

January 22-28, 2024

# 1 Nephi 11–15

“ARMED WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS AND WITH THE POWER OF GOD”

---

**Summary:** *1 Nephi 11. Nephi sees the Spirit of the Lord and is shown in vision the tree of life—He sees the mother of the Son of God and learns of the condescension of God—He sees the baptism, ministry, and crucifixion of the Lamb of God—He sees also the call and ministry of the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb. About 600–592 B.C.*

*1 Nephi 12. Nephi sees in vision the land of promise; the righteousness, iniquity, and downfall of its inhabitants; the coming of the Lamb of God among them; how the Twelve Disciples and the Twelve Apostles will judge Israel; and the loathsome and filthy state of those who dwindle in unbelief. About 600–592 B.C.*

*1 Nephi 13. Nephi sees in vision the church of the devil set up among the Gentiles, the discovery and colonizing of America, the loss of many plain and precious parts of the Bible, the resultant state of gentile apostasy, the restoration of the gospel, the coming forth of latter-day scripture, and the building up of Zion. About 600–592 B.C.*

*1 Nephi 14. An angel tells Nephi of the blessings and cursings to fall upon the Gentiles—There are only two churches: the Church of the Lamb of God and the church of the devil—The Saints of God in all nations are persecuted by the great and abominable church—The Apostle John will write concerning the end of the world. About 600–592 B.C.*

*1 Nephi 15. Lehi’s seed are to receive the gospel from the Gentiles in the latter days—The gathering of Israel is likened unto an olive tree whose natural branches will be grafted in again—Nephi interprets the vision of the tree of life and speaks of the justice of God in dividing the wicked from the righteous. About 600–592 B.C.*

---

## Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

### How symbolic is a “tree of life” in the old Israel family?

“When a seed is planted, it

disintegrates in the ground, losing its puny identity to the nourishing soil and creative potential of mother earth. A seedling sprouts, which will one day grow into a tall tree. In time, the tree will bear fruit, and seeds, which themselves might become an orchard, and ultimately, a vast forest.” ([https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/215515/jewish/The-Tree-of-Life.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/215515/jewish/The-Tree-of-Life.htm)) The scriptures carry an origin of Tree of Life thought, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay

hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.” (**Proverbs 3:17-18**)

### How can I solidify my understanding of prophecy?

“. . . Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision and will speak unto him in a dream.” (**Numbers 12:6**) Jewish commentary about visions of the future acknowledges that only a Prophet guides us to be able to understand divine things. “The *Zohar* (see *Kabbalah*) (Jewish text presented as an allegorical or mystical interpretation of the *Torah*). argues that the dreams of the wicked derive from the forces of impurity, while the dreams of the righteous contain visions, images, and prophecies of a higher order. *Maimonides* (Jewish scholar-Rabbi, 1138-1204) rejected

supernatural forces, believing that one's daytime thoughts are translated by the imagination into dreams . . . only a prophet, who rids himself of conscious base thoughts and desires is able to perceive divine things." "The early prophets played a prominent role in communal affairs and were consulted for advice and often influenced the political destiny of Israel; the prophet Samuel chose both Saul and David to be kings of Israel. Visions play an important role in the classical prophetic writings, but prophets did not merely predict the future. They often performed symbolic acts and used signs and wonders to authenticate their prediction of impending events. At times they had to bear the consequences of their own dire predictions --- Jeremiah was put into stocks for his unpopular prophecies." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) For many Moslems, Mohammed is called a Prophet although he apparently never claimed to be one. His writings did not particularly predict the future because he still held the Bible to be as accurate as he interpreted it. "From about 610 C.E. (A.D.) Muhammad claimed to have visions and to have been commanded, as messenger of God (Allah) to recite certain verses which came to his mind. In order to win over the Arabs to his new religion Muhammad realized that his appeal would have to be national and not aligned to either the Christianity of Byzantium or the Judaism of Babylonia. The holy book of Islam, the *Koran*, soon attracted a small community of devotees, and its message at this time concentrated on God's goodness and power, the return to God and final judgment, the necessity for man to be humble and grateful to God and to worship Him, and the obligation of generosity and respect for the rights of the poor and defenseless." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) A "general" timeline of the

biblical and Book of Mormon Lands' prophets can be seen:

**BCE (BC).....C.E. (AD)**

2500 2000 1400 1000 800 600 400 200

.....Abraham.....Moses.....Lehi.....Mosiah.....

