

Introduction to the Old Testament: Christ is the Holy One of Israel

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The Old Testament is the early testimonies of Jesus Christ, the Holy One of Israel, The Creator of the First Day, The Rock of Israel, the Messiah and His Atoning power. It yields a wealth of information in as simple or complex a manner as the one reading and studying the text desires.

The Old Testament speaks in eloquent powerful prose, heart wrenching poetry, vibrant vigorous speeches, dynamic history, profound covenants, and many witnesses relating to the purposes, powers, and social solutions for any society. The Old Testament is like an onion and can be “peeled” back revealing information on many diverse levels. One could spend a lifetime studying a few verses of the Old Testament and hardly reach the depth of their meaning. One Hebrew teacher once said to me, “Today we start the study of the Book of Genesis, I doubt we will get beyond the first few words, let alone the first five verses during this semester.” Six months later, I believed him. We had reached verse six of Genesis; the wisdom gained was extraordinary. The Old Testament has been yielding its abundance of concepts ever since, but it always demands “the sweat of thy face” (Genesis 3:19)

When Nephi was writing his record he proclaimed, “Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him. And also my soul delighteth in the covenants of the Lord which he hath made to our fathers; yea, my soul delighteth in his grace, and in his justice, and power, and mercy in the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death. And my soul delighteth in proving unto my people that save Christ should come all men must perish. For if there be no Christ there be no God; and if there be no God we are not, for there could have been no creation. But there is a God, and he is Christ, and he cometh in the fulness of his own time.” (2 Nephi 11:4 - 7)

It is this “key” of Nephi (“there is a God, and he is Christ”), given in the Book of Mormon, which makes the study of the Old Testament such a delight. The knowledge of the Old Testament is offered with effort on the part of the “student”; by work, prayer, fasting, revelation, faith in Jesus Christ and submission to the “Law” or the “Gospel,” we may gain a rich and full grasp of Eternal life. Every individual of every generation must learn for himself the witnesses and truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No one can throw away the ideals, principles, and covenants of God with impunity. We each must search the things of the LORD. Our whole life is spent in labor trying to understand and live the commandments of the LORD. (Psalms 104:23; 128:2) Our understanding is always superficial, at first, but grows in depth and appreciation with experience. (1 Cor. 13:12) When the LORD gives us knowledge and precepts he does not use syllogisms or complete philosophical segments. “Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? *them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.* For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little:” (Isaiah 28:9 - 10) The LORD teaches; when the student is ready and seeking Him with a perfect heart.¹

It is the whole purpose of the “things” of the world, the words of God given by the Holy Prophets (from the time of Adam, Moses, Malachi, etc.), and all the covenants, to show the “coming of Christ.” All things typify the Messiah. The Old Testament is a record of many of

those witnesses. It covers thousands of years of the workings of God with Man and shows His love and mercy for his children. The Old Testament is a glorious tapestry of stories, history, covenants, poetry, hymns, cautionary tales, miracles, visions, parables, and many other types of written, sung, or spoken expressions; ALL are concerned with the “coming of Christ.” The Old Testament is only understandable when approached with a paradigm which asks, “How does this testify of Christ?”; the Old Testament then, begins to yield up its vast storehouse of testimony of the Messiah.

When one begins a study of the Old Testament, it often commences with “Great Expectations.” The expectations often focus on history, traditions, religious rites, epics and great “heroes.” Sometimes those expectations are fulfilled, but often they become unmet or unfulfilled. The most common reason that expectations are unmet is because the true intent of the Old Testament, is either ignored or unrecognized. The real intent, the objective and, “...the right way is to believe in Christ, and deny him not; ...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. 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.” (2 Nephi 25:29 - 30)

The focus or purpose of the Old Testament is carefully delineated by the gloriously eloquent language and thoughts of Deuteronomy Chapter Six:

“Now these *are* the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do *them* in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do *it*; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *the* LORD *is* One: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.... beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you; (For the LORD thy God *is* a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth... Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do *that which is* right and good in the sight of the LORD... that he might preserve us alive.” (Deuteronomy 6:1 - 25)

The apparent focus of this scripture in Deuteronomy is for both Israel, the nation (The First-born Son of God – Ex. 4:22) and an individual Israelite to have a personal relationship with the LORD, the Great Deliverer, the Savior, who brought Israel (the individual and the nation) out of bondage. Thus, the center of the Old Testament is the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, Jesus Christ. His atonement and gospel are continuously presaged, not always with the simplicity found in the Book of Mormon, but with the luxurious symbolism of Ancient Israel.

