

December 2-8, 2024

Moroni 1–6

“TO KEEP THEM IN THE RIGHT WAY”

Summary: *Moroni 1. Moroni writes for the benefit of the Lamanites—The Nephites who will not deny Christ are put to death. [About A.D. 401–21.]*

Moroni 2. Jesus gave the twelve Nephite disciples power to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost. [About A.D. 401–21.]

Moroni 3. Elders ordain priests and teachers by the laying on of hands. [About A.D. 401–21.]

Moroni 4. How elders and priests administer the sacramental bread is explained. [About A.D. 401–21.]

Moroni 5. The mode of administering the sacramental wine is set forth. [About A.D. 401–21.]

Moroni 6. Repentant persons are baptized and fellowshipped—Church members who repent are forgiven—Meetings are conducted by the power of the Holy Ghost. [About A.D. 401–21.]

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How was the word “faith” created in Hebrew?

True religion is based on true faith in the Lord. The Hebrew word for faith is *Emunah* and that is probably derived from the word *Imun* which means practice, procedure or work. Inherent in the word *Emunah* is faith and works. Both are necessary to keep us in the right way. “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” (James 2:17) The words faith and grace are often interchanged, “We receive God’s grace because of the Atonement. We can’t raise ourselves from the dead, so the Resurrection is an example of His grace. We can’t purify ourselves from sin, so the Lord’s forgiveness is another example of grace. But before He will forgive us, we must repent—that’s our part, our works. Besides repentance, our works also include receiving ordinances, keeping covenants, and serving others. While these are necessary for salvation, they aren’t sufficient. They are not enough because we can’t live perfect lives, but we

can do our best to live righteously. By doing so, we invite the Lord’s grace into our lives and qualify for the gift of salvation.” (Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “What Think Ye of Christ?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p 67)

What is the historical background to the “laying on of hands?”

One procedure or practice of true religion is the “laying on of hands” with proper authority. There is biblical evidence of this when Moses laid hands on individuals and gave them authority. “And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.” (Numbers 27:22-23) Even in Judaism, where it is recognized that since the last Temple destruction there is the loss of priesthood, the “laying on of hands” is still done. “Hands are also significant in the symbolic act of bestowing a blessing. In rabbinic literature the priestly blessing is known as *Nesi’at Kappayim* (‘raising of the hands’) and is

pronounced with the hands uplifted, and the fingers spread in a special formation. In fact this special formation of the hands is often engraved on the tombstones of *Kohanim* (priests).” “In the same way that priests lift their hands in blessing, so parents place their hands on the heads of their children when they bless them. (For example, in the Bible, Jacob blessed his grandsons, *Ephraim* and *Manasseh*, by placing his hands on their heads.) Placing the hands on another person is symbolic not only of transferring blessing but also of passing on authority. In *Talmudic* times, scholars received their rabbinic ordination through the symbolic act of placing of the hands (known as *Semikhah*).” “All Jewish religious leaders had to be ordained before they were permitted to perform certain judicial functions and to decide practical questions in Jewish law. The Bible relates that Moses ordained Joshua by placing his hands on him, thereby transferring a portion of his spirit to Joshua. Moses also ordained the 70 elders who assisted him in governing the people. The elders ordained their successors who in turn ordained others, so that there existed an unbroken chain of ordination from Moses down to the time of the Second Temple.” “For some centuries the tradition of ordaining by the laying on of the hands was continued, but the rabbis later decided to ordain by merely conferring the title ‘rabbi’ either orally or in writing.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How do Jews view “ordination?”

