



- John Bytheway: 00:00:00 Coming up on this episode of followHIM.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:00:04 It says <Hebrew>. Now, Na in Hebrew can be translated as please. And it doesn't get in here. And I don't know why, but it's the only place I know where God says please when he gives a command.
- John Bytheway: 00:00:24 Hello everyone and welcome to followHIM. As you know, it is an Old Testament year. Last year, we had Voices of the Restoration. We had Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat with us, which was wonderful. We are in the Old Testament and I am so happy we have Dr. Ross Baron with us, who is going to be doing not Voices of the Restoration, but Thoughts to Keep in Mind. Hank, there are so many thoughts. I'm wondering if I got the capacity to keep them all in mind.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:54 John, I gotta tell you, when it comes to keeping things in mind, there is no one like Ross Baron. I could bring up anything with Ross. And he'd be like, "I understand that. I know about that." Whether it be like playing the guitar, playing the drums, surfing. The guy has done literally everything. We get him how many times? I think we get him eight times.
- John Bytheway: 00:01:14 Our listeners will probably recognize that we've had Brother Baron with us. Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon. He knows a lot and he's been on the Price is Right.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:24 Right.
- John Bytheway: 00:01:26 I was reading your bio, Ross. Tell us what you won on the Price is Right, because it cracked me up. I won a mop, a stove, and a barrel sauna. I don't even know what a barrel sauna is. It's the shape?
- Hank Smith: 00:01:44 He didn't either until he got it.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:01:45 It's a barrel and it's a sauna. The name says what it is.

John Bytheway: 00:01:49 When they announced that you win a barrel sauna, does the music go <sing>? Or is it the good music when...

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:01:59 Yeah, no, there's a clip a student of mine made of me on-- its seven minutes. You should see my face when they say, "And behind this door, boom, barrel sauna." Yeah. And this was Bob Barker, by the way. This isn't Drew Carey. Like I was on with Bob Barker. And my goal was to say Bob, at the beginning of every sentence, and then Bob at the end of every sentence, and if you watch the clip, it's pretty funny.

John Bytheway: 00:02:21 You did it. You managed to do it.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:02:23 Yeah. I definitely- Yeah, yeah. It was pretty hilarious. And I had a t-shirt that said, "Bark for Bob." because he's really into animal rights--

Hank Smith: 00:02:29 Yeah, he was.

John Bytheway: 00:02:31 Yeah that's right.

Hank Smith: 00:02:31 Get your pet's spade or neutered. Yeah, I remember.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:02:34 Exactly. Look at you, Hank.

Hank Smith: 00:02:36 Oh yeah, I remember. I had to go ask my mom what that meant. Oh, yeah. John, I'm telling you, over the course of this year, we're gonna get more like this. He's just, he really has done everything. I hope everyone will listen. These aren't the standard Come Follow Me lessons. These are additions like Voices of the Restoration last year.

John Bytheway: 00:02:56 What I remember was your Old Testament time when you talked about the fact that you would have question and answer sessions with folks from all faiths. You even did that on the radio at one point, isn't that right?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:03:08 Correct. Yep. In LA.

John Bytheway: 00:03:10 I would love to listen, but I would not love to be in the hot seat for that one. I would say, "Can I phone a friend?" Oh, let me call Ross.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:03:17 Lifeline.

Hank Smith: 00:03:18 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:03:19 Yeah. Call Ross. Lifelines.

Hank Smith: 00:03:21 In fact, why don't we just bring him on in and have him do this for us? I'll go ahead and take a seat.

John Bytheway: 00:03:25 And that's why we're here. There's a lot of different categories we're looking at today. The Thoughts to Keep in Mind lesson is simply called Reading the Old Testament. I'm so excited about this because Hank, Old Testament is an area where I don't feel as strong as some of the others. Maybe there's a lot of us out there that feel that way, and that's why I'm so glad to have Ross here to help us. He is so smart, but he can speak to those of us who are new at this. Reading the Old Testament. Ross, where do you want to take us today?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:03:56 The idea for today's episode, I have like top 10 things to keep in mind. So hopefully our mind capacity to 10 things. Then I wanted to do, once we did the top 10 things to keep in mind, I thought we could actually go into a couple of verses where we can model some of these ideas.

John Bytheway: 00:04:12 Wonderful. What an adjustment from the Doctrine and Covenants where it's modern scripture. These are people that are a couple of centuries removed from us, but when we're starting the Old Testament, how many centuries are we going back here?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:04:26 Yeah. Yeah, we're talking big time. Far away.

Hank Smith: 00:04:29 It's a foreign country. One, it's massive. Compared to all the other scriptures. It's intimidating because it's a big book. Two, it's like, really? I don't understand most of it. Uh, well, I'm gonna read the Book of Mormon this year. I'm gonna go back to the Book of Mormon this year, and I'm sure it's important, and maybe I'll pick up a couple of things. Maybe convince us, maybe give us a persuasive speech on ... What do you see here?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:04:55 I think that's a critical question. One of the things to keep in mind is that the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible is the setting for the Book of Mormon. In other words, if you're like, "I love the Book of Mormon," you're actually in an Old Testament setting when you're reading the Book of Mormon. Until Christ comes, so we're talking first Nephi through Third Nephi 11, you're in an Old Testament setting. When you are reading the Book of Mormon, you are 100% contextually situated in an Old

Testament text. If you're like, "Oh, I don't understand the Old Testament", which I get. There can be some tough things and we're gonna work through those. But what I'm saying is that the Book of Mormon essentially is an Old Testament book.

- Hank Smith: 00:05:37 Four years ago, we went through the Old Testament. John, you and I both are pretty honest here. I saw the Book of Mormon in a brand-new light as we studied the Old Testament. Things clicked. Oh, that's why Lehi says that. Oh, that's why King Benjamin gathered them together in their tents. Ross, what I'm hearing you say is, "Hey, you wanna love the Book of Mormon even more?" Come with us.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:06:05 I heard somebody phrase it this way. I'm not sure I'm convinced of it yet. The Keystone to the Keystone, right? Keystone is the Book of Mormon, but the Keystone to the Keystone is the Old Testament. I think that's an interesting way to phrase it. By the way, I would even say with what you were saying earlier about, "Ooh, it's so huge." We can prioritize things. I think we can look where prophets and apostles are focusing in terms of the Old Testament. We can look at where Jesus focuses in the Old Testament, where Paul focuses in the Old Testament. Even Nephi, he's gonna bring up particular stories from the Old Testament, as are Alma and others that will focus our attention. This is probably where we should be focusing. I love the book of Habakkuk, don't get me wrong ... But I'm not sure Habakkuk is the book we should focus on all year.
- Hank Smith: 00:06:48 Because there's not, there's not prophets in other books.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:06:51 Exactly. And I don't want Habakkuk mad at me in the spirit world, but you get what I'm saying. He's an awesome prophet. It's just not been a focus of either Jesus or of Book of Mormon prophets. That's all I'm saying.
- Hank Smith: 00:07:02 I'm grateful for that. I love the scriptures. I spend my career in the scriptures, but I can absolutely see someone who's thinking, "I don't have time for this kind of thing, and I know there's power in the Book of Mormon. I'm gonna keep learning it, " but I hope those listening today will think, "You know what? I'm gonna stick with it this year." Maybe for the first time in my life, I'm gonna really grasp. Not all of it. None of us understand all of it, but a lot more than you used to.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:07:26 When I teach Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel, we spent a chunk of time in the Old Testament. I do a top five at the end of my class. They have to write an assignment, their top five favorite assignments and why. They always refer to something

we talked about in the Old Testament that changed their perspective, that really helped them understand, or that even motivated them to be closer to Christ. That's super critical.

