

November 30–December 6, 2020

Moroni 1–6

“TO KEEP THEM IN THE RIGHT WAY”

Moroni writes for the benefit of the Lamanites—The Nephites who will not deny Christ are put to death. Jesus gave the Nephite apostles power to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Elders ordain priests and teachers by the laying on of hands.

How the elders and priests administer the sacramental bread. The mode of administering the sacramental wine is set forth.

Repentant persons are baptized and fellowshipped—Church members who repent are forgiven—Meetings are conducted by the power of the Holy Ghost. [Between A.D. 400 and 421]

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How does the Hebrew word for faith include works?

True religion is based on true faith in the Lord. The

Hebrew word for faith is *emunah* and that is probably derived from the word *imun* which means practice, procedure or work. Inherent in the word *emunah* is faith and works. Both are necessary to keep us in the right way. “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” (James 2:17)

How important is the “laying on of hands?”

One procedure or practice of true religion is the “laying on of hands” with proper authority.

There is biblical evidence of this when Moses laid hands on individuals and gave them authority. “And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.” (Numbers 27:22-23) Even in Judaism, where it is recognized that since the last Temple destruction there is the loss of priesthood, the “laying on of hands” is still done. “Hands are also significant in the symbolic act of bestowing a blessing. In rabbinic literature the priestly blessing is known as *nesi'at kappayim* (‘raising of the hands’) and is pronounced with the hands uplifted, and the fingers spread in a special formation, (two fingers opened in a “V” shape from the last two fingers). In fact this

special formation of the hands is often engraved on the tombstones of *kohanim* (priests).” “In the same way that priests lift their hands in blessing, so parents place their hands on the heads of their children when they bless them. (For example, in the Bible, Jacob blessed his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, by placing his hands on their heads.) Placing the hands on another person is symbolic not only of transferring blessing but also of passing on authority. In Talmudic times, scholars received their rabbinic ordination through the symbolic act of placing of the hands (known as *semikhah*).” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How were Biblical ordinations performed?

“All Jewish religious leaders had to be ordained before they were permitted to perform certain judicial functions and to decide practical questions in Jewish law. The Bible relates that Moses ordained Joshua by placing his hands on him, thereby transferring a portion of his spirit to Joshua. Moses also ordained the 70 elders who assisted him in governing the people. The elders ordained their successors who in turn ordained others, so that there existed an unbroken chain of ordination from Moses down to the time of the Second Temple.” “For some centuries the tradition of ordaining by the laying on of the hands was continued, but the rabbis later decided to ordain by merely conferring the title ‘rabbi’ either orally or in writing.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

When did ordinations cease?

“Ordination was required for membership in the Great Sanhedrin (supreme political, religious and judicial body in Palestine until the fifth century C.E.) and in the smaller judicial bodies. The lowest degree of ordination entitled the rabbi to decide only religious questions, while the highest degree entitled him to also judge criminal cases.” “It is not clear when the original tradition of ordination was discontinued. According to some historians, Rav, a third century scholar, was the last to receive the traditional *semikhah* just before moving to Babylonia. In accordance with the restriction which authorized ordinations only in Erez Israel, [the land of Israel] Rav refused to confer *semikhah* while in Babylonia and subsequently none of the Babylonian *amoraim* (talmudic scholars) were ordained. By the early Middle Ages the traditional *semikhah* procedure had completely ceased to exist and the direct chain of ordination begun by Moses was broken.” “In 1538 Rabbi Jacob Berab of Safed tried to revive the original *semikhah* practice. At his initiative, 25 rabbis convened and ordained him as their chief rabbi. Berab then ordained four other rabbis including Joseph Caro and Moses di Trani, hoping to ultimately reestablish the Sanhedrin. But Berab had neglected to obtain the consent of the Jerusalem rabbis and, feeling slighted, they opposed his efforts and eventually the institution of ordination was again abolished.” “With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Israel's first minister of religious affairs made a similar plea to restore the Sanhedrin, but he too was overruled.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What replaced priesthood ordinations?

“During the 19th century, the functions of the rabbi began to change and many communities demanded that their leaders be versed not only in Talmud and Jewish law but also in secular studies. To meet these new conditions, rabbinical seminaries were organized, issuing a variety of ‘rabbinical degrees.’ The term rabbi is today the commonly accepted title for all ‘ordained’ (certified) spiritual leaders.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How can I recognize the sacrament as an eternal ordinance?

The practice of using bread and wine in a sacramental procedure is ancient. The central issue in this ordinance was foreshadowed by the Children of Israel through the weekly *Kiddush* (wine, juice or water) and the *Mozi* (bread), in that order, and the Passover Meal for almost three and a half thousand years. In fact, the substantive elements of that meal, “fruit of the vine” (wine) and bread preceded the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. It is important to realize that what Latter-day Saints call the Sacrament, was in fact an eternal ordinance. The meanings of ordinances may be updated from time to time, yet the basis is still the same. “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.” (Genesis 14:18) “And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he broke bread and blest it; and he blest the wine, he being the priest of the most high God . . .” (JST Genesis 14:17)

In what location was the more ancient sacrament administered?

