

November 24-30, 2025

Doctrine and Covenants 135–136

“HE HAS SEALED HIS MISSION AND HIS WORKS WITH HIS OWN BLOOD”

Summary:

Doctrine and Covenants 135. Announcement of the martyrdom of Joseph Smith the Prophet and his brother, Hyrum Smith the Patriarch, at Carthage, Illinois, June 27, 1844.

This document was included at the end of the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, which was nearly ready for publication when Joseph and Hyrum Smith were murdered.

1–2, Joseph and Hyrum martyred in Carthage Jail;

3, The preeminent position of the Prophet is acclaimed;

4–7, Their innocent blood testifies of the truth and divinity of the work.

Doctrine and Covenants 136. The word and will of the Lord, given through President Brigham Young at Winter Quarters, the camp of Israel, Omaha Nation, on the west bank of the Missouri River, near Council Bluffs, Iowa.

1–16, How the camp of Israel is to be organized for the westward journey is explained;

17–27, The Saints are commanded to live by numerous gospel standards;

28–33, The Saints should sing, dance, pray, and learn wisdom;

34–42, Prophets are slain so that they might be honored and the wicked condemned.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How do I view Joseph Smith’s death in the line of Prophets?

Joseph Smith’s martyrdom must be seen through the records of past prophets. Their persecutions and martyrdoms only reflected the future or the past and teach us something about the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord. These prophets were models of their Master, the Savior, who would prophesy against the corrupt part of the Jewish government and the people who followed their wickedness. “And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father.” (**Mosiah 15:6-7**)

What can I learn from Jewish thoughts on martyrdom?

Let me add some Jewish thought on martyrdom. It may have some significance in understanding the difference between righteous martyrdom and those would cause themselves to die in their evil intent destroying and killing others. “Martyrdom is permitted only in the most exceptional circumstances; to lay down one’s life, even for the fulfillment of divine laws, when such sacrifice is not required by law, is regarded as a mortal offense. “The willingness to sacrifice life rather than faith, is one of the most significant concepts of Judaism, and has paradoxically been a factor in Jewish survival, where other oppressed groups have assimilated and disappeared. The laws of martyrdom were first formulated at the rabbinic council of Lydda in the second century C.E. when *kiddush ha-Shem* (‘Sanctification of the Name [of God]’) was declared obligatory with regard to three situations: idolatry, unchastity,

and murder. Rather than worship idols, commit an unchaste act, or murder, the Jew is commanded to choose death. All other commandments may be violated rather than suffer death. But should a Jew be forced into breaking any commandment in the presence of ten Jews (or more) in order to demonstrate his apostasy (abandonment of faith) he is obliged to sanctify God's name by choosing death. If ten Jews are not present, he should transgress rather than be killed. These rules were to apply in 'normal' times. In periods of persecution of the whole community, however, death was to be chosen even if no other Jews were present. The rabbis understood the first verse of the *Shema*, 'And you shall love the Lord your God . . . with all your soul,' as meaning even if He demands your soul from you, and, indeed, the proclamation of the *Shema*, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One,' was the phrase with which martyrs went to their death." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What are other biblical and historical examples?

"Jewish history is replete with examples of those willing to die for their faith from Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who in the Book of Daniel refused to worship an idol and thus endangered their lives, up to the present generation of Soviet Jews who suffer indescribable hardships rather than give up their Jewishness. Under Antiochus Epiphanes, Hellenizers applied violent methods toward the Jews. The Fourth Book of Maccabees is almost entirely a sermon on the meaning and glory of self-sacrifice. Whereas in Christian and Muslim thought martyrdom is chiefly regarded as the act of individuals warranting canonization as saints, in Judaism it remains a task for each and every Jew to fulfill if the appropriate moment should come. "Throughout the ages Jews have

endangered their lives and even died as martyrs to faithfully observe the dietary laws. During the period of the Greek rule of *Erez Israel* (second century B.C.E.) many Jews chose to die rather than eat the unclean foods which the Greeks forced upon them. In peril of their lives, Jews carried out the laws of ritual slaughter during the Crusades. The Marranos of the Inquisition, the Cantonists of Czarist Russia, and the inmates of Nazi concentration camps all remained steadfastly faithful to the laws of *Kashrut*, despite all threats." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What gentile customs are prohibited?

"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 from being converted to other religions. In Talmudic literature the term 'the customs of the Amorites' (*darkhei ha-Emori*) was also used to cover all heathen practices of the gentiles of that time. Even gentile dress associated with non-Jewish religious practice was forbidden ('martyrdom should be accepted rather than changing the style of a shoelace'). Jewish garb thus became an emblem of traditional Judaism, especially in eastern Europe, and modern dress was frowned on as a cunning method of Christianization. Many of the restrictions against involvement with gentiles made during Talmudic times were reduced as economic contact increased between the Jewish and gentile communities during the Middle Ages." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How to Jews differentiate laws for them and laws for others, should I?