Hank Smith: 00:07:46

Yeah. I love it.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:07:47

Let's jump in. I'm gonna do my top 10, talking about each one. The first idea, and this isn't gonna surprise anybody, we should first and foremost seek the companionship of the Spirit. The Old Testament, Hank, you said it earlier, it's like traveling to a foreign country. That is 100% correct. Cultures, traditions, language, even euphemisms, they're so different. We need the companionship of the spirit to help us guide us through what is important, what's not important, how do I understand this, and how does this help me in my life? Elder Kim B. Clark, former Commissioner of Church Education, General Authority Seventy, a former president of BYU, Idaho, former dean of the Harvard Business School. He gave a talk about deep learning. Three things. He said, This is what is deep learning. Number one, you know and understand. Number two, you take effective righteous action, and number three, it helps you become more like your Heavenly Father. Think about that.

00:08:44

I want to do deep learning, and it's not just spiritual stuff. Deep learning applies to statistics, and to biology, and to humanities. But as it relates to our study of the Old Testament, knowing and understanding. Knowing to me is head, understanding is when it drops to the heart. You have to have the Holy Ghost. Number two, you take effective righteous action. It's not about knowing a ton of stuff. It's actually about doing things. Then number three, the point of doing those things is to help me become like our Heavenly Father. That is awesome. As we're studying, I want us to look for deep learning. I want us to look for places where we can have those kinds of experiences. Playing a musical instrument, learning another language, learning a sport. All are deep learning activities. It's so interesting. I grew up, Hank, said I grew up surfing.

00:09:32

I did. Southern California surfed every day. People would say, "Tell me about surfing. I want to learn how to surf." Well, you can't read books about surfing. You actually have to go surfing. You do. You're gonna make a ton of mistakes. You have to take the action, and then it's gonna help you become something different. I taught mission prep for years. I love mission prep, but there's a point in mission prep where I'm like, "I can't tell you anything more about being a missionary." You have to go-

Hank Smith: 00:09:58

You gotta go.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:09:59 ... you gotta be a missionary. Yeah. You have to go. I don't wanna tell you about planning your day anymore. I, I just like, uh ... Go be ... And I think Elder Bednar gave a talk years ago. Remember when he said, the best preparation for mission is to be a missionary now.

00:10:13 You gotta be a missionary now. Had an interesting deep learning experience with Kim B. Clark that you guys might enjoy. When I first came to BYU Idaho in 2005, my mom and dad, who are not members of the church, they were a little concerned. I was leaving Southern California, going up to Rexburg, Idaho. Everybody was like, "What's gonna go on? What's going on? " Elder Bednar had been called into the 12th in 2004. So, they had an interim president, a guy named Bob Wilkes, and then they were calling a new president. Kim B. Clark has been called to be the new president, the former dean of the Harvard Business School. Unbeknownst to me, my mom and dad were listening to Kim B. Clark in an interview on a program called Charlie Rose. Charlie Rose used to do lengthy interviews, very similar to the way you guys do the podcast.

00:10:56 My mom and dad are watching. Again, I don't know anything about this. Charlie Rose says, "Dr. Clark, why in the world would you go to Rexburg, Idaho to lead a little teeny four-year college?" And like, "What? You're the dean of the Harvard Business School. Like, you're the pinnacle of the world." And he goes, "Well, Charlie, if Moses asked you to do something, would you do it? " And Charlie Rose kind of caught off guard. This is like a secular program. Right. Charlie Rose says, "Well, um, well, I guess if Moses asked me to do something, I'd do it. " And then Elder Clark says, "Moses asked me to do this, and his name's Gordon B. Hinckley." My mom and dad are listening to this. And they're like, "Whoa, we're feeling something. We don't know what we're feeling." This is incredible. They call me up and they're like, "We love Kim Clark." Like, they're going off.

00:11:46 I haven't met him. Then we have a meeting, it's our first meeting in the Taylor Chapel at BYU Idaho, and it's Kim Clark in this meeting, I'll never forget it. And it was the faculty there, and Kim Clark, and he gives this inaugural to the faculty, and they did his Q&A. And I raised my hand and I said, "President Clark, I just wanna thank you for your Charlie Rose interview because it really affected my mom and dad who aren't members of the church." And he's like, "Oh, thanks so much." And the next day, I'm on the quad and he was there and he's like, "Hey, you, you, I don't remember your name." And I said, "Yeah, President." And he said, "I've been thinking about your parents all night. I want to invite them up as my personal guests

for my inauguration." When the first presidency comes, he goes, "Do you think they'd be okay with that?"

00:12:30 I was like, "Yes." Call my mom and dad. They're like, "That's so great." So, they extend an official invitation. My mom and dad got to be like with the First Presidency and like, I didn't get to go into any of those things. They did.

Hank Smith: 00:12:44 Ross, tell us about your parents a little bit. Like, what am I, what am I envisioning here?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:12:48 As of right now, they're 93 years old. They're doing amazing. They live alone. They have a busier social calendar than I do. They travel around. It's incredible. But because of that experience with Kim Clark and subsequent experiences with Kim Clark, whenever they're in circles that you and I could not get in in Los Angeles, somebody will say something about or against the church, my mom and dad will be like, "Nope, that's not true." That is not the case. We know these people.

00:13:18 We've been in meetings with them. We met President Hinckley. We know Kim Clark. It's incredible. I believe the Lord orchestrated that opportunity and they defend the church and promote the church. My mom says, she tells my conversion story more than I do. She wants me to make a pamphlet out she can just hand out because people always say, "How many grandkids do you have?" And my mom will say, "Well, we have two children and we have 11 grandchildren." And then she'll go, "Oh, each one has five or six?" No, my son has nine. Is he a rabbi? And my mom will be like, "Kind of." Anyway, there you go. That's the end. That's my Kim Clark story with deep learning and how powerful that is. First and foremost, we seek the companionship of the Spirit. We use the Spirit, number one, so we can know and understand, so we can take effective righteous action, and so we can become more like our Heavenly Father.

