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The Message to the Jews with Special Emphasis on 2 Nephi 25

Daniel H. Ludlow

I have been asked to treat the subject of the Book of Mormon's "Message to the Jews," with special emphasis on 2 Nephi 25. As some of you may know, the topics I like most to discuss are (first) the life, mission, and atonement of Jesus Christ, (second) the eternal plan of progression and eternal life, (third) the Book of Mormon, and (fourth) perhaps the history and prophetic future of the House of Israel. Thus, I am pleased that I can discuss all four of these topics here, with special emphasis on at least two of them.

I do not believe the word *message* needs any further explanation than provided in any standard dictionary. It is defined in *Webster's Third International Dictionary Unabridged* as "a written or oral communication or other transmitted information sent by messenger or by some other means (as by signals); a divinely inspired or revealed communication; the basic teachings of a religious revelation."

However, perhaps it would be well to look briefly at the word *Jew* inasmuch as usage has changed the meaning of this word throughout the centuries, and even today it is understood in a different manner by different people. The Bible Dictionary in the new LDS edition of the King James Version of the Bible provides the following information on this word:

The name indicated first of all a man of the kingdom of Judah, as distinguished from persons belonging to the northern kingdom of Israel. Its first chronological occurrence in the Bible is in 2 Kgs. 16:6, about 740 BC. It has become customary to use the word Jew to refer to all the descendants of Jacob, but this is a mistake. It should be limited to those of the kingdom of Judah or, more especially today, those of the tribe of Judah and his associates. Thus all Jews are Israelites, but not all Israelites are Jews, because there are descendants of the other tribes of Israel also upon the earth (cf. 2 Nephi 33:8).

As indicated in this brief statement, the word *Jew* was used early to refer to the citizens of the kingdom of Judah. However, later it came to refer to all those who were descendants of Judah whether or not they were citizens of the Kingdom of Judah. Still later the term came to mean essentially “anyone of the House of Israel who remained in the kingdom of Judah or in the land of Israel after the time of the scattering of the Ten Tribes.” Thus at the time of the Babylonian captivity, which is essentially the beginning point of the major story of the Book of Mormon, even descendants of the other tribes, including Ephraim and Manasseh, were considered by some to be *Jews* if they were of the house of Israel living in Jerusalem. Thus, Nephi refers to himself and his descendants as being “of the Jews.” Note, for example, these words by Nephi: “And then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews” (2 Nephi 30:4).

Today many people believe that the Jews are the only people still remaining from the original House of Israel. For example, Webster’s lists the following definitions under *Jew*:

1. Judahite or Israelite.
2. A member of the nation existing in Palestine from the sixth century BC to the 1st century AD within which the elements of Judaism largely developed.
3. A person belonging to the worldwide group constituting a continuation through descent or conversion of the ancient Jewish people and characterized by a sense of community; especially one whose religion is Judaism.
4. A person believed to drive a hard bargain.

Even disregarding this last definition, we can see that the word *Jew* is being used today in several different senses. Remember, however, that the purpose of a dictionary is to indicate the *modern* usage of a word; it does not necessarily tell us how the word has been used throughout the ages.

In understanding how the word *Jew* might have been used in the early part of the Book of Mormon, it seems we must understand how the term was used (1) by the early teachers and writers in the books of First and Second Nephi, including Lehi, Nephi and Jacob; (2) by the Lord and his angel-messengers sent to these early prophets; as well as (3) by Joseph Smith as used according to his own understanding, and (4) by the Lord in his revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

When the Lord gives revelation to his people, he uses terminology which they would understand in that particular area at that particular time (see D&C 1:24; 29:33; 50:12; 2 Nephi 32:4; 3 Nephi 17:3). Thus, another thing to remember concerning the meaning of the word *Jew* is that it might be used with different meanings at different times within the Bible itself, and that it might be used with even other additional meanings in the Book of Mormon and in modern revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Following is a computer printout listing every time the words *Jew* and *Jews* are found in the books of 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi. Some of these usages may be somewhat of a surprise to some of us:

