

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



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of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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COMMENTARIES ON ISAAH

The book of Isaiah is one of the most frequently cited prophetic works within LDS scripture. When the Book of Mormon people left Jerusalem, they carried records on PLATES of brass that contained many Old Testament books predating 600 B.C., including Isaiah. Early in their narratives, NEPHI₁ and his brother, JACOB, quoted extensively from Isaiah. Later, the resurrected Jesus admonished his hearers in the Americas to search the words of Isaiah diligently, for “great are the words of Isaiah” (3 Ne. 23:1).

Latter-day Saints see many of Isaiah’s prophecies fulfilled in contemporary events. When the angel Moroni appeared to the Prophet Joseph SMITH on September 21–22, 1823, he quoted Isaiah 11 and said it was “about to be fulfilled” (JS—H 1:40). Isaiah 29 is also seen as a prophecy anticipating the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith’s teachings contain many references to Isaiah, especially about the LAST DAYS before the second coming of Christ. Additionally, Isaiah is often quoted in the Doctrine and Covenants (e.g., 45:10; 50:10–12; 64:34–35; 133), and in some cases interpretations are added (e.g., D&C 113).

Several books written by LDS authors since 1950 have sought to assist Church members and others to understand Isaiah’s words. Some of these commentaries addressed a scholarly audience and others were written for general readers.

In 1952 Sidney B. Sperry commented on Isaiah in the first ten chapters of his book *The Voice of Israel’s Prophets* (Salt Lake City). Its chief purpose was to offer commentary from an LDS perspective, including Joseph Smith’s views, and to analyze the entire book of Isaiah historically and philologically. Sperry included Book of Mormon interpretations of various passages and a discussion of a unified authorship. He also utilized the Septuagint and his mastery of Hebrew to explain and sometimes retranslate passages. Although the earliest such study, it remains a classic of its kind.

In 1982 Avraham Gileadi published *The Apocalyptic Book of Isaiah* (Provo, Utah), a fresh translation of the Hebrew text with interpretive keys for general readers. The book’s contributions include his translation and his Jewish-Mormon perspective. In 1988 he published a second volume, *The Book of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City), which included his earlier translation and an enlarged introduction containing four interpretive keys that he derived from the Book of Mormon. This work notes alter-

nate readings in the DEAD SEA SCROLL Isaiah text and the Septuagint.

Two volumes have served as textbooks. In 1980 Monte S. Nyman published *Great Are the Words of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City) as a commentary and study guide. The book’s most distinctive contribution is a collection of references to Isaiah from Joseph Smith’s writings, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and LDS GENERAL AUTHORITIES. In 1982 Victor L. Ludlow authored *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* (Salt Lake City). Important features are his chapter-by-chapter commentary, suggested multiple interpretations of some passages in the text, helpful maps and historical notes, and LDS doctrinal discussions using various translations of the text.

Other books were written for nonscholarly LDS audiences. L. LaMar Adams’s *The Living Message of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City, 1981) aimed at helping his readers appreciate Isaiah’s prophecies. Its distinctive contribution is its appendix on the apocryphal *Ascension of Isaiah*.

In 1984 W. Cleon Skousen published *Isaiah Speaks to Modern Times* (Salt Lake City) with the intent of assisting an LDS audience to understand Isaiah as one who saw and spoke of the modern era.

Elder Mark E. Petersen is the only General Authority who has written a book on Isaiah, *Isaiah for Today* (Salt Lake City, 1981). His purpose was to help a nonscholarly LDS audience relate Isaiah’s prophecies to present-day events.

ANN N. MADSEN

ISHMAEL

Little is known of the Book of Mormon Ishmael. An Ephraimite from Jerusalem (cf. *JD* 23:184), he cooperated in fulfilling God’s command (brought to him from the wilderness by Lehi’s son) that he, his wife, five daughters, two sons, and their households travel into the wilderness to join the exodus of the prophet LEHI from Jerusalem about 600 B.C. (1 Ne. 7:2–5).

While en route to Lehi’s camp, a division arose in which four of Ishmael’s children collaborated with LAMAN and Lemuel, the older sons of Lehi, against the others of their party. A reprimand by NEPHI₁, the fourth son of Lehi, provoked

them to bind him and threaten to leave him to die. Their hearts were softened toward him only when other members of Ishmael's family pleaded for Nephi's safety (1 Ne. 7:6–21).

