

The Gathering of the House of Israel

Chapter 42

The House of Israel Are God's Covenant People

- What responsibilities do God's covenant people have to the nations of the world?

Jacob was a great prophet who lived hundreds of years before the time of Christ. Because Jacob was faithful, the Lord gave him the special name of Israel, which means “one who prevails with God” or “let God prevail” (Bible Dictionary, “Israel,” 708). Jacob had twelve sons. These sons and their families became known as the twelve tribes of Israel, or Israelites (see Genesis 49:28).

Jacob was a grandson of Abraham. The Lord made an everlasting covenant with Abraham that was renewed with Isaac and with Jacob and his children (see chapter 15 in this book; see also the visual in this chapter, depicting Jacob blessing his sons). God promised that the Israelites would be His covenant people as long as they would obey His commandments (see Deuteronomy 28:9–10). They would be a blessing to all the nations of the world by taking the gospel and the priesthood to them (see Abraham 2:9–11). Thus, they would keep their covenant with the Lord and He would keep His covenant with them.

The House of Israel Was Scattered

Again and again prophets of the Lord warned the house of Israel what would happen if they were wicked. Moses prophesied, “And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other” (Deuteronomy 28:64).



Despite this warning, the Israelites consistently broke the commandments of God. They fought among themselves and split into two kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom, called the kingdom of Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, called the kingdom of Judah. Ten of the twelve tribes of Israel lived in the Northern Kingdom. During a war they were conquered by their enemies and carried away into captivity. Some of them later escaped into the lands of the north and became lost to the rest of the world.

About 100 years after the capture of the Northern Kingdom, the Southern Kingdom was conquered. The capital city of Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C., and many members of the remaining two tribes of Israel were taken captive. Later, some of the members of these tribes returned and rebuilt Jerusalem. Just before Jerusalem was destroyed, Lehi and his family, who were members of the house of Israel, left the city and settled in the Americas.

After the time of Christ, Jerusalem was again destroyed, this time by Roman soldiers. The Jews were scattered over much of the world. Today Israelites are found in all countries of the world. Many of these people do not know that they are descended from the ancient house of Israel.

- What benefits have come to God's children because His covenant people have been scattered throughout the earth?

The House of Israel Must Be Gathered

- Why does the Lord want His people to be gathered?
- How will the house of Israel be gathered?

The Lord promised that His covenant people would someday be gathered: "I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them" (Jeremiah 23:3).

God gathers His children through missionary work. As people come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ, receiving the ordinances of salvation and keeping the associated covenants, they become "the children of the covenant" (3 Nephi 20:26). He has important reasons for gathering His children. He gathers them so they can learn the

teachings of the gospel and prepare themselves to meet the Savior when He comes again. He gathers them so they will build temples and perform sacred ordinances for ancestors who have died without having this opportunity. He gathers them so they can strengthen one another and be unified in the gospel, finding protection from unrighteous influences in the world. He also gathers them so they can prepare themselves to share the gospel with others.

The power and authority to direct the work of gathering the house of Israel was given to Joseph Smith by the prophet Moses, who appeared in 1836 in the Kirtland Temple (see D&C 110:11). Since that time, each prophet has held the keys for the gathering of the house of Israel, and this gathering has been an important part of the Church's work. The covenant people are now being gathered as they accept the restored gospel and serve the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Deuteronomy 30:1–5).

The Israelites are to be gathered spiritually first and then physically. They are gathered spiritually as they join The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and make and keep sacred covenants. This spiritual gathering began during the time of the Prophet Joseph Smith and continues today all over the world. Converts to the Church are Israelites either by blood or adoption. They belong to the family of Abraham and Jacob (see Abraham 2:9–11; Galatians 3:26–29).

President Joseph Fielding Smith said: “There are many nations represented in the . . . Church. . . . They have come because the Spirit of the Lord rested upon them; . . . receiving the *spirit of gathering*, they left everything for the sake of the gospel” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 3:256; italics in original).

The physical gathering of Israel means that the covenant people will be “gathered home to the lands of their inheritance, and shall be established in all their lands of promise” (2 Nephi 9:2). The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh will be gathered in the Americas. The tribe of Judah will return to the city of Jerusalem and the area surrounding it. The ten lost tribes will receive from the tribe of Ephraim their promised blessings (see D&C 133:26–34).

When the Church was first established, the Saints were instructed to gather in Ohio, then Missouri, and then the Salt Lake Valley. Today, however, modern prophets have taught that Church members are to build up the kingdom of God in their own lands. Elder Russell M. Nelson said: “The choice to come unto Christ is not a matter of physical location; it is a matter of individual commitment. People can be ‘brought to the knowledge of the Lord’ [3 Nephi 20:13] without leaving their homelands. True, in the early days of the Church, conversion often meant emigration as well. But now the gathering takes place in each nation. . . . The place of gathering for Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; the place of gathering for Nigerian Saints is in Nigeria; the place of gathering for Korean Saints is in Korea; and so forth. Zion is ‘the pure in heart.’ [D&C 97:21.] Zion is wherever righteous Saints are” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 85; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 81).

The physical gathering of Israel will not be complete until the Second Coming of the Savior and on into the Millennium (see Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37). Then the Lord’s promise will be fulfilled:

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

“But, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers” (Jeremiah 16:14–15).

- In what ways have you been gathered spiritually as one of the Lord’s covenant people?
- In what ways have you participated in the gathering of others?

Additional Scriptures

- Genesis 17:1–8 (God’s covenant with Abraham)
- Romans 9:4–8; Galatians 3:29 (those who follow Jesus Christ and His word are the children of the covenant)

For teachers: When people share their stories of being converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, they are sharing stories about being gathered spiritually. Consider asking a few people in advance to tell about how they were converted to the gospel.

- 2 Nephi 30:2; Mosiah 5:10–11 (those who repent, follow the prophets, and have faith in Jesus Christ become the Lord’s covenant people)
- 2 Kings 17 (Northern Kingdom taken captive)
- 2 Chronicles 36:11–20 (Southern Kingdom taken captive)
- James 1:1 (twelve tribes scattered abroad)
- 1 Nephi 10:12–13 (Nephite migration was part of the scattering)
- Jeremiah 3:14–18 (one from a city, two from a family)
- Ezekiel 20:33–36 (Israel will be gathered from all countries)
- 3 Nephi 20:29–46 (Jews will be gathered to Jerusalem)
- 1 Nephi 15:13–18; 3 Nephi 21:26–29 (gathering starts with Restoration of the gospel)
- D&C 38:31–33 (the Lord’s covenant people will be saved)
- Isaiah 11:11–13 (the Lord will recover His people)
- Revelation 18:4–8 (a voice will proclaim the gathering)
- D&C 133:6–15 (Gentiles to Zion, Jews to Jerusalem)