"Gentiles were expected to practice at least the seven Noachide Laws. These

were considered by rabbinic tradition to be the minimum moral duties enjoined on all men and were derived from divine demands addressed to Adam and Noah. The laws consisted of prohibitions against idolatry, blasphemy, bloodshed, sexual sins, theft (including the taking of booty in war and dishonesty in economic life), and eating flesh from live animals, as well as the command to establish a legal system, presumably to enforce the prohibitions. The gentile was not obliged to acknowledge God, but was at least obliged to abandon the worship of false gods.” “Unlike Jews, Noachides were not required to suffer martyrdom rather than break the law against idolatry; they were, however, required to choose martyrdom rather than shed human blood. In some instances, gentiles were also required to observe Sabbath and the festivals, and to fast on the Day of Atonement. “Martyrdom when sacrifice was not obligatory became a matter of dispute. Maimonides held that one who chose death when the law decided for life was guilty of an offense. Others, like the *tosafists* and most medieval Jews of Germany, considered such voluntary death praiseworthy. The sages of the Talmud were divided as to whether gentiles are required to sanctify God's name by martyrdom. Rava maintained that rather than break one of the Noachide laws, the gentile should choose death.” “In modern times, the lessening of religious fanaticism, and growing secularization of Jewish life, accompanied by trends toward assimilation and emancipation, have led to the disintegration of Jewish values; as the necessity for self-sacrifice diminished, so the idea of *kiddush ha-Shem* appeared to lose its significance. However, renewed persecution under the Nazis revived the ancient tradition in the ghettos and concentration camps of Europe and very many cases of honorable death among the six million who perished must have

gone unrecorded.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

When is martyrdom acknowledged by God?

There is a wall sculpture at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, that carries a similar message. Naphtali Bezem's sculpture includes a panel depicting the Jews being brought into the slave/extermination camps. Underneath is a “broken woman” representing the broken Jewish family line. Next to her is a broken fish with wings. A fish is sometimes used as an art metaphor for the spirit. Its wings seem to represent an ascension to heaven, a reward for martyrdom. It reminds me of Alma's response to Amulek's plea to have Alma use his prophetic priestly power to stop the carnage. “And when Amulek saw the pains of the women and children who were consuming in the fire, he also was pained; and he said unto Alma: How can we witness this awful scene? Therefore let us stretch forth our hands, and exercise the power of God which is in us, and save them from the flames. But Alma said unto him: The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand; for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day.” (*Alma 14:10-11*)

What value comes from true martyrdom?

Also, in the Book of Mormon, one may get a glimpse of impending martyrdom as we picture Abinadi's countenance rebuking the wickedness of the people listening to him. They rejected Abinadi. In reflection,

the Children of Israel did not reject the Lord completely. They accepted a “lesser law,” one with strict rules and regulations rather than accept the spirit-guided “higher law.” In another case, the people of Nineveh repented when Jonah preached to them. Yet, hearing Abinadi, the people of King Noah rebelled even more, resulting in his martyrdom. As Abinadi gave his life, he succeeded in reaching through the crowd of wickedness to one soul. One Alma hears the voice of the prophet. More importantly, he feels the spirit of the Lord and he becomes a prophet to speak to the people for God. In the New Testament, both Zacharia and his son John were killed by a wicked generation and a priesthood (or priestcraft) that existed alongside of righteous priestly men and women who anticipated the impending arrival of the Messiah. In these modern times, evil pretenders “give their lives” to further their misguided cause. They pretend that they are using religion as a worthy reason for their and other’s deaths. These are false martyrs that tear down and destroy. True martyrs seal their testimonies of the Redeemer, the Savior, the Giver of Life with their lives. These are true prophets who leave a legacy of life. As tragic as their deaths may be for those so close to them, they build a future. They lead us to God.

How did music play a role in religious history?

