power, however. Instead, he decided to use Israel’s own God, whose power had been marvelously manifest, against them. To this end he sent a delegation bearing presents to Balaam of Pethor, a celebrated prognosticator in upper Mesopotamia, who apparently had a reputation for being able to bless and curse with great effect (see Numbers 22:3–6).

It is difficult to determine from the record whether or not Balaam was a true prophet of God holding the powers of the priesthood authority. He lived in an area known as Aram, probably named after the son of Kemuel and grandson of Nahor, a cousin of Abraham. Haran, the place of Abraham’s first settlement after he left Ur, was a seat for the worship of Jehovah and was also in Aram. Therefore, Balaam could have been one of the few scattered people such as Jethro, who held the priesthood and exercised its power. The Bible suggests that he had a true knowledge of God and was susceptible to revelation from Him. Regardless of their origin, the Lord raises up inspired men to all nations (see Alma 29:8).

It is significant that Balaam is referred to as a soothsayer or diviner, somewhat on the order of Simon of the New Testament (compare Joshua 13:22; Acts 8:9–24). Although he acknowledged Jehovah and professed his dependence on Him, Balaam was willing to go against the Lord’s counsel and accompany the men of Balak. To assure his responsiveness to God’s will, the Lord sent an angel to threaten him with death should he curse Israel.

One of the remarkable things about Balaam’s blessing of Israel is the Messianic promise of Christ (see Numbers 24:14, 17, 19).

The rebuke received by Balaam from an animal wrought upon by the Spirit of God is a singular event in history. Speculation on how the deed was

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accomplished is useless. It is certain that the beast spoke in a way understandable to Balaam. Other scriptures indicate that when animals are filled with the divine Spirit and celestialized, they will be able to express themselves in ways presently denied them (see Revelation 4:6, 9; D&C 77:2–4). Balaam is not recorded as showing surprise at this phenomenon, which circumstance has led some to suggest that Balaam’s mind was troubled because of his attempt to serve both God and mammon. Had he been more thoughtful, the unusual behavior of his otherwise obedient mount would have caused him to look about to discover the trouble. Then perchance he would have discovered the angel’s presence.

The incident was sufficient to carry out the Lord’s purposes, however. Balaam was shown that it was not the journey in itself that was displeasing to God, but the feelings and intentions he harbored. The entire incident seems to have been brought about to sharpen his conscience and sober his mind so he would strictly speak only the word of God.

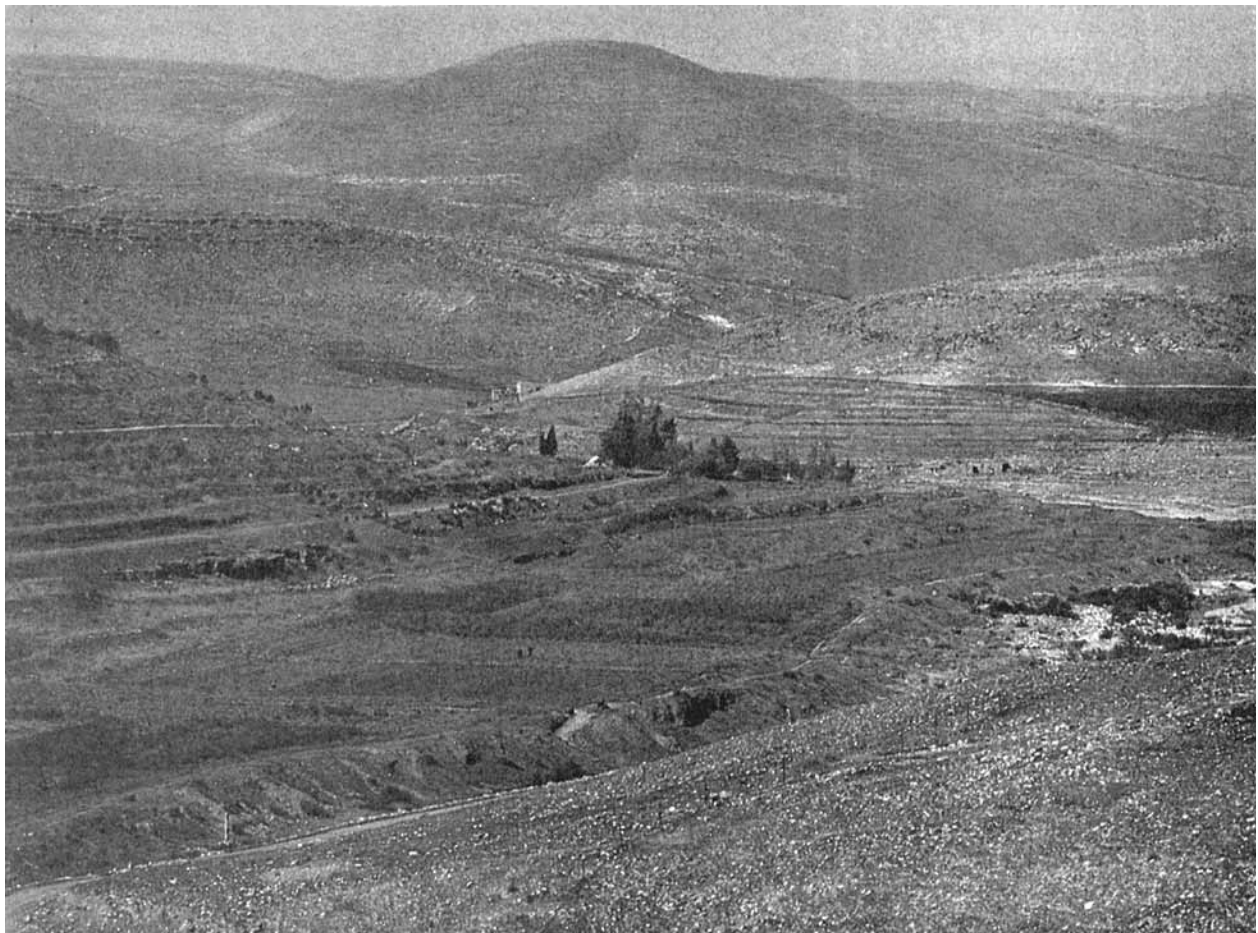
The record next describes the whoredoms Israel committed with the daughters of Moab; that is, Israel joined the women of Moab in worshiping Baal-peor, a fertility god, including offering sacrifices to the god and indulging in sexual immorality. What is not mentioned here but is explained later (Numbers 31:16) is that Balaam advised the Moabites in this

action. Evidently, when he saw that he could not earn Balak’s commission by cursing Israel directly, he told Balak that God would only bless Israel when they were righteous. If the Moabites could seduce Israel into idol worship, they would lose God’s power. Thus, Balaam became a symbol of those who use their callings and gifts to get gain and pervert the Lord’s people (see 2 Peter 2:15; Revelation 2:14).

#### **(18-19) Numbers 25:1–10**

Despite the severe action taken by Moses against those who had joined the Moabites in the worship of Baal, one man dared to bring one of the women into camp. Phinehas slew them both, signifying to all that the priesthood could not tolerate such evil. He knew that the evil of a few could result in suffering and even death for many. If Israel lost power with God by tolerating evil in their midst, innocent people would die in the wars with the Canaanites when Israel crossed over Jordan.

Modern bishops have a similar responsibility to put away evil in the Church. While excommunication is the most severe penalty they can invoke, it is nonetheless their responsibility to root out evil from among the Saints. Failure to do so is to bear responsibility for the people’s sins themselves (see Jacob 1:19).



*The land of Moab*

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### (18-20) Numbers 26

Prior to entrance into the promised land, Moses and Eleazar, the priest, counted by their respective tribes the children of Israel aged twenty years and older. In the process, they discovered that, except for three people, not one living soul over twenty years of age who had been numbered at the beginning of the desert wanderings thirty-eight years earlier was left among the children of Israel. Only Joshua, Caleb, and Moses himself remained of the original company that came out of Egypt. All of this was as the Lord had said (see v. 65). Numbers 33:54 gives the reason the Israelites were numbered on this occasion.

### (18-21) Numbers 27:18-23

The event described here is the ordination and setting apart of Joshua to the priesthood held by Moses.

“Special blessings, anointings, sealing of anointings, confirmations, ordinations, callings, healings, offices, and graces are conferred by the *laying on of hands* by the Lord’s legal administrators. As with all of the Lord’s prescribed procedural requisites, the proffered blessings come only when the designated formalities are observed. (*Teachings*, pp. 198–199.) . . .

“According to the order of God, ordination to offices in the priesthood is performed by the laying on of hands. (Alma 6:1; Acts 6:5–6; 1 Tim. 5:22.) Setting apart to positions of presidency, administration, or special responsibility comes in the same way. (Fifth Article of Faith; Num. 27:18–23; Deut. 34:9.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 438.)

For an account of ancient Israel’s use of the Urim and Thummim, see Reading 13-13.

### (18-22) Numbers 30. The Making of Vows and the Conditions of Validity

The making of a covenant with the Lord was a very serious act in ancient Israel (see Reading 16-15). This chapter in Numbers discusses the force and strength of one’s vows before the Lord. Particularly, it sets forth the relationship between man and woman where a vow or covenant is concerned. Four special instances are discussed:

“The first case (vers. 3–5) is that of a woman in her youth, while still unmarried, and living in her father’s house. If she made a vow of performance or abstinence, and her father heard of it and remained silent, it was to stand, *i.e.* to remain in force. But if her father held her back when he heard of it, *i.e.* forbade her fulfilling it, it was not to stand or remain in force, and Jehovah would forgive her because of her father’s refusal. Obedience to a father stood higher than a self-imposed religious service.—The *second* case (vers. 6–8) was that of a vow of performance or abstinence, made by a woman before her marriage, and brought along with her (. . . ‘upon herself’) into her marriage. In such a case the husband had to decide as to its validity, in the same way as the father before her marriage. In the day when he heard of it he could hold back his wife, *i.e.* dissolve

her vow; but if he did not do this at once, he could not hinder its fulfilment afterwards. . . . The *third* case (ver. 9) was that of a vow made by a widow or divorced woman. Such a vow had full force, because the woman was not dependent upon a husband.—The *fourth* case (vers. 10–12) was that of a vow made by a wife in her married state. Such a vow was to remain in force if her husband remained silent when he heard of it, and did not restrain her. On the other hand, it was to have no force if her husband dissolved it at once.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:224).

### (18-23) Numbers 32

See map 3 in the Bible for the tribal divisions of the land.

### (18-24) Numbers 35:9–27. Why Were “Cities of Refuge” Necessary, and Who Was the Appointed “Revenger of Blood”?

Six of the forty-eight Levitical cities were appointed to be “cities of refuge,” places where those who had taken human life could find protection until they had been tried and either convicted of murder or released (v. 11). These cities were to be located on both sides of the Jordan (see v. 14). Note the distinction that Moses made between murdering and slaying a human being (see vv. 15–25). Differentiation was made among what is called today premeditated murder, murder of passion, manslaughter, and self-defense.

“Cities of refuge among the Hebrews were necessary, because the old patriarchal law still remained in force, *viz.*, that the *nearest akin* had a right to avenge the death of his relation by slaying the murderer; for the original law enacted that *whosoever shed man’s blood, by man should his blood be shed*, Genesis 9:6, and none was judged so proper to execute this law as the man who was nearest akin to the deceased. As many rash executions of this law might take place, from the very nature of the thing, it was deemed necessary to qualify its claims, and prevent injustice; and the cities of refuge were judged proper for this purpose. Nor do we ever read that they were ever found inefficient, or that they were ever abused.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:730.)

### (18-25) Numbers 36. The Daughters of Zelophehad and Their Inheritance

Here Moses dealt with a practical problem that would face Israel when they began to conquer the land. Once the tribal divisions were determined, individual families within each tribe were given a land inheritance. If a portion of land was given to a single woman and she married into another tribe, which was probably quite common, then the woman’s land would become the joint property of her husband. Thus, another tribe would get a portion of the land assigned by the Lord and Moses to the original tribe. Moses and the elders foresaw the potential problems and ruled that land inheritances could not move from tribe to tribe.

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## POINTS TO PONDER

(18-26) In this chapter we have reviewed several instances in which Israel or its individual members did not keep the laws of God.

### Read Numbers 21:4–9.

This incident is famous in Israel's history. Notice that all one had to do to recover from the serpent's poisonous strike was to look to the brass serpent on the pole that Moses had made and held up before the people. Nothing more is told of the story. Yet, later prophets have used this incident to teach some valuable lessons. Jesus used it as a type of Himself. How?

### Read John 3:14.

Nephi reported that although God had prepared the serpent on the pole as a means of the people's being healed, some refused to avail themselves of the proffered gift. Why? What happened then?

### Read 1 Nephi 17:41.

Alma added a reason why the people would not obey. What does he say?

### Read Alma 33:20–22.

Nephi, son of Helaman, said that Moses and later prophets taught the children of Israel that the brazen serpent was a type of Christ. What special connection did Nephi draw between the serpent on the pole and Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

### Read Helaman 8:13–16.

Elder Boyd K. Packer likewise drew upon this incident to teach us why we should heed the words of the living prophets.

"They are given divine authority. Not one of them aspired to the office he holds, nor did he call himself, for 'in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called,' said President Clark, 'which place one neither seeks nor declines.' (*Improvement Era*, June 1951, p. 412.)

"'Ye have not chosen me,' said the Lord, 'but I have chosen you, and ordained you.' (John 15:16.)

"We don't have to listen to them or pay heed to them—we have our agency. But there is a lesson in scripture to consider.

"The children of Israel entered the land of Edom. It was infested with serpents and snakes, the bite of which was so painful and so dangerous that they called them fiery, flying serpents. They cried for deliverance.

"... And Moses prayed for the people.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

"And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.' (Num. 21:7–9.)

"How silly,' some must have said. 'How can such a thing cure me? I'll not show my stupidity by paying any attention,' and some would not look. . . .

"And today many say, 'How silly! How could accepting Christ save me?' They will not turn their heads to look nor incline their ears to hear. They ignore the great witness that comes from these conferences. We ought to, indeed we must, heed the counsel of these men, for the Lord said, 'What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.'" (In Conference Report, Oct. 1968, pp. 75–76.)

It is not because they are learned, or have achieved professional success, or have traveled widely, that one should listen, but because they are "called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands, by those who are in authority to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof" that one should listen (Articles of Faith 1:5). Those who fail to heed their warning voice lose the promised blessings. Truly, as the scriptures record, there are no successful sinners.





# An Exhortation to Obedience, Part 1

## (19-1) Introduction

If you knew that you had but a short time to live, what would you want to say to your family? Of what would you warn them? Would you want to remind them of anything?

This was the position Moses was in when he wrote the book of Deuteronomy. The long journey from Egypt to Canaan was over. Israel was about to enter the promised land, but Moses could not go with them. What could he say to this people, in parting, whom he had loved and led for forty years? And if he spoke, would they heed his words of counsel any better than they had in the past?

Blessings from the Lord are based upon obedience. We can no more disobey God's commands and reap promised rewards than we can enjoy the benefits of electricity without conforming to the physical laws that govern its effects. The principle of free agency allows us to make our own choices, to seek our own goals. Some choices, however, are better than others. Wise children of our Father in Heaven understand the spiritual laws of cause and effect and govern themselves accordingly. Unwise children do not. The former reap the promised blessings; the latter sometimes reap the sorest cursings.

"Cursings are the opposite of blessings, and the greater the opportunity given a people to earn blessings, the more severe will be the cursings heaped upon them, if they do not measure up and gain the proffered rewards. Failure to pay tithing, for instance, brings condemnation upon the covenant people, whereas the people of the world—not being specifically obligated to keep this law—do not suffer the same penalties for non-tithe paying. (Mal. 3:7–12.) 'Hearken and hear, O ye may people, saith the Lord and your God, ye whom I delight to bless with the greatest of all blessings, ye that hear me; and ye that hear me not will I curse, that have professed my name, with the heaviest of all cursings.' (D. & C. 41:1.)" (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 175.)

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Deuteronomy 1–16.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON DEUTERONOMY 1–16

### (19-2) Deuteronomy 1:1. These Be the Words of Moses

Deuteronomy is a title formed from the two Greek words *deutero*, "second," and *nomos*, "law." Thus, the title means "the second law," or "the repetition of the law" (see Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Deuteronomy," 1:522). The Christian world adopted this descriptive title from the Septuagint (the first Greek translation of the Old Testament written in the second century before Christ) rather than the Jewish name for the book, *Eileh Hadvareem*, which is the first two words of the book in Hebrew (translated as "these be the words").

The translators of the Septuagint called the fifth book written by Moses the second law because in it Moses summarized the Mosaic code in three final discourses he gave to Israel before leaving them. This name, however, does not imply that he gave them a new law in any sense of the word, nor that he merely repeated what had already been given. Moses knew that he was soon to leave Israel. Israel was by this time camped in Moab across the Jordan from the promised land. Joshua would shortly lead them to battle against the Canaanites to take possession of the land of promise. In three separate discourses Moses eloquently exhorted Israel to look to the laws given them by God so that they could enjoy God's favor and protection in the future.

In the first address (Deuteronomy 1:6–4:40), Moses recounted the most important events in the wanderings in the wilderness and reminded Israel that they must not forget the laws given them at Sinai.

The second address (chaps. 5–26) contains Moses' review of the law, including the Ten Commandments (see Deuteronomy 5:6–21). But his purpose was far more than a mere review. These chapters contain a "description, explanation, and enforcement of the most essential contents of the covenant revelation and covenant laws, with emphatic prominence given to the spiritual principle of the law and its fulfillment, and with a further development of the ecclesiastical, judicial, political, and civil organization, which was intended as a permanent foundation for the life and well-being of the people in the land of Canaan." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:270.)

The third and final address (chaps. 27–30) was a call for Israel to renew the covenant and a warning of the consequences of failing to do so. Moses again solemnly reviewed the Lord’s goodness to them and all that He had done for them, and then Moses advised Israel to make the covenant with God so that the curses would not come upon them.

Chapters 31 through 34 are a supplement, perhaps not written by Moses, which recount the selection and ordination of Joshua as Moses’ successor and the “death” of Moses. (Other sources indicate that Moses did not die but was translated. See Reading 20-35.)

The value of Deuteronomy is shown in the fact that, of all the five books of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy is quoted more often by the Old Testament prophets than any other book of the Law.

“Deuteronomy has been made most use of by the prophets, simply because it is best calculated to serve as a model for prophetic declarations, as also because of the inward harmony that exists between the *prophecies* and the *laws* upon which they are based.” (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Deuteronomy,” 1:523.)

#### **(19-3) Deuteronomy 1:1–4. “And It Came to Pass . . . That Moses Spake unto the Children of Israel”**

Moses “speaks like a dying father to his children. The words are earnest, inspired, impressive. He looks back over the whole of the forty years of their wandering in the desert, reminds the people of all the blessings they have received, of the ingratitude with which they have so often repaid them, and of the judgments of God, and the love that continually broke forth behind them; he explains the laws again and again, and adds what is necessary to complete them, and is never weary of urging obedience to them in the warmest and most emphatic words, because the very life of the nation was bound up with this; he surveys all the storms and conflicts which they have passed through, and, beholding the future in the past, takes a survey also of the future history of the nation, and sees, with mingled sorrow and joy, how the three great features of the past—viz. apostasy, punishment, and pardon—continue to repeat themselves in the future also.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:276).

#### **(19-4) Deuteronomy 1:5–3:20**

These verses are a review by Moses of the instructions given by the Lord during the desert wanderings. They also set forth Moses’ view of how well Israel carried out those instructions. The people failed many times to heed their God. Moses feared they would fail again once he had departed from them, so he gave the lengthy counsel recorded in Deuteronomy.

#### **(19-5) Deuteronomy 2:7, 14, 16**

This account clarifies events also recorded in Exodus or Numbers. Israel came to Sinai in the third month following their departure from Egypt (see Exodus 19:1–2). They departed from Mount Sinai on



*From Kadesh-barnea Moses sent spies into the promised land.*

the twentieth day of the second month of the second year, so it seems that they remained near Mount Sinai for almost a whole year. After an eleven-day journey to Kadesh, men were sent into the land of Canaan to search out the land. Their return with a negative report of walled cities and strong inhabitants so discouraged Israel that they began to murmur against the Lord. (See Numbers 13:26–33.) They had expected to move into the promised land without effort. As a result of their lack of spiritual readiness, they were compelled to wander thirty-eight more years in the desert.

“The Israelites were eleven days in going from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea, where they were near the verge of the promised land; after which they were thirty-eight years wandering up and down in the vicinity of this place, not being permitted, because of their rebellions, to enter into the promised rest, though they were the whole of that time within a few miles of the land of Canaan!” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:737.)

This situation adds poignant meaning to the phrase “so near, and yet so far.”

#### **(19-6) Deuteronomy 3:25–29**

For discussion of why Moses was refused entrance into the promised land see Reading 18-13.

#### **(19-7) Deuteronomy 4:1–8. What of Those Who Claim the Bible Is Complete and Cite Revelation 22:18–19 as Proof?**

It is not uncommon for those who object to Latter-day Saint belief in modern scripture to cite Revelation 22:18–19 as proof that all revelation is contained in the Bible. Moses, however, uttered the same warning in Deuteronomy 12:32. This reference indicates that any warning not to add to the things written refers only to the writings of that particular prophet. On this subject President Brigham Young stated:

“The saying which we have quoted, and which constitutes the sweeping argument of modern Christians against new revelation, only alludes to this particular book [Revelation], which was to be kept sacred, as the word of the Lord to John, and not to

the whole Bible; nor does it prohibit the Saints in his day, or the Saints in any future time, from getting new revelation for themselves. That is not all; if we turn to the writings of Moses, we find the same sentiment, and almost the same language used. Moses says, 'Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.' So if such quotations are given with the intent to shut the heavens, and put an end to all new revelation, then the revelations given to Prophets who arose after Moses, and the revelations given to Jesus Christ and his Apostles, including John and his revelation on the Isle of Patmos, all amount to nothing, and are not worthy of our notice. This 'sweeping argument,' when it is examined, sweeps away rather too much; besides, John's Gospel and his epistle to his brethren were written after he wrote his revelation on the Isle of Patmos, consequently he would destroy his own system; but it sets forth the ignorance and short-sightedness of those who have not the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 1:242-43.)

#### (19-8) Deuteronomy 4:9-24

Moses was anxious for the people to remember the Lord. This remembrance was to come through keeping the law. Why, then, didn't the Lord show Himself to Israel at Sinai? (see vv. 15-16).

#### (19-9) Deuteronomy 4:25-31. The Scattering and Gathering of Israel

Moses had no illusions about how long Israel would remain obedient. Here he prophetically foresaw one of the most common themes in the Old Testament: the scattering of Israel because of their wickedness, but also the great gathering that is to take place "in the latter days" (v. 30). The Lord pointed out two reasons why Israel shall be regathered. First, many of latter-day Israel will turn to the Lord (see v. 29); second, the covenants Jehovah made with Israel's fathers (the patriarchs) will be kept (see vv. 31, 37). This gathering involves a return to the lands of Israel's inheritance, but, more important, it involves a spiritual gathering, that is, a return to the covenants and laws of God. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained spiritual gathering in this way:

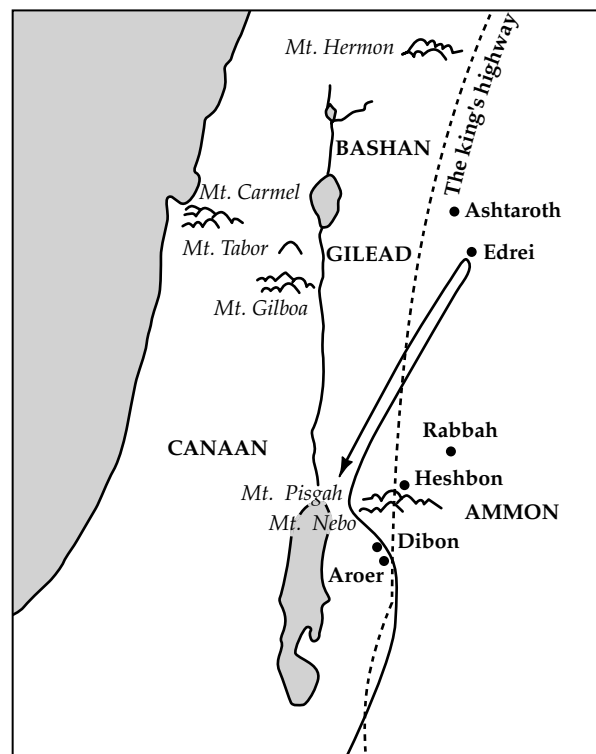
"As is well known, ancient Israel was scattered among all the nations of the earth because they forsook the Lord and worshipped false gods. As is also well known, the gathering of Israel consists of receiving the truth, gaining again a true knowledge of the Redeemer, and coming back into the true fold of the Good Shepherd. In the language of the Book of Mormon, it consists of being 'restored to the true church and fold of God,' and then being 'gathered' and 'established' in various 'lands of promise.' (2 Ne. 9:2.) 'When they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer, they shall be gathered together again to the lands of their inheritance.' (2 Ne. 6:11.)

"Two things are accomplished by the gathering of Israel: First, those who have thus chosen Christ as their Shepherd; those who have taken upon themselves his name in the waters of baptism; those who are seeking to enjoy his Spirit here and now and to be inheritors of eternal life hereafter—such people need to be gathered together to strengthen each other and to help one another perfect their lives.

"And second, those who are seeking the highest rewards in eternity need to be where they can receive the blessings of the house of the Lord, both for themselves and for their ancestors in Israel who died without a knowledge of the gospel, but who would have received it with all their heart had opportunity afforded." ("Come: Let Israel Build Zion," *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 117.)

#### (19-10) Deuteronomy 4:41-49. What Does It Mean That Moses "Severed Three Cities"?

The law of Moses provided cities of refuge for persons guilty of involuntary manslaughter until their cases could be judged or until the high priest died (see Numbers 35:6, 14; Joshua 20:1-6). The statement that Moses "severed three cities" means that before his death he set apart these cities as cities of refuge (Deuteronomy 4:41). The cities mentioned were on the eastern side of the Jordan across from where most of the Israelites would settle. Later, additional cities of refuge were set aside within the promised land.



Israel's route of conquest: Sihon and Og

### (19-11) Deuteronomy 5

Moses reminded Israel of God's covenant with them at Mount Horeb (Sinai), beginning with a review of the great fundamental principles known as the Ten Commandments (see vv. 6–21). Moses' special admonition is given in verses 29, 32, and 33.

The law of Moses represents a gospel orientation (see Reading 12-1), and these verses demonstrate such an orientation. In this section of Deuteronomy Moses issued a call to obedience, to commitment, to righteousness, to holiness. Moses taught that blessings, both temporal and spiritual, follow those who answer that call and, conversely, that punishments and misery come to those who do not heed it.

### (19-12) Deuteronomy 6:4–9. "Hear, O Israel; The Lord Our God Is One Lord"

Verse 4 begins what is known among Jewish people as the *Shema* (from the Hebrew word meaning "hear"). "The *Shema* is in Jewish thought the supreme affirmation of the unity of God and is frequently called 'the acceptance of the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven'" (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Shema, Reading of," *The Shema in Jewish Thought*, 14:1372). The entire *Shema*, which consists of Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Deuteronomy 11:13–21; and Numbers 15:37–41 (in that order), is recited twice daily by all devout Jews as an evening and a morning prayer. It has become traditional for Jewish martyrs to face death with the *Shema* on their lips. In fact, "Jewish devotional manuals sometimes advise the worshiper to have in mind while reciting the *Shema* that if he is called upon to suffer martyrdom for the sanctification of God's name he will do so willingly and with joy" (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Shema, Reading of," *The Shema in Jewish Thought*, 14:1373). The *Shema* passage in Deuteronomy 6 is of interest to Christians also because Jesus said that verse 5 contained the greatest commandment in the law (see Matthew 22:36–37). It is the sum and substance of all other commandments, for if people loved God with all their heart, might, mind, and strength, every aspect of their lives would be devoted to righteousness and holiness. And if these words were constantly in their hearts (see v. 6) and they sought to teach them to their children in every way possible, in every aspect of their lives, through precept and example, at night and in the day, at home or elsewhere, all of society would be dramatically altered. In that respect, this belief of the Jews is correct. The *Shema*, if it truly is an affirmation of faith and not just words, should be the supreme thought in one's heart, and it is even worth dying, if living means a denial of that affirmation.

If latter-day revelation the Lord taught a similar principle of commitment: "And all they who suffer persecution for my name, and endure in faith, though they are called to lay down their lives for my sake yet shall they partake of all this glory. Wherefore, fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full. Therefore, care not for the body, neither the life of the body; but care for the



A thirteen-year-old boy wearing a phylactery

soul, and for the life of the soul. And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life." (D&C 101:35–38.)

The Lord emphasized the importance of this injunction by using figurative language commanding the people to bind these words on their foreheads and hands and to put them on the doorposts of their homes. These verses led to the Jewish customs known as the *tefillin* (or *phylacteries*) and the *mezuzah*.

Taking the command literally, the Jews inscribed certain scriptural passages, including Deuteronomy 6:4–9, on tiny pieces of parchment, folded them up, and put them into tiny leather boxes about 1 1/2 inches square. These boxes were then tied to the head to be over the forehead, or on the left biceps, suggesting that the wearer would "fulfill the law with the head and heart" (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "phylactery," 3:1344). Some apostate Israelites later viewed these frontlets as amulets to ward off evil spirits. Thus, the Greeks called them *phylacteries*, which means "safeguards."

The *mezuzah* (Hebrew for "doorpost") was similar to the *tefillin* in that it was a parchment with a scriptural passage on it inserted into a tiny, cylindrical box. The *mezuzah* was attached to the door frame, and it became customary for Jews to touch or kiss the *mezuzah* each time they left or entered the home.

The symbolic words of the commandment teach a beautiful lesson. The doorpost symbolizes the portals through which man moves to interact with his fellow man. As one sets forth from or returns to home, one's conscious desire should be to do the will of God.

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**(19-13) Deuteronomy 6:10–15. “When Thou Shalt Have Eaten and Be Full; Then Beware”**

The sad truth that men forget God in times of peace and prosperity was eloquently taught by Moses both here and in Deuteronomy 8:11–20. Mormon also taught this truth in Helaman 12:1–7.

**(19-14) Deuteronomy 6:13, 16; 8:3. Jesus Used the Wisdom and Counsel of Moses in Thwarting Temptation**

Elder Marion G. Romney taught that Jesus’ “thorough knowledge of the scriptures is evidenced by the fact that He repeatedly cited them. When the devil tempted Him to turn the stones into bread, He countered by quoting from Deuteronomy: ‘. . . It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’ (Matthew 4:4; see Deuteronomy 8:3.) When the tempter challenged Him to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, He responded by quoting from the same book: ‘It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’ (Matthew 4:7; see Deuteronomy 6:16.) For the third time He quoted from Deuteronomy (6:13) when Satan offered Him the kingdoms of the world, saying: ‘Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.’ (Matthew 4:10.)” (*Jesus Christ, Man’s Great Exemplar*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, Provo, Utah, 9 May 1967, p. 9.)

**(19-15) Deuteronomy 7:1–5. Why Did the Lord Command the Israelites to Utterly Destroy the Canaanites?**

The Hittites, Hivites, and Jebusites were direct descendants of Canaan, son of Ham, and were therefore Canaanites. The Girgashites, Amorites, and Perizites were inhabitants of Canaan. (*Canaanite* also refers to one who lived in the land of Canaan, irrespective of descent.) Undoubtedly these groups had intermarried. By the time Israel approached the promised land, these Canaanites had become an extremely wicked and idolatrous people. When Abraham was told that his seed would inherit the land of Canaan, the Lord also told him that Israel would first be taken into captivity in Egypt because “the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Genesis 15:16). Now, several hundred years later, that fulness of iniquity had come.

Certain acts are so evil and so destructive to the order of the society that the only just reparation is the death of the guilty parties (see Exodus 21:12–17). Nephi was told that Laban’s death was justified because his wickedness threatened the spiritual existence of an entire future nation. The Lord began His explanation of that principle by saying, “Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes” (1 Nephi 4:13).

Likewise, the kinds of evil of which the Canaanites were guilty were so infectious, so contaminating, that to have shown mercy and let them survive

would have proven to be the spiritual downfall of Israel. Indeed, later history shows that this is exactly what happened when Israel failed to follow these instructions. Moses warned Israel: “Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee” (Deuteronomy 9:5; see also 1 Nephi 17:32–38).

Israel was not commanded to treat all her enemies in this manner. One commentator explained why the Canaanites were different: “The second commandment prohibits graven images in worship; it *requires* the destruction of all such forms of worship: ‘Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works; but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images’ (Ex. 23:24). In Deuteronomy 12:1–14, the contrast is drawn clearly: obedience means on the one hand destroying all places of idolatrous worship, and, on the other hand, bringing offerings to God in the prescribed manner and to the prescribed place. The commandment to destroy idolatrous places and images is restated in Deuteronomy 7:5; 16:21, 22; Numbers 33:52; and Exodus 34:13, 14. But, in certain instances, the destruction of graven images required also the destruction of the people of the images (Deut. 7:1–5); not only are covenants with the Canaanites forbidden, but inter-marriage also. The Canaanites were ‘devoted’ or set apart, ‘sanctified’ unto death by God’s order. This is an important point and needs careful attention. The law specifically forbade reprisals against Egyptians or any other foreigner; instead of vengeance, they should remember their oppression in Egypt as a means of greater dedication to justice for all under God’s law (Lev. 19:33–37). Having suffered injustice at foreign hands, they should themselves be careful to avoid being like the Egyptians, themselves the instruments of injustice. Egypt sought to exterminate all Hebrews (Ex. 1:15–22), but Israel was required to render justice to all Egyptians in terms of their individual obedience or disobedience to the law. But all Canaanites were devoted to death. The criterion was not enmity to Israel but the law of God. Egypt was an enemy of God as was Canaan, but the iniquity of the Canaanites was ‘full’ or total in God’s sight (Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24–28, etc.). Prostitution and homosexuality had become religious practices to the point where the people were entrenched in depravity and proud of it. Their iniquity was ‘full’ or total. Accordingly, God sentenced them to death and made Israel the executioner. . . . The Canaanites as a whole were deserving of death; God’s patience allowed them a few centuries from Abraham’s day to Joshua’s and then His judgment was ordered executed. The failure of Israel to execute it fully became finally their own judgment.” (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 92–93.)

Nephi said of the Canaanites, “He that is righteous is favored of God. But behold, this people had rejected every word of God, and they were ripe in iniquity” (1 Nephi 17:35).

**(19-16) Deuteronomy 7:7-26**

According to Moses, of all the people of the earth, Israel was the chosen of the Lord because the Lord loved Israel and “would keep the oath which he had sworn unto [their] fathers” (v. 8). Many blessings were promised to those who would keep their covenants with the Lord. The idols of other nations, Moses instructed the people, were to be burned entirely, and neither the idols themselves nor the precious metals on them were to be taken into the homes of the Israelites (see vv. 25-26).

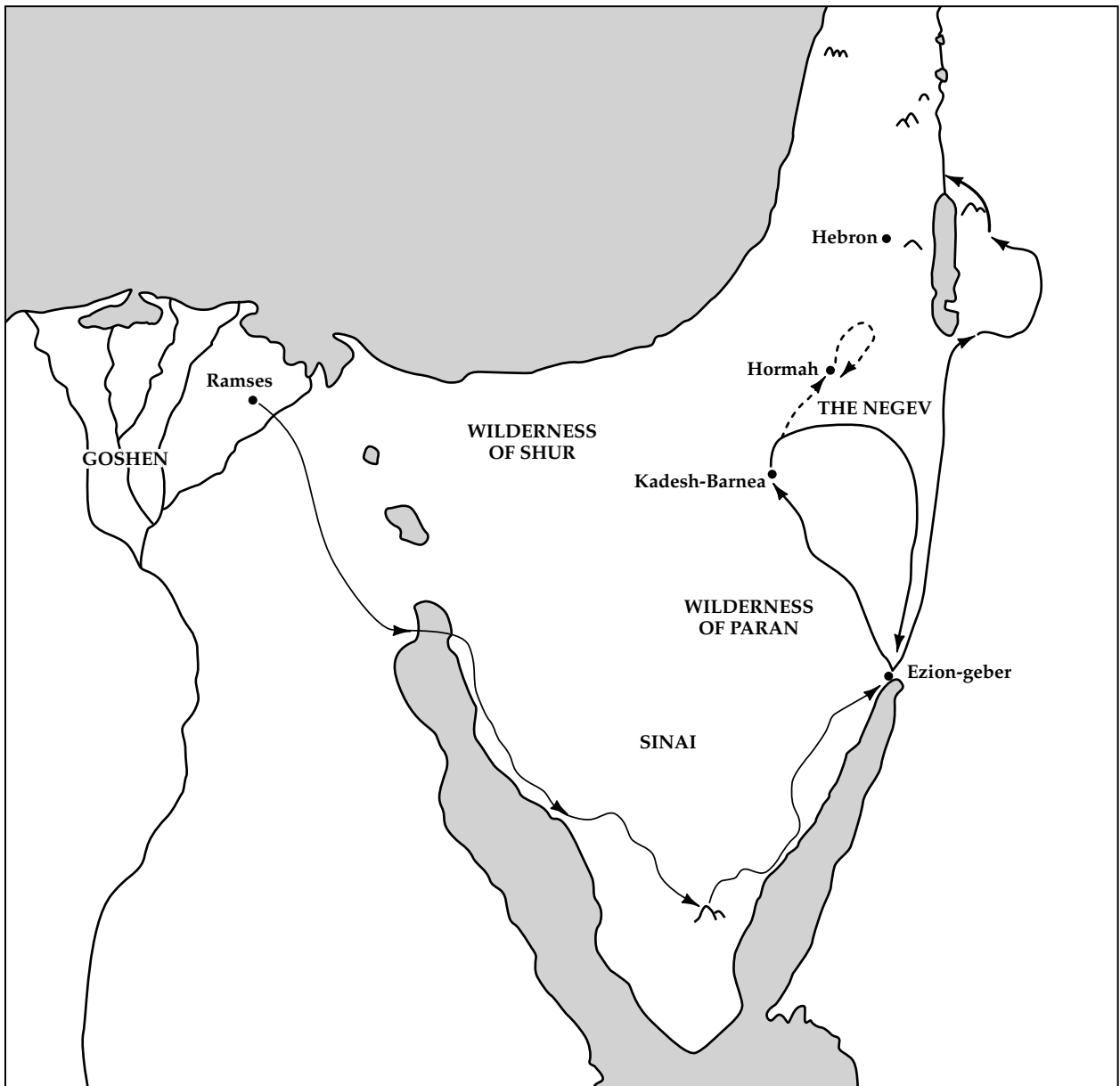
**(19-17) Deuteronomy 8:4. What Did Moses Mean When He Said “Thy Raiment Waxed Not Old”?**

The words used by Moses affirm the idea that the clothes of the Israelites did not wear out because God

gave them a miraculous durability. Some early rabbis and Christian theologians interpreted this passage to mean that the clothes of the younger generation grew upon their backs like the shells of snails. Israel did, however, have limited means for producing some items of clothing.

**(19-18) Deuteronomy 9:22; 10:6-7. Where Are the Places Which Are Mentioned in These Verses?**

Only Kadesh-Barnea may be located with any degree of certainty (see map). The other places mentioned were most likely in the wilderness of Shur and the wilderness of Paran to the south. At least two or three of them may have been only oases in the wilderness of Sinai. If it were possible to pinpoint these locations, scholars would likely know precisely which route the wandering Israelites took.



*Out of Egypt: Wilderness wanderings*

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**(19-19) Deuteronomy 10:12–22**

Here is another example of a beautiful gospel concept in the Mosaic law. Any Latter-day Saint could profitably use these verses as a creed. (For the meaning of the phrase “circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart” [v. 16], see Reading 5-17.)

**(19-20) Deuteronomy 11:10–17**

The Lord drew some distinctions between Egypt and Canaan. What are they? (See Reading 19-15.)

**(19-21) Deuteronomy 11:14. What Is Meant by the First Rain and the Latter Rain?**

“By the *first* or *former* rain we are to understand that which fell in Judea about November, when they sowed their seed, and this served to moisten and prepare the ground for the vegetation of the seed. The *latter* rain fell about April, when the corn was well grown up, and served to fill the ears, and render them plump and perfect. . . . If the *former* rain were withheld, or not sent in due season, there could be no vegetation: if the *latter* rain were withheld, or not sent in its due season, there could be no full corn in the ear, and consequently no harvest. Of what consequence then was it that they should have their rain in *due season*! God, by promising this provided they were obedient, and threatening to withhold it should they be disobedient, shows that it is not a *general providence* that directs these things, but that the very rain of heaven falls by *particular direction*, and the showers are often regulated by an *especial* providence.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:770.)

**(19-22) Deuteronomy 11:18–32**

Moses pointed out to Israel that the children were not aware of all that God had done for their fathers while they were wandering in the wilderness (see v. 2). He gave them specific instructions about teaching their children (see vv. 18–19) and promised them certain blessings if they obeyed.

**(19-23) Deuteronomy 11:26–32. What Is the Significance of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim?**

Moses set before Israel both a curse and a blessing. To symbolize them, Moses selected two of the most prominent hills in central Canaan to use as object lessons. Mount Gerizim was appointed to be the mount of blessing, and Mount Ebal the mount of cursing.

“The two mountains mentioned were selected for this act, no doubt because they were opposite to one another, and stood, each about 2500 feet high, in the very centre of the land not only from west to east, but also from north to south. Ebal stands upon the north side, Gerizim upon the south; between the two is *Sichem*, the present *Nabulus*, in a tolerably elevated valley, fertile, attractive, and watered by many springs, which runs from the south-east to the north-west from the foot of Gerizim to that of Ebal, and is about 1600 feet in breadth. The blessing was to be uttered upon Gerizim, and the curse upon Ebal.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:349–50.)

**(19-24) Deuteronomy 13**

One very difficult problem for those Israelites uninitiated in the ways of the Lord was discerning true prophets or the true God from false ones. These verses counseled them about this problem. Why would the Lord command that a false prophet or deceiver be put to death? (see vv. 9–11). Similar instructions were given about whole cities whose inhabitants had gone astray (see v. 15). (For an additional test for determining true and false prophets, see Deuteronomy 18:18–22.)

Reference is made again to the “cursed thing” (Deuteronomy 13:17), which refers to anything sacrificed to idols or made to represent an idol or made to be used in the worship of idols. Cursed things were to be avoided by the Israelites altogether (see Joshua 7, which records an incident in which this restriction was not followed, and lists the resulting problems).

**(19-25) Deuteronomy 13:6–10. “Neither Shall Thine Eye Pity Him”**

For an explanation of the prohibitions against pity for idolaters, see Reading 20-9.

**(19-26) Deuteronomy 14:22–29. How Can the Law Justify the Use of Tithing to Purchase Things Lusted After?**

“The tithe, or tenth of all increase, was ordinarily contributed ‘in kind’; but if the contributor lived too far from the central place for making the contribution, he could sell the material and carry the money instead, where he could convert it back into whatever kinds of goods he desired to make his contribution and to make the thanksgiving feast which accompanied tithe paying. The goods would be used by the Levites (who produced none of their own) and by the poor (cf. D&C 119:3–6).

“The word ‘lusteth’ in the phrase ‘whatsoever thy soul lusteth after,’ in [Deuteronomy 14:26], has bad connotation to us, but it is merely a King James translation of a word that means ‘to long or yearn for.’ Also the use of wine and other fermented fluids (here called ‘strong drink’) may surprise us because we do not use them for any purpose; however, they were then commonly used in ceremonial meals. (We noted, nevertheless, that fermented drinks were forbidden to Priests in service, to Nazarites and to some others, according to Leviticus 10 and Numbers 3.)” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:131.)

**(19-27) Deuteronomy 16:1–17. What Purpose Did the Feasts and Festivals Serve?**

Christmas and Easter celebrations aid the followers of Jesus Christ to remember certain great events in Christian history. The festivals which the Lord commanded Israel to keep served a similar purpose. Moses once again reminded his people of the solemn need to observe these festivals in just the way and at just the time the Lord had commanded.

“From very early times the Jewish year was punctuated by the great festivals—the ‘feasts of the

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Lord'. Some were timed to coincide with the changing seasons, reminding the people of God's constant provision for them, and providing an opportunity to return to God some token of all that he had given. Others commemorated the great events of Israel's history, the occasions when in an unmistakable way God had stepped in to deliver his people. All were occasions of whole-hearted delight and enjoyment of God's good gifts, and at the same time sober gatherings to seek his forgiveness and cleansing.

"They were never intended to be observed out of mere formality and empty ritual. The prophets had sharp words for those who reduced them to this level. The purpose of the festivals was spiritual: a great and glorious meeting of God and his people." (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 180.)

## POINTS TO PONDER

(19-28) As a prelude to his call for Israel to commit themselves to living the laws of God so that they could become a holy and covenant people, Moses prophesied of the scattering and eventual gathering of Israel. Are the two concepts related? Does living the laws of God have any relationship to the scattering and gathering of Israel? Read what Elder Bruce R. McConkie has said about the gathering of Israel in our day and then answer the questions that follow.

"Now, if those of us who have been gathered again into the sheepfold of Israel are to play the part assigned us in the Lord's eternal drama concerning his people, we must know that some things relative to the gathering of Israel are past, some are present, and yet others are future. We ought not to struggle through a quarter of a century or so trying to determine, as did the New Testament saints in an analogous situation, what part we should play in the building up of Zion.

"The gathering of Israel and the establishment of Zion in the latter days is divided into three periods or phases. The first phase is past; we are now living in the second phase; and the third lies ahead. Prophecies speak of them all. If we do not rightly divide the word of God, as Paul's expression is, we will face confusion and uncertainty. If on the other hand we correctly envision our proper role and know what should be done today, we shall then be able to

use our time, talents, and means to the best advantage in building up the kingdom and preparing a people for the second coming of the Son of Man.

"The three phases of this great latter-day work are as follows:

"Phase I—From the First Vision, the setting up of the kingdom on April 6, 1830, and the coming of Moses on April 3, 1836, to the secure establishment of the Church in the United States and Canada, a period of about 125 years.

