

Fireside January 10th 2021

What is the definition of Israel? Is there a difference in how we define Israel now versus the past? What is/what was the most essential factor in the creation and identifying of Israel?

Making and keeping covenants with God is essential to creating and identifying Israel. The first important truth to understand is that Israel exists on both sides of the veil of mortality. The people Israel existed prior to this Earth's creation. The people Israel also exist after this mortal life.

Pre-Mortal Israel included those who exercised faith in the Savior and did exceedingly good works in the premortal life, accepted God's plan there, covenanted with Him, and were called with a holy calling. Not everyone in the premortal life was Israel.

Deuteronomy 32:7-8

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

Abraham 3:22-23

*22 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;
23 And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.*

Alma 13:3-4

*3 And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.
4 And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren.*

After the Flood happens, Noah and his family are the only ones of Israel left on the earth. God then sends Israel to specific families (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and allows Israel to be born and spread through the descendants of these families. Lineal descendants of these families are considered Israel as they accept and are obedient to the covenant with Jehovah. Abraham is promised that in his seed will the nations of the Earth be blessed (Genesis 12:2-3).

Some of Israel break the covenant with Jehovah and are scattered by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. While they are still the actual seed of Abraham, they are no longer Israel because of

their disobedience to the covenant. They would properly be termed Gentiles by those who are Israel.

President Nelson:

“Sadly, Israel’s posterity broke their covenants with God. They stoned the prophets and were not willing to let God prevail in their lives. Subsequently, God scattered them to the four corners of the earth.”

We also see this distinction between Israel/Gentiles in the Book of Mormon. Instead of Nephi calling them Israel, he calls them Jews.

2 Nephi 30:1-2

And now behold, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you; for I, Nephi, would not suffer that ye should suppose that ye are more righteous than the Gentiles shall be. For behold, except ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall all likewise perish; and because of the words which have been spoken ye need not suppose that the Gentiles are utterly destroyed.

For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel.

After Jesus’ death, Peter receives a revelation which changes how to gather Israel. It will now be done by preaching to the Gentiles. The Gentiles included those whose ancestors may have been Israel, but had fallen away from the covenant. Therefore, their seed had not made and/or kept the covenant. Example: Joseph Smith was a pure Ephraimite, but also a Gentile.

President Joseph Fielding Smith (Way to Perfection, p. 140):

“President Brigham Young . . . said that Joseph Smith was a pure Ephraimite. This is true, yet Joseph came also of Gentile lineage. So do most all members of the Church”

Joseph Smith (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 149, 150):

“This first Comforter or Holy Ghost has no other effect than pure intelligence. It is more powerful in expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, and storing the intellect with present knowledge, of a man who is of the literal seed of Abraham, than one that is a Gentile, though it may not have half as much visible effect upon the body; for as the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene; and his whole soul and body are only exercised by the pure spirit of intelligence; while the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost. In such a case, there may be more of a powerful effect upon the body, and visible to the eye, than upon an Israelite, while the Israelite at first might be far before the Gentile in pure intelligence.”

Gentiles also included those who were not actual, lineal descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and whose ancestors had never accepted the covenant.

Brigham Young (Journal of Discourses 2:269):

“If a pure Gentile firmly believes the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and yields obedience to it, in such a case I will give you the words of the Prophet Joseph—“When the Lord pours out the Holy Ghost

upon that individual he will have spasms, and you would think that he was going into fits.” Joseph said that the Gentile blood was actually cleansed out of their veins, and the blood of Jacob made to circulate in them; and the revolution and change in the system were so great that it caused the beholder to think they were going into fits. If any of the Gentiles will believe, we will lay our hands upon them that they may receive the Holy Ghost, and the Lord will make them of the house of Israel.”

The revelation to Peter expanded how Israel was gathered. The Gentiles could become Israel by repenting and covenanting with Jesus Christ. They were adopted into the house of Israel, even if they weren't actual descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Romans 9:4

Who are Israelites; of whom are the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God...

Israel was scattered by and among the Gentiles and all families of the Earth after Christ until present day.

