

## “They Are Not Cast Off Forever”

FULFILLMENT OF THE COVENANT PURPOSES

Jared W. Ludlow

*Jared W. Ludlow is an associate professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.*

One of the first purposes of the Book of Mormon we may think of is its purpose to convince Jew and Gentile alike that Jesus is the Christ. While that is certainly a major purpose of the Book of Mormon, the title page also declares that this sacred record will “show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever.” The object of this paper is to examine Book of Mormon references that show how the remnant of Israel will be taught about the Lord’s covenants and his dealings with their forefathers. Knowledge of these covenants offers the remnant of Israel hope for redemption. The original writers of the Book of Mormon were aware of at least one of God’s wise purposes for the coming forth of their record: to teach the remnant of Lehi’s posterity of God’s covenants so that they would keep these covenants, remain faithful to him, and foster faith in his Son. By coming to know this record, God’s power will be revealed to them and they will know that they have not been cast off forever. In order to show how the

Book of Mormon accomplishes these purposes, we will first look at the foundation of these covenants with the house of Israel, then see how they were understood by Book of Mormon writers, and finally examine prophecies concerning the record's deliverance to Lehi's descendants through the Gentiles.

## The House of Israel

The Book of Mormon talks frequently of the house of Israel when speaking of the covenant relationship between God and his children. The term "house of Israel" refers back to the descendants of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (see Genesis 32:28; 35:10). These children of Israel were the covenant people in the Old Testament. Yet, because of their wickedness and rebellion, the Lord's punishments frequently came upon them, and they were expelled from the covenant land of Israel and scattered among the nations of the earth. Despite these episodes, the Lord promised to gather the house of Israel in order to fulfill his eternal purposes for his children and because of his previous covenants made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see 1 Nephi 19:15-16; 22:3-12).

Because its primary peoples are descendants of the sons of Jacob, or Israel, the Book of Mormon belongs within the storyline of the house of Israel. Those journeying with Lehi around 600 BC were descended from Joseph through his sons Manasseh and Ephraim (see 1 Nephi 5:14-16; Alma 10:3),<sup>1</sup> and so they have most of the same responsibilities and promises of the biblical house of Israel.<sup>2</sup> Yet their exile from the promised land of Israel could have easily led them to believe that they were cast off from God's covenant family. However, Jacob (Nephi's brother) explained that God had led them to a land choice "above all other lands" for their inheritance and encouraged his people not to hang down their heads, "for we are not cast off; nevertheless, we have been driven out of the land of our inheritance; but we have been led to a better land" (see 2 Nephi 10:19-20). Jacob alludes to the idea that they felt cast off—but since they were in fact a covenant people, God had another plan for this remnant of the house of Israel.

The allegory of Zenos further explores God's dealings with the house of Israel, showing how God will sometimes cast away those branches who have turned wicked, but he always remembers the remnant and preserves the faithful (see Jacob 5:74-75). In the case of Lehi's branch, or remnant,

of Israel, they were not scattered or led away from their home in Jerusalem because of *their* wickedness but because of the wickedness and coming punishments of God upon the wicked in Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:13; 2:2; 21:1; 2 Nephi 1:3–4). In this, the Lord preserved a remnant of the seed of Joseph. This remnant of Israel was destined to inherit another promised land, a land far away in the Americas. The Book of Mormon prophets understood that their purpose included encouraging faithfulness in covenants so that their people would not cast themselves away from God. One of the ways these prophets accomplished this mission was by reminding their people of the great things God had done and would continue to do for their people because of the promises and covenants made to their forefathers Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph.

## Promises to Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph

The Book of Mormon preserves promises made to Abraham, Jacob/Israel, and his son Joseph during their lifetimes. Although the phrase “Abrahamic covenant” is never used in the Book of Mormon, allusions to it certainly exist. As part of that covenant, Abraham was promised a numerous posterity, lands of inheritance, and the blessings of the priesthood. His posterity was to “bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations” (see Abraham 2:9–11), thereby becoming a blessing to all nations (see Genesis 12:3; 22:18). The covenant made to Abraham would be fulfilled in the latter days (see 1 Nephi 15:18), and the Book of Mormon record would help make known the covenants the Father made with Abraham (see 1 Nephi 22:9). In most of the passages referring to the covenants made with Abraham, the writers link those covenants with the covenants passed on through the house of Israel.<sup>3</sup> For example, Mormon 5:20 states that after Lehi’s posterity are scattered by the Gentiles, the Lord will remember the covenant “he made unto Abraham and unto all the house of Israel.” The resurrected Lord appeared in the Americas and told the people, “Ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed” (3 Nephi 20:25). Jesus further states that after being blessed, “then fulfilleth the Father the covenant which he made with Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be