"Phase II—From the creation of stakes of Zion in overseas areas, beginning in the 1950s, to the second coming of the Son of Man, a period of unknown duration.

"Phase III—From our Lord's second coming until the kingdom is perfected and the knowledge of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea, and from then until the end of the Millennium, a period of 1,000 years. . . .

"Many things have already been restored, and many things are yet to be restored. Israel has been gathered in part, but in many respects the greatest part of the gathering of Israel is ahead. The foundations of Zion have been laid, but the promised City of Holiness has yet to be built. We have done some of the things destined to be accomplished in this dispensation; we are now engaged in doing the very things reserved for our time; and there are many things ahead to be done by our children and grandchildren and by all those who shall build on the foundation we are now laying." ("Come: Let Israel Build Zion," *Ensign*, May 1977, pp. 115-16.)

1. What was the cause of the scattering of Israel in the first place? (see Deuteronomy 4:25).

2. Upon what basis will the Lord forgive Israel and gather her back? (see 4:29-30).

3. We are in the second phase of the latter-day fulfillment of Moses' prophecy that Israel would be gathered, and we are fast approaching the third stage. What conditions do you think are necessary for latter-day Israel to build the latter-day Zion?

4. Elder McConkie said, "Each one of us can build up Zion in our own lives by being pure in heart" ("Come: Let Israel Build Zion," *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 118). What does Moses counsel Israel about their hearts? (See Deuteronomy 4:9, 29, 39; 4:29; 6:5-6; 8:2, 5, 14; 9:4-5; 10:12-16; 11:13-18; 13:3; 15:7-10.)





# An Exhortation to Obedience, Part 2

## (20-1) Introduction

Our Father in Heaven is a being who governs by law. Nothing is haphazard or accidental about the manner in which He dispenses His blessings. If we keep the commandments, we receive the promised rewards. If we disobey the commandments, we lose the proffered gifts. It is now as it has ever been: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10).

It is true also that our choices in premortal life affect our condition in earth life. Thus Moses wrote the following:

“When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” (Deuteronomy 32:8–9.)

Why were the people of Israel so favored of the Lord? Could it be that they had earned their privileges by their conduct in the premortal life? Commenting on Deuteronomy 32:8–9, Elder James E. Talmage said:

“From this we learn that the earth was allotted to the nations, according to the number of the children of Israel; it is evident therefore that the number was known prior to the existence of the Israelitish nation in the flesh; this is most easily explained on the basis of a previous existence in which the spirits of the future nation were known.

“No chance is possible, therefore, in the number or extent of the temporal creations of God. The population of the earth is fixed according to the number of spirits appointed to take tabernacles of flesh upon this planet; when these have all come forth in the order and time appointed, then, and not till then, shall the end come.” (*Articles of Faith*, pp. 193–94.)

Do you see how the Lord works by law? We obtain exactly that for which we live—blessings or cursings—just as Moses indicated. Understanding this concept helps us appreciate why the Lord would command Israel to deal so harshly with their Canaanite neighbors, who were ripe in iniquity. It also helps us to see why the Lord compelled Israel to wander forty years in the desert before permitting them to enter the promised land. Israel had to learn certain lessons first.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie commented: “God sends his spirit children to earth on a regular, organized schedule. There is nothing haphazard or accidental about the peopling of the earth or the assignment of various land areas to the races of men. The race and nation in which men are born in this world is a direct result of their pre-existent life. All the spirit hosts of heaven deemed worthy to receive mortal bodies were

foreordained to pass through this earthly probation in the particular race and nation suited to their needs, circumstances and talents. . . . Not only Israel, but all groups were thus foreknown and their total memberships designated in the pre-mortal life.’ (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 616.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:159–60; see Deuteronomy 32:8; Acts 17:26.)

The Lord chose certain spirits to be the seed of Abraham, with the assignment to take the blessings of the gospel to all the nations of the earth (see Genesis 12:1–3; Abraham 2:6, 9–11).

## Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Deuteronomy 17–33.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON DEUTERONOMY 17–33

### (20-2) Deuteronomy 17:1–7

Moses set the penalty for worshiping false gods: death. The worship of false gods was so destructive to the spiritual life of man and the order of Israel as a nation that those who sought to entice Israel to abandon Jehovah were to forfeit their lives. When idolatry is tolerated or even punished lightly, the whole order of God’s law is jeopardized. In other words, in a system based on the acceptance of God, idolatry is high treason against that system, and high treason is punished by death.

### (20-3) Deuteronomy 17:8–13

Modern bishops in the Church are judges in Israel (see D&C 58:14–17; 64:40). Upon their shoulders rests the heavy responsibility of hearing and judging cases involving Church membership or worthiness. Anciently, priests of the Aaronic Priesthood performed similar functions (see Deuteronomy 17:9).

### (20-4) Deuteronomy 17:14–20. Counsel for Future Kings

The Lord understood His children well, knowing that some time after their entry into the promised land they would seek a king in order to be like surrounding nations. This event is exactly what happened about two hundred years later (see

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1 Samuel 8). So the Lord gave the following counsel about the future king:

1. He should be a man selected by the Lord (see Deuteronomy 17:15).
2. He had to be an Israelite (see v. 15).
3. He should not “multiply horses” (v. 16). In the ancient Middle East, horses were used primarily in warfare. One Bible scholar believed this use was forbidden “lest the people might depend on a well-appointed *cavalry* as a means of security, and so cease from trusting in the strength and protection of God. And . . . that they might not be tempted to extend their *dominion* by means of cavalry, and so get scattered among the surrounding idolatrous nations, and thus cease, in process of time, to be that distinct and separate people which God intended they should be.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary* 1:783.)
4. He should not “multiply wives” (v. 17), for usually a king had multiple wives for political as well as personal reasons. Foreign wives would represent an enticement to false gods; thus, they were forbidden, “that his heart turn not away” (v. 17). This situation later led to Solomon’s fall from God’s favor (see 1 Kings 11:4).
5. He should not seek to expand his wealth (see v. 17), for this goal often led to oppression and unjust taxation of the people.
6. His basis for rule was to be the law of God (see vv. 18–19). David gave similar words of counsel to Solomon in 1 Kings 2:2–4.
7. He was not to be “lifted up” in pride (v. 20).

In the history of the world, few political rulers have followed these guidelines, and much of the sorrow of the world is directly traceable to that failure.

#### **(20-5) Deuteronomy 18:9–12. What Is Expressly Forbidden Here?**

The Canaanites were a superstitious people who believed in and practiced divination and black magic. An enchanter inspects the entrails of dead animals, watches the flight of birds, or uses other means to predict the future. A charmer employs spells and incantations in predicting future events. Consulters with familiar spirits try to contact the spirit of a departed person to learn things not known to human beings. A wizard is a male witch. A necromancer, like one who consults with familiar spirits, seeks the secrets of the spirit world by inquiring of the dead. All of these activities were forbidden to ancient Israel. They were admonished to heed the words of their living prophet.

#### **(20-6) Deuteronomy 18:15–19. Who Is the Prophet Like unto Moses?**

At least four other scriptures refer to the prophet like unto Moses (see Acts 3:22–23; 1 Nephi 22:21; 3 Nephi 20:23; JS—H 1:40). In each instance these scriptures make it clear that the prophet like unto Moses was the Savior, Jesus Christ. When Jesus visited the Nephites, as recorded in the Book of Mormon, He identified Himself in this way:

“Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people.” (3 Nephi 20:23.)

#### **(20-7) Deuteronomy 18:20–22. What Are the Tests for a True Prophet of God?**

“When is a prophet a prophet? Whenever he speaks under the inspiration and influence of the Holy Ghost. . . .

“When prophets write and speak on the principles of the gospel, they should have the guidance of the Spirit. If they do, then all that they say will be in harmony with the revealed word. If they are in harmony then we know that they have not spoken presumptuously. Should a man speak or write, and what he says is in conflict with the standards which are accepted, with the revelations the Lord has given, then we may reject what he has said, no matter who he is.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:187.)

It should be kept in mind, however, that the Lord will continue to add line upon line through His prophets. On-going revelation will expand and clarify revelations the Lord has already given. Thus, living prophets help keep the Church in tune with the living God.

#### **(20-8) Deuteronomy 20**

This chapter relates Israel’s war-making activities and gives special rules for selecting soldiers (see vv. 1–9). A noted Bible scholar gave some excellent insights into the principles in the Mosaic code related to warfare.

“The military laws of Scripture are of especial relevance to man, in that they involve not only laws of warfare but an important general principle.

“In surveying military laws, we find that, *first*, when wars are fought in terms of a defense of justice and the suppression of evil, and in defense of the homeland against an enemy, they are a part of the necessary work of restitution or restoration, and they are therefore spoken of in Scripture as the wars of the Lord (Num. 21:14). The preparation of the soldiers involved a religious dedication to their task (Josh. 3:5).

“*Second*, the law specified the age of the soldiers. All able-bodied men twenty years old and up were eligible for military service (Num. 1:2, 3, 18, 20, 45; 26:2, 3). This standard long prevailed and was, for example, the basis of operation in the American War of Independence. It was, however, still a selective service (Num. 31:3–6), so that, for example, out of 46,500 eligible from Reuben, 74,600 from Judah, and 35,400 from Benjamin (Num. 1), in the war against Midian, only a thousand from each tribe were taken (Num. 31:4). The eligibility of each able-bodied man was thus in principle to assert their availability in an extreme crisis.

"Third, since warfare against evil is godly and serves God's task of restoration, God promised to protect His men if they moved in terms of faith and obedience. . . . In the battle against Midian, cited above, 12,000 Israelite soldiers burned all the cities of Midian and slew their men, brought back 675,500 sheep, 72,000 head of cattle, 61,000 asses, and 32,000 unmarried women, without any loss of life. Out of this, a tithing or portion was given to the Lord. Thus, where a war is waged in terms of God's law and in faith and obedience to His law-word, there men can count on His protecting and prospering care even as Israel experienced it.

"Fourth, exemption from military service was provided by law. The purpose of an army should be to fight God's battles without fear (Deut. 20:1–4). Exemptions were given to several classes of men: (a) those who had built a new house and had not dedicated nor enjoyed it; (b) those who had planted a vineyard and had not yet enjoyed its fruit; (c) and those who have 'betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her'; such men would have a divided mind in battle; finally, (d) all who were 'fearful and faint-hearted' were excused as dangerous to army morale, 'lest his brethren's heart melt as his heart' (Deut. 20:5–9). The exemption of the newlywed men was mandatory according to Deuteronomy 24:5, 'When a man taketh a new wife, he shall not go out in the host, neither shall he be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife, whom he hath taken.' Also exempt from military service (e) were the Levites (Num. 1:48, 49). The Levites very often fought, but they were exempt from a draft.

"From these exemptions, a general principle appears: *the family has a priority over warfare*. The young bridegroom cannot serve; the new home must come first. The new farmer similarly gains exemption. *Important as defense is, the continuity of life and godly reconstruction are more important*.

"A fifth aspect of military law requires cleanliness in the camp (Deut. 23:9–14). A latrine outside the camp is required, and a spade 'to cover up your filth' (Deut. 23:13, Moffatt). 'For the Eternal your God moves within your camp, to rescue you and to put your enemies into your power; hence your camp must be sacred—that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you' (Deut. 23:14, Moffatt).

"Another general principle appears from this law as well as the first and third laws (above), namely, *that it is not enough for the cause to be holy: not only the cause, but the people of the cause, must be holy, both spiritually and physically*.

"A sixth military law requires that, prior to an attack, or rather, a declaration of war, an offer of peace be extended to the enemy. The offer of peace cannot be an offer to compromise. The cause, if it be just, must be maintained; the enemy must yield to gain peace (Deut. 23:9–14). A 'sneak attack' after a declaration, in Gideon's manner, is legitimate: hostilities are in progress. But, prior to a declaration of war, an attempt to negotiate with honor to the cause is required. [This position is supported also in

latter-day scripture; see D&C 98:33–36; Alma 43:46; 48:14–16.] The formal blowing of trumpets, both before war and in rejoicing at the time of victory, placed the cause before God in expectancy of victory and in gratitude for it (Num. 10:9, 10).

"Seventh, warfare is not child's play. It is a grim and ugly if necessary matter. The Canaanites against whom Israel waged war were under judicial sentence of death by God. They were spiritually and morally degenerate. Virtually every kind of perversion was a religious act: and large classes of sacred male and female prostitutes were a routine part of the holy places. Thus, God ordered all the Canaanites to be killed (Deut. 2:34; 3:6; 20:16–18; Josh. 11:14), both because they were under God's death sentence, and to avoid the contamination of Israel. Among related and adjacent peoples whose depravity was similar but not as total, men (Num. 31:7; Deut. 1:1, 2, 16; 20:16, 17) and sometimes married women as well were killed (Num. 31:17, 18), but the young virgins were spared (Num. 31:18). With other foreign countries, of better calibre, any woman taken prisoner could be married, but could not be treated as a slave or as a captive (Deut. 21:10–14), clearly indicating the difference in national character between Canaanites and other peoples. These provisions are quite generally condemned by the modern age, which has hypocritically resorted to the most savage and total warfare in history. These laws were not applicable to all peoples but only to the most depraved. They assert a still valid general principle: *if warfare is to punish and/or to destroy evil, the work of restoration requires that this be done, that an evil order be overthrown, and, in some cases, some or many people be executed*. . . .

"Eighth, the normal purpose of warfare is defensive; hence, Israel was forbidden the use of more than a limited number of horses (Deut. 17:16), since horses were the offensive weapon of ancient warfare. . . .

"Ninth, a very important military law appears in Deuteronomy 20:19, 20, one which also embodies a basic principle of very far-reaching implications. According to this law, 'When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege: Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued.' The last portion of Deuteronomy 20:19 is rendered by various translators to read, 'for is the tree of the field man, that it should be besieged of thee?' (MJV). In other words, war is not to be waged against the earth, but against men. But, even more centrally, life must go on, and the fruit tree and the vineyard represent at all times an inheritance from the past and a heritage for the future: they are not to be destroyed. Other trees can be cut down, but only as needed to 'build bulwarks against the city.' Wanton destruction is not permitted. . . .

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"Tenth, and finally, the laws of booty provided a reward to the soldiers (Num. 31:21–31, 29, 30, 42; Deut. 20:14), so that there is legal ground not only for soldiers' pay but also a pension, a reward for their services. War indemnity was an aspect of the penalty imposed on an enemy (II Kings 3:4) as penalty for their offense, and to defray the costs of the war.

"In terms of Scripture, in a sinful world, war is ugly, but it is a necessity if evil is to be overcome." (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 277–81.)

#### **(20-9) Deuteronomy 21:18–21. Were Parents Really Required to Have Their Rebellious Children Executed?**

Modern readers are shocked at this requirement, and some try to use it as proof of the primitive and savage nature of the law. The following points are important in considering this requirement:

1. This requirement, like all else in the Mosaic law, was given by the Lord, who was the premortal Jesus. It is consistent with all other aspects of His nature.

2. The law was not speaking of just disobedient children but of incorrigible children, those to whom no counsel or guidance was meaningful.

3. Almost certainly, these were children who had reached maturity. (The charge of drunkard is evidence for this view.) Small children would not qualify as incorrigible.

4. The parents have tried all other means of correction (see v. 18), and all have failed.

5. Although the parents had to bring charges against their own child, they were not required to execute him, as were the witnesses in other capital crimes.

6. Since the family is the basic unit of society and the most important means of transmitting righteousness from generation to generation, the child who utterly rejected parental authority threatened the very order of society. Thus, like the idolator, he must be put to death (see Reading 20-2).

7. A parent who upheld his child in crime became a contributor to crime in society.

"To deny the death penalty is to insist on life for the evil; it means that evil men are given the right to kill, kidnap, rape, and violate law and order, and their life is guaranteed against death in the process. The murderer is given the right to kill without losing his life, and the victim and potential victims are denied their right to live. Men may speak of unconditional love, and unconditional mercy, but every act of love and mercy is conditional, because, in granting it to one man, I am affirming the conditions of his life and denying others in the process. If I am loving and merciful to a murderer, I am unloving and merciless to his present and future victims. Moreover, I am then in open contempt of God and His law, which requires no mercy to a man guilty of death." (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 78.)

Rushdoony continues: "If the parents refused to complain against their son, they were then guilty of condonation and/or participation in his crimes. Their

role was thus a formal but necessary one: would the family align itself with justice or stand in terms of blood ties? In view of the strong nature of family loyalties, the parental participation was necessary in order to ensure freedom from feud and also to place the family firmly against its criminal members. A parent refusing to file a complaint in such a case would become a party to the offense and a defender of crime. The principle required was clear-cut: not blood but law must govern. . . .

"Clearly then, the intent of this law is that all incorrigible and habitual criminals be executed. If a criminal son is to be executed, how much more so a neighbor or fellow Hebrew who has become an incorrigible criminal? If the family must align itself with the execution of an incorrigibly delinquent son, will it not demand the death of an habitual criminal in the community?

"That such is the intent of the law appears from its stated purpose, 'so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and *all* Israel shall hear, and fear.' The purpose of the law is to eliminate entirely a criminal element from the nation, a professional criminal class. The family is not permitted the evil privilege of saying, 'We will stand behind our boy, come what may'; the family itself must join the war on crime." (*Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 187–88.)

8. Think for a moment of how strongly parents would strive to turn their children from sin, knowing that if they failed, they would have to go through the horror of taking them to the judges for execution. Surely they would chasten them in every possible way to see that such an event never happened (see v. 18). In a world of permissive child rearing and the ensuing destruction of righteousness, the lesson of this passage has great meaning.

#### **(20-10) Deuteronomy 21:22–23. Why Was the Body of an Executed Criminal Not to Be Left Overnight?**

"Its exposure for the space of *one day* was judged sufficient. The law which required this answered all the ends of public justice, exposed the shame and infamy of the conduct, but did not put to torture the feelings of humanity by requiring a *perpetual* exhibition of a human being, a slow prey to the most loathsome process of putrefaction. . . . In the case given in the text, God considers the land as defiled while the body of the executed criminal lay exposed, hence it was enjoined, *Thou shalt in any wise bury him that day.*" (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:793–94.)

#### **(20-11) Deuteronomy 22:5**

The way one clothes oneself is important to the Lord. A special prohibition in the law of Moses forbade men and women to wear each other's clothing. When this practice is tolerated by society, it produces great confusion. The Lord expressly forbade a unisex society. Any attempt to erase the obvious distinctions between men and women is unnatural and an abomination to the Lord.

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**(20-12) Deuteronomy 22:8. What Is “a Battlement” for a Roof?**

“Houses in the East are in general built with flat roofs, and on them men walk to enjoy the fresh air, converse together, sleep, &c.; it was therefore necessary to have a sort of battlement or balustrade to prevent persons from falling off. If a man neglected to make a sufficient defence against such accidents, and the death of another was occasioned by it, the owner of the house must be considered in the light of a murderer.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:795.)

**(20-13) Deuteronomy 22:19. What Does It Mean to “Amerce” a Man?**

The word *amerce* means to fine. Here, the term refers to levying a charge against the man who accused his wife of not being a virgin when she really was. A betrothed or married woman could be defended by her father.

**(20-14) Deuteronomy 22:23–27. Why Does the Punishment Differ in Various Circumstances for a Woman Who Is Violated Sexually by a Man?**

“In connection with the seduction of a virgin . . . two, or really three, cases are distinguished; viz. (1) whether she was betrothed (vers. 23–27), or not betrothed (vers. 28, 29); (2) if she were betrothed, whether it was (a) in the town (vers. 23, 24) or (b) in the open field (vers. 25–27) that she had been violated by a man.—Vers. 23, 24. If a betrothed virgin had allowed a man to have intercourse with her (*i.e.* one who was not her bridegroom), they were both of them, the man and the girl, to be led out to the gate of the town, and stoned that they might die: the girl, because she had not cried in the city, *i.e.* had not called for help, and consequently was to be regarded as consenting to the deed; the man, because he had humbled his neighbour’s wife. The betrothed woman was placed in this respect upon a par with a married woman, and in fact is expressly called a wife in ver. 24. Betrothal was the first step towards marriage, even if it was not a solemn act attested by witnesses. . . . Vers. 25–27. If, on the other hand, a man met a betrothed girl in the field, and laid hold of her and lay with her, the man alone was to die, and nothing was to be done to the girl. . . . In the open field the girl had called for help, but no one had helped her. It was therefore a forcible rape.—Vers. 28, 29. The last case: if a virgin was not betrothed, and a man seized her and lay with her, and they were found, *i.e.* discovered or convicted of their deed, the man was to pay the father of the girl fifty shekels of silver, for the reproach brought upon him and his house, and to marry the girl whom he had humbled, without ever being able to divorce her. This case is similar to the one mentioned in [Exodus 22:15–16]. The omission to mention the possibility of the father refusing to give him his daughter for a wife, makes no essential difference. It is assumed as self-evident here, that such a right was possessed by the father.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:412.)

**(20-15) Deuteronomy 22:30. What Does It Mean to “Discover His Father’s Skirt”?**

*Discovering one’s skirt* is a Hebrew euphemism similar to *uncovering one’s nakedness* (see Leviticus 18:6–19) and means to have sexual relations. Thus, this prohibition probably referred to a stepmother. In some cases an older man would marry a much younger woman after the death of his first wife. Then when he died an older son who was close to the age of this stepmother would be tempted to marry her. The law prohibited this eventuality, as it did other cases of incest (see Leviticus 18).

**(20-16) Deuteronomy 23:1–18. The Right of Citizenship in the “Congregation of the Lord”**

Those who had undergone sexual mutilation, who were illegitimate children, or who were Ammonites or Moabites were not allowed to be part of “the congregation of the Lord,” even to the tenth generation (v. 2).

One possible explanation for this prohibition is the following: “There seems to be some corruption of rules here, as contradictions to many of these can be found elsewhere in the Scriptures” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:133). Ruth, a Moabitess, is just one of these examples.

Another possible explanation is that the word *congregation* had a special, limited meaning. It referred to the civil authority of the people.

“The ban was not on faith; *i.e.*, it is not stated that [those listed in Deuteronomy 23:1–3] cannot be believers. There is, in fact, a particularly strong promise of blessing to believing eunuchs in Isaiah 56:4, 5, and their place as proselytes was real even in the era of hardened Phariseeism (Acts 8:27, 28). The Moabitess Ruth intermarried twice, first with a son of Naomi, then with Boaz, to become an ancestress of Jesus Christ (Ruth 1:4; 4:13, 18–21; Matt. 1:5). There is no reason to doubt that eunuchs, [illegitimate children,] Ammonites, and Moabites regularly became believers and were faithful worshippers of God. *Congregation* has reference to the whole nation in its governmental function as God’s covenant people. G. Ernest Wright defined it as ‘the whole organized commonwealth as it assembled officially for various purposes, particularly worship.’ The *men* of the legitimate blood line constituted the heads of houses and of tribes. These *men* were the congregation of Israel, not the women and children nor excluded persons. All the integrity and honesty required by the law was due to every ‘stranger’ (Lev. 19:33, 34), and it was certainly not denied to a man’s illegitimate child, nor to a eunuch, an Ammonite, or a Moabite. The purpose of the commandment is here the protection of authority. Authority among God’s people is *holy*; it does require a separateness. It does not belong to every man simply on the ground of his humanity.” (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 85.)

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Other scholars agree that *congregation* referred to civil authority. "If by entering the congregation be meant the bearing a *civil* office among the people, such as magistrate, judge, &c., then the reason of the law is very plain; no man with any such personal defect as might render him contemptible in the sight of others should bear rule among the people, lest the contempt felt for his personal defects might be transferred to his important office, and thus his authority be disregarded. The general meaning of these words is, simply, that the persons here designated should not be so incorporated with the Jews as to partake of their *civil privileges*." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:797.)

**(20-17) Deuteronomy 23:7–8. Why Were the Edomites and Egyptians Not Similarly Banned When They Were Israel's Enemies Too?**

"The grounds for exclusion are significant. Edom met Israel with open, honest enmity [Numbers 20:18, 20], and Egypt worked to destroy them [Exodus 1:22], but Ammon and Moab instead worked to pervert Israel [Numbers 22:2–5; 31:16], after Israel showed them forbearance [Deuteronomy 2:9, 19, 29]. . . . Edom and Egypt sought to kill Israel; Ammon and Moab tried to pervert and degrade Israel, and their judgment was accordingly severe." (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 85–86.)

**(20-18) Deuteronomy 23:17–18**

The word *dog* is a contemptuous term for males who either were prostitutes themselves or profited from prostitution. Thus, no money gained from prostitution or homosexuality ("a sodomite" [v. 17]) could be used as offerings to God.

**(20-19) Deuteronomy 23:19–25**

For the restriction in the law against usury, see Leviticus 25:36. Victuals are food. Vows made unto the Lord were to be fulfilled without delay.

**(20-20) Deuteronomy 24:1–4**

The purpose of a "bill of divorcement" (v. 3) was that a woman divorced by her husband could remarry if she desired. The restriction here is that one who has divorced his wife may not later change his mind and remarry her. Bible scholars explained this rule as follows:

"If a man married a wife, and he put her away with a letter of divorce, because she did not please him any longer, and the divorced woman married another man, and he either put her away in the same manner or died, the first husband could not take her as his wife again. . . . The law that the first husband could not take his divorced wife back again, if she had married another husband in the meantime, even supposing that the second husband was dead, would necessarily put a check upon frivolous divorces." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:3:417–18).

**(20-21) Deuteronomy 25:3**

Forty stripes was the most that could be laid upon a man as punishment for sin. In order to prevent a miscount and therefore break a commandment of the Lord, thirty-nine lashes were usually administered. Thus, the Apostle Paul reported that "of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one" (2 Corinthians 11:24).

**(20-22) Deuteronomy 25:5–10. The Levirate Law of Marriage**

These verses define the levirate law of marriage, which provided that a dead man's brother should marry the widow and raise a family to the dead man. "The custom insured the security of a widow who might otherwise be left destitute and friendless. . . . If no brother existed, some more distant male relative was required to perform this duty. Whichever relative married the widow became her 'go'el' (redeemer or protector). The first son born to the widow by the new marriage was counted as a child of the dead husband and inherited his property." (*Great People of the Bible and How They Lived*, p. 132.)

The word *levirate* has nothing to do with the tribe of Levi. Rather, it is taken from the Latin word *levir*, meaning "husband's brother." The Sadducees used this law in trying to trap Jesus when they asked whose wife such a woman would be in the Resurrection (see Matthew 22:23–33).

**(20-23) Deuteronomy 25:17–19**

Clarification of the incident with Amalek mentioned here can be found in Exodus 17:8–16.

**(20-24) Deuteronomy 26:16–19**

After briefly reminding Israel of God's goodness to her, Moses gave one of the finest statements of a covenant found anywhere in scripture. Israel promised to keep the Lord's commandments, and the Lord "avouched" (promised) to honor Israel and make of her a holy nation (v. 17).

**(20-25) Deuteronomy 27:1–10**

As a token of Israel's gratitude to God for His many kindnesses, Moses commanded that an altar of uncut stones should be built following Israel's arrival in the promised land. On the stones were to be inscribed the words of God given to Moses.

**(20-26) Deuteronomy 27:11–26**

For an explanation of the cursings from Mount Ebal, see Reading 19-23.

**(20-27) Deuteronomy 28. The Blessings and Cursings of Israel Foretold Again**

This chapter of Deuteronomy is very similar to Leviticus 26, in which the Lord specifically outlined the blessings that would accrue to Israel if they were obedient (see vv. 1–14) and also the punishments they would suffer if they turned from the Lord (see

vv. 15–68). One particularly gruesome prediction added in this chapter concerned a siege so terrible that cannibalism would result (see vv. 49–57). When Jerusalem fell to Babylonian forces under Nebuchadnezzar, conditions were so terrible that the people did turn to cannibalism to survive (see Lamentations 4:1–10). But in the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, the prophecy seems to have been fulfilled with particular preciseness. Note the parallels.

“A nation . . . from far” (v. 49). Rome lies over a thousand miles from Israel.

“Swift as the eagle flieth” (v. 49). The eagle was the symbol of Rome and was carried on the standards of the legions of Rome.

“Whose tongue thou shalt not understand” (v. 49).

While the Aramaic of Babylon was a sister tongue to Hebrew, Latin was completely different in alphabet, structure, and so on.

“A nation of fierce countenance which . . . shall not shew favor” (vv. 50). Roman ferocity in battle and treatment of captives not profitable for slavery was well known.

“He shall besiege thee in all thy gates” (v. 52). Titus built a siege wall completely around Jerusalem so that none could escape (see Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, bk. 5, chap. 12).

“Thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body” (v. 53). Under siege, the people in Jerusalem soon became so desperate for food that all kinds of things were eaten, and finally the people turned to cannibalism (see Josephus, *Wars*, bk. 5, chap. 10, pars. 1–5; chap. 13, par. 7; bk. 6, chap. 3, par. 2).

“The tender and delicate woman . . . shall eat them . . . secretly in the siege” (vv. 56–57). Josephus described a noblewoman from Perea who killed her son and used him for food during the siege (see Josephus, *Wars*, bk. 6, chap. 3, pars. 4–5).

#### (20-28) Deuteronomy 29–30

In these two chapters Moses explained the nature of the covenant that Israel must make with God in order to be worthy of the promised land. Failure to keep the covenant would curse the people and the land as Sodom and Gomorrah had been cursed. “All the curses that are written in this book” (the book of Deuteronomy) would then be in effect (Deuteronomy 29:20). Eventually, the people would be scattered among the nations for their rejection of the covenant.

Later, when Israel had learned to lean upon the Lord, what did Moses say would happen? (see Deuteronomy 30:3–6, 8–10). What would happen to the curses placed upon Israel? (see Deuteronomy 30:7). Moses concluded this chapter with a stirring appeal to Israel to choose the way of blessing rather than the way of cursing (see Deuteronomy 30:16–20).

#### (20-29) Deuteronomy 31

This chapter is an interesting study in contrasts. First Moses said that the Lord would protect and preserve Israel as they entered the promised land. “Be strong and of a good courage,” he said (v. 6). Do not fear your enemies, he urged them, “for the

Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee” (v. 6). Next Moses prophesied that following his death, Israel would desert the Lord. What did he say the principal sin would be? (see v. 20). What did he indicate would befall her then? (see v. 29).

#### (20-30) Deuteronomy 32:14–15. To What Do the Terms *Bashan* and *Jeshurun* Refer?

The word *bashan* means “fruitful.” It was the title given to a district east of the Sea of Galilee that was taken by the Israelites during the conquest of Canaan. It extended from the border of Gilead on the south to the base of Mount Hermon on the north and was given as an inheritance to the tribe of Manasseh (see Maps and Charts). Bashan included the area now known as the Golan Heights.

The word *jeshurun* is a Hebrew word meaning “upright,” or “right in the sight of God,” and refers to Israel itself. As used in Deuteronomy 32:15, it implies that Israel was once in the path of righteousness, but upon becoming fat (prosperous) would yet kick (rebel or fight) against God and esteem the source of their salvation as naught. Some feel that it refers to Israel’s calling to be a righteous people and that God used this word to demonstrate her flagrant disregard for Him.



*Bashan*

#### (20-31) Deuteronomy 32:15, 18, 30–31. To What or Whom Does the Word *Rock* Refer?

“Christ is the *Stone of Israel*. (Gen. 49:24.) ‘I am the good shepherd, and the stone of Israel. He that buildeth upon this rock shall never fall.’ (D. & C. 50:44.) Christ is thus the stone or foundation upon which all men must build. Of him the psalmist prophesied: ‘The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.’ (Ps. 118:22; Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10–11; Luke 20:17–18.) Peter used this truth to teach that the saints ‘as lively stones’ should build ‘a spiritual house,’ with Christ, the Stone of Israel, as the foundation. (1 Pet. 2:1–9.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 768.)

That the Apostle Paul understood this concept is clear from a statement he made about the children of Israel during the period of their wanderings: “For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4). In other words, they all ate the same spiritual meat and drank the same spiritual drink.

#### (20-32) Deuteronomy 32:44–52

Once again is recorded a reference to the Lord’s refusal to permit Moses to enter the promised land. For a discussion of why Moses was forbidden to enter the promised land, see Reading 18-13.

#### (20-33) Deuteronomy 33

A comparative study of Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33 shows some additions to the blessings of the sons of Jacob that were given when they were still only twelve small families. At the time Deuteronomy was written, they were twelve tribes numbering thousands each. It had been about four hundred and fifty years since Jacob gave the sons his patriarchal blessings. What evidence is given that Jacob’s blessings were prophetic?

#### (20-34) Deuteronomy 34:1–4

Moses’ view from Nebo was greater than what could be seen by even the sharpest eyes of an observer. His was a complete view of the promised land to the Mediterranean Sea, which was hidden from view by the mountains of Jerusalem. The view was given to him, perhaps through a vision or revelation.



Mount Nebo from the Jordan Valley

#### (20-35) Deuteronomy 34:5. Did Moses Really Die as Recorded in Deuteronomy 34:5?

“The Old Testament account that Moses died and was buried by the hand of the Lord in an unknown grave is an error. (Deut. 34:5–7.) It is true that he may have been ‘buried by the hand of the Lord,’ if that expression is a figure of speech which means that he was translated. But the Book of Mormon account, in recording that Alma ‘was taken up by the Spirit,’

says, ‘the scriptures saith the Lord took Moses unto himself; and we suppose that he has also received Alma in the spirit, unto himself.’ (Alma 45:18–19.) It should be remembered that the Nephites had the Brass Plates, and that they were the ‘scriptures’ which gave the account of Moses being taken by way of translation.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 805.)

The question is raised, Why was Moses translated? President Joseph Fielding Smith answered the question in this way:

“Moses, like Elijah, was taken up without tasting death, because he had a mission to perform. . . .

“When Moses and Elijah came to the Savior and to Peter, James, and John upon the Mount, what was their coming for? Was it just some spiritual manifestation to strengthen these three apostles? Or did they come merely to give comfort unto the Son of God in his ministry and to prepare him for his crucifixion? No! That was not the purpose. I will read it to you. The Prophet Joseph Smith has explained it as follows:

“The priesthood is everlasting. The Savior, Moses, and Elias [Elijah, in other words] gave the keys to Peter, James, and John, on the Mount when they were transfigured before him. The priesthood is everlasting—without beginning of days or end of years; without father, mother, etc. If there is no change of ordinances, there is no change of priesthood. Wherever the ordinances of the gospel are administered, there is the priesthood. . . . Christ is the Great High Priest; Adam next.’ [Smith, *Teachings*, p. 158.] From that we understand why Elijah and Moses were preserved from death: because they had a mission to perform, and it had to be performed before the crucifixion of the Son of God, and it could not be done in the spirit. They had to have tangible bodies. Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection; therefore if any former prophets had a work to perform preparatory to the mission of the Son of God, or to the dispensation of the meridian of times, it was essential that they be preserved to fulfill that mission in the flesh. For that reason Moses disappeared from among the people and was taken up into the mountain, and the people thought he was buried by the Lord. The Lord preserved him, so that he could come at the proper time and restore his keys, on the heads of Peter, James, and John, who stood at the head of the dispensation of the meridian of time.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:107, 110–11.)

## POINTS TO PONDER

(20-36) Obedience to the Lord always has its own rewards. When Moses reminded Israel of its spiritual obligations and then set before the people both a cursing and a blessing, he knew that they must choose.

Life is like that for us, too. We cannot stand uncommitted forever in the face of choices to be made. And while it is true, as the Lord declared, that He is a “jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children” (Deuteronomy 5:9), it does not follow that we can blame our sins upon our ancestors. Consider this inspired counsel:

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“The Jews believed in the law of heredity to a great extent, probably to a greater extent than they were justified; and by and by they took this commandment and crystalized it into a proverb which declared, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ [See Lamentations 5:7; Jeremiah 31:29; Ezekiel 18:2.] Then when rebuked for their sins and their abominations, they would turn and say, in effect, ‘Well, we are not to blame. It’s not our fault. It is the sins of the fathers being visited upon the heads of the children, and surely God will not condemn us for the sins which we have inherited from our fathers, for our teeth have been set on edge by our fathers eating sour grapes.’ The Lord was very much displeased with this excuse of theirs, and He declared to Ezekiel, the prophet, ‘As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.’ He then went on to tell the people through the prophet that He would require of every man and every woman in Israel an accounting for his or her own conduct and course in life, and every one should be judged according to the deeds done in the body. These Israelites seemed to forget that part of the commandment which said, that He would show mercy unto thousands of them that loved Him and kept His commandments.” (Hyrum M. Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1904, p. 52.)

But if others’ cursings are not our cursings, then others’ blessings are not our blessings either. We must earn our own. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote the following:

“Search the Scriptures, search the Prophets and learn what portion of them belongs to you and the people of the nineteenth century. You, no doubt, will agree with us, and say, that you have no right to claim the promises of the inhabitants before the flood; that you cannot found your hopes of salvation upon the obedience of the children of Israel when journeying in the wilderness, nor can you expect that the blessings which the apostles pronounced upon the churches of Christ eighteen hundred years ago, were intended for you. Again, if others’ blessings are not your blessings, others’ curses are not your curses; you stand then in these last days, as all have stood before you, agents unto yourselves, to be judged according to your works.” (*Teachings*, p. 12.)

Take a moment now to thumb through the book of Deuteronomy. What scriptures did you mark? What concepts impressed you as Moses lovingly counseled Israel for the last time? Write, in no more than a page or two, your own reaction to Moses’ counsel. What value does it have for you? How would your life be different if you took his counsel fully to heart?



# The Entry into the Promised Land

## (21-1) Introduction

How do you feel when you stand on the verge of reaching a long-awaited goal? Are you happy, sad, or relieved that the journey is nearly over? Are you frightened of the tests and trials that still lie ahead, or do you view your future with courage and faith in God?

Forty years of wandering in the wilderness had brought Israel to stand upon a mountaintop overlooking the land of promise. Every Israelite over twenty years of age when they left Egypt under Moses' leadership was now dead, except for three people: Moses, Joshua, and Caleb (see Numbers 14:38). All the others had died without realizing their cherished blessing. Why? What caused those Israelites who left Egypt by God's power to lose their privilege of setting foot upon the promised land?

In formulating an answer, remember that God never breaks a promise. Forty years before this time God had told the children of Israel, "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to you. . . . for an heritage: I am the Lord." (Exodus 6:7–8.)

God always keeps His promises. He has power to make them, and He has power to fulfill them. Some doubt this fact. The initial company of Israelites who departed from Egypt did so with reluctance. Bad as things were in Egypt, the known seemed better than the unknown to those who lacked faith. During their forty years of desert wandering, the children of Israel alternately blessed and cursed the name of God. When He showed them miracles, they humbled themselves. When the tests and rigors of desert life became difficult, they hardened their hearts in anger and resentment. They forgot His power and trembled in fear at the thought of facing the Canaanites. In so doing, they lost their privilege to enter the land of promise.

As their children stood on the mountain and saw in the distance the promised land, the realization of their expectations, were they ready? Did they appreciate the great blessing of receiving that which was denied their fathers? Could they move into the land under the leadership of a living prophet and possess the country on the Lord's terms? Or would they pollute their inheritance, as their fathers had done before?

## Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Joshua 1–24. Chapters 12–21 contain detailed descriptions of the tribal divisions of the land.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)
3. Use the maps given in this chapter to find various locations mentioned in your reading.

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON JOSHUA 1–24

### (21-2) Joshua 1:1. The Book of Joshua and the Man Joshua

"The Book of Joshua is one of the most important writings in the old covenant, and should never be separated from the Pentateuch, of which it is at once both the continuation and completion. Between *this Book* and the *five Books of Moses*, there is the same analogy as between the *four Gospels* and the *Acts of the Apostles*. The Pentateuch contains a history of the Acts of the great Jewish *legislator*, and the Laws on which the *Jewish Church* should be established. The *Book of Joshua* gives an account of the *establishment* of that Church in the Land of Canaan, according to the oft-repeated promises and declarations of God. The *Gospels* give an account of the *transactions* of Jesus Christ, the great Christian *legislator*, and of those Laws on which *his Church* should be established, and by which it should be governed. The *Acts of the Apostles* gives an account of the *actual establishment* of that Church, according to the predictions and promises of its great founder. Thus, then, the *Pentateuch* bears as pointed a relation to the *Gospels* as the *Book of Joshua* does to the *Acts of the Apostles*." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:4.)

Clarke called the Old Testament the Jewish Church, meaning the organization founded by Jehovah among the early Israelites. But Latter-day Saints know that Jehovah was the premortal Christ. This fact explains the remarkable parallels. Both Churches were the Church of Jesus Christ, given in different circumstances and with different priesthood emphasis. But in both cases baptisms were performed, and the principles of righteous living and faith in God were clearly taught.

These parallels suggest that the book of Joshua may continue the typology, or symbolism, of Christ, just as did the law of Moses. Indeed, Latter-day Saints are taught that Moses was “in the similitude of [the] Only Begotten” (Moses 1:6; see also McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 442–48). Just as Moses, in his role as prophet, lawgiver, mediator, and deliverer, was a type of Jesus Christ, so Joshua, who led Israel into the promised land, was also a type of Jesus, who leads all the faithful into the ultimate land of promise, the celestial kingdom. (See Alma’s comparison of the promised land to eternal life in Alma 37:45.)

“Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, was first called *Oshea* or *Hoshea*, . . . [Numbers 13:16], which signifies *saved*, a *saviour*, or *salvation*; but afterwards Moses, guided no doubt by a prophetic spirit, changed his name into . . . *Yehoshua* or *Joshua*, which signifies *he shall save*, or *the salvation of Jehovah*; referring, no doubt, to his being God’s instrument in *saving the people* from the hands of their enemies, and leading them from victory to victory over the different Canaanitish nations, till he put them in possession of the promised land. . . . By the Septuagint he is called . . . , *Jesus Naue*, or *Jesus son of Nave*: and in the New Testament he is expressly called . . . Jesus; [see Acts 7:45; Hebrews 4:8].” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:3.) In other words, in the original Hebrew both *Joshua* and *Jesus* were the same name.

There are further analogies between organizations of the old and new covenants: “On this very ground of analogy Christ obviously founded the Christian Church; hence he had his *twelve disciples*, from whom the *Christian Church* was to spring, as the *Jewish Church* or *twelve tribes* sprang from the *twelve sons of Jacob*. He had his *seventy or seventy-two disciples*, in reference to the *seventy-two elders*, six chosen out of each of the twelve tribes, who were united with Moses and Aaron in the administration of justice, &c., among the people. Christ united in his person the characters both of Moses and Aaron, or legislator and high priest; hence he ever considers *himself*, and is considered by his *apostles* and *followers*, the *same* in the *Christian Church* that Moses and Aaron were in the *Jewish*. As a rite of *initiation* into his Church, he instituted *baptism* in the place of *circumcision*, both being types of the purification of the heart and holiness of life; and as a rite of *establishment* and *confirmation*, the holy *eucharist* [the Lord’s Supper] in place of the *paschal lamb*, both being intended to commemorate the atonement made to God for the sins of the people. The analogies are so *abundant*, and indeed *universal*, that time would fail to enumerate them. On this very principle it would be a matter of high utility to *read these Old Testament and the New Testament books together*, as they reflect a strong and mutual light on each other, bear the most decided testimony to the words and truth of prophecy, and show the ample fulfilment of all the ancient and gracious designs of God.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:5.)

### (21-3) Joshua 1:4. The Promised Land

Biblical Israel is generally thought of as that region south and southwest of the Lebanon mountains, north

and east of Egypt, east of the Mediterranean coastal plain, and west of the Arabian desert. In dimension, Israel was roughly 150 miles from Dan to Beersheba, and at its greatest width it was about 75 miles across. The Lord promised Joshua that the original extent of the land promised to Abraham was to be given to Israel (see Genesis 15:18; Joshua 1:4). Although the Israelites who went into the promised land with Joshua were generally faithful and obedient, as a nation Israel soon returned to their old ways and lost the blessings promised to them of winning the whole land. Not until the time of David and Solomon (about two hundred years later) did Israel control the land given in the original covenant and then only for a short while, for they soon lost the outermost parts of it again.

### (21-4) Joshua 1:5–18

After affirming that Joshua had the power and authority of Moses (see v. 5), the Lord charged him to make the law the basis of all he did. He was not to vary from it (see v. 7), and it was not to depart out of his mouth, that is, all that he spoke was to conform to it, and he was to meditate upon it constantly (see v. 8). The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, who were to inherit lands already conquered on the east side of the Jordan, were charged to join the other tribes in conquering the rest of the land. These tribes showed their loyalty by accepting that charge and covenanting to put to death any who refused to do so.

### (21-5) Joshua 2:1–7. Was Rahab a Harlot?

“In the narrative of these transactions Rahab is called *zonah*, which our own, after the ancient versions, renders ‘harlot.’ The Jewish writers, however, being unwilling to entertain the idea of their ancestors being involved in a disreputable association at the commencement of their great undertaking, chose to interpret the word ‘hostess,’ one who keeps a public house, as if from the Hebrew word meaning ‘to nourish’ (Joseph. *Antiq.* v:I; ii and vii; comp. the Targum and Kimchi and Jarchi on the text). Christian interpreters also are inclined to adopt this interpretation for the sake of the character of the woman of whom the Apostle speaks well, and who would appear from Matt. 1:4 to have become by a subsequent marriage with Salmon, prince of Judah, an ancestress of Jesus. But we must be content to take facts as they stand, and not strain them to meet difficulties; and it is now universally admitted by every sound Hebrew scholar that *zonah* means ‘harlot,’ and not ‘hostess.’ It signifies harlot in every other text where it occurs, the idea of ‘hostess’ not being represented by this or any other word in Hebrew, as the function represented by it did not exist. There were no inns; and when certain substitutes for inns subsequently came into use, they were never, in any Eastern country, kept by women. On the other hand, strangers from beyond the river might have repaired to the house of a harlot without suspicion or remark. The Bedouins from the desert constantly do so at this day in their visits to Cairo and Bagdad. The house of

such a woman was also the only one to which they, as perfect strangers, could have had access, and certainly the only one in which they could calculate on obtaining the information they required without danger from male inmates. This concurrence of analogies in the word, in the thing, and in the probability of circumstances, ought to settle the question. If we are concerned for the morality of Rahab, the best proof of her reformation is found in the fact of her subsequent marriage to Salmon; this implies her previous conversion to Judaism, for which indeed her discourse with the spies evinces that she was prepared." (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Rahab," 3:1424.)

