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FAMILY HISTORY:

PEACE, PROTECTION, & PROMISES



As your family participates in the gathering of records, the healing of hearts, and the sealing of family members, you and your posterity will be blessed forever and ever.

The story of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a story about families. When I say *families*, I don't mean our modern concept of Mom, Dad, and children.

I use the term the way the Lord uses it, as a synonym for *kindred* or *multigenerational families*, because everyone has a family. Our Heavenly Father's plan for His children centers on this kind of family—with children who draw strength from ancestors many generations back and parents who seek to bless their posterity for generations to come.

In this sense the Book of Mormon also tells stories of families. As we read these stories, we find that families haven't changed that much over the centuries. Even those who lived in another time and place are a lot like us—and God's desire for His children to live in happy, eternal families hasn't changed.

Why did the Lord preserve the record of these stories? What did He want us to learn from them? Do they contain lessons that could help us in our efforts to gather, heal, and seal our families?

A Lesson from Lehi

I believe that the first family in the Book of Mormon—Lehi's family—has a powerful lesson for us that we might not have noticed. Lehi's family can teach us a great deal about family records—why they're important to the Lord and why they should be important to us.

When the story begins, Lehi and Sariah are raising their daughters and four sons in Jerusalem, leading a relatively comfortable life in that great city. Their lives changed forever when the Lord commanded Lehi to take his family into the wilderness.

GENEALOGY CHANGES
OUR CHARTS;
FAMILY HISTORY CHANGES
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Lehi obeyed, and he and his family left their material possessions behind and ventured into the wilderness. After traveling a while, Lehi said to his son Nephi:

“Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall *return* to Jerusalem.

“For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass” (1 Nephi 3:2–3; emphasis added).

Because of this commandment, our families are blessed with the following great declaration of faith and obedience from Nephi: “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that 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).

The brass plates were a record. They contained the scriptures, but they also contained Lehi’s family history. The Lord knew how important it would be to preserve that record for many generations to come.

Have you ever wondered why the Lord didn’t command Lehi, rather than his sons, to go back for the record? He was the patriarch of the family. The Lord gave *him* the vision. Wouldn’t Lehi have had more influence on Laban than his sons?

We don’t know why the Lord commanded Lehi’s sons to return to Jerusalem, but we do know that they struggled to accomplish what the Lord asked them to do. The task was difficult, and it tested their faith. They learned valuable lessons that would serve them well throughout their journeying in the wilderness. Perhaps most important, they learned that when the Lord commands, He really does provide a way.

We might ask ourselves, what does the Lord want our sons and daughters to learn as they “return” to retrieve our family records? How is He providing a way for them? Are there experiences He wants them to have? Are we inviting them to have these experiences? What blessings is He hoping to give your



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sons and daughters through temple and family history service?

When Nephi and his brothers returned to their father’s tent, Lehi “took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning.” There he found “the five books of Moses,” “the prophecies of the holy prophets,” and “a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph . . . who was sold into Egypt.” And when Lehi “saw all these things, he was filled with the Spirit” (1 Nephi 5:10, 11, 13, 14, 17).

Lehi then taught his family what he had learned from the plates. You might say his tent became a family history and learning center—just as our homes should be.

It’s easy to see why the Lord wanted Lehi’s family to have these records. They gave his descendants a sense of identity, linking

them to faithful patriarchs of the past and planting in their hearts “the promises made to the fathers” (D&C 2:2; Joseph Smith—History 1:39). These records were so important to the faith of unborn generations that the Spirit warned Nephi that without them, an entire “nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief” (1 Nephi 4:13).

The experience of another people in the Book of Mormon shows how true it is that when records are lost, truth is lost, and the results for future generations can be disastrous.

The Mulekites left Jerusalem about the same time as Lehi’s family. But unlike Lehi’s family, “they had brought no records with them.” By the time Mosiah discovered them about 400 years later, “their language had become corrupted; . . . and they denied the being of their Creator” (Omni 1:17). They had lost their identity as a covenant people.

Mosiah taught the Mulekites his language so they could learn from the records he possessed. As a result, the Mulekites underwent a transformation from a troubled, godless society to a society that understood God’s plan of happiness for them—and their families.

Return with Your Family

The knowledge of who we are in relation to God and to each other changes the way we think, act, and treat others. Records are a vital piece of our identity and perspective. Looking back prepares us to go forward.

Parents, have you invited your family to “return”? Has your family been separated from their records—or from each other—in one way or another? Has your family’s tie between the present and the past been severed? What occurred in your family’s history to cause this separation? Was it immigration, family conflict, conversion to the gospel, or simply the passage of time? Have you reached out recently to find your ancestors on [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org)?

The house of Israel has been scattered, and in many ways that includes the scattering of our families and records. Our responsibility is to gather them and, where necessary, to heal the wounds of separation. As we seek diligently to turn the hearts of our children to their fathers, our hearts will also turn to our children¹ and we will discover together the peace and healing that come of this work (see D&C 98:16).

Just as Lehi sent his sons back to Jerusalem for the sacred records, let us send our children back for our family records. Just as the Lord provided a way for Nephi, He has provided the Internet and other technologies that will enable our children to gather and heal our families. And He has provided temples where we can take the names we find and make our gathering permanent through sealing ordinances.

Joy in the Wilderness

When my wife, Sharol, and I were married, we decided we’d have four sons. The Lord had a different plan. He gave us four daughters.

We’ve traveled with our daughters through the wilderness. Now they’re married with children and traveling through their own wilderness. Has everything been easy along the way? No. We’ve had our share of murmuring, and there have been plenty of struggles.

Life’s wilderness can be tough on families. When people ask, “How are you and your family doing?” I often say, “We’re between crises right now. Thanks for asking.”

But there are also moments of true joy along the way. As patriarchs and matriarchs, we spend a lot of time fortifying our children for the wilderness. Prophets in our day have promised that family history work provides “protection from the influence of the adversary”² and a “deep and abiding” conversion to the Savior.³ What a powerful way to gather, heal, and seal our families.

As the patriarch of our family, I’ve asked my daughters to “return” to *find* the records, *take* the names to the temple, and *teach* our grandchildren. I have asked them to get to know who they are made of by participating in our family history.

A Promise

I promise that as you invite your children to “return” and find your family records, together you will “rejoice exceedingly” like Lehi and Sariah and give “thanks unto the God of Israel.” As you search your records, you will be “filled with the Spirit,” for you will find “that they [are] desirable; yea, even of great worth.” And you will know that “it was wisdom in the Lord that [you] should carry them with [you]” as you journey “in the wilderness towards [your] land of promise” (1 Nephi 5:9, 17, 21–22).

The Church is here to support and strengthen your family in this journey. I promise that as your family participates in the gathering of records, the healing of hearts, and the sealing of family members, you and your posterity—your family—will be blessed forever and ever. ■

From an address, “Gathering, Healing, and Sealing Families,” given at the RootsTech Family History Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, on February 14, 2015.

NOTES

1. For examples of how the records contained on the plates of brass brought healing to Lehi’s posterity, see Alma 37:8–10.
2. Richard G. Scott, “The Joy of Redeeming the Dead,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 94.
3. David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 27.



MORE ONLINE

Two Apostles promise blessings to youth who participate in family history and temple service. Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/1016000 to watch the video.