

JANUARY 25-31, 2021

## Doctrine and Covenants 6–9

“THIS IS THE SPIRIT OF REVELATION”

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**Summary:** *Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, April 1829. Oliver Cowdery began his labors as scribe in the translation of the Book of Mormon, April 7, 1829. He had already received a divine manifestation of the truth of the Prophet’s testimony respecting the plates on which was engraved the Book of Mormon record. The Prophet inquired of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim and received this response. 1–6, Laborers in the Lord’s field gain salvation; 7–13, There is no gift greater than the gift of salvation; 14–27, A witness of the truth comes by the power of the Spirit; 28–37, Look unto Christ, and do good continually.*

*Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, April 1829, when they inquired through the Urim and Thummim as to whether John, the beloved disciple, tarried in the flesh or had died. The revelation is a translated version of the record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself. 1–3, John the Beloved will live until the Lord comes; 4–8, Peter, James, and John hold gospel keys.*

*Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to Oliver Cowdery, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, April 1829. In the course of the translation of the Book of Mormon, Oliver, who continued to serve as scribe, writing at the Prophet’s dictation, desired to be endowed with the gift of translation. The Lord responded to his supplication by granting this revelation. 1–5, Revelation comes by the power of the Holy Ghost; 6–12, Knowledge of the mysteries of God and the power to translate ancient records come by faith.*

*Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet to Oliver Cowdery, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, April 1829. Oliver is admonished to be patient and is urged to be content to write, for the time being, at the dictation of the translator, rather than to attempt to translate. 1–6, Other ancient records are yet to be translated; 7–14, The Book of Mormon is translated by study and by spiritual confirmation.*

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### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

#### How has revelation changed in some Jewish thinking?

In Jewish thinking, “looking to God” and “revelation” are almost figurative and in modern times have become unexplainable. “Revelation, the act by which the hidden, unknown God shows himself to man. There is no specific term corresponding to ‘revelation’ in the Bible or in rabbinic Hebrew. God is said to ‘appear’ to the patriarchs and prophets, and the appearances are described by a series of anthropomorphic (i.e., human) expressions and concrete images. Sometimes God manifests Himself ‘in a vision’ or ‘in a dream’ or he appears

through the mediation of an angel. However, the Bible emphasizes that no direct, sensory perception of God is possible. Thus, various phrases are used when describing appearances of the Divine, for example *kavod* (‘glory’) or *shekhinah* (. . . ‘Divine Presence’) or *davar* (‘word’ of God). “Any event in which the Divine presence is felt is called a revelation, but the term is applied more particularly to communications of the Divine will as revealed through God’s messengers, the prophets. The Bible itself, and later the rabbis, discerned among the prophets a hierarchy of form and degree, with that of Moses as supreme and unique. At Sinai, the principal revelation of God to man took

place. At that time, all the assembled 'heard' the Voice of God, and through the mediation of Moses (who, according to the rabbis, functioned there as a scribe), received the complete text of the Torah and its interpretation, the Oral Law."

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

### **How is revelation and prophecy connected?**

Revelation has no time limits. It is a gift of seeing the past, present and future and may result in prophecy. There is also an assigned order for revelation; some revelation is for the people as authorized by the Lord through His prophet. "The phenomenon of prophecy is founded on the basic belief that God makes His will known to chosen individuals in successive generations. A prophet is a charismatic individual endowed with the divine gift of both receiving and imparting the message of revelation. A prophet does not choose his profession but is chosen, often against his own will, as in the case of Jonah, to convey the word of God to the people regardless of whether they wish to hear it. The prophet, although conscious of being overwhelmed by the divine word and of being involved in an encounter with God, is still capable of reacting and responding, and may even engage God in dialogue."

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) "The same Prophets who have contemplated and described the . . . reunion of the tribes of Israel . . . have also predicted that, in connection with all these preparations, a new dispensation should be manifested, a new covenant established, 'A standard' for the nations, 'An Ensign' for the people. In short, 'Swift Messengers,' 'Teachers,' Prophets would be commissioned, revelations be manifested, and a new organization be developed, fitted to the times, and with the principles and laws adapted to the reorganization, order, and government of a renovated world." ([Parley P. Pratt, Key to Theology, Ch.9, Pg.76 - Pg.77](#))

### **How is revelation connected to man's abilities?**

"Aaron was clearly given a lesser role than Moses. Aaron experienced revelations from God and, being an eloquent speaker, acted as prophet and miracle-worker before Pharaoh in the matter of the Plagues of Egypt. However, it is significant that even where he plays an active role in performing the miracles, it is not a result of his own ability or initiative, but solely by divine command given through Moses." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) Moses was called of God to be the prophet, despite his own ability or initiative.