Deuteronomy 6 enshrines four fundamental principles. Israel Abrahams calls them, “the fundamental *dogma* (monotheism), the fundamental *duty* (love), the fundamental *discipline* (study of the law), and the fundamental *method* (union of ‘letter’ and ‘spirit’, of the Jewish Religion.”² These four principles are very applicable for the “student” trying to understand the Old Testament. Because of the Book of Mormon witness the definitions of the four principles are different from Rabbi Abrahams’, these four principles are now defined as: the fundamental *dogma*, which is the belief that the Messiah, the Rock of Israel, LORD of *Sabaoth*, the Holy One of Israel is Jesus the Christ; the fundamental *duty* is love; the fundamental *discipline* is the study of the Law and the Gospel; and the fundamental *method* is the “letter” and “spirit” united in the principles of the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ in this dispensation.

For the “might,” “mind,” and “strength” to be centered on Jesus Christ when studying, these four principles will help in understanding the *Tanak*, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.³ The four principles are simple and straightforward and, like all natural or universal “laws,” are pragmatic and should be observed if one expects the desired result.

The Fundamental Dogma. “The LORD is our God the LORD Alone!” (Deut. 6:4)⁴ This direct statement indicates; all things testify of the divinity, power, role, and purpose of The LORD. All things given of God typify Jesus Christ. He is our only LORD.⁵ Many scriptures testify of the role and power of Jesus Christ, but none more succinctly than Nephi’s assertion, “Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the Law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him. (2 Nephi 11:4) Nephi’s testimony regarding the acknowledgment of the Christ centered world, echoed the Savior’s personal testimony to Adam, “and behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me.” (Moses 6:63, cf. Jacob 7:10-12 and Helaman 8)

These scriptures state that “all things” in the world testify of God and the coming of Jesus Christ with the redemptive powers of the Atonement. The Doctrine and Covenants also shows how important the Savior centering concept is, “Wherefore, verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal; neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam, your father, whom I created. Behold, I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandment, but no temporal commandment gave I unto him, for my commandments are spiritual; they are not natural nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual. (Doctrine and Covenants 29:34-35.) If one envisioned the scriptures as both temporal and spiritual ideas, then the focal point of the scriptures would be some mendacious amalgamation of “ethical behavior” with some convenient opportune spiritualistic virtue, not probity. The focal point is not temporal. It is concerned with the

perfection of the saints through a personal relationship with the Holy One of Israel, Jesus Christ; the perfection and exaltation of the individual.⁶

This “spiritual focus” is elegantly pointed out in the Book of Mosiah, “For salvation cometh to none...except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men, to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy, even as though he had already come among them. Yet the Lord God saw that his people were a stiff-necked people, and he appointed unto them a law, even the law of Moses. And many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows showed he unto them, concerning his coming; and also holy prophets spake unto them concerning his coming; and yet they hardened their hearts, and understood not that the law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his blood.” (Mosiah 3:12-15)

All things, therefore, bear record of The Messiah, Jesus Christ, and his Atonement, even the lives of the Prophets, not just their teachings. “The experiences of the fathers foreshadowed the history of their descendants, whilst their merit stood by their children,”⁷ including the coming of Christ; and his Atonement to the Israelites. They, however, frequently forgot, knowingly rebelled, and lost the knowledge, power, and “heart” of the Old Testament. They began to interpret their scriptures through the paradigms of man, not the paradigms of God. The “Torah” became merely an ethical law, the “Prophets,” simply an historical record, the “Writings” merely poetry or wisdom literature. The fundamental essential creed and paradigm is: the LORD, the Redeemer, the Rock of Israel, the Holy One of Israel, is Jesus Christ the Lord, the Savior. If we follow that *dogma*, we become prophets, in our own right, because our view will be oblique.⁸ We see the world through the eyes of God and with his interpretation. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God *he is* our LORD Alone.”⁹

The Fundamental Duty (Love): “And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.” (Deuteronomy 6:5-6) The love of God is defined by personal actions. Love is a simple straightforward duty, according to the Savior, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15, cf. Doctrine and Covenants 124:87; Eccl. 12:13)