“Ordination was required for membership in the Great *Sanhedrin* (supreme political, religious and judicial body in Palestine until the fifth century C.E.) and in the smaller judicial bodies. The lowest degree of ordination entitled the rabbi to decide only religious questions, while the highest degree entitled him to also judge criminal cases.” “It is not clear when the original tradition of ordination was discontinued. According to some historians, *Rav*, a third

century scholar, was the last to receive the traditional *Semikhah* just before moving to Babylonia. In accordance with the restriction which authorized ordinations only in *Erez Israel*, (the land of Israel) *Rav* refused to confer *Semikhah* while in Babylonia and subsequently none of the Babylonian *amoraim* (*Talmudic* scholars) were ordained. By the early Middle Ages, the traditional *Semikhah* procedure had completely ceased to exist and the direct chain of ordination begun by Moses was broken.” “In 1538 Rabbi *Jacob Berab* of *Safed* tried to revive the original *Semikhah* practice. At his initiative, 25 rabbis convened and ordained him as their chief rabbi. *Berab* then ordained four other rabbis including *Joseph Caro* and *Moses di Trani*, hoping to ultimately reestablish the *Sanhedrin*. But *Berab* had neglected to obtain the consent of the Jerusalem rabbis and, feeling slighted, they opposed his efforts and eventually the institution of ordination was again abolished.” “With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Israel's first minister of religious affairs made a similar plea to restore the *Sanhedrin*, but he too was overruled.” “During the 19th century, the functions of the rabbi began to change, and many communities demanded that their leaders be versed not only in *Talmud* and Jewish law but also in secular studies. To meet these new conditions, rabbinical seminaries were organized, issuing a variety of ‘rabbinical degrees.’ The term rabbi is today the commonly accepted title for all ‘ordained’ (certified) spiritual leaders.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

When did the ordinance of the sacrament originate?

The practice of using bread and wine in a sacramental procedure is ancient. All ordinances are eternal, “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, in the priesthood, 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) The ordinance issue in this lesson was foreshadowed by the Children of Israel through the Passover Meal for almost three and a half thousand years. In fact, the substantive elements of that meal, “fruit of the vine” (wine) and then (bread) preceded the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The prayers connected to this practice include acknowledgment of being delivered from Egyptian bondage, plus anticipation of a future – more significant deliverance in the future. It is important to realize that what Latter-day Saints call the Sacrament, maybe, in fact, an ancient ordinance. After the Savior’s atonement for us, it was **bread** followed by **wine** or water – in remembrance of the greater deliverance The meanings of ordinances may be updated from time to time, yet the basis is still the same. In the following scripture quotes the ultimate or “higher law” practice of the “sacrament” may be described. “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.” (Genesis 14:18) “And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he broke bread and blest it; and he blest the wine, he being the priest of the most high God . . .” (JST Genesis 14:17) In modern Jewish life, there is something like this that is actually done in the home, a reflection of the “lesser law.” There are two blessings each Sabbath eve. One is the

kiddush. It is the blessing for the wine. It always precedes the blessing over the *hallah*, a special (sweeter) Sabbath bread. The blessing over the bread (which happens at every meal) is popularly called *Ha Mozi*. Many religious families prefer to eat at a four-corner table because there is no temple and a four-cornered table at least represents the shape of the altar. “The table is set for the festive meal, with the Sabbath candles glowing in polished holders. The family stands and the father raises the brimming silver cup to say *Kiddush*, the blessing and sanctification over wine.” “*Kiddush* is recited on the evening of the Sabbath, or the festival, before the start of the meal. Nothing may be eaten before *Kiddush*.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What is the importance of *Kiddush* and *Motzi* for the Jews?

“*Kiddush* continues with the benediction for wine, preceded by the word *Savri* (Attention!) so that all present, men and women, may fulfill the requirement of *Kiddush* by listening carefully to the recital of the prayer and by responding ‘Amen’ afterwards. When wine is not available, the blessing is said over *hallah*, the Sabbath loaves.” “The proper recitation of *Kiddush* is just before the festive meal, at the place where the meal will be eaten. However, it is a custom among *Ashkenazi* (western) Jews to say *Kiddush* in the synagogue just after the Sabbath services. Originally it was for the benefit of travelers who were lodged in the synagogue, to enable them to fulfill the precept. This custom is not followed in Israel.” “On Sabbath and festivals the blessing over bread is recited over two loaves (representing the double portion of manna that fell on Friday and did not go bad when kept till the Sabbath). These loaves are specially sweet bread and

made in a distinctive shape. They are known as *hallot* (singular: *hallah*), and are usually covered with a cloth embroidered with *Shabbat* symbols. Should there be no wine for *Kiddush*, it can be recited over the *hallot* . . . beverages other than wine may also be used.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

How was the procedure of the sacrament modified?

