



*“He Delighteth in Mercy”*

## Show Notes & Transcripts

### Podcast General Description:

Follow Him: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Friday and Saturday.

### Podcast Episode Descriptions:

#### Part 1:

Are covenants more than two-way promises? Dr. Joshua Sears explores Jonah and how the Lord uses covenantal relationships to save and serve his children.

#### Part 2:

Dr. Sears continues to explore the Book of Amos and the importance of the minor prophets, the concept of *hesed*, and the importance of the Everlasting Covenant.

# Timecodes:

## Part 1

- 00:00 Part 1–Dr. Joshua Sears
- 01:16 Introduction of Dr. Joshua Sears
- 02:52 Minor prophets
- 04:14 President Nelson’s “The Everlasting Covenant”
- 06:45 Two stories on how God is trying to save his children
- 11:45 Covenants create relationships
- 12:56 *Hesed* and covenants
- 19:43 God will scatter to save and what *hesed* involves
- 24:29 Exodus 34:6-7’s importance
- 27:08 Jesus Christ in the Plan of Salvation
- 30:47 The metaphor of the Bride and Bridegroom
- 33:42 What makes the Book of Jonah unique
- 37:31 Jonah in 2 Kings
- 40:10 Is Jonah historical?
- 41:23 Jonah doesn’t go to Nineveh
- 43:25 Jonah flees to Joppa and gets on a ship
- 47:43 A great fish swallowed Jonah
- 50:30 Jonah has forsaken *hesed*
- 51:53 Jonah goes to Nineveh and warns them
- 54:28 Nineveh repents and Jonah is angry
- 58:32 Jonah sits outside the city under a shelter
- 1:00:51 Jonah is angry the Lord shows mercy to Nineveh
- 1:05:02 The Book of Jonah asks an open-ended question
- 1:10:00 Elder Holland tells us to let people repent
- 1:12:42 Parallels between Jesus and Jonah
- 1:14:10 Hank shares a personal story about his dad’s death
- 1:17:27 End of Part 1–Dr. Joshua Sears

## Part 2

- 00:00 Part II– Dr. Joshua Sears
- 00:17 The background to the Book of Micah
- 04:08 The opening of Micah
- 07:56 Linguistics and creativity in Micah
- 08:42 Micah 2 contains judgment and hope
- 11:11 Samuel the Lamanite parallels
- 14:14 President Nelson “Love and the Laws of God”
- 17:08 Hope in Micah 2

- 20:34 How does the Lord use an imperfect remnant?
- 24:43 A remnant shall return
- 30:06 Micah elaborates on a remnant
- 33:03 Israel as bride
- 36:57 A King shall come from Bethlehem and redeem Israel
- 44:24 3 Nephi 20 and Micah
- 49:19 Joseph Smith as member of gentile nation with Israelite heritage
- 50:34 How are we like the Israelites
- 53:44 Dana Pike's *They Shall Grow Together*
- 55:23 Jesus will come to gather a remnant
- 59:19 Micah 6 sacrifice and *hesed*
- 1:02:54 *God Will Prevail* by Kerry Muhlestein
- 1:05:19 Image of God nurturing his flock
- 1:12:18 End of Part II—Dr. Joshua Sears

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## Biographical Information:



Joshua Sears grew up in Southern California and served in the Chile Osorno Mission. He received a BA in ancient Near Eastern studies from BYU, where he taught at the Missionary Training Center and volunteered as an EMT. He received an MA from The Ohio State University and a PhD in Hebrew Bible at The University of Texas at Austin. His research interests include Israelite prophecy, marriage and families in the ancient world, and the publication history of Latter-day Saint scripture. He has presented at regional and national meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, BYU Education Week, the Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, and the Leonardo Museum Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls. His wife, Alice, is from Hong Kong and plays in Bells at Temple Square; they live in Lindon, Utah, with their five children.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:01	Welcome to followHIM, a weekly podcast dedicated to helping individuals and families with their Come Follow Me Study. I'm Hank Smith.
John Bytheway:	00:00:09	And I'm John Bytheway.
Hank Smith:	00:00:11	We love to learn.
John Bytheway:	00:00:11	We love to laugh.
Hank Smith:	00:00:13	We want to learn and laugh with you.
John Bytheway:	00:00:15	As together, we follow him.
Hank Smith:	00:00:20	Hello everyone. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I am your host. I am here with my fishy co-host, John Bytheway. John, if I said the word fish out of the Old Testament, what does that make you think of?
John Bytheway:	00:00:34	If you said whale, I would think of Jonah. But actually if you said fish, I'd probably think of Jonah too, actually.
Hank Smith:	00:00:40	Yep. It says, "The Lord prepared a great fish." You're a great co-host. You swallow up our audience, John. You do. You swallow up our audience.
John Bytheway:	00:00:49	On what kind of a scale?
Hank Smith:	00:00:52	That's funny. Wish I could speak whale. All right. John, you and I are not experts in these smaller prophets, so we needed to bring someone on who knows and understands these books of the Bible. Who is with us today?
John Bytheway:	00:01:05	Well, we're excited to have Dr. Josh Sears with us again. He was here for Genesis and also for 2 Kings. And so I'll remind our listeners, Joshua Sears grew up in Southern California, served in the Chile Osorno mission.

00:01:21 He received a bachelor's in Ancient Near Eastern Studies from BYU where he taught at the MTC and volunteered as an EMT. I love saying that he was an EMT at the MTC. He received an MA or Masters from Ohio State University, a PhD in Hebrew Bible at the University of Texas at Austin. His research interests include Israelite prophecy, marriage and families in the ancient world and the publication history of Latter-day Saint Scripture. I love that topic. I was in seminary the day they said, "Pass in your bibles. We're giving you a new one."

Hank Smith: 00:01:55 Wow.

John Bytheway: 00:01:56 He has presented at regional and national meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, BYU Education Week, the Sydney Spare Symposium and the Leonardo Museum Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls. His wife Alice is from Hong Kong and plays in Bells at Temple Square. They live in Lindon with their five children. We're really glad to have you back. Thanks for coming back on followHIM.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:02:17 Glad to be here.

Hank Smith: 00:02:18 Hey John, those two episodes on Genesis and 2 Kings, if we have any new listeners who are like, "Oh, I wonder if those are any good." Oh my goodness, let me tell you. Go take the time to go back and listen to both of those. They're moving, they're-

John Bytheway: 00:02:34 Beautiful.

Hank Smith: 00:02:34 Educational. Yeah, they really are beautiful in every way. They were so good, Josh. Not to set you up, Josh, we're here like, "Oh, that's quite a bit of pressure." Josh. We're taking on the books of Jonah and Micah today. How do you want to go about this? What should we do first?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:02:52 Well, we're part way through the 12, we call them the minor prophets at the end of the Old Testament, these smaller books right there. We should probably keep that general context in mind of what we've seen with Amos and what we're going to see later with Malachi and all these guys.

00:03:07 I know these minor prophets, especially some of these are not very familiar to us and they can be full of images and teachings that can seem really strange or difficult, a little crazy sometimes. Just some wild things going on here. I was trying to think hard coming in here, what's the best way we could frame these so that we can make the most sense of these? I was really

thinking the best thing that we might do to make sense of all the crazy little details in here is to really take a big, big step back and just remind ourselves about more big picture things. Not lose the forest for the trees as we see these details.

- Hank Smith: 00:03:40 Okay, I think that's always helpful.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:03:42 If we want to think of what's the big picture ideas that'll really give context for both of these books, that would be the covenant that God has made. We've talked about that several times this year. I know you've had Kerry Muhlestein and you have had Jennifer Lane, for example. Others that have been talking about the covenant throughout the year. But at the risk of a little repetition, I think it might be worth going back and covering a few things. Because I really think that they will pay dividends as we dive into Jonah and Micah.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:08 I think it was President Hinckley who said, "Repetition is the law of all learning." We don't fear repetition on followHIM.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:04:14 And another reason this might be timely is because in this past month, the Liahona Magazine came out with a brand new article from President Russell M. Nelson that was all about the covenant. So that is the October 2022 Liahona. I've got a copy right here and it features President Nelson's article on the cover. It's got a special one page intro by a member of the 70, and then his article is the first thing, and it is titled The Everlasting Covenant by President Russell M. Nelson.
- 00:04:42 If there's one thing I could say today to everybody, it would be you don't necessarily finish this podcast and what I have to say. Go back and read President Nelson. That is the best use of your time right here. A few years ago I co-authored an article with Kerry Muhlestein and Avram Shannon, who've both been on the podcast this year and we were trying to explore the covenant.
- 00:05:01 As part of that, I went back and tried to read everything that President Nelson had ever written on this idea of covenant. And so based on that experience, I've got to say, I think this new Liahona article is like the best thing he's ever done. There's things where in the article we wrote before, we had to read this speech here and this talk here and this devotional over here, kind of connect some dots to figure some things out. Whereas in this new article, he just says it, clear as day.
- 00:05:26 I'm going to be assigning this to I think all my students and all my classes from now on, it's worth your read. So I'm going to

quote a few things from here and throughout our time today, I think I'll quote a few parts of what he says, because I think he says some things that can give you a lot of insight into both Jonah and Micah and the rest of these prophetic books because all the prophet books in the Old Testament in some way or another are talking about the covenant. They're all dealing with it. So understanding this, especially with the help from President Nelson can give us a lot of illumination on these small little books, especially.

- Hank Smith: 00:05:55 How great to live in a time where we can read ancient prophets and then hot off the press, we can get a modern-day prophet. That's just awesome.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:06:03 I think it's going to be really illuminating putting these together. So here's one thing President Nelson said that's really interesting. When you're thinking about, "Okay, well what covenant are we talking about?" And you go to the scriptures, the two major covenants that you see again and again are the everlasting covenant and what we call the Abrahamic covenant.
- 00:06:21 And President Nelson says this, "The new and everlasting covenant and the Abrahamic covenant are essentially the same. Two ways of phrasing the covenant God made with mortal men and women at different times." So that's the first thing that we can kind of pick apart for just a couple of minutes here. How are the everlasting covenant, Abraham covenant both the same but also phrasing things a little bit differently?
- 00:06:45 You might look at it this way, what is God trying to do? Well, he's trying to work for our immortality and eternal life. Moses 1:39. So how does he go about doing that? How does he save and exalt his kids? I think there's at least two different ways you could tell the story of how God does that.
- 00:07:03 Story one might go something like this. A long time ago, we all lived in the premortal life with our Heavenly Father. He wanted us to grow and progress and become like him. And so he developed a plan that would help us to do that. He knew that in order to progress and become like him, we needed to enter into a special relationship with him where we would work towards this goal and he would help us and together would be able to achieve this. So that relationship is the everlasting covenant. And he knew that as we came, that would require coming to earth and living life here and then moving on from there to the spirit world and kingdoms of glory.

- 00:07:42 But we needed help because here on earth, we would be subject to sin and death. And so the Savior, Jesus Christ volunteered to perform his atoning sacrifice to help us conquer both physical and spiritual death, heal from all the trauma we experience here so that we can return to God's presence better than we were before, inheriting all the blessings that he has for us.
- 00:08:02 So that's one way to tell the story of what God is doing to save his kids. Here's a second story, story number two, a different way to tell it. A long time ago in ancient history, Earth was filled with wickedness. The earth was filled with violence. Hardly anybody knew about God's covenant, let alone was keeping it. And God wanted to change that and save the world from itself.
- 00:08:27 So he called Abraham and Sarah, this family that was keeping the everlasting covenant, and he made a covenant with them wherein they and their descendants, the family of Israel would take upon the responsibility of living the gospel, being a light to the nations and taking the gospel to all the nations of the earth, sharing with them the blessings of eternal life and salvation.
- 00:08:53 From starting with Abraham and Sarah, for the rest of human history, clear till the second coming, missionary work and the spread of the gospel and the administration of the covenant would be bound up in this one family line through all their highs and lows, all the different places they would go. The destiny of humanity is going to be tied up with the fortunes of this family so that through them, all families of the earth could be blessed.
- 00:09:18 Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer of Israel, guides Israel, gives revelation to them, helps them, scatters them, gathers them and he's there to save them from all their troubles so that they can fulfill their mission and responsibility in this covenant.
- 00:09:34 That's maybe two ways of telling the story. They're a little bit different, but they're also interconnected in so many points. You can think of the everlasting covenant describing, it's like a big cosmic journey. We're in the premortal life, we come here and then we go on to kingdoms of glory. It's this big epic, huge perspective.
- 00:09:52 The Abrahamic covenant is basically still God trying to save his kids. It's still the same program, but it zooms way in here to earth. It gets boots on the ground now. This is where you get your hands dirty, focusing on this mortal life and history as we know it. Dealing with the problems here on earth and our large

human community that we live in, not just our individual cosmic journey right there.

00:10:13 So they're interconnected. Jesus Christ is at the heart of both of these, but the Abrahamic Covenant is just zooming way in. Everything assumed about the everlasting covenant is part of the Abrahamic covenant. But we've got this focus now on missionary work and Christ guiding the house of Israel to be able to share the everlasting covenant with everybody throughout human history.

Hank Smith: 00:10:31 Yeah, that's excellent. I remember, Josh, in class I've asked before, "What is the gathering of Israel?" And most often someone will say, "Oh, that's missionary work." And I'd say, "Well, missionary work is part of the gathering of Israel, but that's not entirely what it is." I think that your overview has helped us see, that maybe we're going to focus in on Jonah, him as a missionary.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:10:51 All these are going to come into play.

Hank Smith: 00:10:52 Yeah. But this isn't all it is. There's much more to it than that.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:10:56 There's temple covenants, exaltation, there's everything is bound up in this. The everlasting covenant is the plan of salvation. It's the gospel of Jesus Christ. But I love calling it a covenant instead of calling it a plan, that's helpful. The gospel's good news, all of those bring things. But I kind of like referring to it as a covenant because covenants are fundamentally about relationships.

00:11:15 It kind of stresses that this is about a relationship we have with God. President Nelson says this, "When you and I enter that covenant path, we have a new way of life. We thereby create a relationship with God that allows him to bless and change us. The covenant path leads us back to him. If we let God prevail in our lives, that covenant will lead us closer and closer to him. All covenants are intended to be binding. They create a relationship with everlasting ties."

00:11:44 That's a theme of his article is how does the covenant bind us to God and what does that look like? One thing he mentions that's important is that baptism is your initial covenant that gets you on that covenant path. It's how you're initiated into both the Abrahamic and the everlasting covenant right there, that you're taking that step into that big journey to become like God and those responsibilities here in this life to share with others and

help others and bring peace to the world right there. So that all starts with baptism, and that's one reason why baptism is so important. This is how you formalize that relationship and start on this journey.

- Hank Smith: 00:12:15 Yeah, you become his. King Benjamin says, "This day he has spiritually begotten you."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:12:20 Yeah. So all of this will come to play as we're reading Jonah and Micah. Like you said Hank, the fact that Jonah's got to be a missionary. He's tied into his responsibility. That's what Israel's supposed to do, is go share. When God is chastising the people for not doing the right thing, the Everlasting Covenant helps us recognize how high the stakes are. This is how they're going to complete their mission of coming to Earth and the fact that they're responsible for then sharing that with everyone else, there's a lot of responsibility there and that's why the prophets are sometimes so hard on Israel because they've got such a big job to do. I can't imagine stakes that are higher than this as far as trying to keep our covenants and stay true to the Lord.
- Hank Smith: 00:12:56 Excellent.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:12:56 There's one more thing President Nelson talks about that will pop up in both Jonah and Micah I want to read here. President Nelson talks about a doctrinal concept that the Israelites had a word for in Hebrew, but in English we don't have a good word for. But understanding the Hebrew word can help us kind of figure out what these prophets are talking about in their context. This is what President Nelson says, "Once we make a covenant with God. We leave neutral ground forever. God will not abandon his relationship with those who have forged such a bond with him. In fact, all those who have made a covenant with God have access to a special kind of love and mercy."
- 00:13:34 In the Hebrew language that covenantal love is called hesed. This is the word where we have no good English equivalent and that's what President Nelson says. He points out that in the King James Bible, hesed is translated a whole bunch of different ways: loving kindness, love, mercy, goodness, loyalty, all sorts of different things.
- 00:13:53 So since it appears some 250 times in the Old Testament, but since it's translated a dozen different ways, we usually miss all the connections between the passages and the fact that for the Israelites, this was a very kind of technical specific term there. President Nelson says, all those English words capture part of what hesed means, but not all of it. So he says, "Hesed is a

unique term describing a covenant relationship in which both parties are bound to be loyal and faithful to each other." And he says this several times, that in a covenant relationship, so then hesed is like this special love and loyalty that the two parties have for each other and it creates a special sort of love and loyalty in there that you don't have with people outside the covenant relationship.

00:14:36 Now, one trick with this is, and I'm sure you two have experienced this, whenever you say anything like this, somebody's going to get offended and say, "What? You're saying that God loves your people more than other people?" And that can sound really negative and it's kind of being exclusive. So President Nelson tries to work us through this a little bit. So by way of analogy, he compares this to a marriage relationship, which is a kind of covenant.

00:14:57 So he says, "A celestial marriage is such a covenant relationship. A husband and wife make a covenant with God and with each other to be loyal and faithful to each other." Imagine this, but everybody on earth is our brothers and sisters and we should love everybody in theory. I don't do the best at this with everybody, but in theory we should love everybody. But when two people get married to each other, that creates a special relationship in which they now have a special kind of love that's special just to the two of them and a special kind of loyalty that's special just to the two of them.

00:15:28 That's not trying to take away from the love you should have for all your brothers and sisters, but you should love your spouse in a way that's different and deeper and richer because of that special relationship that the two of you have through your covenant. So President Nelson compares these. So he says, "Just as marriages and family share a unique lateral bond that creates a special love, so does the new relationship formed when we bind ourselves by covenant vertically to our God". Right there.

