



THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL: THE ELECTION AND THE ADOPTION

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ISRAEL BEFORE THE WORLD WAS

“The greatest and most important talent or capacity that any of the spirit children of the Father could gain is the talent of spirituality. Most of those who gained this talent were chosen, before they were born, to come to earth as members of the house of Israel. They were foreordained to receive the blessings that the Lord promised to Abraham and to his seed in all their generations. This foreordination is an election, Paul tells us, and truly it is so, for those so chosen, selected, or elected become, in this life, the favored people” (Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], p. 512; see also Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979–81], 1:23).

“There was a group of souls tested, tried, and proven before they were born into the world, and the Lord provided a lineage for them. That lineage is the house of Israel, the lineage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their posterity. Through this lineage were to come the true and tried souls that had demonstrated their righteousness in the spirit world before they came here” (Melvin J. Ballard, “The Three Degrees of Glory,” in *Melvin J. Ballard, Crusader for Righteousness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], pp. 218–19).

“You are all the sons and daughters of God. Your spirits were created and lived as organized intelligences before the world was. You have been blessed to have a physical body because of your obedience to certain commandments in that premortal state. You are now born into a family to which you have come, into the nations through which you have come, as a reward for the kind of lives you lived before you came here and at a time in the world’s history, as the Apostle Paul taught the men of Athens and as the Lord revealed to Moses, determined by the faithfulness of each of those who lived before this world was created [see Acts 17:24–27; Deuteronomy 32:8–9]. . . .

“It would seem very clear, then, that those born to the lineage of Jacob, who was later to be called Israel, and his posterity, who were known as the children of Israel, were born into the most illustrious lineage of any of those who came upon the earth as mortal beings.

“All these rewards were seemingly promised, or foreordained, before the world was. Surely these matters must have been determined by the kind of lives we had lived in that premortal spirit world. Some may question these assumptions, but at the same time they will accept without any question the

belief that each one of us will be judged when we leave this earth according to his or her deeds during our lives here in mortality. Isn’t it just as reasonable to believe that what we have received here in this earth [life] was given to each of us according to the merits of our conduct before we came here?” (Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, pp. 7–8; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, p. 5).

LITERAL DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB

“A vital part of every patriarchal blessing is the declaration of lineage. . . . The patriarch should be responsive to the whisperings of the Spirit as he identifies lineage and the special promises and blessings attendant thereto. Patriarchs gain the inspiration to declare the lineage of the person receiving the blessing, naming the tribe of which the individual is a member. . . .

“There has been an intermixture of each of the tribes with all of the others. The blood of one particular tribe, however, would be dominant in each person. Children in the same family could belong to different tribes.

“We are speaking now of literal descent, of genealogical ancestry, of blood lines, and of a father and son relationship” (*Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs*, pp. 3, 5).

“You have heard Joseph [Smith] say that the people did not know him; he had his eyes on . . . blood-relations. Some have supposed that he meant spirit, but it was the blood-relation. This is it that he referred to. His descent from Joseph that was sold into Egypt was direct, and the blood was pure in him. That is why the Lord chose him and we are pure when this blood-strain from Ephraim comes down pure” (Brigham Young, in “A Family Meeting in Nauvoo,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, vol. 11, p. 107).

“We are the descendants of Abraham, we are the children of Abraham, we are his seed. We are natural inheritors by blood lineage of all the blessings that God gave Abraham; they are the blessings of glory and immortality and eternal life. We are the children of the prophets. We are a select and favored group known as the house of Israel. We have been gathered in from the ends of the earth so that God can fulfill the covenants made with our fathers and offer to us again, as he offered to them, the fulness of every great, glorious gospel principle. And the summation of these is to have the family unit continue everlastingly in eternity” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Households of Faith*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Provo, 1 Dec. 1970], p. 3).

“Do you see the importance of your patriarchal blessing? I hope each one of you has obtained one. It is precious. It is personal scripture to you. It declares your special lineage. It reminds you of your linkage with the past. And it will help you realize your future potential. Literally, you can lay claim upon the Lord for fulfillment of those blessings through your faithfulness. . . .

“. . . Are you of Israel? Absolutely. You are the ‘Hope of Israel, Zion’s army, Children of the promised day.’ . . .

“Are you Hebrew? Yes, as scriptures define the term. You are related to Abraham, who was the great ‘Eber’ from which the term Hebrew was derived” (Russell M. Nelson, “Thanks for the Covenant,” in *1988–89 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1989], p. 58; see also Theodore M. Burton, *God’s Greatest Gift* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], pp. 116–26).

