

November 2–8, 2020

## Mormon 7–9

“I SPEAK UNTO YOU AS IF YE WERE PRESENT”

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**Summary:** *Mormon invites the Lamanites of the latter days to believe in Christ, accept his gospel, and be saved—All who believe the Bible will also believe the Book of Mormon. [About A.D. 385]*

*The Lamanites seek out and destroy the Nephites—The Book of Mormon shall come forth by the power of God—Woes pronounced upon those who breathe out wrath and strife against the work of the Lord—The Nephite record shall come forth in a day of wickedness, degeneracy, and apostasy. [Between A.D. 400 and 421]*

*Moroni calls upon those who do not believe in Christ to repent—He proclaims a God of miracles, who gives revelations and pours out gifts and signs upon the faithful—Miracles cease because of unbelief—Signs follow those who believe—Men are exhorted to be wise and keep the commandments. [Between A.D. 400 and 421]*

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### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

#### Who are we, and what restores our identity if we have lost it?

One of the first things necessary to living a good

life is to have an identity. Mormon reminds us to understand our identity as a part of the House of Israel. We are a chosen family who represents God to all others on this globe. In order to do so, we must constantly turn toward him. Again, the Hebrew word “to turn” also means to repent. Repentance brings us back to the presence of the Father in Heaven. His firstborn son has provided us a spiritual atonement – providing we repent. He has also provided a physical atonement, the resurrection – even if we do not repent.

#### How does ‘going back’ bring us forward?

The heavenly closeness we achieve through true repentance will unlock memories of what we knew before our mortality. It brings us closer to our earthly forefathers in understanding their teachings and examples. Again, it brings us to a closer sense of identity and connection with our Heavenly Father. Moroni deposits the records of his father so that later generations can make a family connection that can inspire a closer bond with God. He also counsels us to read and search the words of the Israelite prophet, Isaiah. “It should be remembered, too, in this connection,

that the Book of Isaiah's prophecies carried by the colony of Lehi into the Western hemisphere with them became a powerful influence among the Nephite writers. His book is quoted from more extensively than any other book of the Jewish scriptures possessed by the Nephites; and that because of the plainness with which Isaiah spoke of the coming and mission of Messiah. The first Nephi, commenting upon Isaiah and the esteem in which he held his writing, said: “And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words. For I will liken [apply] his words unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. And my brother Jacob also has seen him as I have seen him, wherefore I will send their words forth unto my children, to prove unto them that my words are true.” (2 Nephi 11:2-3) “Small wonder then if a prophet held in such large esteem, as was Isaiah, and so extensively quoted, influenced prophetic Nephite literature, and led to the habit of writing prophecies referring to the Christ in the language of accomplished fact.” (B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God, Vol.3, p.447*)

#### What ancient prophet is quoted more abundantly?

“Fully one-third of the writings of Isaiah are found in the Book of Mormon, making Isaiah

the most frequently quoted biblical book there. Twenty-two of the sixty-six chapters of Isaiah are quoted in whole or in part in the Book of Mormon (a total of 433 of Isaiah's 1,292 verses). Book of Mormon prophets and writers typically selected those chapters highlighting God's covenant relationships and his promises to Israel, the role and calling of the messiah, and prophecies concerning the last days. These themes are prevalent in contemporary LDS theology as well (A of F 3, 4, 9, 10).”  
**(Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol.1, BIBLE)**

### How did Isaiah prophecy over the entire House of Israel?

Notice the parallels that Mormon and Moroni make about their people to what Isaiah says of his people. A summary of the first chapter of Isaiah by the venerable Hugh Nibley is added for your convenience. “The quickest way to get an overview of the immense book of Isaiah is simply to read the first chapter. Scholars have long held that this is not part of the original book but a summary by a disciple. If so, that makes it nonetheless valuable, and indeed it is remarkable that this, the most famous chapter of Isaiah, is never quoted in the Book of Mormon. Let's take it verse by verse.”