That Rahab's faith in Jehovah was sincere is supported by the fact that both Paul and James cited her as an example of faith (see Hebrews 11:31; James 2:5).

#### (21-6) Joshua 2:8-24

These verses illustrate the value placed upon an oath or promise by men of ancient times. Unfortunately, men of that day were more faithful to their covenants with other men than they were to those made with God. A token was agreed upon as proof of their intention to protect Rahab and her family from destruction in return for her assistance. Rahab was to place a "line of scarlet thread" in the window of her house (v. 18). This thread would serve as a reminder to attacking Israel that Rahab and all within her house were to be spared from destruction.

#### (21-7) Joshua 3

As Moses was magnified by the Lord in the eyes of Israel when God parted the Red Sea, so Joshua was magnified in the same way through the parting of the Jordan River. In both instances Israel passed through the water into a newness of life. This passage may have been what Paul had in mind when he spoke of Israel's baptism "in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:2; see also vv. 1, 3-4). In each instance the passage represented a new covenant agreement. Israel passed over the River Jordan on the first day of the Passover (see Joshua 3:17; 4:19; compare Exodus 12:3).



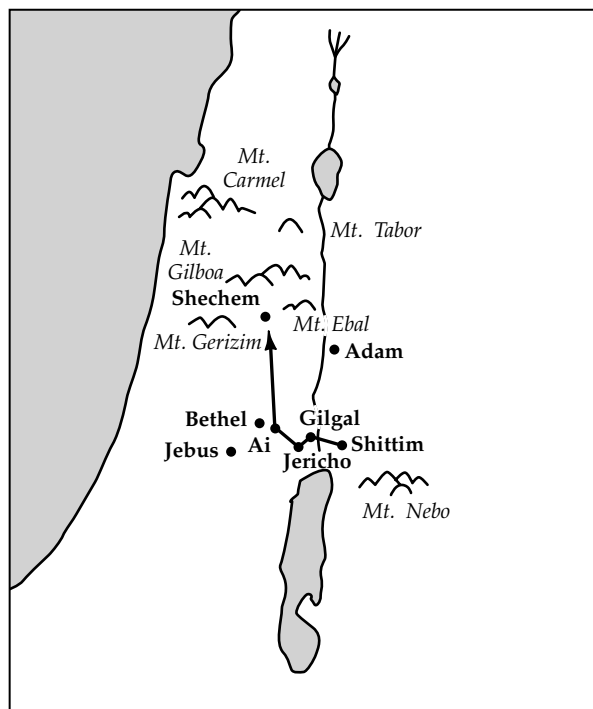
The Jordan River

#### (21-8) Joshua 4. Why Did Israel Set Up Memorial Stones?

Biblical peoples were very fond of symbolic acts to commemorate great events. In order to memorialize God's blessing in parting the waters of the Jordan River, Joshua commanded that twelve stones be taken from the riverbed and placed where all the people could see them: "These stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever" (v. 7). In later years, when their children would ask the meaning of the stones, Israel could rehearse the story of God's miracle; thus, the stones would serve as a visible reminder of God's power.

#### (21-9) Joshua 5:1

It is important to remember that the Israelites did not move into a land where no one lived. On the contrary, the area known as Canaan had been inhabited for centuries. The mention of the Amorite and Canaanite kings and their response to the miraculous crossing of the Jordan further indicates that all of the land of Canaan was laid at the feet of Israel by the Lord. They had only to physically conquer those who were already defeated mentally, but they lost the advantage the Lord gave them when they began to forsake their covenants with Him.



Entry into the promised land

#### (21-10) Joshua 5:2-8. Why Were the Israelites Circumcised Now?

Israel had wandered forty years in the wilderness because they were not faithful in their covenant with God. It is not surprising, then, that during that period they had failed to continue the practice of circumcision, which was the symbol of their covenant.

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Therefore, after Joshua had led his people through the waters of the Jordan—a type of baptism (see Reading 21-7)—onto the sacred ground that had been denied their fathers, the Lord required them to reinstitute the physical token of the covenant.

**(21-11) Joshua 5:10–12. The Manna Is No Longer**

This event marks a major turning point for Israel. For the first time in forty years the children of Israel were on their own. The Israelites had been tenderly nursed with manna during that time, but now they were to stand forth in maturity and, from their own labor, eat the bread of the land. Considering that the manna had appeared every day but the Sabbath for forty years, or more than twelve thousand times, it truly was the end of a remarkable era.

**(21-12) Joshua 5:13–14. Who Was the Captain of the Lord's Host That Joshua Saw?**

Although there is a noticeable lack of detail in this account, what is recorded suggests a miraculous vision shown to Joshua. Most commentators assume either a mortal servant of God or an angel came to strengthen Joshua and Israel as they prepared for their first battle.

Two things, however, suggest that Joshua may actually have seen Jehovah, the premortal Jesus Christ. First, when Joshua fell down to worship him, no attempt was made to stop him. Yet the mortal servants of God are quick to prevent others from worshipping them, even when they have demonstrated

great power (see Acts 10:25–26; 14:8–18; Alma 18:15–17). The same thing is true of angels, for twice, when he was awed at the presence of angels and fell at their feet to worship them, John the Revelator was told the same thing, “See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets” (Revelation 22:9; see also 19:10). The angel who appeared to Samson’s parents clearly taught them that any offerings were to be to the Lord (see Judges 13:16). But no attempt was made to prevent Joshua from falling down to worship this being.

Second, the personage commanded Joshua to remove his shoes because he was standing on holy ground—the same instructions Jehovah gave to Moses on Mount Sinai (see Exodus 3:5). But, since this account in Deuteronomy is very scant on details, it can only be surmised that the being may have been the Lord.

**(21-13) Joshua 6. The Fall of Jericho**

The inhabitants of Jericho knew full well of the powerful destruction that Israel had directed against the kingdom of the Amorites east of Jordan. Therefore, it is no surprise that they shut up their walled city against Israel.

The prevalence of the number seven in the Lord’s dealing with Jericho’s defense is significant. Throughout the law of Moses, *seven* was used numerous times to signify the covenant. Its association with the covenant probably stems from the idea that “*seven . . . is associated with completion, fulfilment,*



*Old Testament Jericho*

and perfection" (Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "number," p. 898). By patterning the conquest of Jericho in sevens, the Lord taught Israel that their success lay in the covenant with Jehovah; His perfect power brought conquest, not their own.

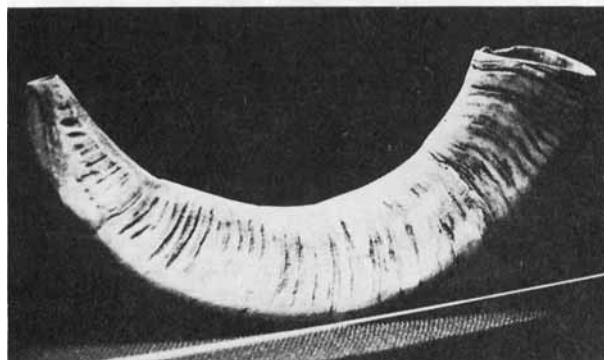
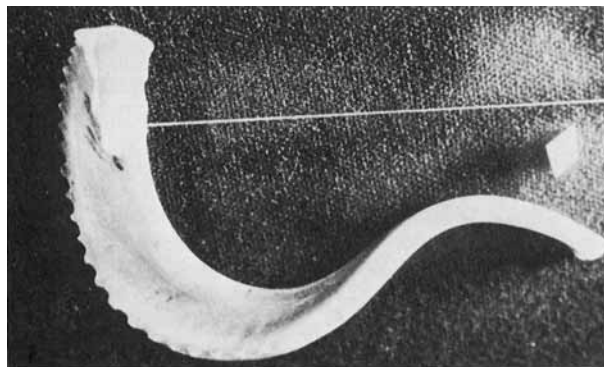
The horn blown was the Hebrew *shofar*, or ram's horn (see vv. 4–6). Scholars are generally agreed that the shofar was the oldest musical instrument in Israel. After being flattened by heat, the horn of a ram was forced to turn up at the ends. This shape thus created a most unusual and easily recognizable sound. In early times the horn was used to warn of approaching armies, to give the signal for attack, or to dismiss troops from the field.

As the ark of the covenant symbolized the presence of God in the tabernacle's Holy of Holies, so it symbolized His leadership of the armies of Israel as they carried it before them while they marched around the city (see vv. 4, 6–8). This was not a mere mortal conflict: Canaan was to be destroyed by the very God of Israel. This truth was impressively taught to Israel by the presence of the ark.

Great care was given to honoring every detail of the oath that had been given to Rahab.

#### (21-14) Joshua 6:20. What Caused the Walls of Jericho to Fall?

Men have argued this question for ages. Did the marching feet, the blaring trumpets, and the final shout weaken the walls in some way so that they tumbled in accordance with natural law? Or was some other principle in operation? Did the Lord simply, at a convenient point in time, level the walls by His power? Elder James E. Talmage discussed this question in these words:



*Shofar horns*

"May we not believe that when Israel encompassed Jericho, the captain of the Lord's host and his heavenly train were there, and that before their super-mortal agency, sustained by the faith and obedience of the human army, the walls were leveled?"

"Some of the latest and highest achievements of man in the utilization of natural forces approach the conditions of spiritual operations. To count the ticking of a watch thousands of miles away; to speak in but an ordinary tone and be heard across the continent; to signal from one hemisphere and be understood on the other though oceans roll and roar between; to bring the lightning into our homes and make it serve as fire and torch; to navigate the air and to travel beneath the ocean surface; to make chemical and atomic energies obey our will—are not these miracles? The possibility of such would not have been received with credence before their actual accomplishment. Nevertheless, these and all other miracles are accomplished through the operation of the laws of nature, which are the laws of God." (Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, pp. 222–23.)

#### (21-15) Joshua 7:1–13. Why Did the Israelites Lose the Battle of Ai?

"Consider the defeat of Israel by the men of Ai; a law of righteousness had been violated, and things that were accursed had been introduced into the camp of the covenant people; this transgression interposed resistance to the current of divine help, and until the people had sanctified themselves the power was not renewed unto them" (Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, p. 105; see also Joshua 7:10–13.)

For further discussion of the significance of this loss, see Points to Ponder in this chapter.

#### (21-16) Joshua 7:6

The act of placing dust upon one's head had the same symbolic meaning as dressing in sackcloth and sitting in ashes. It was a token of great remorse, true humility, and deep repentance. It also symbolized the unworthy station of man compared to deity (see Genesis 37:34; compare Job 2:12; Lamentations 2:10). This sense of unworthiness seems to be the meaning of King Benjamin's comment that the people considered themselves as less than the dust of the earth (see Mosiah 4:2).

#### (21-17) Joshua 7:7–26. Why Was Achan Worthy of Death?

It may appear that the action taken against Achan for taking the booty of Jericho was too severe, but the death of the mortal body may often be a merciful act both to other people and to the offender (see 1 Nephi 4:13; Leviticus 24:17). Some offenses of men are of such consequence that the payment of the life of the offender is required for the expiation of the sin. Achan's disobedience cost the lives of thirty-six men (see Joshua 7:5). But even more important, Israel's spiritual death would be more serious than the physical death of individuals. For Israel to fail to obey the Lord in all things would be tantamount to

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depriving her of the land of Canaan (see 1 Nephi 17:31–35). It is apparent from his voluntary confession that Achan understood this truth (see Joshua 7:20–21).

See the tables of weights and measures in Maps and Charts to better understand the value of a shekel of silver.

#### **(21-18) Joshua 8**

More than Jericho, Ai, the second city conquered after Israel crossed the Jordan, became a model for the conquests of other cities. Once Ai was taken, Joshua moved Israel to Mount Ebal and fulfilled the instructions of Moses to build an altar there and pronounce the blessings and cursings of the Lord from Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim (see vv. 30–35; Deuteronomy 27).

#### **(21-19) Joshua 9:3–27**

Although the subtle alliance manufactured through deceitful means saved their lives, the people of Gibeon became the perpetual slaves of Israel. Moses had warned Israel not to make any covenants with the Canaanites (see Deuteronomy 7:2), and this warning may explain why Joshua was so upset when he discovered the deception. Since the oath had been made, however, he honored it, placing the people of Gibeon in slavery instead of having them killed.

#### **(21-20) Joshua 10:1–11**

Adonizedek (a Hebrew word meaning “lord of justice”) is an example of many other civil leaders who chose titles for themselves or had titles bestowed upon them by greater rulers whose vassals they were (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Adonizedek,” 1:56). Perhaps he, like other Canaanite kings, assumed this name in imitation of the ancient patriarchal king of Salem, Melchizedek, “king of righteousness” (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Melchizedek” 2:1136). He was the chief of the confederacy of five kings that made war against Gibeon.

#### **(21-21) Joshua 10:12–14. Did the Sun Really Stand Still in the Heavens?**

The Book of Mormon makes it clear that it was the earth, not the sun, that was involved in Joshua’s miracle. Mormon, discoursing on the might and power of God, wrote:

“Yea, and if he say unto the earth—Move—it is moved. Yea, if he say unto the earth—Thou shalt go back, that it lengthen out the day for many hours—it is done; And thus, according to his word the earth goeth back, and it appeareth unto man that the sun standeth still; yea, and behold, this is so; for surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun. And behold, also, if he say unto the waters of the great deep—Be thou dried up—it is done. Behold, if he say unto this mountain—Be thou raised up, and come over and fall upon that city, that it be buried up—behold it is done.” (Helaman 12:13–17.)

“So here we have the words of a Book of Mormon prophet confirming the fact that God can—and

would, when necessary—cause that the earth should stop in its rotation to lengthen a day. And since on the occasion in question he was fighting to bring victory to Israel, this was one of his means of doing so.

“If we have doubts about the Lord’s willingness or ability to interrupt the usual movements of heavenly bodies, how shall we explain such phenomena as the following:

“But, behold, I say unto you that before this great day shall come the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall be turned into blood, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and there shall be greater signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath.” (D&C 29:14.)

“Or: ‘And they shall see signs and wonders, for they shall be shown forth in the heavens above and in the earth beneath. And they shall behold blood, and fire, and vapors of smoke. And before the day of the Lord shall come, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon be turned into blood, and the stars fall from heaven.’ (D&C 45:40–42.)

“For not many days hence and the earth shall tremble and reel to and fro as a drunken man; and the sun shall hide his face, and shall refuse to give light; and the moon shall be bathed in blood; and the stars shall become exceedingly angry, and shall cast themselves down as a fig that falleth from off a fig-tree.’ (D&C 88:87.)

“Or: ‘And so great shall be the glory of his presence that the sun shall hide his face in shame, and the moon shall withhold its light, and the stars shall be hurled from their places.’ (D&C 133:49.)

“The episode of Joshua commanding the sun and moon to stand still was insignificant compared to the stellar upsets that will accompany the second advent of the Savior, when stars will be hurled from their places. Some power will darken the sun and make the moon refuse to give its light. (Of course the moon will be darkened as soon as the sun gives no further light, since the moon’s light is merely reflected from the sun.)

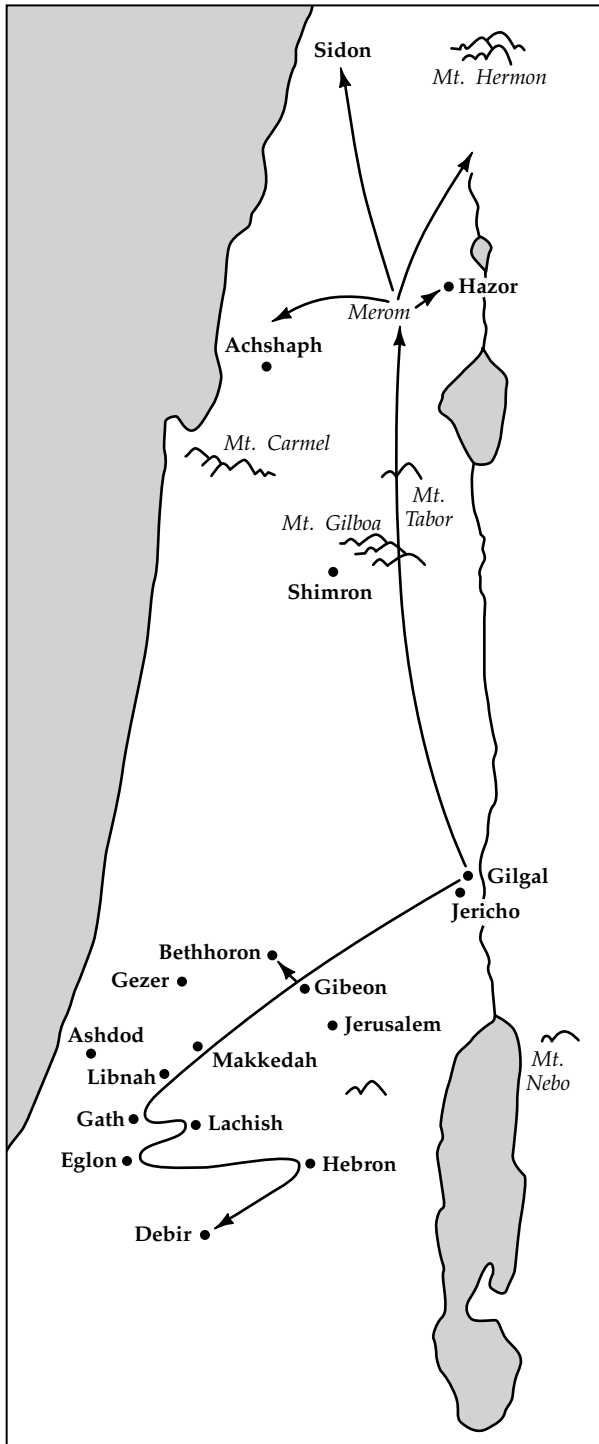
“It is appropriate here to quote Sir Charles Marston, a most intelligent ‘critic of the critics,’ who said that it is time we begin ‘to recognize the extravagance of its [criticism by the intellectuals] underlying assumption, that *what the critic did not know could not have been!*’ (*The Bible Comes Alive*, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1947, p. 182.)” (Petersen, *Joshua*, pp. 58–59.)

#### **(21-22) Joshua 10:13. What Is the Book of Jasher and Where Can It Be Found?**

Like numerous other books mentioned in the Old and New Testament but not contained within their pages, the book of Jasher appears to have been a source that contained accounts of heroic deeds in ancient Israel. It is thought by many to have been written in verse, but it likely contained some prose as well. A book with this title is currently available, but it is of doubtful origin, according to most scholars, and probably is not the one mentioned in the Old Testament.

**(21-23) Joshua 10:24**

To place one's foot upon the neck of a fallen enemy was a symbolic act that demonstrated complete subjugation. One had then been literally trodden underfoot. This fact is often represented in Egyptian and Assyrian sculptures and wall paintings (see 1 Kings 5:3; Isaiah 51:23).



*Joshua's military campaigns*

**(21-24) Joshua 10:28-43**

The destruction of the five nations of the Canaanites was accomplished over a period of days rather than on the same day as the battle at Gibeon.

**(21-25) Joshua 11**

This chapter summarizes the conquest of northern Canaan. The destruction of these northern kingdoms, however, required a long time (see v. 18). The note in verse 22 is of interest because the Anakim were a race of giants (see Numbers 13:32-33) and because Goliath came from Gath (see 1 Samuel 17:4).

**(21-26) Joshua 11:6, 9. What Does Hough Mean?**

To hough a horse is to cut the leg tendons above and behind the tarsal joint or ankle, thus rendering the horse useless. The Israelites were foot soldiers rather than charioteers. The fear seems to have been that should the horses and chariots be used as vehicles of war, Israel would turn from faith in God and trust in the arm of flesh (see 2 Samuel 8:4; Isaiah 31:1).

**(21-27) Joshua 13-21**

These chapters contain accounts of the division of the land of Canaan among the twelve tribes of Israel. The map of Canaan in Maps and Charts gives a clear picture of how the land was divided between the tribes. Chapter 18 discusses the Levite cities commanded by Moses to be given to members of the tribe of Levi (see Reading 18-24; Numbers 35:9-27), and chapter 20 lists the cities of refuge and their purpose.

**(21-28) Joshua 22**

This chapter demonstrates the critical balance between true worship and apostate idolatry. Without a knowledge of why the 2 1/2 tribes had built the altar on the other side of Jordan, one would judge the action to be an adulteration of the holy worship in the tabernacle. Satan's counterfeits can appear very convincing. Fortunately, the tribes showed that it was an act of legitimate worship and not idolatry. The tragedy is that in a short time Israel would no longer react strongly against idolatry.

**(21-29) Joshua 23**

The thirty-one Canaanite city-states destroyed by Joshua in his day were not all that the Lord intended to purge from Israel (see Numbers 23:4-5). Since men tend to adopt the values or habits of those with whom they associate, it was imperative that all idolatrous nations in Canaan be destroyed. Joshua warned Israel of three things in the event that some heathen nations, including those that surrounded them, were allowed to remain: (1) beware of social intercourse with them (see Joshua 23:7), (2) refrain from worshiping their false gods (see vv. 7-11), and

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(3) avoid intermarriages with them (see v. 12). Otherwise, “snares and traps,” “scourges,” and “thorns” awaited Israel (v. 13).

**(21-30) Joshua 24:1–28. “Choose You This Day Whom Ye Will Serve”**

Near the end of his life Joshua called his people together for a final blessing and warning, very much as Moses had done. Such messages should be considered very significant, for what a prophet says as he approaches death seems to be an effort on his part to rid his garments of the blood of the people by placing the full responsibility for their conduct squarely upon their shoulders (see Jacob 1:19). Joshua showed Israel exactly what God had miraculously done for them in the past and challenged them to choose whom they would serve.

Elder Erastus Snow, commenting on the feeling some have that being obedient to God somehow limits their agency, gave an interesting insight on choosing to follow God:

“If good and evil is placed before us, does not the person who chooses the good and refuses the evil exhibit his agency and manhood as much as the man who chooses the evil and refuses the good? or is the independence of manhood all on the side of the evil-doer? I leave you to answer this question in your own mind. To me, I think the angels and saints and all good people have exercised their agency by choosing the good and refusing the evil; and in doing so they not only exhibit their independence and manhood as much, but show a much higher and greater nobility of character and disposition; and I leave the future to determine who are wise in the choice of their freedom and independence.

“Joshua said to ancient Israel: ‘Choose ye this day whom ye will serve; if the Lord be God, serve him; if Baal, serve him. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.’ I think what we need to learn are the true principles that shall lead us to peace, to wealth and happiness in this world, and glory and exaltation in the world to come. And that if we can learn these principles, and receive them in good and honest hearts, and teach them as our faith, and practice them in our lives, we shall show our manhood, our independence and our agency as creditably before the angels and the Gods, as any wicked man can, in refusing the good and cleaving to the evil, exhibit his before the devil and his angels.” (In *Journal of Discourses*, 19:180–81.)

**(21-31) Joshua 24:32**

Reference is made here to “the bones of Joseph” (v. 32). When Joseph, Jacob’s son, was dying, he extracted a promise from the children of Israel that they would take his body with them when they left Egypt (see Genesis 50:25). Most likely his body had been embalmed in the Egyptian manner. Upon Israel’s departure from Egypt, Moses honored the promise and “took the bones of Joseph with him” (Exodus 13:19). Following Israel’s arrival and settlement in the promised land, Joseph’s remains were interred, as recorded in Joshua 24:32.

## POINTS TO PONDER

(21-32) The inhabitants of Canaan were ferocious and warlike. They resisted bitterly any attempt by others to settle on land they regarded as their own. But the Lord had given Canaan to the Israelites. It was theirs to hold if only they had the courage and strength to wrest it from the Canaanites and keep it safe from their enemies.

In the strength of God, Joshua and Israel became fearless. Nations trembled at the mention of their name. Courageously they swept over the land of Canaan, east and west of Jordan, and none could stop their conquering spirit—except themselves. They had earned, for the present, at least, the name *Jeshurun* (“righteous Israel”) because they had chosen to serve the Lord.

The Saints today also face a world intent on their spiritual destruction. Canaan has long passed from the earth, but Satan, who incited Canaan’s wickedness and opposition to Israel, is still determined to destroy those who follow the Lamb of God (see 1 Nephi 14:12–14). Sometimes modern Israel may feel apprehensive as they see the impending judgments drawing closer and closer. Modern Canaan will be destroyed in preparation for the establishment of a worldwide Zion, and this destruction is not pleasant to contemplate. Elder Ezra Taft Benson used two passages from the book of Joshua to counsel those who feel anxiety as they contemplate the future.

“Now during this critical period, and it is a critical period that we are passing through, I hope that we will keep ever burning in our hearts the spirit of this great work which we represent. If we do so, we’ll have no anxiety; we’ll have no fear; we’ll not worry about the future because the Lord has given us the assurance that if we live righteously, if we keep his commandments, if we humble ourselves before him, all will be well. I turn to two passages of scripture today which I’d like to read:

“... Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” (Joshua 1:9.)

“This was the Lord’s admonition to his son, Joshua, encouraging him to trust in God. Joshua answered that admonition in counsel to his people in these words:

“... choose you this day whom ye will serve; ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (*Ibid.*, 24:15.)

“Embodied in these two passages of scripture are the two principal essentials for security and peace: first, trust in God; and second, a determination to keep the commandments, to serve the Lord, to do that which is right. Latter-day Saints who live according to these two admonitions—trust in God and keep the commandments—have nothing to fear.

“The Lord has made it very clear in the revelations that even though times become perilous, even though we be surrounded by temptation and sin, even though there be a feeling of insecurity, even though men’s hearts may fail them and anxiety fill their souls, if we only trust in God and keep his

commandments we need have no fear.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1950, pp. 145–46.)

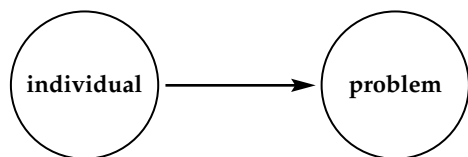
(21-33) There are powerful spiritual lessons for modern Saints in the account of Achan and Israel’s defeat at Ai. First, the story shows the effect of individual sin on the whole community. No one sins in isolation. We cannot say that our actions influence only ourselves for even if we do something sinful that is completely personal, our individual loss of spiritual power means a lessening of power for all mankind and contributes to the withdrawal of the Lord’s Spirit, and that is damaging to all mankind.

There is a second valuable lesson in the Lord’s answer to Joshua when Joshua asked why Israel had been defeated (see Joshua 7:10–15). If we have lost power with God, we can know, as surely as we know the sun will rise on the morrow, that the problem lies within us and not within God. As He said in our day, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10). And the key for restoring the relationship with God was also given when the Lord told Joshua, “Up, sanctify the people” (Joshua 7:13).

Joseph Smith was taught a similar lesson when the Church was deeply in debt.

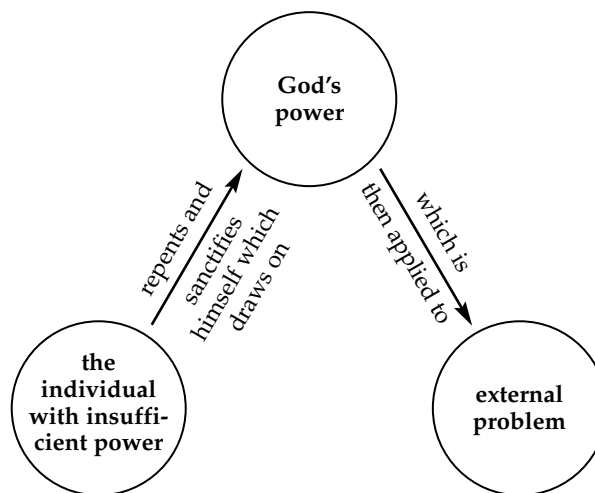
**Read D&C 104:78–80.**

Note how the Lord introduces a third element into the problem-solving process. Most of us look at problems in this way:



We think that the problem is something external, that is, if we can summon enough power, it can be solved through our own effort. But the Lord told Israel through both Joseph and Joshua that while

there was an external problem, there was also an internal one that blocked the channels of true power. Here is how the problem-solving process should work:



1. How did Abraham and Sarah apply this principle in relationship to Sarah’s barrenness? (see Hebrews 11:11).
2. How did Joseph use this principle when presented with the problem of interpreting the pharaoh’s dream? (see Genesis 41:14–16).
3. How could this lesson be applied in such modern situations as a wife with an inactive husband, a parent with wayward children, a child with unbelieving parents, a person struggling to overcome a bad habit?
4. How is this principle of power related to the principle taught in Ether 12:27?
5. Isn’t this the whole principle behind the doctrine that ultimately we are saved by the grace of Christ “after all we can do”? (2 Nephi 25:23).
6. Read carefully Moroni 10:32–33. Isn’t this the very way that we eventually come to salvation?



# Idolatry: Ancient and Modern

# F

## (F-1) The Seriousness of Idolatry

What was so evil about idolatry that would cause the Lord to be so severe in His punishment of those who practiced it? Why did the Lord tell the Israelites of Joshua's day to destroy all of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites? Why did the Lord command them, "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth"? (Deuteronomy 20:16.) They were also commanded to make a heap of all the images and all but certain designated possessions and burn them (see Deuteronomy 7:24–26; 12:2–3). Why such severe treatment? Why was the Lord so severe with all Israel when Achan kept things that were forbidden? (see Joshua 7). Why, indeed, must mankind be strictly confined by commandment to the worship of only the one true God? Perhaps the real question is, Why would anyone want to worship any but the true God?

After Saul fell from the favor of the Lord, David was anointed to sit on the throne of Israel and to establish the royal family that would produce the King of Kings. Probably no king of Israel was more free than David was of any idolatrous inclinations or practices. From his day on, the writers of the Old Testament used David as the standard of excellence in measuring the loyalty of their kings to Jehovah. This use of David as a standard almost makes it look as if a king could be forgiven any offense more easily than even the slightest dabbling in idolatry.

## (F-2) Idolatry Is the Worship of False Gods Which May or May Not Involve the Manufacturing of Images

The first two commandments in the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) forbade the sin of idolatry (see Exodus 20:25). Thus, the Lord announced the error and sin of having false gods, tangible or intangible, as objects of worship. (This commandment does not refer to decorations on or in temples, tabernacles, or chapels. The same Lord who gave the Ten Commandments also instructed the Israelites in the decoration of the ark of the covenant with graven cherubim. Simply having these cherubim there as art objects was not idolatry. It is when the image becomes an object of or an integral part of worship or obeisance that its manufacture and use become idolatrous.)

It is very important to understand that the worship of a false god that is intangible is just as evil and just as disastrous to the idolater as the worship of a graven image. Some false god may be associated with nature or be the worship of nature itself, meaning the laws or powers seen in nature. Idolatry of nature-related gods has included the worship of various animals, plants, the weather, volcanoes, the

sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, and so on. For instance, the Baal of the Old Testament was a god of nature. He was associated with rain and fertility of the soil, and he was also worshiped as a sun god. The myths surrounding him say that he was supposed to be a real entity who dwelt on a mountain somewhere north of Israel and was involved in all sorts of heroic but sinful pursuits. He even was supposed to have been killed by Mot, the god of death, and later resurrected. This episode was supposed to explain a great drought in the Middle East and its later alleviation (see Roth, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Baal worship," 4:10–11).

Though in the Old Testament idolatry is associated with the worship of actual images, true idolatry goes far beyond the practice of bowing down to images and appeasing angry idols. The Lord has made it clear in all ages that whenever men place their full trust in such things as other men, nations, treaties, treasuries, precious minerals, armies, or armaments, their actions are a form of idolatry because such actions reveal a lack of trust in Jehovah. To be totally free of idolatry one must put complete trust in the true God.

## (F-3) Idolatry in the Old Testament

The most pronounced and consistent of Israel's departures from the covenant relationship with Jehovah involved idolatry. Old Testament history is filled with accounts of Israel's turning to false gods, the Lord's warnings against doing so, and prophets' warnings about what would happen if Israel did not repent. The following excerpts briefly summarize idolatry in the Old Testament.

## (F-4) The Sin of Idolatry

"Idolatry was the most heinous offense against the Mosaic law, which is most particular in defining the acts which constitute the crime, and severe in apportioning the punishment. Thus, it is forbidden to make any image of a strange God; to prostrate oneself before such an image, or before those natural objects which were also worshiped without images as the sun and moon [Deuteronomy 4:19]; to suffer the altars, images, or groves or idols to stand [Exodus 34:13]; or to keep the gold and silver of which their images were made and to suffer it to enter the house [Deuteronomy 7:25–26]; to sacrifice to idols, most especially to offer human sacrifices; to eat of the victims offered to idols by others; to prophesy in the name of a strange god; and to adopt any of the rites used in idolatrous worship, and to transfer them to the worship of the Lord [Deuteronomy 12:30–31]. As for punishment, the law orders that if an individual committed idolatry he should be stoned to death [Deuteronomy 17:2–5]; that if a town was guilty of

this sin, its inhabitants and cattle should be slain, and its spoils burnt together with the town itself [Deuteronomy 13:12–18].” (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “idolatry,” 2:850.)

#### (F-5) Objects of Idolatry

“The sun and moon were early selected as outward symbols of all-pervading power, and the worship of the heavenly bodies was not only the most ancient but the most prevalent system of idolatry. Taking its rise in the plains of Chaldea, it spread through Egypt, Greece, Seythia, and even Mexico and Ceylon. Comp. Deut. 4:19; 17:3; Job 31:20–28. In the later times of the monarchy, the planets or the zodiacal signs received, next to the sun and moon, their share of popular adoration. 2 Kings 23:5. Beast-worship, as exemplified in the calves of Jeroboam, has already been alluded to. Of pure hero-worship among the Semitic races we find no trace. The singular reverence with which trees have been honored is not without example in the history of the Hebrews. The terebinth (oak) at Mamre, beneath which Abraham built an altar, Gen. 12:7; 13–18, and the memorial grove planted by him at Beersheba, Gen. 21:33, were intimately connected with patriarchal worship. Mountains and high places were chosen spots for offering sacrifice and incense to idols, 1 Kings 11:7; 14:23; and the retirement of gardens and the thick shade of woods offered great attractions to their worshippers. 2 Kings 16:4; Isa. 1:29; Hos. 4:13. The host of heaven was worshipped on the house-top. 2 Kings 23:12; [Jeremiah 19:13; 32:29]; Zeph. 1:5. (The modern objects of idolatry are less gross than the ancient, but are none the less idols. Whatever of wealth or honor or pleasure is loved and sought before God and righteousness becomes an object of idolatry.)” (Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “idolatry,” pp. 263–64.)

#### (F-6) Rites Used in Idol Worship

“The general rites of idolatrous worship consist in burning incense; in offering bloodless sacrifices, as the dough-cakes and libations in [Jeremiah 7:18], and the raisin-cake in [Hosea 3:1]; in sacrificing victims [1 Kings 18:26]; and especially in human sacrifices. . . . These offerings were made on high places, hills, and roofs of houses, or in shady groves and valleys. Some forms of idolatrous worship had libidinous orgies. . . . Divinations, oracles [2 Kings 1:2], and raddomancy [Hosea 4:12] form a part of many of these false religions. The priesthood was generally a numerous body; and where persons of both sexes were attached to the service of any god (like that of Ashtoreth), that service was infamously immoral.” (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “idolatry,” 2:850.)

#### (F-7) The More Well-known False Gods of the Old Testament

*Ashtoreth*. “This is the name of *Astarte*, goddess of the Zidonians [1 Kings 11:5, 33], and also of the Philistines [1 Samuel 31:10], whose worship was introduced among the Israelites during the period of the judges [Judges 2:13; 1 Samuel 7:4], and was

celebrated by Solomon himself [1 Kings 11:5], and was finally put down by Josiah [2 Kings 23:13]. She is frequently mentioned in connection with Baal, as the corresponding female divinity [Judges 2:13]; and from the addition of the words ‘and all the hosts of heaven,’ in [2 Kings 23:4] . . . it is probable that she represented one of the celestial bodies. . . .

“ . . . The most prominent part of her worship, consisted of those libidinous orgies which Augustine, who was an eye witness of their horrors in Carthage, describes with such indignation. . . . Her priests were eunuchs in women’s attire and women . . . prostitutes [Hosea 4:14], . . . who, like the Bayaderes of India, prostituted themselves to enrich the temple of this goddess.” (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Ashtoreth,” 1:168.)

*Baal*. “The supreme male divinity of the Phoenician and Canaanitish nations, as Ashtoreth was their supreme female divinity. Some suppose Baal to correspond to the sun and Ashtoreth to the moon; others that Baal was Jupiter and Ashtoreth Venus. There can be no doubt of the very high antiquity of the worship of Baal. It prevailed in the time of Moses among the Moabites and Midianites, Num. 22:41, and through them spread to the Israelites. Num. 25:3–18; Deut. 4:3. In the times of the kings it became the religion of the court and people of the ten tribes, 1 Kings 16:31–33; 18:19, 22, and appears never to have been permanently abolished among them. 2 Kings 17:16. Temples were erected to Baal in Judah, 1 Kings 16:32, and he was worshipped with much ceremony. 1 Kings 18:19, 26–28; 2 Kings 10:22. The attractiveness of this worship to the Jews undoubtedly grew out of its licentious character. We find this worship also in Phoenician colonies. The religion of the ancient British islands much resembled this ancient worship of Baal, and may have been derived from it. Nor need we hesitate to regard the Babylonian Bel, Isa. 46:1, or Belus, as essentially identical with Baal, though perhaps under some modified form. The plural, Baalim, is found frequently, showing that he was probably worshipped under different compounds, among which appear—

“1. Baal-berith (*the covenant Baal*), Judges 8:33; 9:4; the god who comes into covenant with the worshippers.

“2. Baal-zebub (*lord of the fly*), and worshipped at Ekron. 2 Kings 1:2, 3, 16.

“3. Baal-hanan. *a*. The name of one of the early kings of Edom. Gen. 36:38, 39; 1 Chron. 1:49, 50. *b*. The name of one of David’s officers, who had the superintendence of his olive and sycamore plantations. 1 Chron. 27:28.

“4. Baal-peor (*lord of the opening*, *i.e.* for others to join in the worship). We have already referred to the worship of this god. The narrative (Num. 25) seems clearly to show that this form of Baal-worship was connected with licentious rites.” (Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Baal,” p. 70.)

*Chemosh*. “The god of Moab (1 Kgs. 11:7); also of Ammon (Judg. 11:24). . . . Chemosh was worshipped with human sacrifices (2 Kgs. 3:27)” (Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Chemosh.”)

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*Dagon.* "The God of the Philistines (Judg. 16:23; 1 Sam. 5:2; 1 Macc. 10:84; 12:2). There were temples of Dagon at Gaza and Ashdod. . . . His image was in the form partly of a man and partly of a fish. Some recent writers, however, question whether Dagon was really a fish-god, and connect the name with *dagan*, 'grain.'" Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Dagon.")

*Molech.* "The worship of Moloch is generally cited as an example of the cruelest and most abhorrent idolatry known to man. Moloch, called also Molech, Malcham, Milcom, Baal-melech, etc., was an Ammonite idol: it is mentioned in scripture in connection with its cruel rites (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; see also 1 Kings 11:5, 7, 33; 2 Kings 23:10, 13; Amos 5:26; Zeph. 1:5; Jer. 32:35). Keil and Delitzsch describe the idol as being 'represented by a brazen statue which was hollow, and capable of being heated, and formed with a bull's head, and with arms stretched out to receive the children to be sacrificed.' While the worship of this idol did not invariably include human sacrifice, it is certain that such hideous rites were characteristic of this abominable shrine. The authors last quoted say: 'From the time of Ahaz, children were slain at Jerusalem in the valley of Ben-Hinnom, and then sacrificed by being laid in the heated arms and burned' (2 Kings 23:10; 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; Jer. 32:35; Ezek. 16:20, 21; 20:31; compare Ps. 106:37, 38). Many authorities state that the sacrifice of children to this hideous monster long antedated the time of Ahaz. 'The offering of living victims was probably the climax of enormity in connection with this system, and it is said that Tophet, where it was to be witnessed, was so named from the beating of drums to drown the shrieks and groans of those who were burned to death. The same place was called the Valley of Hinnom, and the horrible associations connected with it led to both Tophet and Gehenna ('valley of Hinnom') being adopted as names and symbols of future torment.'" (Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, p. 464.)

#### **(F-8) Why Was Idolatry So Attractive to the Israelites?**

"Many have wondered why the Israelites were so easily led away from the true God, into the worship of idols. (1) Visible, outward signs, with shows, pageants, parades, have an attraction to the natural heart, which often fails to perceive the unseen spiritual realities. (2) But the greatest attraction seems to have been in licentious revelries and obscene orgies with which the worship of the Oriental idols was observed. This worship, appealing to every sensual passion, joined with the attractions of wealth and fashion and luxury, naturally was a great temptation to a simple, restrained, agricultural people, whose worship and laws demanded the greatest purity of heart and of life." (Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "idolatry," p. 264.)

#### **(F-9) Worship of the True God Must Be Complete and Wholehearted**

A person's god is the thing or being in which he trusts and which he believes has the greatest power. It is the thing to which he looks for whatever salvation he believes is available. All other beliefs and actions are affected by that belief or object of his worship. When this idea is fully grasped one can understand why the Lord would issue an edict to destroy all the people and their possessions in an idolatrous city. Not to destroy their goods would be to demonstrate a lack of faith that the Lord would provide. Similarly, if a Latter-day Saint will not tithing, is it not because he centers his trust in worldly things and the system that produces them instead of in the providence of the Lord? In that sense, then, the things of the world become a god to him, for he trusts more in them than in God's power. Paul said, "Covetousness . . . is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5) and a "covetous man . . . is an idolater" (Ephesians 5:5). Is not the failure to pay tithing a form of covetousness? Those who do not pay tithing would likely be shocked to think they were guilty of idolatry just as the ancient Israelites were guilty of idolatry. The form differs, but the sin is the same.

Often modern prophets have warned against making idols of money, automobiles, houses, and other material objects (see Reading 11-4 for President Spencer W. Kimball's statement on modern idolatry). The worship of these things, of course, is symptomatic of the trust some have in natural law instead of God and His laws. They see the world as a place where the creature fares according to his genius (see Alma 30:17). Hence, they look upon all they gain as their own, not as the Lord's. They forget that they are only stewards of the Lord's goods.

A Zion people can come into being only through obedience to the gospel, commencing with a true knowledge of the true God. There cannot be any compromise. You cannot serve God and mammon (see Luke 16:13). True worship, like liberty, is not divisible. You cannot get away with a little idolatry; once started, the destruction follows unless sincere repentance occurs (see Exodus 34:10-17; Deuteronomy 7; Joshua 23:6-16; 1 Kings 9:9; 2 Kings 17:7-23; Psalm 106:34-43; Jeremiah 16:11-21; John 2:11-23).

When the Lord put a blessing and a cursing upon the children of Israel and their land, the conditions were very strict (see Deuteronomy 28; Leviticus 26). The Israelites failed because they would not put their complete trust in their one true God. So they were delivered up to the consequences of trying to love both the world and the Lord at the same time.

Brigham Young called upon modern Saints to examine their own hearts in this regard:

"Again, I can charge you with what you will all plead guilty of, if you would confess the truth, viz.,

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you dare not quite give up all your hearts to God, and become sanctified throughout, and be led by the Holy Ghost from morning until evening, and from one year's end to another. I know this is so, and yet few will acknowledge it. I know this feeling is in your hearts, as well as I know the sun shines.

"We will examine it a little closer. Many of you have fearful forebodings that all is not right in the organization of this kingdom. You shiver and shake in your feelings, and tremble in your spirit; you cannot put your trust in God, in men, nor in yourself. This arises from the power of evil that is so prevalent upon the face of the whole earth. It was given to you by your father and mother; it was mingled with your conception in the womb, and it has ripened in your flesh, in your blood, and in your bones, so that it has become riveted in your very nature. If I were to ask you individually, if you wished to be sanctified throughout, and become as pure and holy as you possibly could live, every person would say yes; yet if the Lord Almighty should give a revelation

instructing you to be given wholly up to Him, and to His cause, you would shrink, saying, 'I am afraid he will take away some of my darlings.' That is the difficulty with the majority of this people.

"It is for you and I to wage war with that principle until it is overcome in us, then we shall not entail it upon our children. It is for us to lay a foundation so that everything our children have to do with, will bring them to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. If we lay such a foundation with all good conscience, and labor as faithfully as we can, it will be well with us and our children in time and in eternity." (In *Journal of Discourses*, 2:134.)





# The Reign of the Judges, Part 1

## (22-1) Introduction

When Joshua and the leaders of Israel who served under him died, the national spirit of Israel also died. Tribal loyalty replaced national unity. Each tribe began to look to its own resources without giving help or asking aid from their fellow Israelites. Joshua's generation remained faithful to the Lord (see Joshua 24:31), but spiritual apostasy soon occurred in the following generation. "And there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

"And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger." (Judges 2:10, 12.)

None of this apostasy needed to happen. The Lord had directed Israel into the promised land and had provided them with a political covenant. He was to be their divine sovereign. Their temporal leaders were to be ruling judges, under whom the people retained religious and political liberties. (Such a form of government was advocated in the Book of Mormon by King Mosiah [see Mosiah 29].)

Israel's political covenant showed the mercy and long-suffering of the Lord and would have been the best possible government in Israel. As can be seen in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon, however, under the rule of the judges the people must demonstrate loyalty to the Lord and His commandments for this ideal form of government to function properly. Since Israel usually broke their covenant during the reign of the judges, the governmental system did not function properly, and Israel fell out of favor with the Lord.

The reign of the judges is similar in many ways to the history of the Nephites prior to the coming of Christ. It is a story of one continuous cycle of apostasy and repentance. When the Israelites turned from the Lord, their enemies began to prevail (see Judges 2:14–15). Suffering under oppression and war, the people would cry unto God and He would raise up a Deborah or a Gideon to deliver them. But once peace and security were reestablished, the people turned again to their former ways (see Judges 2:16–19).

The story of the time of the judges is thus primarily a sad and tragic one, although in this period lived some of the most remarkable men and women of the Old Testament. In their lives of courage, faith, and personal greatness, as well as in the lives of those who forsook the Lord and pursued selfish ends, are many lessons of importance for Saints today. Look for those lessons as you read this period of Israel's history.

## Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Judges 1–12.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON JUDGES 1–12

### (22-2) Judges 1. What Are the Campaigns of Israel in the First Chapter of the Book of Judges?

This account is a repetition of the story found in the last half of the book of Joshua. The following information is of special interest in understanding the other historical books of the Bible:

1. Judah was able to control the inland hill country of southern Canaan but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the Shephelan and the coastal plain (the Philistines), apparently because of the chariots of iron which the Philistines introduced (see Judges 1:19). The real reason for their failure, however, was that they had lost the power of the Lord through their lack of faith and by their disobedience.

2. The holy area around Bethel was captured and controlled by the house of Joseph (see Judges 1:22–26).

3. Even though the Israelites were supposed to drive out all the heathen inhabitants of their promised land, they failed to do so. Numerous unconquered cities remained (see Judges 1:27–36), and the presence of these people and their gods proved to be a thorn in the side of Israel for centuries to come (see Judges 2:3; Reading 22-7).



*Ruins at ancient Bethel*

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### **(22-3) Judges 1:1–7**

The Israelites apparently joined in the practice common among other ancients of mutilating captives in an attempt to strike terror into the hearts of other enemies.

### **(22-4) Judges 2. What Was the Political and Religious Condition of the Populace of the Promised Land When the Israelites Conquered It?**

“When discussing the political and religious conditions in Palestine at the time of the Israelite conquest (between 1250 and 1200 B.C.), we should note that the whole Near East had boiled with turmoil during the preceding century. The power of Egypt’s ally in Mesopotamia, Mitanni, had collapsed. Egypt herself first lost and then regained power over much of the eastern Mediterranean area. The Hurrian and Aryan peoples had pressed down from the north almost as far as Palestine, Assyria had begun to rise as a world power, and the old Hittite Empire of Asia Minor and Egypt had reached a standoff for control of the Near East.

“In Palestine, Egypt was nominally in control. The land of Canaan was made up of numerous city-states, each independently governed, which paid tribute to Egypt whenever they were forced to do so. Other Hebrew tribes, distant relatives of the Israelites, comprised a modest part of the population in Canaan. It is also worth noting that prior to Israel’s settlement, the Canaanites had developed a linear alphabet, which later passed from Phoenicia to Greece, thus becoming the ancestor to our own.

“The material culture and international trade of the Canaanites was highly advanced, but their religious ways stood diametrically opposed to Israel’s. Based on the fertility cults led by the god Baal, the Canaanite religion was an extraordinarily immoral form of paganism, including . . . prostitution, homosexuality, and other orgiastic rites.

“The population of Canaan was mixed. In addition to the Canaanites near the sea and a few Hebrew clans, the Amorites are mentioned often in the Old Testament. Abraham descended from this Semitic people. Many of the other peoples listed in the Bible as inhabitants of the land (Hittites, Hivites, Horites, Jebusites, etc.) represent Canaan’s non-Semitic elements, although their tribal names preserve their distant origins. These people fully adopted the Canaanite religion and way of life by the time of the Israelite invasion.” (S. Kent Brown, “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1973, p. 58.)

### **(22-5) Judges 2. How Did the Canaanite Culture Affect the Lifestyle of the Israelites?**

“Perhaps inevitably, the Israelites, who had no distinct culture or knowledge of settled life, gradually absorbed many aspects of Canaan’s sophisticated culture. The architectural style, pottery, furniture and literature of later Israel were all borrowed from those of Canaan. In many ways this borrowing was beneficial. The Israelites were able to profit from the techniques of construction, farming and craftsmanship which had taken the Canaanites centuries to develop.

“But in the eyes of Israel’s religious leaders, the pagan ways of the Canaanites posed a continual threat to the integrity of the nation. The Israelites’ only strength lay in their common covenant. Any weakening of this basic loyalty left the individual tribes without the strength that comes from unity. When misfortune came, it was [because of] the faithlessness of the people, who again and again turned away from the Lord.” (*Great People of the Bible and How They Lived*, p. 114.)

### **(22-6) Judges 2:1–5**

Why, according to the angel of the Lord, did God no longer assist Israel in driving out the Canaanites?

### **(22-7) Judges 2:11–13. What Resulted from Israel’s Not Driving the Canaanites Out of the Promised Land?**

“The Book of Judges makes clear that Israel did not conquer all of Canaan when first she entered it. . . . For a long time during the days of the Judges many of the Israelites were essentially ‘hillbillies’ [see Judges 6:2], hemmed in by their enemies on every side. After the generations of Israelites who had been acquainted with Joshua passed away, the effects of Canaanite morals and religion began to be apparent upon the younger generation. For long periods of time the Canaanites conquered Israel and this fact alone would tend to disrupt her settled religious life and practice. Times were rough and banditry was rampant. As the record itself states: ‘In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes’ [Judges 17:6]. All of this seems to have taken place because Israel did not drive the Canaanites completely out. The Lord said to the Israelites: ‘Ye have not hearkened to My voice; what is this ye have done? Wherefore I also said: I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be unto you as snares, and their gods shall be a trap unto you.’ [Judges 2:2–3.] . . . Israel’s conduct during this period had a lasting effect upon her religion and morals. For centuries Israel’s prophets and wise men referred to it and denounced her allegiance to old Canaanite practices. It is plain that Israel, during the period of the Judges, compromised her relatively high religious ideals with Canaanite practices and certain elements in her population must have apostatized completely.” (Sperry, *Spirit of the Old Testament*, pp. 51–52.)

### **(22-8) Judges 2:12–13. Who Are Baal and Ashtoreth?**

“Numerous Old Testament references recite apostate Israel’s worship of *Baal* and *Baalim* (plural of Baal). It was the priest of Baal, for instance, with whom Elijah had his dramatic contest in the days of Ahab and Jezebel. (1 Kings 18.) Baal was the supreme male deity of the Phoenician and Canaanitish nation. It is likely that there were, in practice, many Baals or gods of particular places, the worship of whom was licentious in nature, *Baalzebub* (the same name as *Beelzebub* or *Satan*) was the name of the god of one particular group. (2 Kings 1:3.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 68.)

“As Baal was the supreme male deity of the Phoenician and Canaanitish nations, so Ashtoreth (Ashtaroth) was their supreme female deity. She was the so-called goddess of love and fertility, whose licentious worship pleased Israel in her apostate periods. (Judges 2:13; 10:6; 1 Sam. 7:3–4; 12:10.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 55.)

For more information on the false gods of Old Testament times, see Enrichment Section F, “Idolatry: Ancient and Modern.”

### (22-9) Judges 2:16. Who Are the Judges?

The so-called judges, according to the record, appear to be more military heroes rather than officers of the judiciary.

“The English word ‘judge’ doesn’t well describe these leaders. Though the root of the Hebrew word used means primarily ‘to judge,’ it is used secondarily also in the extended meaning ‘to govern.’ Most of the ‘judging’ done in this period was a matter of giving advice and rendering decisions. Regular court procedures are nowhere described for the times of the Judges in Israel. In fact, the most common function they are seen to perform is that of military leadership.” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:149.)

The judges did not reign over all of unified Israel during their period of leadership. The chronicler of these stories likely took the choicest of the heroes from each of the tribes during this generally apostate period and combined into one book their righteous achievements and their moral lessons for Israel.

### (22-10) Judges 2:14–23. What Was the Cyclical Pattern of Israel’s Relationship with the Lord during the Period of Judges?

These verses explain what this historical record, the book of Judges, reveals. First, the people chose evil by worshiping heathen gods, and the Lord allowed them to fall into the hands of their enemies. Judges were then raised up by the Lord to deliver them. At such times, as it is more clearly stated in the Joseph Smith Translation, “the Lord *hearkened* because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them” (JST, Judges 2:18; emphasis added). But as soon as the judge was dead, Israel turned to the other gods, and the cycle began again. A strikingly similar cycle of righteousness and apostasy occurred among the people of the Book of Mormon and is graphically described in Helaman 12.

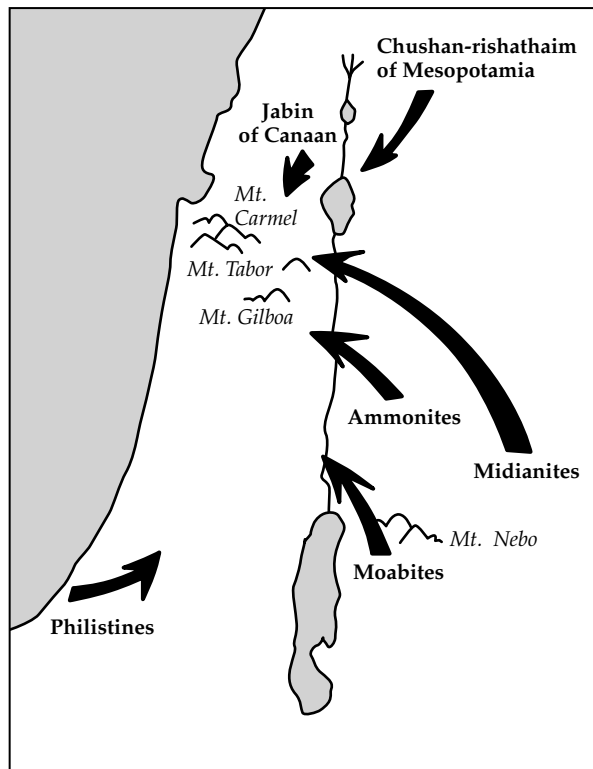
### (22-11) Judges 3:1–7

Intermarriage with the heathen nations was a natural result of serving “Baalim and the groves” (v. 7). The groves were local worship centers for heathen gods and included a tree or pole and altars, often among groves of trees. The practice of idolatry which broke the covenant and which was sustained from generation to generation corrupted the house of Israel. One of the most important reminders to Israel that the Lord gave through Moses before they entered the promised land went unheeded (see Deuteronomy 7:3–5).

### (22-12) Judges 3–15. Who Were the Twelve Judges of Israel and What Were Their Areas of Leadership?

The twelve judges and their victories spoken of in the book of Judges were as follows:

1. Othniel of Judah (3:9): victory against Chushan-rishathaim.
2. Ehud of Benjamin (3:15): victory against Eglon of Moab.
3. Shamgar (3:31): victory against the Philistines (location unknown).
4. Deborah (Ephraim) and Barak (Naphtali) (4:4–6): victory over Jabin and Sisera.
5. Gideon of Manasseh (6:11): victory over the Midianites and Amalekites.
6. Tola of Issachar (10:1).
7. Jair of Gilead (10:3).
8. Jephthah of Gilead (11:11): victory over the Ammonites.
9. Ibzan of Bethlehem (12:8).
10. Elon of Zebulun (12:11).
11. Abdon of Ephraim (12:13).
12. Samson of Dan (15:20): victory against the Philistines.



Nations that challenged Israel’s right in the Promised Land

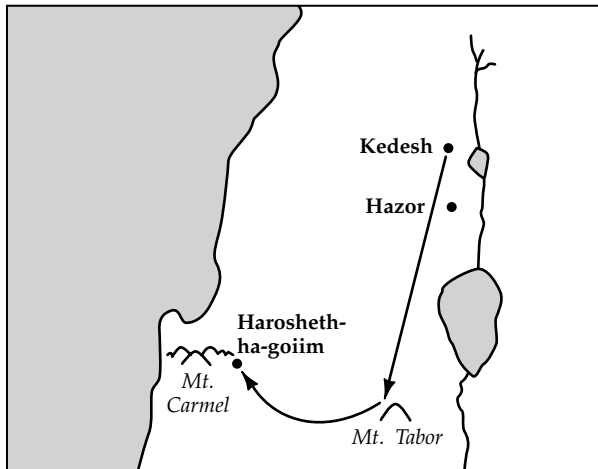
### (22-13) Judges 3:13. Where Was the “City of Palm Trees”?

The “city of palm trees” is another name for Jericho (Judges 3:13; see also Deuteronomy 34:3; Judges 1:16; 2 Chronicles 28:15). Evidently this city had been rebuilt near the original site after its destruction by Joshua. Through the centuries, Jericho has had minor shifts in location. The New Testament location was different from both Old Testament locations.

**(22-14) Judges 4:1–10. How Was It That a Woman, Deborah, Led Israel?**

Israel was sorely lacking in leadership at this time. The regular priesthood leadership was not in effect because the covenant had been broken. Deborah did not direct Israel in any official sense; she was a prophetess who possessed the spirit of prophecy, one of the gifts of the Spirit (see Revelation 19:10; Moroni 10:13; D&C 47:22). She was blessed with spiritual insight and leadership qualities that were not being put to use by any man. Barak would not lead an army against Jabin until Deborah promised to be present (see Judges 4:8–9).

“No special ordination in the Priesthood is essential to man’s receiving the gift of prophecy; bearers of the Melchizedek Priesthood, Adam, Noah, Moses, and a multitude of others were prophets, but not more truly so than others who were specifically called to the Aaronic order, as exemplified in the instance of John the Baptist. The ministrations of Miriam and Deborah show that this gift may be possessed by women also.” (Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, pp. 228–29; see also Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 3:66.)



Barak defeated Sisera.

**(22-15) Judges 4:10–24**

The Kenites were descendants of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses (see Judges 1:16). The courageous Jael, who was the wife of Heber the Kenite, slew the chieftain Sisera, thus fulfilling Deborah’s prophecy (see Judges 4:9). Sisera’s death opened the way for Barak’s victory.

**(22-16) Judges 5:21. How Did God Use the Forces of Nature to Aid the Cause of Israel?**

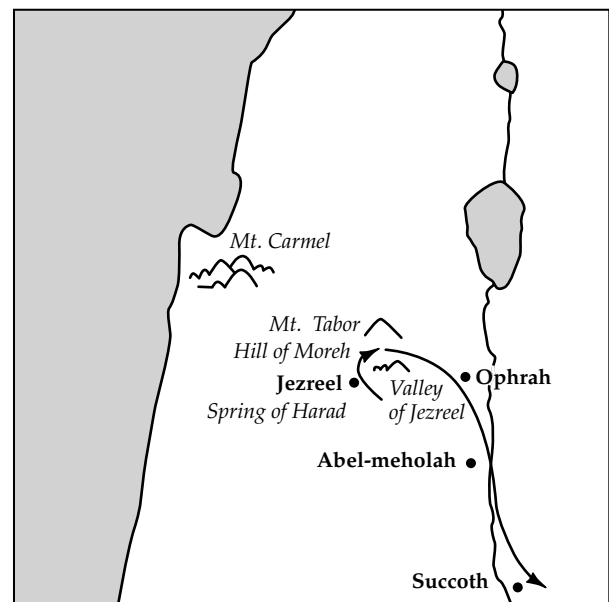
The River Kishon flows in a northwest direction through the Jezreel Valley until it empties into the Mediterranean Sea near present-day Haifa. Because the land is quite flat, the river is usually not much more than a sluggish stream. In times of unusually hard rains, however, it may overflow its banks and flood the surrounding land, making it marshy and nearly impassable.

The song of Deborah seems to suggest that just such an unexpected downpour, accompanied by thunder and lightning, suddenly struck the area. The chariots of Sisera bogged down in the resulting overflow of the Kishon River, making it possible for the smaller forces of Deborah and Barak to achieve victory. Deborah rightly saw in this event the hand of the Lord and gave Him credit for the victory (see v. 30).

**(22-17) Judges 6:1–10. Why Was the Presence of the Midianites and the Amalekites such a Terrible Scourge to Israel?**

“The Midianites and the Amalekites were the children of the desert who, through their roving habits which begot naturally a desire for plunder, led them into a systematic practice of robbing the Israelites. During the seasons of harvest they came from the deserts on the south and the east like great swarms of locusts and carried away the corn [grain] and the live-stock upon which the Israelites subsisted.

“For seven years Israel was thus impoverished, and adopted every means at their command to conceal their property and to hide themselves from the dangers of slaughter by the Midianites. In that period, through southern Palestine, they made caverns in the earth that may still be seen. In time, however, they came to feel so deeply their suffering and humiliation that they appealed to Jehovah, the God they had forsaken in their worship. He was their last refuge, their last means of escape from the awful bondage of those times.” (Tanner, *Old Testament Studies*, 1:288–89.)



Gideon defeated the Midianite kings.

**(22-18) Judges 6:11–24. Since the Lord Condemns Sign-Seeking, How Do We Explain Gideon’s Request?**

“When Gideon asked for a ‘sign’ he seemed only to want a sign that the messenger was a bona fide

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emissary of the *Lord* (v. 17). On this point, note that messengers may sometimes be from the wrong source and discernment is important. (See, e.g., D&C 129; see another consideration of the problem in II Corinthians 11:13–15; I Corinthians 12:10; and I John 4:1–2.) (Signs *may be* given, based upon man’s faith and the will of God. D&C 63:10.)

“When Gideon made a meal of meat, cakes and broth, and the angel turned it into a miraculous burnt offering, this ‘sign’ quite overwhelmed Gideon. But the *Lord* kindly gave him comfort and peace, and Gideon gratefully named the monument he built there ‘*Lord of Peace*.’” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:150.)

#### **(22-19) Judges 6:25–7:1. How Did Gideon Receive the Name *Jerubbaal* and What Does It Mean?**

Gideon’s father, Joash, owned a grove and an altar dedicated to the false god Baal. Groves of trees played a prominent part in ancient heathen worship. Since it was thought wrong to shut up the gods with walls, groves of trees were often used as natural temples. Within the groves the immoral rites of the heathen religions were performed.

Gideon and ten other men followed the *Lord*’s commandments to tear down the grove and the altar and in their place erect an altar to Jehovah. The men of the city cried for Gideon’s death, but Joash defended his son’s actions. Joash named Gideon *Jerubbaal*, “let Baal plead,” meaning that if Baal was upset by Gideon’s actions Baal could defend his own cause. The name *Jerubbaal* remained with Gideon on some occasions thereafter.

#### **(22-20) Judges 7; 8:21. How Did Gideon’s Forces Deal with the Numerous Camel-Riding Midianites?**

“Though only the tribes from the north—Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali—joined his campaign, these were more than enough for the purposes of the *Lord* at the time. Eventually the 32,000 were reduced to 300, that the ‘help of the *Lord*’ might be apparent to Israel. . . .

“Against the formidable might of camel-mounted marauders, strategy and the help of the *Lord* gave the Israelites success where hand to hand combat would have been disastrous. It is now known that the use of camels for military purposes by the nomadic desert riders was only beginning to be common in those times—12th to 10th centuries B.C., and of course, the first tribes to use them had the advantage.” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:151.)

#### **(22-21) Judges 7:19**

Ancient Israel divided the twelve hours of the night into three watches. The middle watch would have been from 10:00 P.M. until 2:00 A.M. After the dispersion of Israel, the Jews continued the practice (see Exodus 14:24; 1 Samuel 11:11; Psalms 63:6; 90:4; 119:48; Lamentations 2:19). In New Testament times the Romans divided the night into four watches (see Matthew 24:43).

#### **(22-22) Judges 8:16. What Did Gideon Do to the Men of Succoth When He “Taught” Them with Thorns and Briars?**

As they pursued the remnants of the Midianite army, Gideon’s valiant little band of three hundred grew faint from hunger and sought food from the people of Succoth, a town of Gad (Gilead), which lay on the east side of the Jordan not far from Jericho. The Succothites refused to give Gideon’s men the food they needed because they had not yet actually conquered the Midianite kings. The people of Penuel (the place where Jacob had stopped many years before and wrestled with God’s messenger [see Genesis 32:31]), also refused aid. Perhaps they were afraid that Gideon would fail to capture and subdue the fleeing kings and that later the Midianites would return and punish them for aiding Gideon. Whatever the reason, these events illustrate the tragic fragmentation of apostate Israel. Since the Midianites lived in the deserts of Arabia, Gad and the other tribes east of the Jordan were most vulnerable to their marauding raids. Yet instead of joining Gideon in his attempt to eliminate the threat once and for all, these Gadites flatly refused to get involved.

Gideon was furious and promised that once he finished with the Midianites he would return to deal with these traitors. In the case of Succoth, Gideon promised to return and “tear”—the Hebrew literally means “thresh”—their flesh with briars and thorns (v. 7) (see Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “tear,” p. 440). Yet when Gideon did return, the record says, he “taught” them with briars and thorns (v. 16). Many of the ancient manuscripts show this change to be a scribal error: “Instead of . . . *he taught*, Houbigant reads . . . *he tore*; and this is not only agreeable to what Gideon had threatened, ver. 7, but is supported by the *Vulgate*, *Septuagint*, *Chaldec*, *Syriac*, and *Arabic*. The Hebrew text might have been easily corrupted in this place by the change of . . . *shin* into . . . *ain*, letters very similar to each other.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:137.)

This punishment was probably a figurative term and not necessarily an actual whipping with thorn branches. “What this punishment consisted in I cannot say; it must mean a severe punishment: as if he had said, I will thresh your flesh with briars and thorns, as corn is threshed out with threshing instruments; or, Ye shall be trodden down under the feet of my victorious army, as the corn is trodden out with the feet of the ox.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:136.) Such harsh punishment was justified because in their refusal to help Gideon’s army, Succoth and Penuel threatened the whole nation of Israel. Their act was thus equivalent to high treason.

#### **(22-23) Judges 8:21**

Zebah and Zalmunna did not want Jether to slay them. To have a boy slay them would be a great dishonor, but to die quickly under the hand of such a great warrior as Gideon would preserve their honor. Compare this request with Abimelech’s request of his armor-bearer to slay him lest men say a woman had killed him (see Judges 9:53–54).

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**(22-24) Judges 8:22–23. “The Lord Shall Rule over You”**

These verses give proof of Gideon’s great faith and righteousness. The people sought to make him king because of his greatness in victory. Had he consented, Gideon would have been lending support to the idea that through his own power he had won the battle. By refusing their request, Gideon reminded them where the real source of their victory lay and whom they should view as their king.

**(22-25) Judges 8:24–28. How Did the Ephod Become a Snare to Gideon?**

“An unfortunate anticlimatic development arose due to Gideon’s mistaken zeal in making a new ephod (part of the garment of the chief Priest in Israel) out of some of the precious things gathered from the smitten soldiers of the enemy. When the text says Israelites ‘went a whoring after it’ the idiom means they looked upon it as if it were an idol, and idol worship is often condemned in these terms as infidelity to God.” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:151.)

Gideon’s intention was to use the spoils of war to make a fitting memorial honoring God’s part in the victory, but the Israelites were quick to turn to false gods and viewed the ephod as though it were an idol.

**(22-26) Judges 9:1–20. Of What Significance Is the Parable of Jotham?**

Jotham was the only one of the seventy sons of Gideon to escape the mass fratricide of Abimelech. Jotham had hid himself (see v. 5). Upon the eight-hundred-foot high Mount Gerizim, Jotham delivered to the men of Shechem a very interesting parable, one of the few parables recorded in the Old Testament.

In the parable there were trees (leaders of Israel) who wanted a king among them (Gideon was offered the chance to become king). None of the faithful trees (sons of Gideon) would accept the crown because they felt there should be equality among the trees and one should not rule over the rest. Finally, the kingmakers asked the miserable bramble bush (Abimelech, son of a concubine wife) to reign over the trees. The bramble bush consented, providing the trees would put their complete trust in him and obey his every command. If they did not obey, he would send fire to consume all of them.

Jotham then prophesied that the people would eventually desire to destroy Abimelech (see v. 20). For the details of how completely Jotham’s prophecy was fulfilled, see Judges 9:22–57.

**(22-27) Judges 10**

Israel had no assurance at this time that God would help them. They had sold themselves to other gods, and they now had to rely on their strength. A similar warning, found in D&C 101:7–8, was given to the Saints of the latter days.

**(22-28) Judges 11:29–40. How Did Jephthah Offer His Daughter As a Sacrifice?**

Many have supposed that Jephthah offered his daughter as a human sacrifice, and a literal reading of the text may support that view. But if that is true, some difficult questions are raised. Jephthah was regarded as a great hero and deliverer of Israel, and even his sacrifice of his daughter is treated in a way that suggests the author of Judges viewed it as a commendable act. In Hebrews 11:32–35 Jephthah is used as one of the examples of great faith. Would this case be true if he had engaged in human sacrifice, an act viewed as one of the greatest of abominations in ancient Israel? Why does Jephthah’s daughter “bewail her virginity” (Judges 11:37) rather than mourn the approaching loss of her life? After Jephthah had fulfilled his vow of sacrificing his daughter, the text states that “she knew no man” (v. 39). Bible scholars have suggested an explanation that adequately answers these questions.

“Jephthah was compelled by his vow to dedicate his daughter to Jehovah in a lifelong virginity. . . . The entreaty of the daughter, that he would grant her two months’ time, in order that she might lament her virginity upon the mountains with her friends, would have been marvellously out of keeping with the account that she was to be put to death as a sacrifice. To mourn one’s virginity does not mean to mourn because one has to die a virgin, but because one has to live and remain a virgin. But even if we were to assume that mourning her virginity was equivalent to mourning on account of her youth. . . . ‘it would be impossible to understand why this should take place upon the mountains. It would be altogether opposed to human nature, that a child who had so soon to die should make use of a temporary respite to forsake her father altogether. It would no doubt be a reasonable thing that she should ask permission to enjoy life for two months longer before she was put to death; but that she should only think of bewailing her virginity, when a sacrificial death was in prospect, which would rob her father of his only child, would be contrary to all the ordinary feelings of the human heart. Yet, inasmuch as the history lays special emphasis upon her bewailing her virginity, this must have stood in some peculiar relation to the nature of the vow. . . .’ (P. Cassel, p. 473). And this is confirmed by the expression, to bewail her virginity ‘upon the mountains.’ ‘If life had been in question, the same tears might have been shed at home. But her lamentations were devoted to her virginity, and such lamentations could not be uttered in the town, and in the presence of men. Modesty required the solitude of the mountains for these. . . .’ (P. Cassel, p. 476). And so, again, the still further clause in the account of the fulfilment of the vow, ‘and she knew no man,’ is not in harmony with the assumption of a sacrificial death. This clause would add nothing to the description in that case, since it was already known that she was a virgin. The words only gain their proper sense if we connect them with the previous clause, he ‘did with her according to the vow which he had vowed,’ and understand them as describing what the daughter did in fulfilment of

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the vow. The father fulfilled his vow upon her, and she knew no man; *i.e.* he fulfilled the vow through the fact that she knew no man, but dedicated her life to the Lord, as a spiritual burnt-offering, in a lifelong chastity. . . . And the idea of a spiritual sacrifice is supported not only by the words, but also most decisively by the fact that the historian describes the fulfilment of the vow in the words 'he did to her according to his vow,' in such a manner as to lead to the conclusion that he regarded the act itself as laudable and good. But a prophetic historian could never have approved of a human sacrifice." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:1:392-93.)

Compare the wording of Jephthah's vow (see vv. 30-31) to Hannah's vow (see 1 Samuel 1:11).

#### **(22-29) Judges 12:1-7**

Once the war against the Midianites was won, the Ephraimites complained because they were not allowed to help, just as they did after Gideon's victory (see Judges 8:1-3). Perhaps this ruse was typical of Ephraim—to hang back until the victory was won and then pretend they wanted to be part of it all along. Gideon had appeased them, but Jephthah bluntly reminded them that, although he had asked them, they sent no recruits, so he did it his own way.

#### **(22-30) Judges 12:8-15**

"The mention of the number of sons and daughters from time to time and the fact that they could all be mounted on colts seems to be something of an ancient symbol of status" (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:152).

### **POINTS TO PONDER**

**(22-31)** Josephus, the noted Jewish historian, usually spoke highly of his people. Yet, his commentary on the condition of the Israelites during the period of the judges was anything but praise:

"After this, the Israelites grew effeminate as to fighting any more against their enemies, but applied themselves to the cultivation of the land, which producing them great plenty and riches, they neglected the regular disposition of their settlement, and indulged themselves in luxury and pleasures; nor were they any longer careful to hear the laws that belonged to their political government: whereupon God was provoked to anger, and put them in mind, first, how, contrary to his directions, they had spared the Canaanites: and, after that, how those Canaanites, as opportunity served, used them very barbarously." (*Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 5, chap. 2, par. 7.)

Extraordinary courage was required for an Israelite to be devoted to the Lord during this era. Unfortunately, this situation arose not because of pressure from outside of Israel but because of pressure from within. Gideon's neighbors, not a group of pagan Canaanites, were worked into a murderous frenzy when Gideon destroyed the altar of Baal. Jotham's prophecy was uttered against his own brother, not against some Philistine king. Indeed, Israel's problem did not stem from the pagan masses they faced. It lay within their

own hearts. Their greatest enemies were not the power-hungry Midianites or Moabites but inward vacillation, apathy, disobedience, and rebellion. Their outward enemies raged through them constantly only because the inward weaknesses raged unchecked also.

The Canaanites and Philistines are gone today. But are not the offspring of their gods, metamorphosed into modern form and made intellectually acceptable, still with us? And what of apathy, disobedience, vacillation, and rebellion? Is not our greatest enemy within? If so, then the same kind of courage displayed by the people of whom you have just read is as necessary now as it was then.

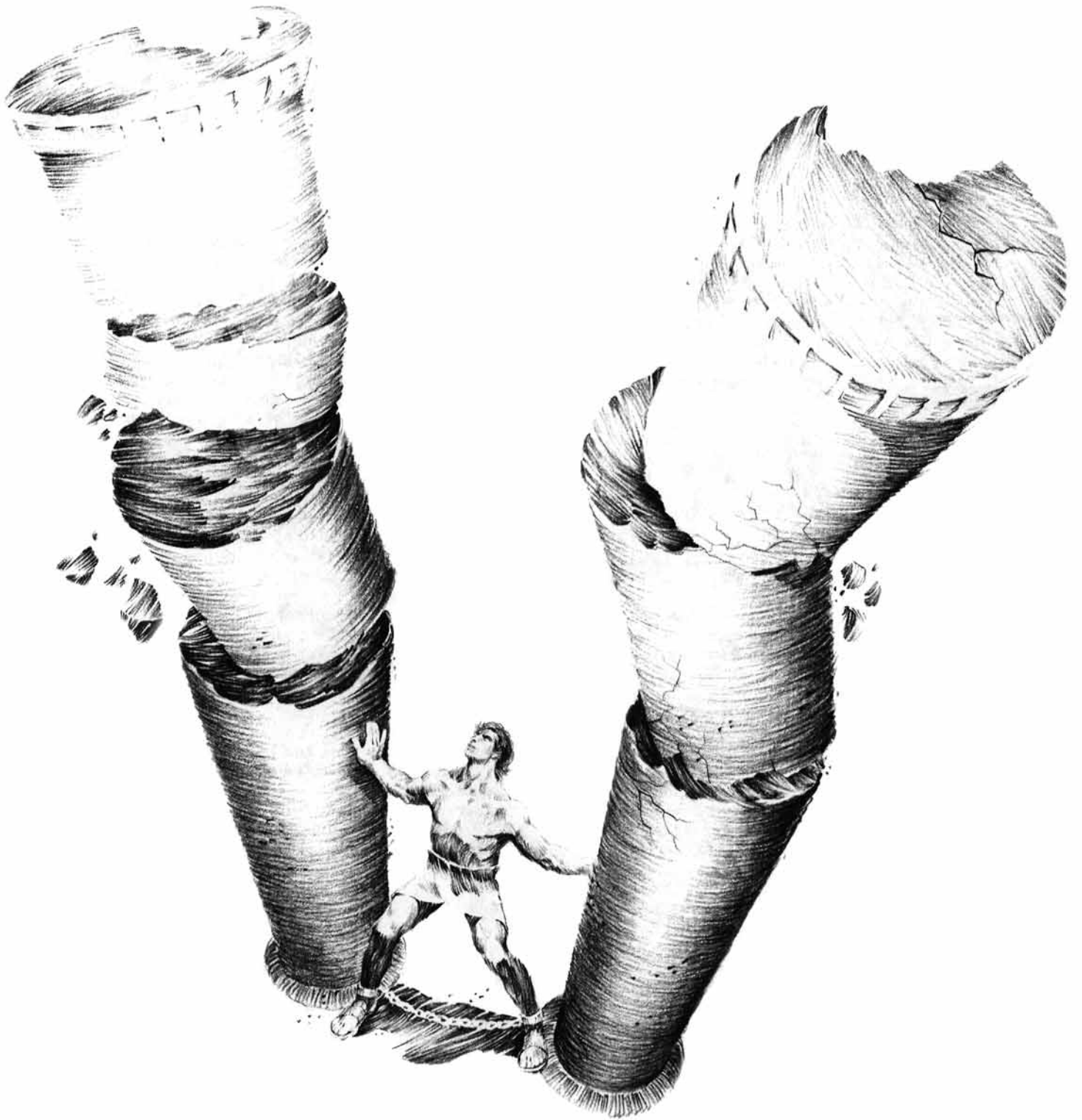
**(22-32)** It takes courage to be constant in one's devotion to gospel standards. The Song of Deborah contains a key as to how to overcome every adversary: "Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves" (Judges 5:2). How can you exercise the courage necessary to give yourself willingly to God? The following counsel, given by President Joseph F. Smith to leaders of the Church, applies to you in a very real sense. Consider it carefully.

"One of the highest qualities of all true leadership is a high standard of courage. When we speak of courage and leadership we are using terms that stand for the quality of life by which men determine consciously the proper course to pursue and stand with fidelity to their convictions. There has never been a time in the Church when its leaders were not required to be courageous men; not alone courageous in the sense that they were able to meet physical dangers, but also in the sense that they were steadfast and true to a clear and upright conviction.

"Leaders of the Church, then, should be men not easily discouraged, not without hope, and not given to forebodings of all sorts of evils to come. Above all things the leaders of the people should never disseminate a spirit of gloom in the hearts of the people. If men standing in high places sometimes feel the weight and anxiety of momentous times, they should be all the firmer and all the more resolute in those convictions which come from a God-fearing conscience and pure lives. Men in their private lives should feel the necessity of extending encouragement to the people by their own hopeful and cheerful intercourse with them, as they do by their utterances in public places. It is a matter of the greatest importance that the people be educated to appreciate and cultivate the bright side of life rather than to permit its darkness and shadows to hover over them.

"In order to successfully overcome anxieties in reference to questions that require time for their solution, an absolute faith and confidence in God and in the triumph of his work are essential.

"The most momentous questions and the greatest dangers to personal happiness are not always met and solved within oneself, and if men cannot courageously meet the difficulties, and obstacles of their own individual lives and natures, how are they to meet successfully those public questions in which the welfare and happiness of the public are concerned?" (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 155.)



# The Reign of the Judges, Part 2

## (23-1) Introduction

Samson could have been one of the greatest leaders in Israel since Joshua if he had been true to his Nazarite vows and to his Lord. If Samson, foreordained and chosen by the Lord, had been able to master himself, he could have set an example of spiritual and physical courage that would rank with the finest in history. But we can learn from Samson's failure to avoid self-justification and uncontrolled passion so that we might join modern Israel in becoming a mighty and pure people before the second coming of the Lord.

There were some, however, who did not falter during the last years of the rule of the judges. Ruth, a true convert to Jehovah, lived a quiet life devoted to righteous principles. Through her devotion and faith, Ruth chose the better part and was blessed to marry Boaz. They became the parents of a noble posterity that included King David, Mary, and the Messiah. Elder Thomas S. Monson said:

"In our selection of heroes, let us nominate also heroines. First, that noble example of fidelity—even Ruth. Sensing the grief-stricken heart of her mother-in-law, who suffered the loss of each of her two fine sons, and feeling perhaps the pangs of despair and loneliness which plagued the very soul of Naomi, Ruth uttered what has become that classic statement of loyalty: 'Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.' (Ruth 1:16.) Ruth's actions demonstrated the sincerity of her words. There is place for her name in the Hall of Fame." ("My Personal Hall of Fame," *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, p. 108.)

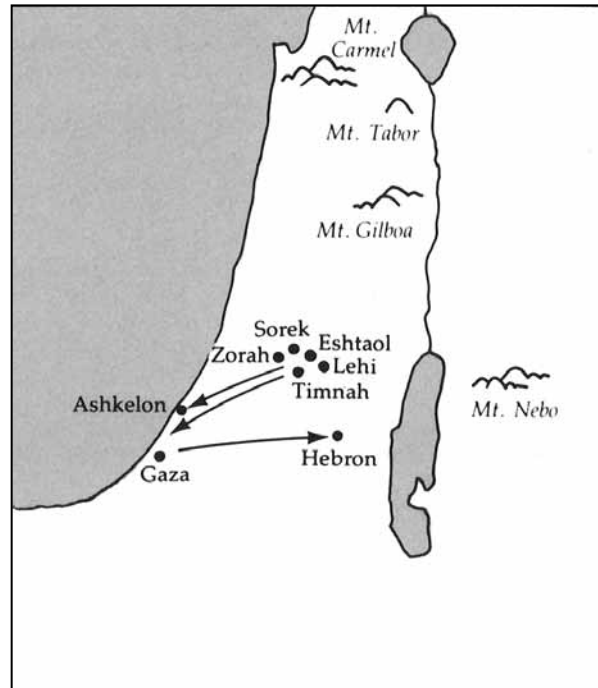
### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study Judges 13–21; Ruth 1–4.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON JUDGES 13–21

### (23-2) Judges 13:1–2

Zorah, the home of Samson, had been assigned originally to the tribe of Judah (see Joshua 15:33), but was later inhabited by the tribe of Dan, which had been unable to take over the land assigned to it as its inheritance. See Maps and Charts for the location.



*Exploits of Samson*

### (23-3) Judges 13:5. What Is a Nazarite?

"The primary meaning of the Heb. verb *nazar* is to separate. Hence the *nazir* [Nazarite] is 'the separated,' 'consecrated,' 'devoted.'" (Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "Nazarite," pp. 647–48). A Nazarite, therefore, was one who was separated from others by a special vow of self-dedication to Jehovah. The term "set apart" is used to mean that one has been given a special calling or position and is thus separated from others. (See Reading 17-11.)

Jesus' title, the Nazarene, meant that He was from the city of Nazareth, not that He was a Nazarite.

### (23-4) Judges 13:16–25

"The angel does not say that it [his name] was *secret*, but . . . *hu peli*, it is WONDERFUL; the very character that is given to Jesus Christ [see Isaiah 9]." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:159.)

It is doubtful that the angel was the Lord Himself, but rather was one who spoke in the name of the Lord by divine authority, as in Revelation 22:1–9. Certainly the experience of Manoah and his wife is one of the most remarkable instances of angelic visitation recorded in all of scripture. And that fact heightens all the more the tragedy of Samson's life. Heralded by an angel, born of a barren woman, blessed with tremendous gifts from the Lord, Samson should have lived one of the greatest lives

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in scriptural record. Instead, his life was one of self-indulgence, immorality, selfish seeking for revenge, and violation of the covenant. Samson's life is truly one of the great tragedies of history.

**(23-5) Judges 14:6. If Samson's Life Was So out of Harmony with God's Will, How Did He Have the "Spirit of the Lord"?**

In the Church today when one speaks of a person having the Spirit of the Lord, he means that he is a spiritual person, that is, he is close to God, has a testimony, demonstrates spiritual power, and so on. And such spiritual power comes only through obedience and righteousness. So, could Samson have had "the Spirit of the Lord come mightily upon him"? (v. 6). That or a similar phrase is used three times in the account of Samson (see Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14), but in every case it has reference to Samson's demonstration of great courage and physical strength. Samson's remarkable strength was a gift of God derived from and sustained by the Nazarite vow he was under. Perhaps when the author of Judges used the phrase "the Spirit of God" he did not use it as one does today, but used it more in the way that one would now use the phrase "spiritual gifts." One may say of another, "The way he taught the lesson demonstrated that he has a spiritual gift." Samson's gift was strength, and each time he used that gift in a remarkable manner, the writer of the scripture gave credit to the Lord, the true source of the gift, by saying "the Spirit of the Lord" came mightily upon him.

**(23-6) Judges 14:8–20**

At Samson's seven-day wedding celebration he proposed a riddle. When his wife revealed the answer to the thirty Philistine guests to save her own life (see v. 15) and Samson lost the wager, he was furious and wreaked havoc on the Philistines at Ashkelon to get the spoils necessary to pay his debt. Probably for spite, his father-in-law gave Samson's wife to the man "used as his friend" (v. 20), that is, his best man at the wedding.

Here is an excellent glimpse of the moral state of the Philistines and of Samson's own moral failure. The angel had told his mother that her son "shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13:5). Instead, Samson married a Philistine, interacted with them, and smote them only when it suited his personal desire.

**(23-7) Judges 15:9–19. The Place of Lehi**

The city of Lehi was located in the Shephelah, or foothill area, a few miles southwest of Jerusalem. (See Maps and Charts for the possible location.) *Lehi* means "jaw-bone," and *Ramath-Lehi* means the "lifting up of the cheek or jaw-bone" (Fallows, *Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Ramath-Lehi," 3:1426). Therefore, Samson's source of water was a spring miraculously provided by God near the place of Lehi (jaw), the spring known thereafter as En-hakkore, "the spring of him who called" (Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "En-hakkore," p. 377).

Some Latter-day Saint scholars have speculated that the location of Samson's battle with the Philistines may have been the site of Lehi's home near Jerusalem before he led his family into the wilderness, but there is no evidence to support this idea. Lehi lived five or six hundred years after Samson. That he should live in the place that bore his name would certainly be unlikely.

**(23-8) Judges 16:1–16**

To offer Delilah a treasure of eleven hundred pieces of silver was a striking indication of the desperate state in which the five lords of the Philistines found themselves after the depredations wrought by Samson. These lords were the rulers of the five major cities of the Philistines. These cities—Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath—were significant in Old Testament history. Gaza was where Samson had visited a harlot (see v. 1) and was also the scene of his death (see Judges 16:21–30). Gath was the hometown of the later Philistine champion Goliath (see 1 Samuel 17:4).

**(23-9) Judges 16:17–22. Was Samson's Hair Really the Source of His Strength?**

The biblical account of Samson reveals him as a man of extreme confidence and tremendous courage, qualities based on his recognition that his power was from God and that God would sustain him in the mission to which he had been called. But Samson did not realize that there is a rule that governs power in the Lord, which is, "let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God" (D&C 121:45). Samson's misfortunes began when his confidence in God turned into conceit and pride. Over a period of time he broke the vows of a Nazarite and violated other commandments, including the law of chastity (see Judges 16:1).

Samson's superhuman strength did not reside in his hair but in his confidence in God and in the Nazarite oath, of which the hair was the outward symbol. Delilah's treachery and the shaving of Samson's hair signified the final betrayal of his vows. Thus, he became a miserable, broken man with no power left.

**(23-10) Judges 16:23–31. Why Did God Once Again Strengthen Samson?**

The claim of the Philistines that "our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy" (v. 24) referred to their belief that their success in capturing Samson proved the Philistine deity Dagon (see Reading F-7) was greater than Jehovah. Thus, the people did not fear to make sport of Samson, the champion of Jehovah, in the temple of their god. In this setting, Samson once again exercised that kind of courage through which God could have used him as a tool. But again the self-centeredness of Samson is evident. Even in his final opportunity, when Samson used his restored strength to destroy the temple of Dagon and the Philistines who were there, he thought only of getting revenge for what had been done to him (see

v. 28). In the destruction of his very temple, what better proof could there be that the power of Dagon was nothing? And yet how much more powerfully could Samson have borne witness to the power of Jehovah if he had fulfilled his calling to overthrow the power of the Philistines.

### (23-11) Judges 16:29–30. Could Samson Have Really Pulled Down an Entire Temple?

“The character of [this] building is illustrated by discoveries at Gezer and Gaza. The roof was supported by wooden pillars set on stone bases. It was flat, consisting of logs of wood stretching from one wall to beams supported by the pillars and from these beams to other beams or to the opposite wall. The temple at Gezer had a forecourt leading into a paved inner chamber, separated from it by four circular stones, on which the wooden pillars stood. Samson probably stood between the two central pillars, if there were more than two. The Philistine lords and ladies were in the inner chamber; the crowd watched from the roof. *Samson made sport*, in the forecourt, and then asked the boy to lead him to the central pillars to rest against them. Then, putting an arm round each, and bending forward so as to force them out of the perpendicular, he brought the roof down. The weight of people on the roof may have made the feat all the easier.” (Guthrie, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 272.)

### (23-12) Judges 17:21. “Every Man Did That Which Was Right in His Own Eyes”

In the closing chapters of Judges the writer turned from stories of Israel’s heroes to two incidents that illustrate the low state of religion and morality in the days when Israel forsook her covenant with the Lord and everyone “did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

The stories of Micah the Levite and the Danite migration, in chapters 17 and 18, and the account of the rape of the concubine at Gibeah and the subsequent punishment of the Benjamites, in chapters 19–21, are samples of Israel’s worst days. Nothing in the stories show the Israelites doing what was right. The following information from these chapters is worth noting:

1. The Danites sought an inheritance because they had not obtained one since entering Canaan (see Judges 18:1). They finally found an inheritance at the headwaters of the Jordan River. Since this area was the northernmost tribal inheritance, it became a common saying to speak of the domain of Israel as being “from Dan even to Beersheba” (Judges 20:1).

2. The tribe of Benjamin, already one of the smallest, was nearly annihilated in a vengeful civil war. Altogether, according to the account, a total of 25,100 Benjamites were slain, leaving only 600 alive (see Judges 20:46–47; also see Enrichment Section E, “The Problem of Large Numbers in the Old Testament,” for information that might modify the account of the size of their losses). These 600 were allowed by the princes of Israel to take wives, although not in a righteous manner, so that the tribal identity could be

perpetuated, but the tribe of Benjamin remained small.

3. The city of Jerusalem was inhabited by the Jebusites during the time of the judges (see Judges 19:10–11). Jerusalem did not become a holy city and a capital for the Israelites until David conquered the Jebusites.