In summary, the Bible Dictionary defines Israel thus:

“This name was given to Jacob at Penuel (Gen. 32:28) and at Bethel (Gen. 35:10). It also applies to his descendants and to their kingdom (2 Sam. 1:24; 23:3). After the division of the kingdom, the northern tribes, as the larger part, retained the name Israel, while the southern kingdom was called Judah. The land of Canaan is also called Israel today. And in another sense Israel means the true believer in Christ, as explained by Paul (Rom. 10:1; 11:7; Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:12). The name Israel is therefore variously used to denote (1) the man Jacob, (2) the literal descendants of Jacob, and (3) the true believers in Christ, regardless of their lineage or geographical location.”

In addition to that as Blake explained, Israel was also everyone in the pre-Earth life who were valiant in their testimony and obedient to the Father. The other Hebraic definition, *One who prevails with God*, I believe to be equally important, if not more important that *let God prevail*. The skewing of the definition of humility that we currently experience in the world would be destroyed overnight if people understood that Israel are those who **prevail** with God. Those of Israel are not cowards, they are not apathetic, they are not indolent etc. Letting God prevail in your life is important, but the sign, the fruit, who is Israel is/are those who **prevail** with God. Even in the pre-Earth life Israel was standing up to Satan and “**prevailing** with God.” Israel simply put are winners, but they are winners not because of any intrinsic talent, intellect, etc on their own part, but rather a complete dependence on the Father gained by a willingness to let God's will prevail over their own. This is the crowning difference between Israel and the rest of God's children in the **pre-Earth life**; that is singularly the biggest test **in this life**, “will Israel once it takes on flesh maintain its dependence on the Father in humility which will make them abound in good works ie. **prevail** with God, or will they pursue their own paths in the flesh in pride?” A successful example of Israel is found in Ammon:

Ammon 26:11-12

11 But Ammon said unto him: I do not boast in my own strength, nor in my own wisdom; but behold, my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God.

12 Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name forever.

When Israel fails in this life, it is a tragedy on such a scale that all of heaven weeps.

Moses 7:28-32, 36-37, 40-41,44

And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains? And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity? And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still; and yet thou art there, and thy bosom is there; and also thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever; And thou hast taken Zion to thine own bosom, from all thy creations, from all eternity to all eternity; and naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst weep? The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them...and among all the workmanship of mine hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren. But behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands; wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer? Wherefore, for this shall the heavens weep, yea, and all the workmanship of mine hands. And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Enoch, and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men; wherefore Enoch knew, and looked upon their wickedness, and their misery, and wept and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned; and all eternity shook. And as Enoch saw this, he had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens: I will refuse to be comforted...”

However, the Lord cheered up Enoch:

“but the Lord said unto Enoch: Lift up your heart, and be glad; and look.”

What did the Lord show Enoch? The success of the house of Israel.

Can we determine who is Israel or not? If so, how?

Yes. Those who are willing to fully embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ can be identified as Israel. In order to help identify Israel, **WE** need to act by extending invitations to make or keep covenants with Christ.

In regards to family history work, we extend the invitation by indexing or discovering records/information and creating family trees. People are thereby “found” or “gathered”. In regards to temple work, we extend this invitation as we provide the ordinances of exaltation by proxy for the individual.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

D&C 35: 20-21

And a commandment I give unto thee—that thou shalt write for him; and the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in mine own bosom, to the salvation of mine own elect; For they will hear my voice, and shall see me, and shall not be asleep, and shall abide the day of my coming; for they shall be purified, even as I am pure.

D&C 18: 33-36

And I, Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, have spoken it. These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man; For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit unto you, and by my power you can read them one to another; and save it were by my power you could not have them; Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words.

D&C 84:48-61

And the Father teacheth him of the covenant which he has renewed and confirmed upon you, which is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for your sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world. And the whole world lieth in sin, and groaneth under darkness and under the bondage of sin. And by this you may know they are under the bondage of sin, because they come not unto me. For whoso cometh not unto me is under the bondage of sin. And whoso receiveth not my voice is not acquainted with my voice, and is not of me. And by this you may know the righteous from the wicked, and that the whole world groaneth under sin and darkness even now. And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received— Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all. And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written—That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion. For shall the children of the kingdom pollute my holy land? Verily, I say unto you, Nay. Verily, verily, I say unto you who now hear my words, which are my voice, blessed are ye inasmuch as you receive these things; For I will forgive you of your sins with this commandment—that you remain steadfast in your minds in solemnity and the spirit of prayer, in bearing testimony to all the world of those things which are communicated unto you.

