

MARCH 8-14, 2021

Doctrine and Covenants 23–26

“STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH”

Summary: *Doctrine and Covenants 23. A series of five revelations given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Manchester, New York, April 1830, to Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith, Joseph Smith Sr., and Joseph Knight Sr. As the result of earnest desire on the part of the five persons named to know of their respective duties, the Prophet inquired of the Lord and received a revelation for each person. 1–7, These early disciples are called to preach, exhort, and strengthen the Church.*

Doctrine and Covenants 24. Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, July 1830. Though less than four months had elapsed since the Church was organized, persecution had become intense, and the leaders had to seek safety in partial seclusion. The following three revelations were given at this time to strengthen, encourage, and instruct them. 1–9, Joseph Smith is called to translate, preach, and expound scriptures; 10–12, Oliver Cowdery is called to preach the gospel; 13–19, The law is revealed relative to miracles, cursings, casting off the dust of one’s feet, and going without purse or scrip.

Doctrine and Covenants 25. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, July 1830 (see the heading to section 24). This revelation manifests the will of the Lord to Emma Smith, the Prophet’s wife. 1–6, Emma Smith, an elect lady, is called to aid and comfort her husband; 7–11, She is also called to write, to expound scriptures, and to select hymns; 12–14, The song of the righteous is a prayer unto the Lord; 15–16, Principles of obedience in this revelation are applicable to all.

Doctrine and Covenants 26. Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, Oliver Cowdery, and John Whitmer, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, July 1830 (see the heading to section 24). 1, They are instructed to study the scriptures and to preach; 2, The law of common consent is affirmed.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What value do I receive in remembering persecutions?

There is a mistaken idea that if one truly repents and truly forgives, he will forget. The scriptural verses about remembrance indicate that the Lord is the one who will forget our mistakes. Apparently, we need to have memory, because it is from our memory of good and bad that we learn. As we remember our sins and the sins of our forefathers, we can prevent ourselves from repeating the same mistakes. “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto

the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (**Jeremiah 31:33-34**) There is great value in being reconciled with God through the process of remembering. It leads us to seek forgiveness and imbues us with a sense of forgiving. “It is natural for someone who has endured a terrible disaster to want to bury his painful memories along with the dead and forget the past. But the Jews, being only a tiny minority in the world and having a long history of persecution, cannot afford to forget that Nazism brutally murdered six million of their people. Thus in 1953 the Knesset, Israel’s parliament, established *Yad Vashem*, the Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority, to perpetuate their memory.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) Alma teaches, as prophets taught in the past and as they teach today, to look forward to the past! In other words, our memory must be “before” us so that we can

learn from the past. At the same time, our future is before us as well. In that way we have the advantage of a “wide screen” view of life. “. . . again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember . . .” (Alma 13:1)

How can persecutions bring me closer to the Lord?

Due to the persecution the early saints were subject to, the Prophet Joseph Smith instructed the saints to seek legal redress. Both the United States and the State of Israel have a few things in common. Both are established on a rule of law. Although Israel is basically a religiously “Jewish” nation and the United States is basically a religiously “Christian” nation, both allow freedoms including worship and enterprise, again, based on law. Both legal system’s laws are based on a system that includes punishments for breaking the law. However, biblical law prescribed punishments based on breaking the law. The modern legal system in the USA is similar to the Roman system, much more slanted to the punishment of people . . . breaking the law. Joseph Smith’s martyrdom must be seen through the records of past prophets. Their persecutions and martyrdoms only reflected the future or the past and teach us something about the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord. These prophets were models of their Master, the Savior, who would prophesy against the corrupt part of the Jewish government and the people who followed their wickedness. “And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father.” (Mosiah 15:6-7)

How can miracles teach me about God?

“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.) The greatest saving miracle in Jewish history is the grand exodus from Egypt. The account is repeated every year at Passover, the feast (celebration) of deliverance. A handbook (*Haggadah*) explains the miraculous event. “Since the overriding theme of the *Haggadah* is that God saved the Jewish people from their enemies, Moses’ name is not mentioned in the *Haggadah* (except for one passing instance). This emphasizes that it was God Himself—not an angel and not a messenger—who redeemed Israel. Accordingly, a large part of the *Haggadah* is filled with songs of praise for the great miracles that God performed.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How important is music in the process of bearing-in-mind – the redemption?