### **What is the Torah?**

Jewish learning is based on the "*Torah*," (the law) that is, the first five books of the "Old Testament" as given by the Prophet Moses. "The Bible is holy to Jews because it represents the Word of God. This is particularly true of the *Torah* which is, so to speak, God's direct statement. The *halakhah*, or Jewish law, which is the authoritative guide for a Jew's life, is mainly based on the *Torah*, so obviously study of the *Torah* as well as the rest of the Bible is one of the prime religious duties. "The custom of reading the *Torah* publicly is very, very ancient—originating with Ezra in the fifth-fourth centuries B.C.E. At some later date a reading from the *Nevi'im* (the prophets) was added; this corresponding passage from the Prophets is known as the *Haftorah*."

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

### **What might be the Haftorah to members of the Church?**

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint's use of the "Pearl of Great Price" and the Doctrine and Covenants as an LDS *Haftorah*. Literally, it is the reading of the *Nevi'im*, the "Prophets," with their explanations and direct heavenly insights. Anciently, Isaiah

and other prophets wrote about the Lord who “directs our paths.” Reading and studying the words of God is a daily opportunity “Our gospel learning and teaching should be part of our daily lives (see **Deuteronomy 6:6–7; Acts 17:11**).” (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/come-follow-me-helps-home/handout?lang=eng>) The idea is repeated by latter day prophets, and in Jewish teachings also. “Solomon, the Gaon of Vilna . . . emphasized the study of Torah as the supreme duty of the Jew and the safest path to follow in the search for the truth.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) Jewish worship practices include reading the *Torah* (the Law) and *Haftarah* (the Prophets). Anciently, this was done publicly once a week on the Sabbath. In modern times there are three Jewish public readings each week; Monday, Thursday and Saturday (Sabbath). The entire Bible text (Old Testament) is covered in one year. By the way, when Jesus lived, apparently the Jews read the “Law and the Prophets” just once a week. “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.” (**Luke 4:16**) It is likely that the reason Jesus’ ministry was three years long was so that He could read, review and instruct the Disciples through the entire Law and the Prophets once during those training years. His instruction brought back the spirit, reopening the purpose of the law. The spirit was replacing the wall of do’s and don’ts. The obsession with the “letter of the law” had drawn the Jews away from an understanding of and looking forward to the redemption.

### **How is prayer a part of Jewish devotion?**

When the Jews pray in a synagogue, they form a prayer circle (Minyan). It usually consists of at least ten participants. There is a tradition that if there are only nine

persons, the prayer circle can be completed with an agreement that the presence of the Lord or the Spirit of the Lord is with them. In addition to group prayer and the prayer circle, it is still essential to have individual prayer. “The rabbis placed great emphasis on the relationship of the individual to the community during prayer. Almost all prayer, for example, was written in the first person plural—‘Forgive us,’ ‘Teach us,’ ‘Bring us to our Land.’ Although private prayer was certainly permitted, the individual was urged to join a congregation (*minyan*) when he prays and to incorporate the needs of the *minyan* in his prayers. “A *minyan* was said to consist of at least ten adult Jewish males. Without the presence of a *minyan* many important prayers—*Kedushah*, *Kaddish*, *the Priestly Benediction*, *the reading of the Torah* and *the Haftarah* and the *hazzan*’s repetition of the *Amidah*—cannot be recited. Recently, the Conservative movement in Judaism has granted its congregations permission to include women in the *minyan*. Reform congregations generally have not insisted on the presence of a *minyan*. When they have, women have usually been counted.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **Prayers—personal or prewritten, and in what language?**

Most prayers in Judaism are pre-written. Many are created from the Psalms. It is common that the prayers were and still are said in the Hebrew language. In fact, the Hebrew language was largely preserved because of prayers and, of course, the scriptures. There is also a recent trend of thought that questions the pre-written structure of prayers. “The rabbis assumed that God understands all languages; therefore they said that prayers may be recited in any language which the worshiper understands. Hebrew, however, was given a special status—it may be used even though the

worshiper does not understand it. Over the centuries some widely accepted prayers (*Kaddish*, *Kol Nidrei* for example) have been written in other languages. The Reform movement and, to a lesser extent, the Conservative movement, have encouraged prayer in the language understood by the worshiper. Recently, however, all movements have stressed the significance of Hebrew, not only as the language of prayer which ties the Jew to his past, but also as a means of uniting him with fellow Jews throughout the world.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### **How have people changed the simplicity of prayer?**

