

RECONCILIATION AND PEACE

Phil Ortega, October 3, 2013

at B'Nai Shalom in SLC, UT

Shalom Aleichem b'shem Ha'Meschia Yeshua, Peace be unto you in the name of the Messiah Jesus. I am honored to be invited to speak tonight here in Salt Lake City! Thank you Sister Baker, Officers of B'Nai Shalom and members of the Board, members and guests!

I have had the joy of electronic communication with many of you and now I have the joy of meeting with you face to face! It is amazing what we can do with technology today. What would we do without Facebook and Twitter? Oh, and let's not forget about blogs! For the past 5 years, I have had the privilege of being called as the Young Men's President in two different wards. Prior to that, I didn't know what texting was! The only way that I can get a response from my young men is to text them. Not too long ago, I remember saying I would never text!

While speaking at a youth fireside, I noticed a young man who was intently listening to my every word I said. At the end we had a question and answer time and he raised his hand and asked me, "If you had a choice, who would you choose to be, a Pharisee or a Sadducee?"

I answered, "If I lived during that time, I would be a Pharisee. The reason is this, the Pharisee believes in the resurrection and the Sadducee does not! That is why the Sadducee was always Sad You See!"

We who are here tonight represent the House of Israel. I praise the Holy One for bringing us together to feast on his Word!

I have been asked many times to share my conversion story. Specifically what it was that caused me to believe that the Book of Mormon is true?

For those who have not heard it let me share a little. I enjoyed the company of the Missionaries for 6 years before being baptized in the church. During this time, I decided to study the Book of Mormon to prove to my dear wife that it was not a scriptural work.

What I noticed was the Hebrew mannerisms of the Book. These mannerisms were what kept me bound to the delivery of the message placed on my heart.

After much study, one evening in July of 2007 I told my wife who is a lifelong member of the church, that I was ready to join the church and be baptized. As she shared with me later, she didn't think I was ready to join. She asked Father about it and he placed on her mind, D&C 4:3

“Therefore, if ye have the desires to serve God ye are called to the work”

This was the peace placed on her heart by our Father in Heaven that all was well. She smiled at me and said, “If we do this, it has to be all or nothing!” I agreed and we called the Missionaries.

I don't think I really knew what I had agreed to but on July 14, 2007 I was baptized and on Sunday the following day, I was confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and given the Aaronic Priesthood. That same day, I was called to teach Sunday school. Two months later at Stake Conference I was sustained to the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordained an Elder in the church and was called to be the Branch Mission Leader along with teach Sunday school. If that wasn't enough, I was a substitute for Seminary and when needed, taught Gospel Doctrine. This was all within the first 5 months of becoming a member of the church! Like I said, I really didn't know what my wife meant by “All or Nothing!”

As you who speak Yiddish would say, “Oye Vey”. We Sephardi's would say (g)uay.

As a long time student of the Scriptures, the turning point for me, was understanding the integrity of the Book of Mormon as it pertained to the Ancient Prophets. Namely, the Torah and the Prophet Isaiah!

A dear gentleman that I had the honor of meeting two weeks ago in the home of Brother and Sister Baker, Dr. Avraham Gileadi said it this way, “The book of Isaiah and the Book of Mormon teach us much about each other. The better we understand the one, the better we will understand the other.”

This was what I found in the words of the Scriptures. I found perfect harmony which, when studied seriously could not be denied! The more we learn about what both have to say, the more we will learn about the time in which we live!

Thus, I was able to reconcile myself to the integrity of the Book of Mormon as another Gospel of Jesus Christ!

What is the definition of Reconciliation? From Webster Dictionary.

rec·on·cile X

v. **rec·on·ciled, rec·on·cil·ing, rec·on·ciles**

v.tr.

1. To reestablish a close relationship between.

2. To settle or resolve.

3. To bring (oneself) to accept

4. To make compatible or consistent

v.intr.

