

DECEMBER 30-JANUARY 5, 2020

Introductory Pages of the Book of Mormon

“Another Testament of Jesus Christ”

It is important that the actual scriptures be read. The Holy Land and Jewish insights are added to help the teacher and student “go back” to the setting in which the scriptures were given, and to better understand the general Jewish views of those scriptures. Jewish views have varied with time and dispersion. Yet understanding the Jews (basically Judah) will help Joseph in the prophetic mission of reuniting “Joseph and Judah.” This knowledge will restore the original understanding and truths which God gave to his children, yesterday and today as well as tomorrow.

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

Summary: **What is the key to understanding—beyond the meaning of each word?**

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

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| <p>learning of my father</p> <p>highly favored of the Lord</p> <p>knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God</p> <p>learning of the Jews</p> | <p>I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days. Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Nephi 1:1-2)</p> |
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What is the center-point about?

The center point of his instruction is the gift he acknowledges, the knowledge of mysteries. A synonym for mysteries is the “subtle understanding” of God’s word. This is available through the Gift of the Holy Ghost. “For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.” (1 Nephi 10:19) “Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.” (2 Nephi 32:3)

So, what’s the “sandwich?”

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

How does the Torah apply to all people?

The basis of Jewish learning is based on the “Torah,” that is the first five books of the “Old Testament.” “The Bible is holy to Jews because it represents the Word of God. This is particularly true of the Torah

which is, so to speak, God's direct statement. The halakhah, or Jewish law, which is the authoritative guide for a Jew's life, is mainly based on the Torah, so obviously study of the Torah as well as the rest of the Bible is one of the prime religious duties.” “The custom of reading the Torah publicly is very, very ancient --- originating with Ezra in the fifth-fourth centuries B.C.E. At some later date a reading from the Nevi'im was added; this corresponding passage from the Prophets is known as the Haftarah.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) The haftarah, is a series of selections from the books of “Nevi'im” (the Prophets and their writings) of the Hebrew Bible that is publicly read in synagogue as part of Jewish religious practice. It may have started as a practice when Jews were forbidden to read the “Law” (Torah). Nowadays, the Haftarah reading follows the Torah reading on each Sabbath and on Jewish festivals and fast days.

How do Latter-day Saints use a Haftarah?

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

rewards us with the blessing of the **Gift of the Holy Ghost**.

What scripture becomes the “Keystone of our religion?”

“Taken from the plates of Nephi; Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites—Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile—Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed—To come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof—Sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile—The interpretation thereof by the gift of God.”
“An abridgment taken from the Book of Ether also, which is a record of the people of Jared, who were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, when they were building a tower to get to heaven—Which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever— And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations—And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.

(Book of Mormon, Title Page)

How does the keystone function?

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

What is the Book of Mormon?

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

future events. It is prophesy in the form of history. Therefore, the history is accurate.

How did the prophets choose what to write, and what could my journal contain?

The ancient prophets could not (and would not) write all that happened. They selected to write those things which would apply as lessons of the future. “And a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, which now began to be numerous, cannot be written upon these plates; but many of their proceedings are written upon the larger plates, and their *wars*, and their *contentions*, and the *reigns of their kings*.” (Jacob 3:13) “And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which **Jesus did truly teach** unto the people;” (3 Nephi 26:6) *My journal might contain authorities’ testimonies that testify of Christ, especially in a local context.* “Wherefore, **I chose these things**, to finish my record upon them, which remainder of my record I shall take from the plates of Nephi; and I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people.” (Words of Mormon 1:5) *My journal should use the Lord’s spirit to help me choose what to report. I might consider, even create, several entries, then **choose** as directed.* “And a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, which now began to be numerous, cannot be written upon these plates; but many of their proceedings

are written upon the **larger plates**, and their **wars**, and their **contentions**, and the **reigns of their kings**.” (Jacob 3:13) *My journal might contain two versions, a more detailed account compared to the “large plates,” and a smaller “summarized” version that might be compared to the “small plates.” In any case, these writings should be inspired for a future generation’s poignant spiritual understanding and guideline. We learn from contrasting views.* “And the Lord spake unto Ether, and said unto him: Go forth. And he went forth, and beheld that the **words of the Lord had all been fulfilled**; and he finished his record; (and the hundredth part I have not written) and he hid them in a manner that the people of Limhi did find them.” (Ether 15:33) *I could write in such a way that reveals the fulfillment of the promises made to me, my family, and the Saints or the people of my area or country.* “And there had many things transpired which, **in the eyes of some, would be great and marvelous**; nevertheless, they cannot all be written in this book; yea, this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people in the space of twenty and five years;” (3 Nephi 5:8) *In my journal, I could write, what was it that made the event extra-ordinary.* The better journal reports on the WHAT, HOW, WHEN, WHERE, WHO, in such a way that the WHY is revealed.