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“Behold, I Have Graven Thee Upon The Palms Of My Hands;  
Thy Walls Are Continually Before Me” (Isa. 49:16)

I’ve always wondered what our departure from the Premortal World was like. Did we feel well-prepared? Who saw us off? Did we receive individual instructions from our Heavenly Parents? Did we have a personal interview with the Savior?

While the answers to these questions are largely unknown, we can glean *some* information by observing how the Lord calls and sends His children off on their personal missions or journeys during mortality. Whether we are speaking of Abraham’s call, or Moses’ mission, Paul’s preparations, or John’s exile to Patmos, it appears that the Lord takes a very personal interest in each of His children, and *does* uniquely prepare and qualify them for what lays ahead. This point is especially evident in the Lord’s preparations and instructions to Israel as His covenant family, sometimes portrayed as His covenant Bride.

Israel was about to enter the “furnace of affliction” (Isa. 48:10). Babylon was coming, and the Lord was going to allow her to be taken captive (Isa. 39:6-7). Her own transgressions and apostasy had brought these consequences about (Isa. 50:1). If she had kept her covenants, and obeyed the commandments, she would have known peace (Isa. 48:18), but she had been obstinate (Isa. 48:4), and had disregarded the repeated efforts of the many prophets that the Lord had sent to call her back to repentance (1 Ne. 1:4).

Through the prophets, including Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lehi, the Lord was very clear that destruction was coming. They prophesied in great detail about the terrible consequences that would come because of their disobedience: they would become enslaved, their city and temple destroyed, they would be forced to leave their beloved Jerusalem and its environs, and many would be killed along the way.

Even while the Lord was prophesying of the coming calamities, He was yet reassuring His people of His love and care, promising that He would never forget them, and would remember the covenants He had made with them and with their fathers. Although they were surely going to pass through the fire (Isa. 43:2), He would yet bring them back by the highway of holiness (Isa. 35:8) to a land rich with Living Waters (Isa. 40:17-18, 43:19-20, etc.). These promises were repeated in such detail by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that the people should surely have felt securely wrapped in the arms of the Lord as they left their beloved city, ropes about their necks, beards plucked off, and their nakedness revealed.

But, did they? Did they feel reassured and hopeful as they made their way along the dusty roads to Babylon? How many of them, like Daniel, saw their captivity as a mission? How many of them, like Daniel, remembered the prophecies and counted the years, and taught their children to count them, and say: “In 70 years, we will return and build our sacred city, with the temple at it’s heart?” (see Jer. 25:11, 29:10; Dan. 9).

“Before it came to pass, I showed it thee” the Lord reminded His people; “I have not spoken in secret,” he reminded them (Isa. 48:5,14,16), but did they believe Him, and if they did, how did it affect their attitude towards what was happening?

I can't help but think that we had similar preparations before we came to earth. Bruce R. McConkie taught: "Preexistence is not some remote and mysterious place. All of us are but a few years removed from the Eternal Presence, from him whose children we are and in whose house we dwelt. All of us are separated by a thin veil only from the friends and fellow laborers with whom we served on the Lord's errand before our eternal spirits took up their abodes in tabernacles of clay. True, a curtain has been drawn so we do not recall our associations there. But we do know that our Eternal Father has all power, all might, all dominion, and all truth and that he lives in the family unit. We do know that we are his children, created in his image, endowed with power and ability to become like him. We know he gave us our agency and ordained the laws of obedience to which we can obtain eternal life. We know we had friends and associates there. We know we were schooled and trained and taught in the most perfect educational system ever devised, and that by obedience to his eternal laws we developed infinite varieties and degrees of talents" (*Ensign*, May 1974, 71).

In comparison to life in the premortal world, or life in the Millennium, our sojourn of mortality may seem like a banishment to Babylon, where we are surrounded by confusion and constant messages of "all is lost." But, we, too, can look to the writings of the prophets and the words of comfort the Lord has given: that He knew what was going to happen, and that His eye is still upon us, and that He will yet gather us back into His arms of peace and safety. We can look to Daniel, who saw his banishment as a personal mission to declare the truths of the gospel in a foreign land, and we can also look to Lehi and Nephi, who recognized that their banishment from Jerusalem was also an important part of God's plan. Each of these prophets left Jerusalem because of the Babylonian conquest, and each of them retained in their memory all of the covenant promises of the Lord . . . and got to work to perform their part of the plan.