0 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600 2000

Jesus.....Mormon/Moroni.....Jos. Smith

### What supporting team does the Prophet lead?

When Moses led the Israelites, twelve princes were selected, one representing each tribe (**Numbers 1:44; 17:6**). subsequently, Solomon had twelve administrators over all Israel, (**1 Kings 4:7**). After Israelites returned from Babylonian captivity, twelve chief priests were again ordained apart from the rest (**Ezra 8:24**). When Jesus restored the Gospel (**Matthew 4:17**), "he had called unto him his twelve disciples . . . [and] these twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, . . . Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (**Matthew 10:1, 5, 6**). Later, Jesus gave these disciples (later called Apostles) the keys of the kingdom with Peter as the chief Apostle (**Matthew 16:18–19; 18:18**) and declared that they would judge the twelve tribes of Israel (**Matthew 19:28**) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also has twelve Apostles who hold the keys of the kingdom, just as the Apostles did in Jesus' day (**Doctrine and Covenants 112:30–32; 124:128**). These Apostles serve under the direction of the First Presidency of the Church to "build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and secondly unto the Jews." (**Doctrine and Covenants 107:33**). So, in the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency is the symbol of priesthood power and the

permission to direct the Lord's work on the Earth.

### **How significant are the crossroads of the East and the West?**

The prophecies of the "Colonization of America" in the Book of Mormon echo the blessings and prophecies given to Joseph, son of Jacob (Israel). The fascinating geographic connection in his blessing is the term, "everlasting hills." Mountainous Israel is the "Crossroads of the East." On the other hand, Utah ("Tops of the Mountains" in the Navaho language) is the "Crossroads of the West." There are only two land masses on this planet that have a perpetual, unending range of mountains or "everlasting hills," Israel and USA. The connection to God's everlasting ways is also noted. "In the blessing given by Jacob to his son Joseph the inheritance of America is foreshadowed and predicted in the following words: 'Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: . . . The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.' (**Genesis 49:26**)" (**Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation Vol.3, Pg.68**) "He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting." (**Habakkuk 3:6**)

### **What is one of the helpful symbolisms of immersion?**

The latter-day restoration included authority and clarification of eternal ordinances such as baptism. Although the word "baptism" is not found in the Old

Testament, observance of the Jewish ritual of immersion may give us a clue of what the ancient rituals were like. The Book of Mormon clearly explains these immersions and the picture that is created to a Jewish reader can be recognizable as being like Biblical practices. Some religious Jews who experience repeated immersions in a *Mikveh*, (monthly for women and regularly for men) step into their immersion font from the east side, immerse themselves, and then exit to the west side. This could be a reminder of entering into the gateway of cleanness as the Children of Israel entered into their promised land. For the religious Jews, immersions are favored below ground level in flowing water that emanates from bedrock – the "Rock of Salvation." Jewish description includes: "*Mikveh* (Hebrew: - 'a collection [of water]') a special pool of water (is) constructed according to rigid legal specifications, immersion in which renders ritually clean a person who has become ritually unclean." "A *mikveh* must not be filled with water that has been drawn (i.e., has been in a vessel or a receptacle), but with water from a naturally flowing source; spring water or rainwater are the ideal sources, but melted snow and ice are also permitted. The water must be able to flow into the *mikveh* freely and unimpeded (any blockage renders the water 'drawn water') and must reach the *mikveh* in vessels that are not susceptible to ritual uncleanness. The minimum size of the *mikveh* is of a vessel which has a volume of '40 *seah*,' variously estimated at between 250 and 1,000 liters (quarts). The *mikveh* must be watertight and must be constructed of natural materials on the spot, for otherwise it is deemed itself to be a 'vessel' and renders the water in it 'drawn water'." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **How do Old Testament rituals teach me about the atonement?**

When animals were sacrificed, the cleaned carcass had to be immersed. Likewise, in modern times, to make meat “*kosher*,” it must be “immersed” in salt water. As stated in the **Book of Numbers 19:1-9**, there was a Red Heifer (in Hebrew, calf is a feminine word) ritual for forgiveness of sins. Jewish tradition tells us that the “Red Heifer” was sacrificed on the Mount of Olives, east of the Temple’s “Gate of Forgiveness, also known as the Gate Beautiful, as well slightly north of the altar. Those who have had the experience of sitting about half-way up the Mount of Olives opposite the present-day Gate Beautiful can attest to the spirit of Gethsemane (well away from the traditional Church of Gethsemane on the lower part of the mount).

