

March 2-8, 2020

## 2 Nephi 31–33

“THIS IS THE WAY”

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**Summary:** *Nephi tells why Christ was baptized—Men must follow Christ, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end to be saved—Repentance and baptism are the gate to the strait and narrow path—Eternal life comes to those who keep the commandments after baptism. [About 559–545 B.C.]*

*Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost—Men must pray and gain knowledge for themselves from the Holy Ghost. [About 559–545 B.C.]*

*Nephi’s words are true—They testify of Christ—Those who believe in Christ will believe Nephi’s words, which will stand as a witness before the judgment bar. [About 559–545 B.C.]*

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### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

#### What reminders do Jews have of eating at the Temple?

The term “feasting”  
on the word of the

Lord has a great Jewish tradition. A religious Jewish family will always engage in discussion of the Torah during every meal. You might remember that for them the eating tables must be square or at least have four corners. That is because the four-cornered sacrificial Altar of the Lord doesn’t exist anymore and the tables with food simulate the sacrificial offering. “A feast held in connection with religious acts is called *se’udah shel mitzvah* and is the duty of every Jew. Whether to celebrate a joyous family occasion such as a wedding, or to honor a holiday by eating festive meals, a *se’udah shel mitzvah* must be eaten in the spirit of pleasure and enjoyment, blessing and thanksgiving, being particularly careful to avoid overeating.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

#### How often do observant Jews remind themselves of the ancient Temple?

“The Talmud describes in detail the various modes of conduct to be observed at meals. For example persons should engage in a discussion of Torah during the meal so that they will be ‘as though

they had eaten at the table of God.’ Furthermore, the table is regarded as a substitute for the altar in the Temple, and therefore, it must be treated with reverence. Before any meal, the hands must be washed pronouncing the appropriate blessing over the washing, after which bread is eaten. The meal is concluded with the Grace after Meals. When a meal is eaten for the purpose of honoring a festival or rejoicing in the fulfillment of a commandment, it is considered more than an ordinary meal; it is a *se’udah shel mitzvah*. Psalm 126, *shir ha- ma’alot*, is recited before Grace after Meals, and in the Grace itself, there is usually an additional paragraph appropriate to the occasion.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica-Jr.) The prayers recited before and after every meal include a plea for rebuilding of the Temple.

#### What are biblical special festive meals?

Such festive meals include the following:  
1) The meals eaten on the Sabbath and festivals. *Kiddush* over wine is recited before two of the meals of the Sabbath or holiday (evening and morning) and the third meal which is required on the Sabbath and which is known as *se’udah*

*shelishit*, is often accompanied by a short sermon of Torah. All these meals are characterized by the singing of hymns (*zemiroth*), the presence of two loaves of bread (*hallot*), and the eating of fish or meat which are considered festive dishes. In addition, each holiday has its own traditional dishes which are served at its festive meals. **2)** A *melavveh malkah*, a festive meal held after the departure of the Sabbath, **3)** the Passover seder, **4)** the Purim dinner, **5)** the meal before the fast of the Day of Atonement (*se'udah mafseket*), **6)** the *siyyum*, a feast made on the completion of the study of a Talmudic tractate. Such a feast is usually held on the morning of the eve of Passover so that the firstborn can participate (and thereby be exempt from fasting on that day), and **7)** the banquet of the *hevra kaddisha* (the burial brotherhood) held on the Seventh of Adar.

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

### What extra days would prompt a “feast?”

Joyous family occasions also have various *se'udot shel mitzvah* connected with them: **1)** the circumcision feast, **2)** the meal at the ceremony of the redemption of the firstborn (*pidyon ha-ben*), **3)** the festive meal celebrating a bar mitzvah, **4)** the betrothal and wedding feasts, and **5)** the occasion of dedicating a new home (*se'udat hanukkat ha-bayit*). “The Fast of Tammuz is also traditionally associated with the fast mentioned by the prophet Zechariah as the ‘Fast of the Fourth Month.’ According to the prophet, this fast in messianic times will be transformed into ‘joy and gladness and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.” ([Zecharia 8:19](#))

### What about fasting?

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

### How do Jews’ pray nowadays?

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

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) There is an effort in Judaism to at least say the pre-written prayers with real intent. This is called *Kavvanah* (direction, intention or concentration). “Because the times of the services and even the words which were to be recited, were fixed, there was a danger that prayer would lose its vitality and become mere routine. In order to overcome this danger, the rabbis urged the worshiper to meditate before he began to worship, to think of ‘before Whom he was standing’ in prayer, and to create a new prayer every time he worshiped. They placed great emphasis on the emotional aspect of prayer, calling it ‘service of the heart’ and stressing that God appreciates most the pure intentions of the worshiper. Later authorities sought to embellish the fixed prayers with original

poems (*piyyutim*,) or with short introductions (*kavvanot*) whose purpose was to direct the heart and mind of the worshiper. Melodic chanting was used as a means of increasing *kavvanah* and worshipers were taught to sway as they prayed, thus throwing their entire body into the worship.” “Books containing the texts of the customary daily and festival prayers did not exist in ancient times. The reader would pray aloud and the congregants would chant the words along with him, or they would simply say ‘amen’ to the blessings. Only after the completion of the Talmud, when many of the components of the Oral Tradition were first compiled in written form, were the prayers written down. Thus, the very first ‘prayer book’ was produced only in the ninth century.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

### **What manner of speaking did Nephi use?**

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

### **What is selective anti-semitism?**

I remember when Rabbi Stanley Wagner (1932-2016), who was chairman of a Denver Inter Faith committee, was telling me that, after associating with Mormons, he wanted the Mormons to be part of that committee. Rabbi Wagner’s personal friend, a Pastor and an associate member of that committee objected strenuously to “Mormons” being included. He even threatened to leave the Inter Faith Committee and challenged the friendship. The Rabbi told me, “I have seen and heard this kind of thing before.” Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were included and the Pastor resigned; however, the friendship continued. It takes two to make or break a friendship. ([University of Denver 1972 to 1999](#))

### **How can I respect the words?**

The Book of Mormon Prophet, Nephi, prays for acceptance or, at least, respect for his and the Lord’s words, wherever they come from. “And you that will not partake of the goodness of God, and respect the words of the Jews, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day.” ([2 Nephi 33:14](#))