00:15:56 That's the kind of analogy there. God loves all his children. We're not trying to take away from the love he has for everyone. But when people form a covenant with him, it's now a special relationship. It does create a special loving dynamic in there that is not available outside of the covenant. But this is not meant to be something that's exclusive saying, "Now we're in the covenant. We're better than all you people out there." President Nelson says that the covenant path is open to all. We plead with everyone to walk that path with us. No other work is so universally inclusive.

Hank Smith: 00:16:28 The relationship is open to everyone.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:16:30 Yeah. So it's not like he's trying to exclude the rest of the world from this love. He wants everybody to experience it. So the general authority introduction to the article says this too. "President Nelson helps us see how choosing a covenant people wasn't an act of exclusivity, but rather the path to an all-encompassing inclusivity."

Hank Smith: 00:16:48 It's meant to reach everyone.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:16:51 Yes. We're not trying to say, "Yeah, God loves these people better than you." In a sense, yes, there's a special kind of love and loyalty there and that has a real impact on how he relates to people. But he wants everybody to come experience that.

00:17:03 We're trying to get everybody to come experience that richer, deeper kind of love that you can have within the bonds of a covenant. Maybe it's not a coincidence then that in the scriptures, God often compares himself to like a husband marrying Israel as a bride. He's using a covenant relationship there as an analogy to his covenant Israel, just like President Nelson does.

Hank Smith: 00:17:22 Even inside of Israel, Josh, each tribe has different responsibilities. The tribe of Judah, President Nelson says, was given responsibility to prepare the world for the first coming of the Lord. The tribe of Joseph through his son's Ephraim and Manasseh, was given the responsibility to lead in the gathering of Israel, to prepare the world for the second coming of the Lord.

00:17:43 Those both could sound exclusive as well, but they're not. They're just... Like John says, it's like being chosen to mow the lawn. You're being chosen to throw the family reunion, you're in charge. You've got to send out the invitations and make sure everybody knows that it's available.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:18:00 We're all working together here. The fact once you enter into that covenant, it really forever after changes your relationship to God. So this is what President Nelson says about that. "Because God has hesed for those who have covenanted with him, he will love them. He will continue to work with them and offer them opportunities to change. He will forgive them when they repent and should they stray, he will help them find their way back to him."

- 00:18:27 So in other words, God promises throughout the scriptures. And when you look for the word hesed, he'll do this where he says, "Even if you break the covenant and you're not showing love and loyalty to me, I will never break the terms of the covenant. I will always show love and loyalty to you." That means that he'll help us out.
- 00:18:45 He offers all sorts of blessings to being in the covenant. It means that when you sin and break the covenant, he'll readily forgive you. He's happy to restore the relationship to the way it had been. And when people get off the covenant path and they're straying, it also means that he'll come after you. It means that he might come after you and humble you. Try to give you these experiences that'll encourage you to get back on the covenant path. Because once you've made that covenant and you both agreed, okay, eternal life is the goal, we're working towards this, we're trying to have you become like me, then he is going to just tenaciously be after you.
- Hank Smith: 00:19:17 He will not give up on you.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:19:19 Exactly. That means he might be reaching out extra to get people who have made a covenant back on the path versus those who have never made a covenant with him. Because that's what hesed is all about, is that tenacious loyalty, that drive to love and help people that have made the covenant.
- 00:19:34 That's why it's so important that we're inviting everyone to get baptized. Missionaries do this work. Once you're in that covenant, no matter how the rest of your life goes, he is going to be after you and he'll never give up on you.
- Hank Smith: 00:19:43 He even says to Israel, "I'll even scatter you in order to save you."
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:19:49 Scattering is all part of the process of humbling them, teaching them, using them to fulfill this mission because this is what they agreed to do. And even if they've lost sight of that, he has not lost sight of that. He's always fixed on that goal.
- Hank Smith: 00:19:59 This is fantastic. Josh, let's restate a couple of things just to make sure John and I get it. John, one, this family of Israel has been chosen to bless the world and to give the covenant to all the world and God is going to work with them much like a husband and wife relationship.

- 00:20:18 He's asking them to come into an intimate relationship with him and invite anyone into this family of Israel. That's going to be done through missionary work, through temple work. But sometimes, Israel doesn't do their part of the covenant and so God will forgive them when they repent. He will help them when they stray. He will help them find their way back to him. Do you feel like I understand at least that portion?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:20:42 Yeah, that's great. That helps us understand the context for a lot of what these prophetic books are saying because when Israel goes astray, which they often have in these books, because of his hesed and that loyalty to them being not just covenant individuals but a covenant people, that means he's going to keep working with them even if it means humbling and punishing, that's a form of helping for him because he's trying to get them back on track.
- 00:21:04 Because Israel's responsibility is to take the blessings of the everlasting covenant to all nations of the earth, God has to find a way to still make that work. Even if Israel's going way off, he's got to problem solve and work with them and try and try again even if it takes thousands of years so that they can ultimately fulfill their mission to take the blessings of the covenant to every people on the planet. You'll see all those dynamics at play in these covenant books as these books are exploring the implications of all these ideas.
- Hank Smith: 00:21:31 If there's one thing I've learned this year studying the Old Testament is the Lord will not give up on Israel.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:21:37 Yeah, he's got a really long game. Thousands of years, this plan. So as you watch how he interacts with Israel as a people, you can try to figure out okay, well how does that mean he reacts with me as an individual? If he's patient for thousands of years with Israel as a group, that means I think he's pretty patient with you as well. You can watch that dynamic between individual and group.
- John Bytheway: 00:21:56 Okay. I love what you've done here. The new and everlasting covenant is a broader kind of cosmic eternal view of the whole thing. We get down here on earth and it's named after Abraham, which is great because... But even Abraham said, I sought for the blessings of my fathers. And you're like, "Wait a minute, who are Abraham's fathers?"
- 00:22:16 Because God made a covenant with Adam and Enoch, but that idea of you're going to bear the ministry, you're going to bless all of the families of the earth. So gathering of Israel isn't just

missionary work, it's getting them to the temple where the highest blessings offered to families are.

- 00:22:33 So that Abrahamic covenant named after Abraham, we're all part of it. That takes more of a right now worldview Abrahamic covenant maybe. We could say it like that. I'm part of that. I love what Elder Bednar did at one of his conference talks about saying, "Going on a mission isn't something you do, it's something you are because you are Abraham's seed." Do you remember that talk?
- Hank Smith: 00:22:55 I do, yeah. Becoming a missionary.
- John Bytheway: 00:22:57 Yeah, becoming a missionary. Not just going on a mission, but becoming a missionary. He made that thing. And so this big picture of the covenant, I remember Dr. Robert Millet that we've had on the podcast before, and this could have been 30 years ago kind of sensing there was a lack of covenant consciousness. I feel like all of us have really learned more about that.
- 00:23:22 President Nelson, as you just found out, Josh has done a lot of talks about this, about we're covenant Israel and that identity with the young adults recently, what was the three identities to remember: I'm a child of God, I'm a child of the covenant and I'm a disciple of Christ. So now we get... Okay, this is who we are, not just what we're supposed to do, but this is who we are and we have that relationship with God. Now let's help fulfill that covenant. Did I get that right, kind of?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:23:56 Perfect. It's really helpful through these books and the rest of the Old Testament, watch for that covenant language. Anytime it mentions covenants or gathering or God saying, "My people." And even sometimes it requires digging a little bit behind the scenes and looking at the Hebrew, like with the word hesed, it kind of hides most places. But when you know what you're looking for, it gives you whole new ways of looking at passages.
- 00:24:16 So here's one example that will be relevant later in Micah and Jonah, Exodus 34:6 and 7. One of the most important passages in the entire Old Testament.
- Hank Smith: 00:24:28 Exodus 34.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:24:30 Yeah, 34:6 and 7.
- Hank Smith: 00:24:32 Okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:24:33 God talking to Moses on Sinai. And I can claim that this is one of the most important passages because it's quoted in the rest of the Old Testament about two dozen times. In the Old Testament itself, in ancient Israel, they saw this passage as just tremendously important.

00:24:49 It's about Jehovah explaining his own nature. And so when they want to talk about the nature of God, this is the classic passage that they go back to. So it says, "And the Lord," Jehovah, "passed by before him," Moses, "and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.'" Now that word goodness there is hesed in Hebrew. So he's abundant in hesed, that kind of covenant love and loyalty there. And you see how goodness is nice, but it just doesn't capture that full sense of what we're getting at. The covenant context and the loyalty and the love that's built into that right there.

00:25:30 Verse 7 keeps going, keeping mercy for thousands. Mercy there is the same word, it's hesed. They've translated it two different ways within a line right there. He's abundant in hesed and he keeps hesed for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

00:25:48 And then it goes on to talk about his justice. And that will by no means clear the guilty. And the Joseph Smith translation has rebellious. So this isn't just that you've messed up, it's that you're in open rebellion and defiance. Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children to the third and the fourth generation. You've got this contrast here. Some people go, "Wait, why is he visiting sins on grandkids or something?"

00:26:10 But I think what's going on, it's trying to contrast that big number at the beginning of the verse, the thousands of generations for which he keeps mercy versus the 3 or 4 for which he enacts justice here. You can tell it's a very lopsided number right there. He's just and merciful, but the scales are heavily weighted towards him wanting to put out mercy. This is his description of himself and he's got the word hesed in there twice, stressing that special covenant love and loyalty there. So hold that thought there because we will return to this passage later. It comes up in both Jonah and Micah because again, the prophets look to this as inspiration as they're working through these ideas.

Hank Smith: 00:26:47 Excellent. Josh, you said that the new and everlasting covenant, this covenant, the covenant that President Nelson is talking

about could be said as the plan of salvation. Maybe we do a disservice when we teach the plan of salvation without talking about the covenant. Because I could do a plan of salvation on the board with a bunch of circles and lines and never really bring up the covenant.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:27:08 When I used to teach at the MTC, we'd get to lesson two of Preach My Gospel. Missionaries use a lot of visual aids to teach the plan of salvation. And you can buy a lot of commercial ones that have pretty pictures and puzzle pieces you put together and things like that. My one caution to the missionaries was this, be careful as you teach the plan that it's not just a roadmap. "We're here, then we go here, then we'll go here or here, then we go here, here, here." And it's just a bunch of places like that.
- 00:27:33 That's the skeleton, but that doesn't have the life behind it. I love the visual in Preach My Gospel itself, the church's official one, the graphic there. It's very simple and unassuming and it shows the progression of the places. But then in big old letters, underneath everything else, it says, "The atonement of Jesus Christ makes salvation possible." As if to say don't get so lost in the details of the here and there that you miss that Jesus Christ, the cross, sin and forgiveness, the atonement, the covenant, what we're trying to get with all of this.
- 00:28:06 Those are the big picture things. Yeah, I think it's very possible to get lost in circles and lines and kind of miss the reason behind all this. This can't be something that we talk about in January, the beginning of the Old Testament year and then move on because it's throughout the Old Testament. We can remind ourselves that when the angel showed Nephi that vision of the last days, and Nephi saw that Bible, that book, the angel explained to him that the Bible containeth the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made under the house of Israel and also many prophecies of the holy prophets. And then the angel repeats, "It contains the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made under the house of Israel. Therefore, it's of great worth onto the Gentiles." The angel, the way he frames the importance of the Bible is that it's a container for those covenants with Israel, for the Abrahamic covenant right there.
- 00:28:53 And when he says it contains the prophecies of the prophets, I don't think he's talking about a completely separate thing when we recognize these prophetic books are part of the Old Testament that has the history of the covenant, describes the covenant and then the prophetic books elaborate on the

covenant, explore the depths and plumb the ins and outs of the covenant there.

00:29:09 So it's all about that ultimately and I think that's very clearly what the angel's saying to Nephi. But what he goes on to say is the Gentiles miss sight of that. They don't recognize the significance of the Bible. They don't see the importance of the covenant. So the framing is off even though they have the words right there. And the Book of Mormon then helps restore that covenant consciousness. So then you can go back to the Bible and go, "Aha, that's what it's about."

John Bytheway: 00:29:31 Things which are plain and most precious; that's not the end of the sentence. "With all our plain and precious things, they're taken from the gospel of the lamb. Many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away." That's the 1 Nephi 13:26 part. I always wanted, "Don't forget that part. The covenants that the restoration brought a restoration of the new and everlasting covenant."

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:29:56 And you see in Christian history with the way a lot of people interpreted it, it was they said, "Yeah, when Jesus came, the Abrahamic Covenant was done. It's like the law of Moses, it's over. It was temporary. The Jews had their shot and they blew it. And now we gentile Christians are God's people."

00:30:11 Whereas the Book of Mormon pushes back on that hard to say no, the law of Moses was fulfilled when Jesus came, but the covenant that he made with Israel is not all fulfilled. That's still the program clear till the second coming. That is it.

John Bytheway: 00:30:21 Love it.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:30:22 So when you don't understand that, you misunderstand all of human history and what the Lord's trying to do.

John Bytheway: 00:30:27 That's not a big misunderstanding. You just misunderstood all of human history.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:30:32 "An exceedingly great many do stumble." That's how the angel puts it, right?

Hank Smith: 00:30:35 Yeah, yeah. That's exactly right, Josh. I love this overview that we've done because then it helps you see each individual book, not just the ones we're going to study today, but each individual book then relates back to the covenant.

John Bytheway: 00:30:47 Do you know what I love too? And what I've noticed so many times, particularly some of the recent ones we've done just about this metaphor of Christ being the bridegroom and we being the bride. What a metaphor. How do you not believe then that eternal marriage is what we aspire to when that metaphor is used so often, what we as individuals want for us as part of that.

00:31:11 But I also think when we talk about some really strong words in the Book of Mormon and elsewhere, about the whore of all the earth, I like to tell my students in Isaiah, when it gives that long list of, I call it excessive, excessive accessories about all the ornaments that the daughters of Zion are wearing and then say, "Now, look. We, all of us, are the daughters of Zion because we are the bride and Jesus is the bridegroom."

00:31:38 And if we are going after other lovers, what could possibly be more hurtful than us trying to attract other lovers when we are supposed to be engaged? Or how would you say it? Betrothed to Christ. He's the bridegroom. I think that helps the metaphor to see the worst kind of rejection you could imagine would be in a marriage covenant. That's the metaphor that the Lord used. I thought, "Whoa! That's good."

Hank Smith: 00:32:07 I think that's a crucial pickup of the Old Testament, isn't it Josh, that metaphor?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:32:11 Yep. The Lord's going to say that. And Micah, "Look at all I have done for you. How could you possibly have betrayed me like this and gone after other gods?" Spiritual adultery.

Hank Smith: 00:32:21 And what's great about the metaphor as well of a marriage relationship between the Lord and all of Israel is that I can see in my own marriage, my wife doesn't expect me to be perfect, but she expects loyalty. The Lord is the same way with Israel. I don't need you to be perfect, but I need you to be loyal. I need you to have one love, me.

John Bytheway: 00:32:41 Repentance is a part of marriage. "I'm sorry I did that. I didn't mean to, but I'm loyal. I'm still here. I want to be here." I love it.

Hank Smith: 00:32:49 Yeah. Josh, do you want to jump into Jonah yet?

John Bytheway: 00:32:53 That was good, Hank. Let's jump into Jonah. I like that.

Hank Smith: 00:32:56 Should we dive in to Jonah? Let's swallow Jonah today and...

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:33:05 All right, so book of Jonah. Just 4 chapters. It's refreshingly short.

Hank Smith: 00:33:09 Yes.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:33:10 Honestly, of all the 12 prophets, Jonah I think has to be easily the most famous one. Everybody, whether you're Christian or Jewish or non-believer, everyone knows the Jonah story. It's famous.

Hank Smith: 00:33:20 Jonah and the great fish.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:33:24 So one reason it's famous is because it's so unusual for a prophetic book. We've got Isaiah, you've got Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Amos, Micah, Habakkuk, all these other ones. Jonah among all of those is unique in being a narrative rather than a book of prophecies like every other prophetic book.

00:33:42 From ancient times, Jews have always placed it in this prophetic book collection. So they see it as a prophetic literature, but it's just done very differently where it's a narrative rather than prophecies. There's nothing to suggest that Jonah wrote this. He's always referred to in the third person, he doesn't come across very good. So probably some other prophet wrote this about Jonah. But it's being done in a way to teach something using his story.

00:34:06 It's a very different way of teaching a message though than the straight prophecies in quoting the Lord you get in all the other books. He's also unusual in that Jonah is the only prophet in the Old Testament, not just to prophesy about foreign nations, but to actually be told to travel to a foreign nation and talk to them. Elisha does that once, but Jonah's the only other one. So lots of unusual stuff about that from the get go.

00:34:28 Of course, one perennial question that people have had with this, well it's a narrative, but what kind of a narrative is it? Is it a historical narrative where we're like a journalist documenting exactly what happened to this guy or is it more like a parable, an allegory that's using this story to teach a message but not necessarily describing what Jonah actually did?

00:34:47 That's a long time debate. I don't feel like I need to settle that question for anybody. You can see it how you want, but I'll make just a couple of observations for what it's worth. Number one might be that one reason people have seen this as not historical is because he's got these miracles like being

swallowed by the fish. And how could that really happen? I would say just as a believing Christian, I don't have a problem with that in theory. I like what the Bible dictionary says that once you accept the resurrection, the ultimate miracle, all other miracles cease to be improbable. Small potatoes compared to the resurrection from the dead.

Hank Smith: 00:35:23 And for somebody who can create the earth, for somebody who can travel between space and time, putting a guy inside a fish doesn't seem like a big deal for someone if we believe he really can do those other things.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:35:34 Yeah. Something like that is not a problem for me. Him breathing in the whale for 3 days and not getting eaten alive by stomach acids, God can do so much. If he needed to keep him alive in there he could. So for me that's really a non-issue. So the second point I'd make though is that all that being said, there are other reasons why people have thought that this might be written more as a parable or allegory, something like that. Not having to do with whether you believe in miracles or not, but just the way that the book is written.