In modern Jewish life, there is something like the sacrament that is actually done in the home. There are two blessings each Sabbath eve. As mentioned, one is the *kidush*. It is the blessing for the wine. It always precedes the blessing over the *hallah*, a special Sabbath bread. The blessing over the bread (which happens at every meal) is popularly called *Ha Mozi*. Many religious families prefer to eat at a four-cornered table because since there is no Temple the table at least represents the shape of the altar. “The table is set for the festive meal, with the Sabbath candles glowing in polished holders. The family stands and the father raises the brimming silver cup to say *Kiddush*, the blessing and sanctification over wine.” “*Kiddush* is recited on the evening of the Sabbath, or the festival, before the start of the meal. Nothing may be eaten before *Kiddush*.” “*Kiddush* continues with the benediction for wine, preceded by the word *savri* (Attention!) so that all present, men and women, may fulfill the requirement of *Kiddush* by listening carefully to the recital of the prayer and by responding ‘Amen’ afterwards.” (Encyclopedia

Judaica Jr.) When wine is not available, “living” water may be used.

What cloth do Jews use to cover the emblems?

“The proper recitation of *Kiddush* is just before the festive meal, at the place where the meal will be eaten. However, it is a custom among Ashkenazi Jews to say *Kiddush* in the synagogue just after the Sabbath services. Originally it was for the benefit of travelers who were lodged in the synagogue, to enable them to fulfill the precept. This custom is not followed in Israel.” “On Sabbath and festivals the blessing over bread is recited over two loaves (representing the double portion of manna that fell on Friday and did not go bad when kept till the Sabbath). These loaves are specially sweet bread and made in a distinctive shape. They are known as *hallot* (singular: *hallah*), and are usually covered with a cloth embroidered with Shabbat symbols. Should there be no wine for *Kiddush*, it can be recited over the *hallot* . . . beverages other than wine may also be used.” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)**

How does immersion connect with the Kiddush and Motzi?

It may be significant that, to the Jews, the blessing of wine and then bread is in anticipation of a greater deliverance than from Egypt. To believers in Jesus, the ritual is done by blessing the bread first and then the wine. This is done in remembrance of the great deliverance, the atonement. Another important Biblical ritual is immersion or what is called *mikveh* in Hebrew. This is done for a religious cleansing as well as required for conversion to Judaism. Once again, reviewing the Jewish concept of *mikveh*, (immersion) is helpful. “A potential convert (or proselyte) is first questioned by a court (*bet din*) of three rabbis. They usually begin by trying to persuade him to give up the idea of joining a nation which has been, and today still is, severely persecuted. If the candidate still affirms sincerely that he is ready to ‘accept the yoke of the commandments,’ he or she must undergo a period of instruction in Judaism, in its laws and practices. After thorough study, when he understands the *mitzvot* and is ready to begin

his life as a Jew, the candidate is ready for the rituals of conversion.” “For both males and females the *bet din* [witnesses] oversees their immersion in a ritual bath (*mikveh*).” “Like the synagogue and the cemetery, the *mikveh* is a basic element of Jewish family and communal life, and thus the erection of a *mikveh* was among the first projects undertaken by Jewish communities throughout the world from earliest times.” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)**

How often are public or group gatherings in Bible traditions?

The admonition to meet often is part of the practice to keep us in the right way. Modern Jewry has public meetings where the Torah and other scriptures are read three times a week. These are on Mondays, Thursday and, of course, on Sabbath, Saturday. “According to an ancient tradition, Moses commanded that the Israelites should read the Torah on the Sabbath, on festivals, and on the first day of each month; Ezra decreed that it should also be read on Monday and Thursday mornings as well as Sabbath afternoons. Scholars differ as to whether this tradition should be taken as a historical statement or not; however, even those who are skeptical about its literal truth believe that the tradition of reading the Torah in public is a very ancient one.” “The Babylonian Talmud relates that the Jews of ‘the West’ (i.e., Erez Israel) took three years to complete their public reading of the Torah. They apparently divided the Torah into more than 150 different sections (*sedarim*, singular: *sidrah*; or *parashot*, singular: *parashah*). On the first Sabbath of their cycle they read the first few chapters of Genesis, on the next Sabbath a few more, and so on until, by the end of three years, they had read the entire Torah.” “In Babylonia, the custom was different. There the Torah was divided into 54 different sections (naturally the Babylonian sections were about three times as long as the Palestinian sections) so that the entire cycle was completed in one year. Today, nearly all communities follow the Babylonian custom; however, some congregations, especially within the Conservative and Reform movements, are experimenting with a three-year cycle.” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)**

What could be a purpose of the Saviors' three-year ministry?

In the days of the Savior, the Torah and scripture reading was only once a week and the three-year cycle was probably being used. Maybe, that is one reason he had a three-year ministry. That way Jesus could teach the entire Law and The Prophets. What is paramount in the Lord's ministry, then and now, is that all

religious work, procedures and practices are to be guided by *emunah*, faith, true faith with works. "And their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done."

(Moroni 6:9)