We, too, may benefit from, and be blessed by, the prophecies recorded in the scriptures, and also in our own personal instructions contained in our patriarchal blessings. Has the Lord prepared us for our mortal journey through Babylon? Most assuredly, yes! No need to become assimilated and lose our identity, as so many of the people did. We must remember that we are covenant Israel, and remember that we have a specific work to do that will aid us in keeping and remembering our own covenants, as well as remembering the covenants that the Lord has made to us as individuals, and also to Israel as a whole.

The symbolic role of Jesus Christ as the Husband, and Israel as the Bride, overarches chapters 49-66 of Isaiah. These roles present a level of intimacy that is purposeful and raw: the apostasy of Israel and her departure from the covenant is a betrayal of the worst kind. Not a "Puppet-Master" far removed from mankind, the Lord is portrayed as a faithful, fully-committed Man in love. But, He is not like any other "man" or husband: whereas the law of Moses allowed for an easy divorce in the case of adultery, the Lord will not "divorce" His people, but will, instead give His own life's-blood to pay the price for her sins and redeem her from those who have torn and abused her. She has gone after the false gods and teachings of Babylon, but God will prove and distinguish Himself by His faithful commitment in the face of her abandonment. In the midst of these prophecies, Isaiah, himself, exclaims: "Who hath believed our report?" (Isa. 53:1), for who can believe that the God of all, Creator of the Universe, would condescend and become the Scapegoat to pay for the sins of Israel — and all for love of His people?

We will take our chapters a little out of order for this purpose, and begin with Isaiah 50, where the Lord explains:

King James	Book of Mormon	TEV Today's English Version
50:1 Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.	2 Ne. 7:1 Yea, for thus saith the Lord, Have I put thee away, or have I cast thee off forever? For thus saith the Lord: Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, to whom I have put thee away, or to which of my creditors have I sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.	The Lord says: Do you think I sent my people away like a man who divorces his wife? Where, then, are the papers of divorce? Do you think I sold you into captivity like a man who sells his children as slaves? No, you went away captive because of your sins; You were sent away because of your crimes.
50:2 Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.	7:2 Wherefore, when I came, there was no man; when I called, yea, there was none to answer. O house of Israel, is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem, or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make their rivers a wilderness, and their fish to stink because the waters are dried up, and they die because of thirst.	Why did my people fail to respond when I went to them to save them? Why did they not answer when I called? Am I too weak to save them? I can dry up the sea with a command and turn rivers into a desert, so that the fish in them die for lack of water.
50:3 I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.		I can make the sky turn dark, as if it were mourning for the dead.

There is no bill of divorce! The Bride of Jehovah separated herself from Him, and as a natural consequence, was separated from the lands that were a part of the covenant contract. She had sold herself to her evil "creditors" with whom she had entered into political liaisons, despite repeated warnings to rely solely upon Jehovah for her protection and guidance (see Isa. 30:7). Verse 2 laments that His people would not rely upon His power to save them, and did not trust in Him.

Several prophets confirm this symbolic metaphor, as well as attest to the fact that God has not deserted His people. Jeremiah records: "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion" (Jer. 3:14).

Verse 3 illustrates the deep mourning that the Creator feels for His people's loss and captivity; He instructs the heavens to mirror his grief, by clothing them in sackcloth. Jeremiah adds: "Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow" (Jer. 14:17).

Once in captivity, Israel believes she is cast off by the Lord, but He corrects her misunderstanding. Isaiah, chapter 49, records a "conversation" between Israel, the Bride, and the Lord, the Husband:

King James Version	Book of Mormon
<p>49:1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken ye people, from far; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.</p>	<p>21:1 And again: Hearken, O ye house of Israel, all ye that are broken off and are driven out because of the wickedness of the pastors of my people; yea, all ye that are broken off, that are scattered abroad, who are of my people, O house of Israel.</p> <p>Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken ye people from far; the Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.</p>
<p>49:2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;</p>	
<p>49:3 And he said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.</p>	
<p>49:4 Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgement is with the Lord, and my work with my God.</p>	
<p>49:5 And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.</p>	
<p>49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.</p>	
<p>49:7 Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.</p>	<p>21:7 Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, his Holy One. to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nations abhorreth, to servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful.</p>
<p>49:8 Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;</p>	<p>21:8 Thus saith the Lord: In an acceptable time have I heard thee, O isles of the sea, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee my servant for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;</p>

King James Version	Book of Mormon
49:9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves, They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.	21:9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners: Go forth; to them that sit in darkness: Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.
49:10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.	
49:11 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.	
49:12 Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.	21:12 And then, O house of Israel, behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.
49:13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.	21:13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; for the feet of those who are in the east shall be established; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for they shall be smitten no more; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.
49:14 But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.	21:14 But, behold, Zion hath said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me — but he will show that he hath not.
49:15 Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.	21:15 For can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel.