### (23-13) Judges 19:29–30. What Is the Significance of the Woman Being Divided into Twelve Pieces?

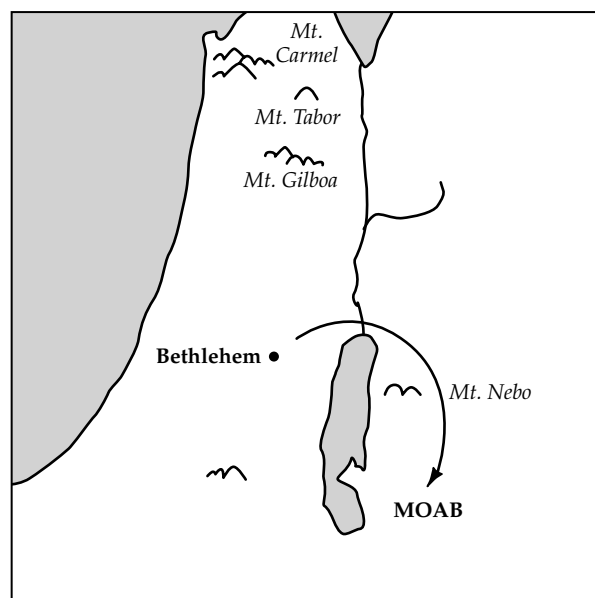
“There is no doubt that with the pieces he sent to each tribe a circumstantial account of the barbarity of the men of Gibeah; and it is very likely that they considered each of the pieces as expressing an execration, ‘If ye will not come and avenge my wrongs, may ye be hewn in pieces like this abused and murdered woman!’ They were all struck with the enormity of the crime, and considered it a sovereign disgrace to all the tribes of Israel.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:182.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON RUTH 1–4

### (23-14) Ruth 1:1. What Is the Background of the Book of Ruth?

“Many years had passed since the Israelites had crossed the Jordan and formed a loose tribal confederacy in the central highlands of Canaan. As they established their own settlements, they gradually discarded their nomadic traditions and adopted an agricultural way of life.

“Yet their position remained precarious. The northern tribes were almost constantly at war with those walled cities that remained under the control of the Canaanites, and they frequently had to defend themselves against invasions by people from the



*Elimelech took his family to Moab.*

east: the Ammonites and Midianites. In contrast, Judah, which occupied the southern end of the Israelite territory, seems to have been relatively tranquil and not involved in the great wars that concerned the Judges.

“The people of Judah regularly battled another sort of enemy: the climate. Judah occupied a rugged plateau in the semiarid lands west of the Dead Sea. Normally, the land was fertile enough to sustain fields of wheat and barley, grape vineyards and groves of olive and fig trees. But occasionally the rains failed, the crops withered and there was famine.

“During one such disaster, a Judean man named Elimelech, who lived in the town of Bethlehem, fled the land with his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. The family traveled to Moab, a kingdom on the eastern borders of the Dead Sea. The distance was not great—perhaps 30 or 40 miles along the edge of that inland sea [the Dead Sea].” (*Great People of the Bible and How They Lived*, p. 126.)

#### (23-15) Ruth 1:16. “Thy God [Shall Be] My God”

The primary god of the Moabites was Chemosh (see Reading F-7). While there is no indication that Ruth and her sister-in-law, Orpah, were believers in this false god, two verses say that Ruth was converted to the true God of Israel. In her beautiful expression of loyalty and devotion to Naomi, Ruth said that she

not only wished to stay with her mother-in-law but also desired to make Naomi’s people her people and Naomi’s God her God. Later, Boaz, praising Ruth’s concern for Naomi, says to her, “A full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, *under whose wings thou art come to trust*” (Ruth 2:12; emphasis added). Both of these passages indicate that Ruth was converted.

#### (23-16) Ruth 1:19–21

Naomi here used a play on words based on her name. In Hebrew *Naomi* means “sweet or pleasant” and *Mara* means “bitter.” When, after many years’ absence, the people greeted her in surprise by asking, “Is this Naomi?” (v. 19), she responded by saying, “Call me not Naomi [pleasant], call me Mara [bitter]: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me” (v. 20). This reply was not an accusation, only Naomi’s way of saying that she had endured much tragedy while in Moab.

#### (23-17) Ruth 1:22–2:17. What Is “Gleaning”?

“Harvesting was difficult work and demanded long hours. Young men moved through the fields grasping handfuls of the grain and cutting through the stalks with sickles. These small bunches of grain were then bound into bundles called sheaves. As the men worked rapidly, a number of stalks fell to the



*Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz.*

ground. If the men were careful and took the time, these too could be gathered up. However, any stalks that dropped were allowed to remain where they fell. Poor people, following the reapers, were permitted to 'glean,' or gather, the random stalks—possibly all that stood between them and starvation. In addition, the edges of the field, where the sickle was not as easily wielded, were left unharvested. The poor were welcome to that portion, as well.

"The destitute of Bethlehem now included Ruth and Naomi, and Ruth offered to go into the fields and glean." (*Great People of the Bible and How They Lived*, p. 129.)

### **(23-18) Ruth 2:18–4:10. What Was the Levirate Marriage That Naomi Hoped to Arrange for Ruth and Boaz?**

Naomi wanted to help her faithful daughter-in-law secure a husband and family. To do this, Naomi considered the levirate marriage, a practice that had prevailed for many years in Israel. See Reading 20-22 for an explanation of this custom.

Deuteronomy 25:5–10 is the scriptural reference for the levirate marriage obligation in Israelite families.

"The word here rendered 'redeemer' we translate literally from Hebrew *go'el* and this is its proper translation. It is rendered merely 'kinsman' in the King James English translation. The function of a *go'el* was to make it possible for a widow who had lost home and property to return to her former status and security and to have seed to perpetuate her family.

"It is easy to see why the later prophets borrowed this word from the social laws of Israel and used it to describe the functions of Him who would become the Divine Redeemer: Think of what He does to restore us to proper status with God, and to give us future security and eternal 'seed.'" (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:157.)

### **(23-19) Ruth 3:6–9. How Did Ruth Make Her Proposal to Boaz?**

"When Boaz awoke from his sleep by the pile of grain, which he was guarding as was the custom during harvest time, he was startled by Ruth's presence. She was direct in her proposal. The word rendered 'skirt' also means 'wing,' and her request is not unlike our idiom 'take me under your wing.' Gesenius, the famous Hebraist, says it was a proper proposal of marriage—even though the girl was doing the proposing!" (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:157.)

The idiom means "protect me," or, in other words, "be my protector or husband."

"According to our customs, indeed, this act of Naomi and Ruth appears a very objectionable one from a moral point of view, but it was not so when judged by the customs of the people of Israel at that time. Boaz, who was an honourable man, and, according to [Ruth 3:10], no doubt somewhat advanced in years, praised Ruth for having taken refuge with him, and promised to fulfil her wishes when he had satisfied himself that the nearer redeemer would

renounce his right and duty [see vv. 10–11]. As he acknowledged by this very declaration, that under certain circumstances it would be his duty as redeemer to marry Ruth, he took no offence at the manner in which she had approached him and proposed to become his wife. On the contrary, he regarded it as a proof of feminine virtue and modesty, that she had not gone after young men, but offered herself as a wife to an old man like him. This conduct on the part of Boaz is a sufficient proof that women might have confidence in him that he would do nothing unseemly. And he justified such confidence." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:1:483.)

### **(23-20) Ruth 4:7–12. How Was a Public Agreement Made Legally Binding?**

"The public life of an Israelite village was concentrated at its main gate. It was here that matters of law were brought for adjudication before the elders of the community. They also were the official witnesses for transactions such as the one in which Boaz agreed to marry Ruth if her kinsman would give up all rights to her dead husband's property. A man renouncing property rights removed a sandal and presented it to the new property holder, a gesture that everyone understood and considered binding if witnessed by the elders." (*Great People of the Bible and How They Lived*, p. 133.)

## **POINTS TO PONDER**

**(23-21)** When Samson defied his parents and gave in to his passion for Philistine women, his special calling disappeared into an unfulfilled dream. In twenty years of adulthood, Samson did not at any time attempt to organize the forces of Israel for their liberation, as the Lord had called him to do (see Judges 13:5). His exploits of slaughter, arson, and other damage to the Philistines seemingly were motivated by his own personal desire for revenge. Samson fought less for Israel than for himself. The Lord said, "For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts of 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" (D&C 3:4).

Samson seems to have had everything except what really counts—self-discipline. Although it is true that Delilah "pressed him daily with her words, and urged him" (Judges 16:16), Potiphar's wife "spake to Joseph day by day" (Genesis 39:10), but he refused even to be near her and fled rather than violate God's commandments. Samson gave in to enticement and fell into both physical and spiritual tragedy.

It is in commitment to true principles, combined with self-discipline, that true greatness lies. Consider the following statement by President N. Eldon Tanner:

"I should like to say a few words about self-discipline, self-control, or self-mastery which is so important to all of us if we are to accomplish what

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we set out to do and enjoy the blessings which we desire so much.

"First, I should like to quote some of the philosophers.

"Plato said: 'The first and best victory is to conquer self; to be conquered by self is, of all things, the most shameful and vile.'

"And da Vinci once said: 'You will never have a greater or lesser dominion than that over yourself.' Then he goes on to say that 'the height of a man's success is gauged by his self-mastery; the depth of his failure by his self-abandonment. . . . And this law is the expression of eternal justice. He who cannot establish dominion over himself will have no dominion over others.' In other words, he cannot be a worthy father or leader.

"Solomon in all his wisdom made this meaningful statement: 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.' (Prov. 16:32.)

"There are two important elements in self-mastery. The first is to determine your course or set the sails, so to speak, of moral standards; the other is the willpower, or the wind in the sails carrying one forward. As I said before, character is determined by the extent to which we can master ourselves toward good ends. It is difficult to say just what builds good character, but we know it when we see it. It always commands our admiration, and the absence of it our pity. But it is largely a matter of willpower." ("Success Is Gauged by Self-Mastery," *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 75.)

It would be easier to exercise self-mastery in the face of sin if the bad effects of sin were instantaneous. But they are not. Further, it is an illusion that sin always appears to the mind to be ugly, vile, and repulsive. Consider this insight from Elder Spencer W. Kimball:

"Whoever said that sin was not fun? Whoever claimed that Lucifer was not handsome, persuasive, easy, friendly? Sin is attractive and desirable. Transgression wears elegant gowns and sparkling apparel. It is highly perfumed; it has attractive features, a soft voice. It is found in educated circles and sophisticated groups. It provides sweet and comfortable luxuries. Sin is easy and has a big company of pleasant companions. It promises immunity from restrictions, temporary freedoms. It can momentarily satisfy hunger, thirst, desire, urges, passions, wants without immediately paying the price. But, it begins tiny and grows to monumental proportions—drop by drop, inch by inch." (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p. 229.)

In what way could this concept be applied to the tragic fall of Samson? How does his life illustrate the eternal truth that the wages of sin is death—physical, or spiritual, or both? (see Romans 6:23).

**(23-22)** The book of Ruth contains one of the most beautiful stories ever written. Despite being set in a day when political chaos and moral degeneracy existed in parts of the land, this story contains not a

single demeaning feature and is uplifting and heartwarming. The following are examples of quiet devotion and obedience from this story:

1. Ruth's marriage to Mahlon led to her conversion from the Moabite to the Israelite way of life.

2. Ruth's choice to remain with her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi, is an example of selfless concern for others.

3. The acts of kindness exhibited by Ruth and Boaz had a positive effect on those around them.

4. Ruth's virtue and integrity impressed the noble Boaz, and he was honorable in his relation to her, showing willingness to assume family responsibility.

5. The union of Boaz and Ruth produced a royal posterity from whom came King David and eventually Jesus Christ.

President John Taylor used the example of Ruth to describe modern Saints who also were willing to give up homes and kinships to be where their God wanted them to be: "'Thanks be to the God of Israel who has counted us worthy to receive the principles of truth.' These were the feelings you had and enjoyed in your far distant homes. And your obedience to those principles tore you from your homes, firesides and associations and brought you here, for you felt like one of old, when she said, 'Whither thou goest I will go; thy God shall be my God, thy people shall be my people, and where thou diest there will I be buried.' And you have gathered to Zion that you might be taught and instructed in the laws of life and listen to the words which emanate from God, become one people and one nation, partake of one spirit, and prepare yourselves, your progenitors and posterity for an everlasting inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God." (*In Journal of Discourses*, 14:189.)

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6). The truth of this declaration is evident in the contrasting stories of Samson and Ruth. The prophets have always been anxious that the Saints find that peace which comes from living a Christlike life. President Spencer W. Kimball gave us this challenge:

"Would a frequent housecleaning be in order for all of us?

"I may not be able to eliminate pornographic trash, but my family and I need not buy or view it.

"I may not be able to close disreputable businesses, but I can stay away from areas of questioned honor and ill repute.

"I may not be able to greatly reduce the divorces of the land or save all broken homes and frustrated children, but I can keep my own home a congenial one, my marriage happy, my home a heaven, and my children well adjusted.

"I may not be able to stop the growing claims to freedom from laws based on morals, or change all opinions regarding looseness in sex and growing perversions, but I can guarantee devotion to all high ideals and standards in my own home, and I can work toward giving my own family a happy, interdependent spiritual life.

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"I may not be able to stop all graft and dishonesty in high places, but I myself can be honest and upright, full of integrity and true honor, and my family will be trained likewise.

"I may not be able to insure family prayers, home evening, meeting attendance, and spiritual, well-integrated lives in all my neighbors, but I can be certain that my children will be happy at home. They will grow strong and tall and realize their freedom is

found at home, in their faith, in clean living, and in opportunity to serve. As Christ said, 'And the truth shall make you free.'

"No virtues in the perfection we strive for are more important than integrity and honesty. Let us then be complete, unbroken, pure, and sincere, to develop in ourselves that quality of soul we prize so highly in others." (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, pp. 247-48.)



# The Prophet Samuel and Saul, King of Israel

## (24-1) Introduction

Hushed was the evening hymn;  
The temple courts were dark;  
The lamp was burning dim  
Before the sacred ark;  
When suddenly a voice divine  
Rang through the silence of the shrine.

The old man, meek and mild,  
The priest of Israel slept;  
His watch the temple child,  
The little Levite kept;  
And what from Eli's sense was sealed,  
The Lord to Hannah's son revealed.

O give me Samuel's ear,  
The open ear, O Lord,  
Alive and quick to hear  
Each whisper of thy word,  
Like him to answer at thy call  
And to obey thee first of all.

O give me Samuel's heart,  
A lowly heart, that waits,  
Wherein thy house thou art  
Or watches at thy gates,  
By day and night a heart that still  
Moves at the breathing of thy will!

O give me Samuel's mind,  
A sweet un murmuring faith,  
Obedient and resigned  
To thee in life and death,  
That I may read with childlike eyes,  
Truths that are hidden from the wise!"  
(*Hymns* [1948], no. 252.)

There is the challenge, for Saul of old and for us today. The contrast between Samuel and Saul is a major focus of this section of the Old Testament. What seems to be the chief difference between Samuel the prophet and Saul the king?

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study 1 Samuel 1–15.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON 1 SAMUEL 1–15

### (24-2) 1 Samuel 1:4–5. What Are the “Portions” That Elkanah Gave His Wives and Children?

When Elkanah took his wives and their families to Shiloh (where the tabernacle had been located after the tribes conquered Canaan) to offer sacrifices, a peace offering was made. After the fat, kidneys, and other parts were burned, the priest customarily received the breast and right shoulder. The rest of the sacrificial animal was given back to the offerer to be eaten in a special feast. From his part, Elkanah gave portions of the meat to his family. Hannah received either more than the others or else a more choice portion because of Elkanah's love for her (see Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:206).

### (24-3) 1 Samuel 1:6–7. Who Was Hannah's Adversary and Why Was Hannah Provoked by Her?

Peninnah, the other wife, “was constantly striving to irritate and vex her, *to make her fret*—to make her discontented with her lot, because the Lord had denied her children.

“As the whole family went up to Shiloh to the annual festivals, Peninnah had both *sons* and *daughters* to accompany her [see v. 4], but Hannah had none; and Peninnah took this opportunity particularly to twit Hannah with her barrenness, by making an ostentatious exhibition of her children.

“She was greatly distressed, because it was a great reproach to a woman among the Jews to be barren; because, say some, every one hoped that the Messiah should spring from her line.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:207.)

### (24-4) 1 Samuel 1:9. What Is the Significance of Eli's Sitting upon a Seat by a Post of the Temple?

In the ancient Middle East, it was customary for certain officials to place a stool or seat in a courtyard or near the gate of the city where they could sit in judgment, hearing cases or complaints. These seats usually had no backs and were placed near a wall or post to provide a backrest. This circumstance would explain why Eli was sitting near a post. It was probably on such a backless seat that Eli was sitting when he heard the news of the death of his sons and fell over backwards, killing himself (see 1 Samuel 4:18).

**(24-5) 1 Samuel 1:11**

Hannah's covenant with the Lord that, if she were given a child, "no razor" would come upon his head seems to be a promise to raise Samuel as a Nazarite, one under a special vow to God never to cut his hair. In Samuel is a great contrast to Samson, the former keeping his Nazarite vows throughout life, becoming a powerful man of God, and the latter violating all his vows, becoming a wretched example of failure to serve God.

**(24-6) 1 Samuel 1:16**

When Hannah protested to Eli that she was not a "daughter of Belial" she meant a "worthless or profane person." *Belial* means "worthless, someone of evil affiliation." It is capitalized by the English translators as if it were a title for Satan and is sometimes so used in later books of the Old Testament (see Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:161).

**(24-7) 1 Samuel 1:20**

The name *Samuel* means, in Hebrew, "heard of God" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:25). The name was meant to serve as a lifelong reminder to both Hannah and Samuel of the special circumstances and commitments attendant on his birth.

**(24-8) 1 Samuel 1:20–28. Samuel Is Presented at the Tabernacle**

"Weaning took place very late among the Israelites. According to [2 Maccabees 7:27], the Hebrew mothers were in the habit of suckling their children for three

years. When the weaning had taken place, Hannah would bring her son up to the sanctuary, to appear before the face of the Lord, and remain there forever, *i.e.* his whole life long. The Levites generally were only required to perform service at the sanctuary from their twenty-fifth to their fiftieth year [see Numbers 8:24–25]; but Samuel was to be presented to the Lord immediately after his weaning had taken place, and to remain at the sanctuary forever, *i.e.* to belong entirely to the Lord. To this end he was to receive his training at the sanctuary, that at the very earliest waking up of his spiritual susceptibilities he might receive the impressions of the sacred presence of God." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:26.)

**(24-9) 1 Samuel 2:1–11**

Hannah's prayer shows her to have been a woman with great faith and love for God. The horn (see v. 1) symbolized power and strength. God had given her the power to bear a child. The rock (see v. 2) was a representation of protection. Jesus Christ is the rock or stone of Israel, the protector from evil (see Matthew 21:42–44). In 1 Samuel 2:10 both allusions are combined into one: the Messiah is "the anointed one" who will break all adversaries of the Lord in pieces (the Greek word for *Messiah*, *Christos*, also means "the anointed one"). He it was, Hannah said, who would be given strength in that his horn (power) would be exalted before men. This passage is a choice Old Testament reference to the future Messiah and shows that Hannah was blessed with the gift of prophecy.

**(24-10) 1 Samuel 2:8**

The people of Hannah's day did not think the world was flat and sitting on pillars, as some suppose. That superstition was the invention of the Middle Ages. Hannah was using poetic language to show the power of Jehovah.

**(24-11) 1 Samuel 2:13–36. If the Priests Were Entitled to a Portion of Certain Sacrifices, Why Were the Sons of Eli Punished?**

"Of these offerings, the portion which legally fell to the priest as his share was the heave-leg and wave-breast. And this he was to receive after the fat portions of the sacrifice had been burned upon the altar [see Leviticus 7:30–34]. To take the flesh of the sacrificial animal and roast it before this offering had been made, was a crime which was equivalent to a robbery of God. . . . Moreover, the priests could not claim any of the flesh which the offerer of the sacrifice boiled for the sacrificial meal, after burning the fat portions upon the altar and giving up the portions which belonged to them, to say nothing of their taking it forcibly out of the pots while it was being boiled [see 1 Samuel 2:12–17]. Such conduct as this on the part of the young men (the priests' servants), was a great sin in the sight of the Lord, as they thereby brought the sacrifice of the Lord into contempt." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:35–36.)



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Hannah presented her firstborn son to Eli.

The poor example of the priests caused others in Israel to abhor “the offering of the Lord” (v. 17). But these actions were not all, for the sons of Eli seduced women and engaged in adulterous acts at the very door of the tabernacle, evidently by misusing their office of priest to entice the women (see v. 22). Under the law of Moses, willful disobedience to parents was punishable by death, and the parents were obliged to see that the punishment was carried out (see Reading 20-9). Hophni and Phinehas compounded their already serious sins by disobeying their father, and Eli failed in his parental responsibility as well as in his office as the presiding priest. Although he rebuked his sons, he took no action to see that the abomination in his family and at the tabernacle was corrected. Therefore, “a man of God” (some unnamed prophet) came to Eli and pronounced the Lord’s curse upon Eli’s house because “[thou] honourest thy sons above me” (vv. 27, 29). That is, Eli’s relationship with his sons was of more value to him than his relationship with God.

**(24-12) 1 Samuel 3:1. “The Word of the Lord Was Precious in Those Days”**

The word *precious* as used here means “scarce.” The word of God was seldom heard in all the land. Elder Harold B. Lee explained why as follows: “The story commences with a significant statement.

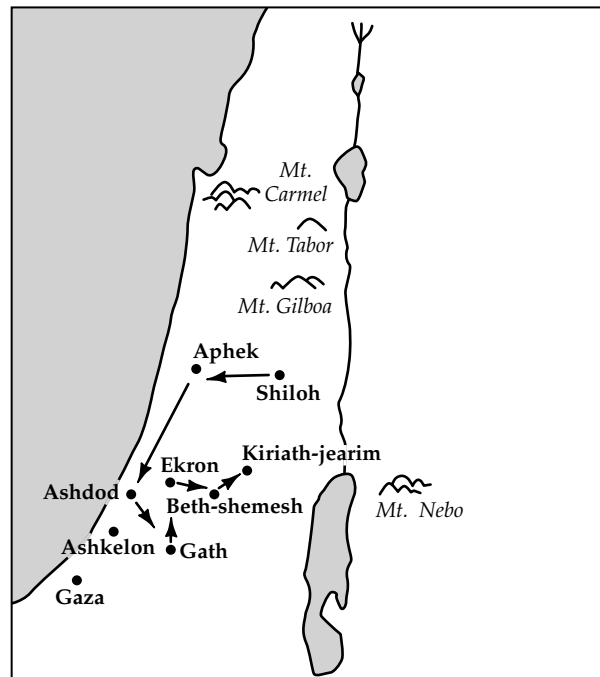
“‘And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.’ (1 Samuel 3:1) . . . That means that there was no prophet upon the earth through whom the Lord could reveal his will, either by personal experience, or by revelation. And it came to pass that Eli was laid down in his place and his eyes were dim, and Samuel the boy also lay down to his sleep, and you remember through that night there came a call, ‘Samuel,’ and thinking that Eli had called him he went to Eli’s room to be told that Eli had not called him. And he lay down the second time again to be called, and yet the third time. And by this time Eli, sensing the fact that he was being spoken to by an unseen speaker, said, ‘The next time that you hear, then you shall answer, ‘Here I am Lord, speak to me.’” And so the next time when the call came, Samuel answered as he had been directed. Now it says, ‘Samuel (up to this time) did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord revealed unto him.’ And after he had recognized the Lord and said, ‘Thy servant heareth,’ then he was told that the Lord was to proceed to ‘do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that heareth it, shall tingle.’ And then he explained the reason why Eli could not receive further messages from the Lord. ‘His sons make themselves vile, and he restrained them not,’ or in other words he allowed his sons to curse God and therefore were leading the people of Israel astray.” (“*But Arise and Stand upon Thy Feet*”—and I Will Speak with Thee, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, Provo, 7 Feb. 1956, p. 2.)

**(24-13) 1 Samuel 3:19. The Lord Honored Samuel As He Honors All His Apostles**

“You need have no fear that when one of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ delivers a prophecy in the name of Jesus Christ, because he is inspired to do that, that it will fall by the wayside. I know of more than one prophecy, which, looking at it naturally, seemed as though it would fall to the ground as year after year passed. But lo and behold, in the providences of the Lord, that prophecy was fulfilled.” (Grant, *Gospel Standards*, p. 68.)

**(24-14) 1 Samuel 4–7**

These chapters deal with Israel’s loss of the ark of God to the Philistines. (See the accompanying map to locate most of the places mentioned in these chapters.) The Israelites viewed the ark as the visible symbol of the presence of God, but bringing the ark from Shiloh on this occasion was a demonstration of Israel’s state of spiritual wickedness rather than a demonstration of their faith.



*The loss and return of the ark of the covenant*

“They vainly supposed that the ark could save them, when the God of it had departed from them because of their wickedness. They knew that in former times their fathers had been beaten by their enemies, when they took not the ark with them to battle; as in the case of their wars with the Canaanites, [see Numbers 14:44–45]; and that they had *conquered* when they took this with them, as in the case of the destruction of Jericho, [see Joshua 6:4]. From the latter clause they took confidence; but the cause of their miscarriage in the former they laid not to heart.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:219.)

Great disaster followed the appearance of the ark among the troops because of Israel's wickedness. Israel suffered a resounding defeat, Hophni and Phinehas were slain, and the ark was captured. News of the capture of the ark and of the death of his sons caused Eli such consternation that he lost his balance on his seat (see Reading 24-4), fell over backwards, and died, thus fulfilling the prophecy that his house would come to a tragic end (see 1 Samuel 2:27-36).

#### (24-15) 1 Samuel 5:2-3. Who Was Dagon?

Dagon was one of the gods of the Philistines (see Reading F-7). Since the Philistines believed that Dagon had given them victory over Israel, the ark was brought into Dagon's temple and deposited at his feet as a war trophy.



Thought to be Dagon, the fish god

#### (24-16) 1 Samuel 5:6-12; 6:1-9. What Are Emerods?

Because the word translated *emerod* means "an inflamed tumor," many have assumed that the Philistines were smitten with hemorrhoids and thus were motivated to send the ark back to Israel. The description of the effects of the emerods on the Philistines suggests something far more serious than hemorrhoids, however, although that ailment can be very painful. Many died, and those who did not seem to have endured great suffering (see 1 Samuel 5:10-12).

Josephus indicated that it was "a very destructive disease" involving dysentery, bleeding, and severe vomiting (see *Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 6, chap. 1, par. 1). Josephus also mentioned a great plague of mice that accompanied the disease. Although no direct mention is made of the plague of rodents, when the Philistines sought to placate Jehovah's wrath upon them by returning the ark, they sent five golden emerods and five golden mice as well (see 1 Samuel 6:4).

The severity of the disease and the fact that rodents were involved lead many scholars to conclude that what smote the Philistines was bubonic plague. Bubonic plague gets its name from the buboes, or tumorous swellings, in the lymph glands. These tumors settle particularly in the area of the groin. This

fact would explain the "secret parts" mentioned in 1 Samuel 5:9. It is well known that rats and mice are the main carriers of this disease, for the fleas that transmit the disease to man live on rodents. The disease is accompanied by great suffering and pain, and the fatality rate may run as high as 70 percent in a week's time. (See Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v., "medicine," p. 598; Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "emerods," p. 368.) Small wonder that the Philistines were anxious to return the ark to Israel.

The ancient Philistines were very superstitious. They, like many others during the world's history, believed that an image made to represent an actual object might be used to ward off evil powers. Such appears to have been their thinking in making golden images of the emerods and the mice and sending them as a "trespass offering" (v. 8) with the ark back to Israelite territory.

#### (24-17) 1 Samuel 6:19-21. How Many Died at Beth-shemesh When the Ark Was Returned, and Why Were They Smitten?

"Concerning the men of Beth-shemesh who were smitten for sacrilege, the Hebrew account says, 'And he smote among the people seventy men, fifty thousand men. . . .' It is not a proper Hebrew expression for 50,070. The 'fifty thousand men' appears to be an added phrase, or gloss. The septuagint and Josephus both have merely 'seventy men.'" (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:163.)

Exactly what they did to bring the curse upon them is not clear. If it was merely looking upon the ark, then one wonders why all were not smitten. Bible scholars have indicated that the Hebrew word translated *looked* actually means "to look upon or at a thing with lust or malicious pleasure" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:69). Remembering that the lid of the ark with the cherubim on it was solid gold and the ark itself was covered with gold plating (see Exodus 25:10-18), it is possible that these residents of Beth-shemesh looked upon the ark with covetous eyes, or at least upon the golden emerods and mice that were sent with it.

But whatever the specific reason for the deaths, the lesson was clear. The ark of the covenant was a physical symbol of the living presence of Jehovah. Any unholiness, whether Philistine or Israelite, was not to be tolerated.

#### (24-18) 1 Samuel 7:13. "So the Philistines Were Subdued"

Here again the remarkable contrast between Samuel and Samson is evident. Both were born of barren women through miraculous intervention; both were to be Nazarites for life. Samson, despite tremendous physical strength, did not throw off the power of the Philistines because he did not dedicate himself to the Lord. Samuel, on the other hand, did free Israel from the oppression of the Philistines because he had great spiritual strength and power.

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**(24-19) 1 Samuel 8:1. What Type of Government Did Israel Have under Samuel and Those Leaders Who Preceded Him?**

*Thearchy* or *theocracy* is government by the immediate direction of God through his ministers and representatives. A state governed in this manner is called theocracy. This was the original earthly government, Adam serving as the great presiding high priest through whom the laws of the Lord, both temporal and spiritual, were revealed and administered. This type of government apparently continued among the righteous portion of mankind from the days of Adam to Enoch and the taking of Zion to the Lord's bosom.

"The great patriarchs after the flood—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and others—appear to have had this type of government. Righteous portions of the Jaredite peoples were undoubtedly governed on this system. Certainly ancient Israel in the days of Moses and the judges operated on a theocratic basis, and the same system prevailed among the Nephite portion of Lehi's descendants during most of their long history. When Christ comes to reign personally on earth during the millennial era, a perfect theocratic government will prevail. (D. & C. 38:20–22; 58:20–22.)" (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 789.)

This type of government was the ideal. During the reign of the judges, however, the wickedness of the people in general and of certain leaders in particular largely invalidated the theocratic form of government.

**(24-20) 1 Samuel 8:3–7. What Caused the Elders of Israel to Reject Samuel As Their Judge and Leader and Desire a King?**

Samuel's sons set a poor example to the people. They turned aside from the religious truths they had learned in their youth. They used their judgeships to seek monetary gain, betraying their sacred trusts by taking bribes and giving perverted judgments. But, even more than this, the Israelites as a people had become weak and sinful and were envious of surrounding kingdoms, even though their governments were wicked and oppressive. So they used Samuel's sons as an excuse to justify their desire to be governed by the same system as the gentile nations.

"The people of Israel traced the cause of the oppression and distress, from which they had suffered more and more in the time of the judges, to the defects of their own political constitution. They wished to have a king, like all the heathen nations, to conduct their wars and conquer their enemies. Now, although the desire to be ruled by a king, which had existed in the nation even from the time of Gideon, was not in itself at variance with the appointment of Israel as a kingdom of God, yet the motive which led the people to desire it was both wrong and hostile to God, since the source of all the evils and misfortunes from which Israel suffered was to be found in the apostasy of the nation from its God, and its coquetting with the gods of the heathen. Consequently their self-willed obstinacy in demanding a king,

notwithstanding the warnings of Samuel, was an actual rejection of the sovereignty of Jehovah, since He had always manifested himself to His people as their king by delivering them out of the power of their foes, as soon as they returned to Him with simple penitence of heart." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:78.)

The Lord Himself said to Samuel, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (v. 7).

**(24-21) 1 Samuel 8:11–22. What Are the Dangers of Monarchical Government?**

Samuel warned the Israelites of three principal evils of a kingly form of government: excessive taxation (see vv. 15, 17), conscription of the labor force (see vv. 11–13, 16), and seizure of private lands (see vv. 14–15). In discussing the matter, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

"The system of kingly government itself, no matter how talented or noble an individual occupant of the throne may be, does not make the best form of government, one in which the instinctive and automatic concern of government is to look after the best interests of the body of the people. It is inherent in the nature of even the best and most ideal kingly systems that special privilege and questionable adulation be heaped upon those in the ruling class. . . .

"It is true that the Lord on occasions, in the pre-Christian Era, administered righteous and theocratic government through kings, but no such approved kingly government has existed among men for some 2000 years. Such a system, in which the king is the Lord's representative, is patterned after the true kingdom of God and is proper government, but even then the moment an unrighteous king gains the throne, the blessings and freedoms of such a system die out. As King Mosiah said, 'Because all men are not just it is not expedient that ye should have a king or kings to rule over you. For behold, *how much iniquity doth one wicked king cause to be committed, yea, and what great destruction!*' (Mosiah 29.) Pending the day in which He shall again reign, whose right it is, the saints are obliged to be subject to the powers that be." (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 414–15.)

**(24-22) 1 Samuel 9:1–17. What Kind of Person Was Saul before He Was Called to Be King?**

The scriptures indicate that "there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he" (v. 2). The word *goodly* seems to indicate many of the qualities that made Saul a logical candidate to be Israel's first king. All that the Bible reveals indicates that Saul was honest, reliable, considerate of his parents, and altogether a very promising person for the great task ahead.

*Goodly* also described Saul's physical attributes. In this regard, Saul was potentially the hero and man of valour all Israel sought. He was about a foot taller than those of his generation. Yet subsequent events show that the Lord was teaching Israel a lesson about people and about kings when He chose Saul.

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For the Lord certainly knew the end of this thing from the beginning, as He does in all things. Though Saul had, at first, a great regard for the law of Moses and for God, yet “the consciousness of his own power, coupled with the energy of his character, led him astray into an incautious disregard of the commands of God; his zeal in the prosecution of his plans hurried him on to reckless and violent measures; and success in his undertakings heightened his ambition into a haughty rebellion against the Lord, the God-king of Israel.” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:79.)

#### **(24-23) 1 Samuel 9:9-27**

A *seer* is one who has the ability to see the future—he is literally a “see-er.” As explained in the Book of Mormon, seers are men who possess the power to “know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come” (Mosiah 8:17). They do this in some cases with the aid of the Urim and Thummim. The possession of these instruments in ancient times made a righteous man a seer (see Mosiah 8:13-18; 28:10-16). It is in this connection, then, that a seer is greater than a prophet (see Mosiah 8:15). The means by which Samuel identified Saul is evidence of Samuel’s gift of seership. Members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are sustained and ordained as prophets, seers, and revelators.

#### **(24-24) 1 Samuel 9:20. Did Israel Desire Saul to Be Their King?**

This verse may be taken to mean that Saul, as the king-to-be, was the embodiment of what Israel desired even though as yet they did not know he would be their king. It also could mean, however, that his size, comeliness, and other qualities were well known and that his name was being talked about as one possibility for king.

#### **(24-25) 1 Samuel 10:1. What Was the Significance of the Ordinance of Anointing Saul?**

Anointing with oil in priesthood service is as old as Adam. And, since the Lord set up the kingdom of Israel and revealed the laws that were to govern their kings, it was altogether fitting that these kings be anointed with oil.

“Anointing with oil was a symbol of endowment with the Spirit of God; as the oil itself, by virtue of the strength which it gives to the vital spirits, was a symbol of the Spirit of God as the principle of divine and spiritual power [see Leviticus 8:12]. Hitherto there had been no other anointing among the people of God than that of the priests and sanctuary [see Exodus 30:23-38; Leviticus 8:10-36]. When Saul, therefore, was consecrated as king by anointing, the monarchy was inaugurated as a divine institution, . . . through which henceforth the Lord would also bestow upon His people the gifts of His Spirit for the building up of His kingdom. As the priests were consecrated by anointing to be the media of the ethical blessings of divine grace for Israel, so the king was consecrated by anointing to be the vehicle and

medium of all the blessings of grace which the Lord, as the God-king, would confer upon His people through the institution of a civil government.

Through this anointing, which was performed by Samuel under the direction of God, the king was set apart from the rest of the nation as ‘anointed of the Lord.’” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:95.)

But Samuel anointed Saul to be “captain” even though he was later called king (see 1 Samuel 10:1). This title should have served as a reminder that the Lord was still king.

#### **(24-26) 1 Samuel 10:25**

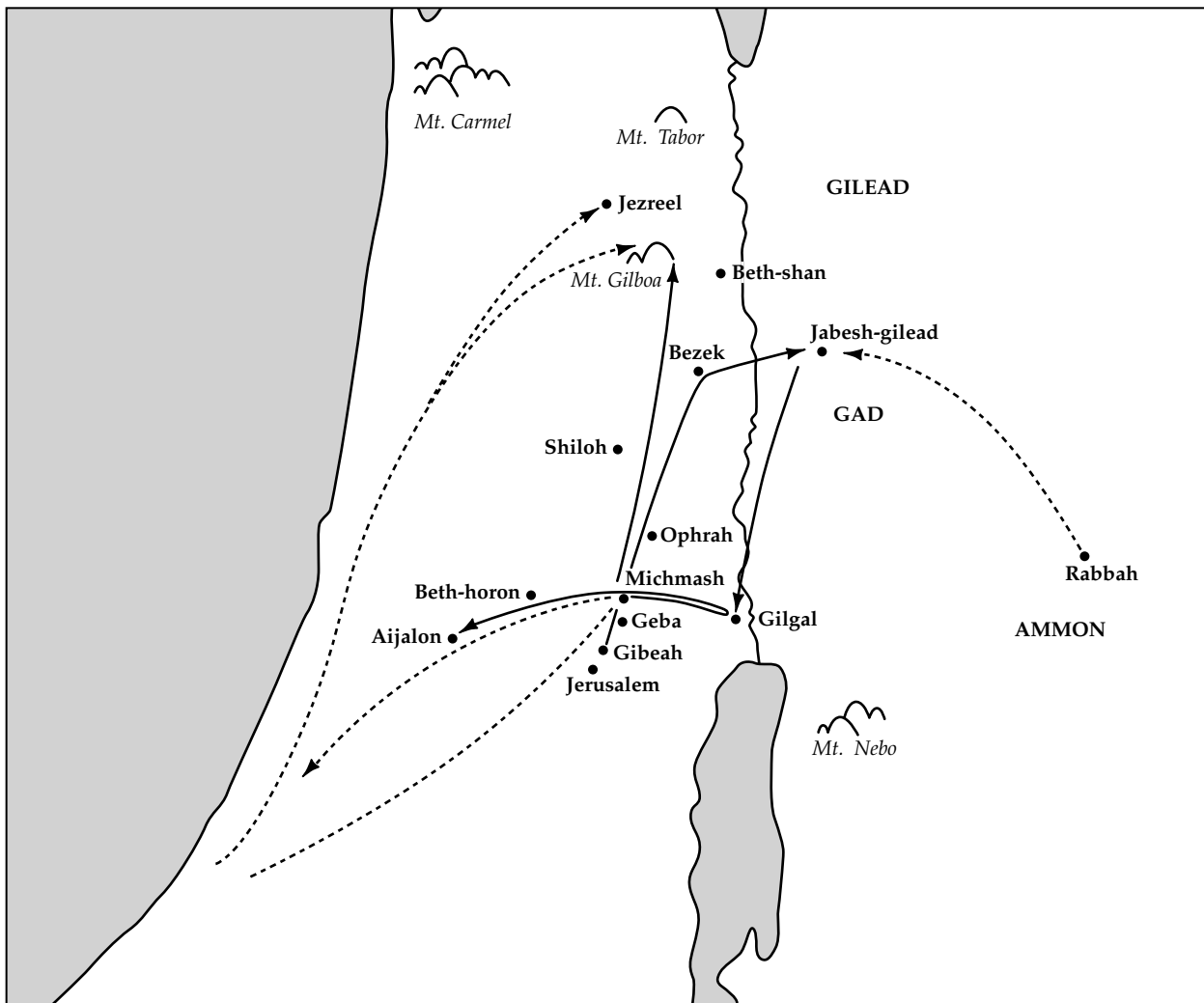
Several books are mentioned in the Old Testament which are not a part of the present canon of scripture. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

“Reference is made in both the Old and New Testaments to books and epistles which are not now available. These include: Book of the Covenant (Ex. 24:4, 7); Book of the Wars of the Lord (Num. 21:14); Book of Jasher (Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18); A Book of Statutes (1 Sam. 10:25); Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41); Books of Nathan and Gad (1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29); Prophecy of Ahijah and Visions of Iddo (2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22); Book of Shemaiah (2 Chron. 12:15); Book of Jehu (2 Chron. 20:34); Acts of Uzziah, written by Isaiah (2 Chron. 26:22); Sayings of the Seers (2 Chron. 33:19); an epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5:9); an epistle of Paul to the Ephesians (Eph. 3:3); an epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16); Epistle of Jude (Jude 3); and the Prophecies of Enoch (Jude 14).” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 454.)

Certainly the standard works do not contain all that God has ever spoken to His children, and those who say that the Bible is all there is are mistaken. The Book of Mormon itself does not contain “even a hundredth part” of all that Mormon had at his disposal to make his abridgment (3 Nephi 5:8; see also vv. 9-11).

#### **(24-27) 1 Samuel 11**

Nahash, king of the Ammonites, and his army attacked the tribes on the east of the Jordan. No doubt he intended to enforce the claim to a part of Gilead asserted by his ancestor in the time of Jephthah (see Judges 11:13). In desperation, the men of Jabesh-gilead appealed for help from the tribes west of the Jordan. Even though Saul had been officially appointed king, the tribes seem still to have remained in their independent and self-governed state. Some even seem to have rejected Saul as king (see 1 Samuel 11:12). At this critical time Saul was at his finest. He slew his oxen and sent the pieces thereof to every tribe to dramatize that this crisis called for a united Israel (see v. 7). He joined his authority with that of Samuel in the message. Under this leadership, the armies of Israel dealt a stunning defeat to the Ammonites, and Saul gave all credit to the Lord (see v. 13). The victory provided the catalyst for uniting the tribes into one nation for the first time. So strong was the support for Saul that some suggested that those who had earlier



Saul's campaign

questioned his right to rule be put to death. Saul rejected this proposal.

The ceremony at Gilgal was a wise move on Samuel's part and helped formalize the popular acceptance of Saul after his great victory.

**(24-28) 1 Samuel 12**

This chapter contains Samuel's testimony of the manner in which the Lord had blessed Israel from the first. Samuel reminded the people that the Lord had always been just in His dealings with them and told them that they should likewise deal justly with one another. He then recalled the times when Israel had forgotten the Lord and experienced great calamity. He urged them to serve the Lord lest an even greater calamity overtake them.

**(24-29) 1 Samuel 13:5. Were There Actually Thirty Thousand Philistine Chariots Prepared for Battle with the Israelites?**

The Bible says that there were thirty thousand chariots, but this figure is believed to be an error in

transcription. One prominent Bible scholar discussed the problem and gave the opinion that the correct figure is three thousand (see Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:247). Errors of this sort arose out of translation problems and perhaps also the exaggeration of later scribes who took it upon themselves to add to the record, thinking that they were adding to the glory of Israel. (For further information, see Enrichment Section E, "The Problem of Large Numbers in the Old Testament.")

**(24-30) 1 Samuel 13:5-14. Why Did Saul Seek to Assume Samuel's Priesthood Duties?**

It was not long before Saul began to have an exaggerated opinion of his power and importance. This tendency is natural to men who forget the Lord and trust in themselves. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion" (D&C 121:39). It is true that this was a time of great

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crisis. The Philistines were amassed in great strength and the people were deserting from Saul's army (see 1 Samuel 13:6). When Samuel was late in coming, Saul took things into his own hands and offered the sacrifices. This action was a great sin.

"Think also of Saul who had been called from the field to be made king of the nation. When the Philistines were marshalled against Israel in Michmash, Saul waited for Samuel, under whose hand he had received his kingly anointing and to whom he had looked in the days of his humility for guidance; he asked that the prophet come and offer sacrifices to the Lord in behalf of the people. But, growing impatient at Samuel's delay, Saul prepared the burnt offering himself, forgetting that though he occupied the throne, wore the crown, and bore the scepter, these insignia of kingly power gave him no right to officiate even as a deacon in the Priesthood of God; and for this and other instances of his unrighteous presumption he was rejected of God and another was made king in his place." (Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, pp. 184–85.)

The circumstances were critical, but one of the purposes of mortality is to demonstrate that one will remain faithful and obedient under all circumstances (see D&C 98:14–15). Saul failed that test and thereby lost his right to be God's representative of the people.

#### **(24-31) 1 Samuel 13:19–21. Why Was There "No Smith" in Israel?**

Scholars believe that at this time the Israelites did not know how to work with iron. The Philistines guarded the secret carefully to maintain superiority in weapons over the softer brass weapons of the Israelites. As a result, the Israelites did not have the superior chariots of iron, nor could they manufacture swords and spears of iron. The other instruments mentioned, "share," "coultter," "axe," "mattock," and "goad," had to be taken to the Philistines for sharpening. A *share* was a metal instrument used to plough the ground, and a *coultter* was a small garden hoe used to loosen the earth and weed the soil. A *mattock* was an Egyptian hoe or grubbing axe, and a *goad* was a sharp rod about eight feet long used to prod stubborn animals.

#### **(24-32) 1 Samuel 14:15. What Were "Spoilers" among the Philistines?**

In the armies of ancient times, certain men were assigned to go out and destroy crops, homes, barns, cattle, and so forth. Their prime purpose was not to take human life, but to make living difficult for the civilian population who supported the military (see Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:249).

#### **(24-33) 1 Samuel 14:1–15**

These verses give insights into the character of Jonathan, son of Saul, a young man of great faith in God (see vv. 6, 10). The venture into the Philistine camp was not foolhardy but was based on faith and courage.

#### **(24-34) 1 Samuel 14:19–46. Why did Saul Try to Kill Jonathan?**

Saul again foolishly sought to win a battle against the Philistines by attempting to gain the Lord's intervening power in an unapproved way. The courageous attack of Jonathan and his armor-bearer on the camp of the Philistines suddenly altered the circumstances of the battle. The Philistines were thrown into disarray, and even the men who had hid themselves came forth now to join the battle (see v. 22).

In the heat of the battle, Saul had compelled his men to swear with an oath that they would fast all that day. This restriction put the men in distress, for their fasting added the weakness of hunger to the fatigue of battle. (See v. 24.)

"This command of Saul did not proceed from a proper attitude towards the Lord, but was an act of false zeal, in which Saul had more regard to himself and his own kingly power than to the cause of the kingdom of Jehovah, as we may see at once from the expression . . . 'till I have avenged *myself* upon mine enemies.'" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:142.)