00:14:12 That's key in understanding the Old Testament. That's number one. Number two, things to keep in mind, the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament, same God. We over index in the church that the God of the Old Testament is wrathful, vengeful, harsh, and even in Latter-day Saint gospel doctrine classes, that comes up all the time. But Jehovah, Jesus, is the God of the Old Testament, and he has the same character attributes and perfections as the God of the New Testament. I actually say we've got to keep in mind this all the time. And a superficial reading without understanding certain things of the Old Testament might lead one to make that assumption or

make that conclusion quickly, but that's not the case. As you're reading the Old Testament, you look for Jesus Christ, you look for and deepen your love for him and what's being taught about him.

00:15:09 What is being taught about the Savior? I'm gonna emphasize that through the year and hopefully in some other episodes I might show ... I have one particular thing where I wanna show specifically how we reconcile that to make sure we understand that the God in the New Testament, God of the Old Testament, same God.

Hank Smith: 00:15:27 Ross, I think this is pretty critical because it's almost as if we categorize, wow, the God of the Old Testament is mean. And here comes Jesus, this really merciful...

John Bytheway: 00:15:38 Oh, he's so nice.

Hank Smith: 00:15:39 Yeah. But, when you read closely, it's not true.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:15:43 It actually misunderstands the God of the New Testament and misunderstands the God of the Old Testament. And we know from Lectures on Faith, that having a correct idea of God's character attribute and perfections is the first principle to actually having faith leading into life in salvation. We gotta get that. You gotta get three things right. You gotta get who God is. You gotta get who we are. And then ironically, you gotta get who Satan is. And if you get those three things right, you're gonna go right. For example, if you go to the temple, I don't know what you're gonna totally get your first time out of the temple, but you're gonna know who God is. You're gonna know who we are in relation to God, and you're gonna know who Satan is. If you go to Joseph Smith in the grove, when Joseph Smith comes out of the grove, he knows who God is, he knows who he is, and he knows who Satan is.

00:16:25 You go to Moses chapter one, his experience. He knows who God is, he knows who he is, and he knows who Satan is. My concept here is that by understanding the Old Testament, we deepen and powerfully expand our understanding of who God is, who we are, and who Satan is, because those things come out.

John Bytheway: 00:16:44 If nothing else happens, that framework for starting the Old Testament, exactly. Look for the Savior. Look for Jehovah, look for Jesus as you read the Old Testament. That alone will bless everybody. Gives us a way to focus. When you said who God is

who we are, who's Satan is, I went, "Oh, that's Joseph Smith," and then you said it. Sacred Grove.

- Hank Smith: 00:17:05 And then I said, "That's Moses one." And I'm also thinking of the temptations of Jesus. Same thing. Baptism, temptations.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:17:14 The temptations are so critical because we all think the temptation initially is turn the stones to bread, but the actual first temptation and through it all, the thread is, it's an identity temptation, if thou be the son of God. It's who you are. And then the bookend, the temptations in Matthew 4, and then later on the cross. If you be the son of God, come down off the cross. The identity temptation never leaves who you are in relation to God and who Satan is. Wow. Power, power. We ready to roll?
- John Bytheway: 00:17:44 That's President Nelson. Child of God, child of the covenant, disciple of Christ, identity. Awesome.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:17:51 Always remember that. Number three, this is gonna be hard. Okay? Everyone breathe. The way history was is not the way history had to be. Follow me, follow me. I'm gonna use the story of Joseph who was sold into Egypt. Then I'm gonna go back to the fall because this is gonna be tough. I'm gonna need people to think through this. Joseph, in my view, Joseph is going to go down into Egypt. That is God's plan. But he doesn't have to go down to Egypt because his brothers sell him. Now, circling back to the fall, Adam and Eve are gonna leave the garden. And to leave the garden, they gotta eat the fruit, but they don't have to listen to Satan to do it. Ooh, because the way history was is not the way history had to be.
- Hank Smith: 00:18:39 Ross, I think you're right on. People have to have agency and it can't be ... Well, they had to do that. Satan had to do what he did. The brothers had to sell him. Amen.
- John Bytheway: 00:18:49 Isn't one school of thought, basically everything that happens must have been God's will. And you're like, "Well, doesn't it say in Matthew it is not the will of the Father that any of these little ones should perish, but little ones do perish?" Is everything that happens God's will? No, there's this free agency thing going on here. Is he able though to turn things to good like he did for Joseph? Yeah, and he says so. That's a great point.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:19:15 The way history was is not the way history had to be. And I just wanna be clear that people don't think I've gone too far. Joseph's going to Egypt. Adam and Eve are gonna leave the

garden. It just doesn't have to necessarily be the way that that happened.

Hank Smith: 00:19:29 That is so important. I wanna throw in one more thing because I love it. David McCullough comes to BYU, I can't remember, early 2000s and says something so simple. He said, "Nobody ever lived in the past." No one ever looks around and goes, "Isn't this crazy here being in the past?" Look at us in our authentic clothes. I can't wait for fill in the blank to happen. He said, "When you do that, you lose all the courage." Washington didn't know that he was gonna cross the Delaware and win. If you think he did, you lose the enormity of that decision. There's obviously prophets in the Old Testament, but you can't see Joseph going, "Well, I can't wait till I get to Egypt and save the family." He doesn't know. No.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:20:21 That's great. And McCullough, of course, wrote those amazing books, 1776, and yeah, phenomenal. Great historian. We can link that in the show notes. What are we on number four? We're number four. This is what I suggest. Let's say the assignment for Come Follow Me is Genesis one through six. My suggestion is read through it. I don't wanna say fast, but read through it to get the lay of the land. As you're getting the lay of the land, you look for converting principles. Look for Jesus Christ. You look for connections to be made and what it can teach me about Christ. Then you go back, follow me on this, and you focus on those things and slow way down. I'm gonna do Genesis one through six, boom, I'm gonna read it pretty quick, get the lay of the land, figure out kinda what's going on. I should be able to explain the storyline to somebody.

00:21:09 As I was reading little converting principles all along the way, and then I'm gonna go back, and I'm gonna slow way down on those things. I want to model that a little bit a little later. So, number five is then ask questions of the text. One of the assignments I give my students is to ask questions of the text. Sometimes I'll say, "I want you to take this verse and I need you to come back with 15 relevant questions for that text." And they'll be like, "That's impossible. You can't ask 15 questions of that text." And I'll go, "Oh, that's the assignment. Go do it." They'll generally come back saying that was one of the most helpful things. Slow down, look at the text, ask questions. So, my son, my oldest son, Josh, has a 12-year-old son named Spencer, and Spencer had to give a talk, and the talk was on Luke 2:52.

