

March 9-15, 2020

Jacob 1–4

“BE RECONCILED UNTO GOD THROUGH THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST”

Summary: *All the prophets worshiped the Father in the name of Christ—Abraham’s offering of Isaac was in similitude of God and His Only Begotten—Men should reconcile themselves to God through the Atonement—The Jews will reject the foundation stone. [About 544–421 B.C.]*

Jacob denounces the love of riches, pride, and unchastity—Men may seek riches to help their fellowmen—The Lord commands that no man among the Nephites may have more than one wife—The Lord delights in the chastity of women. [About 544–421 B.C.]

The pure in heart receive the pleasing word of God—Lamanite righteousness exceeds that of the Nephites—Jacob warns against fornication, lasciviousness, and every sin. [About 544–421 B.C.]

All the prophets worshiped the Father in the name of Christ—Abraham’s offering of Isaac was in similitude of God and His Only Begotten—Men should reconcile themselves to God through the Atonement—The Jews will reject the foundation stone. [About 544–421 B.C.]

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What reason were separate records kept?

It can be understood that there were several records being kept by the people who left Jerusalem in 600 B.C. Although they were historical, we can see that Jacob was instructed by his father, Nephi, to keep a separate history that dealt more with sacred instructions. These instructions were to lead the people to their identity with their Lord. Jewish thought on history has some parallel. “Now and again attempts are made to present a systematic history of the Jewish people, but these efforts are relatively few. As early as biblical times records were kept but these have since been lost. The Bible itself is not a history although it contains a vast amount of historical information and is the major literary source for our knowledge of the biblical period.” “The study of Jewish history continues to grow and in many cases helps to deepen Jewish self-

identification . . . Jewish nationality and achievement.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How do we relate to wealth?

Jacob’s first recorded “sacred” teaching included a call to repent from focusing so much on wealth accompanied by immorality. These result in the abuse and even the abandonment of the family. This type of instruction is evident in Talmudic teachings. “The rabbis taught that a man is truly ‘rich’ when he is ‘happy with his portion’ --- when he recognizes and appreciates the good in his life. Ultimately, a man’s material poverty or wealth is irrelevant; what is really important is his spiritual worth.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How do holiness and sexual activity relate?

“Like other basic human desires, sex is regarded in a positive light in Jewish teaching, especially as it is the means of fulfilling the first biblical commandment: ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’ Judaism does not encourage the unbridled fulfillment of desire, however, but rather imposes

restrictions which raise the act to the level of holiness.” “Detailed legislation concerning sexual behavior can be found in the Bible as well as in the Talmud and subsequent rabbinic literature. Celibacy (complete abstinence from all sexual activity) is discouraged as an unnatural state and detrimental to the human personality.” “The primary restriction of sexual activity in Jewish law is that it should take place within marriage, as an expression of love between husband and wife as well as out of a desire to fulfill God’s commandments. An element of holiness is added by the laws of *niddah* (separation during the period of menstruation; which ensure that the couple does not indulge in sex on impulse but rather directs the act to holiness).”
([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How can we better understand “chastity?”

“In general, moderation and self-control in sexual activity are encouraged. Chastity, the goal to be aimed for, does not mean the avoidance of all sex but of illegal sex. This includes adultery, incest, sodomy, rape and seduction. Adultery is defined as sexual relations between a married woman and any man other than her husband.” “Judaism encourages modesty as one of the means to chastity. Thus the Jewish woman is enjoined to dress and act modestly at all times. Furthermore, a man is forbidden to be alone with a woman with whom he is not permitted to have sexual relations from considerations of both chastity and modesty.”
([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What is family?

The Book of Mormon teachings of Jacob reflect the repeated teachings to the Children of Israel which show concern for family identity and sacredness of marriage, marital companionship and the sanctity of children. “The mother . . . occupied a place of honor next to her

spouse. At his death, if no sons were of age, she could become the legal head of the household. Concern for her welfare as a widow was considered the duty of a good society.” “The successful marriage in the eyes of the prophets and the rabbis was the most perfect symbol of a meaningful and purposeful relationship and was taken by them as the closest approximation to the idealized relationship between God and Israel, and between Israel and the Torah.” “‘Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward’ ([Psalms 127:3](#)). In Jewish tradition, the central purpose of marriage is to have children. Children are considered a great blessing; they are the hope and the promise of continuing life. The joys of parenthood bring also many responsibilities and it is the parents’ religious duty to fulfill them.”
([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How important are children?

“As the children grow, they must be educated and trained for their future roles in Jewish life. The father’s duty is to provide for his children, to give them a proper education, to teach them a trade, and to prepare them for marriage.” “Great emphasis is placed on the importance of education and religious training, which should begin early in the home. The mother’s role is vital since she is the one who creates the home atmosphere in which basic values are fostered and transmitted. She trains her sons and daughters in *mitzvot* and prepares them for formal education. The rabbis advised parents to be loving but firm in the upbringing of their children, and warned against showing favoritism.” “In some communities it is customary for the father to bless his children on the Sabbath eve when he returns from the synagogue.” “Children are obliged to treat their parents with honor and respect. Children must provide dependent parents with food, clothing and personal attention if it is

necessary. This obligation is removed from a daughter when she marries.” “Children may not abuse their parents. According to the Bible, if a son is extremely rebellious and incorrigible and refuses to mend his ways (*ben sorer u-moreh*), his parents may agree to bring him to the town elders for judgment and punishment, which could be death by stoning. However, there is no record of such punishment ever having been carried out.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What is God’s counsel about respect and kindness?

As Jacob rebuked the Nephite men for their mistreatment of their wives and children, so have other prophets given the same counsel. Jewish philosophy carries the same theme. “It is said that a man without a wife lives without joy, blessing and good, and that a man should love his wife as himself and respect her more than himself. Women have greater faith than men and greater powers of discernment. The Torah, the greatest joy of the rabbis, is frequently pictured as a woman and is represented as God’s daughter and Israel’s bride.” “In modern Israel, the Declaration of Independence ensures complete equality of political and social rights to all its inhabitants, regardless of religion, race, or sex, but the real Magna Carta of the Israeli woman was the Women’s Equal Rights Law of 1951, giving women equal legal status with men. The only field of law in which there remains a degree of discrimination against women is that of personal status. Matters of marriage and divorce come within the exclusive jurisdiction of the religious courts and thus, for example, a divorce must be given by the husband to the wife. On the other hand, in accordance with the *halakhah*, children take the national identity of their mother and not that of their father.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How do we view mistreatment and prejudice?

Mistreatment of anybody is simply ungodly. The Jews, as a people, have experienced mistreatment. That probably makes them more concerned about being kind and removing racial prejudice. “In 1975 the UN passed resolution 3379 which equated Zionism with racism. In 1992, U.S. Pres. Bush took a major initiative to have the UN repeal the resolution stating that Israel could not move forward with the peace process in the Middle East as long as the resolution existed. In 1992, the General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to revoke the resolution. Following the repeal, UN attitude toward Israel began to change and in October, an Israeli was elected to the executive of the UN’s environmental group after being banned for so many years.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What leads to, or away, from the Kingdom of God?

Unfortunately, as Jacob taught, wealth leads to immorality. Immorality leads to family abandonment and that leads to discrimination and prejudice. In reflection of this lesson, the history (large plates) was not as important as the lessons of history (small plates). In these few verses, Jacob uses the repeated lessons of history as a guideline for finding the “Kingdom of God.”