Two unfortunate incidents resulted from Saul's command to fast. First, Jonathan, who had been in the camp of the Philistines at the time Saul made his army swear not to eat, violated the oath by partaking of some wild honey (see vv. 25–27). When told about the oath, Jonathan frankly said that his father had done a foolish thing. Since his own strength had been revived by the food, he wondered aloud how much greater the victory would have been if the people had been allowed to eat instead of fighting in a state of physical exhaustion (see vv. 28–30).

The second unfortunate incident occurred later that same day when the people, faint with hunger, fell upon the animals captured from the Philistines and "did eat them with the blood" (v. 32). The animals were not properly killed to drain out their blood, which violated the Mosaic law (see Leviticus 17:10–14).

Saul immediately sought to make atonement for this violation by offering sacrifices to the Lord (see vv. 33–35). But when he sought revelation from the Lord about whether to go against the Philistines, no answer came (see vv. 36–37). Saul concluded that some other sin of the people was the cause of the lack of response from the Lord. He then directed that all the people be gathered together to meet him and Jonathan, swearing with an oath that the guilty party would be put to death. To dramatize his determination to carry through with his threat, Saul indicated he would even put his own son to death if he were proven guilty (see v. 39), quite unaware that it was indeed Jonathan who would be facing death.

"What Jonathan had done was not wrong in itself, but became so simply on account of the oath with which Saul had forbidden it. But Jonathan did not hear the oath, and therefore had not even consciously transgressed. . . . In the present instance, Saul had issued the prohibition without divine authority, and had made it obligatory upon the people by a

solemn oath. The people had conscientiously obeyed the command, but Jonathan had transgressed it without being aware of it. For this Saul was about to punish him with death, in order to keep his oath. But the people opposed it. They not only pronounced Jonathan innocent, because he had broken the king's command unconsciously, but they also exclaimed that he had gained the victory for Israel *'with God.'* In this fact (Jonathan's victory) there was a divine verdict. And Saul could not fail to recognise now, that it was not Jonathan, but he himself, who had sinned, and through his arbitrary and despotic command had brought guilt upon Israel, on account of which God had given him no reply." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:146–47.)

### (24-35) 1 Samuel 15:2–35

The Amalekites were old Israelite enemies, and their punishment had long been foretold (see Exodus 17:8–16; Deuteronomy 25:17–19). Saul's failure to carry out the word of God with exactness and honor caused the Lord to reject him as the king of Israel (see vv. 11, 26). (*Note:* The references to the Lord's repenting [vv. 11, 35] were corrected by the Prophet Joseph Smith; see JST, 1 Samuel 15:29.) Saul's excuse that he had saved the best to sacrifice was simply not acceptable, even if it were true. As Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice. . . . For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (2 Samuel 15:22–23). The root of Saul's problem is here revealed (see v. 17). Saul had been called because of his humility ("thou wast little in thine own sight"; v. 17); now he trusted in his own wisdom and did not look to God.

Saul's repentance (see vv. 24–25) was too late and very short-lived. This second violation was essentially the same sin of disobedience he had been guilty of before (see 1 Samuel 13:8–14). Had Saul's repentance been deep and sincere, the second incident would never have happened. As the Lord warned in modern times, "But unto that soul who sinneth [after the Lord has forgiven him] shall the former sins return" (D&C 82:7).

## POINTS TO PONDER

(24-36) The Old Testament provides many remarkable contrasts and practical lessons. Answer the following questions as you consider the lives of the people discussed in this part of the Old Testament:

1. Peninnah, the other wife of Elkanah, probably sensed her husband's special love for Hannah and resented it. Perhaps that is why she kept reminding Hannah of her barrenness and "provoked her" (1 Samuel 1:7). One can sympathize with Peninnah's jealousy, but could she have been in any way responsible for the situation with her husband? Would it have been easier to love Hannah or Peninnah? Have you ever been guilty of blaming someone else for problems that lie at least partly within yourself? What kind of counsel would you have given Peninnah in this situation?

2. What are the first indications that Eli had lost the power of discernment? (see 1 Samuel 1:12–14). Is it unfair to suppose that Eli should have been able to discern that Hannah was not a drunken woman? Read Doctrine and Covenants 46:27 before answering. As high priest, Eli was the equivalent of the Presiding Bishop today. Does this modern-day scripture apply to him?

3. King Benjamin taught that if one seeks to repay the debt he owes to God by living righteously, one is further blessed for his obedience and thus can never repay God (see Mosiah 2:23–24). How was this principle true of Hannah? (see 1 Samuel 1:24–28; 2:21).

4. In modern times, the Lord warned some leaders of the Church that certain problems in their spiritual lives were traceable to their family problems. Read Doctrine and Covenants 93:38–50. How does this counsel apply to Eli?

5. How was Eli's sin in tolerating the wickedness of Hophni and Phinehas compounded by the fact that he was both their father and the high priest? Read Leviticus 21:9–23; Deuteronomy 21:18–21.

6. It is obvious that Eli did not condone the evil behavior of his sons (see 1 Samuel 2:22–24). What, then, was his problem and why did the Lord curse him and his family? (see 1 Samuel 2:29; 3:13).

7. Have you ever asked yourself, Why Samuel? Why not Eli? Eli was also in the house that night when the Lord spoke, as undoubtedly were Phinehas and Hophni. Would they have understood the voice if they had heard it? How is this situation similar to that of Laman and Lemuel? (see 1 Nephi 17:45).

8. Elder Harold B. Lee reminded us that a certain amount of spiritual preparation is necessary before we can receive divine communications. He said, "The Lord will bring us his blessings to that extent that we have diligence in keeping his commandments. Each of you, in other words, must stand on your own feet if you will receive the great blessings which the Almighty has in store for you. . . .

"Stand upon your own feet, so the Lord can speak to you. In humility be prepared to say with Paul, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me do?' And with dauntless courage say with the boy Samuel 'Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth.' Be humble, be prayerful and the Lord will take you by the hand, as it were, and give you answer to your prayers." (*"But Arise and Stand upon Thy Feet"—and I Will Speak with Thee*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, Provo, 7 Feb. 1956, pp. 7, 11.)

What evidence do you find in 1 Samuel 3–8 that Samuel did more than just hear the Lord that night in the tabernacle? Note Elder Lee's first sentence. Do you find that requirement in Samuel's life? (see 1 Samuel 12:1–5).

9. How were Saul and Samuel alike in their early years? (see 1 Samuel 9:2, 21; 10:6, 9–13). What made the difference later? (see especially 1 Samuel 13:13–14; 15:17).



# King David's Call to Lead Israel

## (25-1) Introduction

Who's on the Lord's side? Who?  
 Now is the time to show;  
 We ask it fearlessly:  
 Who's on the Lord's side? Who?  
 (*Hymns*, no. 260.)

David's actions showed that his answer to such a question would have been a hearty "I am!" Arriving at the battlefield at a time when the haughty giant Goliath had openly challenged Israel to send a man to fight him, David boldly volunteered to accept Goliath's challenge. When accused of pride, the future king of Israel asked his oldest brother, "Is there not a cause?" (1 Samuel 17:29).

Many young people of today are great joiners. They attach themselves to this or that organization or group because they wish to make the world a better place. They need a purpose for living, a reason to be—they need a cause.

Young David, shepherd boy of Israel, had a cause. And this cause was emphasized when Samuel, the Lord's prophet, anointed David to be a future king of Israel. Throughout his early life, David stayed close to the Lord. In all his military ventures, in the face of threats against his life, and despite numerous opportunities to slay Saul, David was true to his chosen cause. "And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him" (1 Samuel 18:14).

And what of today? Have we a cause? Indeed we have! We found that cause when we gained our testimonies of the true gospel and of the value of citizenship in the kingdom of God.

"I declare with all my soul—there is a cause! It is a cause worth giving one's life for. It is the cause of righteousness. It is a cause that every youth in this Church should rally to as he declares war on Satan and his legions. As David said to Goliath, so each youth should declare to Satan, 'Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.' (1 Sam. 17:45.)" (Victor L. Brown, "Is There Not a Cause?" *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, p. 104.)

There is a cause! That cause is the Lord's!

## Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study 1 Samuel 16–31.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON 1 SAMUEL 16–31

### (25-2) 1 Samuel 16:1–13

These verses contain the Lord's directions to His prophet in the selection of a new king. Note the Lord's special counsel in verse 7. Mortals tend to see the outward appearance, but the Lord has the power to look to the very depths of men and things. The "horn of oil" was probably a ram's horn filled with olive oil and used to anoint those chosen of the Lord (v. 13; see also v. 1).

### (25-3) 1 Samuel 16:14–23. Did the Lord Really Send an Evil Spirit to Trouble Saul?

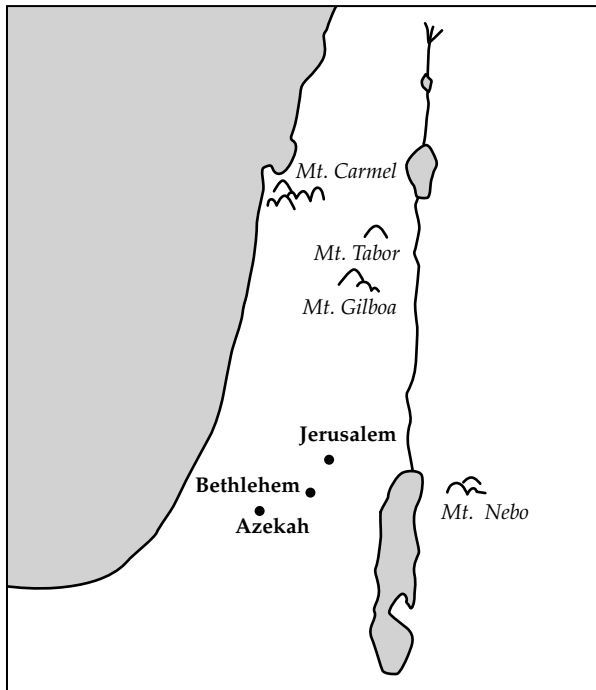
Evil spirits are not sent by God, nor does God give revelations through the evil spirits which sometimes trouble men. He cast these evil spirits out of heaven long ago for their rebellion against Him. The Joseph Smith Translation corrects this passage to say, "An evil spirit which was *not* of the Lord troubled him" (JST, 1 Samuel 16:14; emphasis added). Recorded here are the first effects of Saul's rejection of the Lord. More and more Saul failed to find peace with himself until at last he became a miserable, guilt-ridden man.

### (25-4) 1 Samuel 17:1–3. Where Is the Valley of Elah Located?

Descending from the hill country of Judah toward the Mediterranean Sea are numerous valleys or wadis. One of these is the Valley of Elah, in which David's battle with Goliath occurred near Azekah in the Shephelah or low-lying hills (see 1 Samuel 17:1). The accompanying map shows the Valley of Elah almost directly west and a little south of Jerusalem.



The Valley of Elah



Azekah in the Valley of Elah

**(25-5) 1 Samuel 17:4. “And There Went Out a Champion . . . Named Goliath”**

“Our word *champion* comes from *campus*, the field; . . . ‘*Champion* is he, properly, who fights in the field; i.e., in *camps*.’ A man well skilled in arms, strong, brave, and patriotic.

“But is this the meaning of the original . . . *ish habbenayim*, a *middle man*, the *man between two*; that is, as here, the *man who undertakes to settle the disputes between two armies or nations*. So our ancient *champions* settled disputes between *contending parties* by what was termed *camp fight*; hence the *campio* or *champion*.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:261.)

Although it seems peculiar in this day of modern warfare, in ancient times it was not unusual for opposing armies, which were generally quite small, to select one representative from each side to fight a personal contest. The outcome of that contest determined the winner of the battle. (Compare this verse with 2 Samuel 2:12–17, in which is recorded a similar choosing of representatives to battle for each side.

**(25-6) 1 Samuel 17:4–11. How Big Was Goliath and How Heavy Was His Armor?**

According to this passage, Goliath’s height was six cubits and a span. The most widely accepted opinion of the length of a cubit is about eighteen inches or, roughly, the distance from the elbow to the tip of the extended middle finger. A span is said to be one-half the distance from the thumb to the end of the little finger when the fingers are spread as wide as possible. These measurements would make the height of Goliath approximately nine feet, nine inches! It is not

too surprising that the Philistines would have picked such a champion or that no man in Israel wanted to be Saul’s champion.

It is unusual that anyone today is over seven feet tall, but it is commonly believed there were men in ancient times whose height far exceeded seven feet. There are references in the scriptures to giants in the earlier periods of history: in the time of Enoch (see Moses 7:15), in the days of Noah (see Moses 8:18; Genesis 6:4), and in the time of the Israelites (see Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 2:10–11; Joshua 15:8). Called *Anakim* (meaning “long-necked” or “tall” in Hebrew) by the Israelites, this race of giants seems to have been virtually destroyed in the conquest of Canaan under Joshua (see Joshua 11:21). In fact, it is recorded that none of the Anakim were left except in Gaza, Ashdod, and Gath (see Joshua 11:22), which was Goliath’s hometown (see 1 Samuel 17:4).

Experts have estimated the weight of Goliath’s armor to be about 150 pounds (see Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:261). A weaver’s beam is a strong, thick piece of wood on which thread is strung in preparation for weaving. The weight of Goliath’s spearhead has been estimated from twelve to twenty-six pounds, depending on which authority is consulted and what weight he selects for a shekel. (See the table on weights and measures in Maps and Charts.) A greave is a protective piece of armor that fits on the front of the leg and extends from just below the knee to the ankle.

**(25-7) 1 Samuel 17:12–20**

These verses are a brief flashback that bring young David into the story once again. Even though he was Saul’s armor-bearer, young David, unlike the fighting men, was evidently permitted to leave the battlefield and return home from time to time.

**(25-8) 1 Samuel 17:17**

The ephah was a dry measure roughly equivalent to three fifths of a United States bushel, or about 22 liters. (See the table on weights and measures in Maps and Charts.)

**(25-9) 1 Samuel 17:20–51. “I Come to Thee in the Name of the Lord of Hosts”**

The story of David and Goliath is so well known that some readers take David’s courage for granted. But his courage was not born of self-confidence alone, although he did believe in his own skills in battle. As a young shepherd, he had much practice at slinging stones. It was an effective way both to keep wolves and other vicious animals away from the sheep and to attract the attention of straying sheep and drive them back to pasture. As a result of his experience, David had confidence in his skills, but the true source of his courage was faith in the power of the living God. In fact, the contrast between David and the other Israelites was as great in terms of faith as in courage. David was incensed that “this uncircumcised Philistine [one not of the covenant but of the world] . . . should defy the armies of the living

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God" (v. 26). There was no similar anger in the men of Israel, only a quaking fear because of Goliath's size and strength. And David's answer to Goliath's laugh of derision at the unprotected boy who came out to accept the challenge provides a classic study in faith as well as in courage. "Thou comest to me," he said to Goliath, "with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts. . . . This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand, . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. . . . for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands" (vv. 45-47).

#### **(25-10) 1 Samuel 17:49. The Shepherd's Bag and Sling**

Shepherds of David's time carried a sling and a small leather or woolen wallet or bag in which food or stones could be carried to the place where the sheep grazed. In the King James Version of the Bible, this bag is called a scrip. When Jesus sent His disciples forth without purse or scrip (see Luke 10:4), they went without a bag in which to keep money or food. David used his shepherd's scrip to hold the stones he obtained from the brook.

Slings were made from various materials, the most common being leather. Hair, wool, animal sinews, or rushes were used to make the pouch that held the stones. The pouch had strings attached on each side and was whirled until a certain speed was reached. When one string was released, the stone was hurled from the pouch toward its mark. Any variation from perfect roundness affected the accuracy of a stone. Uniform weight and size of the stones were also important. Anciently, slingers, particularly shepherds with time on their hands, developed great accuracy and skill in slinging stones. When not in use, the slings were carried by shepherds around their foreheads or waists.

Slings were used fairly commonly in the ancient Near East. The Israelites, who did not often use chariots in war, employed many trained slingers. The same was true of peoples from surrounding areas.

#### **(25-11) 1 Samuel 17:52-58**

These verses might lead the reader to conclude that Saul, who had met David before, did not know who he was. Saul's inquiry of Abner about who David was merely means, "Who is this lad of such skill and courage? Obviously, he does more than play the harp. Who is his father? From what kind of family did he come? Where did he get such courage? Is this really the boy who has been with us all this time?"

#### **(25-12) 1 Samuel 18**

Once again weaknesses in Saul's character began to manifest themselves. He was jealous of David's newly won popularity (see vv. 6-8, 16). Verse 10 in the Joseph Smith Translation again makes it clear that the evil spirit Saul possessed was *not* from God.

Saul tried two ways to do away with David (see vv. 10-11; 21-25). But although Saul was jealous of David's growing popularity with the people, there was no indication yet that he knew that David had been anointed to be his successor.

Although the people of Israel celebrated the prowess of David in warfare, the Lord later indicated that because of his great wars, David was not allowed to build the temple. The privilege was given to his son, Solomon (see 1 Chronicles 22:8).

#### **(25-13) 1 Samuel 19:1-11**

Jonathan, Saul's son, was one of the most noble men of ancient Israel. He could have seen David as a threat, as Saul did, since the oldest son generally succeeded to the kingship. But instead, Jonathan assisted David, even helping him to escape from Saul. Truly Jonathan loved David "as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1).

#### **(25-14) 1 Samuel 19:13. What Is a "Pillow of Goats' Hair" for a "Bolster"?**

A bolster is a long pillow or cushion used to prop the head or back while a person sleeps. This bolster was stuffed with or made from goat's hair.

#### **(25-15) 1 Samuel 19:18-24. Samuel and the School of the Prophets**

After David escaped from Saul through the help of his wife, Michal, Saul sent messengers to kill him. But David had sought refuge with Samuel in what scholars called "Schools of the Prophets" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:199). These scholars showed that such prophets as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha conducted special schools that were called here "the company of the prophets" (v. 20). Elsewhere, the men who attended these schools were called "sons of the prophets" (1 Kings 20:35). This fact is of interest to Latter-day Saints because Joseph Smith set up a similar school in Kirtland, Ohio, to help teach priesthood holders their special duties.

When the messengers from Saul and finally Saul himself came, they came under the influence of the Spirit, and thus David's life was spared. The fact that the people said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (v. 24) is explained this way:

Saul "threw off his royal robes or military dress, retaining only his *tunic*; and continued so all that day and all that night, uniting with the sons of the prophets in *prayers, singing praises*, and other *religious exercises*, which were unusual to kings and warriors; and this gave rise to the saying, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* By bringing both him and his men thus under a Divine influence, God prevented them from injuring the person of David." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:274.)

This remarkable event has a parallel in latter-day Church history. During his mission to Great Britain, Elder Wilford Woodruff was delivered from the hands of government authorities through the influence of the Spirit.

“When I arose to speak at Brother Benbow’s house, a man entered the door and informed me that he was a constable, and had been sent by the rector of the parish with a warrant to arrest me. I asked him, ‘For what crime?’ He said, ‘For preaching to the people.’ I told him that I, as well as the rector, had a license for preaching the gospel to the people, and that if he would take a chair I would wait upon him after meeting. He took my chair and sat beside me. For an hour and a quarter I preached the first principles of the everlasting gospel. The power of God rested upon me, the spirit filled the house, and the people were convinced. At the close of the meeting I opened the door for baptism, and seven offered themselves. Among the number were four preachers and the constable. The latter arose and said, ‘Mr. Woodruff, I would like to be baptized.’ I told him I would like to baptize him. I went down into the pool and baptized the seven. We then came together. I confirmed thirteen, administered the Sacrament, and we all rejoiced together.

“The constable went to the rector and told him that if he wanted Mr. Woodruff taken for preaching the gospel, he must go himself and serve the writ; for he had heard him preach the only true gospel sermon he had ever listened to in his life. The rector did not know what to make of it, so he sent two clerks of the Church of England as spies, to attend our meeting, and find out what we did preach. They both were pricked in their hearts, received the word of the Lord gladly, and were baptized and confirmed members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The rector became alarmed, and did not venture to send anybody else.” (In Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, p. 118.)

#### (25-16) 1 Samuel 20

David needed to know Saul’s disposition toward him before he could safely remain at court as Saul had ordered (see 1 Samuel 16:22; 18:2). A sacrifice and a feast at every new moon (see v. 5; Numbers 10:10; 28:11) afforded Jonathan a perfect opportunity to inquire into the matter. Jonathan’s brotherly love for David remained firm, even in the face of his father’s wrath.

#### (25-17) 1 Samuel 20:26

Saul’s reference to David’s possible uncleanness refers to the requirement in the Mosaic law that one be ceremoniously cleansed, if needs be, before attending a holy feast. He assumed David was absent because he had not been able to meet the ceremonial requirements.

#### (25-18) 1 Samuel 20:30. Why Did Saul Insult Jonathan’s Mother?

In his anger Saul cursed his wife as being responsible for Jonathan’s rebellious disloyalty in being faithful to David rather than being faithful to his own father. Saul was falling deeper and deeper into evil and withdrawing further and further from the Spirit. Even his own children, first Michal and

then Jonathan, supported David because they knew their father’s hatred was unjustified.

#### (25-19) 1 Samuel 20:40

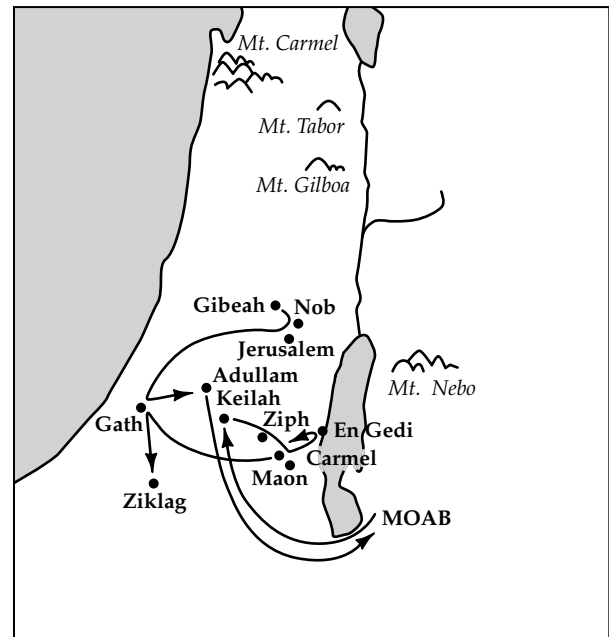
Anciently, artillery was any weapon that cast a projectile, in this case, an arrow. Jonathan handed his servant his bow and arrows and told him to return to the city.

#### (25-20) 1 Samuel 20:41. What Does “David Exceeded” Mean?

Both men were tearful at their parting, but David’s distress exceeded that of Jonathan. Saul had taken David’s wife Michal and given her to another (see 1 Samuel 25:44), and David was now banished from access to the tabernacle and the rituals of sacrifice because he was forced to hide from Saul. He had to live among the Philistines and send his parents to live among the Moabites for protection (see 1 Samuel 22:3–4). Thus, “David’s distress must, in the nature of things, be the *greatest*. Besides his friend Jonathan, whom he was now about to lose for ever, he lost his wife, relatives, country; and, what was most afflictive, the altars of his God, and the ordinances of religion.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:277.)

#### (25-21) 1 Samuel 21–24

These chapters recount the flight of David from King Saul. The map given here shows the locations to which David went seeking safety.



*David eluding Saul*

#### (25-22) 1 Samuel 21:1–5

David’s partaking of the shewbread, which was reserved only for the priests (see Reading 13-7), was technically a violation of the Mosaic law. Jesus,



Possible site of the cave of Adullam where David hid from Saul

however, used this incident to show that in times of dire necessity a breach of the ritual law was not a sin (see Matthew 12:1–8). As Paul said, “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Corinthians 3:6).

**(25-23) 1 Samuel 22:1–2**

The constant desertion from Saul to David eventually reached such proportions that David’s army became “a great host, like the host of God,” or Saul’s army (1 Chronicles 12:22; see also 12:1–7, 16–21).

**(25-24) 1 Samuel 22:3–4**

Although the king of Moab was no particular friend to Israel, his primary hatred was of Saul. Thus, the Moabite king gave refuge to David’s parents. David’s arrangement for the safety of his parents was simply a precautionary step in case Saul decided to punish them or torture them into revealing their son’s whereabouts.

**(25-25) 1 Samuel 22:5–19**

Again Saul evidenced weakness, his greatest to date. He murdered innocent persons who knew nothing of his problems with David.

**(25-26) 1 Samuel 24:10. “I Will Not Put Forth Mine Hand against . . . the Lord’s Anointed”**

This chapter exhibits an aspect of David’s character that is much to be admired. Although anointed by God’s prophet to be king of Israel, and although Saul constantly sought his life, this chosen servant of the Lord still would not lift his hand against Saul so long as Saul lived (see vv. 5–6). David understood an important priesthood principle, that is, that one has loyalty to those called by the Lord to preside even when they may not function perfectly in their calling. Saul was failing miserably, but David knew that it was the Lord’s responsibility to remove Saul, not his.

**(25-27) 1 Samuel 25:22**

The phrase used by David when he threatened the destruction of Nabal is shocking to modern readers. Today the word is used only in profanity, but such was not the case when the King James Version was translated. The phrase was a Hebrew idiom used several times in the Bible that meant “every male” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:242). Thus, David threatened not only to kill Nabal himself but also to destroy completely all that was his. The same idea occurs in modern revelation but without the offensive expression (see D&C 121:15).

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**(25-28) 1 Samuel 25:29**

Abigail used beautiful images here, one having to do with a bundle and the other with a sling. Abigail was simply saying that David's life, bound up as it was with God, was precious and would be spared, while the lives of his enemies would be flung from David and from God as a rock is flung from a sling.

**(25-29) 1 Samuel 25:37. "His Heart Died within Him and Became as Stone"**

This statement was a way of saying that Nabal was terrified to think of what he had narrowly escaped only because David heeded his wife's plea. He may have suffered a stroke or heart attack because of the shock.

**(25-30) 1 Samuel 25:42-44**

David married two women about this time, Saul having given Michal, David's first wife, to another man (see v. 4). Although Abigail is mentioned here before Ahinoam, the latter was the mother of David's oldest son, Amnon, and is always listed first when his wives are named (see Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:291).

**(25-31) 1 Samuel 26**

This chapter details David's second refusal to kill King Saul, although it would have been a simple thing to do. As proof, David took the king's spear and bottle of water, carried them to the other side of the ravine, and then chided Abner, the king's captain, for his failure to protect the king. Once again the character of David shone forth. When David said, "The Lord render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness" (v. 23), he was asking the Lord to judge his works as compared to Saul's works.

"There is a vast deal of dignity in this speech of David, arising from a consciousness of his own innocence. He neither begs his life from Saul, nor offers one argument to prevail upon him to desist from his felonious attempts, but refers the whole matter to God, as the judge and vindicator of oppressed innocence. Saul himself is speechless, except in the simple acknowledgment of his sin; and in the behalf of their king not one of his officers has one word to say! It is strange that none of them offered now to injure the person of David; but they saw that he was most evidently under the guardian care of God, and that their master was apparently abandoned by him. Saul invites David to *return*, but David knew the uncertainty of Saul's character too well to trust himself in the power of this infatuated king. How foolish are the counsels of men against God! When he undertakes to save, who can destroy? And who can deliver out of his hands?" (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:294.)

From this time on Saul stopped hunting David to seek his life (see 1 Samuel 27:4).

**(25-32) 1 Samuel 27:10**

"Whither have ye made a road today" is another way of saying "Where have you been today?" It seems likely that David had been out among the enemies of Israel (see v. 8) and had taken spoils from them to support his army who were with him at Ziklag. Although many commentators condemn this action by David, it should be noted that he was fulfilling God's commandment given to Moses and Joshua to utterly destroy the Canaanites when Israel first came to the promised land (see Reading 19-15 for the reasons this destruction was required by the Lord).

**(25-33) 1 Samuel 28:3-14. Why Did Saul Use a Familiar Spirit?**

Mention has been made before of what it meant in ancient Israel to have a familiar spirit (see Reading 16-5). Saul, now devoid of spiritual sensitivity because of his wickedness and unable to get an answer from the Lord "neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (v. 6), sought out a medium, a witch, one who claimed to be able to communicate with those in the world of spirits. It was the act of a desperate man.

"Those religionists who attempt and frequently attain communion (as they suppose) with departed spirits are called *spiritualists*. Their doctrine and belief that mediums and other mortals can actually hold intercourse with the spirits of the dead is called *spiritualism*. Such communion, if and when it occurs, is manifest by means of physical phenomena, such as so-called spirit-rappings, or during abnormal mental states, such as in trances. These communions are commonly arranged and shown forth through the instrumentality of *mediums*. . . .

". . . No matter how sincerely mediums may be deceived into thinking they are following a divinely approved pattern, they are in fact turning to an evil source 'for the living to hear from the dead.' Those who are truly spiritually inclined know this by personal revelation from the true Spirit; further, the information revealed from spirits through mediums is not according to 'the law and to the testimony.'

". . . In ancient Israel, spiritualistic practices were punishable by death. 'A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death.' (Lev. 20:27; Ex. 22:18.)" (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 759-60.)

**(25-34) 1 Samuel 28:15-20. Can One Possessed of an Evil Spirit Compel a Dead Prophet to Speak?**

"The Witch of Endor, . . . instead of being a prophetess of the Lord, was a woman who practiced necromancy; that is, communication or pretended communication with the spirits of the dead; but she was led by a familiar spirit. In other words, she was a spiritual medium, similar to those modern professors of the art, who claim to be under the control of some departed notable, and through him or her to be able

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to communicate with the dead. It should be observed that in the seance with the king of Israel, Saul did not see Samuel or anybody but the medium or witch. She declared that she saw an old man coming up and that he was covered with a mantle. It was she who told Saul what Samuel was purported to have said. Saul 'perceived that it was Samuel' through what the witch stated to him. The conversation that ensued between Samuel and Saul was conducted through the medium. All of this could have taken place entirely without the presence of the prophet Samuel. The woman, under the influence of her familiar spirit, could have given to Saul the message supposed to have come from Samuel, in the same way that messages from the dead are pretended to be given to the living by spiritual mediums of the latter days, who, as in the case under consideration, perform their work at night or under cover of darkness.

"It is beyond rational belief that such persons could at any period in ancient or modern times, invoke the spirits of departed servants or handmaidens of the Lord. They are not at the beck and call of witches, wizards, diviners, or necromancers. Pitiably indeed would be the condition of spirits in paradise if they were under any such control. They would not be at rest, nor be able to enjoy that liberty from the troubles and labors of earthly life which is essential to their happiness, but be in a condition of bondage, subject to the will and whims of persons who know not God and whose lives and aims are of the earth, earthy." (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:107-8.)

#### **(25-35) 1 Samuel 28:16-20. Can Familiar Spirits Prophecy the Future?**

"It has been suggested that in this instance the Lord sent Samuel in the spirit to communicate with Saul, that he might know of his impending doom; but this view does not seem to harmonize with the statements of the case, made in the scripture which gives the particulars. If the Lord desired to impart this information to Saul, why did he not respond when Saul enquired of him through the legitimate channels of divine communication? Saul had tried them all and failed to obtain an answer. Why should the Lord ignore the means he himself established, and send Samuel, a prophet, to reveal himself to Saul through a forbidden source? Why should he employ one who had a familiar spirit for this purpose, a medium which he had positively condemned by his own law?

"'But,' it is argued, 'the prediction uttered by the spirit which was manifested on that occasion was literally fulfilled. Israel was delivered into the hand of the Philistines, and Saul and his three sons and his armor bearer and the men of his staff were all slain. It was therefore a true prophecy.' Admitting that as perfectly correct, the position taken in this article is not in the least weakened. If the witches, wizards, necromancers and familiar spirits, placed under the ban of the law, did not sometimes foretell the truth there would have been no need to warn the

people against consulting them. If the devil never told the truth he would not be able to deceive mankind by his falsehoods. The powers of darkness would never prevail without the use of some light. A little truth mixed with plausible error is one of the means by which they lead mankind astray. There is nothing, then, in the history of the interview between Saul and the woman of Endor which, rationally or doctrinally, establishes the opinion that she was a prophetess of the Lord or that Samuel actually appeared on that occasion." (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:108-9.)

#### **(25-36) 1 Samuel 30:7-8**

David's use of the ephod here almost certainly involved the use of the Urim and Thummim. The breastplate of the high priest, which held the Urim and Thummim, was attached to the ephod (see Exodus 28:26-30; Reading 13-13). Thus, David asked the high priest to inquire of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim, and he got an immediate answer (see 1 Samuel 30:8).

#### **(25-37) 1 Samuel 31:10. Who Is Ashtoreth?**

See Enrichment Section F, "Idolatry: Ancient and Modern," especially Reading F-7.

## **POINTS TO PONDER**

**(25-38)** The section of the Old Testament containing the story of Samuel, David, Jonathan, and Saul is so full of modern-day applications, so replete with lessons that span all time, that it is not surprising that modern prophets have returned to it again and again as they speak to Israel today. The following excerpts should be read and pondered carefully as you look for lessons in your own life. You may wish to note things in your journal that are of particular worth to you.

#### **(25-39) What Can We Learn from Samuel's Choice of David As Israel's Future King?**

"By referring to Samuel's experience while choosing a king, we may get a better understanding of the fact that man is not qualified to judge. The Lord had rejected Saul as king of Israel and instructed the prophet Samuel to choose a new king. He told him to go to the house of Jesse, who had eight sons, and that while there the anointed one would pass before him and Samuel would know who was to be chosen. When the first son, Eliab, came before him, Samuel thought he was the chosen one, but the Lord refused him and then gave the prophet Samuel the key as to how to judge:

"'Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.' (1 Sam. 16:7.)

"Each of the seven sons then passed before Samuel and was rejected. Then David, the youngest, was sent for and was approved by the Lord.

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"The reason, therefore, that we cannot judge is obvious. We cannot see what is in the heart. We do not know motives, although we impute motives to every action we see. They may be pure while we think they are improper.

"It is not possible to judge another fairly unless you know his desires, his faith, and his goals. Because of a different environment, unequal opportunity, and many other things, people are not in the same position. One may start at the top and the other at the bottom, and they may meet as they are going in opposite directions. . . . How can we, with all our weaknesses and frailties, dare to arrogate to ourselves the position of a judge? At best, man can judge only what he sees; he cannot judge the heart or the intention, or begin to judge the potential of his neighbor." (N. Eldon Tanner, "Judge Not That Ye Be Not Judged," *Ensign*, July 1972, p. 35.)

#### **(25-40) What Must We Do to Conquer Our Own Goliaths?**

"Remember that every David has a Goliath to defeat, and every Goliath can be defeated. He may not be a bully who fights with fists or sword or gun. He may not even be flesh and blood. He may not be nine feet tall; he may not be armor-protected, but every boy has his Goliaths. And every boy has his sling, and every boy has access to the brook with its smooth stones.

"You will meet Goliaths who threaten you. Whether your Goliath is a town bully or is the temptation to steal or to destroy or the temptation to rob or the desire to curse and swear; if your Goliath is the desire to wantonly destroy or the temptation to lust and to sin, or the urge to avoid activity, whatever is your Goliath, he can be slain. But remember, to be the victor, one must follow the path that David followed:

"'David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him.' (1 Sam. 18:14.)" (Spencer W. Kimball, "The Davids and the Goliaths," *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, p. 82.)

#### **(25-41) Armed with Faith in God, Our Cause Cannot Be Hindered**

The wise person arms himself as David did, not with sling or stone, necessarily, but with faith. While David was trained in stone slinging, his confidence lay in the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies whom Goliath defied. Just so, we too must arm ourselves for our battles.

"I am suggesting that each individual put on the whole armor of God. He will then become an example to others, and many will follow in his footsteps. As each individual does this, he helps form the army that will win the great victory and ultimately prepare the world for the second coming of the Savior.

"In putting on the whole armor of God, we must become acquainted with the Savior. At 14 Joseph Smith, in his quest for knowledge and wisdom, sought the Lord in prayer. God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared to him in a vision. He saw two personages, one saying of the other, 'This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!' [Joseph Smith—History 1:17.] This was the beginning of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth. If we have faith, we can prepare ourselves through prayer and study and gain the same assurance Joseph Smith had that God lives and that he and his Son are separate personages. Jesus of Nazareth then will become the center of our lives. With this assurance, our cause cannot be hindered. Without it, we have no cause." (Victor L. Brown, "Is There Not a Cause?" *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, p. 104.)

#### **(25-42) We Honor the Cause, Not the Unworthy Members Who Espouse It**

"Now if a man is not the anointed of the Lord we may have a fellow feeling for him, that feeling which human nature teaches, but when a man is the anointed of the Lord, we feel like David did with Saul. David would not lift his hand against Saul, because, said he, he is the anointed of the Lord, but how could they move hand in hand and be one, when they were of a different spirit? There was an opposite spirit in Saul, but yet David would not put forth his hand and slay him, although he had him in his power; he had a respect for him because he was the Lord's anointed. A man may move on the same car or in the same kingdom, and yet be of a different spirit from another man, and he may pass quietly along for a time, because he is the Lord's anointed, but still he will not exert himself for the carrying out of the principles of the kingdom, he lies dormant all the time. How can he who is filled with the principles of righteousness and with the love of Jesus love that man? He cannot do it as he desires. We have got to be inspired by the same Spirit and by the same kind of knowledge, in order that we may love one another and be of one heart and one mind." (Lorenzo Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:156.)





# The Fall of King David

## (26-1) Introduction

“If the Latter-day Saints ever hope to make any headway with the Jewish people, they must stop talking about King David as a tragic, sinful figure, for we view him as one of the great figures of our history.” So spoke a Jewish youth to his Latter-day Saint neighbor.

“Was David a good man?” Ask this question among Old Testament scholars, and you will likely be immediately embroiled in a vigorous debate.

Under David Israel reached its golden age, the zenith of its power. For the first time, under his direction the chosen people controlled the whole land promised to Abraham’s seed nearly a thousand years earlier. Israel had not achieved such heights before, nor did they ever again.

Do we emphasize the David who killed Goliath, or the David who killed Uriah? Should we view him as the servant who refused to lift his hand against the Lord’s anointed, or as the Lord’s anointed who lifted his hand against a faithful and loyal servant? Was his life a tragedy, or a triumph?

If a triumph, why, then, has “he fallen from his exaltation” (D&C 132:39) and lost “the greatest of all the gifts of God”? (D&C 6:13). If a tragedy, why is the Messiah prophesied to sit “upon the throne of David” (Isaiah 9:7), and be called “David their king”? (Jeremiah 30:9; see also 23:5–6; 30:15–17; Ezekiel 37:24–25). Why are we told that Jesus shall receive “the throne of his father David” (Luke 1:32) and that He has “the key of David”? (Revelation 3:7).

In this chapter we read of David as king of Israel. We have already seen him as the shepherd boy turned warrior and as the king’s armor-bearer turned king’s outlaw by Saul’s own madness. Then Saul was dead, and David was king in fact as well as name.

Study his life carefully in this chapter and the next to see if you can answer these questions. Is it an injustice to treat David as a tragedy? How shall we view this great man of history?

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study 2 Samuel 1–12.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON 2 SAMUEL 1–12

### (26-2) 2 Samuel 1:1–16. Why Did David Kill the Man Who Had Killed Saul at the King’s Own Request?

A careful reading of 1 Samuel 31:1–6 and 2 Samuel 1:1–16 shows two different accounts of Saul’s death. The man who came to David and reported that he had killed Saul at Saul’s insistence was not Saul’s armor-bearer. When the armor-bearer refused to kill his master, Saul fell upon his sword rather than fall into the hands of the Philistines. His armor-bearer then followed suit and also died.

“The whole account which this young man gives is a fabrication: in many of the particulars it is grossly *self-contradictory*. There is no fact in the case but the bringing of the *crown*, or *diadem*, and *bracelets* of Saul; which, as he appears to have been a plunderer of the slain, he found on the field of battle; and he brought them to David, and told the lie of having despatched Saul, merely to ingratiate himself with David.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:308.)

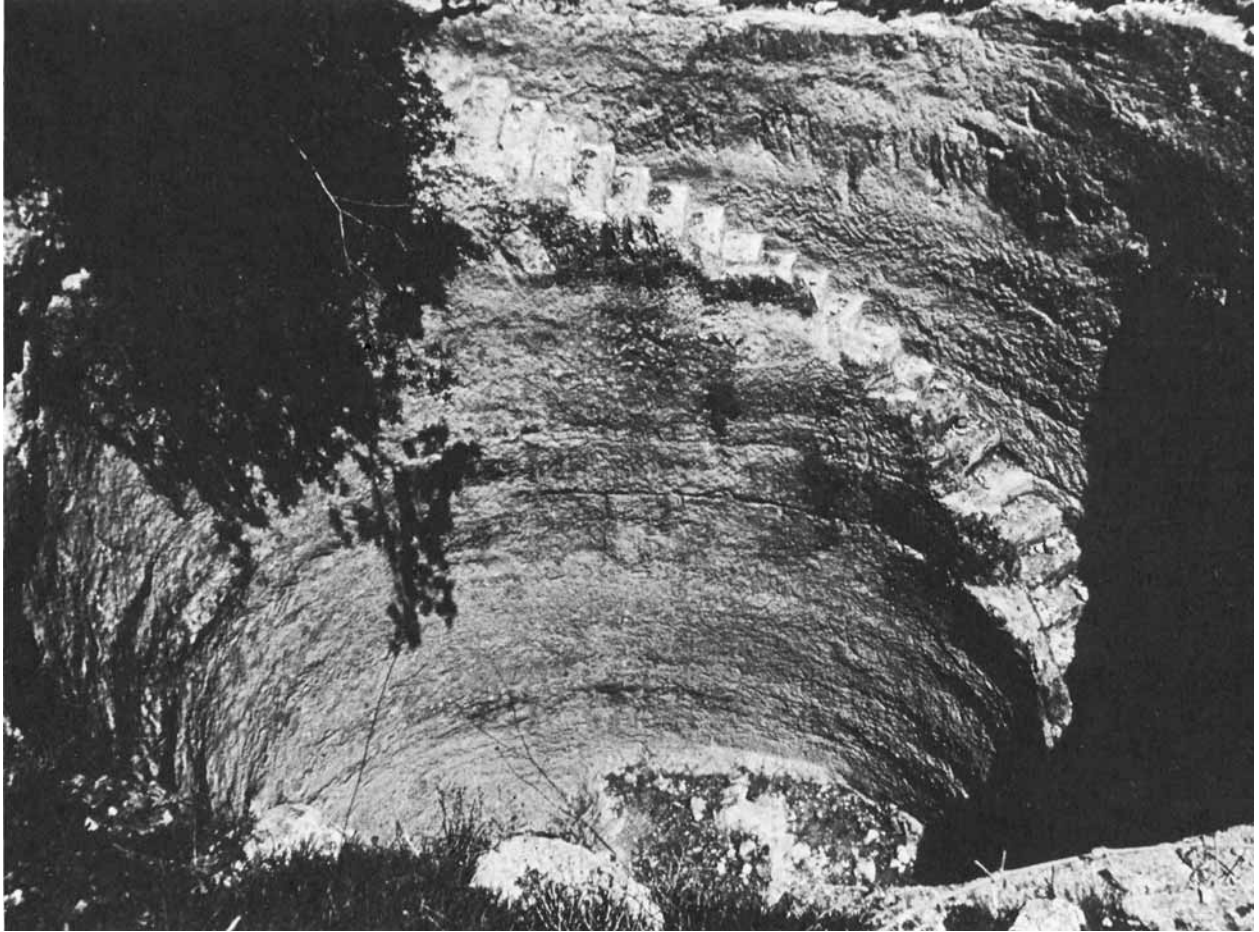
That David understood the Amalekite’s motives is clear from 2 Samuel 4:10. David’s lamentation over the death of Saul was sincere and deep. Instead of being grateful for the death of his most violent enemy, he truly mourned for the tragedy that had befallen Israel.

### (26-3) 2 Samuel 2:1–11

After Saul died, the tribes of Israel did not immediately flock to David and accept him as king. Abner, the captain of Saul’s host (his commanding general), set up one of Saul’s sons as the new king (see vv. 8–9). The tribe of Judah accepted David as king, but for seven years there was no unity, and two opposing kings reigned (see v. 11). David may have refused to take action against Ishbosheth because he had covenanted with Jonathan not to retaliate against Saul’s family when he came to power (see 1 Samuel 20:14–16).

### (26-4) 2 Samuel 2:12–32

The contest between the men of Abner and the men of Joab at the pool of Gibeon was more than a simple grudge match. Abner was the leader of the forces of Ishbosheth, Saul’s son. Joab was David’s commander. Thus, in the clash between the two kingdoms, champions were chosen to determine the winner (see Reading 25-5). The challenge to let the



*The pool of Gibeon*

young men “play before us” (v. 14) meant to let the twelve representatives battle for each side.

When the twelve from each side had killed each other, no clear winner was shown, so both sides erupted into a furious battle, which David’s men won. When Asahel, Joab’s brother, gave chase to Abner, Abner yelled back that Asahel should content himself by taking the armor of one of the younger men, but Asahel refused.

“It seems Asahel wished to get the armour of Abner as a trophy; this also was greatly coveted by ancient heroes. Abner wished to spare him, for fear of exciting Joab’s enmity; but as Asahel was obstinate in the pursuit, and was swifter of foot than Abner, the latter saw that he must either kill or be killed, and therefore he *turned his spear* and ran it through the body of Asahel. This *turning about* that he might pierce him is what we translate ‘the hinder end of his spear.’ This slaying of Asahel cost Abner his life.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:313.)

#### **(26-5) 2 Samuel 3**

The war between the two kingdoms grew more intense as David’s army slowly gained the upper hand (see v. 1). It was at that point that Ishbosheth

accused Abner of having an affair with one of Saul’s wives (see v. 7). To approach the royal concubines was tantamount to claiming the throne. It is little wonder Ishbosheth was concerned. Abner’s question, “Am I a dog’s head of Judah,” meant, “Am I a traitor?” (v. 8). This he soon proved to be.

Enraged, Abner retaliated against Ishbosheth by turning the hearts of the rest of the people to King David (see vv. 17–19), and then he himself deserted to David’s camp (see v. 20). Joab used this opportunity to avenge the death of his brother (see v. 27).