00:21:56 Jesus increased in stature and favor with God and with man. My son said, "Okay, Spencer, go ask 11 questions of the text." And Spencer was like, "There's no possible way."

Hank Smith: 00:22:06 Yeah. It's one verse. Yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:22:08 Yeah, it's one verse. Yeah, no, impossible. So, he came back and he said, my son was looking at his questions, he's like, "These are really good." And one of them was, "In what ways did Jesus increase in his social like connection with men?" Spencer goes, "That's the question I'm wondering about. " And my son's like, "Okay, so what do you think? " He goes, "Well, he must have known him pretty well because he gave the apostles nicknames." That's awesome. Yeah. That is so insightful. He slowed down, asked a question of the text, the text drew him to other things, then he starts to learn about the character and nature of Jesus. What a powerful deal that is.

Hank Smith: 00:22:48 That's beautiful.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:22:49 Ask questions of the text. We're gonna talk about that too. Number six, consider the context of the scriptures. Hank, you said it like out of the gate. And I say, remember that you're traveling in a foreign land. It's so funny, I worked with this guy right before my mission, his name was Isidro, Sid, Spanish guy from Mexico, spoke amazing English, amazing man, inspiring, worked hard, wasn't a Latter-day Saint. And at the end of the day, he would say to me, "Ross, I'm so tired and sick of this day." And I'd be like, "Sid, we don't say tired and sick. We say sick and tired." And he's like, "I said sick and tired." I said, "No, you said tired and sick." If a native speaker says tired and sick, that means they're tired and they're sick. But if they say sick and tired, that means they're frustrated.

00:23:37 And he goes, "That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard." And I go, "That is dumb." But again, a native speaker picks that up instantly. We're in the Old Testament, it's a foreign land, they're saying things, we think we understand them, we're reading too fast, we might not understand. It might be Sid saying, "I'm so tired and sick of this day." And all Native speakers are going, "No, you're not. You know, you're not. Are you tired?" Because you guys are both native speakers. You instantly picked it up. He did that wrong. That happens all the time when we're reading ancient scripture, that we've got to be tuned in and be humble enough to say, "Okay, okay, I'm in this foreign land. I need to be respectful of cultures, customs, languages, euphemisms, colloquialisms, and where can I go for help?" Well, sometimes

we're gonna connect to the Book of Mormon, which is gonna help us understand it.

00:24:29 We're gonna triangulate it with the Doctrine and Covenants, with the Pearl of Great Price and other things. That'll help us. That's my number six.

Hank Smith: 00:24:38 Yeah. Occasionally. It's definitely not the majority of our listeners, but occasionally we'll hear from someone who will say, "I don't do podcasts. I wanna go straight to the source myself." I, I really ... And it's highly critical, and I get that. I get that. When it comes to things like that, idioms in the Old Testament-

John Bytheway: 00:24:58 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:24:58 ... the only place I've learned them is from those who have studied this, those who speak Hebrew. And I remember Elder Ballard saying, use these resources that we have in the church. He even said at a BYU devotional once, I go to the experts here at BYU when I want to know about some history. I can find the exact quote for you. I am not saying that podcasts are the great, uh, you gotta listen to a Come Follow Me podcast if you really wanna know the scriptures. But one of the reasons we do what we do is to provide. Ross speaks Hebrew. He's gonna show us some things. I don't care how many times I read it. I would never see it because I don't speak Hebrew.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:25:46 That's true. I love what you're saying. I listened to your podcast, by the way. I love the insights of these scholars, of people that know the text, that have paid a price. It inspires me then to go dig deeper in the source.

Hank Smith: 00:26:00 Exactly.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:26:00 I cannot tell you how many times I have been inspired by one of your guests to go then dig deeper for myself. And then, again, I know and understand, I take effective righteous action, and I become more like my Heavenly Father, which is deep learning. Inspired by someone who's paid a price. Yeah, there's nothing wrong with that.

Hank Smith: 00:26:22 That's awesome. Where is it in the Book of Acts where someone's reading the book of Isaiah and it said, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:26:29 Fill up the eunuch, yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:26:30 Someone should guide me. Yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:26:32 We've all said that, right?

Hank Smith: 00:26:33 Yeah. Do you understand what you're reading? No, absolutely not. Well, let me help you. Right?

John Bytheway: 00:26:39 Well, just keep trying. Bye. Yeah, that's not what that said.

Hank Smith: 00:26:41 Keep reading the same thing over and over. Yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:26:44 Right. No, that's awesome.

Hank Smith: 00:26:45 Love that. Thank you for saying that.

John Bytheway: 00:26:47 Hank, I'm glad you said that. I got to teach a class at FSU this year. That was really fun. And one of the classes they ask every teacher to share, one of the beginning classes is to learn to use trusted sources beyond your standard works. I remember a time when I had a couple of converts in my class. Guess how long they had been members when they got in my class? Two weeks. Suddenly, I'm trying to listen with their ears. That's super, super helpful.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:27:22 That's great. I wanna bring up the Joseph Smith translation. Please, please, please use the Joseph Smith translation. It's footnoted or it's in your appendix. I was wondering if we could, for a moment, go to Section 35 of the Doctrine Covenants. Some people don't fully get what the Joseph Smith translation is. This verse is power. Section 35 of the Doctrine and Covenants, this is New York, December 1830. Now, we just got out of Doctrine and Covenants, so you guys know that Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer, and Ziba Peterson have gone on a mission, and they stopped in Kirtland, baptized, I think, 127 people in a couple of weeks. One of them was Sidney Rigdon. Sidney Rigdon is so excited, he's gonna leave Kirtland, go up to Palmyra, and try to meet Joseph. And he does, he meets Joseph and we get section 35 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

00:28:21 In it, verse 20, he's going to say, this is the first verse about what the Joseph Smith translation is. I'm reading Section 35, verse 20. "And a commandment I give unto thee," that is Sydney, "that thou", Sidney "shall write for him", Joseph. The Book of Mormon's already been translated. We're not talking about that. Oliver's on a mission. Oliver was the scribe, essentially, other people were too, but Oliver essentially. "...and

the scriptures shall be given even as they are in mine own bosom, to the salvation of mine own elect." Now notice, the scriptures shall be given even as they are in mine own bosom, not even as they are in ancient manuscripts, not even as they are in original Hebrew or original Greek or whatever the person spoke. I use the Joseph Smith translations and I think there's some verses that without it would be highly problematic figuring out who God is, who we are and who Satan is.

00:29:15 Go to Exodus chapter four. This is when Moses has been called, he doesn't really wanna be the prophet. But the Lord is called him and he's gonna go before Pharaoh. The King James chapter four, verse 21 says, quote, "And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go." Theologically, that's a problem because again, we're back, John, on what you said about agency, about free will.

