

December 6-12, 2021

The Articles of Faith and Official Proclamations 1 and 2

“WE BELIEVE

Summary: *Articles of Faith. The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A statement by Joseph Smith published in the Times and Seasons March 1, 1842, in company with a short history of the Church that was popularly known as the Wentworth Letter.*

Official Declaration 1. The Bible and the Book of Mormon teach that monogamy is God’s standard for marriage unless He declares otherwise (see 2 Samuel 12:7–8 and Jacob 2:27, 30). Following a revelation to Joseph Smith, the practice of plural marriage was instituted among Church members in the early 1840s (see section 132). From the 1860s to the 1880s, the United States government passed laws to make this religious practice illegal. These laws were eventually upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. After receiving revelation, President Wilford Woodruff issued the following Manifesto, which was accepted by the Church as authoritative and binding on October 6, 1890. This led to the end of the practice of plural marriage in the Church.

Official Declaration 2. The Book of Mormon teaches that “all are alike unto God,” including “black and white, bond and free, male and female” (2 Nephi 26:33). Throughout the history of the Church, people of every race and ethnicity in many countries have been baptized and have lived as faithful members of the Church. During Joseph Smith’s lifetime, a few black male members of the Church were ordained to the priesthood. Early in its history, Church leaders stopped conferring the priesthood on black males of African descent. Church records offer no clear insights into the origins of this practice. Church leaders believed that a revelation from God was needed to alter this practice and prayerfully sought guidance. The revelation came to Church President Spencer W. Kimball and was affirmed to other Church leaders in the Salt Lake Temple on June 1, 1978. The revelation removed all restrictions with regard to race that once applied to the priesthood.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What major Christian religions have Articles of Faith?

In England, there was an Act of Six Articles of 1539 declaring six key Catholic beliefs. At the time, denial was punishable by law with a heretic's death automatically set for repudiation of transubstantiation, denying the authority of clerical celibacy, vows of chastity, and other things. Then, the Anglican Church derived 39 Articles of Religion from a former 42 articles that were overturned under the Catholic Mary I, yet, under Elizabeth I they were reformed. The writings were couched in uncertain language, so that a broader

definition of faith, excluding Roman Catholics and others, and still included items of Protestant beliefs. Elizabeth sought to pull the people of her realm under one umbrella of faith that still allowed for individual interpretation. The articles were designed to establish the preeminence of the Anglican church, with Elizabeth 1 at its head. They cancelled Catholic beliefs such as transubstantiation, affirmed the authority of the Bible, allowed marriage of clergy and the right of the reigning monarch to change church policy. In 1571 the English Parliament made obedience to the 39 Articles a legal obligation, although that statute is no longer viable. They remain the basis of the Anglican religion until

now. The far-reaching effect of the 39 Articles in Protestant faith is still seen in Protestant religions throughout the world.

When did the Jews get their Articles of Faith?

By the time the Crusaders were approaching the Holy Land, a prominent Jewish philosopher, Moses Maimonides (1138-1204), began collecting the writings and interpretations of other Jewish sages to codify and centralize them. As previously mentioned, in his work "The Guide to the Perplexed," Maimonides included 'Thirteen Articles of Faith.' The first three articles declared that God cannot be explained. That is probably the first published Jewish work that (in most Judaic studies) eliminated reference to the anthropomorphic nature of God. An understanding of the 'humanlike' nature of God was known to the Jews at the time of Jesus. The Old Testament, as well as the Dead Sea Scrolls contain several references to God in 'human terms.' As the true nature of God is seen to diminish in history, true religion faded away.

What do the Jewish Articles of Faith include?