David went to great lengths to demonstrate to the people that he had had nothing to do with Abner’s death (see vv. 28–38). This move was important politically, for those whom Abner had persuaded to change their loyalty to David could easily have gone back to Ishbosheth at the news of Abner’s death.

#### **(26-6) 2 Samuel 4**

Again, David showed great wisdom and judgment by executing the two men who killed Ishbosheth. Although he was at war with Ishbosheth, David did not condone the treachery of the assassins and put them to death. His wisdom and goodness finally united the tribes into one kingdom loyal to David.

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**(26-7) 2 Samuel 5:6–10. David Conquered Jerusalem and Made It His Capital City**

The origin of the city of Jerusalem is lost in antiquity. The first biblical reference to the city may be in Genesis, which states that “Melchizedek king of Salem” (Jerusalem) and “priest of the most high God” met Abraham returning from his battle with the kings and blessed him (Genesis 14:18). He was the one to whom Abraham paid a tithe of all he possessed. When Joshua crossed the Jordan the Jebusites, a Canaanite tribe, possessed the city. This people held Jerusalem until David captured it about 1000 B.C., although Israel may have temporarily conquered the city soon after their invasion of the land of Canaan (see Joshua 10).

David wisely chose this city as his capital, for Jerusalem was a city between the northern and southern tribes of Israel but it belonged to neither of them because it was still held by the Canaanite Jebusites. The manner of conquering the city has been much discussed because of the problematical word rendered “gutter” (2 Samuel 5:8). The word most likely designates a channel or a shaft, as it is similarly used in Mishnaic Hebrew. The shaft running up perpendicularly from a water conduit cut into the rock fifty feet west from Gihon, discovered by Sir C. Warren in 1867, would have given people inside the city walls access to water in time of siege and would have made a possible avenue for invaders to enter and open the gates of the city from within. Joab is said to have accomplished that initial entry (see 1 Chronicles 11:6).

The sarcasm of the Jebusites’ saying David would have to overcome “the blind and the lame,” as if such would have been sufficient to defend the city, was returned to them by David, who thereafter scathingly referred to all the Jebusite defenders as “the blind and the lame” (vv. 6, 8).

**(26-8) 2 Samuel 5:11–12. Who Was Hiram, King of Tyre, and What Was His Connection with Israel?**

About midway between present-day Beirut and Haifa in Israel was the port city of Tyre, one of the ancient and most important cities of the Phoenicians. The name *Hiram* appears to have been the family name for a king or series of kings of Tyre who were contemporaries of David and Solomon. Best known of these Hiram is he who sent masons, carpenters, and cedars from Lebanon to build David’s palace in Jerusalem (see 2 Samuel 5:11; 1 Chronicles 14:1). Later, Solomon was greatly assisted in the building of the temple in Jerusalem by this same Hiram, or another of the same name (see 1 Kings 9; 2 Chronicles 2).

**(26-9) 2 Samuel 5:17–25**

If the war with the Philistines occurred prior to the capture of Jerusalem, the “hold” (v. 17) to which David went for safety was probably the cave of Adullam (see 1 Samuel 22:1–4). If, however, the war occurred after Jerusalem’s seizure, the hold may refer to Jerusalem itself (see 2 Samuel 5:7, 9). David did not count his men, meaning to rely on the size of his army, but rather he relied on the Lord.

**(26-10) 2 Samuel 6:1–11. Why Was Uzzah Slain?**

The ark of the covenant was a sacred vessel that housed some of the holiest objects in Israel’s history. To touch the ark or its contents was strictly forbidden by the Lord. Only authorized Levites, and they only under certain specified conditions, could handle the sacred instruments (see Numbers 4:15). Uzzah may have exhibited some bold presumption when he sought to touch that which God had forbidden to be touched. Even if Uzzah’s intention was simply to keep the ark from falling, it should be remembered that God was fully capable of steadying His own ark had He wished to do so. While much of the story is not known, it is an excellent example that the commands of God are sacred and must be observed precisely as the Lord decreed. There are many modern-day implications (see Reading 26-23).

**(26-11) 2 Samuel 6:12–23. Why Was Michal Offended When David Danced?**

“When the ark came (*i.e.* was carried) into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and there she saw king David leaping and dancing before Jehovah, and despised him in her heart. . . . Michal is intentionally designated the daughter of Saul here, instead of the wife of David, because on this occasion she manifested her father’s disposition rather than her husband’s. In Saul’s time people did not trouble themselves about the ark of the covenant [1 Chronicles 13:3]; public worship was neglected, and the soul for vital religion had died out in the family of the king. Michal possessed teraphim, and in David she only loved the brave hero and exalted king; she therefore took offence at the humility with which the king, in his pious enthusiasm, placed himself on an equality with all the rest of the nation before the Lord. . . .

“ . . . The proud daughter of Saul was offended at the fact, that the king had let himself down on this occasion to the level of the people. She availed herself of the shortness of the priests’ shoulder dress, to make a contemptuous remark concerning David’s dancing, as an impropriety that was unbecoming in a king. . . . With the words ‘who chose me before *thy father and all his house*,’ David humbles the pride of the king’s daughter. His playing and dancing referred to the Lord, who had chosen him, and had rejected Saul on account of his pride. He would therefore let himself be still further despised before the Lord, *i.e.* would bear still greater contempt from men than that which he had just received, and be humbled in his own eyes [see Psalm 131:1]: then would he also with the maidens attain to honour before the Lord. For whoso humbleth himself, him will God exalt [Matthew 23:12].” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:336–38.)

**(26-12) 2 Samuel 7:1–17. Why Was David Not Allowed to Build the Temple?**

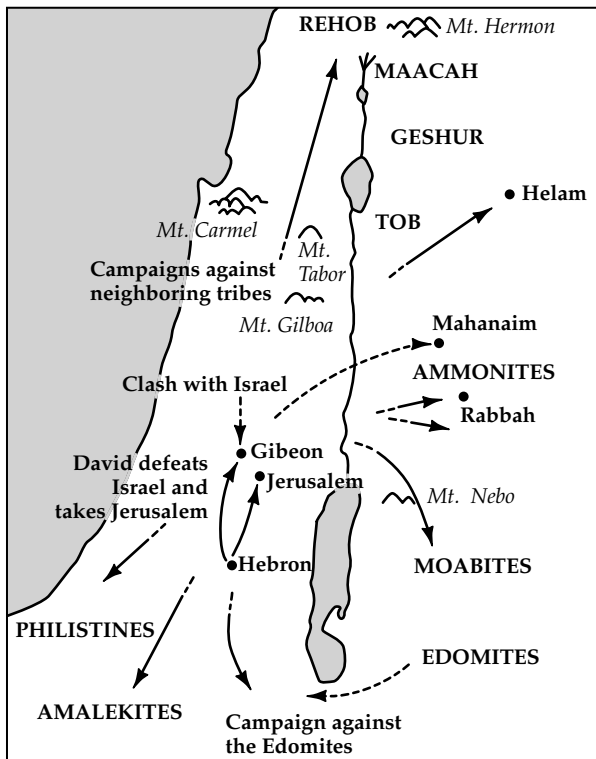
David’s motivation for wanting to build a permanent house for the Lord (the tabernacle built by Moses in the wilderness was then about three hundred years old) was proper and good, but the Lord, through Nathan, denied him permission to do so.

No specific reason was given here, only a blessing on David's house. In the account in Chronicles, however, David told Solomon that it was revealed to him that he had seen too much war and bloodshed to build the house of the Lord (see 1 Chronicles 22:8).

**(26-13) 2 Samuel 7:16. Was David's House and Throne Established Forever?**

This verse is an example of a dualistic prophecy, that is, a prophecy with a double meaning (see Reading G-5). It promised that David's lineage would continue on the throne, and unlike Saul's lineage, would not be overthrown after his death. But it is clearly a Messianic prophecy as well. Jesus, the Messiah, was called David, He would hold the key of David, and He would sit upon the throne of David (see Reading 26-1). Clearly, only one person can sit upon the throne of David (that is, rule over the house of Israel) forever and ever, and that one is Christ. He came into mortality as a descendant of David and as an heir to his throne both physically and spiritually. Elder James E. Talmage explained the significance of the genealogies of Jesus given by Matthew and Luke as establishing Jesus' right to the throne.

"At the time of the Savior's birth, Israel was ruled by alien monarchs. The rights of the royal Davidic family were unrecognized; and the ruler of the Jews was an appointee of Rome. Had Judah been a free and independent nation, ruled by her rightful sovereign, Joseph the carpenter would have been her crowned king; and his lawful successor to the throne would have been Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 87.)



*Military campaigns of David*

**(26-14) 2 Samuel 8:3-18**

Under David's leadership the kingdom expanded to the extent of God's promise to Abraham (see Genesis 15:18).

**(26-15) 2 Samuel 9**

Once David was secure on the throne, he sought to heal old wounds. His desire was to be kind to any of the house of Saul. The only person left was Mephibosheth, whom David took in and treated nearly as a son. This action fulfilled his promise to Jonathan made years before (see 1 Samuel 20:14-16).

**(26-16) 2 Samuel 10**

The ill treatment of David's ambassadors, who were deliberately humiliated and degraded by the exposure of their faces and lower bodies, brought on full-scale war that only served to expand David's domain. Truly it could be said, "The Lord preserved David whithersoever he went" (2 Samuel 8:6).

**(26-17) 2 Samuel 11:2. Why Was David Walking on His Roof?**

Many homes in the Holy Land, both then and now, had flat roofs. In the heat of the Middle East, much of the people's time was spent walking or sitting on their roofs in the refreshing cool of evening or in the day to catch a daytime breeze. The roof of David's palace was probably high enough that he could have looked into the inner courts of a number of homes nearby.

**(26-18) 2 Samuel 11:3-27. What Great Lesson Can We Learn from These Verses?**

"Things were getting too easy for David; he had leisure to stay at home while Joab and his men were out fighting Ammonites and Syrians. In his leisure he looked from his rooftop at his neighbor's wife. Leisure and lust led to adultery and then to murder, which sins had eternal repercussions, as well as tragic earthly results. It is one of the shocking and serious warnings of the Old Testament that a man may be ever so good and great and eminent and still have weaknesses which can lead to deeds that entirely overshadow and defeat the better self!" (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:185.)

**(26-19) 2 Samuel 12:1-4. Murder and Adultery Carry Their Own Consequences**

"As happens too frequently, it is only when a sinner knows that his sin is known that he begins to repent! The figure of Nathan boldly accusing the king to his face by an allegorical parallel is impressive, though not as surprising in Bible stories as it would be in accounts of other peoples where the will of God was not such a recognized factor in determining the morality of men and in specifying the results. Nathan's allegory was skillfully drawn, and his climatic 'Attah ha ishi!' ('Thou art the man') must have crashed in upon the conscience of David like the harbingers of doom's day.

“His repentant feelings were no doubt sincere, but he could not repent enough to restore the *life* of his friend, Uriah, nor the *virtue* of his wife. Though he later hoped and prayed that his soul would not be left forever in hell (the spirit prison), yet the eternal destiny of doers of such twin sins does not look good. (See Psalms 16 and 51; then see Hebrews 6:4–6; Revelation 22:14–15; D&C 132:27; 76:31–37; 29:41 and 42:18, 79.)” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:185.)

#### **(26-20) 2 Samuel 12:15–25. Was the Death of the Child a Punishment from God?**

“The child born of their illicit union did not live, but there is no reason to look upon that as ‘punishment’ of the child for the sins of the parents. Removal from this earth by the hand of the Lord must come at one time or another and can be a blessing to an individual, brought about for his best interest at whatever time the Lord sees it to be optimum. The parents did suffer remorse over it. After David knew that the baby was dead, he ceased mourning, however, and philosophically and hopefully explained, ‘I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.’

“It appears that David promised Bathsheba that her next son would be his royal heir, for actions later were taken upon such an assumption. (See verse 24 and I Kings 1:17, also, I Chronicles 22:9.)” (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:185–86.)

#### **(26-21) 2 Samuel 12:13. David Is Still Paying in Hell for His Sins**

The Joseph Smith Translation says, “The Lord also hath not put away thy sin” (JST, 2 Samuel 12:13).

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, commenting on David’s sin, said: “David committed a dreadful crime, and all his life afterwards sought for forgiveness. Some of the Psalms portray the anguish of his soul; yet David is still paying for his sin. He did not receive the resurrection at the time of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter declared that his body was still in the tomb, and the Prophet Joseph Smith has said, ‘David sought repentance at the hand of God carefully with tears, for the murder of Uriah; but he could only get it through hell: he got a promise that his soul should not be left in hell.’ Again we ask: Who wishes to spend a term in hell with the devil before being cleansed from sin?” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:74.)

## **POINTS TO PONDER**

**(26-22)** Let us now return to the questions raised in the introduction to this chapter. Should we view David’s life as a triumph or as a tragedy? The answer is not a simple yes or no for either alternative.

Certainly David must be viewed as one of the greatest royal administrators. He never took to himself authority that was not his nor practiced unrighteous dominion. He never lost his perspective, as Saul did. His refusal to lift his hand against Saul because he was the Lord’s anointed is one of the finest examples of loyalty anywhere in the scriptures.

Perhaps Jesus, in His office of Messiah, is constantly tied into David and his reign because David did three things for temporal Israel that typify what Christ will do for spiritual Israel. David united the twelve tribes into one nation under the ultimate leadership of God. For the first time in history, David succeeded in winning the whole extent of the promised land for the covenant people (see Reading 26-14). And David established Zion or Jerusalem as the spiritual and political center of Israel.

Nevertheless, no success can compensate for failure in our personal lives or in our families. Consider that David was destined for exaltation, destined to rule in heaven forever and ever as a Creator and a God to his future children. As the Lord said, there is no greater gift that He could offer a man than eternal life (see D&C 6:13). David had it within his grasp, and then, in a foolish attempt to hide his sin, sent a man to his death. Had he even come to himself after his transgression with Bath-sheba and sought repentance as sincerely and earnestly as he did after Nathan’s parable, there is every indication that he could have come back and received forgiveness. It would have been difficult, but not impossible. But he did the very thing of which so many are guilty—he compounded his sin by trying to cover it up. Elder Spencer W. Kimball indicated that there is no restitution possible for murder.

“As to crimes for which no adequate restoration is possible, I have suggested . . . that perhaps the reason murder is an unforgivable sin is that, once having taken a life—whether that life be innocent or reprobate—the life-taker cannot restore it. He may give his own life as payment, but this does not wholly undo the injury done by his crime. He might support the widow and children; he might do many other noble things; but a life is gone and the restitution of it in full is impossible. Repentance in the ordinary sense seems futile.

“Murder is so treacherous and so far-reaching! Those who lose their possessions may be able to recover their wealth. Those defamed may still be able to prove themselves above reproach. Even the loss of chastity leaves the soul in mortality with opportunity to recover and repent and to make amends to some degree. But to take a life, whether someone else’s or one’s own, cuts off the victim’s experiences of mortality and thus his opportunity to repent, to keep God’s commandments in this earth life. It interferes with his potential of having ‘glory added upon [his head] for ever and ever.’ (Abraham 3:26.)” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 195–96.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained the limits of David’s eternal inheritance:

“Murderers are forgiven eventually but only in the sense that all sins are forgiven except the sin against the Holy Ghost; they are not forgiven in the sense that celestial salvation is made available to them. (Matt. 12:31–32; *Teachings*, pp. 356–357.) After they have paid the full penalty for their crime, they shall go on to a telestial inheritance. (Rev. 22:15.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 520.)

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From celestial to teledial—that is tragedy. Although David was brave and had great intellect, administrative ability, and faithfulness early in life, he failed in one important thing—to endure to the end.

David was a great example in his fulfillment of his calling as king, and a tragic example in his falling from glory. We can learn from both aspects of his life.

**(26-23)** The account of Uzzah being smitten dead while attempting to save the ark of the covenant from toppling over (see Reading 26-10) raises questions in the minds of many readers. It seems so harsh, when all he was doing was trying to save a holy object from being harmed. Or so it seems on the surface. But reflect for a moment on the incident. The ark was the tangible object that symbolized the presence of God, His throne, His glory, His divine majesty (see Reading 13-5). When first given to Israel, the ark was placed in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle, and not even the priest was allowed to approach it. Only the high priest (a type of Christ) could approach it and then only after going through an elaborate ritual of personal cleansing and propitiation for his sins (see Reading D-6). The holiness of God is clearly taught in scripture. No unclean thing can dwell in His presence (see Moses 6:57). His presence is like a consuming fire (see Hebrews 12:29). Those who bear the vessels of the Lord must be clean (see D&C 133:5).

However well-meaning, Uzzah approached casually what could only be approached under the strictest conditions. He lacked faith in God's power. He assumed that the ark was in danger, forgetting that it was the physical symbol of the God who has all power. What man can presume to save God and His kingdom through his own efforts?

"Uzzah's offence consisted in the fact that he had touched the ark with profane feelings, although with good intentions, namely to prevent its rolling over and falling from the cart. Touching the ark, the throne of the divine glory and visible pledge of the invisible presence of the Lord, was a violation of the majesty of the holy God. 'Uzzah was therefore a type of all who with good intentions, humanly speaking, yet with unsanctified minds, interfere in the affairs of the kingdom of God, from the notion that they are in danger, and with the hope of saving them.'" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:333.)

In modern revelation, the Lord made reference to this incident to teach that very principle (see

D&C 85:8). The Lord is in His heavens and does not need the help of men to defend His kingdom. Yet in our own time we see those who fear the ark is tottering and presume to steady its course. We hear of those who are sure that women are not being treated fairly in the Church, of those who would extend some unauthorized blessing to those not yet ready, or of those who would change the established doctrines of the Church. Are these not ark-steadiers? The best intentions do not justify such interference with the Lord's plan. President David O. McKay applied this lesson to modern Saints:

"It is a little dangerous for us to go out of our own sphere and try unauthoritatively to direct the efforts of a brother. You remember the case of Uzzah who stretched forth his hand to steady the ark. [See 1 Chron. 13:7-10.] He seemed justified when the oxen stumbled in putting forth his hand to steady that symbol of the covenant. We today think his punishment was very severe. Be that as it may, the incident conveys a lesson of life. Let us look around us and see how quickly men who attempt unauthoritatively to steady the ark die spiritually. Their souls become embittered, their minds distorted, their judgment faulty, and their spirit depressed. Such is the pitiable condition of men who, neglecting their own responsibilities, spend their time in finding fault with others." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1936, p. 60.)

President John Taylor taught:

"We have more or less of the principles of insubordination among us. But there is a principle associated with the kingdom of God that recognizes God in all things, and that recognizes the priesthood in all things, and those who do not do it had better repent or they will come to a stand very quickly; I tell you that in the name of the Lord. Do not think you are wise and that you can manage and manipulate the priesthood, for you cannot do it. God must manage, regulate, dictate, and stand at the head, and every man in his place. The ark of God does not need steadying, especially by incompetent men without revelation and without knowledge of the kingdom of God and its laws. It is a great work that we are engaged in, and it is for us to prepare ourselves for the labor before us, and to acknowledge God, his authority, his law and his priesthood in all things." (*Gospel Kingdom*, p. 166.)





# The Price of Sin: Tragedy in the House of David

## (27-1) Introduction

The price of David's sin of murder and adultery was high. He spent the rest of his life regretting it. In one psalm he expressed his mental torment and pleaded for forgiveness.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. . . .

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me." (Psalm 51:1–3, 10–11.)

Eventually, David received the assurance that his soul would be "delivered . . . from the lowest hell" (Psalm 86:12–13). But this assurance could not restore the blessings he had lost. They were gone forever (see D&C 132:39).

David paid another price, too, an earthly one, which haunted him until the day he died. "The sword shall never depart from thine house," the prophet Nathan told him, "because thou hast despised me [the Lord], and hast taken the wife of Uriah" (2 Samuel 12:10). This prophecy was literally fulfilled.

This section of your study of the Old Testament depicts the sorry story of how David's earthly kingdom began to fall apart through inner contention and strife. David lived to mourn his sins in mortality as well as in eternity.

### Instructions to Students

1. Use Notes and Commentary below to help you as you read and study 2 Samuel 13–24.
2. Complete Points to Ponder as directed by your teacher. (Individual study students should complete all of this section.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON 2 SAMUEL 13–24

### (27-2) 2 Samuel 13:1–14. How Did the Tragedy of Tamar Parallel the Experience of Bath-sheba and David?

Tamar was the lovely daughter of David by his wife Maacah and was the half sister of Amnon. Amnon was the eldest of David's sons, having been

born to Ahinoam while David was at Hebron. He was the crown prince and the natural heir to David's throne.

The love Amnon felt for Tamar was not the love of a brother for a sister. It was a consuming lust, which drove reason from his brain. The parallel between David and Amnon is evident. David had set an example in not having the spirit control the body when he gave in to his lust for Bath-sheba. He also had set an example of plotting ways to cover up his sins.

### (27-3) 2 Samuel 13:15–22. "Then Amnon Hated Her Exceedingly"

Amnon did not really love Tamar. Once he had gratified his lust, he despised her. How often is such gross unfairness toward women demonstrated by evil men? They exploit women and then despise the women rather than themselves. Amnon would not save Tamar from disgrace by making her a part of his household as a wife or concubine. Knowing that she had been disgraced and would therefore be deprived of a husband, Tamar mourned in the manner of a widow (see v. 19; note especially v. 20). David was furious because of the way Amnon had treated Tamar, but what could he do or say? His own conduct with Bath-sheba had left him without a basis for condemnation. Here was another result of sin. Because of his own guilt, David did not act to correct this great abomination in his own household. David learned the sad lesson that a man's sins can often visit him even to the third and fourth generation (see Exodus 34:7).

### (27-4) 2 Samuel 13:23–39. How Did Absalom Seek Revenge for the Wrong Done to His Sister?

Absalom concealed his hate and rage for two years. At the end of this time he invited King David and all of his sons to come several miles north to the mountains of Ephraim where his sheep were being sheared. It was customary at shearing time to have a feast, since this time usually involved a gathering of the family. David declined the invitation, fearing the entire court would be "chargeable," that is, a burden on his son, but he sent his eldest son, Amnon, the apparent heir to the throne (v. 25). As the feast progressed, Amnon became "merry with wine" (v. 28). Absalom gave the signal, and his servants swept down and killed Amnon. Absalom escaped to his grandfather's home in Geshur.

### (27-5) 2 Samuel 14:1–24

Here is the pathetic account of the deepening tragedy in David's household. Once again David was caught in a trap of his own making. Enmity between

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himself and his son Absalom drove them far apart, so far, in fact, that Absalom would not even visit his father at the court. Joab tried to reconcile the king and prince and employed a stratagem to do so. The woman conspiring with Joab was very careful to keep her real intent sufficiently disguised until she had committed the king to a benevolent course of action. Only then was she willing to suggest that David should be as merciful to his own son as he would be to her son.

**(27-6) 2 Samuel 14:7. What Does It Mean to “Quench One’s Coal Which Is Left”?**

“A man and his descendants or successors are often termed in Scripture a *lamp or light*. . . . And to *raise up a lamp* to a person signifies his having a posterity to continue his name and family upon the earth: thus, *quench my coal that is left* means destroying all hope of posterity, and extinguishing the family from among the people.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:344–45.)

**(27-7) 2 Samuel 14:11**

“Revenge of blood” were those next of kin who were obligated to avenge the death of their relative (v. 11; see also Numbers 35:19–29).

**(27-8) 2 Samuel 14:24–33**

David allowed Absalom to return but did not restore him to the court and his princely prerogatives. Absalom demanded either death or his former position (see v. 32). David reconsidered, and Absalom was restored to favor, a position he then exploited to plot against his father.

**(27-9) 2 Samuel 14:26. What Does It Mean to Poll One’s Hair?**

To *poll* means “to thin” by means of combing or cutting. Thus, when Absalom’s hair became either too thick or too long, he had it polled. Evidently, Absalom’s hair was extremely thick, and this information was probably introduced into the narrative here because Absalom’s hair seems to have played a part in his death (see 2 Samuel 18:9–17). Exactly how much weight is meant by two hundred shekels is not completely clear; this number may either be incorrect or an exaggeration of the total weight for literary purposes.

**(27-10) 2 Samuel 15:1–12. How Did Absalom Win Favor with the People?**

Once restored to his position in David’s court, Absalom began to capitalize on his return to princely status by developing a careful plan to overthrow his father. He began to act like a king, with a full royal procession (see v. 1), but more serious than that, he undertook a deceitful campaign to gain favor with the people. He arose early and sat in judgment at the gates of the city (see v. 2). A city gate was the normal location for giving judgment in ancient times and was the place where the people came to present grievances. Absalom ingratiated himself by telling

the people that their causes and complaints were just, but that no one from the king’s court was willing to hear them. While this assertion may have been a lie, it is more likely that David’s court was not functioning properly and that the people were being neglected. Absalom took advantage of the disgruntlement of the people, but he refused to let them bow down to him. Instead, he raised them up, kissed them, and treated them as equals—highly unusual behavior from royalty (see v. 5). And in this way “Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (v. 6). Absalom then lied to his father, telling him that he needed to go to Hebron to fulfill a vow when, in fact, it was his intention to raise an insurrection against David.

Several reasons have been suggested why “the conspiracy was strong” and “the people increased continually with Absalom” (v. 12):

“It is very difficult to account for this general defection of the people. Several reasons are given: 1. David was old or afflicted, and could not well attend to the administration of justice in the land. 2. It does appear that the king did not attend to the affairs of state, and that there were no properly appointed judges in the land; [see v. 3]. 3. Joab’s power was overgrown; he was wicked and insolent, oppressive to the people, and David was afraid to execute the laws against him. 4. There were still some partisans of the house of Saul, who thought the crown not fairly obtained by David. 5. David was under the displeasure of the Almighty, for his adultery with Bath-sheba, and his murder of Uriah; and God let his enemies loose against him. 6. There are always troublesome and disaffected men in every state, and under every government; who can never rest, and are ever hoping for something from a change. 7. Absalom appeared to be the *real* and was the *undisputed* heir to the throne; David could not, in the course of nature, live very long; and most people are more disposed to hail the beams of the *rising*, than exult in those of the *setting*, sun. No doubt some of these causes operated, and perhaps most of them exerted less or more influence in this most scandalous business.” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:349–50.)

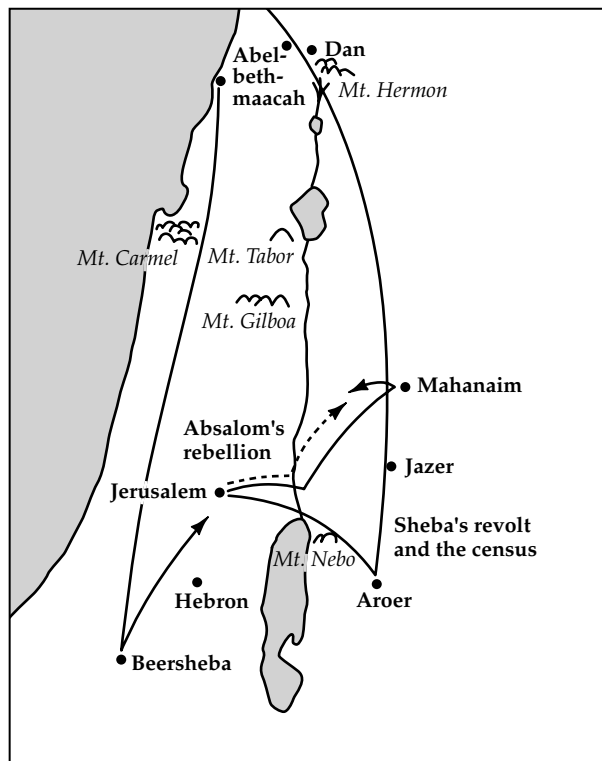
**(27-11) 2 Samuel 15:14–30. “And David Said . . . Arise and Let Us Flee”**

David’s immediate call for flight from the city was so out of character that the reader cannot help but wonder what prompted this response. His words (see v. 14) indicate that he wanted to avoid a massacre, but his actions suggest that it was not fear that motivated the flight.

“This . . . was the first time that David turned his back to his enemies. And why did he *now* flee? Jerusalem, far from not being in a state to sustain a siege, was so strong that even the blind and the lame were supposed to be a sufficient defence for the walls. . . . And he had still with him his faithful *Cherethites* and *Pelethites*; besides six hundred faithful Gittites, who were perfectly willing to follow his fortunes. There does not appear any reason why such a person, in such circumstances, should not act on

the *defensive*; at least till he should be fully satisfied of the real complexion of affairs. But he appears to take all as *coming from the hand of God*; therefore he humbles himself, weeps, goes barefoot, and covers his head! He does not even *hasten* his departure, for the habit of mourners is not the habit of those who are *flying* before the face of their enemies. He sees the storm, and he yields to what he conceives to be the tempest of the Almighty." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:350.)

Some believe Psalm 55 was written by David to express his feelings over Absalom's revolt. Note especially verses 12–14 and 20–21 of this psalm.



David quelled revolt.

#### (27-12) 2 Samuel 15:32–37

David's spies were those who were completely loyal to him. His choice of Hushai was particularly good because he not only had inside information but was able to offset counsel given by the sagacious Ahithophel.

#### (27-13) 2 Samuel 16:5–14. Why Did David Choose to Endure the Curses of Shimei?

"Note the rationale behind David's humbly choosing to endure the curses of Shimei of the house of Saul: (1) any dishonor was considered negligible compared to the dishonor of his own son taking his kingship and seeking his life; (2) if he suffered his afflictions patiently, perhaps the Lord would have mercy upon him and requite him later; (3) perhaps the Lord Himself had commanded Shimei to curse him; (4) since the sons of Zeruiah (Abishai and Joab)

were such men of violence, David countered as usual with more moderate action." (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:187.)

#### (27-14) 2 Samuel 16:20–23. Why Did Ahithophel Advise Absalom to Take David's Concubines?

"Lying with the king's concubines was an appropriation of the royal harem, and, as such, a complete usurpation of the throne . . . which would render any reconciliation between Absalom and his father utterly impossible, and therefore would of necessity instigate the followers of Absalom to maintain his cause with all the greater firmness. This was what Ahithophel hoped to attain through his advice. For unless the breach was too great to be healed, with the affection of David towards his sons, which might in reality be called weakness, it was always a possible thing that he should forgive Absalom; and in that case Ahithophel would be the one to suffer." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:428.)

#### (27-15) 2 Samuel 17:1–23

Ahithophel clearly understood David's vulnerability at this stage of the revolt. Had his counsel been followed, the result would have been critical for David. Twelve thousand men against the small band who had fled with David would have been a disaster for David. Hushai saved the situation for David, first, by convincing Absalom that a delay while he gathered more strength to his army would be wise, and, second, by warning David to flee in case Ahithophel's counsel was followed.

Ahithophel knew his only hope lay in Absalom's success. Since he was a traitor to King David, if David won, his fate was sealed. Understanding perfectly that a delay meant the ultimate defeat of Absalom and David's return to the throne, Ahithophel returned to his home and, after putting things in order, committed suicide.

#### (27-16) 2 Samuel 18:1–17. The Revolution Comes to an End

Absalom's delay to gather a larger army provided David with enough time to prepare for the coming battle. He gathered the people who were loyal to him into a formidable army of his own, received supplies from those east of the Jordan (see 2 Samuel 17:27–29), and chose a site where the terrain would work in his favor (see 2 Samuel 18:8).

In spite of Absalom's treachery and rebellion, David still entreated his generals to deal kindly with him if they caught him. Joab, as usual, took matters into his own hands and ignored David's request.

#### (27-17) 2 Samuel 18:19–33. Why Did Ahimaaz Insist on Running to David with the News?

"It appears that Ahimaaz, the priestly son of Zadok, wished to cushion the blow of the bad news to the king that his son was dead; but it was to no avail, for tragedy had been in the making for a long time in the lives of David and Absalom and the

climax had to come one day in one way or another. What David would have given at the climax to have voided the process would have been needed much sooner. How pathetic that lament:

O my son Absalom  
My son, my son Absalom,  
Would God I had died for thee!  
O Absalom  
My son,  
My son!"

(Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:188.)

### (27-18) 2 Samuel 19:1-16

David bore the tragedy so bitterly that he nearly lost the kingdom by insulting those who had defended him. He insisted upon lamenting the death of one against whom his loyal subjects had fought in order to save their king. Joab's harsh words brought David around. Though Joab's counsel was needed and justified, his words were harsh and disrespectful and probably contributed to David's decision to replace him as commanding general.

In his attempts to reconcile the unrest in the kingdom, David not only accepted the repentant spirit of all the tribes (see vv. 9-10) but sent emissaries to Judah, among whom the rebellion had first broken out, and promised them forgiveness, pledging that Amasa, Absalom's general, would replace Joab (see vv. 11-13).

"So far as the fact itself is concerned, it was certainly wise of David to send to the members of his own tribe, and appeal to them not to be behind the rest of the tribes in taking part in his restoration to the kingdom, lest it should appear as though the tribe of Judah, to which David himself belonged, was dissatisfied with his victory, since it was in that tribe that the rebellion itself first broke out; and this would inevitably feed the jealousy between Judah and the rest of the tribes. But it was not only unwise, but unjust, to give to Amasa, the traitor-general of the rebels, a promise on oath that he should be commander-in-chief in the place of Joab; for even if the promise was only given privately at first, the fact that it had been given could not remain a secret from Joab very long, and would be sure to stir up his ambition, and lead him to the commission of fresh crimes, and in all probability the enmity of this powerful general would become dangerous to the throne of David. For however Joab might have excited David's anger by slaying Absalom, and by the offensive manner in which he had reproved the king for giving way to his grief, David ought to have suppressed his anger in his existing circumstances, and ought not to have rendered evil for evil, especially as he was not only about to pardon Amasa's crime, but even to reward him as one of his faithful servants." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 2:2:445-46.)

It is almost as though after his sin with Bath-sheba and the murder of Uriah the light that gave David his political genius went out. His actions during this extreme crisis were of blind loyalty to an evil son and of one foolish decision after another.

### (27-19) 2 Samuel 19:41-20:2. What Implications for the Future Are in This Rift between the Ten Tribes and the Tribe of Judah?

As David and his armies returned to Jerusalem after paying tribute to Barzillai (see 2 Samuel 19:31-40), a violent quarrel broke out between the leaders of Judah and the leaders of the other tribes, who felt that Judah was monopolizing David. As a result of this conflict, the leaders of the other tribes of Israel stormed off in high vexation, leaving Judah alone to escort David back to Jerusalem. This incident portended a whole new round of revolution.

The revolt of Sheba (see 2 Samuel 20:1-2) could scarcely have been a real threat to David's rule, but once again the animosity of the other tribes was manifested against Judah and resulted in the eventual division of the house of Israel (see 1 Kings 12).

### (27-20) 2 Samuel 20:3. Why Were David's Ten Concubines Forced into the Status of Widowhood While David Still Lived?

According to the Mosaic law (see Leviticus 18), married women once defiled could not once again enjoy the married state. A Bible scholar explained David's actions:

"He could not well divorce them; he could not punish them, as they were not in the transgression; he could no more be familiar with them, because they had been defiled by his son; and to have married them to other men might have been dangerous to the state: therefore he shut them up and *fed them*—made them quite comfortable, and they continued as widows to their death." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:364.)

### (27-21) 2 Samuel 20:4-13. The Assassination of Amasa

This account is somewhat difficult to follow since it is not always clear to which person certain pronouns refer. David commissioned Amasa to gather his forces and pursue Sheba, the leader of the new rebellion. For some reason Amasa tarried (see v. 5), so David sent Joab's men after Sheba. Amasa and Joab met at Gibeon. Although the King James Version makes it sound as though Amasa had on Joab's clothing, the narrator was really describing what Joab was wearing:

"It appears that this was not a military garment; and that Joab had no arms but a short sword, which he had concealed in his girdle; and this *sword*, or *knife*, was so loose in its sheath that it could be easily drawn out. It is thought farther, that Joab, in passing to Amasa, stumbled, (for so some of the versions, and able critics, understand the words *it fell out*,) and that the sword fell down when he stumbled; that he took it up with his left hand as if he had no bad intention; and then, taking Amasa by the beard with his right hand, pretending to kiss him, he, with his sword in his left hand, ripped up his bowels. This seems to be the meaning of this very obscure verse." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:364-65.)

Joab then appointed a soldier to stand by Amasa's body and charge the people who passed by to join

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with Joab in support of David and pursue the rebel Sheba. Amasa was, evidently, not instantly killed by Joab's blow, and the people were so shocked at the sight of him that the soldier finally rolled him off the road and covered him with a sheet so that the people would not tarry.

**(27-22) 2 Samuel 21:1–14. Did God Require the Sacrifice of Saul's Sons to Alleviate the Famine in the Land?**

"This terrible episode must have been done in [the] days of David's spiritual deterioration. The law would have not permitted sons to be put to death for the guilt of a father or a forefather (Deuteronomy 24:16 is explicit on that; see another Numbers 35:33). It cannot have been a revelation from the Lord that either required or approved this deed done 'to avenge the Gibeonites'—some of whom Saul had slain in spite of the ancient promise of Joshua that they might live in Israel.

"It is a pathetic picture to envision the innocent mother of innocent sons guarding their bodies from the birds and beasts; and it is repulsive to read that after all this was done 'God was entreated for the land.' This is apostate theology, comparable to that of the Canaanite-Baal religions.

"The text is somewhat corrupted too, and the name Michal must be a mistake for Merab, for it was Merab who married Adriel. If it is indeed Michal, David's wife and Saul's daughter, who is meant, this is a very bitter ending to their relationships as man and wife." (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2:40.)

**(27-23) 2 Samuel 21:15–22. How Did This Battle with the Philistines Reflect David's Youth?**

David by now was in his sixties, an old man so far as military service was concerned. Nevertheless, he personally led his forces against the Philistines. In the midst of this battle David found himself confronted by one of the sons of the giants, perhaps even a son of Goliath. He apparently was very large and immediately began bearing down on the man who was famous for killing Goliath. For David this was a life and death struggle, and the scripture states that "David waxed faint" (2 Samuel 21:15). Fortunately, David's friends were near by, and Abishai stepped in and slew the giant.

After the battle was over, David was told, "Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel" (2 Samuel 21:17). As king, David was like a lamp or guide to his people, and they did not want that lamp extinguished. David undoubtedly reflected on the days of his youth and remembered his victory over Goliath, but now he realized he must be content with the less active affairs of state because of his old age.

**(27-24) 2 Samuel 22:1–23:7**

These verses contain a psalm of David's in which he praises God for all His goodness to him. In many respects the poetic statement here resembles the

Eighteenth Psalm, which was apparently written about the same time. David used the occasion to reaffirm his allegiance to and love for the Lord. Note his brief but powerful summary of what constitutes good political leadership (see 2 Samuel 23:3).

**(27-25) 2 Samuel 23:8–39**

The exploits recorded here were probably taken from various times in David's life and placed together at this point. It appears that David's request for water from Bethlehem (see v. 16) had jeopardized the lives of these three in carrying out his request. In contrition for his thoughtlessness, he denied himself the fruit of their labor.

**(27-26) 2 Samuel 24:1–10. Why Was the Lord Angry with David for Numbering the People When "He Moved David" to Do So?**

"God could not be angry with David for numbering the people if *he moved him to do it*: but in the parallel place [see 1 Chronicles 21:1] it is expressly said, *Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel*. David, in all probability, slackening in his piety and confidence toward God, and meditating some extension of his dominions without the Divine counsel or command, was naturally curious to know whether the number of fighting men in his empire was sufficient for the work which he had projected. . . . He therefore orders Joab and the captains to take an exact account of all the effective men in Israel and Judah. God is justly displeased with this conduct, and determines that the *props* of his vain ambition shall be taken away, either by *famine, war, or pestilence*." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 2:377.)

**(27-27) 2 Samuel 24:18–25. The Threshing Floor of Araunah**

In an attempt to appease the Lord and stay the plague that was smiting Israel, David purchased the threshing floor (a large open area where the rock base is flat and the grain could be threshed and winnowed without getting mixed with dirt) from Araunah and there built an altar to the Lord. This site later became the place where Solomon built his temple (see Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Araunah," 1:140).

## POINTS TO PONDER

**(27-28)** We have now finished our study of the life of David, king of Israel. It was a life of greatness, greatness of triumph and greatness of tragedy. As a final study of David's life, review 1 Samuel 17 to 2 Samuel 24 and complete either A, B, or C below. (*Note:* This review can be done quickly by looking at the chapter summaries in the Bible or by reviewing the subheadings for chapters 25 to 27 in this manual.)

A. Make a teaching outline of the major events and decisions in David's life. In other words, assume you were going to give a lesson on the life of David. What kinds of things would you include? How would you organize your lesson?

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B. Using the following statement by Elder Sterling W. Sill, draw illustrations of the principle of the law of the harvest from the life of David. How did he reap what he sowed? Was this process true of good things as well as bad? Show how each item you choose is related to what Elder Sill has said.

“One of the distinguishing characteristics of our world is that it is a place of law and order, and the basic law of creation is God’s fundamental law of compensation. It says that all work must be paid for, that we can no more do a good thing without sometime, in some way receiving a reward, than we can do an evil thing without suffering a penalty. In everything that we do, including the very thoughts that we think, we are subject to this interesting, undeviating eternal law. It is just as universal in its operation as are the laws of gravity, electricity, light or heat. It is never set aside, it is never suspended

or restricted, and it governs in every department of human activity. Nothing is ever denied to well-directed effort and nothing is ever achieved without it.

“The Lord himself gave this law its clearest expression when he said, ‘There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.’ (D&C 130:20–21) It is a thrilling challenge, that we may have any blessing that we are willing to live for. And the primary law of the universe is this immutable, inexorable, irrevocable law of the harvest that says, ‘Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.’ (Gala. 6:7)” (*The Law of the Harvest*, p. 11.)

C. Write a short paper of no more than two pages entitled “What a Latter-day Saint Can Learn from the Life of David the King.”



5 וַיִּקְרָא עֲדוֹתַי בְּיַעֲקֹב וַתּוֹרֶה שְׁמִי בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל  
 אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֶת־אֲבוֹתַינִי לְהוֹדִיעַם לְבְנֵיהֶם׃  
 6 לְמַעַן יִדְעוּ דְּוֹר אַחֲרוֹן בְּנֵים יוֹלְדוּ  
 יִקְרְמוּ וַיִּסְפְּרוּ לְבְנֵיהֶם׃ וַיִּשְׂיִמוּ בְּאֱלֹהִים כָּסֶלָם  
 וְלֹא יִשְׁכַּחוּ מַעַלְלֵי־אֵל וּמַצֹּתָיו יִנְצְרוּ׃  
 8 וְלֹא יִהְיוּ כְּאֲבוֹתָם דְּוֹר סוֹרֵר וּמָרָה  
 דְּוֹר לֹא־הַכִּין לִבּוֹ וְלֹא־נִאֲמְנָה אֶת־אֵל רוֹחָו׃  
 9 בְּנֵי־אֲפָרַיִם נוֹשְׁקֵי רוֹמֵי־קֶשֶׁת הִפְכוּ בַיּוֹם קָרְבִי׃  
 10 לֹא שָׁמְרוּ בְרִית אֱלֹהִים וּכְתוּרָתוֹ מֵאֲנוּ לְלַכֵּת׃  
 11 וַיִּשְׁכַּחוּ עֲלִילוֹתָיו וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר הִרְאָם׃  
 12 נִגְדוּ אֲבוֹתָם עֲשָׂה פֶלֶא בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שִׁדְה־צֶעַן׃  
 13 בְּקַע יָם וַיַּעֲבִירָם וַיַּצַּב־מַיִם כְּמוֹ־נָד׃  
 14 וַיִּנְחָם בְּעַנְּנֵי יוֹמָם וְכָל־הַלַּיְלָה בְּאֹר אֵשׁ׃  
 15 וַיִּבְקַע צֻרִים בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיִּשְׁקֵם בְּתַהֲמוֹתֵי רֶבְהִי׃  
 16 וַיּוֹצֵא נוֹזְלִים מִסֵּלַע וַיּוֹרֵד בְּנִהְרֹת מַיִם׃  
 17 וַיּוֹסִיפוּ עוֹד לַחֲטֹא־לוֹ לְמַרְוֹת עֲלִיּוֹן בַּצִּיָּה׃  
 18 וַיִּנְסוּ־אֵל בְּלִבָּבָם לְשֹׂאֵל־אֶכֶל לְנַפְשָׁם׃  
 19 וַיִּידְבְּרוּ בְּאֱלֹהִים אָמְרוּ הַיּוֹכֵל אֵל לַעֲרֹךְ שְׁלֹחַן בַּמִּדְבָּר

# Hebrew Literary Styles

## G

## (G-1) Hebrew Poetry

Psalms is included in that part of the Old Testament known as the wisdom literature or the poetic books. The books usually included in this classification are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. (*Note:* Joseph Smith indicated that “the Song of Solomon is not inspired scripture”; Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Song of Solomon.” It will therefore not be treated in this manual.) But it would be a serious misconception to think that there are no poetic or literary passages elsewhere in the Old Testament. There are whole passages of poetic songs in the historical books (for example, see the song of Moses in Exodus 15 and the song of Deborah and Barak in Judges 5). The prophetic writings, especially Isaiah, are also replete with passages of poetic quality and form. While this Hebrew literature is as commonly spoken of as poetry, this name is misleading, for it is greatly different from Western poetry, whether rhyming verse or blank verse. It is beneficial to the study of Psalms for one to understand some of the basic elements of the ancient Israelite literary styles before studying the actual writings. Four important characteristics are of note: parallelism, chiasmus, figurative imagery, and dualism.

## (G-2) Hebrew Poetry Is Based on Parallelism, or “Thought-Rhythm”

“The chief characteristics . . . of Hebrew poetry are found in the peculiar form in which it gives utterance to its ideas. This form has received the name of ‘parallelism.’ Ewald justly prefers the term ‘thought-rhythm,’ since the rhythm, the music, the peculiar flow and harmony of the verse and of the poem, lie in the distribution of the sentiment in such a manner that the full import does not come out in less than a distich [a poetic form containing two lines; a couplet].” (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v., “Poetry, Hebrew,” 3:1357).

“The word ‘poetry’ may suggest to us a highly specialized branch of literary art, produced by the few for the few. But this would be a misleading term for any part of the Old Testament. A closer modern equivalent would be the measured oratory of, for instance, a Winston Churchill—

We shall fight on the beaches,  
We shall fight on the landing-grounds,  
We shall fight in the fields and in the streets

—in which reiteration (or other devices) and rhythm join to make a passage doubly memorable and impressive.

