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## How Are the Nations of the Earth Blessed Through Abraham and His Seed?

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**Abstract:** This article states that the Gentiles are blessed by the scattering of Israel among the and spreading the gospel.

In these pages is answered clearly  
earth blessed through

# Your Question

by Joseph Fielding Smith  
President of the Council of the Twelve

*Note—Response to Your Question is so great that it is possible to answer on these pages but a small percentage of the questions submitted. In some cases it may seem advisable to answer questions by mail. This can be done, of course, only if you include your name and address when you write.—J. F. S.*

QUESTION: *“In our studies of the scriptures the question arose as to the meaning of the covenant of the Lord made with Abraham as recorded in Genesis, chapters 17, 18, and 22. We understand the promise that his seed would be a great and mighty nation and that this covenant was to be everlasting, but we do not understand the promise, ‘In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.’ Israel during most of its history was an exclusive nation which had been forbidden to mix with the surrounding nations, and down through the years the Jews have maintained that exclusiveness. How are the nations of the earth blessed through Abraham and his seed?”*

ANSWER: These passages in Genesis do not convey the full significance of this covenant the Lord made with Abraham. Without doubt much of the promise of blessings to the nations has been lost through the transcribing and translating of the scriptures. In the book of Abraham we find a more accurate account as follows:

“My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

“And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.”<sup>1</sup>

The greatness of the Israelitish nation in Palestine

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## and succinctly, "How are the nations of the Abraham and his seed?"

does not enter into this question. David made Israel a nation of power to be respected. In the days of Solomon its fame had gone to all parts of the known world, but because of wickedness in Solomon's later years and following, decay set in because of the rebellion of the people of Israel. First came the carrying away of the ten tribes into Assyria, from which country they never to this day have returned. From these exiles many without question found their way into the area which formed the nations of northern Europe. The greater body however has been hidden away by the hand of God to be restored at a later day. Then scarcely more than a century after the ten tribes were taken captive, the people of the nation of Judah were carried captive into Babylon, and from that nation many never returned. After this captivity of seventy years, the remnant came back to Palestine to continue as the nation of Judah.

### Conditions before the flood

The point in your question to be considered is how were the nations benefited by the covenant made with Abraham? First let us take a view of conditions before the flood. The Lord taught Adam the gospel after he was driven out of the Garden of Eden, and the Lord commanded him to teach his children. This Adam did, but we read that Satan came among them saying: "I am also a son of God; and he commanded them, saying: Believe it not; and they believed it not, and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish."<sup>2</sup> Therefore in the course of about sixteen hundred years the world had become corrupt and the Lord brought upon it the flood and cleansed it from its iniquity. With Noah and his family a new start was made, and the same commandments were given, and the people began to multiply and spread out over the earth. Like the antediluvians they too soon forgot the commandments of the Lord and turned to wickedness and idolatry. Therefore the Lord chose Abraham and commanded him to leave his native land and made a covenant with him that through his seed he would bless the world with the gospel. "Be-

hold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee.

### "My name shall be known"

"As it was with Noah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God."<sup>3</sup>

It was to be by scattering the children of Israel among the nations of the earth that the Lord would bless them and make them entitled to the blessings of the gospel. The Lord took measures for this scattering soon after the Israelites entered the land of Palestine and had received their inheritances. For a detailed account of this dispersion the reader is referred to the excellent work by Elder George Reynolds entitled, *Are We of Israel?*<sup>2</sup> In this brief history the migrations and mixing of the Israelites in all parts of the earth is shown; therefore it is not needful here to go into any great detail showing this universal scattering. Evidence of the mixing of the seed of Israel among the gentile nations is shown at the time of the feast of Pentecost when Peter and the apostles addressed the assembly of Hebrews who had come to that feast, "devout men, out of every nation under heaven."<sup>4</sup> These people evidently had been born in these foreign lands for they could not speak the language of the apostles and were astonished that each heard them in his own tongue.