It is imperative for man to be centered in Jesus Christ and to seek after the power of his atonement by obedience to his law; The Gospel. This is not a part-time occupation, but is pursued even as a man thirsting after water. David very poetically portrayed this when he wrote, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psalm 42:1-2, cf. Psalm 143:6) The Savior as recorded in Third Nephi, also identified the standard of love by using the imagery of thirst and water. “And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. (3 Nephi 12:6) A person needs the Savior as much as the physical need for drink and food. Recognizing the unity of God and the plan of salvation given to us by Jesus Christ and seeking His kingdom is the only way we can *love* the Lord our God. Love is about duty, responsibility, service, care, honor, respect, and obedience. ***It is not just an emotional warm-fuzzy enthusiasm.*** It is striving diligently with all of our heart, soul, and might for the perfection of Godhood. To become like God. (Psalms 8:5; 2:7; 110; D&C 132)

In Third Nephi the Savior told the people, “Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give

eternal life. Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my commandments. And this is the law and the prophets, for they truly testified of me.” (3 Nephi 15: 2-10) We should read, seek, and feast upon the words of Christ, apply this wisdom to our lives, follow his plan and counsel; in other words, show our *love* for Him.

Psalm 119 gives an outstanding summary about the purpose, love and focus of the man who observes the dictum; Loving the LORD. “Happy are they that are upright in the way, Who walk in the law of the LORD. Happy are they that keep His testimonies, That seek Him with the whole heart; Yea they do no unrighteousness; They walk in His ways. Thou hast ordained Thy precepts, That we should observe them diligently. Oh, that my ways were directed To observe Thy statutes!” (Psalm 119:1-5; Jewish Publication Society Translation)¹⁰

“The meaning of the love of God is that a man should be longing and yearning after the nearness of God ...and striving to reach His holiness, in the same manner as he would pursue any object for which he feels a strong passion. He should feel that bliss and delight in mentioning His name, in uttering His praises and in occupying himself with the words of the Torah, which a lover feels towards the wife of his youth, or the father towards his only son.”¹¹

A wonderful Rabbi once stated that the love of God was when a worshipper, “unconditionally surrenders his mind and heart to God’s holy will. Such spiritual surrender is called, ‘taking upon oneself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven,’ קבלת עול מלכות שמים.... the noblest spiritual surrender and love of God, ...was to act toward our fellowmen as to make God and His Torah *beloved* in their eyes.”¹²

It is *this* longing, yearning, striving *love* for The Holy One of Israel, Jesus Christ, which will bring us to Him. We will put on His yoke and then endure or remain in His Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven. If we make this offering, or sacrifice, of *love* then God will in turn immerse and cleanse us in His atonement. We will become like him, filled with the Holy Ghost and be of the covenant. “And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost.” (3 Nephi 9:20; cf. Jer. 29:11-14; Doctrine and Covenants 20:37; Psalm 51:17) Our duty as noted in Deuteronomy, is to, “Love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might;” to be obedient to His laws and ordinances.

The Fundamental Discipline (Study of the Law and the Gospel). “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” (Deuteronomy 6: 6-9)

The hearer of the words of God which were given, concerning the nature of God, His powers, and the duty which one should have toward the Holy One of Israel, are to be internalized; individually and by family. The LORD, the laws, and the covenants will be the inmost part of Israel. “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and [I] will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Jeremiah 31:31-33) It takes work, obedience, and endurance to make this happen so that God can give us new hearts.¹³

There is a beautiful passage in the Book of Alma which shows this same circumstance. Alma the Younger asks the people of Zarahemla if they have repented and are ready to meet God, “I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances?” (Alma 5:19)

To prepare for the injunction of Deuteronomy 6, an Israelite must be cleansed and purified inwardly and outwardly. Exodus chapters nineteen and twenty discuss Israel's preparation to become "a peculiar treasure" and "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" at Mount Sinai. Moses is instructed by the LORD to prepare the people both inwardly and outwardly and set boundaries so that Israel is not destroyed, but will hear and see the God of Israel.¹⁴ Israel chose not to go into the presence of the LORD, but opts for Moses to speak and they will "hearken" unto Moses. Both physical and spiritual preparations were necessary. The image of God; engraven upon the hearts and countenances of Israel. Everyone in Israel is liable; no exceptions.

