

JANUARY 11-17, 2021

Doctrine and Covenants 2; Joseph Smith—History 1:27–65

“THE HEARTS OF THE CHILDREN SHALL TURN TO THEIR FATHERS”

Summary: *An extract from Joseph Smith’s history relating the words of the angel Moroni to Joseph Smith the Prophet, while in the house of the Prophet’s father at Manchester, New York, on the evening of September 21, 1823. Moroni was the last of a long line of historians who had made the record that is now before the world as the Book of Mormon. (Compare Malachi 4:5–6; also sections 27:9; 110:13–16; and 128:18.) 1, Elijah is to reveal the priesthood; 2–3, The promises of the fathers are planted in the hearts of the children.*

Moroni appears to Joseph Smith—Joseph’s name is to be known for good and evil among all nations—Moroni tells him of the Book of Mormon and of the coming judgments of the Lord and quotes many scriptures—The hiding place of the gold plates is revealed—Moroni continues to instruct the Prophet. (Verses 27–54.)

Joseph Smith marries Emma Hale—He receives the gold plates from Moroni and translates some of the characters—Martin Harris shows the characters and translation to Professor Anthon, who says, “I cannot read a sealed book.” (Verses 55–65.)

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How essential is preparation?

The preparation that Joseph Smith went through is part of a pattern of

preparation identified throughout the scriptures and evident in Jewish tradition. Many of the Jewish holidays have extensive preparations that are as important as the holy day itself. “The Sabbath before Passover is known as *Shabbat ha-Gadol*. Tradition connects it with the tenth of Nisan, the day on which the Israelites in Egypt set aside the lamb that they were to slaughter on the first Passover (Exodus 12:3). On *Shabbat ha-Gadol*, a special *haftarah*, [reading from the Prophets] taken from the Book of Malachi and referring to the day on which Elijah the Prophet will reappear as forerunner of the great day of the Lord, is read.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the

earth with a curse.” (**Malachi 4:5-6**) The prophecy of Elijah being the forerunner of the Messiah implies a unique preparation for salvation. Elijah’s mission, reflected in temple ordinances, is part of the preparation for mankind to be completely saved in the life to come.

How significant was the preparation preceding ancient Temple functions?

Anciently, temple sacrifices had a preparation period. “During the period of the Second Temple, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from within *Erez Israel* as well as from the Diaspora streamed to the Temple at each of the three festivals. The pilgrims would arrive several days before the festival, and would prepare for their entry into the Temple to offer there the obligatory sacrifices. This was the essential component of the pilgrimage act . . .” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The temple teaches about the creation and purpose of life. In Jewish customs, even the creation itself had a preparation period. “. . . almost all scholars agree that the text is teaching that God created an orderly and good universe. They note

that each of the first three days is used to prepare the work for the next three days.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) The Although Jews generally do not refer to a life after death, sages have taught that our earth life is a preparation for the life to come. “The sages of the Talmud saw life as a prelude to life in the world to come. ‘This world is like a vestibule before the world to come; prepare yourself in the vestibule that you may enter into the hall’ (Mishnah, Avot 4:21). In other words, according to rabbinic theology, the physical life a person has is a kind of trial period for his ‘real’ life which comes after death. Indeed, in rabbinic parlance, the life after death is known as ‘the world of truth’.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

How was history used as a prophecy of the future?

The preparation of scriptures for later use is definitely a pattern seen in the Bible as well as the Book of Mormon. There is strong evidence that Biblical texts were lost and even found again as told in an account of King Josiah. “During the renovation, the book of Deuteronomy was discovered in one of the storage chambers. The biblical Books had previously been destroyed by Amon so that the find caused a sensation. When the Book was read to Josiah he was deeply shocked by its prophesies of doom. He immediately sent a delegation to the prophetess Hulda to ask her advice. The answer was forthright and not reassuring—Jerusalem and the Temple were doomed, but Josiah himself would not live to see their destruction. Josiah led the people to the Temple in repentance. He issued a proclamation to celebrate the Passover according to the ancient statutes. The people flocked to Jerusalem from all corners of the kingdom to celebrate the renovation of the Temple and the holiday of Passover. Josiah was far-sighted. Despite his successes, he heeded Hulda's prophesy and hid the Ark of the Covenant so that it should not be captured when Jerusalem fell.

He also hid the anointing oil, prepared in the wilderness by Moses.”

(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) Some of the witnesses for the Book of Mormon are the previous prophets who foresaw its coming and its value in the restoration of all things. “And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which *men* deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it *is* sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work . . . *even* a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hid.” (*Isaiah 29:12-14*)

How can objects be utilized in a witness role?

Starting with the ancient prophets, the function of witnesses is very established. Some modern/biblical considerations of the legal term “witness” follow. “*Kiddushin* is a legal act of acquisition of the bride by the groom: by handing over an object of value (usually a simple ring) to the bride in the presence of two witnesses and reciting the formula, ‘Behold you are consecrated unto me with this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel,’ the groom signifies his intent to reserve the bride exclusively to himself, and by accepting the ring the bride signifies her consent. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

How does the recurring use of metal plates reflect a more permanent witness?