- A. The plates of brass are a “record of the Jews” from the beginning (preface to 1 Nephi; 1 Nephi 3:3; 5:6; 5:12; 13:23). Many of us are accustomed to referring to the plates of brass as being a record of the descendants of Joseph.
- B. At least a portion of our Bible came forth “from the mouth of a Jew” and it contained “the fulness of the gospel of the Lord” and went “from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 13:24-25; 14:23).
- C. The Savior will “be rejected of the Jews, or of the house of Israel” (1 Nephi 15:17). Also, Isaiah spake concerning “the restoration of the Jews, or of the house of Israel” (1 Nephi 15:20).
- D. The Jews “shall be gathered home to the *lands* of their inheritance, and shall be established in all their *lands* of promise” (2 Nephi 9:2; emphasis added).
- E. The Lord said the Bible “shall proceed forth from the Jews, mine ancient covenant people” (2 Nephi 29:4-6).
- F. Jews are differentiated from the “Nephites” and the “lost tribes of Israel” (2 Nephi 29:12-13).
- G. The “remnant” of Nephi’s seed will come to understand that “they are descendants of the Jews” (2 Nephi 30:4).

- H. Nephi said he had charity for the “Jew, because I mean them from whence I came” (2 Nephi 33:8).
- I. Also, numerous references speak of the “Jews and gentiles” as though these words include all humans. In such usage, the word “gentile” means essentially “non-Jew” (see Introduction to the Book of Mormon; 1 Nephi 13:25-26, 42; 15:17; 2 Nephi 26:33; 27:1; 30:3).

Now that we have “muddied the water” concerning the meaning of the word *Jew*, perhaps we should turn our discussion specifically to the chapter which I have been asked to discuss—2 Nephi 25.

Some of you may already have heard me say that I think 2 Nephi 25 in the Book of Mormon is one of the most important sections of all scripture. I think that can be said about virtually every chapter or verse of the Book of Mormon and all of us should feel this way when we realize that except for the seven and a half pages comprising the small books of Enos, Jarom, and Omni, all the remainder of the Book of Mormon was given to us through the writings of four brethren: Nephi and Jacob, the sons of Lehi who lived some 500-600 years before the time of Christ, and Mormon and Moroni, the father-son combination who lived some 300-421 years after the time of Christ. Notice some of the striking parallels and similarities of all four of these major writers of our present Book of Mormon:

- 1. *All were personal witnesses of Jesus Christ during their mortal probation.*
 - Nephi (1 Nephi 17:7 ff; 2 Nephi 11:2-3)
 - Jacob (2 Nephi 11:3)
 - Mormon (Mormon 1:15)
 - Moroni (Ether 12:22-23, 38-39)

2. *All were visited and tutored by angels and/or by translated beings sent by the Lord.*
Nephi (1 Nephi 11:1 to 1 Nephi 14:30)
Jacob (2 Nephi 10:2-3, 7; Jacob 2:11)
Mormon (3 Nephi 28:26)
Moroni (Mormon 8:11)

3. *All had visions of us—of our times and our challenges—and wrote especially for us (and not for their contemporaries).*
Nephi (2 Nephi 25:1 through 33:15, especially 25:7-8 and 26:16-17, 23-24)
Jacob (2 Nephi 6:4, 8-9; Jacob 4:4, 13)
Mormon (Mormon 3:16-22)
Moroni (Mormon 8:25-35, esp. 34-35; Mormon 9:26,30-31; Ether 8:23-26; Moroni 1:4)

4. *All were guided by the Lord (or told by angels sent from the Lord) as to what they should write and what they should not write, and they wrote only what they were commanded.*
Nephi (1 Nephi 19:3-6; 2 Nephi 28:1-3; 31:1; 32:7)
Jacob (2 Nephi 9:40-44; Jacob 2:11)
Mormon (W of M 1:3, 7, 9; 3 Nephi 26:11-12; 30:1; Mormon 5:9, 13)
Moroni (Mormon 8:1; Ether 8:20-26; 13:13)

5. *All bore strong testimonies of the divinity of Jesus Christ.*
Nephi (1 Nephi 19:18; 2 Nephi 11:4-6)
Jacob (Jacob 4:4-5, 13)
Mormon (Mormon 7:1-10)
Moroni (Mormon 9:11-37; Moroni 10:1-34)

6. *All warn that we will be held accountable for what they have written.*

Nephi (2 Nephi 33:10-15)

Jacob (Jacob 6:1, 12-13)

Mormon (Mormon 3:14, 18-22)

Moroni (Mormon 9:35; Ether 5:6; Moroni 10:24-34)

Inasmuch as all four of these writers indicated that they wrote only those things which were commanded by the Lord, then in a sense, everything we read in the Book of Mormon came from Christ. He is the true author of the Book of Mormon which now carries the subtitle “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.”