00:35:59 There's a lot of stuff in the book that appears to be along the lines of satire and kind of everything is like the opposite. Jonah is the anti-prophet. He doesn't listen to God, he goes the wrong way. He preaches to the worst kind of people and has the most amazing success of any prophet in history.

00:36:16 There's other satirical elements in here might be the fact that for example, all the gentiles who encounter Jonah immediately repent despite what he does with them or the fact that even cows are presented as praying for their sins and fasting and putting on sackcloth and ashes. So you get a lot of these kind of exaggerated fantastical details there. Even though I believe in miracles, I'm not sure what I would do with cows literally...

Hank Smith: 00:36:40 Cows repenting?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:36:41 Yeah, repenting and putting on sackcloth and ashes. So I'm comfortable with either way, I'm comfortable seeing this as being based on a historical story. I'm comfortable with this being written as kind of a parable there too. What I think we need to do is not get so bogged down in the historical details like, "What kind of a species of fish was it?" That you lose sight of the message and that often happens.

- 00:37:02 People get so bogged down in debating was it a fish or a whale, that they miss what the book's actually about and it has some really important stuff to say. So what we do know is it says in the first one that the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai. And he is mentioned in a historical narrative elsewhere in the Old Testament. That 2 Kings 14. So Bible authors, they put these little phrases in there because they want you to link things together.
- 00:37:31 I'll really quick go to 2 Kings 14 and just read what it says about Jonah there because I think the author of Jonah wants you to be aware of that story coming in here. So 2 Kings 14, this has Jonah in the northern kingdom. He'd be living around the 9th century. So 100 years before Isaiah. If you go to about verse 23, 2 Kings 14, "In the 15th year of Amaziah, the son of Joash, King of Judah, Jeroboam, the son of Joash, the king of Israel began to reign in Samaria and reigned 41 years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. He departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin.
- 00:38:06 He restored the coast of Israel or the border of Israel from the entering of Hemath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet which was of Gath-hepher. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel that it was very bitter. For there was not any shut up nor any left nor any helper for Israel."
- 00:38:31 That's the Jonah story you get in Kings. And there's a few interesting things about that that I think will come into play here in the book of Jonah. Number one is that Israel was wicked. They weren't doing things perfectly, but God saw that their affliction was great and they have no helper.
- 00:38:47 So he still helped them re-expand their borders to what they used to had been and get back some lost territory. That's an interesting message on God working with imperfect people and not having a perfect standard before he'll come help you out when he sees that you're in distress. That'll become interesting as Jonah seems to have a much higher standard for the foreigners he's working with where he wants just justice for them when he's already prophesied good for Israel even though they weren't doing things great either.
- 00:39:16 And then the other interesting thing is in the book of Amos, in chapter 6 of Amos, verses 13 and 14, Amos prophesied that because Israel's wicked, the territory from the entering of Hemath under the sea of the plain is going to get lost to Israel.

It's like a complete reversal of what Jonah says. That's interesting that you get Amos who's a God prophet we really like prophesying the exact opposite of what Jonah says and Jonah's got kind of a suspicious character. So that also puts kind of a red flag on him for whatever that's worth.

00:39:45 That's interesting. I think as you get verse one of Jonah, the Bible authors are assuming that you're kind of connecting that, cross-referencing that back to that story there. So does that mean that Jonah's a historical character then? I think that means that there was a Jonah because he appears in this historical book. But it may not mean still that the book of Jonah as written is all to be taken historical. The author may not have intended it that way.

00:40:10 Actually, on that note, lest anyone's thinking I'm a heretic for suggesting such a thing, I've got a book here of church history and here's an interesting story that's relevant here. In October 1922, so this is this Church History Book, it says that the first presidency received a letter from somebody asking about the position of the church with regard to the literality of the Bible. And then two members of the first presidency, Charles W. Penrose and Anthony W. Ivins, hence writing for the first presidency, answer that. And they say, "The Bible's the word of God as far as it's translated correctly, but there are some issues with the Old Testament."

00:40:44 And then they give an example of Jonah. They wrote that while they thought Jonah was a real person, they said it was possible that the story as told in the Bible was a parable comment at the time. The purpose was to teach a lesson and this is a quote from their letter, "It is of little significance as to whether Jonah was a real individual or one chosen by the writer of the book to illustrate what is set forth therein."

00:41:08 I think of the first presidency, even though it's a 100 years ago, was comfortable with the idea that this is mostly a parable or some of it's a parable. We can be fine with that too. And you don't have to see it that way. Just to throw out some options there for people who want to see it one way or the other.

Hank Smith: 00:41:22 Excellent.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:41:23 I think most of us know the gist of the story here. Jonah is told in verse 2, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and cry against it for their wickedness has come up before me." So then in verse three, Jonah does rise up, but then he flees.

Hank Smith: 00:41:37 Is this the first we've heard of Nineveh, Josh?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:41:40 We know about Nineveh later in history after Jonah, it's going to be the capital of the Assyrian Empire. It is a big role. Nineveh is first mentioned back in Genesis. You've got these cities rising up in Mesopotamia like Babylon. Nineveh is back there and it calls it, "Nineveh, that great city." So I think this is an illusion back there. And you've got Nimrod and people that are over there that are wicked.

00:42:01 Calling it Nineveh, that great city I think is meant to invoke Genesis. And seeing Nineveh as kind of an archetype for wickedness that you get over there. Like these big urban centers from Mesopotamia are supposed to be back in the early chapters of Genesis.

Hank Smith: 00:42:13 Okay. So go to this wicked city.

John Bytheway: 00:42:15 In the manual, it mentions something that I think is really helpful. It says Nineveh was part of the Assyrian Empire. We've talked a lot about Assyria when we've talked about Isaiah, the events of the 10 tribes being captured and taken off by the Assyrians and the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem. It says, "An enemy of Israel known for its violence and cruelty." So remembering what we know about Assyria, kind of a cruel military empire. Where's Jonah being called to go?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:42:46 Straight to the heart of it.

John Bytheway: 00:42:48 I think I'd go, "I've got to head down to Joppa first. Give me a sec." I think I might be that guy too. I mean I can't blame the guy.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:42:58 And I've seen some people recount the story where they say, "Oh, Assyria was so militaristic, he was probably scared to go." But the story doesn't say that. And in chapter 4, he's going to give his reason for not going and he basically says, "Because I don't like them." That's what it gets to. So I think you're right to point this out. He's not scared for his life. In fact, he'd rather be dead than preach to them. His life isn't the issue. It's that he really hates their guts to put it bluntly right there for the reasons you're talking about, I think.

00:43:25 They are an enemy who's known for their cruelty and everybody hates them. We have whole other prophetic books kind of celebrating their fall. Jonah then rises up and he flees to Joppa. He gets on a ship and instead of rising up like God told

him to do, he goes down to Joppa, he goes down to the ship and later he'll go down into the water.

00:43:43 He's just going down, down, down rather than rising up like he was supposed to do right there. And then in verse 4 it says, "The Lord sent out a great wind." The Hebrew verb there is *hiphil*. God hurled a wind. It's the same verb translated as cast forth in the rest of the chapter several times. So God casts out this big wind. There's a mighty tempest in the sea.

00:44:01 So the ship was like to be broken. And then you've got the mariners. These mariners based on the port here are going to be Gentiles, which is important. Remember all these prophetic books are about the covenant and this dynamic between Israel, the covenant people and Gentiles, these people that are not part of the covenant. So these are Gentile sailors and they're afraid for their life. They're crying out every man to his God. They're casting out the ship's cargo and Jonah's down there fast asleep. Again, everything about Jonah is just the opposite of what you expect. Everyone's panicking and he's just asleep. So they come to him and say in verse 6, "What meanest thou, oh sleeper? Arise." He's been going down. This guy's saying, "Get back up."

Hank Smith: 00:44:42 I need to use this with my teenagers, "What meanest thou, oh sleeper?"

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:44:46 "Oh sleeper. Call upon thy God." Get up and say your morning prayers right there. So everybody's praying to their God, you do yours in case we can find the God that will stop this so that we perish not.

00:44:57 And then they cast lots and the lot falls upon Jonah. So to them that indicates that he's responsible for this storm, which they recognize as being supernatural. And then verse 8, they ask him, "What's your story? What's going on here?" And he responds in verse 9, "I'm a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, which made the sea and the dry land." And this is a really weird statement. Either he's recognizing the foolishness of what he's done or this is an ironic statement where he's like, "Yeah, I worship the one true God who's master of land and sea." But this is the guy of course that went out to the sea to try to escape from this God. So he has not been putting what he believes into practice here.

Hank Smith: 00:45:34 He's like, "I now fear him because he's found me."

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:45:37 Yep. So then the men are exceedingly afraid and then they knew that he ran from the Lord because he told them. And they say, "What shall we do?" In verse 12, Jonah says, "Cast me forth." That's the same word again, is God hurling out the storm. "Hurl me forth into the sea so that the sea will be calm." There's two ways you could read this. One is that Jonah's being self-sacrificing here by saying, "Yeah, throw me overboard and you guys save yourselves."

00:46:00 That could be a positive way to look at it. There's a negative way to look at this too, because Jonah, why couldn't he just throw himself overboard? Instead, he tells them to do it, but then that leaves them the problem of they've got his blood on their hands and they're really worried about that. Because in verse 14, they have a whole prayer to Jehovah saying, "Please, please, please don't put this guy's blood on their hands."

00:46:18 So Jonah could be making them do it and then the responsibility is theirs, not on himself. So that would be less selfless. Also, you've got to ask yourself, so later Jonah says he'd rather be dead than go save those people in Nineveh. So is he still trying to avoid that awful fate of preaching to those people? Because if he'd rather be dead than asking to have them throw him overboard is not that big of a deal because he might be still trying to escape the responsibility here.

00:46:45 "Kill me now." He's going to say that twice later. So this guy constantly has a death wish to avoid things he doesn't like. The interesting thing is, these guys are nice guys. They don't immediately cast him over in verse 13. They try their best to save everybody first and then only after they've exhausted all their efforts do they resort to throwing him over. Then they do, they throw him over. They have this prayer, "Lord, please don't hold this against us."

00:47:10 And then in verse 16, it's interesting, "The men feared the Lord. Feared Jehovah exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows." So in verse 5, they're afraid of the storm and they're praying to their gods and Jonah is this guy who fears Jehovah and now they fear Jehovah too. They've kind of converted in a way here, and this is kind of a theme of the book, of this instant Gentile conversions.

Hank Smith: 00:47:32 Gentile conversion, which rarely happens, but happens around Jonah apparently all the time.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:47:36 Rarely happens. He's the one being disobedient Jehovah. But these guys immediately are doing everything in their power to do it the right way.

Hank Smith: 00:47:43 It's an interesting form of missionary work.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:47:45 Yep. So then in verse 17, the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah and he's in the belly 3 days and 3 nights, the famous part. That's the story this far. The narrative in chapter two is interrupted by this Psalm of Thanksgiving that Jonah says he offers from the belly of the fish right there.

00:48:01 Unlike the other three chapters, which were narrative format. This is kind of a poem, a psalm that you get here. If you look at modern translations, you'll see it switches to poetry format once you get to chapter 2.

John Bytheway: 00:48:10 It's so interesting. This is not first person, this is someone writing about Jonah, but they knew what his psalm was.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:48:18 People debate, did he actually write this psalm or was this inserted into the book here as a separate composition? Whatever. It's presented here in the book as being him. So we can read it that way.

John Bytheway: 00:48:27 Sure.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:48:29 Verse two of chapter 2, "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice." Hell there doesn't have the negative connotation as in English, it's just the old underworld, the place where dead spirits go.

John Bytheway: 00:48:44 I can't imagine anything worse than being inside of a fish's stomach.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:48:49 But it'd feel like that, yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:48:50 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:48:51 So I might have a different word too.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:48:54 So then in verse 3, he talks about the billowing waves over him. And then in verse 4 he says that he turns again towards the temple, which is interesting that whether Jonah in the belly of the whale, or anybody else in dire straits, that the temple is where he goes. He knows that's where God's presence is and his

mind is drawn to the temple. I think that's something we can really relate to.

- Hank Smith: 00:49:13 When he's in this terrible position, that's what he's thinking about.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:49:17 Yeah. And then you get this interesting kind of death imagery in 5 and 6. "The waters compassed me about even to the soul. The depth closed me roundabout. The weeds were wrapped about around my head and I went down to the bottoms of the mountains. The earth with her bars was about me forever. Yet, hast thou brought me up my life from corruption. Oh Lord, my God!"
- 00:49:39 So that's beautiful imagery there about death and kind of being brought up to life imagery there. I think this is why Jesus invokes the story of Jonah when he's talking about his own life and resurrection right there. Because the imagery here is powerful, that you're down in those depths, you can't be saved and then Jehovah reaches down there and just picks you up from that dark, watery depth and brings you back up to life.
- Hank Smith: 00:50:00 That can happen for someone who is mourning the death of someone. That Jehovah reaches down and picks you up and pulls you out of that. Same with the person who has died can be brought back.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:50:12 Exactly. Verse 7, "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord. My prayer came in unto thee into thy holy temple." And then he kind of makes this takeaway message from these experiences. "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." Here's where we get to start using some of our President Nelson background.
- 00:50:30 So they that observe, observe there is the same verb you use for keep, like keep the commandments. Lying vanities is *hevel*. It's like empty things, worthless things. Like in Ecclesiastes, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Just stuff that's ethereal goes up in smoke. The stuff that doesn't last there and they that keep that stuff as opposed to keeping the commandments, it says forsake their own mercy. And guess what the Hebrew word is there? It's *hesed*.
- Hank Smith: 00:50:54 *Hesed*.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:50:55 Yeah, you put your trust in these vain empty things. You forsake your own *hesed*. God's still offering that to you, but you've put

yourself out, you forsake it. You abandon the love you could be getting and the blessings you'd be getting. You stray from the covenant path and you put yourself out of the blessings that come from being in that hesed relationship. That's a very kind of powerful lesson there, I think.

- Hank Smith: 00:51:17 Josh, is Jonah talking about himself or is he talking about just others in general?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:51:21 If you're reading this in context of Jonah's story, he's starting to maybe recognize this, but it's also written as a general principle.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:27 They that trust in lying vanities, forsake their own mercy.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:51:33 That covenant love and loyalty there, it's up to us. God's never going to forsake it, but we can place ourselves outside of those blessings there if we stray.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:41 Okay.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:51:42 And then he promises he's going to sacrifice again, give thanksgiving and give what he's vowed and then the fish vomits Jonah out at the end of this.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:50 Do you think I will pay what I have vowed meaning I will go?
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:51:53 In chapter 3, it starts off the Lord repeating, "Arise, go to Nineveh that great city." And now he does it. So I think he's at least come to the point where he's going to be obedient to that much.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:01 I'll go where you want me to go.
- John Bytheway: 00:52:03 It's interesting that that's exactly the same phrase too. The Lord doesn't say, "I told you." It just says, "Arise, go to Nineveh that great city." Same exact phrase in Jonah 1:2.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:13 Same calling.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:52:14 Let's do a redo on this.
- John Bytheway: 00:52:15 I repeat.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:52:16 Let's take it from the top. But I don't think this means Jonah has learned all the lessons he's supposed to learn as we'll see in the rest of chapters 3 and 4. I think you could read it as him being quite grudging as he does this. So I think grudging obedience is

at least better than disobedience, but it's still not full-hearted. Willing obedience. There's a difference there.

00:52:35 We'll have to continue with this guy on his journey. So then Jonah in 3:3, he arises, goes to Nineveh. And Nineveh was an exceedingly great city of three days journey. So three days journey might be one of these kind of exaggerated things. The way the story is told, it does not actually archeologically take three days to walk across the city, but it's painting this picture of just this huge metropolis here. And it says that it's an exceedingly great city in the King James version.

00:52:59 If you look at the footnote in the Hebrew, it literally says, "A great city like Elohim." Like to God. It's a great city to God. Which as God is going to talk about Nineveh later in his care for it. That's an interesting alternate translation to think about. All right, so then 3:4, he goes and delivers his message. And this is the strangest message in prophetic history. He doesn't talk about the people's crimes, he doesn't talk about the weakness, he doesn't invite them to repent, he never invokes the name of the Lord or mentions God. He just says, "Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

John Bytheway: 00:53:32 Amen. Sits down.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:53:33 The message is even more curt in Hebrew. It's just five words. *owd abarim yom v'nineveh neh-paket*. It's just really short there. In English, it sounds even longer than it actually is right there. He just says, "You guys are all going down. In 40 days, this is happening." To overthrow literally means to flip something upside down. It's the same verb used for Sodom and Gomorrah back in Genesis. They're just overthrown completely.

00:53:56 It's hard to say what to do with this. Are we just not getting the rest of his message? Or is this literally all he went and told these people? The story only gives us this much. Again, you wonder if this is him just doing the minimal effort here. He's still not hoping that they repent. He still doesn't want them to get off the hook. He wants them to go down and that's what he prophesies right there.

Hank Smith: 00:54:16 The whole message.

John Bytheway: 00:54:18 Don't you wish you had that kind of power? You could say eight words in English, five in Hebrew and an entire very wicked place says, "Okay." And repents.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:54:28 Yeah. Because then in verse five, you get a miracle that's honestly way bigger than the fish. The people of Nineveh believed God proclaimed a fast, put on sackcloth from the greatest of them, even to the least of them, including the king. He gets off the throne, puts off his fancy clothes, puts on sackcloth and ashes and he sends a proclamation throughout Nineveh saying, "Don't let any of the people or any of the animals, any of your herds or flocks, nobody eat or drink. We're all going to fast. And let all the humans and all the animals put on sackcloth and ashes and let all the humans and animals cry mightily to God. Maybe he'll turn away from the evil and the vile."

00:55:04 That maybe he'll change his mind and turn away the fierce anger and we won't perish. So you get this instant conversion of everyone.