King James Version	Book of Mormon
49:16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.	

In reference to Israel having been chosen “from the womb” (vs 1), Bruce R. McConkie wrote: Israel is an eternal people. Members of that chosen race first gained their inheritance with the faithful in the pre-mortal life. Israel was a distinct people in the pre-existence. Many of the valiant and noble spirits in that first estate were chosen, elected, and foreordained to be born into the family of Jacob, so as to be natural heirs of all of the blessings of the gospel (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:284).

In the first verses of chapter 49, Israel laments because, although she had been chosen “from the womb” or from premortality, she “spent [her] strength for naught and vain,” or on the foolish things of the world. This wasting of her talents was identified and cataloged in the preceding chapters of Isaiah, as she was caught up with all of the false glitter of idol worship and worldly ideologies.

But, Israel had been chosen to be a light to the world, a witness of the covenant, both by her own works and also by the works that the Lord did with her, as in the exodus from Egypt. “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified,” the Lord had instructed (vs 3).

Verse 5 is the promise that despite the fact that Israel would be scattered, the gathering of Israel would be a miracle of such magnitude that it would cause the whole world — even kings and princes — to take notice (see Jer. 16:14-15). How could it be otherwise, when most of Israel has even now lost the remembrance of her identity, and is dispersed throughout the nations? Yet, this is the great mission of the “Gentiles” — or the LDS Church — to gather Israel again and restore her to her covenants. Once Israel is restored, she shall “be glorious in the eyes of the Lord,” fulfilling the purpose for which she had been designed.

Verse 6 is directed to Israel, to the Messiah, and to the members of the restored Church. All fulfill the directive to be a “light to the Gentiles,” as outlined above, in bringing the attention of the world to the mission and atonement of the Savior, Jesus Christ, Who, as the Faithful Husband, gathers and restores His Bride through His servants, who give all glory to Him. Eventually, as is already occurring, the “Gentiles” also come into the fold of covenant Israel, where all work together to testify of the Plan of Salvation, and the works of God, which central feature is the atonement of Jesus Christ, making the redemption and restoration possible.

Verse 7 emphasizes the characteristic that will draw all of the attention from kings and princes: that the Lord, the Holy One of Israel is faithful to the people He has chosen . . . even when they betrayed Him.

Verses 8-12 prophesy of the gathering. Because of the covenant, the areas that were formerly left uninhabited (or “desolate”) of the covenant children, will be inhabited again. This has certainly been true for the tribe of Judah’s return to Jerusalem, both following the Babylonian captivity, and again, after World War II (despite the political strain and debate following the second return). In addition, the Lord promises that He will preserve and help His people.

Verse 9 speaks of the prisoners going free, which takes place on multiple levels. 1) The Jews were going to be permitted to return to their homeland (see above), and because we know that has been occurring, we also know that 2) Israel as a whole, will have the opportunity to return to the land(s) of their inheritance (see D&C 103:11). This larger-scale “return” of the prisoners is accomplished by miraculous means; a “highway” shall be opened for the scattered peoples to make their way in safety. They will be nourished and protected as they travel, watched over by the Lord (vs. 9-12; see Isa. 35:8).

As on earth, so in heaven (in this case), as verse 9 also refers to the opening of the way for the spirits in prison to be freed from their captivity (see D&C 138). “In a day of salvation,” the Lord promises the blessings of the covenant to all (vs.8).

Verse 13 speaks of the redemption as already accomplished, with past tense references to the Lord having “comforted” His people. In this, we are reminded that when the Lord has stated His will and His Plan, nothing will annul it or “turn it back” (see Isa. 14:27). Even as Adam and Eve — and all those who lived before the actual mortality of the Savior — were able to partake of the fruits of the atonement, so we might partake of the future blessings that are promised to the faithful: we might access the comfort and reassurance the Lord has promised in knowing that all will be right in the end, as He will accomplish His purposes.