After joining with Lehi in the valley of Lemuel, Nephi, his brothers, and ZORAM married the daughters of Ishmael (1 Ne. 16:7). As the journey continued Ishmael died and “was buried in the place which was called Nahom” (16:34). Ishmael's death and the combination of other adversities caused such grieving among his children that they again complained against Lehi and Nephi, repenting only after the voice of the Lord chastened them (16:34–39).

CHRISTINE PURVES BAKER

ISRAEL

[Four articles are clustered under this entry:

- Overview
- Scattering of Israel
- Lost Tribes of Israel
- Gathering of Israel

The first article is a general introduction of the distinctive LDS concept of Israel. The second article is a review of the scriptural scattering of Israel. The third article treats the scriptural promises of the restoration of the tribes to their homelands. The fourth article constitutes a review of the scriptural promises concerning the latter-day gathering of Israel. They reflect the breadth of interest in the topic among Latter-day Saints and the doctrinal and historical foundations of this interest. Other articles with a related historical component are Abraham's Covenant; Covenant Israel; Ephraim; Jerusalem; Moses; Promised Land; and Zionism. Articles that incorporate doctrinal aspects of LDS interest are Allegory of Zenos; Law of Adoption; New and Everlasting Covenant; and New Jerusalem.]

OVERVIEW

The name Israel (Hebrew for “God rules” or “God shines”) has two particularly distinctive modern applications to Latter-day Saints. First, it refers to members of the Church. Second, it points to modern descendants of ancient Israelite stock, who, because of God's fidelity to ancient covenants made with their forebears, are to become recipients of his blessings in the latter days.

HISTORY OF THE NAME. The name Israel first appears in the Bible as the divinely bestowed sec-

ond name of Jacob (Gen. 32:28; 35:10). “Sons of Israel” or “children of Israel” initially meant Jacob's sons and their families (Gen. 50:25; Ex. 1:1) and, more distantly, all of Jacob's descendants (e.g., Ex. 1:7, 9). After Jacob's posterity settled in the land of Canaan, the name Israel referred to the league of tribes bound together by a covenant with the Lord (Josh. 24). Later, the united monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon was known as Israel (e.g., 1 Sam. 9:16; 13:13; 2 Sam. 5:3). After the breach following Solomon's death, the name Israel denoted the northern kingdom (1 Kgs. 11:34–39; 12:3, 16), while the name Judah designated the southern realm (1 Kgs. 12:23, 27). After the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C., the name Israel became a spiritual designation for the southern kingdom (e.g., Isa. 5:7; Micah 3:1; Zech. 12:1; 1 Macc. 1:11, 62). The term “Jew” was first applied by outsiders to those living in the kingdom of Judah and first appears in 2 Kings 16:6.

In the New Testament, the name Israel refers to the people of God, not usually in a nationalistic sense but designating those who are, or will be, gathered to Jesus Christ by obeying the word of God (e.g., Matt. 10:6–7; Luke 24:21; John 1:31, 49; Acts 2:22, 36). It also refers to Christ's kingdom (Matt. 27:42; Mark 15:32), into which Gentiles will be grafted as if into an olive tree (Rom. 11:17–21). Two passages in Galatians clearly equate Israel with the early Christian church (Gal. 3:27–29; 6:15–16), and the connection is also affirmed by Jesus' statement that his apostles will judge the tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28; cf. 1 Ne. 12:9; D&C 29:12).

In the Book of Mormon, several phrases appear with distinctive applications. The phrase “children of Israel” regularly refers back to Jacob's descendants in the Mosaic era, echoing the language of the Exodus account (e.g., Ex. 19:1; 1 Ne. 17:23; Jacob 1:7; Mosiah 7:19; cf. 3 Ne. 29:1–2). God's title Holy One of Israel, drawn from Isaiah (e.g., 48:17; 1 Ne. 20:17), appears in discussions of God's covenants, affirming him to be the faithful God who made covenants with ancient Israel (e.g., 1 Ne. 19:14–17). This title also appears in prophecies concerning God's future “reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory” (1 Ne. 22:24–25). The Holy One of Israel is identified as Jesus Christ (2 Ne. 25:29). “House of Israel” refers to the lineal posterity of Jacob and is frequently used in prophetic utterances that have to do with their scattering or latter-day gathering. Moreover,