We who accept the Book of Mormon know that the Lord led the Nephites and the Mulekites out of Palestine to this western hemisphere. Likewise other colonies were taken to other parts of the earth. What became of the Ten Tribes we do not know, but from the prophetic utterances of the Nephite prophets we know that long before the coming of our Redeemer, the Israelites were scattered over the face of the globe. Nephi writing of this scattering had this to say:

"Wherefore, the things of which I have read are things pertaining to things both temporal and spiritual; for it appears that the house of Israel, sooner or later, will be scattered upon (Continued on page 116)

## Your Question

(Continued) the face of the earth, and also among all nations.

"And behold, there are many who are already lost from the knowledge of those who are at Jerusalem. Yea, the more part of all the tribes have been led away; and they are scattered to and fro upon the isles of the sea; and whither they are none of us knoweth, save that we know that they have been led away.

"And since they have been led away, these things have been prophesied concerning them, and also concerning all those who shall hereafter be scattered and be confounded, because of the Holy One of Israel; for against him will they harden their hearts; wherefore, they shall be scattered among all nations and shall be hated of all men."<sup>5</sup>

There are several passages in the Book of Mormon which speak of this scattering, likewise in the Old and the New Testaments. It is unnecessary to mention all of these. The Lord has promised that these scattered members of the house of Israel shall in the last days be gathered. They shall come back from their long dispersion to inherit the lands of the covenant in the due time of the Lord and no mortal hand or power can stop them. When visiting the Nephites the Lord said to them: "And verily, verily, I say unto you that I have other sheep, which are not of this land, neither of the land of Jerusalem, neither in any parts of that land round about whither I have been to minister.

"For they of whom I speak are they who have not as yet heard my voice; neither have I at any time manifested myself unto them.

"But I have received a commandment of the Father that I shall go unto them, and that they shall hear my voice, and shall be numbered among my sheep, that there may be one fold and one shepherd; therefore I go to show myself unto them."<sup>6</sup>

One of the most interesting and significant parables ever written is that revealed to Zenos and recorded in the fifth chapter of Jacob in the Book of Mormon. It is a parable of the scattering of Israel. If we had the full key to the interpretation, then we would have in detail how Israel was transplanted in all parts of the earth.

Thus through this scattering the Lord has caused Israel to mix with the nations and bring the gentiles

within the blessings of the seed of Abraham. We are preaching the gospel now in all parts of the world, and for what purpose? To gather out from the gentile nations the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is

by this scattering that the gentile nations have been blessed, and if they will truly repent they are entitled to all the blessings promised to Israel, "which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal."

## Better than any later hour

Richard L. Evans



We all live with some uncertainties; we all at times fear failure; we all worry about many things that haven't happened; and we all have regrets about some things that have happened. And as a year comes close to its closing, there is lingering in the minds of most of us some thoughts as to what we have done and what we have failed to do. These thoughts linger in the background of our lives no matter how fast and feverish the pace of this absorbing season. Some have had losses, accidents, illness; some, loss of loved ones; some, discouragement and disappointment. It is always so. Life is never always altogether trouble free for any of us. But this we all must admit: that much of what we might have worried about hasn't happened; much that could have occurred in the events of the world and in the affairs of men hasn't happened. In the words of one eminent observer: "The Creator and Preserver . . . has brought us by a way that we did not know to the end of another year"<sup>1</sup>—a way through which we have survived, with so much to be thankful for. True, we have troubles. Every generation has had—and every individual also. As the parents in one of Thornton Wilder's plays said of the coming marriage of their son: "Yes, they'll have a lot of troubles, . . . Everybody has a right to his own troubles."<sup>2</sup> We cannot spare ourselves, or anyone else, all adverse events. (Nor can we legislate ourselves into or out of everything we want to, until men personally are willing to repent and improve. If in this year we have learned this one lesson, we should be grateful for it.) Sometimes those who are older say to the young: "It's too late for us, but you do differently." But none of us at any age—or at any time of year—should assume that it is too late to improve upon the past. It may be too late for some things, but so long as a person has any part of a year—or a step left to take, or a day left to live, he can improve upon the past. Indeed, any present time is better than any later hour for repentance and improvement. And while there is yet a little left, it is a better time than later to turn toward whatever we should turn toward: not more mistakes, not more misunderstanding—but to turn, if need be, from what we should have done to what we yet should do—grateful for what we have, and also for much that hasn't happened.

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