Hank Smith: 00:55:11 I can see why some people think this is satire.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:55:14 It's worth noting we have no record of Nineveh all converting to the worship to Jehovah.

John Bytheway: 00:55:18 Yeah, maybe those eight words were the very end of his sermon.

Hank Smith: 00:55:23 You're like, "Do they say anything else?"

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:55:25 Well, it's like the sailors. We're supposed to compare this to the sailors. Just based on this brief encounter with him, they completely turned to Jehovah and changed their ways, forsake the other gods and sacrifice.

Hank Smith: 00:55:35 By being a terrible missionary, Jonah is a really good missionary.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:55:39 Interesting, that word overthrown, it can be a literal overturning something, but it's in the passive voice here. In other scriptures that Hebrew verb in the passive can be metaphorical for turning around, changing, transforming.

00:55:54 In a way, what Jonah is said can still come true, and Nineveh did completely turn around, they transformed. But this is not happening like Jonah expected. They transform on the inside, not getting the city physically destroyed by getting flipped over there. It's not the way he was hoping.

John Bytheway: 00:56:09 That's disappointing to him, it sounds like.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:56:12 Look what they do in verse 8. It says that let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence which is in their hands. Interestingly, back in Genesis, when it talks about the problems that are on the earth that cause the flood of Noah, it uses the same two Hebrew words, *ra'ah* the evil and *chamas*, the violence right there is what Genesis stresses caused the flood.

00:56:32 It was the wickedness and the violence. So they're issuing that. As far as what Gentiles can do, just doing basic things in their framework, this is it. Live righteously, stop the violence, live peacefully.

Hank Smith: 00:56:45 Jonah should be excited about this.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:56:47 He's achieved what the Abraham Covenant is supposed to do, is bring righteousness and peace to a violent wicked world.

Hank Smith: 00:56:52 Good job.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:56:54 And then in verse 10, God sees their works and that they turn from their evil and then he changes his mind, which is what repents mean there, of his evil that he was going to do to them, this calamity and he doesn't do it. You get this miraculous salvation of them.

Hank Smith: 00:57:07 And here it goes. Jonah should be excited, but Jonah was very angry.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:57:13 Chapter 4, very angry. And chapter 4 is really where the whole story comes together. It's all been leading to the discussion that you have right here. Again, this is very well crafted literature. This is not someone necessarily on the ground recording with a reporter taking down every word.

00:57:26 So for example, what Jonah says in verses 2 and 3 is exactly 39 words in Hebrew. What God says to Jonah at the last two verses of the chapter, verses 10 and 11 is exactly 39 words in Hebrew as well. Someone has set up 39 words from Jonah, 39 words from Jehovah to him as a contrast bookending this chapter as they have this discussion. It's super well crafted.

John Bytheway: 00:57:47 Say that again. Which 39 words at the beginning of...

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:57:50 So in 4:2-3, Jonah complains to God using 39 Hebrew words. And then in chapters 10 and 11, God finishes by responding to Jonah and his speech has exactly 39 words.

John Bytheway: 00:58:03 Oh verses 10 and 11 of chapter 4.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:58:06 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:58:07 That's 39 words, the last two verses of Jonah?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:58:11 Yep. In the quote part, not the part where it says, "Then the Lord said." But everything after that word's the quote.

John Bytheway: 00:58:16 39 words in Hebrew. I love stuff like that. I love symmetry.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:58:20 Somebody is setting this up really cleverly. So then verse 4, the Lord says, "Doest thou well to be angry."

John Bytheway: 00:58:27 I love that phrase. How's that anger working for you?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:58:32 Yeah. Jonah doesn't respond. So then Jonah goes out of the city, he sets up a little shelter and he sits in the shadow because I imagine it's hot. And he sits there hoping maybe I think God will still destroy the city. He's going to see what happens with this. How is this going to play out when day 40 comes. And then God prepares this gourd, this some kind of plant that comes up to shade Jonah better than he had before and it says that it delivered him from his grief right there. So he's like, "Oh yes, thank you. I'm appreciating this."

00:59:01 He's really glad of the gourd. But then in verse 7, God sends a worm, it smites the gourd in the night. The gourd dies. So then when the sun comes up in verse eight, it's really hot and the sun's beating on Jonah and he wishes again that he were dead.

00:59:14 It's better for me to die than to live. I skipped past verses 2 and 3. We should go back and see what Jonah says in those 39 words right there. So verse 2, "Jonah prays to the Lord and says, 'I pray thee, oh Lord, was this not my saying when I was yet in my country? Therefore, or because of this I fled before unto Tarshish.'" So he's explaining now why he fled. "Because I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." Now what's he quoting there? It's Exodus 34. So that's Jehovah's classic description of his own nature. And so when it says, "gracious God, merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness."

00:59:58 Kindness is your hesed word again right there. So he's like, "Oh, I knew it. I knew that you're of great kindness. Great hesed. And because of all of that, that you'll easily change your mind about doing bad things to people. Repent the evil right there."

Basically he's saying, "I want Nineveh to go down. I want to watch them burn. So that's why I fled because I didn't want to give them the chance to repent because I knew that you're so merciful that given any opportunity to do so, you would show them mercy."

- 01:00:24 And notice he's not quoting the second half of Exodus 34:6-7 which does talk about God's justice because he's fine with that. He likes God's justice. He's quoting the part he doesn't like.
- Hank Smith: 01:00:33 I knew you were going to be nice. Yeah.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:00:35 Yeah. Slow to anger and full of hesed right there. He's citing this as a negative thing. He's saying God is too loyal, too loving, too merciful. He's extending this to people who don't belong in the club here.
- Hank Smith: 01:00:48 You're being merciful to people who don't deserve it.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:00:51 Yeah. Now again, the irony is back in 2 Kings 14, that historical narrative about Jonah, he prophesied that God because he sees Israel has no helper, that even though they're wicked, he would extend their border again. So Jonah's fine prophesying about people getting what they don't deserve there when it's his people. But here when it's the Ninevites, he can't stand it. My goodness. They need to get the evil that they deserve, not the mercy that you think they say that they deserve.
- John Bytheway: 01:01:16 It is kind of interesting while we're on that topic, usually the house of Israel is working with other members of the House of Israel, but here he sent as a missionary to another place.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:01:26 Yep. I think it's very much exploring this dynamic of how should covenant people in Israel be relating to these gentiles outside, especially when they're the mean gentiles that you don't like.
- Hank Smith: 01:01:36 Right.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:01:37 Yeah. These aren't just any old Gentiles like you pointed out, John. These are the Assyrians. I don't know whether Jonah really went to Nineveh or not, but regardless, the point of picking Nineveh here for the story I think is that yeah, we're going straight for the worst Gentiles you can think of. These aren't just those, okay neighbors over there to the side. These are the worst of the worst.

Hank Smith: 01:01:55 And they deserve it. They deserve to be destroyed. He says, "Take my life from me. It is better for me to die than to live." He is really upset that God is merciful.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:02:06 Yep. He'd rather died than see them get mercy. Then we get the gourd story and he's really sad to see this gourd died because it was giving him shade. And then you get the Lord's response in 10 and 11. This is the only prophetic book to end on a rhetorical question. Because the book is not going to answer the question for you. You as the reader have to wrestle with the question and answer it.

01:02:27 Jonah doesn't get a chance to. We don't know what happens to him. So in verse 10, the Lord says, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd," this plant, "for the which thou hast not labored, neither made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. Should I not spare Nineveh that great city wherein are more than 120,000 persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left and also much cattle, many animals?"

01:02:55 Why are you taking more pity on this plant than a city that's got more than 100,000 humans in it and even more animals? Shouldn't I have mercy and pity on them? We're left to kind of ponder this question. Are you okay with God extending mercy to your enemies?

Hank Smith: 01:03:12 Say that again. I like that. Are you okay...

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:03:15 With God extending mercy and love to people that you do not like? To your enemies there?

John Bytheway: 01:03:22 Should I say this out loud? I've often thought about the second coming and how there's a part of me that oh man, you're going to... Certain people are really going to get it or things in our culture and Hollywood and violence and all of that. But what if he comes and extends mercy? Well, I was kind of hoping for a little more retribution. The doctrine of retribution. Isn't that in here too somewhere?

Hank Smith: 01:03:48 It also reminds me a little bit of the prodigal son.

John Bytheway: 01:03:51 The comparison.

Hank Smith: 01:03:53 Yeah. They repent and he's mad. He's mad that they're repenting.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:03:58 Yeah. Elder Holland gave that great talk a few years ago on the Parable of The Laborers.

Hank Smith: 01:04:02 Laborers in the vineyard, same thing.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:04:04 People worked all day for the same amount of money as people that came in and arrived right at the 11th hour and they were upset. "That's not fair. Why are you showing such generosity to people who don't deserve it as much as I do?"

John Bytheway: 01:04:14 I love the idea of that and the prodigal son. That issue comes up when we start comparing and looking sideways instead of looking at how the Lord's dealt with us. We want it to be fair. When the whole thing about the laborers in the vineyard, no it wasn't fair. They were called at different times. But the Lord of the vineyard can do what he wants and we shouldn't be envious because he is generous. I think that's what Elder Holland says.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:04:40 We've got to remember too that every ounce of judgment we want him to put on other people, what's that going to do for us? He's got to accept that God's generous to his enemies. And if the natural man is an enemy to God, that suggests that all of us are his enemies to some extent and we're only saved through the atonement of Christ the Lord.

Hank Smith: 01:04:57 Yeah. It's a good thing God loves his enemies.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:05:02 So I think Jonah really forces us to wrestle with this. Again, it's an open-ended question and I think it's meant in ancient times to have the Israelites wrestle with this. What does it mean to be a covenant person and what's God's relationship to the other people? You might be in the covenant, you have that special hesed, but doesn't he also love other people?

01:05:19 Remember that Jonah had said, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." So he was talking about how important hesed is there, but then he didn't like God's hesed when it was extended in some extent to these people of Nineveh. He's like, "Oh, I knew that you have so much hesed. Why are we doing this for them?" Kind of a thing. So not being restrictive about that.

Hank Smith: 01:05:39 I knew you'd be merciful. That's the funny thing about it is that he... I didn't go here because I knew you'd be nice to him and I didn't want you to be nice to him.

John Bytheway: 01:05:47 And it's so hard for me to take, just kill me.

Hank Smith: 01:05:50 Yeah. I can't handle all this kindness.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:05:53 It's surprising, but we really struggle with this. We've had several general conference talks in recent years talking about divisions among us. I don't think anybody thinks, "Oh yeah, I've got enemies that I hope to see crash and burn." But we do have divisions and people that we may not think that they're-

Hank Smith: 01:06:09 They're deserving.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:06:10 Doing things as right in God's eyes as me. Like Elder Renlund a year ago, gave this great talk called The Peace of Christ Abolishes Enmity. And he pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a global stress test both in and out of the church. He says that there's been really positive things, the way people have come together, but there's also shown tendencies that we've had towards contention and divisiveness he says.

01:06:32 This suggests that we have work to do to change our hearts and to become unified as the Savior's true disciples. It's not a new challenge, but a critical one. I was also really touched just this past conference, October 2022, Kristin M. Yee's talk about Beauty For Ashes and forgiving those that have hurt. You get these terrible gut wrenching situations like abuse. And she mentions there, "The Lord said, 'I will forgive whom I will forgive.' But of you, it's required to forgive all men."

01:06:58 And she says, "The Lord requires us to forgive for our own good. But he does not ask us to do this without his help. His love is understanding. Through our covenants with the Lord, we can each receive the strengthening power, guidance and help we need to both forgive and to be forgiven."

01:07:12 This is something we all have to work on to some extent. So I think Jonah's story rather than just us versus some terrible foreign military power really invites us to think about this. Am I willing to forgive people who have done wrong even if it's wrong to me?

Hank Smith: 01:07:27 Sister Yee said, "I came to realize in a profound way that the same son of God who atoned for my sins is the same Redeemer who will also save those who have deeply hurt me." I like how she said that better in a profound way.

John Bytheway: 01:07:43 The acknowledgement that there are some types of things that people have endured that are so difficult that she talked about

like abuse and things, is that the only way that we can forgive is with God's help.

01:07:57 I appreciate that, that no, this is beyond you. This is beyond your ability. You're going to need God to help you do this. Sometimes we get backed up against that wall, "I can't do this by myself. I'm going to need the power of the Savior to help me to go to forgive." I love that she acknowledged that. That was a powerful talk.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:08:18 Jonah's often reduced to a children's tale that's really simple and cute. We reduced the lesson to just simple obedience. He was disobedient, then learned his lesson. But this closing question I think really puts the whole book in a different light where we really got to examine whatever ethnocentrism, racism is still among us, sexism, homophobia, all the things that are dividing us and where we look down on certain groups of people.

01:08:42 The Book of Jonah really is an invitation to say, "Are you actually in the right on this? Are you putting limits on God's generosity, mercy and grace for other people who maybe have a very different life than you do?"

John Bytheway: 01:08:54 That's great to point out. That's the only prophetic book, I'm looking at my notes to end in a rhetorical question. It kind of leaves us to... I think the prodigal son kind of ends that way too, where you're still... You're going, "I want more. Wait a minute." It leaves us to wrestle with something, which I love that, that you go finish the story and wrestle with it in your own heart.

01:09:17 Another thing I want to just bring up is that it's wonderful that Jesus brings up this story. We've got Matthew 16 where the Pharisees come and say, "Give us a sign." And he gives this wonderful thing. You can discern the face of the sky. My dad used to say, "Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning. Red sky at night, sailors' delight."

01:09:39 He gives something similar here but then says, "It's a wicked and an adulterous generation, seeketh after a sign. There shall be no sign given unto it. But the sign for the prophet Jonas." And he left them and departed. That's Matthew 16:4. So what is the sign of the prophet Jonah then?

Hank Smith: 01:09:58 It's got to be the three days, right?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:10:00 Yeah, I think you've got that. And then the fact that he goes on to say what Jesus is saying right too is that Jonah preached and they repented and yet one greater than Jonah is here, Jesus, and yet his own people are not accepting him. That dynamic too. Yeah, I think either of those playing to what Jesus is trying to do.

Hank Smith: 01:10:17 I want to read just a little paragraph, a couple sentences from Elder Holland. This is in a message called The Best Is Yet to Be. He says, "Let people repent." Just those three words. Let people repent, let people grow. Believe that people can change and improve. Is that faith? Yes. Is that hope? Yes. Is that charity? Yes. Above all, it is charity, the pure love of Christ.

John Bytheway: 01:10:48 In another talk, when Elder Holland says all that God has ever had to work with is imperfect people. It must be terribly frustrating for him, but he deals with it and so should we. And then I think in that same talk he says, "So be kind and be grateful that God is kind."

Hank Smith: 01:11:05 It's a happy way to live.

John Bytheway: 01:11:06 It's a happy way to live. We need his kindness and we can extend it.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:11:10 And he gave examples like a spouse who hangs on to something that their husband or wife did 20 years ago because they're determined to hold it over their heads-

Hank Smith: 01:11:17 For another 20 years.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:11:19 And he's saying, "You've got to let go of that. You've got to believe people can change and improve." And that if we want God to be gracious and merciful with us, we've got to extend that to others.

Hank Smith: 01:11:28 In the manual, there's a great quote from President Oaks who says, "We should never set ourselves up as judges of who is ready and who is not, who deserves the message and who doesn't. The Lord knows the hearts of all of his children and if we pray for inspiration, he will help us find persons he knows to be in preparation to hear the word."

01:11:46 Jonah was kind of setting himself up as the judge. He didn't want these people to get the message, yet they were ready to accept the word according to the manual there.

John Bytheway: 01:11:56 When Jesus said, "Except for the sign of Jonas," I remember one of my professors saying, "It just wasn't manly to have your name end in a vowel in Greek." So you've got Jonas in the New Testament referring to Jonah in the older... Esaias in the New Testament, Isaiah in the old.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:12:15 Yeah. Because the A makes it sound like feminine and Greek. You're right, yeah.

John Bytheway: 01:12:19 What was the sign? Well, Jonah was in the whale three days and three nights in Jonah 1:17. Jesus was in the tomb, Jonah comes out. So there was kind of a type of resurrection in there and that was the sign that Jesus was giving if I understand that correctly. Go back and look at the story of Jonah and you will... That's the sign that I'll give you.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:12:42 Yep.

Hank Smith: 01:12:43 I wanted to mention something for our listeners that perhaps I'm not sure the author of the book of Jonah intended for us to see, but there is a foreshadowing to the savior's three days and three nights. He goes into the belly of the fish or into the tomb for three days and three nights and then he comes out. And part of this story is that Jonah comes out of a place he never should have come out of.

01:13:10 When you go into the belly of a whale, you don't come back out and yet he did. And the Lord went into the tomb, a place where nobody comes back out of and yet he came back out. I know that there's many listeners who have lost loved ones. We just recently in our neighborhood had a wonderful young lady killed in an accident. It's just so devastating.

01:13:33 Yet the story of Jonah, I think points us to Christ's resurrection. That though we feel like someone is not going to come back, like they're gone forever, just like Jonah coming out of the whale, just like the Savior coming out of the tomb, the person that you love and miss is going to come back.

01:13:52 I remember, Josh, in a previous episode, you told us about a moment where you really had a gut check. Do you really believe that people live after they die? Do you really believe in these things? And you said, "You know when it came down to it. I found out that I did." And I thought that was so profound.

01:14:10 I wanted to read something from Henry Scott Holland. When my dad died, I found this little quote and it was something that I

just read through a couple of times and it really helped me. I don't think he has any relation to Elder Holland, but it's a wonderful quote. He says, "Death is nothing at all. It does not count. I have only slipped away into the next room. Nothing has happened. Everything remains exactly as it was. I am I and you are you and the old life that we live so fondly together is untouched, unchanged.

01:14:41 Whatever we were to each other, that we are still. Call me by my old familiar name, speak of me in the easy way, which you used to. Put no difference in your tone, wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow. Laugh as we have always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together. Play, smile, think of me, pray for me. Let my name be ever the household word that it always was. Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it. Life means all that it ever meant.