The injunction to *teach, talk, bind, and write* requires that "something" has been learned by those participating in the process of redemption and "something" must continue to be worked upon. There is no passive absorption of thoughts; it is an enthusiastic gathering of concepts and employing variations in conduct. The Father and Mother, instructing and educating their children, is an integral part of the process. They are to "teach diligently." The phrase in the King James Version of the Bible, to "teach diligently" comes from a Hebrew root נָשַׁן *Shanan*, it is quite unusual. In the nine times *Shanan* is used in the Old Testament, it is most often used to show some kind of "sharpening" or "whetting" of a sword, an arrow, or some other weapon. In Deuteronomy 6:7 *Shanan's* Piel (perfect consecutive) form is translated as to "teach incisively."¹⁵ "Writing" the nature of God, His laws, covenants, and duties to the LORD, upon the hearts of the children is given special emphasis to parents who have "hearkened" to the *Shema*.¹⁶ The intensity of the teaching process for the Parents is emphasized; they are to make sure the Torah and all other covenants are incised or inscribed upon the hearts of their children. "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD." (Psalms 34:11; Cf. Psalms 34:30-31; 119)

The work of study and teaching by Israel, both the nation and the individual, is a never-ending concern and practice. The whole of "life," when one is sitting, walking, lying down, and rising should be concentrated on uncovering or revealing the God of Israel. Our heads, hands, homes, farms, etc. should be centered in the understanding of what is called the "Eternal Perspective." The Holy one of Israel is the focal point and aim of our lives; we have a duty to study always. Everything, both temporal and spiritual, affirms the Messiah. "His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and *men* shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory; Amen, and Amen." (Psalms 72:17 - 19)

Modern-day revelation is also adamant about the need to study so that when the Gospel is taught it distills upon the hearts of the children of Adam, that they may be filled with the Holy Ghost. "Seek not to declare my word, but *first seek* to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men. But now *hold your peace*; study my word *which hath gone forth* among the children of men, and also study my word which shall come forth among the children of men, or that which is now translating, yea, until you have obtained all which I shall grant unto the children of men in this generation, and then *shall all things be added thereto.*" (Doctrine and Covenants 11:21 – 22; Emphasis added. cf. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8; 88:118; 90:15; 109:7, 14)

There is an obvious and clear connection between the need to obtain the "word," before one can teach, speak, bind, or write the "word." Man is told, "hold your peace," as he studies, the study is not to be done willy-nilly, one should not run before he is able to walk.

During the dedication of the Kirtland temple, Joseph Smith prayed, “And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books, and that they may *seek learning even by study*, and also *by faith*, as thou hast said; And that they may grow up in thee, and *receive a fullness of the Holy Ghost*, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing;” (D & C109:14 – 15, Emphasis added) Therefore, study is not just a temporal gathering of information, it has a spiritual component. Study must be accompanied with faith in the Holy One of Israel, the LORD of the Old Testament, so that one can “receive a fullness of the Holy Ghost,” if the study and faith, is to be efficacious.

The process of learning takes great effort. Two scriptures exemplify this eloquently. The first is found in the book James in the New Testament: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.... Even so faith if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” (James 1:5 – 6; 2:17) Faith in the LORD, who is Jesus Christ needs labor, sweat, keeping the commandments; otherwise it is inconsequential. Joseph Smith was inspired by the verses from the Book of James.

The second scripture is Joseph Smith’s account of what can be called the “First Vision,” in *Joseph Smith – History*. It furnishes an incredible explanation of the relationship between study and faith. It is the paradigm for all scriptural, spiritual and temporal, study. Verses eight through twenty-five should be carefully perused, then applied by any seeker of truth. Joseph Smith followed some rather specific steps when he sought knowledge concerning God and His covenants.

The steps Joseph Smith adhered to in his quest for knowledge are essential for all study, especially a study of the Old Testament:

- a) Serious reflection (JSH 1:8)¹⁷
- b) Asking Questions (JSH 1:9-10)¹⁸
- c) Reading (JSH 1:11; Cf. Deuteronomy 17:18-20)¹⁹
- d) Reflection (JSH 1:12-13)²⁰
- e) Prayer (JSH 1:14-16)²¹
- f) Testing (JSH 1:15-16; Cf. Isaiah 6: 4-8; Joshua Ben Sirach 2:1-6; James 1:12-15)²²
- g) Receiving (JSH 1:16-20)²³
- h) “Baring” a Witness (JSH 1:20-26)²⁴

These eight steps perfectly tailored to the injunction found in Deuteronomy chapter 6 about study, training, and pursuing integrity; including prayer as an instrument of discovery. An old saw, relevant to the role of prayer and study in the process of revelation appropriately states, “Pray on your knees as if everything depends on the Lord, then work as if everything depends on you.” Jesus in his earthly ministry succinctly gave the formula for gaining knowledge and wisdom, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” (Matthew 7:7 - 8) Each of these steps take: work, action, sweat; effort.