D&C 29:1-7

Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, the Great I Am, whose arm of mercy hath atoned for your sins; Who will gather his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, even as many as will hearken to my voice and humble themselves before me, and call upon me in mighty prayer. Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that at this time your sins are forgiven you, therefore ye receive these things; but remember to sin no more, lest perils shall come upon you. Verily, I say unto you that ye are chosen out of the world to declare my gospel with the sound of rejoicing, as with the voice of a trump. Lift up your hearts and be glad, for I am in your midst, and am your advocate with the Father; and it is his good will to give you the kingdom. And, as it is written—Whatsoever ye shall ask in faith, being united in prayer according to my command, ye shall receive. And ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts;

Is the spiritual gathering of Israel only missionary work? What else does it contain?

President Nelson (Let God Prevail Oct 2020 General Conference):

“When we speak of gathering Israel on both sides of the veil, we are referring, of course, to missionary, temple, and family history work. We are also referring to building faith and testimony in the hearts of those with whom we live, work, and serve. Anytime we do anything that helps anyone—on either side of the veil—to make and keep their covenants with God, we are helping to gather Israel.”

This is a pet peeve of mine- the fourfold mission of the Church is:

1. Proclaim the gospel
2. Redeem the dead
3. Perfect the Saints
4. Care for the poor/needly

If by “missionary work” a member is referring to “the gathering and perfecting of Israel” it would include all four of those points. However, if you are talking about “after all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel,” (Joseph Smith, Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007], 330)- that is only referring to point one. “The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead.” (Joseph Smith)- that is referring to point two. There is a clear difference between proclaiming the gospel and redeeming the dead and both are requirements for the celestial kingdom; you can’t proclaim the gospel and ignore redeeming the dead, and you can’t redeem the dead while ignoring proclaiming the gospel. President George Albert Smith taught, “*We will attain our exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom only on the condition that we share with our Father’s other children the blessings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and observe the commandments that will enrich our lives here and hereafter*” (Sharing the Gospel with Others, 190).

I get asked a lot about my thoughts on others “LDS” teachers, and I also have a lot of people slandering me personally. This quote from President Hunter is a crucial tool to help the elect see and recognize the elect, and it ties perfectly into this question. The quote is this: “*What does the Atonement [of Jesus Christ] have to do with missionary work? Any time we experience the blessings of [the Savior’s] Atonement in our lives, we cannot help but have a concern for the welfare of [others]. ... A great indicator of one’s personal conversion is the desire to share the gospel with others*” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter [2015], 127–28).

Members need to do more tracting and less, in the words of Jesus, “straining at a gnat while swallowing camels.”

Is there a physical gathering of Israel? What does it contain? What is the scriptural pattern or sequence for how the physical gathering of Israel will occur in these last days?

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (Millennial Messiah, p. 198)

“The gathering of Israel ... consists, first, of receiving the restored gospel and of joining The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Next it consists of assembling to whatever places are appointed for the worship of the Lord and the receipt of the fulness of his blessings.”

- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints established/Members counseled to emigrate to the United States
- Stakes of Zion established throughout the world/People counseled to stay in their homelands
- Portion of the church called to gather to Utah to head to Jackson County, Missouri to redeem Zion (we have prophecy of the redemption “coming from the west”)
- New Jerusalem established in Jackson County, Missouri
- 10 Lost Tribes physically return to the land of Zion
- Ephraim, Manasseh inherit the land of Zion
- 10 Tribes physically return to the land of Jerusalem (Palestine)
- Those of the tribe of Judah gathered spiritually out of all countries and physically return to the land of Jerusalem
- 10 Tribes and tribe of Judah inherit the land of Jerusalem

What is the relationship between (what can we glean from) the gathering of Israel and the Hebraic meaning of Israel “Let God Prevail”?

The definition of Israel has not changed. Perhaps we as a people have forgot how Israel as a people were created. Perhaps we only think of Israel in terms of blood or lineage. It is our unique responsibility in the dispensation of the fullness of times to gather ALL Israel. If we are only looking for specific characteristics, ethnicities, races, lineages, then we may miss some of Israel who are ready to be gathered. Think about if we are only focused on finding and gathering Abraham’s literal seed.

President Nelson’s talk “Let God Prevail” refocuses us on the truth that Israel is more about making and keeping covenants with God than it is about ancestry, race, or blood lines.