blessed” (3 Nephi 20:25, 27). This connects Book of Mormon peoples with earlier promises made to Abraham.

Jacob (Israel) also received significant promises related to his posterity. Captain Moroni quotes Jacob’s own words, telling us of the promise to preserve a remnant of his son Joseph’s seed: “Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God, and be taken unto himself, while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the [other] remnant of his garment. Now behold, this giveth my soul sorrow; nevertheless, my soul hath joy in my son, because of that part of his seed which shall be taken unto God” (Alma 46:24–26).

The resurrected Savior also mentions Jacob during his visitation in the land of Bountiful when he recounts that he will establish “this people” in “this land” in order to fulfill the covenant previously made with Jacob (see 3 Nephi 20:22).

Along with the recorded promises to Jacob are those given to his son Joseph. These promises are found in 2 Nephi 3.<sup>4</sup> Within this chapter, Lehi declares that “great were the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph” (v. 4). These covenant blessings or promises include the preservation of a righteous branch. This branch would be broken off, but it would be remembered in the covenants of the Lord by having the Messiah “manifest unto them in the latter days, in the spirit of power, unto the bringing of them out of darkness unto light—yea, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom” (v. 5). As part of the bringing forth of Joseph’s remnant into the light, the Lord would raise up a choice seer—Joseph Smith—unto the fruit of Joseph’s loins (see v. 6).

The Lord promised the biblical Joseph that this choice seer would do a valuable work among his descendants to bring them to a knowledge of the covenants made with their fathers (see v. 7). This seer would be given power not only to bring forth God’s word unto Joseph’s descendants but also to convince them of the words or scriptures (the biblical record) that had already gone forth among them (see v. 11). Thus the words of the posterity of Judah would grow together with the words of the posterity of Joseph to confound false doctrines, establish peace, and bring them in the latter days to the knowledge of their fathers and their covenants (see v. 12).<sup>5</sup> The Lord promised that the future choice seer’s weakness would be made strong

in the day when the Lord would begin restoring the house of Israel (see v. 13).<sup>6</sup> Biblical Joseph also prophesied that the record which would be brought forth by the future seer’s hand would bring his people unto salvation (see v. 15).<sup>7</sup> Lehi ended by promising his son Joseph that “because of this covenant thou art blessed; for thy seed shall not be destroyed, for they shall hearken unto the words of the book” (v. 23). By learning of the Lord’s covenants, embracing them, and coming unto Christ, they would not be “cast off forever” (see title page).

### “Preserved for a Wise Purpose”

The record keepers of the Book of Mormon understood that their work was not their own but followed the wise purposes of God. As Alma the Younger was nearing the end of his earthly ministry, he shared his feelings about how seemingly small things like these records (the Nephite scriptures) could confound the wise and in the end do great things such as bringing about the salvation of many souls (see Alma 37:5–7). Alma went on to explain that these records had already brought many to faith in Christ through the missionary work of the sons of Mosiah among the Lamanites, but he expressed a hope that they would bring even more to the knowledge of their Redeemer (vv. 9–10). Alma then declared: “They are preserved for a wise purpose, which purpose is known unto God; . . . that he may show forth his power unto future generations” (vv. 12, 14). As one of the record keepers of the Book of Mormon, Alma could glimpse the record’s significance and role among future generations. He knew that this record would be preserved according to God’s wise purpose and in accordance with promises made to their forefathers. He foresaw that when the Book of Mormon testimony would come forth, it would be a means to show forth the power of God by helping many gain a knowledge of the source they could turn to for redemption: Jesus Christ, their Redeemer. Several Book of Mormon writers petitioned God to preserve their record so it could be a blessing to their future posterity, the remnant of the house of Israel, even when those descendants went astray. Mormon implored, “And my prayer to God is concerning my brethren, that they may once again come to the knowledge of God, yea, the redemption of Christ; that they may once again be a delightful people” (Words of Mormon 1:7–8).