Zion is yet another name for covenant Israel, and in verse 14, Zion reasons that the Lord must surely forget and forsake her, as she has forsaken and forgotten Him in her apostasy. Not so, the Lord responds. Even more committed to His bride than a nursing mother is to her infant, He will “not forget.” Nursing mothers cannot forget their infants, as their biologic response to the infant’s cries demands a two-way bond that is just as necessary to the mother as it is to the child. Yet, the Lord states, a nursing mother is more likely to forget than He is — “thy walls are continually before me” — *because* He has engraved each one upon the palms of His hands. These “lesions of love,” as Elder Jeffrey R. Holland referred to them, are the bond between ourselves and our Lord; stronger even than the bond formed by the mother’s breast to the hungry infant. The infant obtains life through the nurturing love of the mother, and through her very real ability to offer sustenance. The Lord uses these symbols to help us to grasp the even greater need we have of life-giving sustenance and salvation through His sacrificial atonement. Of these scars in His hands, Elder Holland said:

... in a resurrected, otherwise perfected body, our Lord of this sacrament table has chosen to retain for the benefit of his disciples the wounds in his hands and his feet and his side — signs, if you will, that painful things happen even to the pure and perfect. Signs, if you will, that pain in this world is *not* evidence that God doesn’t love you. It is the *wounded* Christ who is the captain of our soul — he who yet bears the scars of sacrifice, the lesions of love and humility and forgiveness” ( October 1995 Conference, “This Do In Remembrance of Me”).

In ancient Israelite customs, eager bridegrooms presented their brides with tokens of their love and esteem: often gifts of clothing (or fabrics) were given for the bride to wear on her wedding day, jewels and jewelry for those with more substance, and often, “coins” that were embroidered into a headband for the bride to wear. The number and the value of the coins were an indication of the depth of the love the bridegroom had for his bride. After the wedding, the precious headband would be displayed proudly just inside the door of the home, so that all visitors could see for themselves how much this bride was valued and cherished.

Ancient Israel looked upon the encounter with Jehovah at Sinai as a betrothal. Shavuot, a yearly feast day, commemorated this event, and had many bridal aspects to the celebrations. At Sinai, the Lord gave tokens of love to His bride: beautiful temple clothing, which included a golden headband that proclaimed Israel as “belonging” to the Lord (Holiness to the Lord), and tabernacle/temple ordinances and rituals to help them to learn how to prepare for the wedding day, and for entering into His presence.

While many ancient customs showed that a bride “belonged” to her husband, Jesus also “wears” “tokens” that show His commitment to the Bride. Anciently, blood marked the consummation of a marriage, and the purity of the bride, but as the Lord’s Bride was *not* pure; it is His blood that marks the consummation, and His purity that binds the Bride and Groom. This principle was taught by Moses at Sinai, when he sprinkled blood upon the people who promised to enter into covenant with Jehovah: “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words,” he said, making it clear that it was through blood that the covenant would be ratified and sealed (Ex. 24:8).

Isaiah 50, introduced with the question of divorce, illustrates the Lord’s determination to fulfill His redemption of Israel, His Bride:

The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair;  
I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

For the Lord God will help me; therefore I will not be confounded:  
therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed (Isa. 50:5-7).

Bruce R McConkie said of these verses: “The course of his life was toward the cross, and he was steadfast and immovable in his determination to follow this very course, one laid out for him by his Father . . . Clearly, there was to be no turning back (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:439).

The Lord, Jesus Christ, Jehovah, the Bridegroom, had “set [His] face” like a flint, in His mission. We can take comfort in the fact that if He was determined to perform the atonement, and did, then He is also determined to gather and to save His people — and will.

An essential part of any marriage is the eternal family, and so it is that the next verses specifically address the fact that Israel, the Bride, in her apostate condition, was “barren.” Spiritually, covenant Israel was meant to enlarge the covenant family through missionary work; like the great menorah in the temple, she was to share the light of the gospel with all nations. Instead, Israel had followed after the idolatrous practices of the other nations, and had brought forth no fruit. In addition, one of the outcomes of war and captivity is childlessness through famine, miscarriage, and isolation. Slaves were not generally kept in family units. Israel had denied herself the covenant blessings of eternal increase and ever-growing families. However, the Lord, keeping His own “marriage vows,” intends redemption for His Bride, which includes restoring all that she has lost:



King James Version	Book of Mormon
49:17 Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.	21:17 Thy children shall make haste against thy destroyers; and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.
49:18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.	21:18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and they shall come to thee. And as I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on even as a bride.
49:19 For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason fo the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.	
49:20 The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give me place to me that I may dwell.	21:20 The children whom thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the first, shall again in thine ears say, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.
49:21 Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?	21:21 Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where have they been?
49:22 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.	
49:23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.	
49:24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?	21:24 For shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captives delivered?
49:25 But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.	JST 49:25 But thus saith the Lord; even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered, for the mighty God shall deliver his covenant people.