01:15:11 It was the same as it ever was. There is absolute and unbroken continuity. What is death but a negligible accident? Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight? I am, but waiting for you for an interval somewhere very near, just around the corner. All is well. Nothing is hurt, nothing is lost. One brief moment and all will be as it was before.

01:15:33 How shall we laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again?" Death Is Nothing at All by Henry Scott Holland. I hope that brings some level of comfort to someone listening who in their heart just mourns to see their family again.

John Bytheway: 01:15:48 That's awesome, Hank. I think of my folks just every day. There's a great statement of... It's actually I believe on Benjamin Franklin's tomb. "Here lies the body of B. Franklin Printer. Like the cover of an old book, it's contents torn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding, lies here food for worms. But the work shall not be wholly lost for it will, as he believed, appear once more in a new and more perfect edition, corrected and amended by the Author." Capital A. author.

Hank Smith: 01:16:24 I have never heard that. That's beautiful.

John Bytheway: 01:16:27 Isn't that great? It's going to be a new perfect edition, corrected and amended by the author. Please join us for part two of this podcast.



John Bytheway:	00:00:00	Welcome to part two of Dr. Josh Sears, the books of Jonah and Micah.
John Bytheway:	00:00:07	Well, this has been wonderful about Jonah. The next book is Micah. And I'm excited to look at this. Where do you want to go with this one, Josh?
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:00:17	Well, I'm really excited. Micah's one of my favorite books of the Bible. And when I was here last time and we were in Second Kings, I mentioned that my firstborn son, we named Josiah after King Josiah there. My second born son is named Micah after his book right here-
John Bytheway:	00:00:31	Oh wow.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:00:32	... just because I like it.
Hank Smith:	00:00:33	Well, if Micah is out there listening, Hello, Micah. We love you here at followHIM.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:00:39	So I've trained him what his name means. Micah, Mi-cah means literally who is like with the question mark, and that sounds funny, but there's longer versions of the name also in Israel. You can have Micaiah, which means who is like Yahweh. And you can have Michael, Micha-el, who is like God. Micah is like the shortened version of that name that doesn't have the God you're talking about there. So it's kind of implied that Micah probably still means something like who is like God or who's like Yahweh, Jehovah. It's just clipped right there.
	00:01:06	So that's what his name means, which is fun because at the end of the book, he's got a little play off his own name. He says, "Who is a God like you that's like this?" And it's really trying to get them to understand the incomparable nature of the God of Israel.
Hank Smith:	00:01:21	Oh that's fantastic. Who is like?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:01:24 So Micah, one way you could think about him, he's the last famous brother of Isaiah. He's not literally his brother, but the book is like a sibling to Isaiah.

Hank Smith: 00:01:32 Oh okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:01:33 Micah is the Sam or the Shiblun to Isaiah's Nephi and Helaman. They live at the same time so they very well could have known each other. And the book covers many of the same themes and topics that Isaiah does and they even share for word for word some of the same prophecies. So there's a lot of connections between the book.

00:01:52 And one thing that also brings them together is that in third Nephi, when Jesus is teaching the Nephites, it's about the last days, he draws heavily on Isaiah to do that and on the Prophet Micah.

Hank Smith: 00:02:04 Oh really? I didn't know that.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:02:05 And weaves both of them together in there. So part of what I would love to do today is when we get to those parts, we'll jump to third Nephi and see what Jesus is doing with Micah.

Hank Smith: 00:02:14 Okay. That would be fantastic.

John Bytheway: 00:02:15 I love that.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:02:16 Micah's got all this stuff going for it, but because it's overshadowed by his more famous older brother book, Isaiah, people tend not to know him as well. But I think he's every bit as worth the attention that he's giving is every bit as prophetic and important here just on a much smaller scale, seven chapters instead of 66. So Isaiah gets all the spotlight, but Micah is right in there in the ring with him fighting the good fight like Sam or Shiblun.

John Bytheway: 00:02:39 Yeah. I wrote that down. Micah is to Isaiah as Sam is to Nephi.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:02:43 Yeah. Good guys just with a lot more famous person next to him.

Hank Smith: 00:02:48 But no less serviceable.

John Bytheway: 00:02:50 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:02:50 So again, Micah lives the same time as Isaiah. You've got four of these great eighth century prophets, Micah, Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea all live kind of in the same time period there. So might have known each other, but we don't know. They never say such a thing. It's fun to imagine what going to church with Isaiah and Micah might have been like.

00:03:09 So Micah's got seven chapters. It's hard to know exactly how to structure them. It depends on what kind of features you decide to look for. But there is what everybody agrees on. There's an interesting back and forth dynamic between judgment and justice and destruction and those kind of prophecies, and then bright rays of hope about a better future.

00:03:28 And then, it goes back to the present dark times and then back to the good times coming in the future. So you do see that switch going back and forth throughout the book.

Hank Smith: 00:03:35 That sounds like Isaiah as well.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:03:36 Yeah. Isaiah does that as well. So here's the thing, we really can't cover every verse in depth, even though there's only seven chapters. I really feel for people like Jan Martin who we made cover like the whole book of Ezekiel in one go. But even though we have fewer chapters to go through, they're just really rich.

00:03:51 So I'm going to go through some parts fast and then we'll slow down at more relevant parts, especially the parts where, again, Jesus is going to incorporate it into a third Nephi, because I think that'll be the biggest payoff for a lot of our listeners here, because it'll help make more sense of what Jesus is saying in the Book of Mormon, which is always a good thing.

00:04:08 Let's get into it. Verse one, the word of the Lord that came to Micah, the Morasthite. That means he's from the village of Moresheth. In the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. The living in the days of Ahaz and Hezekiah and these guys like Isaiah, you got to bring back all that context from the book of Isaiah. What's going on? What's all the wickedness going on in Jerusalem? The predictions that the Assyrians are going to come and destroy Judah, all that stuff is playing in here. So we got to kind of get back in that dynamic thinking of all those things.

00:04:38 And he starts off in verse two. Hear, all ye people, hearken oh earth and all that therein is and let the Lord God be witness against you. The Lord from his holy temple. For behold the Lord

cometh forth out of his place and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth and the mountain shall be molten under him and the valley shall be cleft as wax before the fire and as the waters that are poured down a steep place for the transgression of Jacob is all this and for the sins of the house of Israel.

00:05:09 What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem? Therefore, I will make Samaria as an heap of the field and as plantings of a vineyard and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley and I will discover the foundations thereof.

00:05:26 So you remember in Isaiah's time I know you covered- I'll keep referring to Isaiah by comparison because I know you spent five weeks on Isaiah, but in Isaiah's lifetime and Micah's the northern kingdom of Israel with its capital at Samaria, it's going to get destroyed by the Assyrians and the southern kingdom of Judah is going to get almost destroyed with Jerusalem getting saved in the nick of time. So all that dynamic is behind this as he criticizes both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom for all the things that they're doing wrong.

Hank Smith: 00:05:51 Josh, I just got to say as I think of Jonah. Jonah was like, "This is what I wanted. I wanted fire coming down. I wanted valleys be..."

John Bytheway: 00:06:00 Yeah, melt like wax.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:06:02 But it's important to note, Micah, we can joke about Jonah because he would've... Yeah. But Micah is really upset by this. In verse eight he says, therefore, because of all that I just said, I will wail and howl. I will go stripped and naked. I will make a wailing like the dragons and mourning like the owls.

00:06:21 So dragons and owls probably better translated jackals and ostriches. It's this image of desolation and ruin these wild animals that are just going through what was once civilized territory there. So he's wailing and howling. Yeah. He kind of hates the fact that he's got to prophesy of these terrible things going on.

Hank Smith: 00:06:35 I just thought of Jonah going, "Give me that job. That's the one I wanted." But what did you say about the dragons?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:06:43 Modern translations usually use jackals.

Hank Smith: 00:06:46 Oh okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:06:46 The King James translators, if they didn't know what an animal was, they'd sometimes stick in a fantastical animal as a place holder. Like we don't know what it is so here's something you know it's not and there you go.

Hank Smith: 00:06:55 Here we go.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:06:55 So dragons and satyrs and things like that in there, but these wild animals. So then the rest of chapter one is just predictions of destruction. So verses 10 through 15, he'd lists all sorts of towns that are all towns in Judah. And what he might be doing, given his context, is listing places that the Assyrians are going to come destroy. He's really clever with the way he does it. All the town names have a meaning in Hebrew and the image of destruction that he pairs with that town name is a pun or a play on words on the name of the town.

00:07:28 The footnotes give you the first one what Aphrah means right there. And then, it points out that this is going on for the others rather than explain all of them. Aphrah there means dust. So it says at this town roll thyself in the dust. So the action that he predicts is based off the town name. And it's like that for all the others.

00:07:45 So like the footnotes, I'm going to take a cop out and not give you all the details. You can look those up in a good study Bible, but for the sake of time we'll keep going even though the linguistics of it all is fun and you can see Micah is really creative.

John Bytheway: 00:07:56 I think it helps us to know this isn't just somebody jotting down something real quick when this was originally written, and we missed that because we're not seeing it in Hebrew, but this was crafted and poured over and I like knowing that the footnote says each of the city's named in verses 10 through 16 will meet a fate appropriate to the meaning of its name.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:08:15 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:08:16 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:08:17 It'd be like saying, "Oh Los Angeles will be destroyed and the angels will come overthrow it." Because Los Angeles means the angels. It's something like that.

John Bytheway: 00:08:25 Pull the drapes on Draper and Sandy will be a sandstorm and yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:08:30 Yeah. So like Isaiah, Micah is a poet and these prophecies are all in poetic form. So very creative, lots of very imaginative inter-

Hank Smith: 00:08:38 I want you guys to keep doing that. That was really fun.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:08:42 And then, chapter two is mostly all more judgment and destruction but the last two verses of chapter two give us that first little ray of hope as we give that there. So chapter two gets into more what are these people doing that's so bad? So verse one, woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds. You can just imagine them lying there like dreaming of all the iniquity they're going to do when they get up in the morning.

00:09:05 When the morning is light, they practice it because it is in the power of their hand and they covet fields and take them by violence and houses and take them away. So they oppress a man in his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, behold against this family, do I devise an evil from which he shall not remove your necks, neither shall you go haughtily for this time is evil.

00:09:27 So the thing about coveting fields and taking them and grabbing houses, this gets back to something Isaiah also talked a lot about, about the social injustice going on where you have-

Hank Smith: 00:09:36 Joining house to house.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:09:37 Isaiah said, yeah, joining house to house, gobbling up the property belonging to these poor families so they can create these big vast estates and make lots more money that way. So Micah, it'll have a lot of things about that too, about how judgment is being denied to the poor and the oppressed. So Isaiah had similar language there. So does Amos, all these things about exploiting people who are poor and can't fend them for themselves and the corruption of the legal system and all that.

00:10:01 So Micah's got lots of that. So the rest of verse chapter two start in verse four. So one's going to take up a parable or a taunt song here against you and lament about you. And then, it's got the people in verse six saying, "Prophesy ye not, say they to them that prophesy. They shall not prophesy to them that they shall not take shame."

00:10:21 The word here is not the usual word for prophesy. So often translations will have preach or teach instead of prophesy, but they're basically saying, "Don't prophesy to us stuff that we don't want to hear about. Don't put us to shame with your words here."

Hank Smith: 00:10:34 The guilty taketh the truth to be hard. We don't want to hear this.

John Bytheway: 00:10:37 Is that Isaiah 30:10 where prophesy smooth things, prophesy deceits?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:10:42 I think this is in the same mode. And look, jump down a few verses to 11. If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink. He shall even be the prophet of this people or the preacher of this people. So it's these people saying, "We don't like the prophets that are telling us what we don't want to hear, but if you have people claiming this authority that are telling you to live it up and do the bad things you want to do, then you accept him as an authoritative teacher.

John Bytheway: 00:11:11 Oh that is so Samuel the Lamanites and I look and there's the footnote, Helaman 13:27.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:11:18 I think we ought to go to Helaman 13 and have John read that. Helaman 13:26 and 27.

John Bytheway: 00:11:23 There's Samuel the Lamanite starting in verse 26. Behold ye are worse than they. For as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him. You will say that he is a false prophet and that he is a sinner and of the devil because he testifieth that your deeds are evil.

00:11:46 But behold, if a man shall come among you and say, and shall say, "Do this, there is no iniquity. Do that, ye shall not suffer." Yea, he will say, "Walk after the pride of your own hearts. Yea, walk after the pride of your eyes and do whatsoever your heart desireth." If a man shall come among you and say this, you'll receive him and say that he is a prophet. You'll lift him up, you'll give unto him of your substance, you'll give unto him of your gold and of your silver. You will clothe him in costly apparel. And because he speaketh flattering words unto you and he saith that all as well, then you will not find fault with him.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:12:20 Yeah. Your gold and your silver and your podcast subscriptions and your likes and shares. The currency of today. We've got these people here I think exactly the same sentiment in 11. Someone says, I'll prophesy to you saying it's okay to go after wine and strong drink. Oh yeah, that-

John Bytheway: 00:12:35 I like that one.

Hank Smith: 00:12:37 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:12:38 Let me keep shopping until I find a prophet that I like.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:12:41 We'll skip around a little here, chapter three verse five. Micah says, "Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry peace." So I think that means who say peace to people who give them something to eat, but they make war against he that put it not into their mouth.

00:12:59 So again, you've got these people that are prophets for hire that'll say whoever gives them money so will cry peace to people who give them stuff, something to bite with their teeth, food, but then they prepare war against people that aren't going to give them anything. So you've got these people that are setting themselves up of authority but are just going for whatever will get them the most money or something in return here. They'll say whatever people want to hear.

00:13:19 And you got people who that's what they want. Tell us what we want to hear and then we'll prop you up. These true and false prophetic voice here is a problem. And then Micah responds famously in chapter three verse eight. He contrasts himself to all those false teachers. But truly I, Micah, am full of power by the spirit of the Lord and of judgment, the word there means justice, and of might. So I'm full of power and of justice and of might to declare unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.

00:13:51 And that's the burden of the true prophets. They have to tell the people what they don't want to hear. They have to tell the truth. They have to tell them that they're sinning and what are the consequences of sin. And that's what Micah imagining he doesn't get stuff to bite with his teeth because this isn't what people want to hear, but it's what the Lord's called him to say.

Hank Smith: 00:14:08 Oh I like it. And I like his confidence there. I am full of the power of the spirit of the Lord.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:14:14 It reminds me of President Nelson three years ago now before COVID. So it seems like forever ago. But he came to BYU, his most recent devotional. It was called the Love and the Laws of God. And he discussed this kind of burden that the prophetic mantle places on him.

00:14:28 So here's his quote, "The arbiter of truth is God not your favorite social media newsfeed, not Google, and certainly not those who are disaffected from the church. Many now claim that truth is relative and that there's no such thing as divine law or a divine plan. Such a claim is simply not true. There is a difference between right and wrong. Truth is based upon the laws God has established for the dependability, protection, and nurturing of his children. Eternal laws operate in and affect each of our lives, whether we believe in them or not. Sometimes we as leaders of the church are criticized for holding firm to the laws of God, defending the Saviors doctrine and resisting the social pressures of our day.

00:15:07 But our commission," this is like Micah, "as ordained apostles is to go into all the world and preach his gospel unto every creature. That means we are commanded to teach truth. In doing so sometimes we are accused of being uncaring as we teach the father's requirements for exaltation in the celestial kingdom. But wouldn't it be far more uncaring for us not to tell the truth, not to teach what God has revealed? It is precisely because we do deeply care about all of God's children that we proclaim his truth. We may not always tell people what they want to hear, prophets are rarely popular, but we will always teach the truth."

00:15:43 And I think Micah really feels that burden there as he points out these professional prophets that are just saying whatever people will pay them to say versus Micah who truly does have the spirit, but that means he's got the responsibility to declare transgression and sin. That's what he's got to do.

Hank Smith: 00:15:59 He's probably not biting with his teeth very much. That's true. No one's paying him.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:16:04 All right. Now the rest of chapter three verse 12 famously says, "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high place of the forest." Now the reason I say that's famous is because it appears in another story. Jeremiah like a hundred years later is on trial, there's this great story where he's saying Jerusalem will be destroyed and that upsets everybody and they're planning what they should do with him.

00:16:28 And someone quotes this from Micah, a prophet from a hundred years before going, "Well, Micah did say Jerusalem would be destroyed so maybe there's some precedent for this idea. We can't just dismiss Jeremiah outright."

Hank Smith: 00:16:39 Maybe.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:16:40 Yeah. So that's really interesting that they had access to Micah's words and people are looking at this and wrestling with, "Hmm. What does this mean?"

John Bytheway: 00:16:46 And that maybe this is another place to talk about the Old Testament is not necessarily chronological.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:16:52 Yeah. These prophetic books are not in order. We read all these history stories and you get the historical frame and then you get to the prophetic books, you have to figure out, "Okay, where am I in this story and..."

Hank Smith: 00:17:01 Where does he fit in the history? Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:17:03 So yeah. We already covered Jeremiah in our Come Follow Me reading, but Micah's before him.

Hank Smith: 00:17:07 Before Jeremiah. Okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:17:08 Now the last two verses of chapter two, if we can go back are important. This is where we get that ray of hope that you get in the midst of all the judgment. I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee. I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold. They shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. The breaker has come up before them. They have broken up and have passed through the gate and are gone out by it. And their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them.

00:17:40 So you get images of gathering, you get images of Jehovah being a shepherd, a king who's gathered his flock, and he's kind of leading them out of this gate off like a king in a new exodus and all that. But there's an important concept that appears here for the first time in Micah, but not the last time. And that's the remnant of Israel. So we need to talk about that for a minute.

00:17:59 And here's why. You open up the Book of Mormon to the title page. And like John mentioned earlier, it says, "What's the book of Mormon supposed to be doing here, the big purposes?" Says

the Book of Mormon is to 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.