Now I hope I can help you appreciate why I refer to the 25th chapter of 2 Nephi as one of the most important parts in the Book of Mormon, and thus one of the most important chapters of all scripture. Note some other features pertaining to this chapter. It was written by Nephi—

1. After he believed the visions, dreams, and revelations of his father, including Lehi’s teachings of the need for opposition in all things and of the true circumstances of Adam and Eve both before and after the fall (2 Nephi 2).
2. After he was chosen by the Lord to rule over his brethren and later to serve as the new religious leader of the colony (1 Nephi 2:22; 2 Nephi 1:24-29).
3. After he had learned from his personal involvement in obtaining the plates of brass from Laban and in building the ship that surely “the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7).
4. After he had carefully studied and pondered the plates of brass which contained, among other things, the writings of Isaiah and the great prophecies of Joseph who was sold into Egypt, who “truly saw our day” (2 Nephi 3:5).

5. After he had had the vision of the Tree of Life that was initially given to Lehi, in which he saw the mother of the Son of God and learned of the condescension of God (1 Nephi 11:1-20).
6. After he had spoken to “the Spirit of the Lord” who “was in the form of a man” who spake unto him as one man “speaketh with another” (1 Nephi 11:11).
7. After he was tutored by an angel concerning the birth, life, mission, atonement, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
8. After he had seen in vision the future history of the earth at least into the millennium, including the downfall of his people, the discovery and colonization of America, the loss of many plain and precious parts of the Bible, the restoration of the gospel, the coming forth of latter-day scripture, the building up of Zion, and the gathering of Israel which was likened unto an olive tree whose natural branches should be grafted in again to the mother tree of the gospel (1 Nephi 12-15).
9. After he had witnessed the miraculous powers of the Liahona and had seen his brethren quake before him when he was filled with the spirit (1 Nephi 16:10-32; 17:52-55).
10. After his faith had matured to the point where he could proclaim with full assurance: “If God had commanded me to do all things I could do them. If he should command me that I should say unto this water, be thou earth, it should be earth; and if I should say it, it would be done” (1 Nephi 17:50).

11. After he had prepared and written much on the large plates and the small plates, both of which bear his name (1 Nephi 19:1-6).
12. After he had pondered the words of Zenos, Zenock, and Neum concerning the signs associated with the birth and death of the Messiah, and with the scattering of the Jews, until the latter days when they shall return unto the Lord (1 Nephi 19:10-21).
13. After he had quoted extensively from the writings of Isaiah, including Isaiah chapters 48 and 49 (1 Nephi 20 and 21 in the Book of Mormon), and provided inspired commentary on these writings by relating them to the great events he had seen in his vision of the last days.
14. After listening to and writing the masterful teachings of his brother Jacob in 2 Nephi 6-10, in which Jacob recounts Jewish history (including the Babylonian captivity and return), quotes Isaiah 50, 51, and 52:1-2, and then provides prophetic insight concerning the necessity and infinite aspects of the atonement of the Holy One of Israel who is the keeper of the gate of salvation, but who was crucified by His own, the Jews, who shall be scattered until they begin to believe in Him.
15. And after quoting 13 consecutive chapters of Isaiah (Isaiah 2-14) in 2 Nephi 12-24.

Then, beginning with chapter 25, Nephi provides us with a synthesis of the major teachings concerning some of the major events of the last days, events which he has learned about from these voluminous and extensive sources and experiences.

If all Nephi's prior experiences do not pique your interest as to what he is going to say in chapter 25, then let me share with

you some of his words of warning from 2 Nephi chapters 32 and 33.

Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark (2 Nephi 32:4).

And now, his final words of warning:

And now, my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good.

And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye—for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, at the last day; and you and I shall stand face to face before his bar; and ye shall know that I have been commanded of him to write these things, notwithstanding my weakness.

And I pray the Father in the name of Christ that many of us, if not all, may be saved in his kingdom at that great and last day.

And now, my beloved brethren, all those who are of the house of Israel, and all ye ends of the earth, I speak unto you as the voice of one crying from the dust: Farewell until that great day shall come.