"The great Jewish philosopher Maimonides argued for the existence of God from the idea of motion. Everything in the universe is moving, and since we know that movement is finite, it must have started somewhere, hence the idea of the Prime Mover, i.e., God. "In the final analysis, however, there is no direct positive evidence of the existence of God. It can be argued that if there were such evidence then there would be no virtue in believing in Him. Ultimately it is a question of faith." "Perhaps the most famous of the various formulations of dogmas is the Thirteen Principles of Faith of Maimonides. Originally written in Arabic, this creed is the basis of the *Yigdal* hymn which is part of the daily service and is

usually recited at the conclusion of the Friday evening synagogue service. The 13 fundamentals are: (1) The existence of God, which is perfect; (2) God is 'one' in every sense of the word; (3) God has no body or physical attributes; (4) God is eternal; (5) God alone must be worshiped; (6) the prophecy of the Bible is true; (7) Moses was greater than any other prophet; (8) the entire *Torah* (law) was given to Moses; (9) the Torah will never be superseded or abrogated; (10) God knows the actions of men; (11) God rewards and punishes; (12) the Messiah will ultimately come; and (13) the dead will be resurrected. ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How is marriage viewed in Judaism?

One of the greatest rituals and covenants that Jews maintain is that of marriage and, subsequently, family life. Notice in the following excerpts the similarities of practices in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the Jewish practices that seem to come from ancient times. The ritual of marriage in Judaism is considered without end; there is no statement, "Until death do you part." The canopy or huppah is reflective of the ancient temple. In some cases, the huppah is a *tallit*, the garment that reminds a Jew of the covenants and commandments he has bound to himself. A minyan or "prayer circle" is formed at the marriage. Two witnesses are also present. As in all religious ceremonies, men are separated from women on two sides of the room or hall. Head covering is also required. Blessings are given to the bride and groom. "In Jewish teaching, marriage is considered the ideal human state and a basic social institution established by God at the time of Creation. Both the Bible and the rabbis reject celibacy as unnatural and harmful to the human personality, and insist upon the need for marriage, not only for

purposes of procreation, but also for companionship and human self-fulfillment: 'It is not good that man be alone; I will make a help meet for him' ([Genesis 2:18](#)) and 'He who has no wife is not a proper man; he lives without joy, blessing and goodness.' The successful marriage in the eyes of the prophets and the rabbis was the most perfect symbol of a meaningful and purposeful relationship and was taken by them as the closest approximation to the idealized relationship between God and Israel, and between Israel and the Torah. The laws of marriage and the customs and practices of the marriage ceremony which developed over the generations are numerous and varied, but all take as their goal the glorification of marriage as a sanctified state and the desire to facilitate to the greatest possible extent the maintenance of a successful and harmonious marriage." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How is plural marriage viewed in Jewish history?

In Judaism, where polygamy was once accepted, it later was rescinded. "The biblical idea of marriage was essentially monogamous, although polygamy was common among the upper classes of society. Among the rabbis, polygamy was almost unknown, but it was not until the 11th century that multiple marriages were legally prohibited. Then an enactment associated with the name of Rabbenu Gershom ben Judah was promulgated which established monogamy as the legal norm for all the Jews living in Europe." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) Polygamy has been illegal in Israel since 1977 and is punishable by up to five years in prison. However, many Bedouin don't know that, because Israel has rarely enforced that law, seeing it as an internal ethnic issue. According to Israeli government data, at least 20 percent of Bedouin (Moslem) families are polygamous.

(www.nbcnews.com/news/world/polygamy-persists-among-israel-s-bedouins-women-are-pushing-change-n922296) Among the recently arrived Ethiopian Jews who believe they are descendants of Solomon through the "Queen of Sheba," marriage was officially monogamous, in practice, however, Ethiopian Jewish men often entered polygamous unions with a second wife, or relations with a common-law wife, a concubine, a slave (*barya*), or a divorced woman (*galamotta*) who was searching for "protection" in Ethiopian terms. (<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/ethiopian-jewish-women>)

What are some of the additional traditional practices in Jewish marriages?

Other details of Jewish marriage are included to explain interesting cultural and traditional practices. "A Jewish marriage consists, from the point of view of rabbinic law, of two separate acts, called *kiddushin* and *nissu'in*, which were originally performed at an interval of a year or more apart, but which from the 12th century onward became united in one ceremony. "*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. (The halakhah also recognizes the validity of *kiddushin* performed through the writing of a contract or through actual cohabitation, but both these methods became obsolete at an early date and today *kiddushin* is uniquely performed through the transference of an object of value.)" "*Kiddushin* is thus a legally binding form of betrothal, but it must be followed by *nissu'in*, the marriage proper, for the

couple to be considered completely married. In the *nissu'in* ceremony, the bride is led under a canopy (*huppah*) symbolic of the groom's house, and benedictions are recited, after which the couple may legally live together."