Isaiah, Chapter 1	Hugh Nibley Comments
(1:2) Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.	“The people of Israel are God's children--he is their Father. This is the doctrine they have forgotten, and they will be in no condition to receive it again until they have undergone the moral regeneration that is the burden of Isaiah's preaching.
(1:3) The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: <i>but</i> Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.	That doctrine they have rejected: they refuse to hear it.
(1:4) Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they	Because they can't live with it in their sinful state, they have run away from it. This is inexcusable; God does not look upon it with forbearance. He knows that they are quite

have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.	capable of understanding and living by the gospel. Accordingly, he is more than displeased; he is angry.
(1:5) Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.	Yet it is not he who has been giving them a hard time. They decided to go their own way, openly revolting against him. And their system is simply not working. They are not able to cope with the situation mentally nor do they have the spirit to carry it through. Men on their own are a pitiful object.
(1:6) From the sole of the foot even unto the head <i>there is</i> no soundness in it; <i>but</i> wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.	The whole thing is sick, sick, sick. Every attempt to correct the situation fails miserably. Nothing works.
(1:7) Your country <i>is</i> desolate, your cities <i>are</i> burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and <i>it is</i> desolate, as overthrown by strangers.	The result is internal depression and international disaster.
(1:8) And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.	God's chosen people are holed up, trusting in their miserable defense, trapped by their own walls.
(1:9) Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, <i>and</i> we should have been like unto Gomorrah.	The reason they survive at all so far is that there are still a few righteous, a small remnant of honest people among them.
(1:10) Hear the word the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.	So it is time they were considering the alternative, which Isaiah herewith offers them.
(1:11) To what purpose <i>is</i> the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams,	You are not going to appease God by trying to buy him off, by going through the pious motions of religious observances,

and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.	your meetings and temple sessions.
<b>(1:12)</b> When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?	It is not for you to decide what to do to please God – it is for him to decide, and he has not required all this display of piety from you.
<b>(1:13)</b> Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; <i>it is</i> iniquity, even the solemn meeting.	Your most dedicated observances, even following my ancient prescriptions, if done in the wrong spirit are actually iniquity – not to your credit but to your loss.
<b>(1:14)</b> Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear <i>them</i> .	God is not impressed but disgusted by it.
<b>(1:15)</b> And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.	Even when you pray I will not hear you. Why not? Answer: Because there is blood on your upraised hands.
<b>(1:16)</b> Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;	The blood and sins of this generation are on you in the temple. What blood and sins? Your evil ways.
<b>(1:17)</b> Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.	What evil ways? What should we be doing? Answer: Dealing justly, relieving those oppressed by debt instead of collecting from them, giving a fair deal to the orphans and assistance to the widow, in other words, showing some thought for people without money.
<b>(1:18)</b> Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.	God is not being capricious or arbitrary. He is eminently reasonable. Is his way the only way? Let him tell you why, and then see if you do not agree: 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.' Then a

	surprising statement: 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.' Plainly God does not take pleasure in these rebukes, he does not gloat as men would (for example, Thomas Aquinas) over the punishment in store for the wicked; he loves them all and holds forth the most wonderful promises for them. There is a way out, and that is why Isaiah is speaking, not because he is a puritanical scold.
<b>(1:19)</b> If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:	Have they had enough? They need only to listen and to follow advice and all will be well.
<b>(1:20)</b> But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken <i>it</i> .	But you cannot go on as you have been. You will be wiped out by war if you do. 'For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' The 'consumption decreed' (D&C 87) is another quotation from Isaiah.
<b>(1:21)</b> How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.	You can do it – because you once did. And then you lost it all – went over to unbridled sex and murder.
<b>(1:22)</b> Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:	And for what? Property and pleasure, for silver that is now as worthless as garbage and wine that is flat.
<b>(1:23)</b> Thy princes <i>are</i> rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.	The leaders set the worst example. They work with crooks, everybody is on the take: 'Every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards,' while the poor don't get a break in court and a widow can't even get a hearing.
<b>(1:24)</b> Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:	God wants nothing to do with such rascals; he is going to get rid of them. They have made themselves his enemies.
<b>(1:25)</b> And I will turn my	This calls for a thorough

hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:	housecleaning. All that dross must be purged away.
<b>(1:26)</b> And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.	To bring back the old order, 'restore thy judges as at the first' (as quoted in the well-known hymn). It is still possible, and God is going to bring it about. There will yet be 'The city of righteousness, the faithful city.'
<b>(1:27)</b> Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.	There is going to be a Zion redeemed with many of these same sinful people living in it, along with a lot of converts from the outside.
<b>(1:28)</b> And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners <i>shall be</i> together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.	All the rest will have to go, but not because God chooses to throw them out. They will walk away from safety right into destruction; with eyes wide open they will forsake the Lord and be consumed.
<b>(1:29-31)</b> For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench <i>them</i> .	These verses are the only references to paganism – popular cults that will wither and be burned up – not be destroyed, however, because they follow pagan manners or forms, as the doctors, ministers, and commentators love to tell us, but because they were part of the cover-up for avaricious, hard, and immoral practices.” <b>(Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Vol.1, Ch.8, p.218-221)</b>

