

December 9-15, 2024

Moroni 7–9

“MAY CHRIST LIFT THEE UP”

Summary: *Moroni 7. An invitation is given to enter into the rest of the Lord—Pray with real intent—The Spirit of Christ enables men to know good from evil—Satan persuades men to deny Christ and do evil—The prophets manifest the coming of Christ—By faith, miracles are wrought and angels minister—Men should hope for eternal life and cleave unto charity. [About A.D. 401–21.]*

Moroni 8. The baptism of little children is an evil abomination—Little children are alive in Christ because of the Atonement—Faith, repentance, meekness and lowliness of heart, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end lead to salvation. [About A.D. 401–21.]

Moroni 9. The second epistle of Mormon to his son Moroni. Comprising chapter 9.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How was – and still is “rest in the Lord” manifested by Children of Israel?

The Jewish concept of “rest in the Lord” is connected to the Sabbath, the weekly gift of rest – a gift from God. The Hebrew word for rest is *nuakh* (soft “k”) and it includes the meanings of ‘to abide’ or ‘to rest in.’ The original sense of the verse; “And the Lord God took man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” (**Genesis 2:15**), “The Lord God took man and ‘rested him’ (*nuakh*) into the garden of Eden”. That infers the meaning of the Sabbath, (*shabbat*) a “ceasing” or “stopping.” The Sabbath is a day to stop working and celebrate the blessings of His and our work. The *Mitzvah* (commandment and blessing) of God’s resting at creation, was the *Shabbat* after creation. The Sabbath rest is eternal and is still waiting for those who choose to be blessed by God.

How is the the Promised Land referred to as “God’s rest?”

Menuha is an ancient Hebrew concept meaning rejuvenation. It describes the importance of taking a break from work to find rest, to enjoy sacred pleasure, and

spending time with loved ones. That is what Joshua and Caleb teach as – entering into the Rest of the Lord. Rest for mankind has been in God’s heart since creation. That is why He ordained that one day of seven would be a *Shabat*. Mankind was created on the sixth day, and having assisted in creation, God instructed the first thing for God and man to do (on Day Seven) was REST. Rest is one of the Lord’s priorities for His children. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” (**Hebrews 4:9-10**)

How does caring for the flock, a pastoral scene, teach us about rest in the Lord?

I indelibly remember that on the Mount of Beatitudes was a farmhouse, years ago, with more than a hundred sheep. A boy shepherd would lead them out every morning and return in the late afternoon. Leading sheep is still typical in Israel. Usually there are about a dozen lead sheep, older ones from last year’s flock. The shepherd usually has them marked with bells around their necks. It is common to hear the boy talk to his sheep. He calls them when it’s time to move on, and that’s when the lead sheep

immediately respond, ringing their bells as they run toward their shepherd. The ringing noise alerts the other sheep, and then like a wave they begin to follow the lead sheep. This ancient shepherd's model is like an ancient biblical temple practice. For example, in the inner courtyard of the temple the chief priest would light a fire and burn incense to signal readiness for a sacrifice. That would alert the twelve priests in the next courtyard to wash, dress properly and ready themselves. Their signal to the congregation was the ringing of bells. The multitudes would then gather to follow the priests to participate in the formal procedure. Additionally, I have noticed how the shepherds in Israel develop a language for their sheep. The grunts, whistles and sounds are recognized by the flock. I have also seen two shepherds meet on the hillsides as they lead their sheep. The shepherds stop, chat and typically make a small fire and prepare a hot drink. In the meantime, their sheep begin to mingle. You could imagine the ownership confusion that might follow. Yet, when one shepherd departs, he simply begins talking and making his "sounds," his sheep follow him. "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if ye will hear his voice . . ." (**Psalms 95:7**) "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." (**John 10:4**)

How do I recognize His call to "rest with Him?"

"And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed." (**Alma 5:60**) "How are we to know the voice of the Good Shepherd from the voice of a stranger?"

Can any person answer this question? I can. It is very easy. To every philosopher upon the earth, I say, your eye can be deceived, so can mine; your ear can be deceived, so can mine; the touch of your hand can be deceived, so can mine; but the Spirit of God filling the creature with revelation and the light of eternity, cannot be mistaken--the revelation which comes from God is never mistaken. When an individual, filled with the Spirit of God, declares the truth of heaven, the sheep hear that, the Spirit of the Lord pierces their inmost souls and sinks deep into their hearts; by the testimony of the Holy Ghost light springs up within them, and they see and understand for themselves. This is the way the Gospel should be preached by every Elder in Israel . . ." (**Discourses of Brigham Young, Pg.431**)

What is my choice – being driven or following the Shepherd?

One of my guests, Lorin Moench, a sheep rancher, while visiting Israel pointed out the significant difference between shepherds and sheep herders. Sheep herding is usually driving the flock. In Israel, the shepherd leads the flock. Leading the gathering of Israel is the tribe of Joseph. Anciently, Joseph, the son of Israel, was to lead Israel spiritually as the birthright son. Instead, he was sold as a slave, yet he became a servant who saved. He saved the people of Egypt (Gentiles) and he saved his family (Israelites). In modern times, the keys of the gathering and leading of Israel were given to Joseph Smith. He is a descendant of ancient Joseph. His role is summarized in the parable in **Doctrine and Covenants 101:44-62**. After the destruction of the twelve olive trees and the scattering of the watchmen, the lord instructed another gathering. "And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young

men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, *save those only whom I have appointed to tarry . . .*”

(Doctrine and Covenants 101:55) (Italics added) The verse can be viewed as an instruction of “gathering” activity by the young, the middle aged and the strength of older ones. In modern times, it includes Elders, Sisters, middle aged and older couples, (every member a missionary). The exception is that some, for the time being, are told not to do mission work – like in Israel, (the first shall be last and the last shall be first.) In the end, the Lord would gather those that we have not been able to find. “. . . that by and by I may come with the residue of mine house and possess the land.” **(Doctrine and Covenants 101:58)**

Where do I find moments of “rest in the Lord?”

The imagery used in this parallel is still visible on the hillsides of Israel to this day. The unfinished watch towers, the hedges (terraces) and the olive trees are constant reminders of the Lord working to gather us home. The leadership of this gathering was Joseph. In a parable with almost the

same imagery, Jesus told the self-appointed leaders, the Pharisees, that the kingdom would be taken from them (Judah) and given to another (Joseph).

“Therefore, say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.” **(Matthew 21:43-46)** The Book of Mormon prophecies in the chapters being reviewed this week have deep and powerful images. “And then shall be brought to pass that which is written: Awake, awake again, and put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.” **(3 Nephi 20:36)** The Lamb of God will live in His cities. They will be His earthly homes. Seek his house . . . He will lead us (gather us) home, to His Father, in our heavenly home, the Lord’s rest.