When nations begin to “gather,” there evolves a certain culture. First, the spirit of commitment is challenged by hardships and rejection long before the new society begins to mature and be accepted by others. Secondly, because of true faith in the Lord, the Children of Israel, anciently and in modern times did not and do not let the hardships and the sometimes-violent rejection get in the way of pursuing their faith identified goals. Third, a constant support mechanism is used to reinforce

and strengthen those faith- identified goals. Dancing, singing, and music are things to keep Israel in a “good” mood. “In the communal and religious life of the Jewish people, dance was always regarded as an expression of joy and religious ecstasy. Ecclesiastes wrote: ‘To everything there is a season . . . A time to mourn and a time to dance’ (3:1, 4). When Jerusalem was destroyed, there was no dancing in the land –‘The joy of our heart is ceased: our dancing is turned into mourning’ (Lamentations 5:15), but Jeremiah’s vision of its reconstruction was that the returnees would ‘go forth in the dances of them that make merry’ (Jeremiah 31:7, 13). The Bible tells of Miriam and the women dancing to celebrate the crossing of the Red Sea. When Jephtah’s father came home victorious from battle, Jephtah welcomed him with dances. King David, when he placed the Holy Ark in Shiloh, danced and leaped before the Lord with all his might.” [**\(Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.\)**](#)

What was the ceremonial use of music?

“The Jews incorporated dancing into all kinds of ceremonies. In Temple times, twice a year the girls of Jerusalem would go out in borrowed white dresses and dance in a circle, and the men would choose brides from amongst the dancers. The harvest festivals were celebrated with dancing. When the Temple was still standing, famous scholars would participate in torch dances on Sukkot. Of the dancing and merry-making of the water-drawing festival (see Sukkot) it is said that ‘whoever has not witnessed the joy of the festival of the water-drawing has seen no joy in life.’” “In the Diaspora, the nature-festival dances disappeared, but there was still plenty of dancing. It is considered an act of religious devotion to dance before the bride at a wedding, and so the people did. Even today, there is hardly a traditional Jewish wedding where

the *Mitzvah tanz*, in which the men take turns dancing with the bride, their hands separated by a handkerchief, is not performed.” “‘Praise the Lord with timbrels and dance’ we are told in one of the Psalms. The founder of the Hasidic movement, Israel ben Eliezer Ba’al Shem Tov, taught his followers that the ‘dances of a Jew before his Creator are prayers,’ and with the rise of Hasidism in Eastern Europe in the 18th century, dancing assumed great importance for the Jewish masses.” “Dance is important in modern Israel. Immigrant groups have brought many dance forms, including the *hora* from Rumania, and the *debka* from the Arab countries. Community folk dancing is a part of the youth and pioneering movement and is usually common on kibbutzim. Modern Israel dance groups include the *Inbal* company of Yemenite dancers, and the *Batsheva* Ballet. The *Daliyyah* folk-dance festival, begun by the choreographer Gurit Kadman at Kibbutz Daliyyah in 1944 was held annually for decades. The Karmiel dance festival is popular.” (Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.)

How was music used in the Temple?

“In the days of the Temple, each day during the last six *hol ha-mo’ed* days of the festival (though not on the Sabbath), the priests used to fill a golden flagon with water drawn from the beautiful spring of Siloam in the valley to the south of the Temple Mount, and carry it up the hill for a ceremony at the altar. This ceremony was called *Simhat Bet ha-Sho’evah* (the joy of the water drawing). According to the *Mishnah*, whoever failed to witness this ceremony in his lifetime ‘never witnessed real joy.’ Golden candlesticks, 50 cubits high, were lit with wicks made out of worn-out garments of the priests, and the light emitted was so bright that ‘there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light of the *Bet ha-Sho’evah*.’ Men of piety and good deeds used to dance before the candlesticks with burning

torches in their hands, singing songs and praises. And countless Levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets and other musical instruments, on the 15 steps leading from the Court of the Israelites to the Court of the Women.” “From all corners of the Land of Israel throngs of pilgrims used to make their way up to Jerusalem carrying the gaily decorated baskets of fruit and grain which they brought to the Temple as a thanksgiving offering. At the gates of the city the townsfolk greeted them with music. The pilgrims then ascended the broad marble staircase that led from the City of David to the summit of the Temple Mount, where they would present their offerings to the Priests.” “Levites were entitled to serve at the sanctuary as assistants to the priests. Their duties included serving as custodians of the sanctuary, as musicians, judges, scribes and teachers.” (Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.)

What book of the Bible do I cherish as music?

