

Doctrine and Covenants 76

“GREAT SHALL BE THEIR REWARD AND ETERNAL SHALL BE THEIR GLORY”

Summary:

Doctrine and Covenants 76. A vision given to Joseph Smith the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon, at Hiram, Ohio, February 16, 1832. Prefacing the record of this vision, Joseph Smith’s history states: “Upon my return from Amherst conference, I resumed the translation of the Scriptures. From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of man had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled. It appeared self-evident from what truths were left, that if God rewarded every one according to the deeds done in the body the term ‘Heaven,’ as intended for the Saints’ eternal home, must include more kingdoms than one. Accordingly, ... while translating St. John’s Gospel, myself and Elder Rigdon saw the following vision.” At the time this vision was given, the Prophet was translating John 5:29.

1–4, The Lord is God;
5–10, The mysteries of the kingdom will be revealed to all the faithful;
11–17, All will come forth in the resurrection of the just or the unjust;
18–24, The inhabitants of many worlds are begotten sons and daughters unto God through the Atonement of Jesus Christ;
25–29, An angel of God fell and became the devil;
30–49, Sons of perdition suffer eternal damnation; all others gain some degree of salvation;
50–70, The glory and reward of exalted beings in the celestial kingdom is described;
71–80, Those who will inherit the terrestrial kingdom are described;
81–113, The status of those in the telestial, terrestrial, and celestial glories is explained;
114–19, The faithful may see and understand the mysteries of God’s kingdom by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What is an antidote for a religious mystery?

In referring to the “learning of his fathers,” the Book of Mormon prophet, Nephi, uses one of the typical ways of biblical (hence, Jewish) learning to consider the “opposite” point of view. Thereby, helping us to understand the “opposite, especially if something has been concealed or lost from view or knowledge. There is a tutorial in combining an understanding of the “Learning of the Jews” and knowing the “Mysteries” of the Lord. “For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come;

wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.” (1 Nephi 10:19)

<u>Nephi, Son of Lehi</u>	<u>Laman & Lemuel, Sons of Lehi</u>
Goodly Parents (1 Nephi 1:1)	Murmured (1 Nephi 2:11-12, 1 Nephi 3:5, 1 Nephi 4:14)
Believed his Father (1 Nephi 2:16)	Didn’t believe (1 Nephi 2:13)
Went to the Lord for understanding (1 Nephi 2:16, 19)	Knew not the dealings of God (1 Nephi 2:12)
Willing to Do What Lord Commanded (1 Nephi 3:7)	Complained (1 Nephi 2:16, 1 Nephi 3:5, 1 Nephi 3:28, 1 Nephi 3:31, 1 Nephi 4:4)

<p>Refused to Return Without Records (1 Nephi 3:15)</p> <p>Knew the Lord Was Mightier (1 Nephi 4:14)</p>	<p>Wanted to Give Up (1 Nephi 3:14)</p> <p>Doubted the Lord (1 Nephi 3:31)</p>
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How different is “Heaven and Hell” to some?

The concept of “Heaven and Hell” in most religions is very general and often vague. Even though there is little discussion of after life among the Jews, heaven and hell appear in much Jewish commentary. Again, in context of this lesson, let’s review. “The exact nature of this afterlife is the subject of great discussion in classical Jewish sources. All agree that after death the soul continues to live. The souls of the righteous enter paradise, or *Gan Eden* [Garden of Eden] as it is generally called. In that state ‘there is no eating or ... no envy, hatred or competition but only this: that the righteous sit with crowns on their heads and delight in the splendor of God’s presence’ (*Talmud*). The souls of the wicked enter hell, or *Gehinnom*, as it is known, where they undergo purification before they too can enter paradise. The general view is that the stay in *Gehinnom* is not longer than 11 months and can only be permanent in the case of exceedingly wicked persons.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

How are things looking up?