How would Mormon's prayer concerning his brethren be answered? The primary answer is a sequence related to the actual coming forth of the Book of Mormon:

- the preservation of the record from being destroyed by the Lamanites
- the record being buried in the earth and later crying forth from the dust (in fulfillment of Isaiah's and biblical Joseph's prophecies—e.g., Isaiah 29:4; 2 Nephi 3:19)
- the Gentiles bringing forth this record unto the remnant of the house of Israel
- the Book of Mormon initiating and being a sign of the final gathering of the remnants of the house of Israel to their lands of their inheritance, thereby fulfilling God's covenants.

## Preserved from Being Destroyed by the Lamanites

In order for Mormon's record to come forth, it first had to be preserved through the centuries until the time of the prophesied "choice seer," Joseph Smith. The Lord's promise to preserve the record was made and prophesied about throughout the Book of Mormon. The Lord promised Nephi that what he wrote would be preserved and handed down to his seed. His posterity would be preserved not only physically (see Alma 46:24–27) but spiritually as well (see 2 Nephi 25:21; see also 2 Nephi 3:23).<sup>8</sup>

Enos, after he had received a promise of forgiveness for his sins, prayed for his brethren the Lamanites. His desire was that the Nephite record would be preserved so that, even if his people were destroyed, it "might be brought forth at some future day unto the Lamanites, that, perhaps, they might be brought unto salvation" (Enos 1:13). God covenanted with Enos that the records would be brought forth to the Lamanites in the Lord's own due time (see Enos 1:16; see also D&C 3:19–20; 10:48–52). Despite the Lamanites' desire to destroy the Nephites' records and traditions, the records were kept safe.

Samuel, a Lamanite, later described that even if the Lamanites should dwindle in unbelief, the Lord would prolong their days until the time of

their restoration to the knowledge of the truth, specifically “the knowledge of their Redeemer, and their great and true shepherd” (Helaman 15:11–13). Ammaron, being constrained by the Holy Ghost, hid up the sacred records to the Lord so that Mormon could later retrieve them in order that “they might come again unto the remnant of the house of Jacob, according to the prophecies and the promises of the Lord” (4 Nephi 1:48–49). Mormon prayed and received the assurance that the records would be preserved because of the great things written on them out of which Mormon’s descendants and their brethren would be judged (see Words of Mormon 1:11). One can see in all these prophecies a thread that runs throughout the Book of Mormon. In response to the writers’ desires to preserve this record, God promised to do so in order to later bring it forth through his own power. Out of great charity, these prophets wanted the record preserved from their enemies so that perhaps it could be a means to bless even their enemies’ descendants. Not only is the preserved record a great blessing to the living remnants of the house of Israel, but we as readers are also greatly blessed to be the recipients of this divinely protected spiritual witness.

## Preserved to Come Forth from the Ground

As part of this preservation of the record, many Book of Mormon prophets realized that it would be necessary for these records to be literally buried and hid up in order to preserve them for a future time (see 1 Nephi 13:35; Mormon 8:14–16). Nephi taught his people that the prayers of the faithful (for example, Enos, Mormon, and so forth) would be heard, and the remnant of Israel would not be forgotten. He then quoted the prophet Isaiah, relating Isaiah’s words to his people: “Those who shall be destroyed shall speak unto them out of the ground, and their speech shall be low out of the dust, and their voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit; for the Lord God will give unto him power, that he may whisper concerning them, even as it were out of the ground; and their speech shall whisper out of the dust” (2 Nephi 26:15–16; see also Mormon 8:23–26). Orson Pratt declared:

Never was a prophecy more truly fulfilled than this, in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith took that sacred history “out of the ground.” It is the voice of the ancient prophets of America speaking “out of the ground;” their speech is “low out of the dust;” it speaks in a most familiar manner of

the doings of bygone ages; it is the voice of those who slumber in the dust. It is the voice of prophets speaking from the dead, crying repentance in the ears of the living. In what manner could a nation, after they were brought down and destroyed, “speak out of the ground?” Could their dead bodies or their dust, or their ashes speak? Verily, no: they can only speak by their writings or their books that they wrote while living. Their voice, speech or words, can only “speak out of the ground,” or “whisper out of the dust” by their books or writings being discovered.<sup>9</sup>