00:18:20 So right from the get go, the Book of Mormon is framing itself as a book about remnants, written to remnants to talk about stuff that's happened to remnants right there. And the problem with that is Moroni, and then you get into Nephi and the others. They're assuming that we've read our Old Testaments and that we have Old Testament 101 down in our heads and that we know what they mean by remnants right there.

00:18:43 So the Book of Mormon is saturated with this remnant idea there, but they're assuming that you've read Isaiah, Micah, Amos, these other prophetic books of the Old Testament that outline the idea of what it means to be a remnant of Israel and the Book of Mormon is going to go deeper with that idea. But if we haven't really studied up on Old Testament prophetic ideas, then we're not fully understanding what the Book of Mormon is doing with those messages.

Hank Smith: 00:19:05 Yeah. I can just hear Nephi, "What, you don't know Micah?"

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:19:10 Yeah. He's like, "The angel told me you've got the Old Testament so why haven't you..."

Hank Smith: 00:19:12 Yeah. How do you not know this?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:19:15 I am assuming here. So remnants are really important. So here's a little bit of background so we can make sense of this. A remnant dictionary definition, it's a small part of a greater whole. It's a piece of something, piece of the puzzle. So a remnant of Israel is like a chunk of Israel, a subgroup of Israel. So when you're using Israel as like an analogy to a tree, remnants could be like the different branches.

00:19:38 So you don't have a talk of a remnant early in the story of the Abrahamic covenant. It's just here's the covenant family, Abraham and Sarah. And the Abrahamic covenant is presented in Genesis as a solution to the world's problems. Again, there's wickedness, there's violence. How are we going to bring peace and righteousness and bring the covenant to everyone on earth? It's through this family here.

00:19:58 So you got this big world problem and the Abrahamic covenant is a solution. But then as you keep going through the story, a

new problem develops where it sounds great in the ideal, this family goes and just shares with everybody but it doesn't quite go like that.

00:20:12 First off, Israel, this family, they're imperfect themselves. They can't get their own act together. You've got Isaac vs Ishmael, and then you've got Esau versus Jacob, and then Joseph versus his brothers. Like this family is having so much interpersonal conflict themselves, how are they supposed to be a light to the nations?

Hank Smith: 00:20:30 How are they going to bless the world when they're fighting with each other?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:20:34 Yeah. And then eventually when they come out of Egypt and settle back in there, they can't get along so badly they split into two different countries, you got the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. They just cannot be unified. So it really impedes their ability to tell everyone, "Hey, live like us and you can have peace and prosperity and all these blessings," when they're so messed up.

00:20:52 So what's the solution to this problem? How can God use such a messed up group of humans to still get the job done of taking the covenant to the whole world? And the answer does not come in Genesis nor in the historical books of the Old Testament. You read Samuel and Kings, it's just the story of these problem children, and Kings ends with them in exile. Like there's no solution here. So where you get the solution to this problem is in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, Isaiah, Micah, Amos, these others. They try to work this out.

00:21:21 How can God still use Israel when they're so imperfect to still get the job done, to still fulfill the covenant? And the answer to that is remnants. Remnants is the solution to this problem. And why is that? Because if you take Israel as a wicked whole, you can reduce them down to a righteous remnant, a righteous minority that can still get the job done. And remnants give you some flexibility rather than having all of Israel in one spot where they're just kind of doing their thing as a nation. Remnants gives God the flexibility to move different groups of Israelites physically to different spaces so that they can reach more gentiles, and thus be light to more people around the world.

Hank Smith: 00:22:01 Yeah. I'm pretty sure you've read Jacob chapter five.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:22:05 Yeah. That's exactly Jacob five. Move those branches around to different trees so you can spread the fruit. That's exactly it. If it's all stuck in one tree, you can't bring the goodness of the good fruit to all the other trees in the vineyard. That's exactly it.

John Bytheway: 00:22:17 Well, and that is an Old Testament allegory. We just don't have Zenos in our current Old Testament.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:22:22 Exactly. So if you want more background on this Old Testament concept, one good resource to go to that I'd recommend to people, there was an article presented at the Sperry Symposium a few years ago by our colleague Joseph Spencer, and it's called the Prophets Remnant Theology. And it's just going through setting up what all the Old Testament prophets say about this. And you can read that online for free at the Religious Study Center website, [rsc.byu.edu](http://rsc.byu.edu).

Hank Smith: 00:22:47 We'll put a link in our show notes, [followhim.co](http://followhim.co), [followhim.co](http://followhim.co). You could find it there too.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:22:52 And he starts off by pointing out that the Book of Mormon talks a lot about remnants, but it's kind of assuming we know the Old Testament background. So he's like, "Here's the Old Testament background so then the Book of Mormon makes more sense." So that's a great kind of quick review for a Latter-day Saint context of this remnant idea.

00:23:06 So Micah here brings up this concept of a remnant and he's very similar in how he talks about it to what Isaiah does. And since these remnant stories are going to be brought together in third Nephi, it's worth maybe doing a quick review of what Isaiah says. Sorry. All this background just to get back to verse 12.

00:23:22 Isaiah talks a lot about remnants and in the book of Isaiah, if you look, step back and look at Isaiah as a whole, it's the story of two different remnants primarily. The first half of the book, chapters one through 39 is one remnant story, and chapters 40 through 66, the second half, is a remnant story about a different remnant.

00:23:40 So the first half of the book, the first remnant is the one that's in Isaiah's day. Where Judah is wicked, those Assyrians are on the horizon, they're going to come destroy everybody, Isaiah's trying to preach to them. And what Isaiah's warning is that God is going to reduce wicked Judah down, down, down until you just get the righteous people left. So this righteous remnant that survives the destruction.

00:24:02 In Isaiah six, God even puts a number on this. He says a 10th shall return. So it's like 10% of them. And there's all sorts of places where Isaiah talks about this. He says that we're going to, the survivors that are left in Jerusalem will be holy. Everyone that is counted among the living in Jerusalem. He talks about a holy seed, kind of replanting the tree of Judah after it's chopped down, all sorts of images getting at this remnant idea.

00:24:24 You can tell how important this is to Isaiah because he names his son Shear-Jashub, which means Shear, a remnant-

Hank Smith: 00:24:32 Shall return.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:24:34 ... Jashub, will return.

Hank Smith: 00:24:35 Okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:24:35 He likes to give kids this message name so they're walking billboards for the big points he's trying to make.

Hank Smith: 00:24:41 Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, right?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:24:43 Yeah. Emmanuel, God is with us, right? So Shear-Jashub, Shear is the term for remnant that he typically uses right there. So a remnant shall return, remnant will survive is a big deal for him. So then, the Assyrians come and we've got the Hezekiah story and you just have these survivors in Jerusalem that repented and turned to Jehovah in trust like Hezekiah. So that's the righteous remnant there.

00:25:03 And now they're prepared to do the job of Israel, because instead of having 90% of Israel's wicked, now you've got 10% left, but at least they're righteous. They can keep the commandments. They can be the light that they're supposed to be. They can do the job properly now so that's one function of creating a remnant.

00:25:19 The second half of the book of Isaiah has the remnant different story now. You've got this group that has been exiled to captivity in Babylon. So the way they were created as a remnant is the Babylonians came, scooped up this chunk of people and physically relocated them to Babylon and dumped them there. And now they're a remnant that's operating there.

00:25:34 And God promises to redeem them, to get them out of Babylon, physically gather them back to the land of their inheritance where they can rebuild Jerusalem. So it's a different remnant

story. And it's kind of nice comparing and contrasting those two stories because Nephi wants to talk about remnants in the Book of Mormon so he can liken these stories to the last days. And Nephi's got two stories in Isaiah he can turn to. So the first story is more handy to make certain points, and then the second story is more handy to make other points. So Nephi's got two kind of stories he can draw from.

- 00:26:05      So for example, when Nephi wants to focus on God's destruction on the wicked, mean gentiles oppressing the remnant. Most or your best resource for that is the first half of Isaiah where you get the destruction of the Assyrians. You do get the destruction of Babylon in the second half, but it's mostly applied. There's not as much destruction language there.
- 00:26:22      On the flip side, when you want to talk about remnants that physically gather back after being scattered, you got to go to the second half of Isaiah. Because in the first half the remnant doesn't go anywhere, they're just in Jerusalem the whole time. They don't move. It's in the second half where they got to make a physical journey.
- 00:26:36      So when Nephi wants to talk about that aspect of it, he's got to go to the second half of Isaiah or when Nephi wants to talk about this dynamic of nice Gentiles who are helping the remnants, he's got to go to the second half, because those Persians are the nice Gentiles that help out the remnant there. There's no nice Gentiles in the first half. It's just the Assyrians, these mean gentiles there. So when Nephi wants to talk about a contrast between mean wicked gentiles and nice helpful gentiles, he's got to go to the second half of Isaiah and quote from there.
- 00:27:03      So Nephi is very much aware of the dynamic of these two remnants stories and he very powerfully draws upon them to liken it to the Latter-day remnants and what their situation is such as the Lamanites.
- 00:27:14      So back to Micah then. All that being said, verse 12 in chapter two again. I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee. I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. The remnant is always a promise that only a minority of you are going to make it through this. But there will always be that minority that survives. There's a protection clause in the Abrahamic covenant that God won't let Israel get completely destroyed. They're always going to survive and then he'll keep working with them.

00:27:43 So you see this like in the Book of Mormon, powerful contrast between the children of Lehi, who are part of the covenant, and when they go apostate, they have a remnant that survives to the last days so that they can come back eventually. Then, there's the Jaredites by contrast or Gentiles, they're not part of the covenant. And when they get go apostate, they're completely destroyed. There is no root nor branch. There's no remnant to survive for the last days, Latter-day Jaredites coming back because they don't have the protection clause that's built in.

Hank Smith: 00:28:09 Josh, doesn't Isaiah use it as like a tree that's been chopped down but a piece then starts growing again out of the trunk?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:28:16 Yes. A few places Isaiah used it as that image of the chopped down tree and then the holy seed that sprouts like a root or a shoot or a rod that comes out and can regrow the tree.

John Bytheway: 00:28:24 The teal tree or the oak and Terry Ball says those are trees that can be, you could have all the leaves eaten off but it will still come back because there's a remnant or a sap within.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:28:35 Yeah. So this remnant idea is very powerful for the prophets because on the one hand it's a promise that God won't let his Israel be completely destroyed. He'll make them, at least a small part of them survive so they can live and grow another day.

00:28:46 And on the other hand, it gives God the ability to now have some flexibility to still work with Israel in either to produce a righteous group that can get the job done or to move them around in new Gentile areas, mix them up a little bit. But either way, that helps God use Israel to fulfill the purposes of the Abrahamic covenant to bring the blessings of the everlasting covenant to all the nations of the earth.

00:29:08 So remnants are key to making this work. If they're all stuck in one group and you had to take them all or nothing, it really halt God's ability to work with them here. So remnants is a key and powerful idea.

Hank Smith: 00:29:18 So the scattering is a good thing, it put them into these remnants.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:29:22 Yeah. It can be a good thing to get them out there. Like the Nephites go to the Americas and now they can do missionary work among the natives that are there, the Gentiles there. You have Book of Mormon hints about that. Sometimes it's a

punishment, but even then when it's a punishment, he'll use the unfortunate situation they're in in order to still get the job done.

00:29:38 Like Isaiah 49, God says to the remnant in Judah. Yeah. I'll get you out of Babylon, but that's too light of a thing. I also want you to be a light to the nation so we can bring my salvation to the ends of the earth like let's do this. Let's get back to basics here.

00:29:51 So Micah talks a lot about this remnant idea in the same vein of Isaiah, but he's also going to add a little bit more detail about a certain aspect of the remnant that Isaiah does not do, which is why one reason I think at third Nephi Jesus quotes Micah instead of just sticking with Isaiah. So we'll get there.

00:30:06 Anyway, let's go to chapter four now and continue through the book. So chapter three ended, remember, with Jerusalem getting plowed. And then, it says, "The mountain of the house will be as a high place to the forest." Meaning it'll be like just bare. It'll be like an open field out in the wilderness just bulldozed. And that transitions into chapter four, which has a lot of hope, opens right here.

00:30:27 And it opens with a prophecy that will sound very familiar, because it's almost word for word the same as Isaiah chapter two. But in the last days, so now we're moving from Micah's time and looking forward to a hopeful future. In the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord. So that's the same thing that just got destroyed at end of chapter three, but is now apparently rebuilt and destroyed, or sorry, rebuilt and restored.

00:30:51 The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord into the house of the God of Jacob and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths. For the law shall go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people and rebuke strong nations afar off. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. Sounds familiar.

Hank Smith: 00:31:24 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:31:25 Oh yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:31:25 It sounds very familiar.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:31:28 There's a few differences, but it's mostly the same here as Isaiah. So people have asked, did Micah take this from Isaiah or did Isaiah take this from Micah? And officially, we don't know. Scholars have argued that Isaiah was first and Micah copied it. Others have argued that Micah's first and Isaiah copied it. Others have argued that they're both taking it from a third source that we don't know about.

Hank Smith: 00:31:48 Okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:31:49 I think Latter-day Saints have often assumed that Isaiah was first, but that's just because we think Isaiah's awesome so we just jumped to that.

Hank Smith: 00:31:55 And he comes first in the, as you read, right? If you're reading the Old Testament, he comes first so you kind of automatically think that way, but they're not in chronological order.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:32:05 So the interesting thing here is though they frame this prophecy a little bit differently. In Isaiah, he's contrasting this amazing future with the wicked present we have right now and like, "Get your act together guys, you're sinning, you need to repent so we can work towards this future."

00:32:19 In Micah, he just said, "Jerusalem's going to be destroyed. You're all going to be plowed, but someday things are going to be better." Then, he contrasts that with the temple's going to be rebuilt and everyone's going to come here. And like in Isaiah, it's important here that you've got all these nations and these peoples that are coming to the temple, coming to the house of the Lord, because, again, the Abrahamic covenant is all about Gentiles coming and joining Israel, being adopted, becoming numbered with the house of Israel and you get that dynamic very beautifully presented here.

00:32:48 And the way that Micah talks about the remnant before this, and he's going to talk about the remnant after this, suggests that remnants are tied into this. That it's by creating a remnant that God can do this work of bringing these gentiles into the house of Israel.

00:33:03 So we'll move on to verse six. In that day, saith the Lord. So still talking about this future time, will I assemble her that halteth,

or is lame, and I will gather her that is driven out and her that I have afflicted. And I will make her that halted a remnant and her that was cast far off a strong nation. And the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth even forever. Israel's been, they're like walking lamely. They've been injured. He's afflicted them. They're all over the place. They're scattered, but he's going to bring them together and remnants are the way that he's going to do it. We're going to gather in these pockets of Israel that are scattered in all the nations of the earth.

Hank Smith: 00:33:42

And there's that her again like she's the bride.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:33:45

Yeah. Bringing them back. Then, the rest of chapter four is more talking about destruction and things. So it's like verse 10 says that Zion is like a woman in travail, a woman in labor. So they're having these birth pains and they're shrieking and stuff like that. You're going through this awful painful experience. But what always happens at the end of the labor, you get the baby and it's nice again, right?

00:34:10

So that's what he's using. He has a little allusion here to the Babylonian exile that's still a hundred years out. Thou shalt go even to Babylon and there shalt thou be delivered. So that's a play on here both be delivered of the baby, you've gotten through the birth pains now, and you're going to be delivered from Babylon, redeemed from there, right?

Hank Smith: 00:34:26

Physically.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:34:27

The Lord shall redeem thee from the hands of thine enemies. So basically, it's saying, "Hey, remnant, I'm going to save you, but you're going to have to go through some hard times first. You might feel sometimes like you're in the middle of labor and that's what you got to get through if you're going to get to the joy that's on the other side of the labor." He's promising eventual salvation for the remnant, but it doesn't mean there's not going to be a painful difficult road to get there before you get to that final restoration.

00:34:52

So then, verses 11, 12, 13 start to get into the stuff we're going to quote in the Book of Mormon so I'll read this. Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, "Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion." So you've got these antagonistic Gentiles that are antagonistic to the remnant. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel. For he, the Lord, shall gather them, meaning the remnant, as the sheaves into the floor. The sheaves into the threshing floor. So gathering image.

00:35:23 Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion. For I will make thine horn iron and I will make thy hooves brass. And thou shalt beat in pieces many people. And I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

00:35:38 So two images here, verse 12 has this image of gathering the remnant together. And in verse 13 says that Zion here is going to have a horn of iron, which is an image of strength, and hooves of bronze, which like an image of hardness. And then, they are going to go beat in people, beat in pieces these people, these antagonistic Gentiles that are trying to fight them. So you get this image of the remnant being the instrument in the Lord's hand to then go and beat these wicked oppressive Gentiles that are trying to destroy them.

00:36:11 So that will become important in third Nephi so we'll move on and then circle back to this.

Hank Smith: 00:36:14 So he is saying this will happen in a future date where Jerusalem's going to suffer all this destruction, but this remnant will have power at a future date?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:36:24 Yeah. They'll be gathered and then they'll be strengthened. So instead of getting beaten up, they will then be hardened and strengthened so they can then beat their oppressors.

Hank Smith: 00:36:31 Okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:36:32 Chapter five verse one is kind of continuing that same general train of thought. Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops. He hath laid siege against us. They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. So this image of getting oppressed and the leader of Israel is getting smacked. Maybe as they first understood it, this could be like Sennacherib invading Jerusalem and attacking Hezekiah, something like that. But certainly it's part of this military imagery we're getting here in 12 and 13.

00:36:57 And then, chapter five verse two kind of starts a new section that's really important because it describes this king from the line of David who's going to come and make everything good. So I think we can all guess where that is going and we're listening to this right before Christmas. So this is an important passage to get into.

Hank Smith: 00:37:15 And it tells us where this king's going to come from.