“The *Mishnah* (oldest written collection of Jewish oral biblical traditions) states that the copper serpent (*Nahash Nehoshet* in Hebrew) was not the power which cured the people. Rather it was when the people finally turned their eyes upward toward heaven and listened to the will of God that they were cured. After the plague ended, the *Nahash Nehoshet* served as an ever-present reminder of the dangers and evils which could befall the people in the desert

were it not for God’s constant loving care.” “The people kept the copper serpent when they settled in *Erez* (land of) Israel and remembered its significance. However, when they began to look up to it instead of gazing beyond it to heaven, King Hezekiah had it destroyed so that it should not lead to idol worship.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Where did the term “Stakes of Zion” originate?

An image of heavenly living described with the terms Telestial, Terrestrial and Celestial is in the pattern of living in the “City of our Lord” – with our Lord. The earthly imagery of dwelling places such as tents with their poles (stakes) and curtains may represent the moertally organized facilities and order of heaven. “The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.” (*Isaiah 60:14*) It seems that the “camp” of Israel (*Numbers 2: 2-34*) was organized in a “City of the Lord” which was likened to the “House of the Lord.” The twelve ancestral families were on the outside; the priests (Levites) were next. They surrounded the holiest place (the Ark) where the Lord’s prophet communed with God. It may be likened to the terms telestial, terrestrial and celestial. “. . . it seems, the ancient Israelites were commanded to build a sanctuary so that God may dwell amongst them.” (*Exodus 25:8*). The Tabernacle became the place to which sacrifices were brought in times of joy and in times of sadness. It became the place to which Moses retired when he wanted to communicate with God. When the Children of Israel camped in the desert, the Tabernacle was erected at the very center of the camp; when they moved, the Tabernacle was taken apart and was moved with them. Physically and spiritually, it was the central object for the

Children of Israel, and it was through the tabernacle that they felt their connection with God.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) In the ancient days, the inner two courtyards were draped or had curtains draped between the stakes or poles and cords so that the sacredness and dignity of the priestly area and the Lord’s habitation were maintained. “Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.” (**Isaiah 33:20**)

What did the biblical “Tabernacle” look like?

“The Tabernacle, sometimes (inexactly) called the temple, was a very ornate though portable building, which the children of Israel carried with them in the wilderness. It was to this temple that Hannah went to pray and where Samuel ministered. It was the duty of the Levites to take care of this building and keep it in order. They took it apart, carried it and all that pertained to it from place to place as they journeyed in the wilderness, and then set it up again when a new camp was made.” (**Doctrines of Salvation, Joseph Fielding Smith, Vol.3, Pg.112**) Even in the Book of Mormon, such an organized camp could be imagined as a place where a special holy convocation was being held. “And it came to pass that when they came up to the temple, they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family, consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters, and their sons, and their daughters, from the eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another. And they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them;” (**Mosiah 2:5-6**)

How did ancient Israel’s camp prepare them for living with God?

“Balaam . . . stood on a lofty summit overlooking the camp of the People of Israel in the plain below . . . Balaam blessed the nation, predicting its victory over Edom and Moab . . . Balaam, seeing Israel’s tents arranged in such a way that each family was assured of its privacy, praised the nation he had come to curse, with the words: ‘How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, thy dwelling places, O Israel!’” (**Numbers 24:1-5**) (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) Is it possible that the areas of responsibility and assigned living were “staked” out, that there were stakes, poles or standards that identified the living and tribal areas? “The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying ‘The Israelites shall camp each with his standard under the banners of their ancestral house’” (**Numbers 2:2**). “The standards borne by the 12 tribes served the same purpose as heraldic devices. Their colors and emblems were: Reuben red; emblem mandrakes. Simeon green; emblem the town of Shechem. Levi white, black and red; emblem the Urim and Thummim (**Deuteronomy 33:9**). Judah azure; emblem a lion. Issachar black; emblem a strong boned ass or sun and moon. Zebulun white; emblem a ship. Dan sapphire; emblem a tent or a lion. Naphtali rose; emblem a hind. Asher aquamarine; emblem an olive tree. Ephraim and Manasseh black, embroidered with a picture of Egypt; emblem: Ephraim, a bullock and Manasseh, a wild ox. Benjamin 12 colors; emblem a wolf.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What was the Temple layout like?

