

February 24-March 1, 2020

## 2 Nephi 26–30

“A MARVELOUS WORK AND A WONDER”

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**Summary:** *Christ will minister to the Nephites—Nephi foresees the destruction of his people—They will speak from the dust—The Gentiles will build up false churches and secret combinations—The Lord forbids men to practice priestcrafts. About 559–545 B.C.*

*Darkness and apostasy shall cover the earth in the last days—The Book of Mormon shall come forth—Three witnesses shall testify of the book—The learned man cannot read the sealed book—The Lord shall do a marvelous work and a wonder—Compare Isaiah 29.*

*Many false churches shall be built up in the last days—They shall teach false and vain and foolish doctrines—Apostasy shall abound because of false teachers—The devil shall rage in the hearts of men—He shall teach all manner of false doctrines. [About 559–545 B.C.]*

*Many gentiles shall reject the Book of Mormon—They shall say: We need no more Bible—The Lord speaks to many nations—He will judge the world out of the books thus written. [About 559–545 B.C.]*

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

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### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

### How different are God’s laws for Jews as opposed to Gentiles?

The Word of The

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

### What do Jews view as “Gentile’s” laws?

“Seven laws which were supposed by the rabbis to have been binding on all mankind even before the revelation at Sinai. They are referred to as ‘Noachide’ because of their universality, since the whole human race was supposed to be descended from the three sons of Noah, who alone survived the flood. Exegetically derived from statements made by God to Adam and to Noah, six of them are negative; **Not To:** 1) worship idols; 2)

blaspheme the name of God; 3) kill; 4) commit adultery; 5) rob; 6) eat flesh that had been cut from a living animal. **Must Do:** 1) to establish courts of justice. These seven laws are binding on all non-Jews even today. Whoever observes them is considered to be among the ‘Righteous Gentiles’.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### For whom is the Messiah coming?

Likewise, the Jews consider the Messiah as coming to redeem them. Yet, the Book of Mormon teaches that the Messiah is for ALL people. “The Hebrew word for Messiah, *mashi’ah*, means ‘anointed’ and indicates that the Messiah has been chosen by God. The coming of the Messiah therefore has come to mean the redemption of the Jewish people and an end to its suffering and tribulations.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The Book of Mormon shares the truth, “And as I spake concerning the convincing of the Jews, that Jesus is the very Christ, it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced

also that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God;" (2 Nephi 26:12)

### **What has altered Jewish thought about the Messiah?**

In Judaic thought, when the Messianic period arrives, the divine aspect of the Messiah is discounted, probably because the concept of God and the Godhead has deteriorated throughout time in Judaism. "In traditional Judaism, the Messiah will be a human being --- albeit it a perfect one --- who will come and bring harmony to the world. He will not have a divine aspect other than having been chosen by God for his task." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### **How is the Jews' supposition of "Bible" different than that of the Book of Mormon?**

Reading the term Bible, as referred to in the Book of Mormon, can be understood as a record of "The Jews" including the era of Jesus and his disciples. In Ezekiel's vision of the "dry bones" (chapter 37), the term for the Bible is the "stick" (or bones) of Judah and it is compared to the Book of Mormon, the "stick" of Joseph. Judaic description of the Bible refers just to the period of time preceding Jesus of Nazareth.

### **Who are the People of the Book?**

The Jews are very much involved in writing and books. It is clear to see that both "Judah" and "Joseph" are culturally and scripturally the "People of the Book." "In the Talmud the Bible is known as *Mikra*, which is a noun formed from the verb *kara* meaning 'to read.' The commonly used Hebrew name for the Bible, however, is *Tanakh*. This word is formed from the initial letters of the Hebrew names of the three parts of the Bible: *Torah* (the first five Books), *Nevi'im* (The Prophets) and *Ketuvim* (The Writings, or Hagiographa). The English name, 'Bible,' is from the Greek meaning

'book,' and the other accepted English name, 'Scriptures' (or Holy Scriptures), is from the Latin and means 'writings.'"

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

### **How did Jewish writing originate?**

"The land between the rivers' [Tigris and Euphrates], Mesopotamia, is the ancient name for the region today covered by Iraq, Iran and parts of Syria and Turkey. Western civilization (the establishment of written language, codified law, cities and trade) began in this region toward the end of the fourth millennium (i.e., four thousand years) B.C.E. when the Sumerians emerged as the dominant element in an intermingling of several migrant peoples. Sumer became the name of the land at the head of the Persian Gulf and Sumerian its language. To the Sumerians we owe the full development of writing, possibly the invention of bronze metallurgy . . ." "Writing had a profound effect on Judaism. The covenant between God and the Chosen People was transformed into a written text; the central religious object became the Ten Commandments, inscribed on stone; and later the Torah scroll was to be revered. The biblical society as a whole became 'book centered.' In contrast to many other societies, the Israelites did not limit the acquisition of the arts of reading and writing to the nobility --- any tribesman, even a non-priest, could become a literate

leader. Certainly by King Hezekiah's time (eighth century B.C.E.), a great deal of literary activity was taking place." "Writing usually required a professional to execute it. In ancient times a royal court officer, the *sofer* (scribe), was undoubtedly the letter-writer as well. The professional letter-writer was an important post even into the 20th century. Seals which were used to sign and close the documents of antiquity as well as letters, are displayed in the Israel Museum, and in other collections." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **How would a Jew reflect on a "sealed book?"**

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

### **How would I express the purpose of the Book of Mormon?**

The Book of Mormon is the tool of the convincing of the Jews and the Gentiles that Jesus is the Messiah. It corrects the mistaken perceptions of Jesus as God the

Father AND the Son AND the Holy Ghost. It came forth through the prophet Joseph Smith, a latter-day descendant of ancient Joseph who saved his brothers. It is revealed to all mankind in preparation of the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God and a descendant of ancient David. "According to the Talmud, the Messiah will be a descendant of the House of David and will be preceded by a secondary Messiah, from the House of Joseph." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **Who could be these Latter-day Messiahs?**

In the latter-day "Joseph" scriptures, *The Doctrine and Covenants*, a series of questions were answered by the Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. Note the prophet's answers. "Who is the stem of Jesse spoken of in the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5<sup>th</sup> verses of the 11th chapter of Isaiah? Verily thus saith the Lord: It is Christ. What is the rod spoken of in the first verse of the 11th chapter of Isaiah, that should come of the Stem of Jesse? Behold, thus saith the Lord: It is a servant in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse (father of David and of the tribe of Judah) as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power. What is the root of Jesse spoken of in the 10th verse of the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter? Behold, thus saith the Lord, it is a descendant of Jesse, as well as of Joseph, unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering of my people in the last days." (**Doctrine and Covenants 113:1-6**) Whoever these servants are, the two of them will be of the tribe of Judah (David's lineage) as well as of Joseph (Ephraim's lineage). Both Jews and Ephraimites are represented. Both tribes can be seen as having 'chosen' responsibilities. Jews maintain a tradition, an "Aggadah" of a "Messiah Ben Joseph." The late Rabbi Avraham HaCohen Kook referred to that tradition when asked if the

temple could be built soon. He deferred to a latter-day Joseph, and he purportedly said, "To him will be given the keys of the gathering of Israel, he will restore temple

worship." The Latter-day Saints maintain that the Jews will build that temple.  
**(Gospel Kingdom, John Taylor, Page 293)**