And you that will not partake of the goodness of God, and respect the words of the Jews, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day.

For what I seal on earth, shall be brought against you at the judgment bar; for thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey. Amen (2 Nephi 33:10-15).

With all this as a background, let me quote chapter 25 word for word, verse for verse, subtracting nothing and adding only an occasional brief commentary in brackets. I feel that such commentary is necessary because of the extensive use of pronouns and other words of reference in these chapters. However, I am well aware of Peter's warning:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:20-21).

2 Nephi Chapter 25

Nephi glories in plainness—Isaiah’s prophecies shall be understood in the last days—The Jews shall return from Babylon, crucify the Messiah, and be scattered and scourged—They shall be restored when they believe in the Messiah—He shall first come six hundred years after Lehi left Jerusalem—Nephites keep the law of Moses and believe in Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel (Heading of chapter).

1 Now I, Nephi, do speak somewhat concerning the words which I have written, which have been spoken by the mouth of Isaiah [13 chapters of Isaiah, chapters 2-14; in 2 Nephi 7 and 8, Jacob quoted Isaiah 50, 51, and 52:1-2]. For behold, Isaiah spake many things which were hard for many of my people to understand; for they [the people of Nephi] know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews.

2 For I, Nephi, have not taught them [the people of Nephi] many things concerning the manner of the Jews; for their works [the works of the Jews?] were works of darkness, and their doings [the doings of the Jews?] were doings of abominations.

3 Wherefore, I write unto my people, unto all those that shall receive hereafter these things which I write, that they [the people of Nephi and those who will receive the writings of Nephi] may know the judgments of God, that they [the judgments of God] come upon all nations, according to the word which he hath spoken.

4 Wherefore, hearken, O my people, which are of the house of Israel, [Nephi’s people are a “remnant of the house of Israel” (2 Nephi 28:2)] and give ear unto my words; for because the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you [the people of Nephi who are of the House of Israel], nevertheless they [the words of Isaiah] are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy. But I give unto you a prophecy, according to the spirit which is in me; wherefore I shall prophesy according to the plainness which hath been with me from the time that I came out from Jerusalem with my father; for behold, my soul delighteth in plainness unto my people, that they [the people of Nephi] may learn.

5 Yea, and my soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah, for I came out from Jerusalem, and mine eyes hath beheld the things of the Jews, and I know that the Jews do understand the things of the prophets, and there is none other people that understand the things which were spoken unto the Jews like unto them [the Jews], save it be that they [the people who have not previously understood the things of the prophets] are taught after the manner of the things of the Jews.

6 But behold, I, Nephi, have not taught my children after the manner of the Jews; but behold, I, of myself, have dwelt at Jerusalem, wherefore I know concerning the regions round about; and I have

made mention unto my children concerning the judgments of God, which hath come to pass among the Jews, unto my children, according to all that which Isaiah hath spoken, and I do not write them.

7 But behold, I proceed with mine own prophecy, according to my plainness; in the which I know that no man can err; nevertheless, in the days that the prophecies of Isaiah shall be fulfilled men shall know of a surety, at the times when they [the prophecies of Isaiah] shall come to pass.

8 Wherefore, they [the prophecies of Isaiah] are of worth unto the children of men, and he that supposeth that they [the prophecies of Isaiah] are not, unto them will I speak particularly, and confine the words unto mine own people; for I know that they [the prophecies of Isaiah] shall be of great worth unto them [the children of men including the people of Nephi] in the last days; for in that day shall they [the children of men including the people of Nephi] understand them [the prophecies of Isaiah]; wherefore, for their good [the good of the children of men including the people of Nephi] have I written them [the prophecies of Isaiah].

9 And as one generation hath been destroyed among the Jews because of iniquity, even so have they been destroyed from generation to generation according to their iniquities [the iniquities of the Jews]; and never hath any of them [the Jews] been destroyed save it were foretold them [the Jews] by the prophets of the Lord.

10 Wherefore, it hath been told them [the Jews] concerning the destruction which should come upon them [the Jews], immediately after my father left Jerusalem; nevertheless, they [the Jews] hardened their hearts; and according to my prophecy they [the Jews] have been destroyed, save it be those [of the Jews] which are carried away captive into Babylon.

11 And now this I speak because of the spirit which is in me. And notwithstanding they [the Jews] have been carried away [into Babylon] they [the Jews] shall return again, and possess the land of Jerusalem; wherefore, they [the Jews] shall be restored again to the land of their inheritance.