The following quote give a wonderful background on the Psalms. They are original singing and musical praises to the Lord still used among many religious people. “Psalms - the first book of the *Ketuvim* section of the Bible, constituting an anthology of lyric poems universally recognized as the foremost collection of Hebrew religious poetry. The English name ‘Psalms’ is derived from the Greek word for a ‘song sung to a stringed instrument’ while the Hebrew name, *Tehillim*, is derived from the root meaning praise and glorification. The Hebrew title characterizes the book in terms of its essential contents—a collection of profoundly religious poems of praise to God— while the English title characterizes it in terms of its form: lyric poems designed for elaborate musical accompaniment.” “Traditionally, authorship of the book of Psalms has been ascribed to King David. 73 of the

150 Psalms begin with the superscription *le-David*, although the precise connotation of this term is uncertain; it could mean 'concerning David' or 'a dedication to David' and not necessarily 'by David.' Furthermore, of the remaining Psalms, many bear superscriptions relating them to ten other figures of early Israelite history, ranging from Adam to Moses. However, the association of King David with Psalms rests on strong, ancient traditions. Moreover, in other books of the Bible David appears as a skillful player on the lyre, as an inventor of musical instruments and as a composer of dirges, and is described in one place as the 'sweet singer of Israel.'" "Some evidence further suggests that King David organized guilds of Psalm singers in the Tabernacle (I Chronicles 6:16), which were certainly functioning during the period of the First Temple. The fact that the names of some of these groups (the 'Korahites' and the 'Asaphites') appear in the superscription of various psalms, indicate their strong involvement in the early public worship of Israel. Bible critics today (unlike those of 100 years ago) almost all agree that the Psalms represent a very early form of Israelite literature, bearing no Hellenistic influences and thus predating, at the very latest, early Second Temple times." (*Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.*)

How is music used in modern Jewish worship?

"Today, in the synagogue, on the first six days of *Sukkot* (except Shabbat), a single circuit is made around the *bimah* [pulpit] by the congregants . . . and chant *hoshanot* [praises to the Lord]. On the seventh day, *Hoshana Rabba*, the procession is repeated seven times. . . Every adult male in the congregation is honored with carrying a Torah, and . . . there is much singing . . ." (*Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.*) It should be noted that reading scriptures and praying are to be done in a singing or chanting way to

differentiate the common everyday sounds of the mouth with the Word of the Lord or words to the Lord. A pattern of singing has developed that puts emphasis on particular syllables and words. When a boy has a Bar Mitzvah, he is accompanied by a person who may prompt him to sing his words correctly while making sure that his clothing, cap, robe, sash, etc. is worn correctly. "Singing is a festive part of many Jewish occasions. Many times, the Eastern Jews (Sephardic) and Western Jews (Ashkenazi) sing the same lyrics with their own ethnic music and intonation." (*Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.*) Music inspired the early pioneers of the gathering Jews. That gathering is called "*Aliya*," it means to go up.

How did the Israeli National Anthem come to be?

"The ideal of freedom has always been cherished by the Jews, for their history has been one of slavery, exile and persecution—slavery in Egypt until the Exodus around the 13th century B.C.E., and exile and oppression since the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. Throughout the exile, the hope of the return to *Erez* Israel was kept alive, developing into the Zionist movement in the 19th century, which found its fruition in the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. A fitting symbol of the Jews' desire for their own land, government and defense is the national anthem Ha-Tikvah ('The Hope')." "The poem was first written by Naphtali Herz Imber, probably in 1878, as 'Our Hope,' to express the yearning of the Jews to live as a free people on their own land. In 1882, after Imber had read the poem to a group of settlers in Rishon le-Zion, Samuel Cohen, a recent immigrant from Moldavia, set it to a melody based on an old Moldavian-Rumanian folk song. The song achieved the status of a folk

song almost overnight, and was sung in settlements throughout Erez Israel, as well as at Zionist congresses. The Seventh Zionist Congress (Basle, 1905) ended with an 'enormously moving singing of Ha-Tikvah by all present,' a moment which probably confirmed the song's status. The 18th Zionist Congress in Prague, 1933, declared Ha-Tikvah the official Zionist anthem. In 1948, the Italian conductor Bernardino Molinari orchestrated the song for the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, giving it its final version. At the Declaration of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, Ha-Tikvah was sung at the opening ceremony and played by the Palestine symphony orchestra at the conclusion; however, *Ha-Tikvah* has never been given official status as a national anthem by a proclamation of the Knesset." ([Encyclopedia Judaica, Jr.](#))

As long as deep in the heart
(*Kol od ba'le'vav p'nima,*)
The soul of a Jew yearns,
(*Nefesh yehudi ho'miyah.*)
And towards the east
(*U'lefa-atei mizrach kadimah,*)
An eye keeps watch upon Zion,
(*Ayin le'Tziyyon tzofiyah.*)
Our hope is not yet lost
(*Od lo avda tikva-teinu,*)
The hope of two millenia
(*Ha'tikvah bat sh'not al-payim*)
To be a free people in our land
(*Lih-yot am chofshi b'ar-tzeinu*)
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.
(*Eretz Tziyyon v'Yerushalayim.*)

An inspiring instrumental rendition of *Ha-Tikva* was played and recorded by the Jewish member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the concert pianist, Marvin Goldstein.