Mormon was commanded to hide up his records unto the Lord until the Lord felt to bring them forth (see Mormon 5:12–13). As Moroni sealed up the records for the final time, he spoke to “all the ends of the earth,” and particularly warned those who would reject the power and gifts of God that they would see him at the bar of God. At that time God would say to them: “Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?” (Moroni 10:24, 27). It is indeed a miracle and responsibility to have the Book of Mormon record brought forth out of the ground so that we can hear the powerful testimonies of ancient prophets as speaking out of the dust.

## Role of the Gentiles in Bringing Forth the Book of Mormon

Eventually the Gentiles, through the Restoration of the Church and the subsequent missionary program, would be the instruments to uncover these records to share with the world where they “shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel” (2 Nephi 29:2; see also 2 Nephi 3:19–20; Moroni 10:28).

The use of the term “Gentile” in the Book of Mormon varies slightly from the Bible. Rather than strictly being the nations who were not Israelites, Gentiles in the Book of Mormon “are generally all those who are not Jews or who did not come from the Jewish people. Thus, by this definition, the Gentiles may include those who are of the blood of Israel but who have lost their identity and been assimilated into non-Jewish nations.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, for Book of Mormon prophets looking into the future, the Gentiles appear as non-covenant-abiding peoples living away from the land

of Judah (which is what constituted “Jews” for the Nephites), yet in reality they may be literal descendants of the house of Israel. For example, we know that Joseph Smith, the key Gentile figure prophesied to bring forth this record, was actually a descendant of the biblical Joseph and thus a blood member of the house of Israel (see D&C 109:60). But Joseph Smith was a cultural or geographical Gentile leading forth in the “times” or “fulness of the Gentiles.”<sup>11</sup> The Book of Mormon also declares that “as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord” (2 Nephi 30:2), so ultimately one’s covenant relationship is more important than a lineal one. One of the Book of Mormon’s purposes, therefore, is to help all to receive the blessings promised to the house of Israel through covenants, whether originally Jew or Gentile.<sup>12</sup>

In Nephi’s early vision of God’s future dealings with his people and their land of inheritance (the Americas), he learns from the accompanying angel that the Gentiles will be brought to the Americas and scatter his descendants (see 1 Nephi 13:12–14). Nephi prophesied that after his seed was scattered, the Lord would do a marvelous work through the Gentiles to nourish them in the gospel, thereby blessing his descendants, the Gentiles, and the entire house of Israel as well (see 1 Nephi 22:8–9). As part of this marvelous work, these latter-day Gentiles would bring forth the writings of Lehi’s descendants, writings that were “hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb” (1 Nephi 13:35). Through this record carried by the Gentiles, Nephi’s posterity would not only learn about their fathers but also gain knowledge about Jesus Christ, “and then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews. And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers” (2 Nephi 30:4–5; see also 1 Nephi 13:38–42; 15:12–14; Ether 12:22).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, they would come to a knowledge of “the covenants of the Father of heaven unto Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed” (1 Nephi 22:9). Thus, as “Gentiles” of the last days, ours is the tremendous missionary opportunity to spread these books of scripture and the covenants they contain to all peoples.

One of the initial missionary efforts of the early restored Church was among the Native American tribes in the Kansas Territory of North America in 1830. Terryl Givens has pointed out, “By preaching the Book of Mormon to these Indian tribes, early missionaries had begun the work of conveying to the ‘seed’ of that New World multitude described in 3 Nephi the record of their own forefathers, fulfilling prophecy, and confirming the advent of the end times.”<sup>14</sup> The work that began as a small stone cut out of the mountain without hands continues to fill the earth and bless all nations (see Daniel 2:45; D&C 65:2). The “hastening of the work” further accelerates the efforts of the Church to bring all to the knowledge of God’s covenants and thereby fulfill the prophesied role of the Gentiles in the Book of Mormon.<sup>15</sup>