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How are marriage obligations acknowledged?

"The separation of the two ceremonies in *Talmudic* times allowed the arrangement of long betrothals, but the uncertainties of life in medieval Europe made such an arrangement impractical and perilous, and it was for this reason that it became customary to perform both ceremonies together. The actual wedding ceremony as performed today is an amalgam of customs and traditions which developed over the generations, but its basic features can be summarized as follows:

"Before being led to the *huppah* the groom, in the presence of witnesses, undertakes by an act of *kinyan* (groom's acceptance) the obligations of the *ketubbah* (marriage contract; see below). He is then escorted to the place where the bride is waiting and lets down the veil over her face, while the rabbi pronounces the blessing invoked on Rebekah, 'O sister! May you grow into thousands of myriads' (**Genesis 24:60**). (This ceremony is known in Yiddish as *bedeken di kale* (veiling the bride) and is not practiced by Sephardi Jews.) The groom is then led to the *huppah* by his and the bride's father, while the bride is accompanied to the *huppah* by her and the groom's mother."

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What is done in the marriage "prayer circle?"

"The ceremony proper (customarily performed in the presence of at least a *minyan* of (at least 10) males—a precautionary measure eliminating the possibility of secret marriages) then begins with the recitation of the marriage

blessing over a goblet of wine, from which both bride and groom drink. The groom then places the ring on the forefinger of the bride's right hand and in the presence of two witnesses repeats the marriage formula. *Kiddushin* has now been performed, and in order to separate it from the *nissu'in* which is to follow, the *ketubbah* (marriage contract) is read out loud. Seven marriage blessings are then recited over a second goblet of wine and the ceremony concludes with the groom crushing a glass under his right foot, as a sign of mourning over the destruction of the Temple. To the rejoicing of the invited guests, the couple are then led to a private room in which they spend some time together, while witnesses are stationed outside. After this *yihud* (being alone together) they are finally considered to be man and wife." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How is the spiritual nature of marriage emphasized in Judaism?

"Both the week before the wedding and the week after are celebrated in special fashion. In the synagogue on the Sabbath preceding the marriage, the groom is called to the reading of the *Torah* and, in some communities, while standing at the *bimah* (raised pulpit) is showered with nuts and candies, in symbolic representation of everyone's wish for his fruitfulness and happiness. This custom is called in Yiddish *aufrufen*. During the days immediately preceding the wedding, bride and groom customarily do not see each other (the actual period varies in different communities from a week to the day of the marriage), and both fast on the day of their wedding as an indication of the spiritual importance of marriage and the fact that they are about to start a new life together. Following the wedding ceremony, a festive meal is served, during which the guests entertain the newlywed couple and following which the seven wedding blessings are again recited. The

seven days following the wedding are known as the *Sheva Berakhot* (seven blessings), for festive meals in honor of the couple are arranged each day, and at the conclusion of each the seven wedding blessings are recited in the presence of a minyan of invited guests". ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How does the “perfect” wedding ring signify an unending Jewish marriage?

“Although the act of marriage can be effected in different ways it has become the universal Jewish practice to use a ring (except in very few oriental communities where a coin is used). By law, the ring must belong to the bridegroom, and can be constructed of any material, as long as it is free of precious stones and its value is more than a *perutah*, the smallest denomination of currency in *Talmudic* times.” “The *Ketubbah* is the marriage contract, the document which records the financial obligations which the husband undertakes toward his wife consequent to their marriage. In principle, the obligations recorded in the *ketubbah* are imposed upon the husband by law, independent of the writing of the contract, but the *halakhah* (Jewish law) still dictates that a deed be written and that it is ‘forbidden for the groom to live with the bride until he has written and delivered the *ketubbah* to her.’ According to the *Talmud*, the *ketubbah* was instituted in order to protect the woman, since it imposes a monetary punishment upon the husband in the case of a divorce, and it also assures the wife at least minimal compensation upon the death of her husband. In the *ketubbah* are spelled out the minimum compensation set by law, as well as all additional sums willingly offered by the husband.”