Nephi’s council to his brethren was also succinct and to the point, “Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said? —If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things

shall be made known unto you.” (1 Nephi 15:11) Lehi’s final counsel to his children was also direct and based on a lifelong witness, “I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh. Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss; therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God.” (2 Nephi 4:35)²⁵

Study, labor, industry, effort, sweat are all essential parts of our pursuit of Exaltation in this mortal sphere. The “Curse of Adam,” sweating or needing to work and teaching our children to “work out their salvation,” turns out to be a strengthening blessing to our souls. The counsel given to Oliver Cowdrey concerning gaining “Prophetic Knowledge” is excellent, pertaining to study and its role in gaining revelation and the Holy Ghost, “Do not murmur, my son, for it is wisdom in me that I have dealt with you after this manner. Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me. But, behold, *I say unto you, that you must **study** it out in your mind; **then** you must **ask** me if it be right, **and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.*** But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong...” (Doctrine and Covenants 9:6 – 9, Emphasis added)

After one has gained “Prophetic Knowledge,” as did Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Nephi, Alma, Joseph Smith, and others, which “Prophetic Knowledge”, exists at the root of all we are and do, then one can complete the assignment as outlined in Deuteronomy 6; to Teach. “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” When one gains “prophetic knowledge”, whether a prophet, a priest, or a parent, a duty exists to focus one’s life on the LORD and testify to others concerning the experience or experiences that brought the “prophetic knowledge”. Moses was given a trust after some of his “prophetic knowledge” was bestowed, “Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.” (Exodus 18:19 - 20)

After Joseph Smith’s “First Vision”, he recounted his experiences. It became a duty. He was puzzled that others did not always accept his testimony, but he could not deny his personal experience (JSH 1:20-26). Joseph Smith unfolded his experience, not to conform to some code of belief, rote tenet, or philosophical idea. He “bared,” revealed, and unveiled his experience to others. As the visions and revelations of Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea and Daniel, the revelation of Joseph Smith was not a matter for argument or given by coherent syllogisms. Joseph’s vision was a “personal” witness of his experiences, and he completely demonstrated the role of the prophet as described by Abraham Heschel, “He does not prove or argue...Divine power bursts in the words. The authority of the prophet is in the Presence his words reveal. There are no proofs for the existence of the God of Abraham. There are only witnesses.”²⁶

It is essential for a study of the Old Testament to know that the extant texts of the Old Testament, are different from the ancient forms. The various texts give marvelous insights along with, at times difficult conundrums. Modern prophets have given revelation, which sometimes fill the gaps and correct the errors (which purposely or accidentally) are part our present-day text. President Ezra Taft Benson counseled, “And when we are called upon to study or teach other

scriptures, we need to strengthen that undertaking by frequent reference to the additional insights which the Book of Mormon may provide on the subject” (*Ensign* Nov. 1988:4)

Notice, he said “the Book of Mormon.” If you want to understand what Isaiah the Prophet said, study the Book of Mormon while you study the Book of Isaiah. ***It has tremendous insights***, not only because of the translated text found in the Book of Mormon sometimes differs from the translated Hebrew Masoretic text, but because of the tremendous interpretations, elucidations, and clarifications, given by Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, King Benjamin, Mosiah, Abinadi, and others. The Savior Himself in Third Nephi gave instruction concerning the Book of Isaiah, “And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, ***a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently***; for great are the words of Isaiah. For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles. And all things that he spake have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake.” (3 Nephi 23:1 – 3; Emphasis added) A study of the Old Testament should always apply those steps of study indicated in Deuteronomy 6 together with a joint “study” of the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. Each of these scriptures will further insight into the power and the doctrine of the Old Testament. Through the paradigms given by modern revelation; the Old Testament provides relevant usage and application of Eternal principles.

The Fundamental Method (“Letter” and “Spirit” unified). “Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do *that which is* right and good in the sight of the LORD... that he might preserve us alive.” (Deuteronomy 6:17-23)

Fundamental Method is the incorporation of the other three: *Fundamental Creed*, *Fundamental Duty*, *Fundamental Discipline*. It is summed up best by two scriptures from the Book of Mormon.

“And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall ***endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God***, he cannot be saved. Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. ***For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost***. And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive.