It may be significant that, to the Jews, the blessing of wine and then bread is in anticipation of a greater deliverance than from Egypt. To believers in Jesus, the ritual is done by partaking the bread first and then the wine. This is done in remembrance of the great deliverance, the atonement. Since the “Sacrament” is a renewal/reminder of baptism, another important Biblical ritual to consider is immersion or what is called *mikveh* in Hebrew. This is done for a religious cleansing as well as required for conversion to Judaism. Once again, reviewing the Jewish concept of *Mikveh*, (immersion) is helpful. “A potential convert (or proselyte) is first questioned by a court (*bet din*) of three rabbis. They usually begin by trying to persuade him to give up the idea of joining a nation which has been, and today still is, severely persecuted. If the candidate still affirms sincerely that he is ready to ‘accept the yoke of the commandments,’ he or she must undergo a period of instruction in Judaism, in its laws and practices. After thorough study, when he understands the *mitzvot* (commandments, blessings) and is ready to begin his life as a Jew, the candidate is ready for the rituals of conversion.” “For both males and females, the *bet din* [witnesses] oversees their immersion in a ritual bath (*Mikveh*).” “Like the synagogue and the cemetery, the *Mikveh* is a basic element of Jewish family and communal life, and thus the erection of a *Mikveh* was among the first projects undertaken by Jewish

communities throughout the world from earliest times.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

What is the Jewish practice of meeting together often?

Meeting together often is the Lord’s will; “And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.” (*Moroni 6:5*) The admonition to meet often is part of the practice to keep us in the right way. Modern Jewry has public meetings where the *Torah* and other scriptures are read three times a week. These are on Mondays, Thursday and, of course, on Sabbath, Saturday. “According to an ancient tradition, Moses commanded that the Israelites should read the *Torah* on the Sabbath, on festivals, and on the first day of each month; Ezra decreed that it should also be read on Monday and Thursday mornings as well as Sabbath afternoons. Scholars differ as to whether this tradition should be taken as a historical statement or not; however, even those who are skeptical about its literal truth believe that the tradition of reading the *Torah* in public is a very ancient one.” “The Babylonian *Talmud* relates that the Jews of ‘the West’ (i.e., *Erez Israel*) took three years to complete their public reading of the *Torah*. They apparently divided the *Torah* into more than 150 different sections (*sedarim*, plural: *Sidrah*, singular) *Parashot* (plural), *Parashah* (singular). On the first Sabbath of their cycle they read the first few chapters of Genesis, on the next Sabbath a few more, and so on until, by the end of three years, they had read the entire *Torah*.” “In Babylonia, the custom was different. There the *Torah* was divided into 54 different sections (naturally the Babylonian sections were about three times as long as the Palestinian sections) so that the entire cycle was completed in one year. Today, nearly all communities follow the Babylonian custom; however, some congregations, especially within the Conservative and Reform movements, are experimenting with a three-year cycle.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

What might have prompted Jesus' three-year mortal ministry?

In the days of the Savior, the *Torah* and scripture reading was only once a week, and the three-year cycle was probably being used. Maybe, that is one reason Jesus had a three-year ministry. That way he taught the entire Law and The Prophets. What is paramount in the Lord's ministry, then and now, is that all religious

work, procedures and practices are to be guided by *Emunah*, faith, true faith. "And their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done." **(Moroni 6:9)**