1. To reestablish a close relationship, as in marriage

2. To become compatible or consistent

Jacob 5 in the Book of Mormon tells a story; let me summarize it with another story, author unknown.

The Two Olive Trees

I see two olive trees.

I see a dry olive tree with no water immersion, no life sustenance.

I see a good olive tree with bad fruit on it.

Which tree did I graft into?

I grafted into the good olive tree with bad fruit on it because the wheat are still with the tares.

In order for the good olive tree with some bad fruit on it, to stay alive and thrive, it must receive another engrafting in the last days.

The dry olive tree branches must be engrafted into the good olive tree, to receive nourishment 'the milk of the gospel'.

After those dry olive tree branches receive life sustaining nourishment from the Gentiles who nurse Israel in the last days according to Isaiah, they are able to bring their good Torah fruit 'the greater things' to the good olive tree, which overcomes all of the bad fruit remaining on that good olive tree.

In this, we have the restoration of both houses of Israel into one again.

But here is the issue that hinders this great restoration at this time:

The dry olive tree is blinded to the good olive tree, as they are looking only at the bad fruit on that tree and cannot see that the tree is still alive. They think they are the good olive tree, due to their blindness to the role of Joseph and their forgetfulness of covenants that were only restored through Beit Yosef, who has the restored Melchizedek Priesthood and ordinances for the salvation of Joseph's Hebrew family.

In order for the dry olive tree to be able to see the life that exists in the good olive tree, they must be divinely un-blinded and that is Isaiah 29's marvelous work and wonder which has not occurred yet, which will un-blind Judah.

**13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as
this people draw near me with their mouth, and with
their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me,
and their fear toward me is taught by
the precept of men: 14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a
marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and
a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and
the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.**

Until that divine unblindedness occurs towards the natural branches, the tree will survive by a remnant of Jacob who are grafted into the good olive tree, who does bring

good fruit to the tree, by lifting their voice concerning the bad fruit that is on that good olive tree at this time.

We are small in numbers and anticipate with great rejoicing the time when Judah's family will be un-blinded and receive the milk of the gospel, which is the marvelous work and wonder of Isaiah 29, as they will overcome the bad fruit that is on the good olive tree and the two houses will be one again.

So tell me, what does this mean? The Prophet Isaiah said it this way in chapter 49, verse 22,

“Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.”

In 2 Nephi 29:5 we read,

“O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay; but ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them. But behold, I will return all these things upon your own heads; for I the Lord have not forgotten my people.”

You see, heavenly Father knows what he is doing. He has called many but few have come. Like the 10 Virgins, 5 were forgotten because they were not prepared for the arrival of the Groom!

When I started attending the LDS Church, I would hear the term, “I was born in the covenant!” I could not get that out of my mind.

You see, Me, Phil Ortega, was born in the Covenant... How could anyone claim that if they were not Hebrew? Then I realized; if Mormons are born in the Covenant, then maybe we Jews are off the hook!

Why did I say that? Well in Luke 12:48 we are warned,

“But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

In D&C 82:3 we read,

“For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation.”

I think the question we have to ask ourselves is, “What is our responsibility on this earth and ultimately who is responsible.”

Ask yourself, members of the church, both Jew and Gentile, “Am I doing my part?”

Someone recently passed this story on to me. It is a story about two brothers. They lived on adjoining farms, but they had a deep quarrel. They had often shared their resources, but that practice stopped; and there was nothing left but bitterness. One morning a brother we will call John answered a knock at his door. It was a carpenter. The carpenter asked if there was any work to do.

John said that there was something he could do. He took the carpenter to where the two properties met and showed him how the other brother had taken a bulldozer and created a lake where the meadow used to be. John said, “I know he did this to make me angry. I want you to help me get even by building a big fence so I won’t have to see him or his property ever again.”

So the carpenter worked hard all day. When he reported back to John, John noticed there was no fence. The carpenter had used his skill and built a bridge over the lake instead of a fence. John’s brother saw the bridge and was quite moved that his brother would do such a thing. The two brothers met in the middle and embraced. They saw the carpenter packing his tools and asked him to stay a while and do more work. The carpenter replied, “I’m sorry, but I have other bridges to build.”