“Reiteration was a favourite Canaanite technique, and is also a mark of some of the earliest biblical poetry:

Spoil of dyed stuffs for Sisera,  
Spoil of dyed stuffs embroidered,  
Two pieces of dyed work embroidered for my neck  
as spoil (Judges 5:30).

“The rhythm, though tighter than this in the original, is a flexible matter of stresses, or beats, not of fixed numbers of syllables. Most often there will be three stresses to a line, matched by another three in the following line which pairs with it to form a couplet. But this pattern may be varied by an occasional longer or shorter couplet, or by a triplet, in the same passage; or again the predominating rhythm may be of couplets in which a three-beat line is answered by another of two beats:

How are the mighty fallen  
in the midst of the battle!

“This last rhythm, with its touch of fading or drooping, is often used for taunts or laments (as in the book of Lamentations), and this had suggested the name *Qinah* (lament) for it, although its use is not confined to such themes.

“*What is almost the hallmark of biblical poetry, in contrast to our own, is parallelism: the echoing of the thought of one line of verse in a second line which is its partner:*

Has he said, and will he not do it?  
Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?  
(Numbers 23:19).

“There are many varieties of this, from virtual repetition to amplification or antithesis. It has a dignity and spaciousness which allows time for the thought to make its effect on the hearer, and often also the opportunity to present more than one facet of a matter:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord  
(Isaiah 55:8).

“Bishop Lowth, whose lectures on Hebrew poetry in 1741 first introduced the name ‘parallelism’ for this poetic style, pointed out that *this structure, based as it is on meaning, survives translation into the prose of any language with remarkably little loss*, unlike the poetry that relies on complex metre or a special vocabulary.” (Derek Kidner, “Poetry and Wisdom Literature,” in Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans’ Handbook to the Bible*, p. 316; emphasis added.)

"Lowth distinguished three chief types of parallelism: a. *Synonymous parallelism*. This is a repetition of the same thought with equivalent expressions, the first line or stich reinforcing the second, giving a distich or couplet:

'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh;  
The Lord will have them in derision' (Psa. 2:4).

b. *Antithetic parallelism* consists of the repetition of a contrasting thought in the second line to accentuate the thought of the first:

'The young lions do lack and suffer hunger:  
But they that seek Jehovah shall not want any good thing.' (Psa. 34:10).

c. *Synthetic parallelism* is a building up of thought, with each succeeding line adding to the first:

'And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,  
That bringeth forth fruit in its season,  
Whose leaf shall not wither  
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper' (Psa. 1:3).

This basic pattern of Hebrew poetry conveys thoughts pleasing to the mind and produces a musical cadence pleasing to the ear. There are numbers of variations in parallelism discovered since Lowth's day, such as *inverted parallelism* (Psa. 137:5, 6; Psa. 30:8-10). This occurs in a quatrain when the first line is parallel to the fourth instead of the second and the intervening lines are parallel." (Unger, *Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "poetry, Old Testament," p. 874.)

### (G-3) Chiasmus in the Old Testament

The last form mentioned above has also been called chiasmus, from the Greek letter *chi* (which resembles the letter X), because lines connecting the parallelisms form an X. For example, note the diagram of the parallels in Psalm 124:7:

Our soul is *escaped* as a bird out of the *snare* of the fowlers:  
The *snare* is broken, and we are *escaped*.

In other words, chiasmus is inverted parallelism.

"Chiasmus was first noticed by a few nineteenth century pioneer theologians in Germany and England, but the idea had to wait until the 1930s before it found an ardent exponent, Nils Lund, who was able to lay the principle before the eyes of the world in a convincing way. . . . Today, articles on the subject are quite common.

"What is it that has drawn this attention? To see this for ourselves, we had best begin with an example of chiasmus, and a convenient one is to be found in Psalms 3:7-8, which reads (translating literally from the Hebrew):

"7. Save me, O my God, for thou has smitten all my enemies on the cheek-bone;

"8. The teeth of the wicked thou has broken; to Jehovah, the salvation.

"What's so odd about that? Well, a careful look at these verses reveals something that at first glance is not altogether obvious: namely, that the words occur in a peculiar sequence. Everything gets said *twice*, and in the repetition everything gets said backwards, back to front, or in a *reverse order*. Consider what happens when we rewrite these verses by arranging them in the following way:

a Save me,  
b O my God  
c for thou has smitten  
d all my enemies  
e on the cheekbone;  
e The teeth  
d of the wicked  
c thou hast broken;  
b to Jehovah,  
a the salvation.

It now become becomes quite clear to us that the repetition in these verses is not just a haphazard redundancy. It is an ordered reversal of the original sequence of the psalmist's thoughts.

"Scholars in fact find that many passages follow this same pattern of inverted repetition, and when they do, they call them chiasmus. . . .

"Some chiasms are relatively straightforward, such as the example in Genesis 7:21-23 (translating literally from the Hebrew):

a There died on the earth  
b all birds,  
c cattle,  
d beasts and creeping things,  
e man;  
f all life  
g died  
g and was destroyed.  
f Every living thing  
e both man,  
d creeping things,  
c cattle,  
b birds,  
a were destroyed from the earth.

Other chiasms, as we shall see, are much more complex.

"It is also important for us to notice that chiasmus is not just a simple repetition; it also involves an *intensification* or an aspect of completion in the second half. Compare, for example, the more powerful ideas of Psalms 3:8 over 3:7: the strength of the teeth over the passive nature of the cheekbone; or getting broken vis-a-vis getting smitten; being wicked instead of just being an enemy. Quite consistently, therefore, a shift can be seen to occur at the center of a chiasm so that the bigger, more powerful, or more intense ideas will appear in the second half of chiasmus passages.

"Chiasmus is not limited to short passages.

It may also be used to give order, emphasis, and completeness to longer passages, such as is the case in the 58th Psalm:

- a Do ye indeed O gods speak righteousness?  
Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?
- b Nay in the heart ye work wickedness,  
Ye weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.
- c The wicked are estranged from the womb . . .
- d Their poison is like the poison of a serpent . . .
- e O God  
break  
their teeth in their mouth;
- e the great teeth of the young lions  
break out
- O Jehovah
- d They shall melt away like waters, like a  
snail will melt as it goes along . . .
- c Abortions of a woman that have not beheld  
the sun . . .
- b The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance;  
he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
- a And men shall say, there is a reward for righteousness.  
Surely there is a God that judgeth the earth.

“By comparing each emphasized word in the first half of this psalm with the corresponding emphasized word in the second half, you can see the interesting chiasmic order and the contrasting intensifications that have been written into this psalm. Chiasmus makes this poem harmonic, complete, and brilliant. No end is left untied. No thought is left unbalanced. And yet it flows freely and naturally from one point to the next and back again. To an ancient Israelite this was beautiful, this was metrical, this was inspirational.

“A further phenomenon that we can see in the structure of the 58th Psalm is the importance of the chiasmic *turning point*. Notice how the short prayer at the center of this psalm is marked and spotlighted. The prayer is set in the center for the very purpose of showing how prayer to the Lord God can turn everything completely around. After the prayer the strength of the wicked melts away like the slime of a snail, while the requests of the righteous are granted.

“Needless to say, the discovery of chiasmus has given us plenty to think about. It has led us to think about the nature of our sacred literature and to reevaluate the skill and deliberation with which it was written. By it many passages that were previously obscure have now become clear. Other places that once seemed disorganized have now regained their original orderliness. Above all, we have learned once again that, if we are to judge the literature of another culture, we must not judge it according to our likes and dislikes. The fact that chiasmus was a unique and prevalent form of Hebrew writing requires us to take it into account when we consider the literary accomplishments of ancient Israel.” (John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon; or, the Book of Mormon Does It Again,” *New Era*, Feb. 1972, pp. 6–7.)

#### (G-4) Hebrew Literature Is Full of Imagery and Is Highly Figurative

As explained in Enrichment Section C, the use of symbolic language is characteristic of Old Testament writings. Figurative language and rich imagery abound, especially in the poetic books. Every

rhetorical device is used, including alliteration, hyperbole, simile, metaphor, personification, and metonymy. Sidney B. Sperry used an interesting analogy to illustrate a fundamental difference between the Eastern and Western ways of using language:

“Rudyard Kipling was certainly right when he said: ‘Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.’

“As Latter-day Saints, we should keep Kipling’s saying in mind when we read the scriptures. We oftentimes read our Bible as though its peoples were English or American and interpret their sayings in terms of our own background and psychology. But the Bible is actually an Oriental book. It was written centuries ago by Oriental people and primarily for Oriental people. . . .

“It may be of interest to contrast the speech of modern and ancient Palestinians with our own. In thought and speech the Oriental is an artist; the Occidental, on the other hand, may be thought of as an architect. When speaking, the Oriental paints a scene whose total effect is true, but the details may be inaccurate; the Occidental tends to draw diagrams accurate in detail. When our Lord spoke of the mustard seed as ‘less than all the seeds that be in the earth,’ and the plant as ‘greater than all herbs’ (Mark 4:31–32), he was speaking as an Oriental. Any good botanist knows that the mustard seed (sinapi) of which Jesus spoke, though small, is not the smallest of all seeds, nor is the plant greater than all herbs.” (“Hebrew Manners and Customs,” *Ensign*, May 1972, pp. 29–30.)

Another scholar wrote: “Nowhere is the genius of Hebrew poetry more apparent than in its imagery. It lays heaven and earth under tribute. It steals music from the morning stars, and light from the bridegroom who needs no virginal lamps. Its eternal summer fades not, and its snows are undefiled. It rules the raging of the sea, it drives on the clouds, and rides on the wings of the wind. It makes the royal gold richer, the myrrh more fragrant, and the frankincense sweeter. The offerings it takes from the shepherd suffer no death, and his flock is folded in evergreen pastures. The bread of its harvest will never waste, the oil from its press never fail, and its wine is for ever new. So long as men can breathe, its eternal lines will form the litany of the praying heart. The strings it touches are the strings of the harp of God.

“The rhythm of Hebrew poetry is not the measured beat of the earth-locked body. It is the majestic rhythm of the soaring spirit, felt only by him who has the music of heaven in his soul. It rises above the metrical to a loftier plane and to a new dimension—the dimension of the spirit, where they who worship God worship Him in spirit and in truth. “Its proper object is the Highest, the God of heaven and earth; its source and fount, the depths of the God-hungry heart. Its great theme is the personal encounter with the living God.” (Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “poetry,” p. 1008.)

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### (G-5) The Use of Dualism in Hebrew Writings

One difficult aspect of Hebrew literature is the frequency with which certain writers use figures or images or write of things that have a dual meaning. Such dualism is similar to esoteric language, which is “designed for or understood by the specially initiated alone,” that is, language “restricted to a small group” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1979 ed., s.v. “esoteric”). For example, suppose a person in a crowd of strangers wants to determine if there are any Latter-day Saints present without openly asking. He stands on a bench and begins to sing, “Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear” (*Hymns*, no. 30). He is using esoteric language. Members of the Church would recognize the words instantly, but everyone else would assume that he was only singing a song unfamiliar to them.

The same technique was often used in Old Testament writings. Special messages of spiritual importance were placed in apparently mundane or spiritually insignificant passages. But to the spiritually initiated, the spiritually sensitive, the second and more important meaning leaps out clearly. Isaiah wrote a “proverb” (a taunting or judgmental speech) against the “king of Babylon” (Isaiah 14:4). It is a masterful condemnation of the ruler of the empire that would shortly become Israel’s primary enemy and eventual destroyer. In the midst of the prophecy of this downfall is this passage: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!” (Isaiah 14:12).

Most scholars simply conclude that Lucifer, which in Hebrew means “brilliant star” or “morning star”, was a poetic name for the king of Babylon, since kings and other important personages were sometimes referred to as stars (Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, s.v. “Lucifer,” p. 261). And indeed the whole passage (Isaiah 14:4–22) makes perfect sense if applied to the head of the Babylonian government. But Satan’s name was Lucifer and the falling from heaven represented his being cast out of God’s presence after his rebellion led to the war in heaven (See D&C 76:25–28; Moses 1:1–4). In addition, *Babylon* came to refer to the world and Satan’s dominions (see Revelation 17:5; D&C 1:16; 133:14). Read the passage again in light of the other meanings for *Babylon* and *Lucifer*. A whole new meaning, equally valid and meaningful, becomes apparent. Which is the correct interpretation? The answer—and one key to understanding Hebrew literature—is that both are correct. The passage was written in literary style.

Prophecies concerning Zion provide another example of dualism. *Zion* was a common title for the

city of Jerusalem, and by extension, the covenant people (just as one says Washington or Moscow to mean the United States or Russia). Most scholars interpret Zion references as referring to ancient Israel, and undoubtedly they did. But to Latter-day Saints, *Zion* has modern implications, which give deeper significance to such passages (see Isaiah 2:1–4). Old Jerusalem (*Zion*) has again been set up in the tops of the mountains of Israel, and many Jews from all over the world have flowed unto it. But the establishment of the restored Church in Salt Lake City and in other places in the tops of the mountains has also fulfilled this prophecy. So here is another classic example of prophetic and literary dualism.

Still another example is the prophecies concerning the scattering and gathering of Israel. These prophecies have been fulfilled several times in different ways. The Jews were carried away captive by Babylon and returned seventy years later. They were scattered again by the Romans and are now returning to the land of their forefathers. The Lamanites, another branch of Israel, have been scattered and are now returning to the Church. Israelites from all over the world are gathering to the true Church.

### (G-6) Summary

The key to understanding such literary styles is the Spirit. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said the following:

“In the final analysis, there is no way—absolutely none (and this cannot be stated too strongly!)—to understand any Messianic prophecy, or any other scripture, except to have the same spirit of prophecy that rested upon the one who uttered the truth in its original form. Scripture comes from God by the power of the Holy Ghost. It does not originate with man. It means only what the Holy Ghost thinks it means. To interpret it, we must be enlightened by the power of the Holy Spirit. As Peter said, ‘No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.’ (2 Pet. 1:20–21.) Truly, it takes a prophet to understand a prophet, and every faithful member of the Church should have ‘the testimony of Jesus’ which ‘is the spirit of prophecy.’ (Rev. 19:10.) Thus, as Nephi says, ‘The words of Isaiah’—and the principle applies to all scripture, all inspired writing, all Messianic prophecies—are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy.’ (2 Ne. 25:4.) This is the sum and substance of the whole matter and an end to all controversy where discovering the mind and will of the Lord is concerned.” (*The Promised Messiah*, p. 44.)



10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends; also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.  
11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house; and they bewailed him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; every man also gave him a piece of money, and gave him a carrying of gold.  
12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a

thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.  
13 He had also seven sons and three daughters.  
14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch.  
15 And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.  
16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.  
17 So Job died, being old and full of days.

# THE BOOK OF PSALMS

## PSALM 1

Blessed are the righteous—The ungodly shall perish.

**B**LESSED is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.  
2 But his delight is in the LORD; and in his law he meditate day and night.  
3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the water, that bringeth forth his fruit in its season; his leaf shall not wither; and whatsoever he shall prosper.

4 The ungodly shall not so; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.  
5 Therefore shall the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.  
6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

## PSALM 2

A Messianic Psalm—The heathen shall rage against the Lord's anointed—The Lord speaks of his Son whom he has begotten.

4 Ps. 26: 4; Jer. 15: 17.  
2a To Abundant Life.  
b In teaching, direction, doctrine.  
c To God, Law of.  
3a Jer. 17: 8 (7-8).  
b Gen. 39: 3 (2-3);  
Moshiah 1: 7; Alma 30:

20; Hel. 12: 1; D&C 9: 13.  
4a Job 21: 18 (17-18); Ps. 83: 13 (2, 13); Hosea 13: 3 (1-4); Morm. 5: 16 (16-18).  
6a To Righteousness,  
b To Godliness.

10a M...  
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heaven rage, and the earth set them...  
I set my king upon my...  
I shall give thee the...  
inheritance, and...  
the earth for...  
break them with a...  
dash them...  
O ye...  
judges of the...  
fear, and...  
angry, when...  
put their...  
PSALM 3  
David, when he fled from...  
Absalom his son.

PSALM 4  
David pleads for mercy—He counsels: Put your trust in the Lord.  
To the chief Musician on Neginoth.  
A Psalm of David.  
HEAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.  
2 O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.  
3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

D&C 19: 15.  
b Rev. 2: 27 (26-28).  
c Isa. 30: 14 (13-14).  
11a To Reverence.  
12a To Blessings.  
b To Trust in God.  
3 1a 2 Sam. 15: 14: 17: 27 (27-29).  
3a To Protection, Divine.  
3a To Salvation.  
4 1a Ps. 34: 4; Micah 7: 7;  
1 Jn. 5: 14 (13-14);

Moshiah 9: 18; Ether 1: 40 (39-40).  
b Ps. 97: 6 (5-6); Rom. 1: 17; 2 Ne. 4: 35; Ether 9: 22; D&C 1: 16.  
c Gen. 35: 3; Ps. 118: 5 (4-6); Isa. 25: 4 (1, 4).  
2a To Shame.  
b To Vanity.  
3a To Setting Apart.  
b To Godliness.

# The Psalms: Songs from the Heart of Israel

## (28-1) Introduction

“Music is part of the language of the Gods. It has been given to man so he can sing praises to the Lord. It is a means of expressing, with poetic words and in melodious tunes, the deep feelings of rejoicing and thanksgiving found in the hearts of those who have testimonies of the divine Sonship and who know of the wonders and glories wrought for them by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Music is both in the voice and in the heart. Every true saint finds his heart full of songs of praise to his Maker. Those whose voices can sing forth the praises found in their hearts are twice blest. ‘Be filled with the Spirit,’ Paul counseled, ‘Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.’ (Eph. 5:18–19.) Also: ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.’ (Col. 3:16.)

“Unfortunately not all music is good and edifying. Lucifer uses much that goes by the name of music to lead people to that which does not edify and is not of God. Just as language can be used to bless or curse, so music is a means of singing praises to the Lord or of planting evil thoughts and desires in the minds of men. Of that music which meets the divine standard and has the Lord’s approval, he says: ‘My soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.’ (D&C 25:12.)

“In view of all that the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, ought we not to sing praises to his holy name forever?” (McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, p. 553.)

The psalms in Hebrew are called *Tehillim*, a word coming from the Hebrew word *halal*, “to praise” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 3:199). The same root forms the word *hallelujah*, meaning “praise to Yah” (Jehovah). Unlike some modern songs that tend to depress the spirit, the psalms have the power to lift one toward God. The psalms are a collection of some of the very finest of the world’s inspirational literature.

## Instructions to Students

Because of the large number of psalms, no specific reading assignment is given in the book of Psalms. The objective of this chapter is to introduce you to the book of Psalms so that you can beneficially study it on your own. To do this you should—

1. Read Enrichment Section G, “Hebrew Literary Styles,” if you have not already done so.
2. Read Notes and Commentary below, which will provide background information on the psalms. (*Note:* No specific interpretive commentary is provided in this chapter for any of the psalms.)
3. Select fifteen psalms and study them carefully. At least three of these psalms should be from Psalm 22, 51, 119, 122, or 137.
4. Complete any one of the three exercises in Points to Ponder in connection with your study of the psalms. (Individual study students may be asked by their instructor to complete more than one of the exercises.)

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY ON PSALMS

### (28-2) The Psalms

Anciently the Jews divided the Old Testament into three main sections: the Law (the first five books of Moses), the Prophets, and the Writings. The Psalms constituted the major portion of the third division.

The Hebrew name for Psalms was *Tehillim*, or songs of praise. Our title comes from the Greek psalterion, which is formed from the root *psallo*, meaning “to sing” (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 3:199).

Anciently the Hebrews divided the one hundred and fifty psalms into five separate books that included, in today’s Bible, Psalms 1 through 41, 42 through 72, 73 through 89, 90 through 106, and 107 through 150. At the end of each division, the break is marked with a doxology, or formal declaration of God’s power and glory (see Psalms 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48). Psalm 150 is itself a doxology, using the Hebrew *Hallelujah*, “praise ye the Lord,” at its beginning and end, as well as the word *praise* eleven other times. It is a fitting conclusion to the *Tehillim*, “songs of praise.”

**(28-3) Who Wrote the Psalms?**

There is a great debate among biblical scholars about the authorship of the Psalms. Superscriptions on many of the Psalms themselves attribute them to various ancient authors:

Psalms with no superscription ..... 18  
 Psalms attributed to David ..... 73  
 Psalms attributed to Solomon ..... 2  
 Psalms attributed to Asaph  
 (a musician in David’s court) ..... 12  
 Psalms attributed to the sons of Korah (Levites) ..... 11  
 Psalms attributed to Heman  
 (a leader of the temple music)..... 1  
 Psalms attributed to Ethan  
 (a leader of the temple music)..... 1  
 Psalms attributed to Moses ..... 1  
 Psalms with song titles..... 4  
 Hallelujah (“Praise Ye Jehovah”) Psalms ..... 18  
 Psalms of Degree (see Reading 28-4 for a definition)..... 15

“Although modern critics . . . customarily deny the Davidic authorship of the Psalms, there is ample internal evidence that David, the great poet and musician of Israel, was the principal author of the Psalter. This position, despite the contention of negative criticism, is indicated by the following reasons: (1) David’s name is famous in the O. T. period for music and song and is closely associated with holy liturgy (II Sam. 6:5–15; I Chron. 16:4; II Chron. 7:6; 29:30). (2) David was especially endowed by the Holy Spirit (I Sam. 23:1, 2; Mark 12:36; Acts 2:25–31; 4:25, 26). (3) David’s music and poetical gifts appear indelibly interwoven on the pages of O. T. history. He is called ‘the sweet psalmist of Israel’ (II Sam. 23:1). He was a skilled performer on the lyre (I Sam. 16:16–18). He was the author of the masterful elegy written upon the death of Saul and Jonathan (II Sam. 1:19–27). He is referred to as a model poet-musician by the prophet Amos (Amos 6:5). (4) Much internal evidence in the psalms themselves point to David’s authorship. Most of the songs attributed to him reflect some period of his life, such as Psa. 23, 51 and 57. In line with this evidence of Scripture, a number of the psalms indicate Davidic authorship. (5) Certain psalms are cited as Davidic in Scripture in general. Acts 4:25, 26 so cites Psalm 2. Acts 2:25–28 so cites Psalm 16. Romans 4:6–8 cites Psalm 32. Acts 1:16–20 thus refers to Psalm 69. Also, Rom. 11:9, 10. [See also] Acts 1:20 with Psalm 109; Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36, 37; Luke 20:42–44; Acts 2:34 with Psalm 110.” (Unger, *Bible Dictionary*, s.v., “Psalms,” pp. 898–99.)

**(28-4) What Is the Significance of the Unusual Words Found As Subtitles throughout the Psalms?**

In addition to the superscription indicating the author of the psalm, there are often instructions which contain words transliterated from the Hebrew and left untranslated. Generally, they seem to have been specific instructions to the singer or the

musicians, or to have served as a note about the nature of the particular song.

“Of the terms left *untranslated* or *obscure* in our Bible, it may be well to offer some explanation in this place, taking them in alphabetical order for the sake of convenience. . . .

“(1) *Aijeleth Shahar, Hind of the Morning*, i.e. the sun, or the dawn of day. This occurs only in [Psalm 22], where we may best take it to designate a song, perhaps commencing with these words, or bearing this name, to the melody of which the psalm was to be sung. . . .

“(2) *Alamoth* [Psalm 46], probably signifies *virgins*, and hence denotes music for female voices, or the *treble*. . . .

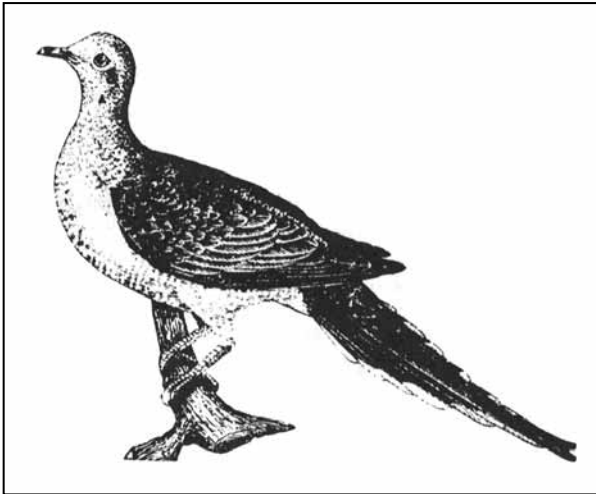
“(3) *Al-taschith, Destroy Thou Not*, is found over [Psalms 57–59, 75], and signifies, by general consent, some well-known ode beginning with the expression [compare Isaiah 65:8], to the tune of which these compositions were to be sung.

“(4) *Degrees* appears over fifteen Psalms [120–34], called *Songs of Degrees*, and has been explained in various ways, of which the following are the chief. (a) The ancients understood by it *stairs* or *steps*, . . . and in accordance with this, Jewish writers relate . . . that these Psalms were *sung on fifteen steps*, leading from the court of Israel to the court of the women. This explanation is now exploded. . . . (b) Luther, whom Tholuck is inclined to follow, renders the title *a song in the higher choir*, supposing the Psalms to have been sung from an elevated place or ascent, or with elevated voice. (c) Gesenius, Delitzsch and De Wette think the name refers to a peculiar rhythm in these songs, by which the sense advances by *degrees*, and so *ascends* from clause to clause. (d) According to the most prevalent and probable opinion, the title signifies *song of the ascents*, or *pilgrim song*, meaning a song composed for, or sung during the journeying of the people up to Jerusalem, whether as they returned from Babylon, or as they stately repaired to the national solemnities. . . . Journeys to Jerusalem are generally spoken of as *ascents*, on account of the elevated situation of the city and temple [see Ezra 7:9; Psalm 122:4]. This explanation of the name is favored by the brevity and the contents of these songs.

“(5) *Gittith* appears over [Psalms 8, 81, 84], and is of very uncertain meaning, though not improbably it signifies an instrument or tune brought from the city of *Gath*. . . .

“(6) *Higgaion* is found over [Psalm 9:16], and probably means either *musical sound*, according to the opinion of most, . . . or *meditation* according to Tholuck and Hengstenberg.

“(7) *Jeduthun* is found over [Psalms 39, 62, 67], and is generally taken for the name of choristers descended from Jeduthun, of whom we read in [1 Chronicles 25:1, 3], as one of David’s three chief musicians or leaders of the Temple music. This use of the name Jeduthun for Jeduthunites is perhaps like the well-known use of Israel for the Israelites. It is most probable that in [Psalm 39] Jeduthun himself is meant, and not his family. The Psalm may have been set to music by Jeduthun or set to a theme named for him. . . .



Dove

"(8) *Jonath-elem-rechokim*, the silent dove of them that are afar, or perhaps the dove of the distant terebinth, found only over [Psalm 56], may well denote the name or commencement of an ode to the air of which this psalm was sung.

"(9) *Leannoith* in the title of [Psalm 88] is quite obscure. It is probably the name of a tune.

"(10) *Mahalath* occurs in [Psalms 53 and 88], and denotes, according to some, a sort of flute. . . . Upon *Mahalath Leannoith* [Psalm 88] is perhaps a direction to chant it to the instrument or tune called *mahalath*.

"(11) *Maschil* is found in the title of thirteen psalms. Delitzsch supposes it to mean a meditation. According to Gesenius, De Wette, Ewald, and others, it means a *poem*, so called either for its *skillful* composition or for its *wise and pious* strain. The common interpretation makes it a *didactic poem*, . . . to teach or make wise.

"(12) *Michtam* is prefixed to [Psalms 16, 56–60], and is subject to many conjectures. Many, after Aben Ezra, derive it from the Hebrew word meaning *gold*, and understand a *golden psalm*, so called probably on account of its *excellence*. . . .

"(13) *Muth-labben* [Psalm 9] presents a perfect riddle, owing to the various readings of MSS., and the contradictory conjectures of the learned. Besides the common reading *upon death to the son*, we have the same word that is used in [Psalm 46] (see above *Alamoith*). Some explain it as the *subject* or *occasion* of the song, but most refer it to the music ("*set to Muthlabben*" R.V.). Gesenius, in his last edition, renders it—*with virgins' voice for the boys, i.e., to be sung by a choir of boys in the treble*.

"(14) *Neginoth* [Psalm 4; 61]. . . . This name, from the Hebrew word meaning *to strike a chord*, . . . clearly denotes that the Psalm was to be sung to the accompaniment of *stringed instruments*.

"(15) *Nehiloth* [Psalm 5], comes most likely from the Hebrew word meaning *to perforate*, and denotes *pipes* or *flutes*.

"(16) *Selah* is found seventy-three times in the psalms, generally at the end of a sentence or paragraph;

but in [Psalms 50:19 and 57:3] it stands in the middle of the verse. . . . most authors have agreed in considering this word as somehow relating to the *music*. . . . Probably *selah* was used to direct the singer to be silent, or to pause a little, while the instruments played an interlude or symphony. In [Psalm 9:16] it occurs in the expression *higgaion selah*, which Gesenius, with much probability, renders *instrumental music, pause, i.e. let the instruments strike up a symphony, and let the singer pause*.

"(17) *Sheminith* [Psalms 6 and 7] means properly *eighth*, and denotes either, as some think, an instrument with *eight* chords, or, more likely, music in the lower notes, or *bass*. This is strongly favored by [1 Chronicles 15:20–21], where the terms *alamoth* and *sheminith* clearly denote different *parts* of music: the former answering to our *treble*, and the latter to the *bass*, an *octave* below.

"(18) *Shiggaion* [Psalm 7], denotes, according to Gesenius and Furst, a *song* or *hymn*; but Ewald and Hengstenberg derive it from a Hebrew word meaning *to err* or *wander*; and hence the former understands a *song uttered in the greatest excitement*, the latter *after the manner of dithyrambs, or to dithyrambic measures*.

"(19) *Shushan* [Psalm 60] and in plural *shoshannim* [Psalms 45, 69, 80]. This word commonly signifies *lily*, and probably denotes either an instrument bearing some resemblance to a lily (perhaps *cymbal*), or more probably a melody so named. *Eduth* is joined to it in [Psalms 60 and 80], giving the sense *lily of testimony*, the name of a tune." (Fallows, *Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Psalms," 3:1406–7.)

In addition to these headings, Psalm 119 is divided into twenty-two sections corresponding to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each section is titled with the corresponding name of the Hebrew letter and its English transliteration. This designation shows that in the Hebrew the psalm forms an acrostic. (An *acrostic* is a poem or work of prose in which the initial letter of each line forms its own word or a particular pattern.) In Psalm 119 each of the twenty-two sections has eight lines. Every line in each section begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In other words, verses 1–8 all start in the original with *aleph*, verses 9–16 with *beth*, and so on. In an age when literature was often memorized and transmitted orally, such devices were a valuable aid to memory. Psalms 25 and 34 also form acrostics with each new line beginning with a successive letter, but this design is not evident in the English translation.

#### (28-5) How Does One Explain the Self-Justification and the Calls for Judgments Found in Certain Psalms?

"Christians reading the psalms are bound to come across two special problem areas. One is the self-justification of the psalmists. The other is their tendency to call down and spell out the most terrible vengeance. We cannot simply discard the offending passages. They are part of God's word, alongside passages no one would question. Nor will it do to excuse the psalmists on the grounds that they did

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not possess the teaching of Christ. Because they did possess the law. They knew as well as we do that no man is perfect by God's standards; and they were taught to behave in a loving way to others (Leviticus 19:17-18), even their enemies (Exodus 23:4-5). The law did not license retaliation, it set limits to it (an eye for an eye, *and no more*).

"*Self-justification*. Two comments may help. First, the psalmist is claiming comparative, not absolute righteousness (i.e. in comparison with other people, not measured by God's standards). 'A good man may sin and yet be a good man.' There is all the difference in the world between those who endeavour to do right and those who deliberately set aside the common laws of God and society. David, in particular, was well aware of his shortcomings before God (see Psalms 51 and 19:11-13). Deep repentance features alongside self-justification in the psalms.

"Second, the psalmist is very often picturing himself as 'the indignant plaintiff' putting his case before God the Judge. And, however much we dislike his self-righteous tone, from this point of view he is unquestionably 'in the right'.

"*Cursing and vengeance*. Before we rush to condemn these passages as utterly 'unchristian', there are a few points worth bearing in mind.

"The first concerns God's holiness. In emphasizing God's love we tend today to be over-sentimental about rank evil. But the psalmists knew God as One 'whose eyes are too pure to look upon evil', who cannot countenance wrongdoing. And this is what motivates their call for vengeance on the wicked. God's own character—his good name—demands it.

"Second, the psalmists are realistic in recognizing that right *cannot* triumph without the actual overthrow of evil and punishment of wrong. We pray 'Thy kingdom come'. But we are often horrified when the psalmists spell out what this means—perhaps because we are less in love with good, less opposed to evil than they were; or because many of us have never known real persecution for our faith; or because we value life more than right.

"However, if the psalmists are guilty of actually gloating over the fate of the wicked, if personal vindictiveness creeps in under the cloak of concern for God's good name, we are right to condemn it—and beware. We can ourselves so easily be guilty of the same thing. But in the psalmist's case the wrong thinking (if wrong thinking there is) never carries over into wrong action. There is no question of him taking the law into his own hands. . . . Vengeance is always seen as God's province, and his alone." (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 339.)

#### **(28-6) The Poetry of the Psalms Compared with Other Classical Poetry**

"The *Hebrew Psalter* is the most ancient collection of poems in the world; and was composed long before those in which ancient Greece and Rome have gloried. Among all the *heathen* nations *Greece* had the honour of producing not only the *first*, but also the most sublime, of poets: but the subjects on which they employed their talents had, in general, but little

tendency to meliorate the moral condition of men. Their subjects were either a *fabulous theology*, a *false and ridiculous religion*, *chimerical wars*, *absurd heroism*, *impure love*, *agriculture*, *national sports*, or *hymns in honour of gods* more corrupt than the most profligate of men. Their writings served only to render vice amiable, to honour superstition, to favour the most dangerous and most degrading passions of men, such as impure love, ambition, pride, and impiety. What is said of the *Greek poets* may be spoken with equal truth of their successors and imitators, the *Latin poets*; out of the whole of whose writings it would be difficult to extract even the *common maxims* of a *decent morality*. . . . The Hebrew poets, on the contrary, justly boast the highest antiquity: they were men inspired of God, holy in their lives, pure in their hearts, labouring for the good of mankind; proclaiming by their incomparable compositions the infinite perfections, attributes, and unity of the Divine nature; laying down and illustrating the purest rules of the most refined morality, and the most exalted piety. God, his attributes, his works, and the religion which he has given to man, were the grand subjects of their Divinely inspired muse. By their wonderful art, they not only embellished the history of their own people, because connected intimately with the history of God's providence, but they also, by the light of the Spirit of God that was within them, foretold future events of the most unlikely occurrence, at the distance of many hundreds of years, with such exact circumstantiality as has been the wonder and astonishment of considerate minds in all succeeding generations; a fact which, taken in its connection with the holiness and sublimity of their doctrine; the grandeur, boldness, and truth of their imagery; demonstrates minds under the immediate inspiration of that God whose nature is ineffable, who exists in all points of time, and whose wisdom is infinite." (Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 3:208.)

#### **(28-7) The Messianic Nature of the Psalms**

"Although the Psalter is largely composed of devotional hymns, heartfelt praise and personal testimonies of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, yet many of these poetic gems give far-reaching predictions and are prophetic as well as devotionally didactic. Psalm 2 is a magnificent prophetic panorama of Messiah's redemptive career and His return as King of Kings. Psalm 22 is an amazingly detailed prophecy of the suffering and death of Christ in His first advent. Psalm 110 is a far-reaching prophecy of Christ as a perpetual Priest. Psalm 16 heralds His future resurrection; Psalm 72 envisions the coming millennial kingdom. Psalm 45 brings into view a vast prophetic perspective. In all the O. T. there is no more practical, instructive, beautiful or popular book than the Psalms." (Unger, *Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Psalms," p. 899.)

Another scholar stated it this way:

"The primary meaning of the psalms is always to be sought first of all in their immediate, historical context. But this does not exhaust their significance. No one can read the psalms without becoming aware that certain psalms and individual verses have a

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deeper, future significance beyond the simple meaning of the words. The Messiah is not mentioned by name, but his figure is foreshadowed, as later generations of Jews came to realize. And the New Testament writers are quick to apply these verses to Jesus as the prophesied Messiah.

“Some psalms, particularly the ‘royal psalms’ (of which 2, 72, 110 are the most striking) picture an ideal divine king priest judge never fully realized in any actual king of Israel. Only the Messiah combines these roles in the endless, universal reign of peace and justice envisaged by the psalmists.

“Other psalms depict human suffering in terms which seem far-fetched in relation to ordinary experience, but which proved an extraordinarily accurate description of the actual sufferings of Christ. Under God’s inspiration, the psalmists chose words and pictures which were to take on a significance they can hardly have dreamed of. Psalm 22, the psalm Jesus quoted as he hung on the cross (verse 1, Matthew 27:46), is the most amazing example.” (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans’ Handbook to the Bible*, p. 329.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained in detail some remarkably prophetic utterances:

“‘All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me,’ the risen Lord said to the assembled saints in the upper room. (Luke 24:44.) To Cleopas and another disciple, on the Emmaus road, the resurrected Jesus said: ‘O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.’ (Luke 24:25–27.) Surely those things we shall now quote from the Psalms—pointed, express, detailed utterances about his sufferings, death, and atoning sacrifice—were included in those things which he expounded unto them.

“The Holy Ghost, through David, said: ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ (Ps. 22:1)—thus revealing aforetime the very words Jesus would speak on the cross in that moment when, left alone that he might drink the dregs of the bitter cup to the full, the Father would entirely withdraw his sustaining power. And so Matthew records: ‘And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, la ma sabach tha ni? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ (Matt. 27:46.)

“The same Psalm says: ‘All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.’ (Ps. 27:7–8.) The fulfillment, as Jesus hung on the cross, is found in these words: ‘The chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, he saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he

said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.’ (Matt. 27:41–44.)

“Next the Psalmist speaks of our Lord’s birth, of his reliance on God, of his troubles, and then coming back to the mob at the foot of the cross, he says: ‘They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.’ Then the record says: ‘I am poured out like water’ (Ps. 22:9–14), an expression akin to Isaiah’s that ‘he hath poured out his soul unto death’ (Isa. 53:12).

“‘Thou hast brought me into the dust of death,’ the Psalmist continues, ‘For dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet,’ which is exactly what transpired on the gloomy day of crucifixion. Then this: ‘They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture’ (Ps. 22:15–18), of which prediction Matthew says, ‘And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots’ (Matt. 27:35). John gives this more extended account of the fulfillment of this promise: ‘Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.’ (John 19:23–24.)

“After this the Psalmist has the Messiah say, in words applicable to his Father, ‘I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee,’ a course that our Lord pursued with diligence during his whole ministry. And then this counsel: ‘Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.’ Following this is the promise that the Lord shall be praised ‘in the great congregation,’ and that ‘all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord’s: and he is the governor of the nations.’ Clearly this has reference to the final millennial triumph of truth, a triumph that is to be when the gospel brought by the Messiah is restored again and carried according to his will to all men. Finally, in this Psalm, it is of the Messiah that the account speaks in these words: ‘A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation’; that is, the Seed of David, generated by the Father, shall serve in righteousness, with this result: ‘They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.’ (Ps. 22:22–31.) And in harmony with this prophetic assurance, we now declare unto all people born after Messiah’s day, the righteousness of the Father in sending his Son and the righteousness of the Son in doing all things for men that needed to be done to bring to them both immortality and eternal life.

"Other Psalms also revealed, before the events, additional specifics that would attend or be associated with the cross of Christ and the agonizing death he would suffer thereon. With reference to the conniving and conspiring plots incident to our Lord's arrest and judicial trials the prophecy was: 'They took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.' (Ps. 31:13.) As to the role of Judas in those conspiracies, the Psalmist says: 'Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.' (Ps. 41:9.) On that occasion when he washed their feet, Jesus spoke in laudatory terms of the twelve, but, said he, 'I speak not of you all,' for a moment later he was to say, 'one of you shall betray me.' 'I know whom I have chosen,' he continued, 'but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.' After a few more words, he dipped the sop and gave it to Judas, thus identifying the traitor in their midst. (John 13:18-30.)

"'The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,' is the Messianic word which foretold the driving of the money changers from the temple and caused Jesus to say, 'Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise,' and which caused his disciples to remember the words of the Psalm. (John 2:13-17.) But the full Messianic statement, which forecasts more than the cleansing of the then-polluted temple, says: 'The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. . . . Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, and there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.' (Ps. 69:9, 20.) Who can fail to see in these words our Lord's piteous state as, hailed before the rulers of this world, he found none to comfort him, but instead was reproached for testifying of that Father whom his Jewish persecutors had rejected?

"After these words comes the Psalmic declaration: 'They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.' (Ps. 69:21.) Their fulfillment is noted by Matthew in these words: 'They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And they crucified him.' Also: After Jesus had, as they supposed, called for Elias, the account says: '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.' (Matt. 27:34-35, 47-48.) John's account of this same occurrence ties the act at the crucifixion in with David's prediction by recounting: 'Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.' It is as though advisedly and with deliberation, though he was in agony beyond compare, yet he consciously continued to the last moment of mortal life, with the avowed purpose of fulfilling all of the Messianic utterances concerning his mortal Messiahship. 'Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar,' John's account continues, 'and they

filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.' (John 19:28-30.)

"Viewing in advance, as it were, this last awesome moment of the Messiah's mortal life, David wrote: 'Into thine hand I commit my spirit.' (Ps. 31:5.) Recording after the fact what took place as the last breath of mortal air filled the lungs of the Man on the cross, Luke said: 'And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.' (Luke 23:46.)

"With our Lord's last breath, all things were fulfilled which pertained to that period when the breath of life sustained his life and being." (*The Promised Messiah*, pp. 530-34.)

## POINTS TO PONDER

(28-8) Of the fifteen psalms you selected to study (see Instructions to the Student, no. 3), choose one (or two, if they are both short) and write your own Notes and Commentary on that psalm. Use the Bible Dictionary, the Topical Guide, and the footnotes in the text to help you in this project.

(28-9) The book of Psalms is quoted more often by New Testament writers than any other Old Testament book—over 115 times. Examine the following list of places in the New Testament where the psalms are quoted. How did the writers use the psalms? What can you conclude from the way they quote them? Do you get further insight into the psalm by how it was used?

Matthew 5:35	Psalm 48:2
Matthew 8:26	Psalm 107:28-29
Matthew 21:9; 23:39	Psalm 118:26
Matthew 21:16	Psalm 8:2
Matthew 21:42	Psalm 118:22-23
Matthew 22:42-45	Psalm 110:1
Matthew 26:23	Psalm 41:9
Mark 15:24-25	Psalm 22:14-18
Luke 4:10-11	Psalm 91:11-12
John 2:17	Psalm 69:9
John 6:31	Psalm 78:24
John 10:34	Psalm 82:6
Acts 1:20	Psalms 69:25; 109:8
Acts 2:27-32	Psalm 16:8-11
Acts 4:25-26	Psalm 2:1-2
Romans 3:4-18	Psalms 51:4; 14:1-3; 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; 36:1
1 Corinthians 10:26	Psalm 24:1

Ephesians 4:8	Psalm 68:18
Hebrews 1:7–13	Psalms 104:4; 45:6–7; 102:25–27; 110:1
Hebrews 5:5	Psalm 2:7
Hebrews 10:7	Psalm 40:6–8
1 Peter 2:7	Psalm 118:22

(28-10) In the October 1973 general conference Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

“I think the Lord’s people should rejoice in him and shout praises to his holy name. Cries of hosannah should ascend from our lips continually. When I think of the revealed knowledge we have about him whom it is life eternal to know, and of the great plan of salvation which he ordained for us; when I think about his Beloved Son, who bought us with his blood, and who brought life and immortality to light through his atoning sacrifice; when I think of the life and ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who has done more save Jesus only for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man who ever lived in it, and who crowned his mortal ministry with a martyr’s death—my soul wells up with eternal gratitude and I desire to raise my voice with the choirs above in ceaseless praise to him who dwells on high.

“When I think that the Lord has a living oracle guiding his earthly kingdom, and that there are apostles and prophets who walk the earth again; when I think that the Lord has given us the gift and power of the Holy Ghost so that we have the revelations of heaven and the power to sanctify our souls; when I think of the unnumbered blessings—the gifts, the miracles, the promise that the family unit shall go on everlastingly, all the blessings that are poured out upon us, and offered freely to all men everywhere—my desire to praise the Lord and proclaim his goodness and grace knows no bounds. And so in this spirit of praise and thanksgiving, which is the same spirit that attended the expressions made by President Romney this morning, I shall conclude with these words of my own psalm:

*Praise ye the Lord:  
Praise him for his goodness;  
Praise him for his grace;  
Exalt his name and seek his face—  
O praise ye the Lord.*

*Blessed is the Lord:  
Bless him for his mercy;  
Bless him for his love;  
Exalt his name and seek his face—  
O blessed is the Lord.*



Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote a psalm of praise to the Lord.

*Praise ye the Lord:  
Praise him who all things did create;  
Praise him who all things did redeem;  
Exalt his name and seek his face—  
O praise ye the Lord.*

*Seek ye the Lord:  
Seek him who rules on high;  
Seek him whose will we know;  
Exalt his name and seek his face—  
O seek ye the Lord.”*

(In Conference Report, Oct. 1973, p. 57; or  
*Ensign*, Jan. 1974, p. 48.)

In the spirit of that counsel, write a psalm (a song of praise) of your own. You may wish to try to incorporate some of the elements of Hebrew parallelism (see Reading G-3), or just write a simple hymn of praise to the Lord.



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## Explanation of codes following scripture references:

Example: Genesis 1:6-8 a, H 2-7

a—analysis. The scripture referred to is the subject of a whole section or chapter.

c—commentary. A short, explanatory comment is made about the scripture.

r—reference. The scripture is merely referred to with no explanation.

q—quotation. The scripture is quoted partially or in full.

H—Hebrew. The meaning and translation of Hebrew words in the scripture are discussed.

JST—The Joseph Smith Translation is used.

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