In ancient times the text of a document

used by the Dead Sea Scrolls community of Jews, (Essenes) had been incised on thin sheets of copper which were then joined together as a scroll. The treasure described in the Copper Scroll (3Q15) found in 1952 describes an accounting of gold and silver, as well as many coins and vessels. (<https://dornsife.usc.edu/wsrp/copper-scroll/>) “(A) graceful example of an American stone box dating to A.D. 650–900. Discovered at the base of the temple of Kulkulcan at Chichen Itza in Yucatan, Mexico, in the late 1800s, where it is exhibited, it measures approximately 2 1/2 by 2 by 2 feet, exterior. The box is carved out of one piece of stone, the rounded lid out of another. In this box were found masonry tools; other stone boxes containing jewelry and precious textiles have been found throughout Mexico and Central America. Many of them are on exhibit in the Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City.” (See Cheesman, “The Stone Box,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1966, pp. 876–78, 900.) (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1979/10/ancient-writing-on-metal-plates?lang=eng>)

What laws govern witnesses?

“The laws involving witness are many. Not all people are qualified to testify before the court. Among those not admissible are slaves, minors (before *bar mitzvah*), lunatics, the deaf and dumb, the blind, criminals who have not repented their crime, relatives of any party involved in the case of the judges, one who stands to gain from his testimony, and, in certain cases, women. Any person who has seen the event but does not testify is liable to punishment which will be meted out to him by God. In criminal cases the witness is under obligation to testify of his own accord; in civil cases the duty to testify arises only when the man is summoned to do so. “The court warns the witnesses that bearing

false witness is a serious crime and each witness is investigated and interrogated separately in order to make sure that he is not lying. If it is established that the witnesses have testified falsely, they are disqualified from ever bearing witness again and, under certain circumstances receive . . . the same punishment the accused would have received had he been convicted. If one witness should contradict another, or say something contradicted by fact—the testimony is rejected. The Bible declares that in order to convict, the evidence must be given by at least two witnesses. However, in certain cases such as those requiring an oath, a single witness is valid. A testimony must be given by the witness himself and not by another who says that he heard such a testimony. Acceptable witnesses who sign a document render it valid.” “*Halakhic* requirements of the marriage ceremony include . . . giving of the ring by the groom to the bride in the presence of two valid witnesses.” “Today in courts in most countries, it is common practice to ‘swear in’ all witnesses. Jewish law never adopted this custom, preferring to accept testimony without the administration of an oath, as long as there were at least two witnesses who corroborated each other’s testimony, as well as other supportive evidence. Testimony given under oath was, in fact, considered to be a particularly weak form of evidence, and it was only accepted when there was a complete lack of something better. When the judicial oath was administered, it was only used in civil cases and then not to the witnesses but to the defendant, or less often, to the plaintiff. In capital cases, a judicial oath was never administered, since it was assumed that no one charged with a capital crime could be believed, even under oath. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

What evidence is needed to prove perjury?

“In Jewish law, perjury can only be proven by the evidence of two other witnesses who both testify that the perjurer could not have been present at the time and place he claims.

These second witnesses must give their evidence in the presence of the first witness. Only in this way can the charge of perjury be leveled: if the second witnesses simply disagree with the first but cannot break his alibi, or if the second witnesses do not offer their refutation in front of the first, this constitutes not perjury, but contradiction in which case all the evidence is disregarded. “The punishment for perjury is laid down in **Deuteronomy 19:19–21**: ‘You shall do to him as he schemed to do to his fellow (i.e., the accused).’ There was considerable discussion on the death sentence for perjurers, complicated by a debate on whether a perjurer who had intended to kill by his false testimony, but had not in fact succeeded in doing so, was himself liable for execution. The law was interpreted to mean that a perjurer should suffer what he had schemed to do, not what had occurred, but in practice the death sentence was rarely carried out for any offense . . . perjurers were usually fined or flogged . . . never allowed to act as witnesses again . . . convictions for perjury were widely publicized.”

(**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

How can I be confident that today’s ordinances are accurate?

One of the reasons witness for the

restoration could be given in ancient times is because the Old Covenant was the same as the New Covenant. “It was the design of the councils of heaven before the world was, that the principles and laws of the priesthood should be predicated upon the gathering of the people in every age of the world . . . Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world . . . for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles.” (**Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Six 1843-44, Pg.308**) “Actually, of course, the law of carnal commandments, the law of performances and ordinances revealed through Moses, was an old covenant as compared with the gospel restored by Jesus and his apostles. But this new testament or covenant, this restored gospel, was the same testament that had been in force between God and his people from Adam to Moses in both the old and the new worlds.” (**Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, Pg.543**) Religious Jews still practice many forms of ancient rites and rituals whose meanings may have become distorted or lost over many years without priesthood guidance. Now that the priesthood has been restored, we can examine the today’s version of the old practices in order to, at least, recognize the “echo” of the “Old Covenant,” which was true and how the “New Covenant” restored the ancient practices with true doctrine.