King James Version	Book of Mormon
49:26 And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.	

These verses paint a picture; we can imagine in our own mind's eye the broken and humbled woman who does not dare to lift her eyes to the face of the Husband she has betrayed. Perhaps, like the prodigal son, she would be content to be a servant in her Master's home, knowing that He treats His servants better than she has been treated by her false lovers or captors. She is not expecting that He could allow her back as His Bride, to sit at His table, and to converse with Him in His home.

. . . Yet, He *does* tell her to "lift up her eyes" and to see what He has provided for her. Not only will He welcome her back to His presence as His companion, but He has provided children for her. He tells her that He will "bind" the children to her as a bride binds her ornaments to her body on her wedding day (vs 18) . . . yet another gift from the Bridegroom.

"Who has begotten these?" she asks, amazed. "I've been captive, and alone," she states, "Who has raised these children during my captivity? (vs 21).

Nephi explains these verses to his people, as he urges them to have faith in the covenant that the Lord has made with Israel:

And it meaneth that the time cometh that after all the house of Israel have been scattered and confounded, that the Lord God will raise up a mighty nation among the Gentiles, yea, even upon the face of this land; and by them shall our seed be scattered.

And after our seed is scattered the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; wherefore, it is likened unto their being nourished by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and upon their shoulders.

And it shall also be of worth unto the Gentiles; and not only unto the Gentiles but unto all the house of Israel, unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of heaven unto Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. . . .

. . . Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations, in bringing about his covenants and his gospel unto those who are of the house of Israel.

Wherefore, he will bring them again out of captivity, and they shall be gathered together to the lands of their inheritance; and they shall be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness; and they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel.

And he gathereth his children from the four quarters of the earth; and he numbereth his sheep, and they know him; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture (1 Ne. 22:7-9, 11-12, 25).

We are those “Gentiles,” appointed with the sacred work of gathering together the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Anointed to become kings and queens, we are to be as “nursing” parents, nourishing and providing real sustenance to those who are caught in the spiritual famine of our day. Together, then, we *become* Israel as we also *seek for* the lost of Israel, bringing our own children as well as their unknown children together into the gospel fold until the children cry out that the “tent” needs to be “enlarged” and that the “stakes” must be spread out in order to accommodate all:

Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations:  
spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes (Isa. 54:2).

This is the ultimate plan of the Lord, as He stated in the great Intercessory Prayer to His Father:

Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none (John 18:9).

And on another occasion, He reaffirmed:

Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world,  
and you are them that my Father hath given me;

And none of them that my Father hath given me shall be lost (D&C 50:41-42).

The *CES Old Testament Student Manual* quotes:

Monte S. Nyman observed that “chapter 49 is one of the most important chapters in the whole book of Isaiah, because it also clearly foretells the mission of the Latter-day Saints and the destiny of the land of America in connection with the house of Israel. Nephi interpreted the chapter as foretelling that the land of America would receive some of scattered Israel, while his brother Jacob applied it both to the Jews in Jerusalem and to the Gentiles. Chapter 49 is of such importance that it ought to be studied diligently by every member of the Church” (*Great Are the Words of Isaiah*, pp. 173-74, as quoted in *CES Old Testament Student Manual*, p. 191).

Jesus Christ is the Faithful Husband, Who redeems His Bride. He speaks of this as if it has already been accomplished. As we look to the many prophecies that have already been fulfilled, we can take comfort in knowing that these will yet be fulfilled.

What was it like when we were leaving the presence of our Heavenly Parents? If the veil were to be removed, and we could see all for what it really is, undoubtedly our mortal life would look like one of captivity by comparison. Like the children of Israel in Babylon, we are surrounded by false gods and false ideologies and many who entrap us into forgetting who we really are, and what the Plan really is. What did our Parents tell us to help us to prepare? If we were to take the scriptures as our template, surely they told us: “We will be with you.” “You will not be alone.” “We will help you.” “Do not be afraid.” “You have a mission to fulfill.” “The Savior will redeem you, and make up for all that is lost.” “All will be well.”

How can we be sure? How can we know that He will fulfill all of His promises? Because He has “engraven [us] upon the palms of [His] hands.”