The Lord promises throughout the Book of Mormon that he will remember his covenant with the house of Israel even after (and despite) the role the Gentiles initially play in scattering them. Strong warnings are given to future Gentiles that “the Lord [will] remember the covenant which he made unto Abraham and unto all the house of Israel. And also the Lord will remember the prayers of the righteous, which have been put up unto him for them. And then, O ye Gentiles, how can ye stand before the power of God, except ye shall repent and turn from your evil ways?” (Mormon 5:20–22). Christ, by commandment of the Father, told Lehi’s posterity of their descendants’ first blessings as a remnant of the house of Israel, as well as the warning for Gentiles to not reject his gospel lest they forfeit the opportunity to receive the same blessings. If they sin against the fulness of his gospel, it will be taken from them and then the Lord will remember his covenant with the house of Israel and bring the gospel to them. “But if the Gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the Father, behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel” (3 Nephi 16:13; see also 2 Nephi 6:12 for the promised blessings to repentant Gentiles). Christ’s emphasis on these covenant blessings to Lehi’s descendants (see 3 Nephi 16:20–22) helps them realize they are never cast off forever but are heirs to spiritual and temporal blessings.<sup>16</sup>

## Lands of Inheritance

A miraculous indication that Lehi’s descendants are not cast off forever is that after the gospel has come forth from the Gentiles to the house of Israel,

then the entire house of Israel can return to the lands of their inheritance. It is important to note that Book of Mormon passages often speak of multiple *lands* of inheritance rather than the one *land* of inheritance of Israel since Lehi’s seed, a broken-off remnant, receive their own promised land.<sup>17</sup> When the Book of Mormon comes forth among the Gentiles, it is a sign that the work of gathering the house of Israel is commencing. Mormon declared that when “these sayings shall come unto the Gentiles according to his word, then ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel, concerning their restoration to the lands of their inheritance, is already beginning to be fulfilled” (3 Nephi 29:1; see also 3 Nephi 21:1–7). Elder Russell M. Nelson declared, “In fact, if there were no Book of Mormon, the promised gathering of Israel would not occur.”<sup>18</sup> The Book of Mormon not only contains prophecies of the gathering; it also helps bring it about through influencing its readers to “come unto Christ” and embrace the covenants of the gospel (see Moroni 10:30, 32; 2 Nephi 31:17–20; 3 Nephi 27:13–21).

The Lord said through Jacob that once the Jews believed in him, then, because of his covenants with their fathers, they would be restored in the flesh to the lands of their inheritance and the Gentiles would be instrumental in carrying them forth to these lands (see 2 Nephi 10:7–8). In a prophecy of the future New Jerusalem built upon the American continent, Ether saw that not only would the *old* Jerusalem be rebuilt for the house of Israel, but a “*New* Jerusalem should be built up upon this land, unto the remnant of the seed of Joseph” (Ether 13:6; emphasis added).

Nephi summarized his father’s teachings on this matter, which included a return to a land of inheritance as well as a restoration of knowledge. Following the scattering of the house of Israel, they would be gathered in *after* the Gentiles had received the fulness of the gospel. Then they would “come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer” (1 Nephi 10:14; see also 1 Nephi 15:12–16; Jacob 5:60; 3 Nephi 5:23–26). During his ministry in the land of Bountiful, the resurrected Lord reminded the inhabitants that they were “children of the prophets,” “of the house of Israel,” and “children of the covenant” (see 3 Nephi 20:25–26). As such, they would help fulfill the promise made to Abraham, “in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed” (3 Nephi 20:27), by being “scattered” and established in a new promised land with a New Jerusalem, where the

powers of heaven would be among them, and even Christ would be in the midst of them (see 3 Nephi 20:22). Meanwhile, other members of the house of Israel would be remembered through previous covenants, and they would be gathered together in the Lord's own due time and be given "again the land of their fathers for their inheritance, which is the land of Jerusalem, which is the promised land unto them forever" (3 Nephi 20:29).

Ultimately the gathering would not be just a physical gathering to lands, but a bringing together of all of God's words to his children: the Jews, the Nephites, and the lost tribes, each contributing their respective books of scripture. The Lord promised through Nephi that each group would have the words of the others, and not only would they be gathered into the lands of their possessions, but God's word would be gathered in one. It is another reminder that God will keep his earlier covenant with Abraham and remember his seed forever (see 2 Nephi 29:13–14).