And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

Wherefore, ***ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ***, having a ***perfect brightness of hope***, and a ***love of God*** and of ***all men***. Wherefore, if ye shall ***press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end***, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. (2 Nephi 31:16 – 21; Emphasis added)

“And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. ***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.***

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 may look for a remission of their sins.

Wherefore, we speak concerning the law that our children may know the deadness of the law; and they, 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 need not harden their hearts against him when the law ought to be done away.

And now behold, my people, ye are a stiff-necked 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 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.

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. 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.” (2 Nephi 25:24 – 30; Emphasis added)

To understand the Old Testament, we ought to strive for, pursue, hunt, seek for the testimony of The Holy One of Israel, The Messiah, The LORD of Sabaoth,²⁷ Jesus the Christ through the Old Testament’s “many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows.” All of the “Witnesses,” from scores of the best prophets of the past, relating to the God of the Old Testament, can and will be uncovered. The Old Testament needs study, prayer, the gift of prophecy, and obedience to the Laws, Principles and Ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, if its rich luxurious fruitful message is to be understood.

The “guidelines” that unlock the Old Testament lie in the Book of Mormon. When Jacob confronted Sherem, he “...said unto him: Believest thou the scriptures? And he said, Yea. And I said unto him: ***Then ye do not understand them; for they truly testify of Christ. Behold, I say unto you that none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ.***” (Jacob 7:10 – 11; Emphasis added.)

The great message is applicable today and it witnesses the divinity and atonement of the Holy One of Israel, Jesus Christ. **ALL** of the scriptures testify of Jesus Christ and his Atonement. That principle gives meaning, validity, and power to the Old Testament. Every line, paragraph, page, book, and event in the Old Testament must be probed with, **“How does this testify of Jesus Christ?”** When an individual seeks that answer, following the pattern of Nephi; to be humble, pray diligently, have faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, keep his commandments, then the testimony or witness will be certain.

The testimony or witness gained, will **not be a “proof”** of Him, but a **“witness”** of His Salvific Power, Eternal Unity, and Divinity. “There are no proofs for the existence of the God of Abraham. There are only witnesses.”²⁸

The Old Testament witnesses, that Jesus Christ is the Holy One of Israel, our LORD, and our God. The God of Abraham! “Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the Law of Moses been given; and **all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him.** (2 Nephi 11:4; Emphasis added)

“Hear, O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD Alone!”

¹ “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed *art* thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as *much as* in all riches. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.” (Psalms 119:9 - 16) There is a need to learn “line by line,” by effort. If one is to gain knowledge and wisdom one must seek for “prophetic knowledge.” His knowledge must be based upon the “Rock of Israel;” not the willy-nilly of logic. “GIVE ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. *He is* the Rock, his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right *is* he.” (Deuteronomy 32:1 - 4)

² Hertz, J.H. *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs, Deuteronomy* Oxford University Press, London, 1936, p.88.

³ תנך (*Tanak*) - The Hebrew Bible is a national literature rather than a book. Jews divide the Bible into three main sections comprising twenty-four books, though it contains the same material as the 39 books of the *KJV*. The first section is called Torah, the second section is called Prophets, the third section is Writings. In Hebrew they are: **Torah (Law) - תורה; Nebi'im (Prophets) - נביאים; Kethubim (Writings) - כתובים**

When the first letter of each word, ת from Torah, נ from Nebi'im, and כ from Kethubim the title תנך (*Tanak*) is derived. *Tanak* is the name of the Jewish Bible.

⁴ Deuteronomy 6:4 is generally translated as “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD is One.” It is called the *Shema*. Rashbam gives the translation: “Hear, O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD alone.” Hertz, J.H. *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs, Deuteronomy* Oxford University Press, London, 1936, p.83.

⁵ Abinadi gives the most eloquent description of the God of Israel: “AND now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.

And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth. And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people. And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father. And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men—Having ascended into heaven, having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion towards the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice. And now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin, he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed? Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God. For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed? Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed. And these are they who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation; and said unto Zion: Thy God reigneth! And O how beautiful upon the mountains were their feet! And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that are still publishing peace! And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who shall hereafter publish peace, yea, from this time henceforth and forever! And behold, I say unto you, this is not all. For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people; yea, him who has granted salvation unto his people; For were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, I say unto you, were it not for this, all mankind must have perished. But behold, the bands of death shall be broken, and the Son reigneth, and hath power over the dead; therefore, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead. And there cometh a resurrection, even a first resurrection; yea, even a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until the resurrection of Christ—for so shall he be called. (Mosiah 15:1-21)

