

November 3-9, 2021

Doctrine and Covenants 125–128

“A VOICE OF GLADNESS FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD?”

Summary: *Doctrine and Covenants 125. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Nauvoo, Illinois, March 1841, concerning the Saints in the territory of Iowa. 1–4, The Saints are to build cities and to gather to the stakes of Zion.*

Doctrine and Covenants 126. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, in the house of Brigham Young, at Nauvoo, Illinois, July 9, 1841. At this time Brigham Young was President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

1–3, Brigham Young is commended for his labors and is relieved of future travel abroad.

Doctrine and Covenants 127. An epistle from Joseph Smith the Prophet to the Latter-day Saints at Nauvoo, Illinois, containing directions on baptism for the dead, dated at Nauvoo, September 1, 1842.

1–4, Joseph Smith glories in persecution and tribulation;

5–12, Records must be kept relative to baptisms for the dead.

Doctrine and Covenants 128. An epistle from Joseph Smith the Prophet to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, containing further directions on baptism for the dead, dated at Nauvoo, Illinois, September 6, 1842.

1–5, Local and general recorders must certify to the fact of baptisms for the dead;

6–9, Their records are binding and recorded on earth and in heaven;

10–14, The baptismal font is a similitude of the grave;

15–17, Elijah restored power relative to baptism for the dead;

18–21, All of the keys, powers, and authorities of past dispensations have been restored;

22–25, Glad and glorious tidings are acclaimed for the living and the dead.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How are Children of Israel known as record keepers?

“Books and learning
are so much a part

of Jewish tradition, that Jews are called ‘the people of the Book.’ Indeed, many of the violent acts of antisemitism throughout history were accompanied by the defacement and burning of books. The persecutors, knowing how much anguish this would cause, identified the book with the Jew. Today, all over the world, with books and paperback editions readily accessible, Jewish book collectors are common. Israel ranks second in the world

~~in the number of books of all kinds bought~~
per person.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

How do scholars think writing developed on earth?

“‘The land between the rivers’ [Tigris and Euphrates], Mesopotamia, is the ancient name for the region today covered by Iraq, Iran and parts of Syria and Turkey. Western civilization (the establishment of written language, codified law, cities and trade) began in this region toward the end of the fourth millennium (i.e., four thousand years) B.C.E. when the Sumerians emerged as the dominant element in an intermingling of several migrant peoples. Sumer became the name of the land at the head of the

Persian Gulf and Sumerian its language. To the Sumerians we owe the full development of writing, possibly the invention of bronze metallurgy . . .” “Writing had a profound effect on Judaism. The covenant between God and the Chosen People was transformed into a written text; the central religious object became the Ten Commandments, inscribed on stone; and later the Torah scroll was to be revered. The biblical society as a whole became ‘book centered.’ In contrast to many other societies, the Israelites did not limit the acquisition of the arts of reading and writing to the nobility—any tribesman, even a non-priest, could become a literate leader. Certainly, by King Hezekiah’s time (eighth century B.C.E.), a great deal of literary activity was taking place.”
([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What is important about family history research?

The “spirit of Elijah” is considered to be inspiring family history research. Jews have a remarkable thirst for family history. I have a large book describing Jewish genealogy. In the foreword, there is a not-so-obscure mention that the largest source of Jewish genealogy is safely preserved in a “granite mountain in Salt Lake City.” “Genealogy is the listing of ancestors in the order of their succession, and occurs in the Bible as lists of ‘generations’ and as tribal, clan and family lists, such as those of the houses of David, Zadok (see Zadokites), and Saul. All were based on the assumption that nations, tribes and clans were descended from a single father.” “The tradition of listing family histories is an ancient one in Israel, for only by thus proving connection with some family or clan could a man claim the privileges of citizenship. If, as happened, members of the local population joined the Israelites (in the period of the Conquest or early monarchy)

they were brought into the genealogical framework of the tribe as a means of assimilating them; similarly artisans, poets, and wise men not originally members of the tribe, were also generally linked with some ancient ancestor. Genealogies were not simply historic records but might be used in a national

census (head count) or for military or tax purposes. They might also reflect political events: thus, the merging of two tribes might be represented by an account of a marriage between heads of their leading families; and the absorption of a newly settled tribe among a local population might be described by the marriage of a tribal leader to one of the native women.”
([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How were family histories preserved?