President Nelson:

“We may be led to some who have never believed in God or Jesus Christ [pure Gentiles or premortal Israel] but who are now yearning to learn about Them and Their plan of happiness. Others may have been “born in the covenant” but have since wandered away from the covenant path [lost of the house of Israel]. They may now be ready to repent, return, and let God prevail. We can assist them by welcoming them with open arms and hearts. And some to whom we may

be led may have always felt there was something missing in their lives. They too are longing for the wholeness and joy that come to those who are willing to let God prevail in their lives."

My paper *Tribalism, Covenants, Honesty*, goes over this entire topic of tonight's fireside in great detail. However, this last question is the focus of the paper. First we decide where we stand, then we decide our responsibilities/promises/covenants in the group, and lastly our honesty determines the value of those covenants. The elect hear the Lord's voice, and are gathered like sheep together into a group (tribalism). The Lord then makes covenants or promises with the group (covenants). Our honesty in those covenants, or in other words our ability to let God prevail and **prevail with** God, determines the value to our covenants (honesty). Those that let God prevail, those who **prevail with** God, are the honest in heart. You cannot be dishonest and of Israel.

Why/how does knowing the covenants made to the House of Israel change our lives? How will it help us endure tribulation in days ahead?

Brother Hyrum Andrus:

"In chapter 28 of Isaiah, as he talks about the drunkards of Ephraim, and this isn't drunkards in the sense that they get it from a bottle, it's the kind of drunkenness when it says "they are drunk, but not with strong drink." They are drunk with the ideals and the zeal and the culture of the Gentile society, and they act on that principle and march by that drum beat. Then speaking of the judgments to come upon Ephraim in that day, in verse 5, he says this: "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people." Isaiah 51 is a whole chapter devoted to that righteous remnant. Note how he begins: "Hearken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness." This, then, is that righteous remnant. "Look unto the rock from whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged." Go back to your roots. See where you came from. Find out who you were. Find out what the Lord wants you to do. "Look to the rock from whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham," there's an example. "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." Now, this remnant is going to be left alone, they are going to sit in the dust. Many are going to say, "The Lord has forsaken us." What is your consolation? You go back to your roots and you look to Abraham, and you say, "I'm a descendant of Abraham, and the Lord is going to handle me like he did him..."

Ezra Taft Benson (Five Marks of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, New Era, December 1980):

*"[The Lord's] first appearance will be to the righteous Saints who have gathered to the New Jerusalem. In this place of refuge they **will be** safe from the wrath of the Lord, which will be poured out without measure on all nations."*

What is stopping us (our roadblocks or possibly concerns) from personally taking part in the gathering of Israel?

Apathy and Fear.

Apathy comes when we only see the Church as just one faith among many in the world. It is made low in the eyes of the world because we allow others to classify us as just another

charitable organization or religious interest group. We don't fully appreciate the unique doctrines and blessings that only The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints offers the world. In regard to temple and family history work, we have relied too heavily on those with special talents for family history or time to go to the temple. This can't be our excuse anymore.

Fear of man more than fear of God. I worry about being liked by others. I don't want to "rock the boat" of a friendship by inviting the person to repent, which often requires great sacrifice on their part.

There are two different groups, one group in the words of President Nelson will be "crushed into silent weakness" while the other group "will press forward in dogged persistence with a cheerful attitude." So what did President Nelson say was the difference? "Do all you can to strengthen your testimony of the Savior by deepening your understanding of the doctrine taught in his restored church. Anchored in pure doctrine you will press forward..." The reason why we are crushed into silent weakness? Because our testimonies are weak and our testimonies are weak because we don't know the doctrine. "Seek first to obtain my word and then shall your tongue be loosed...then shall ye have the power unto the convincing of man."

Elder Heber C Kimball also saw our day and made the same prediction and contrast between the two different groups: *"I want to say to you, my brethren, the time is coming when we will be mixed up in these now peaceful valleys to that extent that it will be difficult to tell the face of a Saint from the face of an enemy to the people of God. Then, brethren, look out for the great sieve, for there will be a great sifting time, and many will fall; for I say unto you there is a test, a Test, a TEST coming, and who will be able to stand? This church has before it many close places through which it must pass before the work of God is crowned with victory. **To meet the difficulties that are coming it will be necessary for you to have knowledge of the truth of this work for yourselves. The difficulties will be of such character that the man or woman who does not possess this personal knowledge or witness will fall. If you have not got the testimony, live right and call upon the Lord and cease not 'till you obtain it. If you do not, you will not stand.**"* (Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945, p. 446.)