## Conclusion

The Book of Mormon is a marvelous work and a wonder. Not only does it recount great things God did for his people during the record keepers' lifetimes and for their forefathers, but its coming forth is a sign of the great things God is doing for the house of Israel, especially Lehi's descendants, in the last days. The Book of Mormon was thus preserved and kept sacred for God's wise purposes so that those remnants of the house of Israel who come in contact with it may know the covenants of the Lord and that they are not cast off forever. One of the key covenant promises is the repeated pledge made to prophets and record keepers (Isaiah, biblical Joseph, Nephi, Enos, and so forth) that this record would come forth in the latter days to serve as an instrument in turning the house of Israel to their Redeemer. In order for this sacred record to come forth, it needed to be preserved from the Lamanites, hid up, and later brought forth to a remnant of their seed through the instrumentality of the Gentiles. In this fashion, all—whether Gentile or of the house of Israel—would have the opportunity to participate in God's covenantal purposes for the house of Israel.

These purposes center on the promised Messiah and his fulfillment of his mission to deliver God's children from physical and spiritual death. Without faith in Christ, the house of Israel and the Gentiles cannot receive the full covenant blessings God has offered them. Moroni, the last of the

record keepers, declared that they wrote so that their brethren might be restored to the knowledge of Christ; and this is “according to the prayers of all the saints who have dwelt in the land.” He then continued, praying, “May the Lord Jesus Christ grant that their prayers may be answered according to their faith; and may God the Father remember the covenant which he hath made with the house of Israel; and may he bless them forever, through faith on the name of Jesus Christ” (Mormon 9:35–37).

The ultimate goal for the writers of the Book of Mormon record was to help others come unto Christ and receive his redemptive power through making and keeping covenants. These scriptures provide the knowledge of God’s covenants, reminders of the great things God has done for his children, and a witness that they are not cast off forever—that they can still participate in the eternal blessings of the plan of salvation through acceptance of Christ.

Nephi summarized it well when he stated, “And at that day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved” (1 Nephi 15:14).

The Book of Mormon has been preserved for *our day* in fulfillment of promises and visions to its ancient record keepers. The invitation and responsibility of every reader of the Book of Mormon, whether of the house of Israel or Gentile, is to accept the covenants contained therein through faith in Christ. Only then can God’s purposes be fulfilled and his power revealed. We can then gain the assurance that because of our deliverer, Jesus Christ, we also are not cast off forever.

## Notes

1. The fact that Ishmael is a descendant of Ephraim is found in a statement of Erastus Snow recalling the teaching of Joseph Smith. See *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 23:184–85. The Mulekites (also known as the people of Zarahemla) descended from Judah through King

Zedekiah (see Omni 1:14–16). The other major people of the Book of Mormon are the Jaredites. Their arrival in the Americas precedes Jacob’s life and thus the formation of the house of Israel, although some of the covenants made with them concerning the promised land are the same as those made to the later house of Israel.