John Bytheway: 00:29:53 God's hardening hearts?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:29:55 Yeah. God's hardening his heart. What chance does Pharaoh have? Now, if you look at footnote 21C, it actually reads, after you got, which I have put in thine hand, "and I will prosper thee, but Pharaoh will harden his heart, and he will not let the people go." Wow. Thank you. Problem solved. I don't have to tie myself up in yoga positions trying to figure out what's going on there theologically. I can now understand via a prophet, again, as I teach, I'm always going to the JST, always going to the JST. If there's a JST, I'm using it. And I actually think it's one of the witnesses of the prophet Joseph Smith and of his divine mission. I do. I find it powerful. Use scripture study helps. Use, I love what you said, John, about trusted resources. Use Bible Hub, use the blue letter Bible, use the words of living prophets via the citation index, and use the Joseph Smith translation.

00:30:51 Okay? So that's number seven.

Hank Smith: 00:30:52 Let me ask you a quick question. Where do you go for other versions of the Bible? I particularly like Bible Hub, not a Latter-day Saint site.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:31:00 I use blueletterbible.org. It's also free. What I like about it, I've used it for a long time. I love Bible Hub as well, but I can click on Bibles and I can get 27 different versions of that verse and just do a comparison. It's powerful. So, whether it's the NIV, the ASV, the RSV, or any other version, I can look quickly and compare.

Hank Smith:	00:31:23	I wanna throw one more thing at you, and this isn't really Old Testament, but it is gonna come up. Occasionally, a student, a friend will ask me, "Wait, wait, wait, wait. Joseph Smith changed something in Isaiah to say this. Yet it doesn't say that in the Book of Mormon." So, I've got a version of Isaiah in the Bible. I've got a JST version, and then I've got a Book of Mormon version, and all three of them are different. That's a question that's I've been asked many, many times. So, either of you wanna take that on?
Dr. Ross Baron:	00:31:52	So when Moroni shows up, he quotes the Malachi prophecy, and he quotes it in a particular way. And then Joseph in Section 128, he'll say, I'm gonna write it this way because it suits my purposes. I could've written it a different way, but it's fine the way it is now. I think that's super interesting that there is a latitude with the Holy Ghost, with prophets, and with particular peoples at particular times to hear things a particular way. Joseph used to say, "Don't put stakes around the Almighty." In other words, don't put limits around the Almighty. If he wants us to understand Malachi in this particular way, cool. And then Moroni, speaking by the power of the Holy Ghost, 2nd Nephi 32:3, he can then expand it for a different particular way, and then Joseph the prophet can use it his way as well. And I think that's totally perfectly fine. That would be my response.
John Bytheway:	00:32:44	The way I've tried to explain it, and you guys tell me if I'm right, is sometimes we think the scriptures have to be one way. It's static. I wanna find the earliest form, you know, that's, what do they call it? Textual criticism. I wanna find the earliest one, and that one's the most true. Well, what if a prophet comes along and says, I'm gonna make that a little clearer. It's not that one is untrue, it's just that another one gives you more insight, just like what you said. He quoted Malachi differently. "I will plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers." It's a more dynamic thing. All of those are, are true, and we can learn from, from all of them. It's not that there's one correct and one false. Also, Ross, tell us something about, if you could rename the Joseph Smith translation, what might you call it?
	00:33:32	The Joseph Smith? Is it always translating lost text?
Dr. Ross Baron:	00:33:35	No. No. In fact, the ... I think ... I'm so glad you asked that. I actually think Joseph Smith's translation, the word translation can create some problems because I've translated Hebrew to English. I use a lexicon and I use verb charts and I use a computer and I use what people in the past have said. That's not what Joseph's doing. We're gonna use the word translate and it's very loose. That's why I always go to Section 35 verse

20. I'm gonna reveal to my servant Joseph the things that are in my own bosom, not things that are in ancient manuscripts necessarily, right? Now, section seven of the Doctrine and Covenants-

- Hank Smith: 00:34:15 It could be that. Yeah.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:34:16 It absolutely could be. But what if we got an original Matthew? Like, what if somebody said, "This is the original Matthew." And we might look at the JSTs, they might not be exactly the same. And I would be 100% fine.
- Hank Smith: 00:34:29 Of course.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:34:30 He never claimed he was doing that. We don't wanna make claims for Joseph that Joseph's not making for himself. I love John that you brought that up, and I bring that up with my classes. Super important to understand. By the way, the Book of Abraham. One of the big problems when people talk about the Book of Abraham is they get into a conversation where they wanna stake out ground about translating. Well, Joseph isn't translating the way Egyptologists translate. I'm not criticizing Egyptologists. I'm glad there's Egyptologists.
- Hank Smith: 00:34:59 We know a few.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:35:01 Yeah. And we, and they're amazing. But Joseph's not claiming to do that.
- John Bytheway: 00:35:04 Thank you for saying that. Sometimes I think I wanna call it the Joseph Smith clarification or the Joseph Smith Revelation and sometimes-
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:35:13 Ooh, see, that's what I want to call it.
- John Bytheway: 00:35:14 Maybe that is original text. We could get so fastened to the words and the oldest text that when Jesus comes and says something, we're gonna go, "Hey, wait a minute. Give me chapter verse on that."
- Hank Smith: 00:35:28 Can you imagine?
- John Bytheway: 00:35:29 I think that's probably a bad idea. When the Word shows up and gives us the word, he's gonna give us more. We're not gonna say, "I don't know where you got that. Show me chapter and verse that would be a bad idea."

Hank Smith: 00:35:42 I would add that we really have to get rid of the idea that there is a correct way, like there is one correct way. Ross, that scripture you mentioned, how many times did it come up in scripture? I will send you the prophet. I will send, and it's almost different every single time. I guarantee if I had all of them in front of me, I'd say, "Lord, which one's right?" And he would say, "Ah, all of them."

John Bytheway: 00:36:03 Yes.

Hank Smith: 00:36:03 I like this one for this reason. I like this one for this reason.

John Bytheway: 00:36:06 Yeah. Well, didn't he say later? Uh, I could have rendered a plainer translation. I could have said bind or seal instead of turn.

Hank Smith: 00:36:14 I would love to see Moroni going, "You'd render it differently, huh? Yeah, I like how you said it, but I would say it this way." Oh, and then Malachi comes over and says, "Actually- Why don't we talk to the original guy." Yeah. I love it, Ross. Let's see scripture as very fluid. Let's-

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:36:34 Dynamic, fluid, and prophetically, not static, prophetically guided. I'm gonna read something from President Oaks. Is that okay? When he was elder Oaks. Quote, "If we harden our hearts, reject continuing revelation and limit our learning to what we can obtain by study and reason on the precise language of the present canon of scriptures, our understanding will be limited to what Alma called the "lesser portion of the word" ... The Lord promised Nephi: "Unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have" (2 Ne. 28:30). That verse capsulizes the Latter-day Saint belief in the importance of continuing revelation as we read and interpret the scriptures. Even if there were no additional revelations to be added to the published canon, an open canon would still be an essential part of our belief and practice in scripture reading.