John Bytheway: 00:37:18 Mm-hmm.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:37:18 Exactly. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah. Ephratah might be like an... We're not sure what that means exactly. It might be an archaic equivalence to Bethlehem or somewhere nearby identifying the region. So Bethlehem, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, like these villages, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, God, that is to be a ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

00:37:47 So the reference to Bethlehem seems to be suggesting that this ruler is going to be from the line of David. David is from Bethlehem and that's where the prophet Samuel anointed him to be king. So even though the Davidic line did not live in Bethlehem after that, it's probably invoking Bethlehem there to say, "Yeah. This king is going to come from Bethlehem either physically, because they actually do still come from that village or at least invoking that idea that King David was from there and where that Davidic line.

00:38:12 So this is the verse that, of course, is quoted in the gospel of Matthew, when you got the wise men going to Herod and they're like, "Where is he that is born, the king of the Jews?" And that makes Herod panic, because he's not born king of the Jews. He's a Roman appointee so he's sensitive about his position.

00:38:29 And then, he asks the guys and they go look, and they say, well, the prophet has written on, an illusion to Micah, and then, they quote chapter five verse two, right? Well, look, it says he's going to come out of Bethlehem. And that's how the wise men know to go to Bethlehem and that's... Then, Herod, of course, hatches his evil plot to go murder all the babies in Bethlehem and keep this guy who's born king of the Jews from coming and doing all these things.

Hank Smith: 00:38:52 Okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:38:53 So we get that Christmas reference very clearly there. But reading the rest of the verses is interesting because it continues to talk about in this prophecy what this king from the line of David is going to do. So in verse three. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth. So that's a reference back to chapter four where Israel's like this woman that's in labor and we're waiting for that time of deliverance there.

- 00:39:15 So it seems like it's hard to say what this means, but somehow he's being kind of held back until the right moment. Then, the remnant, there's that word again of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he, still this kingly figure, shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord. Feeding means like a shepherd. You're feeding your flock, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they shall abide. For now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be the peace or the one of peace.
- 00:39:46 When the Assyrian shall come into our land, when he shall tread in our palaces, then we will rise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof. Thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land and when he treadeth within our borders.
- 00:40:03 So this is interesting because it uses Assyria as this image, but we have no indication in the scriptures that a king of Judah ever takes the fight to the land of Assyria and fights them there for having invaded Judah. So I take this as using the imagery that was familiar to them in their time, but still using it symbolically of a greater evil that's going to attack Israel in the future.
- 00:40:23 And you've got this king of David coming forth, this ruler in Israel who's going to gather the remnant and he's going to take the fight to their enemies and he's going to conquer and feed them as a shepherd and lead them to victory in peace right there. So the fact that Matthew identifies this as Jesus is very significant. That Jesus is the king of Israel who will come and as the redeemer of Israel, gather the remnants in the last days, preserve and protect them and lead them in the fight against their enemies.
- 00:40:48 Verse seven. And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, so presumably Gentiles, non-covenant people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. People have read this as either the remnant being positive in its relationship to these peoples or negative. You could see it both ways.
- 00:41:10 That verse eight is clearly negative. It's an antagonistic relationship. So if verse seven is positive, it's that image dew being nourishing and life giving and refreshing. But there are other spots in the Old Testament where it uses the dew falling on everything as a military image to say, "We're just going to fall on all these guys and cover them completely and take them

out." Like second Samuel 17:12 uses the dew in that way. So you can either read it as a positive-negative, compare-contrast, or that they're both negative and discussing what's going to happen.

00:41:38 So verse eight. This is getting now into the part Jesus quotes. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of the sheep. So the remnant of Israel is the lion and the Gentiles are like the sheep. And then, you just imagine if you let a lion loose in a flock of sheep, what is going to happen? It's going to be a fight. It's going to be a blood bath, but it's very one sided.

Hank Smith: 00:42:05 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:42:06 So who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off. So you got the remnant taking out these Gentiles and ripping them to pieces and destroying them and no one can save them.

00:42:25 Then, verses 10 through 15 have a new thought. It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cut off. And then, it starts to list all these bad things that he's going to remove. And the sense you get here in Micah is that now he's talking to Israel that he's going to purge them too, because he lists specific things that were problems for the Israelites in their particular kind of covenant context.

00:42:47 So he says, "I'll cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I'll destroy thy chariots." That's military image obviously. But it's important because the prophets often equate Judah gathering and amassing horses and chariots as a bad thing, because it means they're trusting in military stuff to save them and not God to save them.

00:43:04 So he says he'll get rid of those things and the cities and throw down the strongholds. So he's getting rid of all the military protection that they've trusted in before, because now they got to trust in him. And then, in verse 12. He'll cut off witchcraft, soothsayers. Verse 13, graven images, standing images, the work of your hand. So idols are all getting taken off.

00:43:23 Verse 14. The groves he'll take out like these Asherah poles that they're worshipping. He's going to destroy these cities. So it's stuff that usually you hear in context of what Israel's doing

wrong. So he sounds like he's kind of critiquing Israel here. But then verse 15, returns to the Gentiles. I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, though Hebrew word there is goyim, which is usually translated as either nations or Gentiles. Heathen has kind of a weird connotation in modern English, right? Like bad, but it's Gentiles.

00:43:52 So God will also execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the Gentiles such as they have not heard. And the word heard there often is translated as obey *shema* there. So it could be these Gentiles that have not obeyed, could be another way to translate it.

00:44:06 So you get this interesting tension here in this section that you've got the remnant is going to be empowered to destroy these Gentiles, but then God's also going to purge Israel of its issues. And then, it returns finally to this thought again about these wicked gentiles getting destroyed. So you get all that in there.

00:44:24 So let's jump to third Nephi chapter 20. This is the second day of Jesus' sermons to the Nephites there. So I thought this would be interesting to look at because I know in Come Follow Me in a couple years, we'll get back to third Nephi, but there's so much going on there, nobody's going to take the time to really be like, "Let's explore Micah in depth." So this is probably your best launching pad to go see what's going on specifically with that.

00:44:45 So chapter 20 verse 10 is a section where Jesus is kind of returning to what he started to talk about the first day about Isaiah and scattering and gathering and remnants and all that. And you remember the Nephites their eyes get glazed over and they're like Isaiah. And then, Jesus pauses and says, "Let's let you go home and..."

John Bytheway: 00:45:03 My time is at hand. Yeah. You can't understand everything.

Hank Smith: 00:45:06 Go home. Go ponder. Go pray. Go sleep.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:45:09 So he had a really important stuff to discuss with them. So here he's returning to where he left off the first day and now he's going to continue with that thought.

00:45:16 So verse 12. He says, "I'm going to talk about the time in the last days, the fulfilling of the covenant, which the Father hath made with his people, O house of Israel." And in verse 13. Then, shall the remnants, which shall be scattered abroad upon the face of

the earth, be gathered in from all these directions. And they shall be brought to a knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them. So they're gathered both physically and spiritually, but gathered back to knowledge there.

00:45:40 And then he says to this, the Lehiters are going to be a remnant. There's going to be a Lamanites remnant in the last days. And he says in verse 14 that the Father has given you guys this land for your inheritance. It's not Jerusalem, your own remnant now, you get your own land.

00:45:53 And in verse 15, he starts this new kind of subsection. And I say to you, that if the Gentiles in the last days do not repent after the blessing, which they shall receive, meaning the restored gospel, after they have scattered my people.

00:46:06 And then we get into our Micah quote. So first he quotes Micah chapter five verses eight and nine. But in Micah 5:8 and 9, it talked about the remnant in the third person. Those guys over there. But Jesus is talking to a remnant. And so, he switches it to talk in the second person directly to them.

00:46:23 Then shall ye, who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, go forth among them. Meaning the Gentiles. And ye shall be in the midst of them who shall be many, and ye shall be among them as a lion among the beast of the forest, and as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he goeth through both treadeth down and teareth it in pieces, and none can deliver.

00:46:40 Thy hand shall be lifted up upon all the adversaries, and all the enemies shall be cut off.

00:46:46 So this Lamanite remnant is told, you're going to have gentiles that'll flick you, smite you, scatter you, beat you up, but eventually, if those Gentiles do not repent and embrace the gospel, then I'm going to empower you and the tables are going to turn. You'll suddenly be like a lion, they'll be like sheep and you're going to tear them into pieces and you'll be freed from this oppression that you've had.

00:47:05 And then, as he goes on he jumps back to Micah four and we get Micah four, the second half of verse 12, and Micah 4:13. So this starts in third Nephi 20 verse 18. And I will gather my people as a man gathereth his sheaves into the floor. For I will make my people with whom the Father hath covenanted, yea, I will make thy horn iron. So he's adding a little bit to Micah. I will

make thy horn iron, thy hoofs brass and you will beat in people many pieces.

- 00:47:30 And then, he concludes that verse 19 by adding something that's not in Micah saying, "Behold, I am he who doeth it." So again, you get this interesting dynamic. If you've got the remnant who are the agents acting as the agents of destruction, they're the ones doing the destruction directly. But he does add here that God is behind that. He's empowering the remnant. He approves of this. He's behind their sudden success as the tables have turned.
- 00:47:55 And then, in verse 20 he concludes with this final recap of what the point of all this is. It shall come to pass, saith the Father, that the sword of my justice shall hang over them at that day. And except they repent it shall fall upon them, saith the Father, yea, even upon all the nations of the Gentiles.
- 00:48:11 So this warning to Gentiles in the last days that these remnants of Israel, such as the Lamanites, you'll get to beat them up and oppress them and abuse them and scatter them for only so long. But if you continually don't repent and don't embrace the restored gospel and you just keep going on with your wicked and oppressive ways, eventually these remnants that will be empowered to turn the tables and they'll come and destroy you in your wickedness there.
- 00:48:34 Now at this point, we might have people reading the Book of Mormon or the Bible going, "Okay. Well, that's not me. I'm not a Gentile. I'm a member of the house of Israel. I have a patriarchal blessing that proves it."
- 00:48:46 So to that I want to suggest, well, yes, but there's a caveat here. According to the Book of Mormon, it is possible for people in the last days to be both a descendant of Israel and a Gentile. How does that work? It's basically because you can have Abraham's genes in your DNA, you can be a lost member of Israel and that can be your covenant heritage going back and everything. But if you belong to a Gentile nation, that can be your citizenship. If you belong to a gentile culture, that can be your cultural orientation.
- 00:49:19 For example, in second Nephi three, Joseph Smith is identified as a descendant of Joseph of Egypt. So he's got the Israelite DNA. But then in the title page of the Book of Mormon, Moroni says the Book of Mormon comes forth by way of the Gentile. Seemingly calling Joseph Smith the Gentile, because he's a

citizen of a Gentile nation right there, even though he's got the DNA.

00:49:37 So you really can be both. You can be Israelite in your ancestry and a Gentile in your culture and national affiliation. So that suggests that rather than just quickly going, "Ah, man, this is talking about other people, not me. This has nothing to do for me." There might be a warning for us too. Because in as much as we participate in Gentile culture, which is secularism and pop stars and violence and participating in economic systems that exploit people, all the things that Gentile culture does wrong, in as much as we participate in any of that, this can also be a warning to us.

00:50:13 Are we going to be true to our Israelite heritage and turn to God for answers or are we doing what the, our gentile culture tells us to do to get answers in the way we should live? And in as much as we give any loyalty to the Gentile culture, we are susceptible I think to the warnings that he's trying to give here.

Hank Smith: 00:50:28 Yeah. Verse 20. The sword of my justice hang over them except they repent. Talking to us.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:50:34 Yeah. And so, you can ask yourself this in a bunch of ways. When you have deep spiritual questions, for example, do you go unto the Lord in prayer? Do you listen to the prophets? Do you read the scriptures or do you do the typical thing that anyone in the world would do? Google your deep spiritual questions. Listen to podcasts from people who are antagonistic. Listen to people who don't even believe in God and get their framework, right? Which way are you turning?

00:50:54 That's something we all have to figure out, because we all have kind of these dual identities as members of a modern secular culture and as people who have covenanted in the church to follow Jesus Christ.

Hank Smith: 00:51:04 Yeah. And I noticed in the next verse the Lord says, "I will establish my people." Not I might or I'm going to try. I will establish my people, O house of Israel. So if you want to get on the team, come be on the team, come repent.

John Bytheway: 00:51:17 And I think repent is the key word there. I'm looking at second Nephi chapter 30 verse two. For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord. And as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off. For the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with

them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel. So bottom line, repent.

- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:51:44 Yeah. In fact, that's a beautiful lead in if we can just go really quickly to chapter 21, the second Micah quote. He's using it to make that exact point, John. So I'm glad you're cross-referencing that back to Nephi. So chapter 21 verse 11.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:55 This is third Nephi 21, right?
- John Bytheway: 00:51:58 Third Nephi 21 verse 11. So Jesus here now has a warning not just to Latter-day wicked Gentiles, but Latter-day wicked Israel. Because like John read from second Nephi, nobody's off the hook here.
- 00:52:10 So verse 11. Therefore it shall come to pass that whosoever, Jew or Gentile, will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, skipping ahead. They shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant.
- 00:52:26 In the context we've been talking about the Book of Mormon coming forth. So he's saying, "Whosoever will not believe my words that I'm presenting to the people in the last days through the Book of Mormon, they'll be cut off from my people who are of the covenant."
- 00:52:38 And then, he quotes Micah again. So we're back to chapter five starting in verse eight. But this time instead of doing verses eight and nine, he goes all the way to verse 15.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:47 Man, Jesus knows his scriptures, Josh.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:52:50 He does. And my people, who are a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles. Yea, in the midst of them, and then we get the lion imagery again. Tearing in pieces, none can deliver, all that stuff. But Jesus adds an interesting line in verse 14. Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles unless they repent.
- 00:53:08 And then, it continues going through the things that we read in Micah that sounded like they're about the Israelites. Like they'll cut off thy chariots, thy horses, thy strongholds, thy witchcraft, soothsayers, graven images, all that stuff right there. So who's he talking to? Is he still talking to Israelites like in Micah or is he talking to Gentiles?

00:53:25 So you look at verse 14, it mentions Gentiles. But in verse 12, it had mentioned my people. So who are the thys or the yours in verses like 14 through 19? It could be both. Really, you could read it that way. It could be the Gentiles here. It could still be the Israelites. This might be a good place to mention that our friend Dana Pike, who has been on your podcast this year.

Hank Smith: 00:53:44 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:53:44 He just wrote a fantastic book chapter on Micah here in third Nephi and how it's used. It's in this new book that just came out, They Shall Grow Together: The Bible in the Book of Mormon, which is just full of fantastic articles about the dynamic between the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

Hank Smith: 00:53:57 That's printed by the RSC.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:53:59 Yeah. Religious Study Center and Deseret Book. So this just came out and Dana Pike has what I think is the best take on Micah in the Book of Mormon that's ever been done. I'm getting some of my stuff from him here. I'll just say that. So like Dana Pike, for example, on this question of in these verses here, are we talking warning to Gentile, warning to Israel? He thinks it's perhaps intentional ambiguity going on here, because we got two kind of references we can go back to. Everybody's being critiqued right here.

00:54:23 Jumping down to verse 18. This is the end of the Micah quote. "I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee." So I will destroy thy cities. And then verses 19 and 20 have stuff that Jesus now adds into the quote from Micah. "It shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceiving, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away. For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that on that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel."

00:54:54 So he repeats this idea. It doesn't matter what your background is, covenant, non-covenant, whatever. Anybody who does not repent will be cut off from the people.

00:55:02 And then, he returns to the quote from Micah in verse 21. "And I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard." Now the switch he does there is in the original Micah verse. Micah five verse 15. He says, "I'll execute vengeance on the heathen", on these gentiles. So it's just all about the gentiles there.

- 00:55:23 But here he says, whoever doesn't accept Jesus Christ and whoever does not repent will be cut off from the house of Israel just like the heathens, just like the Gentiles. So there it's a very clear warning to Israel. That if you do not repent and believe in Jesus and follow him, it doesn't matter what your background is or what covenants you have made. You'll be cut off and you'll be just like a Gentile basically.
- 00:55:46 So throughout third Nephi, Jesus is painting this dynamic. Back in 3 Nephi 16, he said, "The remnant is going to be brought to the knowledge of me, their redeemer. So you can find these remnants, gather them into the covenant."
- 00:55:57 He also said in 3 Nephi 16 that if the Gentiles will repent and come unto me, then they can be numbered among my people. So everybody's invited into the covenant in the last days. But then you can also get out of the covenant. So like here in 21, he had said, "Whosoever will not believe in Jesus Christ shall be cut off from among my people who are the covenant." And then, he repeats it here. If the Gentiles don't repent, the sword of my justice will hang over them.
- 00:56:20 So his point is it really doesn't matter who your ancestor was. It really doesn't matter what covenants you have made. If you're not repenting, if you're not believing the Book of Mormon and coming onto Jesus Christ. Those are the things that ultimately matter.
- 00:56:34 And President Nelson has said the same thing. It doesn't matter if you're a literal descendant of Israel or you're just adopted in. The blessings are the same. What matters in the end is covenant keeping whatever your background is. And that's really what he wants to stress here in third Nephi.
- 00:56:50 So before we leave third Nephi, I'll just make a comment on this. So why is he quoting from Micah to make this point? Why not just stick with Isaiah? Because he puts lots of Isaiah too. There's probably lots of reasons. So I'll just suggest one of them here.
- 00:57:02 Micah has these images from both chapter four and chapter five about the remnant directly being the instrument of destruction on these wicked unrepentant gentiles. Your horn will be iron and thy hoof is brass and be like a lion among sheep. So they're the direct agents of destruction. Somehow God's going to use the remnants to destroy these wicked unrepentant gentiles.