⁶ The “Unity” or “Oneness” of the God of Israel is thus recognized as a singularly important concept. His “oneness” because he is both the “Father” (creator) and the “Son” (Redeemer). He is also doing the bidding of His Father (3 Nep. 11:11) This also illuminates the use of the plural form of God (Elohim - אֱלֹהִים) in the Book of Genesis, which attributes the creation of the world to a “Council of Gods.” (Joseph Smith’s explanation of Elohim is really rather incredible and wonderful “Thus the head God brought forth the Gods in the grand council.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1964 pp. 348-349.) Ivan Engnell has given great insight into the “Divine Kingship” of the Old Testament. He shows how Adam and Eve are “Divine” and share in the ruling of the world. Engnell gives a number of examples: a) “breath of God” b) “a ruler of the cosmos” c) “gardener” d) “robing” e) “giving names” f) “*heiros gamos*” g) “partaking of the fruit”. (“Knowledge” and “Life” in the Creation Story, *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* Volume III. 1955; *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1967.)

That humans can become *Elohim*, be “One with God”, organize a “Council of Gods” and create worlds, as noted in Genesis, is exhibited in the Doctrine and Covenants: “And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there,

to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.” (D & C 132:19 - 20)

The Doctrine and Covenants gives a clear statement about the nature and makeup of what has become known as the “Godhead.” (“And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated. The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us. A man may receive the Holy Ghost, and it may descend upon him and not tarry with him.” D & C 130:21 - 23)

⁷ Cassuto, Umberto *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* Translated from the Hebrew by Israel Abrahams, The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1967 p.30.

⁸ Heschel, Abraham J. *The Prophets* Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, New York, Evanston, and London, 1969, p. 24. “[The prophet’s] view is oblique. God is the focal point of his thought, and the world is seen as reflected in God. Indeed, the main task of prophetic thinking is to bring the world into divine focus. This, then, explains his way of thinking. He does not take a direct approach to things... [it is] rather a triangle-through God to the object.”

⁹ “And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth. And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people. And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father. And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men—Having ascended into heaven, having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion towards the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice. (Mosiah 15:4 - 9)

¹⁰ Notes about these verses are pertinent to an understanding: **1) the upright** in the way is using the same term that is used, by the LORD for Abram, in Genesis 17:1, “walk before Me and be thou whole-hearted;” **2) Torah** should not be read as just, “law,” which has given the wrong impression that a legal system is intended. The true meaning is ‘teaching, direction,’ and it connotes the whole will of God as imparted to man for his guidance.” (A. Cohen *The Psalms* The Soncino Press, London, 1969, p.394. **3)** The use of the term, *testimonies* designates the conduct of one who seeks, with a whole heart the way of the LORD; **4)** the term *precept* denotes unique rules which it is man’s duty to obey in his daily conduct; **5) statutes**, “Its literal meaning is ‘that which is engraven’ on stone, the common form in which the laws if a community were published. It signifies a law regulating the life of the individual as a member of society.” (A. Cohen *The Psalms* The Soncino Press, London, 1969, p.395.)

¹¹ Hertz, J.H. *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs, Deuteronomy* Oxford University Press, London, 1936, p.84.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ezekiel shows that the Redemptive power of the Lord God is essential to an Israelite who is seeking the God of Israel. Like the Jeremiah scripture (31:31-33) There is a “husband” relationship between the house of Israel and the God of Israel, their Redeemer, “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD [יהוה י אדני]: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.” (Ezekiel 18:31 – 32; Cf. Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26)

¹⁴ This same opportunity occurred in the days of Joseph Smith; stated in a revelation given in August 1833. “And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it; Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it,

and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God. But if it be defiled I will not come into it, and my glory shall not be there; for I will not come into unholy temples.” (Doctrine and Covenants 97:15 - 17)

¹⁵ H8150 - šānan - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (kjv). Retrieved from <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h8150/kjv/wlc/0-1/>

¹⁶ “7. *Teach them diligently.* lit., to “prick them in”; so that the words remain indelibly upon their hearts ‘Let them have a clear, and not a confused or stammering, knowledge of the duties and teachings of their Faith’ (Sifri)”. Hertz, J.H. *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs, Deuteronomy* Oxford University Press, London, 1936, p.86. This seems to show an “engraving” upon the hearts so that there will not be a loss of that knowledge, feeling, and desire to worship the God of Israel.