12 But, behold, they [the Jews] shall have wars, and rumors of wars; and when the day cometh that the Only Begotten of the Father, yea, even the Father of heaven and of earth, shall manifest himself unto them [the Jews] in the flesh, behold, they [the Jews] will reject him, because of their iniquities, and the hardness of their hearts, and the stiffness of their necks.

13 Behold, they [the Jews] will crucify him; and after he is laid in a sepulchre for the space of three days he shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings; and all those who shall believe on his name shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Wherefore, my soul delighteth to prophesy concerning him, for I have seen his day, and my heart doth magnify his holy name.

14 And behold it shall come to pass that after the Messiah hath risen from the dead, and hath manifested himself unto his people [the Jews who are part of the House of Israel], unto as many as will believe on his name, [the apostles; Mary and the other women; the 500 at one

time, etc.] behold, Jerusalem shall be destroyed again; for wo unto them that fight against God and the people of his church [that is anyone who fights against God, including the Jews who are part of the House of Israel].

15 Wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered among all nations; yea, and also Babylon shall be destroyed; wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered by other nations [including Rome].

16 And after they [the Jews] have been scattered, and the Lord God hath scourged them [the Jews] by other nations [including Rome] for the space of many generations, yea, even down from generation to generation until they [the Jews] shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind—and when that day shall come that they [the Jews] shall believe in Christ, and worship the Father in his name, with pure hearts and clean hands, and look not forward any more for another Messiah, then, at that time, the day will come that it must needs be expedient that they [the Jews] should believe these things [“these things” that teach of Christ, including the writings of Nephi].

17 And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state [from the apostasy of “his people,” which includes the Jews who are part of the House of Israel]. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men [the various aspects of the Restoration].

18 Wherefore, he shall bring forth his words unto them [the children of men including the Jews and the remainder of the House of Israel], which words shall judge them [the children of men including the Jews and the remainder of the House of Israel] at the last day, for they [the things which teach of Christ, including the words of Nephi] shall be given them [the children of men including the Jews and the remainder of the House of Israel] for the purpose of convincing them [the children of men including the Jews and the remainder of the House of Israel] of the true Messiah, who was rejected by them [the children of men particularly the Jews]; and unto the convincing of them [the children of men particularly the Jews] that they [the children of men particularly the Jews] need not look forward any more for a Messiah to come, for there should not any come, save it should be a false Messiah which should deceive the people; for there is save one Messiah spoken of by the prophets, and that Messiah is he who should be rejected of the Jews.

19 For according to the words of the prophets, the Messiah cometh in six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem; and according to the words of the prophets, and also the word of the angel of God, his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God. [Note: many men of God before Nephi knew that the name of the Messiah would be “Jesus Christ,” including Adam in Moses 6:51-52; Enoch in Moses 7:50; Noah in Moses 8:24; and the brother of Jared in Ether 3:14.]

20 And now, my brethren, I have spoken plainly that ye cannot err. And as the Lord God liveth that brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, and gave unto Moses power that he should heal the nations

after they had been bitten by the poisonous serpents, if they would cast their eyes unto the serpent which he did raise up before them, and also gave him [Moses] power that he should smite the rock and the water should come forth; yea, behold I say unto you, that as these things are true, and as the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved.

21 Wherefore, for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things [the words of Nephi] which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation, that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph, that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand.

22 Wherefore, these things [the words of Nephi] shall go from generation to generation as long as the earth shall stand; and they shall go according to the will and pleasure of God; and the nations who shall possess them [the words of Nephi] shall be judged of them [the words of Nephi] according to the words which are written.

23 For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

24 And, notwithstanding we [the children of Nephi and his contemporaries] believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled.

25 For, for this end was the law given; wherefore the law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith; yet we keep the law because of the commandments.

26 And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they [the children of Nephi] may look for a remission of their sins.

27 Wherefore, we speak concerning the law that our children may know the deadness of the law; and they [the children of Nephi], by knowing the deadness of the law, may look forward unto that life which is in Christ, and know for what end the law was given. And after the law is fulfilled in Christ, that they [the children of Nephi] need not harden their hearts against him when the law ought to be done away.