“In the days of the Temple, each day during the last six *hol ha-mo’ed* days (preceeding days of Passover and Sukkot) of the festival (though not on the Sabbath), the priests used to fill a golden flagon with water drawn from the beautiful spring of Siloam in the valley to the south of the Temple Mount, and carry it up the hill for a ceremony at the altar. This ceremony was called *Simhat Bet ha-Sho’evah* (the joy of the water drawing). According to the *Mishnah*, whoever failed to witness this ceremony in his lifetime ‘never witnessed real joy.’ Golden candlesticks, 50 cubits high, were lit with wicks made out of worn-out garments of the priests, and the light emitted was so bright that ‘there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light of the *Bet ha-Sho’evah*.’ Men of piety and good deeds used to dance before the candlesticks with burning torches in their hands, singing songs and praises. And countless Levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets and other musical instruments, on the 15 steps leading from the Court of the Israelites to the Court of the Women. “From all corners of the Land of Israel throngs of pilgrims used to make their way up to Jerusalem carrying the gaily decorated baskets of fruit and grain which they brought to

the Temple as a thanksgiving offering. At the gates of the city the townsfolk greeted them with music. The pilgrims then ascended the broad marble staircase that led from the City of David to the summit of the Temple Mount, where they would present their offerings to the Priests. "Levites were entitled to serve at the sanctuary as assistants to the priests. Their duties included serving as custodians of the sanctuary, as musicians, judges, scribes and teachers." (**Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.**)

How have songs and hymns enhanced praise to the Lord?

The following quote give a wonderful background on the Psalms. They are original singing and musical praises to the Lord still used among many religious people. "Psalms - the first book of the *Ketuvim* (writings of the Prophets) section of the Bible, constituting an anthology of lyric poems universally recognized as the foremost collection of Hebrew religious poetry. The English name 'Psalms' is derived from the Greek word for a 'song sung to a stringed instrument' while the Hebrew name, *Tehillim*, is derived from the root meaning praise and glorification. The Hebrew title characterizes the book in terms of its essential contents—a collection of profoundly religious poems of praise to God— while the English title characterizes it in terms of its form: lyric poems designed for elaborate musical accompaniment." "Today, in the synagogue, on the first six days of Sukkot (except Shabbat), a single circuit is made around the bimah [pulpit] by the congregants . . . and chant *hoshanot* [praises to the Lord]. On the seventh day, *Hoshana Rabba* (last day of *Sukkot* week), the procession is repeated seven times. Every adult male in the congregation is honored with carrying a *Torah*, and . . . there is much singing . . ." (**Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.**) It should be noted that reading scriptures and praying are to be done in a singing or chanting way to differentiate the common everyday sounds of the mouth with the Word of the Lord or words to the Lord. A pattern of singing has developed that puts emphasis on particular syllables and words. When a boy has a Bar Mitzvah, he is accompanied by a person who may prompt him to sing his words correctly while making

sure that his clothing, cap, robe, sash, etc. is worn correctly. "Singing is a festive part of many Jewish occasions. Many times, the Eastern Jews (*Sephardic*) and Western Jews (*Ashkenazi*) sing the same lyrics with their own ethnic music and intonation. (**Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.**) Music inspired the early pioneers of the gathering Jews. That gathering is called "*Aliya*," it means to go up. "The ideal of freedom has always been cherished by the Jews, for their history has been one of slavery, exile and persecution—slavery in Egypt until the Exodus around the 13th century B.C.E., and exile and oppression since the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. Throughout the exile, the hope of the return to *Erez Israel* (land of Israel) was kept alive, developing into the Zionist movement in the 19th century, which found its fruition in the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. A fitting symbol of the Jews' desire for their own land, government and defense is the national anthem *Ha-Tikvah* ('The Hope'). (**Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.**)

How did we get the "Psalms?"

"Traditionally, authorship of the book of Psalms has been ascribed to King David. 73 of the 150 Psalms begin with the superscription *le-David*, although the precise connotation of this term is uncertain; it could mean 'concerning David' or 'a dedication to David' and not necessarily 'by David.' Furthermore, of the remaining Psalms, many bear superscriptions relating them to ten other figures of early Israelite history, ranging from Adam to Moses. However, the association of King David with Psalms rests on strong, ancient traditions. Moreover, in other books of the Bible David appears as a skillful player on the lyre, as an inventor of musical instruments and as a composer of dirges, and is described in one place as the 'sweet singer of Israel.' "Some evidence further suggests that King David organized guilds of Psalm singers in the Tabernacle (**I Chronicles 6:16**), which were certainly functioning during the period of the First Temple. The fact that the names of some of these groups (the 'Korahites' and the 'Asaphites') appear in the superscription of various psalms, indicate their strong involvement in the early public worship of Israel. Bible critics today (unlike those of 100

years ago) almost all agree that the Psalms represent a very early form of Israelite literature, bearing no Hellenistic influences and thus predating, at the very latest, early Second Temple times.” [Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.](#))

How does study help me to return to God?

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* (the “Law”), 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 *Haftarah*.” [\(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.\)](#) The Latter-

day Saints’ use of the Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price and the Book of Mormon is the LDS *Haftarah*. Literally it is the reading of the *Nevi'im*, the “Prophets,” with their explanations and heavenly insights. “On *Shabbat ha-Gadol*, (Sabbath before Passover week) 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.” [\(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.\)](#)

What would be a reason for “Common Consent?”

Beyond a traditional sense of “approval,” the principle of common consent in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints shows a member’s willingness, acquiescence, and compliance to the will of the Lord – expressed through His servants – and individually confirmed through the power of the Holy Ghost.