¹⁷ “During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness;” (JS-History 1:8)

¹⁸ “I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?” (JS-History 1:10)

¹⁹ “While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.* Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart.” (JS-History 1:11 - 12)

The following scripture is a great example of where a man’s priorities are placed if he is seeking the LORD, as both Joseph Smith and Deuteronomy 6 attest: “And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which is* before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left: to the end that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.” (Deuteronomy 17:18 - 20)

²⁰ “I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know; for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible. At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the determination to “ask of God,” concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture.” (JS-History 1:12 - 13)

²¹ “So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally. After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.” (JS-History 1:14 - 16)

²² “I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. But, exerting all my powers to

call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.” (JS-History 1:15 - 16)

The scriptures are replete with examples of “trials” coming before the resolution of revelations, visions, etc. Isaiah Six is a great example of this: “And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.” (Isaiah 6:4 - 8)

Two other examples that have particular personally meaning for me are found in the Apocrypha and then the New Testament: “My son, if thou come to serve the LORD, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of trouble. Cleave unto him, and depart not away, that thou mayest be increased at thy last end. Whatsoever is brought upon you take cheerfully, and be patient when thou art charged to a low estate. For gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity. Believe in him, and he will help thee; order thy way aright, and trust in him.” (Wisdom of Joshua Ben Sirach)

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing... Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (James 1:2 - 4,12-18)

²³ “But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me, I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!* My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.” He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time. When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven. When the light had departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree, I went home....” (JS-History 1:16 - 20)

²⁴ “When the light had departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree, I went home. And as I leaned up to the fireplace, mother inquired what the matter was. I replied, “Never mind, all is well—I am well enough off.” I then said to my mother, “I have learned for myself that Presbyterianism is not true.” It seems as though the adversary was aware, at a very early period of my life, that I was destined to prove a disturber and an annoyer of his kingdom; else why should the powers of darkness combine against me? Why the opposition and persecution that arose against me, almost in my infancy? Some few days after I had this vision, I happened to be in company with one of the Methodist preachers, who was very active in the before mentioned religious excitement; and, conversing with him on the subject of religion, I took occasion to give him an account of the vision which I had.

had. I was greatly surprised at his behavior; he treated my communication not only lightly, but with great contempt, saying it was all of the devil, that there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days; that all such things had ceased with the apostles, and that there would never be any more of them. I soon found, however, that my telling the story had excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion, and was the cause of great persecution, which continued to increase; and though I was an obscure boy, only between fourteen and fifteen years of age, and my circumstances in life such as to make a boy of no consequence in the world, yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution; and this was common among all the sects—all united to persecute me. It caused me serious reflection then, and often has since, how very strange it was that an obscure boy, of a little over fourteen years of age, and one, too, who was doomed to the necessity of obtaining a scanty maintenance by his daily labor, should be thought a character of sufficient importance to attract the attention of the great ones of the most popular sects of the day, and in a manner to create in them a spirit of the most bitter persecution and reviling. But strange or not, so it was, and it was often the cause of great sorrow to myself. However, it was nevertheless a fact that I had beheld a vision. I have thought since, that I felt much like Paul, when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light, and heard a voice; but still there were but few who believed him; some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise; and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew, and would know to his latest breath, that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise. So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation. I had now got my mind satisfied so far as the sectarian world was concerned—that it was not my duty to join with any of them, but to continue as I was until further directed. I had found the testimony of James to be true—that a man who lacked wisdom might ask of God, and obtain, and not be upbraided.” (JS-History 1:20 - 26)

²⁵ “I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower. I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy* to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.” (Psalms 18:1 - 3) “Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him *cometh* my salvation. He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *he is* my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as* a tottering fence. They only consult to cast *him* down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah. My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation *is* from him. He only *is* my rock and my salvation: *he is* my defence; I shall not be moved. In God *is* my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God *is* a refuge for us. Selah.” (Psalms 62:1 - 8)

²⁶ Heschel, Abraham J. *The Prophets* Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, New York, Evanston, and London, 1969, p. 22.

²⁷ “And for this cause I gave unto you a commandment that you should call your solemn assembly, that your fastings and your mourning might come up into the ears of the **Lord of Sabaoth**, which is by interpretation, **the creator of the first day, the beginning and the end.**” (D & C 95:7; Emphasis added)

²⁸ Heschel, Abraham J. *The Prophets* Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, New York, Evanston, and London, 1969, p. 22.