00:37:41 We believe that the scriptures, which are the revelations of the past, cannot be understood without openness to the revelations of the present." Unquote.

John Bytheway: 00:37:43 Beautiful.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:37:44 I wanna give the reference. It's Dallin H. Oaks Scripture Reading in Revelation Ensign January 1995.

John Bytheway: 00:37:51 Oh, love it. And that goes along with Dr. Millett's experience. The canon is open.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:37:56 Exactly.

John Bytheway: 00:37:57 Aren't we thrilled about that? I tell my students, if we, if we get more scriptures, you're gonna have a lot more of these religion classes.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:38:07 Well, also, I don't know if you guys remember, but John, you brought up when I did that, those community firesides. And in one of my statements I made, I said, "The church isn't based on the Bible. It's based on what the Bible's based on, and that's revelation through prophets." And then the guy asked me, "Well, is the church based on the Book of Mormon?" And I said, "Nope, it's based on what the Book of Mormon's based on. Revelation through prophets." That is absolutely critical to understand. That is the most powerful position you can be in, by the way. The church is not based on the Bible, it's based on what the Bible's based on, revelation through prophets. Boom pow.

Hank Smith: 00:38:44 Yeah. After you've offended everyone else in the room, that-

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:38:47 Exactly. Exactly.

Hank Smith: 00:38:50 Ross, tell me, I mean, you, you've had interaction with many, many different faiths. Joseph Smith, how old is he in 1830? What is he, 25?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:39:00 1830s, 24-25. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:39:02 He comes along and says, "Let me change the Bible."

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:39:05 Yep.

John Bytheway: 00:39:06 The audacity. Yeah. It was, it's kind of like Jesus comes along, "Well, you've heard it said of old time this, but I say this. " Who does he think he is? Actually, he knows who he is and ...

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:39:18 Yep, he does know who he is. I'm gonna say number eight, this is really critical because expectations, if they're false, then they're not met and then we get all disappointed. Don't expect the Old Testament to present a thorough and precise history of humankind. That's not its intent. That's not what the original authors and compilers were trying to do, and, and, and that is really not an ancient world way to think. They're not trying to

create a linear historical thing. So, people are like, "Wait, what's going on?" We don't have to worry about that. It's not a precise history of humankind. That's not what it is. That's not what they wanted. And that's really an expectation thing. You don't have to worry about it. We're okay. We're totally okay.

- Hank Smith: 00:40:09 Ross, as you and I talked about coming on for these Thoughts to Keep in Mind lessons, I know you were interested, you went right to the manual, and there you just quoted it. Don't expect the Old Testament to present a thorough and precise history of humankind. A little bit later, did all of the prophets, poets, compilers, know their words would be read by people all over the world thousands of years later? We don't know. But we marvel that this is exactly what happened. Nations rose and fell, cities were conquered, kings lived and died, but the Old Testament outlasted them all. I like that. What's your expectation coming in?
- John Bytheway: 00:40:42 That same idea specifically for, oh, the creation story. Was the creation story to present the scientific methods that God used to make the universe?
- Hank Smith: 00:40:53 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:40:53 Or is it a story to get something else from? Because we have how many different creation accounts? Pearl of Great Price and the temple in Genesis, they don't have to match perfectly because that's not the intent.
- Hank Smith: 00:41:06 That's not the intent.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 00:41:07 No, that's exactly right. Beautiful. Number nine, sometimes we want our prophets to be perfect. We want the House of Israel to be perfect. We want all these things to be a particular way. Why? Because we have expectations about what a prophet ought to be or what people that follow Jesus ought to be. But we're all in this thing trying to work it out. One of the coolest things about the Old Testament is it doesn't sanitize the text. You get Genesis 27 and Isaac's kind of senile. Rebecca's like, "You need a blessing. I don't know if Dad's gonna give you the right blessing." And we're in a million different machinations to try to get the blessing. And you know what my take is at the end of Genesis 27? Is that everyone got the blessing that we're gonna get anyway. By the way, with saying that, I'm not trying to criticize Isaac, Rebecca.

00:42:01 I am gonna criticize Jacob a little bit in this one and Esau. The idea is that they made mistakes. It's okay. It's okay. And the Lord works through that. You don't have to sanitize it. We don't have to make it perfect. Then teaching-wise, you don't have to go out of your way to try to make it perfect. Students will be like, "But wait, did Jacob lie?" Yeah, he did. Yeah, he did. Well, is that okay? No. And in fact, over the next five chapters, he's gonna get karma like you don't even believe. He's gonna be lied to and deceived in multiple ways. And he becomes a different person. He actually raises up and becomes a different person, wrestles with God, gets a new name, and becomes the man he needed to become. He lied. It's okay. Like, that's the, that's what the text says. I say don't try to sanitize the text.

00:42:53 Let the text speak, which will, by the way, elevate God. It elevates God working through imperfect human beings, points to the perfection, beauty, grandeur, and majesty of Jesus Christ, and allows human beings to be human beings. So when your bishop doesn't say hi to you as he's walking down the hallway, don't leave the church. He's working through it as well. He's trying to figure stuff out. And if president, you know, the church is older, that's okay. God is using these human beings who he trusts to do his work. My number nine is don't try to sanitize the text.

Hank Smith: 00:43:29 Ross, play that out in a seminary class or a Sunday school class. Why is this so important? It, and it is.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:43:37 Yeah. I think it's so critical. I believe in a seminary class and in a gospel doctrine class, it will be refreshing to members when you let the text stand and then just pull back and say, "What are the principles? What points of doctrine did we learn from that text?" Don't try to push it. Because what we try to do then is like, well, the, what he meant was, or what he said was, but that's not what the text said. Then we start setting up a false idol almost, and then it's too easy to knock down. Yeah. So don't do it. Just don't do it. It's refreshing. Especially young people, 18 to 30 years old, they want it. They want the truth, unvarnished, kind of J. Ruben Clark. You don't have to sneak up on them. You don't have to whisper it in their ears.

00:44:21 They just want it out there. So you're reading Genesis 27. It's a funky story. I'm like, down. Let's go. Let's bring it. The principle in the end that everyone got the blessing they would've got anyway, that's power. When Isaac laid his hands on those heads, he gave the blessing. God can do his work. Don't hand sanitize the text. It's there for a reason.

Hank Smith: 00:44:44 This is a New Testament reference. James and John want to blow up a Samaritan village.