“Every person who embraces the gospel becomes of the house of Israel. In other words, they become members of the chosen lineage, or Abraham’s children through Isaac and Jacob unto whom the promises were made. The great majority of those who become members of the Church are literal descendants of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph. Those who are not literal descendants of Abraham and Israel must become such, and when they are baptized and confirmed they are grafted into the tree and are entitled to all the rights and privileges as heirs” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56], 3:246; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., 5 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957–66], 3:62–64).

“Lineages declared in patriarchal blessings are almost always statements of actual blood lines; they are not simply tribal identifications by assignment. . . .

“The clear teaching of the prophets is that few persons *not* of the blood of Abraham have become members of the Church in this dispensation; the terms ‘adopted into the house of Israel’ or ‘assigned to a tribe of Israel’ pertain *only* to those relatively few members. . . .

“From what the prophets have said, then, most members of the Church come from Gentile nations, but they have some Israelite ancestors in their lineage. Therefore, they are not ‘assigned to’ or ‘adopted into’ the house of Israel. They are legal heirs of the covenant, and the lineage proclaimed in their patriarchal blessings identifies the blood line that ties them back to Abraham” (Daniel H. Ludlow, “Of the House of Israel,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1991, pp. 52, 54–55).

THE BLESSINGS OF LINEAL DESCENT

“Truth is eternal, without beginning of days or end of life. The power and ability to receive truth is a great thing—that is a gift which I believe is largely bestowed upon the Latter-day Saints. I believe there is something in our racial connection which has to do with this. It is evident to me that in the last days the Lord has wrought mightily upon the descendants of the house of Israel. . . .

“. . . I do not mean to say that this is confined to us, but that particularly those who are of the house of Ephraim are ready to

receive the word and act according to it as the Lord shall direct” (Charles W. Penrose, in Conference Report, Oct. 1922, pp. 21–22).

“Faith is a part of our heritage. Those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ are the blood of Israel, and characteristic of the house of Israel is the ability to believe. Some have referred to it as ‘believing blood’” (Loren C. Dunn, in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, pp. 35–36; or *Ensign*, May 1981, p. 27).

“What then is believing blood? . . . The term is simply a beautiful, a poetic, and a symbolic way of referring to the seed of Abraham to whom the promises were made. It identifies those who developed in preexistence the talent to recognize the truth and to desire righteousness” (Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, pp. 38–39).

THE CHOSEN SEED IMPACTS THE WORLD

Speaking of the children of Abraham:

“Their blood has permeated European society, and it coursed in the veins of the early colonists of America. And when the books shall be opened and the lineage of all men is known, it will be found that they have been first and foremost in everything noble among men in the various nations in breaking off the shackles of kingcraft and priestcraft and oppression of every kind, and the foremost among men in upholding and maintaining the principles of liberty and freedom upon this continent and establishing a representative government, and thus preparing the way for the coming forth of the fullness of the everlasting Gospel. And it is the foremost of those spirits whom the Lord has prepared to receive the Gospel when it was presented to them, and who did not wait for the Elders to hunt them from the hills and corners of the earth, but they were hunting for the Elders, impelled by a spirit which then they could not understand; and for this reason were they among the first Elders of the Church; they and the fathers having been watched over from the days that God promised those blessings upon Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and Ephraim. And these are they that will be found in the front ranks of all that is noble and good in their day and time, and who will be found among those whose efforts are directed in establishing upon the earth those heaven-born principles which tend directly to blessing and salvation, to ameliorating the condition of their fellow-men, and elevating them in the scale of their being; and among those also who receive the fullness of the Everlasting Gospel, and the keys of Priesthood in the last days, through whom God determined to gather up again unto himself a peculiar people, a holy nation, a pure seed that shall stand upon Mount Zion as saviors, not only to the house of Israel but also to the house of Esau” (Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:186–87).

REFERENCES TO ISRAEL IN MODERN REVELATION

See Doctrine and Covenants 27:10; 35:20–21, 25; 38:33; 39:11; 45:17, 28–29; 52:2; 58:44–46; 64:36; 65:11; 86:8–11; 96:6–7; 98:16; 103:15–19; 109:58, 60, 67; 110:11–12; 113:1–10; 124:11, 58, 91–92; 132:30–31; 133:12, 30, 32, 34; 137:6.