“The Bible uses a variety of Hebrew terms when speaking of the place where God and Israel communed: *Mishkan* – ‘Dwelling’ [God’s dwelling place among the people of Israel]. *Mishkan ha-Edut* – ‘The dwelling place of the Testimony’ [the place where the two tablets containing the

Ten Commandments were kept]. *Ohel Mo'ed* – 'Tent of Meeting' [where God reveals Himself to Israel]. It should be noted that the words *Mishkan* and *Ohel* are synonyms. In the Bible they are both used to denote the Tabernacle. *Mikdash* – 'Sanctuary' or the 'Holy Place'; and especially *Kodesh ha-Kodashim* (Holy of Holies), the most holy place within the Tabernacle." "Some traditional commentators and many critical scholars believe that these terms may refer to more than one place." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The Jewish statement seems to hold a hint of more than one temple! Already discovered are more than a dozen archaeological sites in Israel that fit these descriptions. In the latter-days, an organizational unit called "Stakes of Zion" may have the same purpose in reminding us to live in dignity and sacredness and commune with God as a community. "Until the day cometh when there is found no more room for them; and then I have other places which I will appoint unto them, and they shall be called stakes, for the curtains or the strength of Zion."

(**Doctrine & Covenants 101:21**) The description of stakes and curtains fits the explanation of the ancient temple layout that is destined for the future; "And after this time, your baptisms for the dead, by those who are scattered abroad, are not acceptable unto me, saith the Lord. For it is ordained that in Zion, and in her stakes, and in Jerusalem, those places which I have appointed for refuge, shall be the places for your baptisms for your dead." (**Doctrine and Covenants 124:35-36**)

How do the more religious Jews echo Temple functions?

When Jews marry, since they do not have a Temple, a '*Huppah*' (canopy) is used. It is a remnant of the ancient temple garments, a *Tallit*, supported by four poles or stakes! "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 *Talmud* (primary source of Jewish religious law and theology) 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 . . ." "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.**)

How is "Living Water" a part of Temple symbolism?

Many temples in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are built over springs (living water), and more imagery of Temple symbolism includes features of water or fountains around it. Another name for the Lord is "Water" or "Living Water." The name for heaven in Hebrew is "*Shamayim*." Water (*Mayim* in Hebrew) comes from the clouds in heaven, and so does the Lord. (**Psalm 36:5, Mark 13:26**) (**Doctrine and Covenants 45:42-44**) There are many images of water used in the scriptures that can be connected to Him. For example, water coming from the temple to heal the Dead Sea. "Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east . . . These waters

issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.” (Ezekiel 47:1-12) That is a metaphor of the Lord coming from his abode, heaven (the temple, after all, is His house—a part of heaven on earth), to heal the Dead Sea, and for that matter, all the imbalances of the world.

How has the restoration also helped me understand the resurrection?

The literal understanding of the term "resurrection" is quite lost by most Christians and Jews. In previous discussions we have pointed out that for Jews, the concept of God has diminished since the days of Biblical writings that constantly referred to God in anthropomorphic terminology. Likewise, the concept of life after death in a resurrected state has largely disappeared; and when used, it refers mostly to the righteous in a distant future.