“Modern Jewish thinkers, even those with a deep faith in God, have raised many questions about prayer, its effect upon God, and the person who is worshipping. Can the individual pray with real *kavvanah* [holiness] when he is reciting words written by other people who lived in another era and when he is asked to recite these same words at set times every day? Do prayers, written so long ago, reflect the moral and religious ideas of modern Jews? Does God really ‘hear’ prayer; does He, or can He, change the processes of nature (for example, heal a dying person) in response to prayer?” “In light of these and other problems, many thinkers who have associated themselves with the Reform and Reconstructionist movements have suggested changes which should be made in the wording of traditional prayers. They have chosen to eliminate or to reinterpret prayers for the Resurrection of the Dead, the coming of a personal Messiah, the restoration of animal sacrifices and the benediction in which a man blesses God for not having made him a woman.” “Some thinkers, who do not believe that God changes the course of nature or favors the prayers of one person more than another have tried to reinterpret those prayers which call

upon God to intervene in human affairs. These authors generally stress the belief that the Hebrew word for prayer, *tefillah*, is derived from a root *pil* which (in reflexive form) means to ‘judge oneself’; prayer, therefore, is mainly an act of self-judgment in which the individual examines his life in the light of what God expects of him and of what he, himself, is able to achieve.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### **How does holiness and prayer relate?**

The *hasidic* movement in Judaism places great emphasis on the necessity for *kavvanah* [holiness] in prayer. According to hasidic teaching, man may easily be overcome by "evil thoughts" which deprive him of *kavvanah* and which, eventually, may destroy his moral and spiritual life. Prayer, in part, involves the "annihilation" of evil thoughts; it helps the good, already present in man's soul, to come forth; it enables man to achieve an intense closeness (*devekut*) to God. Many scholars believe that Hasidism stresses the *devekut* aspect of prayer even more than the literal meaning of the words recited. “In prayer, mention of God's holiness should stimulate the worshiper to seek holiness in his own religious and moral life. Holiness is acquired by separation from evil, by the performance of *mitzvot* and by one's willingness to do even more than the law requires, ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God, am holy’ (Leviticus 19:2).” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### **How is kneeling a part of prayer?**

Kneeling, a common form of prayer among Christians, is shunned by Jews, although scriptural references to kneeling do exist. “And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.”

(1 Kings 8:54) “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.” (Psalm 95:6)

### **What is a prerequisite for personal revelation?**

Obedience to the Lord’s commandments is a prerequisite for personal revelation. The physical lesson of opening the heavens also applies in a spiritual sense. “In the Bible, reward and punishment—whether individual, national or universal—is described as appertaining to this world. It is recognized as axiomatic that God rewards the righteous by granting them prosperity and well-being, and punishes the wicked with destruction. This forms the basis of the passage from Deuteronomy which constitutes the second paragraph of the *Shema*: adherence to God’s commandments will bring ‘the rain in its seasons’; disobedience will cause God ‘to shut up the heavens that there be no rain, and the land will not yield her fruit.’” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### **How can faith, and fear, affect my “Hearing Him?”**

In response to the faithlessness of Israel, the “sealing” prophet, Elijah, used his God-given authority to seal the heavens. The physical phenomenon of drought and losing their crops reflected the spiritual phenomenon of disregarding the “still small voice” and, thereby, not being able to bind or seal their eternal families. There is a reason it is called the “still small voice” because without a sense of reverence we won’t be able to hear it. In the Old Testament, reverence is often referred to as “fear,” better said, “awesomeness.” Fear, as in scared, has another meaning; “opposite of faith.” Fear is thinking and expecting what you “don’t

want” while faith is thinking and expecting things you “do want,” while faith in the Lord is thinking and expecting the things God wants for us. “In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. (Psalm 56:4) “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1)

### **What was Moses’ last revelation?**

“Just before he died, and on the eve of the Children of Israel’s entry into the Promised Land, Moses made a farewell speech to the Jews. In it, he reviewed their history and gave direction for their future. In one sentence (Deuteronomy 10:12) he summed up what the Bible considers to be the entire purpose of human existence: ‘And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God demand of you? Only this: to revere (fear) the Lord your God, to walk only in His paths, to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul.’” “The Hebrew word for ‘revere’ is (*yirah*) which is usually translated as ‘fear,’ and that for ‘love’ is (*aha’vah*). These two concepts, although they may seem contradictory at first glance, are the essence of Judaism’s view of man’s attitude to God.” “The ‘fear’ referred to is not the fright or scaredness which a person feels when he is confronted, for example, with a hungry lion. It is rather a feeling of awe or reverence felt when witnessing greatness or grandeur. The view of a major natural wonder, for instance, is breathtaking and inspires the beholder with awe. It is this kind of feeling that is meant by the ‘fear of God’; that is, awe at the thought of the infinity and greatness of God.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)