“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 (land of) 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 is prompting Jews to restore immersion of the dead?

Immersion for the dead were known in the Meridian of Times as the Apostle Paul refers to it, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? (*1 Corinthians 15:29*) The ordinance has been restored because it is

an earthly ordinance and is done for the dead in case, they want the blessings of this ordinance in the life hereafter.

Somehow, even the Jews are restoring an "echo" of the ritual for the dead. From a 2010 article in the New York Times: "... a movement to restore lost tradition has motivated a new generation of Jewish volunteers to learn a set of skills that was common knowledge for many of their great-grandparents: the rituals of bathing, dressing and watching over the bodies of neighbors and friends who have died. Rabbi Zohn estimates that 25 percent of Jewish burials today incorporate the burial rituals, compared with about 2 or 3 percent 15 years ago. "We will always address the person by name," the rabbi said, standing with the others in a fluorescent-lighted room of white tile furnished with ... a large, rectangular stone bath tank filled with water. "We begin with a prayer asking for forgiveness in advance if anything we do offends the honor of the deceased." (*Paul Vitello, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/13/nyregion/13burial.html>*)

How similar are the ancient and restored physical requirements of an immersion font?

For the religious Jews, immersions are favored below ground level in flowing water that emanates from bedrock the "Rock of Salvation." Consider that the lowest spot on the face of the earth where water "that originated in bedrock" flows, is where the Children of Israel crossed into their erstwhile homeland. Judaism and Christianity agree that it is also the likely spot where Jesus came to John in Judea to be immersed. As mentioned previously: "(1.) 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. (2.) 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. (3.) 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). (4.) 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 can I know that ordinances are eternal?

This paragraph is repeated from the last lesson insights. One of the reasons witness for the restoration could be given in ancient times is because the Old Covenant was the same as the New Covenant. "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 . . . 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*)

"Actually, of course, the law of carnal commandments, the law of performances and ordinances revealed through Moses, was an old covenant as compared with the gospel restored by Jesus and his apostles. But this new testament or covenant, this restored gospel, was the same testament that had been in force between God and his people from Adam to Moses in both the old and the new worlds." (*Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, Pg.543*)

How can I recognize evidence of ancient, even eternal ordinances?

As stated in the last lesson insight; Religious Jews still practice many forms of ancient rites and rituals whose

meanings may have become distorted or lost over many years without priesthood guidance. Now that the priesthood has been restored, we can view the "echo" in the old practices in order to find a clue in understanding the "Old Covenant," which was true, and how the "New Covenant" restored the ancient practices with true doctrine. For example, Jews still practice complete immersions, even immersing the dead before burial. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints call it a "baptism," which is an immersion. Jewish ritual includes wrapping the deceased in the clothing representative of garments used in the ancient temple. In addition to head covering, the *Talith* (robe-like prayer shawl) is draped over the shoulder, a sash is used, even an apron is used for Levitical descendants. At the grounds of ancient "Temple Square" which the Moslems have taken over with their Dome of the Rock, is a large font-like basin, (missing the twelve oxen), that Moslems use in their "washing and anointing" procedure before their five-times daily prayers.

How important is family history?

Research of family history provides us with information to be "Saviors on Mount Zion." On April 6, 1890, President Wilford Woodruff shared his testimony. "We are called upon, as saviors on Mount Zion, while the Kingdom is the Lord's, in the latter-days, to go forth and redeem our dead. We hold in our hands the keys and power of their redemption, by attending to the ordinances of God for them. It is a work that the Lord has blessed us with. I thank God for this privilege. It is one of the blessings that the Latter-day Saints enjoy. When I go into the spirit world I expect to meet my fathers, my mothers, my relatives. I have been in the Temple of the Lord. I have received endowments for over three thousand of them on my

father's and my mother's side, all that I could get access to. I do not want to go into the spirit world to meet these people and have them say to me, 'You had power to enter into these Temples to get redemption for me, but you have not done it.'" "Lay these things to heart. Be not afraid with regard to the work; only serve God and trust in Him. You cannot serve man, nor make flesh your arm, for your

salvation. If we are saved, if we are delivered, if we have redemption, it will be by the power of the God of Israel. He sent His Son into the world to lay down His life for the redemption of the children of men." (Brian H. Stuy, *Collected Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 5 vols. Burbank, Calif., and Woodland Hills, Ut.: B.H.S. Publishing, 1987-1992)