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How can the *Huppah* remind me of the ancient Temple?

“Today, the term *huppah* refers to the decorative canopy under which the

wedding ceremony is performed.

Originally, however, it referred to the actual bridal chamber, the tent or room of the groom to which the bride was brought in festive procession for the marital union. The custom of setting up a canopy for the wedding ceremony was apparently not widely practiced until late in the Middle Ages, for many medieval responsa deal with the question whether the act of entering the *huppah* (canopy) was sufficient to constitute marriage or whether it was to be regarded only as a symbol which would still require the couple to retire in privacy (as in today's practice of *yihud*; see above). The *Talmud* relates that there was an ancient custom to make staves of the *huppah* from a cedar and a pine tree planted specifically for this purpose at the birth of a male and female child respectively. In medieval France, it was customary for the groom to cover the bride's head with his *tallit* as a symbol of sheltering her; and in modern-day Israel, for weddings of soldiers on active duty, it is not unusual to see a *huppah* constructed of a *tallit* supported by four rifles held by friends of the bride and groom.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) The *tallit* is a reminder of the ancient Temple where marriages were done by the Priests. “Generally, the *huppah* is erected inside the synagogue or the hall where the wedding is to take place, but among Orthodox Jews, the preferred custom is to erect the *huppah* outside, or at least in a spot open to the sky, underneath the stars, because of God's assurance to Abraham that He would make his descendants ‘as numerous as the stars of the heavens’ ([Genesis 22:17](#)).”

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What marriage clothing reminders relate to the ancient Temple?

In some Jewish circles, a special garment is worn in remembrance of repentance and represents the purity of the covenant of marriage. It is also used to clothe the

dead. It is called the *Kitel* in Yiddish meaning “gown” or garment. “In Ashkenazi tradition it is not just the bride who wears white on her wedding day. The groom, too, stands under the canopy wearing his white *kitel*, or robe, over his wedding finery. The day of their marriage is a solemn one for the bride and groom. They pray that their past sins will be forgiven, and they can start their life together afresh. The white of their clothing symbolizes the purity and the forgiveness of sin for which they are hoping. For this reason, a similar garment is used to clothe the dead for burial. The *kitel* therefore also serves to remind the wearer of how brief life is, and of the necessity for atonement.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How does a religious marriage follow a secular one?

Another interesting similarity to Latter-day Saint practice is the significance of a proper ritual marriage in the faith, even though a secular marriage has already been performed. “A convert to Judaism is considered a new-born child, and, from the *halakhic* point of view, he has no father or mother. Thus, if a whole family converts, the children and the parents start their lives as Jews with no legal relationship. Because of this state of affairs, converts are always named as though they were the sons of Abraham, the first Jew. A husband and wife who convert must also have another wedding ceremony in order to be married under Jewish law.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) The holiness of marriage is a major part of the beliefs of both the Jews and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. “The primary restriction of sexual activity in Jewish law is that it should take place within marriage, as an expression of love between husband and wife as well as out of a desire to fulfill God’s commandments. An element of holiness is added by the laws of *niddah* (separation

during the period of menstruation, which ensure that the couple does not indulge in sex on impulse but rather directs the act to holiness.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) Marriage is one of the greatest covenants God has given to man. The sanctity of marriage is evident in the Bible. The traditions of both Jews and Latter-day Saints similarly uphold the precious responsibilities and blessings of this covenant.

What restrictions were there for ancient priesthood holders?