2. Steven L. Olsen states that “in Nephi’s record, obedience to God’s law distinguishes the house of Israel from all other human groups. Membership in the house of Israel is ultimately determined by faithfulness to the covenant with Abraham, including keeping its commandments and receiving its blessings.” Steven L. Olsen, “The Covenant of the Chosen People: The Spiritual Foundations of Ethnic Identity in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 21, no. 2 (2012): 19.
3. Or they use a generic phrase like “covenants made to their fathers” (for example, 1 Nephi 19:15; 2 Nephi 11:5).
4. This chapter is the only time Lehi directly quotes from the brass plates and the only time Joseph is singled out from his brother Jacob.
5. Mormon, in his closing words, also understood this close, interwitness relationship between the Bible and the Book of Mormon: “This [the Book of Mormon] is written for the intent that ye may believe that [the Bible]; and if ye believe that ye will believe this also; and if ye believe this ye will know concerning your fathers, and also the marvelous works which were wrought by the power of God among them. And ye will also know that ye are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; therefore ye are numbered among the people of the first covenant” (Mormon 7:9–10).
6. Because of the future writers’ faith, any perceived weakness in their words the Lord would make strong “unto the remembering of my covenant which I made unto thy fathers” (v. 21). Biblical Joseph’s emphasis on weakness of writing being turned to strength was also brought up by Nephi when he concluded his record (see 2 Nephi 33:4, 11) and Moroni near the end of his writing (see Ether 12:23–27, 40). Thus part of the promise of the future record is that the Lord will make strong whatever weakness in writing the writers felt they had.
7. Grant Hardy includes an insightful chart of correspondences between key terms in 2 Nephi 3 and Nephi’s concluding remarks in 2 Nephi 25–33, which seems to indicate that Nephi grew in understanding of the importance of these prophecies in relation to his own record-keeping efforts. See Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 80. Hardy also sees Moroni later drawing on biblical Joseph’s prophecy to interpret his understanding of the importance and role of this record for the future (see pp. 250–51).
8. Nephi understood that even though he saw the future destruction of his direct seed, a portion of them would be mixed with the seed of his brethren (see 1 Nephi 12–13, 15; 2 Nephi 9:53; 29:2; 30:3–4). Alma prophesied that the future Nephites would become Lamanites, so the promised future opportunities for the Lamanites include Nephite descendants (see Alma 45:13–14). “Thus while the ethnic group called Nephites will not continue forever, his literal descent line will not be completely destroyed.” Olsen, “The Covenant of the Chosen People,” 17.

9. Orson Pratt's *Works on the Doctrines of the Gospel: The Light of Understanding* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1945), 271.
10. Monte S. Nyman, “Gentile(s),” in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 286.
11. “Thus Joseph Smith . . . was the Gentile by whose hand the Book of Mormon came forth, and the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who have the gospel and who are of Israel by blood descent, are the Gentiles who carry salvation to the Lamanites and to the Jews.” Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 233.
12. Grant Underwood concluded that in Church publications before 1846, the most popular topic was “the restoration of Israel” (found 59 times), while the next highest one was “prophecy relating to Gentiles” (37 occurrences). See Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 78–79.
13. Grant Hardy wonders what the consolatory prophecies Nephi was receiving must have meant to him: “The Lord had revealed to him that there would be an appreciate audience waiting for him far in the future. In other words, Nephi’s mission from God was *not* to unite his family in faithfulness but rather to be a means of ‘restor[ing] the preserved of Israel,’ to ‘be a light to the Gentiles’ in bringing salvation ‘unto the ends of the earth’ (1 Ne. 21:6/Isa. 49:6), and all this would be accomplished through his writing. God had shown Nephi and his book to both Joseph and Isaiah long ago. As Nephi pored over Isaiah 49 and 29, he could say to himself, *I am not a failure; it was part of the plan from the beginning.*” See Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 82; emphasis in original.
14. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 65.
15. Heather Whittle Wrigley, “Church Leaders Share More Information on Missionary Age Requirement Change,” *Church News and Events*, October 6, 2012.
16. Hardy gives a helpful outline of Jesus’ instruction about the Father’s plan for the salvation of humankind and the role of the house of Israel within it. See Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 199–200. Hardy also sees a shift in Mormon’s editing at this point from an “individual salvation” found in the teachings of King Benjamin, Abinadi, Alma, Amulek and others, to “a corporate or collective redemption centered on the restoration of the House of Israel.” The resurrected Jesus was there to “save a people, *his* people.” (p. 205).
17. The Book of Mormon has many references to Lehi’s descendants (seed of Joseph) receiving their own land of inheritance (see 1 Nephi 13:30; 2 Nephi 1:5, 9; 3:2; 10:10, 19–20), including many from the Savior himself when he visited the Nephites (see 3 Nephi 15:13; 16:16; 20:14; 21:22). The Jaredites had earlier been promised this land for their inheritance, but they subsequently lost it due to their unfaithfulness (see Ether 1:38; 2:15). Many passages discuss the *lands* of inheritance when describing the eventual gathering of the house of Israel (see 1 Nephi 22:12; 2 Nephi 6:11; 29:14; 3 Nephi 29:1).
18. Russell M. Nelson, “The Gathering of Scattered Israel,” *Ensign*, November 2006, 80.