28 And now behold, my people, ye are a stiffnecked people; wherefore, I have spoken plainly unto you, that ye cannot misunderstand. And the words which I have spoken shall stand as a testimony against you; for they [the words which Nephi has spoken] are sufficient to teach any man the right way; for the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not; for by denying him ye also deny the prophets and the law.

29 And now behold, I say unto you that the right way is to believe in Christ, and deny him not; and Christ is the Holy One of Israel; wherefore ye must bow down before him, and worship him with all

your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul; and if ye do this ye shall in nowise be cast out.

30 And, inasmuch as it shall be expedient, ye must keep the performances and ordinances of God until the law shall be fulfilled which was given unto Moses.

Now what is the Book of Mormon “Message to the Jews”? If I understand the teachings of the prophets and the scriptures correctly, at one time there was a chosen people living in a promised land who were given a direct responsibility by our Heavenly Father: *to prepare the world for the coming of His Son*. These chosen people were the Jews living in the promised land of Israel, and they were partakers of special covenants with our Heavenly Father.

History and the scriptures indicate that at times they did quite well in fulfilling this divine assignment. However, the lack of scriptures at vital times also indicate varying degrees of apostasy. Thus, unfortunately the chosen people *as a nation* largely failed in their divine assignment, and lost the right to their special covenants and to residence in their chosen land. Although it is true that many of the early converts to Christianity came from among the Jewish people who were living in the Holy Land, again, *as a people*, they did not accept Jesus Christ as their long-awaited Messiah. However, according to eternal principles associated with the restoration and restitution of all things, and with the concept that “the first shall be last, and the last shall be first” (D&C 29:30), in this dispensation another people has been chosen in a new land of promise to help prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Son of God. Thus, the gospel has been restored largely to another branch of the House of Israel—the seed of Ephraim—with the divine responsibility to take the gospel to “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (D&C 77:8) with special emphasis on the responsibility to take it to the Jewish people.

One of the specific statements of the Book of Mormon indicates that it was reserved to come forth “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST” (title page).

Many of the prophets in the Old Testament and the apostles in the New Testament prophesied concerning a restoration or restitution of all things in the last days. Often we correctly quote such scriptures as pertaining to priesthood keys and powers, also to Church offices and positions. However, the principles of restoration and restitution go far beyond these examples. Again, if I understand the words of the prophets and the scriptures correctly, before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ there must once again be a chosen people called Israel living in a chosen land called Israel, and they will also be part of the covenant Church of Israel once again.

Certainly one of the major messages of the 25th chapter of 2 Nephi is concerned with this general topic of the gathering and restoration of Israel, with a specific message and invitation to the descendants of Judah to gather back to the true fold of the Shepherd of Israel. As some of you will recall, within a month of the death of President Kimball and the reorganization of the First Presidency in 1985, a special statement from the First Presidency was published under the title: "An invitation to come back" (*LDS Church News* [22 Dec 1985] 3). As most of us read this stirring invitation, we thought primarily of those who had previously been members of the Church in this dispensation but who may have wandered from the fold because of inactivity or had even left the fold through disfellowshipment or excommunication. However, as you reread here some of the words of this invitation by the First Presidency, I would invite you to think of them as extending to the descendants of those of prior dispensations—including the Jewish people and others who have not yet accepted the fulness of the gospel. These words include the following:

We rejoice in the blessings that come of membership and activity in this Church whose head is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. In deep sincerity we express our love and gratitude for our brethren and sisters everywhere. . . .

To those who have ceased activity and to those who have become critical, we say "Come back. Come back and feast at the table of the

Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the saints.”

We are confident that many have longed to return, but have felt awkward about doing so. We assure you that you will find open arms to receive you and willing hands to assist you.

This is the . . . season when we honor the birth of the Lord who gave His life for the sins of all. We know there are many who carry heavy burdens of guilt and bitterness. To such we say, “Set them aside and give heed to the words of the Savior: ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’ ” (Matthew 11:28-30)

We plead with you. We pray for you. We invite and welcome you with love and appreciation.

Sincerely your brethren,

The First Presidency
Ezra Taft Benson
Gordon B. Hinckley
Thomas S. Monson

To me, this is essentially the message to the Jews that was given by Nephi in his writings:

Come back. Come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship. . . . We plead with you. We pray for you. We invite and welcome you with love and appreciation.

May this inspired invitation be truly received.