Ancient priestly callings and functions were limited to certain people. There were also priestly functions that were carried out for women, by priestly women. In the last Jerusalem temple there was a separate entrance for priestly women. The revelation limiting restriction on some people is evidence of “living revelations” to the Prophet and Apostles of today. “We are not accustomed to speaking of women having the authority of the priesthood in their Church callings, but what other authority can it be? When a woman—young or old—is set apart to preach the gospel as a full-time missionary, she is given priesthood authority to perform a priesthood function. The same is true when a woman is set apart to function as an officer or teacher in a Church organization under the direction of one who holds the keys of the priesthood. Whoever functions in an office or calling received from one who holds priesthood keys exercises priesthood authority in performing her or his assigned duties.” ([President Dallin H. Oaks, General Conference, April 2014](#)) Anciently, “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.](#)) The center of the Lord’s Temple was curtained because of its sacredness, a courtyard where the Prophet could

converse with the Lord. As mentioned previously, the Children of Israel lived in a “camp” that was divided into three sections: the people, the Levites and the Lord.

What was included in ancient priestly assignments?

“Genealogies of individual families seem to have been based on oral (spoken) tradition. In the period of the return to Zion (fifth to fourth century B.C.E.) it became especially important to prove the lineage of the priests and Levites, for without such proof of priestly descent, claimants could not qualify for service in the Temple or the priestly privileges. Other families were also keen to have proof of descent in order to justify claims to abandoned family property.” “In the period of the Second Temple purity of descent was important chiefly for the *kohanim* (priests) and for those Israelite families who claimed the right of their daughters to marry *kohanim*.” “Since the various offices in the Temple service passed from father to son, the purity of those families whose priestly roles were known by long tradition was beyond question.” ““But Judaism never claimed that wisdom was the monopoly of prominent families (‘A learned bastard takes precedence over an uneducated high priest’— **(Mishnah, Horayot 3:8)**). Indeed, some sages were even said to have been descended from evil gentiles who repented their ways and became good Jews. However, purity of blood did play a part in the fight for political power between prominent rival Jewish families. Thus, the Hasmoneans, who had to defend themselves against the contention that only descendants of David could rule, in turn questioned the purity of David's blood, in view of his descent from Ruth the Moabite.

According to the third century Christian historian Africanus, King Herod forged for himself a descent from David, having first destroyed the genealogical records in the Temple.” “After the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. the *kohanim* clung to their lineage as the only remaining symbol of their past glory. Babylonian Jewry considered that the purity of its descent was of a higher order than that of *Erez* Israel, basing its claim on the tradition that all whose lineage was in doubt had returned to Israel with Ezra. With the Temple no longer in existence, genealogy lost much of its meaning and became merely a symbol of social status. In the Middle Ages some sages, such as Rashi and his grandsons Jacob b. Meir Tam and Samuel ben Meir, was claimed to have been of Davidic descent. From the 12th century on in Central and Eastern Europe the question of good birth (known as *yihus*) became increasingly important with regard to arranging marriages. By the 19th century in Germany great pains were taken to prove how deep were the Jewish community's roots in the locality, and much material was published on the subject.” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)**

What example of “living revelation” also occurred in the Meridian of Times?

Gentiles being able to become full covenant members at the time of the Apostle and Prophet Peter was similar to “all worthy people” receiving the priesthood (or to be blessed by priesthood functions) at the time of President and Prophet Spencer W. Kimball. “Priesthood limitation on blacks was changed by revelation. The things of God cannot be understood by the spirit of men. It is impossible to always measure and weigh all spiritual things by man's yardstick or scales.

Admittedly, our direct and positive information is limited. I have wished the Lord had given us a little more clarity in the matter. But for me, it is enough. The prophets for 133 years of the existence of the Church have maintained the position of the prophet of the Restoration that the Negro could not hold the priesthood nor have the temple ordinances which are preparatory for exaltation. I believe in the living prophets as much or almost more than the dead ones. They are here to clarify and reaffirm. I have served with and under three of them. The doctrine or policy has not varied in my memory. I know it could. I know the Lord could change his policy and release the ban and forgive the possible error which brought about the

deprivation. If the time comes, that he will do, I am sure. These smart members who would force the issue, and there are many of them, cheapen the issue and certainly bring into contempt the sacred principle of revelation and divine authority." ". . . I am not sure that there will be a change, although there could be. We are under the dictates of our Heavenly Father, and this is not my policy or the Church's policy. It is the policy of the Lord who has established it, and I know of no change, although we are subject to revelations of the Lord in case, he should ever wish to make a change." **(Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, Pages 448)** In 1978, the Lord made the change!