In Ezekiel 37:15-21

“The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of

Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whether they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land”

The theme of the whole thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel is clear to all: it is the great final gathering of the Lord's people into a holy nation, united forever under the scepter of the rightful king, God's anointed, with the sanctuary of the Lord forever in their midst.

The dry bones of the first half of the chapter represent an Israel that has lost hope of ever becoming a nation again. Ezekiel shows that "God can endow the seemingly dead nation with fresh life, and plant it again in its old land." The uniting of the sticks represent (as the prophet explains, Ezekiel 37:20–22) the reuniting of the nation as a necessary part of the picture.

Reuniting the nation is what we call today, the “Restored Gospel”! Remember my story of the olive tree? The restoration of the olive tree is the reunification of the House of Israel both Gentile and Jew.

I see a problem though; we are two families with a lake between our properties. The Stick of Judah refuses to accept the Gospel of Yeshua Ha’Meschia and the Stick of Joseph refuses to accept the responsibility of nurturing.

I have said many times, I am a Jew and I am the chosen. I have also fallen down on my face more times than I would like to admit! I have also heard, you are now LDS and you are no longer a Jew! Both statements are not altogether true.

We allow our pride to stand in our stead rather than the truth of the Gospel, Jesus Christ who was sent to us by the Living God, Elohiem.

Tell me, how do we conquer this divide? First, we use gatherings such as B'Nai Shalom to better understand each other and build the footings that will hold the bridge. I would still like to better understand why anyone would put carrots in green Jell-O?

We as Jews can learn to understand the secrets of our Prophet Isaiah which holds the key to understanding the Book of Mormon! Did you know that understanding the book of Isaiah has shown me more than thirty major events that are reported in the Old Testament which serve as types for the future, that is, for our day! So when the Book of Mormon writers quote so much from Isaiah, we expect that they will share Isaiah's use of types. We find, in fact, that Book of Mormon writers build on this aspect of Isaiah's thought more than any other.

We may be different, but we are related and thus share inheritance! We are family. As two families who are related have differences, we all have the same blood and it is red! And what is so marvelous in our case, the same God! The same heavenly Father who made us in His image. Think, it matters not the color of the skin or the balance in our bank account we are all perfect! I don't know about yours, but my God does not make a mistake.

So let B'Nai Shalom be the organization that begins the ripples in a large pond, bringing together the sameness of who we are! Let us be a new generation that usher's in the gathering of Israel both of the Stick of Judah and the Stick of Joseph.

There is a song I learned that has words that are meant for you and me. Let me share them with you.

Oh let us be, a generation of reconciliation and peace. And let us be a holy nation, where pride and prejudice shall cease. Let us speak the truth in love, to the lost and least of these and let us serve the Lord in unity so others will believe. Let us be a generation of reconciliation and peace.

Oh let us be, a generation of reconciliation and peace. And let us build on one foundation till He comes and the wars of men shall cease. Let us share the Love of

Jesus without hypocrisy. Let mercy and forgiveness begin with you and me. Let us be a generation of reconciliation and peace.

Have we not one Father? Have we not one faith? Have we not one calling to become one Holy race? Let us be a generation of reconciliation and peace

And let us pray for restoration, and seek the Lord together on our knees. Let us keep our hearts from evil and cling to what is good. Let us honor one another and love the brotherhood. Let us be a generation of reconciliation and peace.

I say unto you my dear brothers and sisters. We are in the Latter Days living in the time spoken of by the Prophets, the gathering of Israel. I tell you from deep within me that this is the Restored Church of Yeshua Ha'Meschia. As was promised by our Father in heaven we have a living Prophet to direct us and help us find the way. We have a leadership that directly resembles the Hebrew Church of Yeshua. And we, you and I, are the chosen generation. Let us be guided by our Redeemer in peace and unity. Amen.