John Bytheway: 00:44:51 Yeah, hey let's blow 'em up.

Hank Smith: 00:44:54 That is, that's basically...That's genocide. Do you wanna blow up this race? And if you say, "Well, that's not really what they meant. They're actually really ... "

John Bytheway: 00:45:05 Nope, that's what they said.

Hank Smith: 00:45:07 That's what they said.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:45:07 Yeah, that's what they said. That's what they meant.

Hank Smith: 00:45:08 They end up teaching Samaritans.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:45:11 And they end up baptizing ... In fact, remember, they baptized, this is Acts chapter eight, this whole area in Samaria, and they didn't know what the Holy Ghost was, so Peter, James and John have to come up and confer the Holy Ghost. So it's a beautiful, like, bookend there. I love that. So great.

John Bytheway: 00:45:25 Oh, I like that.

Hank Smith: 00:45:27 Let it say what it says.

John Bytheway: 00:45:30 Yesterday, I was teaching the Book of Mark, and as an intro, I used what somebody quoted on our podcast Hank, Julie M. Smith had this great introduction from BYUnewtestamentcommentary.com. She has this beautiful introduction about discipleship and says, "Okay, let's look at the Book of Mark. The disciples didn't understand the parables. They fought with each other. They asked who was the greatest in the kingdom of God. They actually turned Jesus in, I guess one of them did. And she goes through this list of how they are struggling to figure out how to be disciples. I love what you said, Ross. We don't need to sanitize that. That, so are we. We're struggling with-

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:46:11 Exactly.

John Bytheway: 00:46:12 ... with what it means to be disciples too.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:46:14 Exactly.

John Bytheway: 00:46:14 Welcome to Earth.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:46:15 Exactly. The new married couple where they're working out stuff in their marriage or the new missionary or the new seminary teacher and they're like, "I'm not perfect." Well, you're working through it. Like, it's okay. This is awesome. Give yourself some grace. The Lord's given us grace. That's not an excuse to be mediocre, but it's an opportunity for us to realize that prophets, apostles ... In fact, you brought up John, which one is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? What do you think they really wanna know? They wanna know which one of them, Jesus. It's you, Peter. And Peter's like, "I told you guys- ... I told you it was me. He called me the rock." And Jesus is like, "I called you the rock because you sank when you walked on water." You're misinterpreting why I called you rock, okay?

00:46:59 That's not why I called you rock. I've never heard that. And I just think it's cute that, like, yeah, it shows it unvarnished. Yeah. Ah.

John Bytheway: 00:47:08 Ross, is this more than almost any other book of scripture?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:47:11 Yes. By far. The Old Testament in terms of sanitizing does not sanitize. It shows us in all the glory of our weakness, our human frailty, and our fallenness.

John Bytheway: 00:47:24 Going back to the Book of Mormon in an Old Testament setting, here's this perfect family that listens to the Jerusalem Tabernacle Choir as they travel across the Arabian Peninsula. No, it's actually, let's kill dad. No, let's kill Nephi. Hey, let's kill Dad and Nephi. You can imagine, "Hey, Lehi, what are you writing there?" Well, Sarai, I'm writing down all of our family problems. Really? What are you gonna do with that? Send it to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

Hank Smith: 00:47:52 Oh.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:47:53 Yeah, that's great. There's a couple of main themes we can keep in mind. Old Testament has some things. These aren't exhaustive, but I'm gonna give three main ones. God will fight our battles. Number two, covenants, and number three, sacrifice. Again, there are other themes, clearly, all tying to Jesus Christ. But man, one of them is, and we miss this a little bit, that when we're in the covenant, God will fight our battles. He's gonna take us through and make it work for us, whatever that battle might be. There is this thing about sacrifice that is critical to the Old Testament. By the way, our Protestant friends who we love and we will call them Christians, but the idea of a covenant requires mutual, voluntarily we enter into a covenant, we bind ourselves to the Savior, we make covenants and ordinances and stuff has to be done.

00:48:52 That Old Testament idea transfers into the New Testament and to the Book of Mormon, and of course, the Pearl of Great Price and the Doctrine and Covenants. That's my 10th one, is you gotta understand some overall meta themes that are going on while you're getting into the details and in the weeds. God will fight our battles. God is in covenant relationship with us. There is a law of sacrifice pointing to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

John Bytheway: 00:49:21 It's a good thing we're in a covenant relationship with Him because I think he would've walked away a long time ago if he weren't in a covenant relationship with us. You guys can't do anything right. I love the idea of thinking of a covenant as a relationship, not just a contract, because if we think of a contract, we think a piece of paper, I sign it, I put it on the shelf. When it's a relationship, I feel a loyalty to Christ. It makes me think differently about my covenants when it's a relationship. And I like that I hear more of us talking about covenants that way instead of contract.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:49:55 Super helpful, by the way. Super helpful.

Hank Smith: 00:49:58 I love what you said, because if you read Genesis, God says, "This, you're my family. This family's gonna bless all the families." By the end, you're thinking, "He better get a new family." Like, this is ... You chose the worst family. Ross, one of my friends, her name is Hilary Wright. She was listening four years ago to our show, and she said, "Hank, I got so tired of hesed. Hesed this. Hesed that." Hesed is a theme that comes up over and over and over.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:50:29 Yes. Yes.

Hank Smith: 00:50:29 It's just not translated like that. Can you speak to that kind of theme?

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:50:35 Yes, I can. That's the idea of the covenant relationship. And in fact, in my personal prayers, I don't wanna sound trite, but I actually say I'm grateful for thy "hesed" towards me. Thy everlasting kindness, thy grace, thy generosity, thy tender mercies. There's a latitude in that translation, but I love what you said, John. Loyalty. He's not giving up on us, if we don't give up on him. When I have a young man or young woman come to me and they're struggling with some particular issue and I'm serving as the bishop right now, they'll say, "Should I partake of the sacrament Sunday?" Often I'll say, "Are you willing to take upon yourself the name of Christ?" If you're planning on sinning on Tuesday, that's a mockery. But if you're willing, then God's

willing. And they'll say, "Well, what if I make a mistake?" That's not what the covenant's about.

00:51:26 That loyalty transcends you making a mistake. But if you're willing, then we're going to the mat for you. I said, I, as a bishop will go to the mat for you. The Lord will go to the mat for you. If it's a mockery, if you're planning premeditated sin, that's not what we're talking about. That "hesed" relationship, that loyalty, no, we don't kick you out of the covenant. Uh-uh, not happening. We're gonna work with you and we're gonna do everything, literally everything. Jacob chapter five. What more could I have done for my vineyard? What more could I have done for you? And the answer always is, "There's nothing more I could have done. I've done everything." That is hesed. We work things out. There's loyalty and you work things out and you repent and you keep coming back. I always know the difference between the Holy Ghost and Satan.