### **How do water and sin have a connection in Jewish traditions?**

“On the afternoon of the first day (of *Rosh Hashana* – biblical new year), it is customary to walk to the nearest body of running water and there symbolically ‘cast’ one’s sins into the water. The ceremony may be based on a verse in the biblical book of Micah: ‘And Thou (referring to God) shall cast all their sins into the depths of the seas’ (**Micah 7:19**). This practice, to which there is no reference in the *Talmud*, is generally called *Tashlikh*, probably after the Hebrew word meaning ‘cast’ (*va-tashlikh*) in the verse from Micah.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **How do some perceive “Jews” and “Gentile” definitions?**

In spite of the many similarities that Mormons and Jews have in their religious societies, it is inevitably essential for Latter-day Saints and Jews to have some dialogue on the definition of “Jew” and “Gentile.” How did Jews seem like

“Gentile” to some members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? How do some Jews see members of the Church as “Gentile”? “An undoubted factor in the survival of the Jews as a people with a common identity has been their shared experience of persecution at the hands of gentiles (non-Jews).” “In ancient Israel the acceptance of monotheism (the belief that there is only one God) became the chief factor distinguishing Jews from gentiles, who then worshiped many gods.” “At this time gentiles were either natives living in *Erez* (land of) Israel or travelers passing through it. Resident gentiles were protected by traditional hospitality and by contractual agreements made between Israel and the neighboring states. Native gentiles were expected to be loyal to Israel’s civil laws in return for protection but were generally in a humbler position than the Israelite population.”

(**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **How did “Gentile” become so inclusive?**

“During the latter part of the Second Temple period (from the second century B.C.E.) the prohibition against Jews marrying gentiles, limited originally to the seven Canaanite nations --- Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (‘neither shalt thou make marriages with them’ **Deuteronomy 7:3**) --- was extended to include all gentiles, who might lure Jews away from the true God. In order to prevent the possibility of intermarriage the rabbis enacted a series of laws intended to limit social contact between Jew and non-Jew.” “Jews were forbidden to emulate gentile customs of an idolatrous or superstitious nature. The prohibition (*hukkat ha-goi*) was derived from the biblical commandment ‘ye shall not walk in the customs of the nation’ (**Leviticus 20:23 and 18:13**). Its purpose was to prevent Jews being converted to other

religions.” “During the 500 years of the *Talmudic* period to 499 C.E. widely differing attitudes toward gentiles were expressed. When Jews were being tortured during the reign of the Roman emperor Hadrian, Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai (2nd-century *Tannaitic* sage in ancient Judea) stated that the best of gentiles should be killed. In later, less hostile times, it was sometimes claimed that no difference between Jew and gentile would be made on the Day of Judgment (see End of Days). The concept of the righteous gentile (*hasidei ummot ha-olam* -- the pious ones of the nations of the world) is first found in the *Midrash* (ancient commentary on part of the Hebrew scriptures). The *Tosefta* (compilation of Jewish Oral Law from the late second century) teaches that they are as eligible to a place in the hereafter as any member of the House of Israel. Rabbi Isaac Arama (1420-1494, Spanish Rabbi) states that ‘every true pious gentile is equal to a son of Israel.’ The *Zohar* states that all gentiles who do not hate Israel, and who deal justly with Jews, qualify as pious ones. According to *Maimonides* (1128-1204) righteous gentiles were those who observed the Noachide laws and

were motivated by belief in the divine origin and authenticity of Moses' prophecy . . .” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) I remember a humorous statement in an Israeli travel brochure outlining a tour of the USA, including a stop in Salt Lake City . . . “the only place a Jew can walk down the street and be considered a Gentile!” Someday Jews and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will both know, we are the same family!

### **How can I come closer to grasping the meaning of justice and mercy?**

As mentioned above, the “Tree of Life” is connected to mercy (mercy is a feminine gender in Hebrew). Picture for a moment in your mind the two cherubim placed on the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant. The place between them was where the Lord would sit, or stand communicating with the Prophet or selected High Priest. Jewish interpretation includes: “Rav (Rabbi) Chaim Paltiel (13<sup>th</sup> century French Biblical commentator) suggests that the two statues represent the two attributes of God, mercy and justice.” (<https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-cherubim-their-role-on-the-ark-in-the-holy-of-holies>)