- 00:57:23 In the book of Isaiah, you don't really find an image like that. You get a few verses that are sort of maybe, but nothing really direct. Part of the reason for that is in the stories of remnants that Isaiah is telling, the remnants always pretty powerless, whether it's the people getting beat up by Assyrians and they're left there in Jerusalem or this remnant of Jews exiled in Babylon. Both of them need a lot of help to get out. And in both cases it's God kind of doing all the destruction thing or using the Persians to do it.
- 00:57:49 So it's other people doing it. It's not the remnant themselves that are ever powerful in those stories. So Isaiah really doesn't give you a lot of material to make that kind of a picture, whereas Micah does. He's got this image of remnants who are like the lions doing the tearing and the treading down.
- 00:58:02 So when Jesus wants to make this point in third Nephi, that part of the destruction on the wicked will come through the instrumentality of the remnant with him empowering them. He can't go to Isaiah really to get an image for that. He's got to go to the book of Micah. So I think that's one reason why he's using Micah here alongside Isaiah.
- Hank Smith: 00:58:20 And just as a side note, I'm so impressed with the Book of Mormon at this point with how well the Savior is using Micah, and then adding to it, changing it to adapt to the message he wants to give.
- John Bytheway: 00:58:34 I mean I was sitting here, Hank, going, yeah, like Joseph Smith, he made this up and it just poured out of him. Right?
- Hank Smith: 00:58:39 He had Micah memorized and then just adjusted right there on the spot for the message.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:58:43 Yeah. Jesus weaves a lot of stuff together here and he changes wording. He interprets it different ways, but I can't imagine anyone complaining to him because he'll just ask, "Well, who do you think gave it to Micah and Isaiah and these guys in the first place? That was me."
- John Bytheway: 00:58:57 Which is really cool, because Jesus is going to quote Malachi later and it's like, well, you gave that to Malachi, you just could have said it. But I love that he honors his prophets that way and says, "Let me quote the words," which basically he gave to Malachi.

Hank Smith: 00:59:12 Jesus is a scripture studier. He studies the scriptures, even as a resurrected being he's quoting scripture.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:59:19 So why don't we return now to Micah six and seven and we'll take this home?

Hank Smith: 00:59:23 Okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:59:24 Last two chapters of Micah go together right here. And again, we're not going to read every verse in detail, but Micah chapter six starts off with kind of this prophets do this where it's kind of like a lawsuit where the prophet is kind of critiquing the people like a lawyer saying, "You've been unfaithful to God." And he kind of proves the case against them.

00:59:43 So in verse three, God asks, "O my people..." This is Micah 6:3. "O my people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me." Like have I broken the terms of the covenant? Have I been unfaithful? Have I ever let you down? Tell me, bring your case.

00:59:59 And then, he invokes in verse four. "I got you out of Egypt, I gave you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." In verse five, he invokes other stories. And so, he's accusing them of really being unfaithful, even though he's always done his job.

01:00:11 And then, Micah six verses six and seven has the people's response. We're like, "Well, what do you want us to do about this?" "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?" Like, "How do we make this right? Should we bring a bunch of sacrifices?"

01:00:27 Verse seven. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with 10,000 rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" They're like, "What do you want? Rivers of oil, Thousands of sacrifices, I could offer my firstborn son as a sacrifice, what would appease you? What would make you happy, God?"

Hank Smith: 01:00:46 Yeah. I'm willing to repent. What do you want me to do?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:00:49 And then, in verse eight, Micah responds with this really classic beautiful image that's probably one of the most famous verses of Micah. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good." Like, why are you even asking? He said this a thousand times if he

has ever said it. "What does the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

01:01:09 And guess what the word is behind mercy there? It's HeseD.

Hank Smith: 01:01:11 HeseD.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:01:13 HeseD again.

Hank Smith: 01:01:14 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:01:14 Yeah. God wants you to do justly, treat people right, to love HeseD and to walk humbly before God. You be faithful and loyal and loving to me. And that's really, you know what Jesus was getting at? What are the two greatest commandments? Love God. Love your neighbor. That's what we get beautifully expressed here, I think.

Hank Smith: 01:01:32 That's really nice, because there is something that you can do.

John Bytheway: 01:01:34 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:01:37 And you don't have to go to these extremes like rivers of oil and thousands of sacrifices. It's like, look, all I want you to do is love me. Be true to your covenants and treat people right.

John Bytheway: 01:01:46 It's a broken heart contrite spirit. You don't have to bring literal sacrifices, just bring you, bring your heart. And I think that's what in third Nephi Jesus says, "Okay. No more animal sacrifice. You are the sacrifice. Bring your broken heart and your contrite spirit." Or in other words, do justly, love mercy, walk humbly. That's a great little summary in there in verse eight.

Hank Smith: 01:02:06 If you want to please me, change your heart. I love that. I don't need thousands of rams. I don't need a thousand rivers of oil. I definitely don't need your first born.

John Bytheway: 01:02:14 I just need you.

Hank Smith: 01:02:16 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:02:16 This is one of those verses that's good to put on a t-shirt. Really gets back to those basics.

Hank Smith: 01:02:22 Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly.

John Bytheway: 01:02:24 Can you spell Hesed for me so I can put it in my margin? And then, I can tell myself how to pronounce it.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:02:31 So your simplest English spelling is H-E-S-E-D, Hesed.

John Bytheway: 01:02:36 Because that's come up a lot. It sounds like it's a favorite word in the Old Testament.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:02:40 Yeah. And now that President Nelson is making it mainstream, we get to run with this now. We get to use it all the time. He spent several paragraphs on it in his article saying, "We got to understand this."

Hank Smith: 01:02:50 This new October Liahona article, brand new.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:02:54 I will say too, I didn't mention this earlier, but in the article, President Nelson says in an end note, he says if you want a fuller discussion with more details about Hesed and about the covenant as a whole, there's a book that he recommends and I brought it here. It's God Will Prevail by Kerry Muhlestein, friend of the podcast.

John Bytheway: 01:03:13 Isn't that wonderful?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:03:15 This book gets an endorsement from President Nelson in the end notes of the article. So it is fantastic and I hope people will take up President Nelson's invitation and really make this a matter of study. The Covenant and Hesed and that love and loyalty there. And Kerry's book goes over this beautifully. You can't get a better endorsement than President Nelson so I would look at that book.

01:03:32 All right. And then, the rest of Micah six is more just critiquing them and saying that they're wicked. So for the sake of time, we'll just move on.

01:03:40 Chapter seven has Micah starting out. "Woe is me." And then, he points out that nobody's good in society, everybody's a liar, everybody's cheating each other. And so, it's either Micah or him kind of personifying Israel. Just lamenting the sad state that they're in. And it goes over that for several verses until you get to verse seven.

01:03:58 And then, either Micah or, again, kind of the good people personified say, "You know what? I can't trust anyone. Everyone's cheating me. Society's topsy-turvy. But in verse seven. "Therefore I will look unto the Lord. I will wait for the

God of my salvation. My God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise. When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

- 01:04:23 So I love this here. If someone's saying, "You know what? My life stinks. I'm surrounded by people I don't trust. Everything is just miserable. But what am I going to do about this? Am I going to give into despair? No. I'm going to look to the Lord. He's going to hear me. When I'm in darkness, he'll be my light."
- Hank Smith: 01:04:36 That's a good application for us. If the world's getting you down, look to the Lord. Wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. Because sometimes you watch the news and you think, "Man, what world do we live in?" So verses like this stand out as ways to kind of recenter yourself.
- John Bytheway: 01:04:55 I like that the word look there. Reminds me also of President Nelson's kind of famous quotation that the, our happiness, what is it? Has less to do with the circumstances of our lives and more to do with the focus of our lives. So we look and focus on the Lord instead.
- Hank Smith: 01:05:11 Which way do you face? Yeah?
- John Bytheway: 01:05:13 Yeah. What are we focusing on? If you focus on the news, yeah. That's a bad day, but if you focus on-
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:05:19 And then, why don't we jump to the last three verses and we'll take, bring this home here. The last three verses are also famous. The preceding verses, he has another image of God feeding his flock like a shepherd and kind of nurturing them despite all that they've done wrong.
- 01:05:33 So in verse 18, Micah asked this. "Who is a God like unto thee..." And that's where you get kind of the play on Micah's name, who is like? Mi-cah. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of the heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. Which is in the Hebrew, he delighteth in Hesed. Right there, you get that word again, tied to this remnant idea that as you're gathered into this remnant of Israel and you're that righteous remnant, he... And I just love this.
- 01:06:11 He delights in Hesed. He delights in extending that love and mercy and loyalty to us. It's not like he's grumbling about it. Like, "Oh man, you messed up again. Now I'm going to have to

forgive you, I guess." No. He delights in it. He loves extending mercy. He loves forgiving. This is what gets him happy is being able to extend that kind of love and mercy to us.

- 01:06:35 So Micah just says, "Wow. Can I even imagine another God like that who's just so quick to pardon iniquity, that just passes by your transgression like it never happened, does it not retain his anger forever and delights?"
- Hank Smith: 01:06:49 What a great verse, Micah 7:18.
- Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:06:52 And then, it doesn't stop. These are three good verses. You put these all on the shirt. Verse 19. "He will turn again, he will have compassion on us. He will subdue our iniquities." And then, it says their sins, but other manuscripts will have our sins. "Thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."
- 01:07:10 And the verb there is like to hurl something. He's going to take your sins and not just sweep them under the rug, not just put them in the closet and close the door. He's going to take those sins. He's going to pick them up. He's going to go over to the edge of the cliff and he's going to hurl them with all his might into the depths of the sea where they're just going to disappear forever. Get rid of those things and then he's going to forget them.
- 01:07:31 Verse 20. "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, or show faithfulness to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham." And that's Heseid once again. You're going to do Heseid to Abraham. You're going to be true to the covenant that you made with him. That these people, no matter how bad they mess up, and no matter how long it takes, you're going to forgive them and make sure the covenant is fulfilled.
- 01:07:55 So you'll have Heseid to Abraham, "which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." And that's the note that we end on.
- Hank Smith: 01:08:01 Wow. What a final message from Micah.
- John Bytheway: 01:08:04 I'm reminded of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland who said, "Surely the thing God enjoys most about being God is the thrill of being merciful, especially to those who don't expect it and often feel they don't deserve it." That sounds like verse 18 to me. Delights in mercy.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 01:08:20 And here I can read the end of President Nelson's October 2022 Liahona article. This is what he says. "The covenant path is a path of love. That incredible Heseed. That compassionate, caring for, and reaching out to each other. Feeling that love is liberating and uplifting. The greatest joy you will ever experience is when you are consumed with love for God and for all his children. Loving God more than anything or anyone else is the condition that brings true peace, comfort, confidence, and joy.

01:08:51 The covenant path is all about our relationship with God, our Heseed relationship with him. When we enter a covenant with God, we have made a covenant with him who will always keep his word. He will do everything he can without infringing on our agency to help us keep ours. My dear brothers and sisters, we have been called at this pivotal time in the history of the earth to teach the world about the beauty and power of the everlasting covenant. Our Heavenly Father trusts us implicitly to do this great work."

01:09:22 I'm just really inspired by that and a prophet who can take these truths that have been taught 2800 years ago, lot of centuries ago, and show us just how relevant this is for us in our day. I love to think of God how merciful he is, and the fact that he's so loyal to us because of this covenant we have made.

01:09:43 There's a lot of people who sin and think, "Have I gone too far? Have I looked at pornography too much, I can never be forgiven again? Have I lied so often that I can never be forgiven? Have I done damage so great that it can never get healed?" Or maybe people are fine themselves, but they have family members that they're just aching over, people who were baptized and grew up in the church, maybe even covenanted in the temple, but have since left the covenant path. And we wonder, "Are they so far gone now that God can't call them back?"

01:10:13 That I think the promise here of the prophets is that, no, you, or they are never so far gone that the light of that love that he has, that stems from his covenant with us can't reach us and them. No matter how long it takes, no matter what he's gotten to do, he's never going to be unfaithful to that covenant, loyalty that he has.

01:10:35 He'll reach out, he'll humble us if he needs to. He'll do whatever it takes to call and plead and as soon as we turn to him sincerely repenting and wanting to make that relationship whole again, he will delight in forgetting all that happened and welcoming us

back as if it never happened. And just hurling those sins into the sea to be forgotten forever.

Hank Smith:	01:10:57	Wow. Absolutely. Perfect. John, what a great day. I understand Jonah more and I love Micah.
John Bytheway:	01:11:04	Yeah. That verse 18. What is God like? Here's an answer, a beautiful answer.
Hank Smith:	01:11:10	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	01:11:10	Along with what Joshua just read from President Nelson. I can't wait to go read that article.
Hank Smith:	01:11:16	Who is a God like unto thee-
John Bytheway:	01:11:17	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	01:11:18	I love it. We want to thank Dr. Josh Sears for being with us today. What a wonderful day. We'll certainly have him back. We're grateful for him. We want to thank our executive producers, Steve and Shannon Sorensen. Our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen, and we hope all of you will join us next week on followHIM.
	01:11:40	We have an amazing production crew we want you to know about. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Nielsen, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts and Ariel Cuadra. Thank you to our amazing production team.

WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO LEARN  
FROM THE STORY OF JONAH?



Hank Smith: 00:05 Hello, my friends. Welcome to followHIM Favorites. My name is Hank Smith, and I'm here with the incredible John Bytheway.

00:11 Welcome, John Bytheway.

John Bytheway: 00:12 Thank you.

Hank Smith: 00:13 If you've been following followHIM Favorites this year, you know that we're taking a single question from every lesson and we're just talking about it. The question this week, John, is, what are we supposed to learn from the story of Jonah? This is just a crazy story of Jonah running away from God and being swallowed by a fish, and by the end of chapter one, you're going, "Holy cow. What is happening here?"

00:37 So, John, what do you get out of the story of Jonah?

John Bytheway: 00:40 Oh, man. There's a few things that I think are kind of interesting. One of them is that he gets a call to go to a place that is known for being really wicked and really brutal, to Nineveh. And I like the words it used to describe, he went down to Joppa, and went down into a ship, and they threw them in the water. And then he goes up. The fish swallows him. He vomits him up on the shore. He goes up to Nineveh. It's like, when you're going away from God, you're going down, down, down. There's something to learn about, if the Lord calls you to do something that sounds really hard or impossible, you can do it with his help. And that's a beautiful part.

01:19 The fun part is, Hank, and we've talked about this before, is that Jesus talks about the story of Jonah. When the scribes and Pharisees are demanding a sign, "We would see a sign of thee." Jesus says, I won't give you one except for the sign of Jonah. So, what does he mean by that, do you think, Hank?

Hank Smith: 01:35 I love the sign of Jonah, the idea that I can give you a sign that Jonah was in the whale for three days and three nights. And here's a sign for you. I'm going to come out of a tomb after

three days and three nights. In the belly of the whale, Jonah was there three days and three nights, somewhere he never should have come out of. And yet, he came out of it. Because I think the sign Jesus is talking about is, I can do something even bigger than Jonah did, not just come out of a fish, I can come out of death after three days and three nights.

02:05 I've had students ask me, "Do you really think that Jonah was in the belly of a whale for three days? Is that scientifically possible?" And I've often thought, that's not the question we should be asking. The question we should be asking, "Did Jesus come out of the tomb after three days and three nights? Is that scientifically possible?" Because that question is going to have eternal consequences. The Jonah question, whether it's a metaphor or not, I'm not overly concerned about that. I'm concerned about Jesus and if he really did come out of the tomb. And if he did, wow, that changes everything, doesn't it?

John Bytheway: 02:40 Yeah. Like you said, Jonah came out of a place no one's ever come out of before. And Jesus came out of a tomb. Nobody had ever done that before and came out of a tomb and resurrected. I guess I was thinking he healed Lazarus, but he brought him back from the dead. But Lazarus died again later. Jesus came out of the tomb, resurrected never to die again. And so, how's that scientifically possible?

03:03 The Book of Mormon calls it the Power of Resurrection. It's the opposite of entropy of everything breaking down. It requires a power. And he came forth. And so, I love that Jesus would reference the sign of Jonah and say, "No. I'm not going to give you a sign, except for the sign of, he calls it Jonas in the New Testament. But in the New Testament, Greek names that end in an H end in an S and the New Testament, I guess.

Hank Smith: 03:28 And I think one more lesson from Jonah is let people repent. Be happy when people repent. Jonah's so upset that God doesn't destroy Nineveh. He's almost like saying, "Don't give them a second chance like you just gave me a second chance." We've got to allow people to repent and be happy about it. It's almost like the parable of the prodigal son, here, where he's upset that his brother is doing the right thing.

John Bytheway: 03:52 That he came back.

Hank Smith: 03:53 We've got to be happy when God allows people to repent, when God is kind.

John Bytheway: 03:57 I really like the connection that you make, there. Jonah just got a second chance. Why should he be upset that the people of Nineveh are getting a second chance?

Hank Smith: 04:06 Right.

John Bytheway: 04:06 I guess it was Elder Holland that said that God is a God of second chances, and repentance is a thing. What did Elder Holland say? The most hopeful, encouraging word in the whole Christian vocabulary is "repentance." And the people in Nineveh did it. "Well, Jonah, you should be happy the Lord let you repent. So, let the people of Nineveh repent, too. Maybe he really wanted some justice because they were pretty brutal, those Assyrians in Nineveh.

Hank Smith: 04:30 He maybe wanted them to suffer for their deeds. But remember, someone has already paid. The Savior has already paid for those deeds. So, let's be happy and rejoice when other people repent and come back to the Lord. I think Elder Holland said, "Be kind. And be grateful that God is kind. It's a happy way to live."

John Bytheway: 04:48 I like it. I like, too, in the Book of Jonah, where it says, "Doest thou well to be angry?"

Hank Smith: 04:53 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 04:55 Showing us, "How's this working for you?"

Hank Smith: 04:57 Yeah. How's that working out?

04:59 We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can find it wherever you get your podcasts. This week, we're with Dr Josh Sears. You're going to love it. So, come over and join us there. And then, join us next week for another followHIM Favorites.