### How can we lose our identity?

In our present age of wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, and pollution we see an immense thievery of time, talent and temporal goods. In this season of robbers we find that wickedness and wars are greatly motivated by money. At an eternal cost as we lose our identity, our covenants evaporate in smoke. “And he that shall breathe out wrath and strifes against the

work of the Lord, and against the covenant people of the Lord who are the house of Israel, and shall say: We will destroy the work of the Lord, and the Lord will not remember his covenant which he hath made unto the house of Israel--the same is in danger to be hewn down and cast into the fire; **(Mormon 8:21)**

### Do you believe in miracles?

Yet, Moroni foresees miracles. There will be some who rise above the world and bring the miracles of heaven in their homes and their lives. The Jewish concept of miracles connects them with God. Yet, even they begin to “apologize” for the heavenly insinuation and consider miracles a part of life. Moshe Dayan, Israel’s Defence Minister in 1967 and a self-proclaimed atheist, famously said at the time, “Yesterday I was not a religious man, and tomorrow I will not be, but today I cannot but say that we have witnessed miracles.”  
**(<https://www.thejc.com/judaism/features/the-reunification-of-jerusalem-is-a-miracle-worth-celebrating-1.437202>)** I’ve often heard that Dayan once was asked, “Do you believe in miracles?” He answered, “No, I just count on them!”

### How can I explain a miracle?

“Extraordinary phenomena that seem to fall outside the pattern of normal, explainable occurrences are frequently referred to in English as miracles. In the Bible, such events are termed *otot* or *moftim* (‘wondrous signs’), and in the talmudic literature as *nisim* (‘heralds’). The terms point to the fact that both for the Bible and for the rabbis, miraculous events were caused by God and served as clear indicators of His controlling power in the universe. When the Red Sea parted to enable the Israelites to flee from the Egyptian armies that were pursuing them, and when the ‘sun stood still’ at Gibeon to enable Joshua to be victorious in his battle with the Canaanites, miracles occurred; at a critical moment in human history, God altered the normal workings of physical phenomena (the sea, the sun), and by doing so, revealed His providential relationship to the people of Israel.

Later thinkers, for whom 'the natural order' had an existence independent of God, were troubled by the question whether biblical miracles were 'natural' or 'supernatural,' but the Bible makes no such distinction and never questions God's ability to do anything, by any means." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

### **How are miracles acceptable?**

"The rabbis of the Talmud unquestionably accepted the biblical miracles as related, but they were troubled by the fact that they seemed to imply a lack of perfection in the very act of Creation. They solved this theological problem by postulating that miracles were, so to speak, provided for already at the time of creation. Thus, although they were 'extraordinary' they were still manifestations of the natural order. Many rabbis reversed this perspective and emphasized that the very regularity and harmony of the natural world were in fact 'miraculous.' It is this thought which is vocalized in the thanksgiving prayer which is part of the daily *Amidah*: 'We thank You for Your miracles which are daily with us, and for Your wonders and benefits, which are wrought at all times, evening, morning and night.'" ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

### **What do some say about "miracles have ceased?"**

"The rabbis rejected, however, the belief in 'miracle performers' as bearers of religious truth. Once the Torah had been revealed to man, it was no longer 'in heaven.' It could not be altered by extraordinary means, but only by a natural process of development which was

purely in the hands of ordinary human beings. And although the rabbis emphasized the miraculous aspect of the story of Hanukkah, they generally believed that by their time the age of miracles had ceased, since only in biblical times were people 'willing to sacrifice themselves for the sanctification of the Name of God.'" "In the Middle Ages, the biblical miracles posed a great problem for Jewish philosophers. They could not be explained in terms of contemporary science and they flew in the face of the philosophers' strong belief in the existence of an unchanging order to the universe. As a solution, many of the medieval philosophers adopted the Talmudic position outlined above which attempted to 'naturalize' the miracles by seeing them as having been woven into the order of nature from the very beginning; their miraculous nature stemmed from the fact that they were expressed at the key moment in history when they were most needed." "In modern times, some people have attempted to offer scientific explanations for several of the biblical miracles, such as the parting of the Red Sea. Others have 'relativized' them by viewing them as natural occurrences which were recorded as if extraordinary and supernatural, because of the crucial role they played at the particular time." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

### **Who is my greatest miracle?**

Moroni, Mormon's son, concludes his testimony with a humble apology of his earthly limitations, yet that Man of God knows who he is, his identity is clear. He calls us to repent and accept the Miracle of the Son of God.