"Resurrection" is one of the Lord's names. The Book of Mormon prophet, Alma, teaches that there is no resurrection until after the coming of the *Messiah*. Judaism, nowadays, has virtually no belief in resurrection or life, as such, after death. To the Jews, the *Messiah* has not come; consequently, it is understandable that they do not have an active belief in the resurrection. There are, however, benedictions and other statements with words that seem to connect to a former belief in Resurrection. ". . . *Barukh mehayyeh ha-metim* ('Blessed be . . . He Who revives the dead') is therefore also known as *Tehiyat ha-Metim* ('Resurrection of the Dead') . . . ". . . the righteous of all generations will be reunited at the time of the resurrection of the dead during the messianic period. ". . . They [*Essenes*] believed in reward and punishment; in immortality of the soul; but not in physical resurrection. "Some rabbis believed in resurrection. That is that at a

certain point in time God will bring everybody back to life and then the world will be a perfect place, and physical life will go on indefinitely. This doctrine poses some obvious difficulties: the body decomposes after burial so, how can it be reconstituted; furthermore, what about overpopulation of the world? Those who believe in resurrection claim that anyway the whole process will be miraculous, and the miracle will solve all the problems. Other rabbis however denied physical resurrection entirely and understood the afterlife to be a completely spiritual experience. "The argument about resurrection lasted well into the Middle Ages, and was one of the reasons for the sharp attacks against *Maimonides* (1138-1204). Many believed that he denied the doctrine and his views started a controversy that lasted for hundreds of years. In modern times most Jewish theologians do not subscribe to the doctrine of physical resurrection and movements such as Reform Judaism do not consider it to be a necessary belief for the Jew. "The whole subject of [an] afterlife is not explicitly stated in the Bible and many scholars are of the opinion that belief in [an] afterlife was adopted by Jews during the Babylonian exile after the destruction of the First Temple when they came into contact with eastern religions such as Zoroastrianism. "The Sadducees also rejected the Pharisaic belief in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, claiming that there is no basis for these beliefs in the *Torah*." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Rather than state, “the devil is in the details,” what are the “details on the devil?”

References to Satan as a personage have also largely disappeared from Jewish thought. *Talmudic* teachings include the following descriptions: "In the *Talmud*, Satan is at times identified with the *yezer*

ha-rah (the evil inclination), but he also assumes certain aspects of a fully personalized entity. Thus, he is the angel of death, or he is the tempter lying in ambush not only for Job but also for Abraham and all the biblical personalities. Or he is the accuser, *ha-mekareg*, constantly waiting for man to sin so as to bring down upon him the wrath of God. "Several references to Satan have found their way into the liturgy, for example the plea in the *hashkivenu* prayer of the evening service to 'remove from us the enemy, pestilence . . . and *Satan*.' "Neither great personalities nor simple folk are immune to the power of the *yezer ha-ra*, which in rabbinic literature, is usually depicted as the influence of Satan. The function of *Satan* is to tempt all humanity and to test a person's sincerity. The rabbis taught that one must therefore always be aware of the power of temptation, for the *yezer ha-ra* can grow and become a bad habit. At first it resembles the thread of a spider's web, the wise men tell us-fragile and barely visible. If not controlled it will become as strong as a stout rope. Judaism places a high value on the good that results from man's victory over his evil inclinations. 'Who is mighty?' ask the sages. 'One who subdues his inclinations.' "In its original application in the Bible, '*Satan*' appears not as a proper name, but rather as a common noun denoting an adversary who opposes or obstructs. Its related verb also has the function of describing the actions of an antagonist in the most general sense. However, in the later books of the Bible (Zechariah and Job), '*The Satan*' can be found as the accepted name of a particular angel-a prosecutor in the heavenly court. Thus, it

is '*The Satan*' who asks for and is given permission by God to test Job's piety by inflicting upon him a whole series of personal ordeals. He is, however, definitely subordinate to God and unable to act without divine permission."

(**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The explainable concept of God and Satan have basically disappeared in modern Judaism. That, of course, would be *Satan's* main goal. Yet the concepts of good and evil are still basic to our lives.

How may I have a precious "blink" into the mysteries, to sense the spirit of God?

From time to time and as a gift from Heaven – mysteries are revealed. "This is the end of the vision which we saw, which we were commanded to write while we were yet in the Spirit. But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. And to God and the Lamb be glory, and honor, and dominion forever and every, Amen." (**Doctrine and Covenants 76: 114-119**)