00:52:13 And one of the ways I know the difference is, if the voice in my head is, give up, stop trying, throw in the towel, that's Satan. I have been rebuked by the Holy Ghost, by the way.

00:52:25 I go on record. The Holy Ghost has rebuked me. But in the rebuke, always whispers hope. Always. Satan never whispers hope. Give it up. You're not good enough. You might as well do that now that you've done this. That's Satan. This idea, Hank, that you brought up with your friend, it is central, central and so critical. And by the way, hopeful. One of the questions in the endorsement interview for church education, it's an open-ended question, which I really love. It is, what does the atonement of Jesus Christ and of his role as your savior and redeemer mean to you? Then as a priesthood leader, you just shut up. To hear the responses of the students is miraculous. A lot of them will center around the opportunity that the atonement of Jesus Christ gives me to change, to be better, to become something different and to have hope.

John Bytheway: 00:53:23 That idea, God will fight our battles. I feel, with my limited understanding of Isaiah, it's like, don't make alliances with other nations. Make the alliance with me. I will fight your battles. For a teenager, I'm thinking, Brother Brad Wilcox, you got this because he's got you. Thankfully, that loyalty goes both ways. He's gonna be loyal to us and help us through things. That's kind of like hesed.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:53:52 There you go.

Hank Smith: 00:53:54 Yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:53:54 Well, and I think it's interesting what you said, John. When the Assyrians are surrounding Jerusalem and they're like, "What do we do? What do we do?" Nothing. Isaiah says, "Be quiet. Don't do anything. God's gonna fight your battle." Wait a minute, we shouldn't do anything? Be in alliance with him, with God, trust God. He's gonna take care of it. Really? Nothing? Are you serious? Because they're right there, and there's a lot of them. Their campfires are burning. Yeah, don't do anything. I'm gonna take care of this. Yeah, power.

Hank Smith: 00:54:26 It'll be all right. It'll be okay.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:54:29 Now that we've done the top 10 on Thoughts to Keep in Mind, I thought it might be fun to do a little modeling. Let's go look at a couple of texts and have some fun. Let's go to Genesis chapter 22. Genesis 22, if you know your Genesis, which apparently, Hank's upset about. You know your Genesis.

Hank Smith: 00:54:51 I know my Genesis.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:54:51 This is when God ... This is the Isaac Abraham situation. So, we all there, Genesis chapter 22, verse one. And it came to pass after these things. Now, that phrase, and it came to pass after these things, in Hebrew, it's <Hebrew>. That specific phrase shows up eight times. Eight times. You might have thought, wait, no, it shows up more. And it came to pass, shows up 328 times. And it came to pass after these things shows up eight times. And check it out, in the context of Abraham, Joseph, Joshua, and Elijah. How about them prophets? That's where the phrase <Hebrew>, and it came to pass after these things shows up. It begs the question, what things? The narrator, who's ever writing Genesis 22, presumably either Moses is, or Moses is redacting or editing some other manuscript. Whoever does this is saying it came to pass after these things, and then we're gonna introduce the text.

00:55:55 The question is, what things? The life of Abraham. Look, people, we met Abraham in Genesis 11. This man has been through everything. He's been through every trial, every test, and passed with flying colors. Here it is, and it came to pass after these things. What are we gonna do now? What are we gonna do now? Isn't he done? So then it says this, that God did tempt Abraham. This is where your footnote comes into play. Look down at the bottom for tempt. The Hebrew says, "test or prove." Tempt is the wrong translation. The verb is nasa. That means test, prove, try. It came to pass after these things, <Hebrew>.

00:56:42 And it came to pass after these things that God did try, test, prove Abraham. Hasn't he been tested, tried, and proved enough? We don't have it in English. But in Hebrew, ancient Hebrew, biblical Hebrew, the verb comes first, then the subject. In English, we say the subject comes first, then a verb. But in biblical Hebrew, the verb comes first, unless there's emphasis. And in this case, that God did tempt Abraham, the subject came first. Elohim comes first. Vehalo- Veha Elohim, <Hebrew> Abraham, which is, and God did try, test, prove Abraham. I'm gonna even say something different. This is me playing rabbi a little bit here, okay? The word nasa, which is try, test, prove, is in the PL form of Hebrew, which is the intensive form. And it pretty much only shows up in the intensive form. But I was thinking about this because Abraham, who we ran in Genesis chapter 11, has literally shown himself loyal and in the covenant always.

00:57:44 So what's going on here? Perhaps another word for try, test, prove would be train. He's going to train him. Okay, now think, think, think. We know what's gonna happen in Genesis 22. He's gonna be asked to offer his son. Then it begs the question, if you're training, training for what? Training to become like God. God's gonna have to do this, and it came to pass after these things. What things? This amazing life you've led Abraham, do we have to try you more? I don't think so. I don't think it's try, test, prove. I think it's training ground now. We're talking elite Navy SEAL training. We're talking you are the elite now. Jacob chapter four, verse five in the Book of Mormon. This is in the similitude of the sacrifice of the only begotten of the Father. When it came to pass after these things, God (subject) did train Abraham.

00:58:47 The narrator knows we don't know yet. And you're like, "What's gonna happen now?" And said unto him, "Abraham, behold, here I am", and I can't help myself I gotta go to verse two. Okay, now the English, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest. The Hebrew leaves Isaac to the end. The Hebrew leaves Isaac to the end. I can't help myself. Can I do it in Hebrew? John? Okay.

John Bytheway: 00:59:11 Please do.

Dr. Ross Baron: 00:59:11 <Hebrew> It's, it's <Hebrew>.

00:59:18 Okay. In other words, Isaac, you heard <Hebrew>. Isaac is at the end. The Hebrew is, take now thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest dot dot dot Isaac. Because he's got two sons. He's got two sons. So, it begs the question, wait a minute, your only

son? Wait, your only <Hebrew>. Why is it your only son when you have another son? Get the into the land of Moriah in Jerusalem. Offer him there for a what? By the way, it's caused him to be offered up for a burnt offering, an Olah offering, the consuming offering. This is pre-Mosaic. This is you got to do like in Leviticus chapter one. I don't know if you're aware, but the way you would do an offering is you're gonna slit the throat, bleed the person out, basically cut them up in different parts so that you have the head, you have the torso, you have the legs, and then you have the innards all laid in order on the altar, and then you 100% burn it so that it completely is consumed and goes up to God.

01:00:17 That is the Olah offering or the burnt offering. That's what's going on right now. Now, one thing I wanna say, in the English text, take now thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest, it says <Hebrew>. Now, na in Hebrew can be translated as please. And it doesn't get in here. And I don't know why, but it's the only place I know where God says please when he gives a command. It's the only place I know where the Lord says, "Please." Because remember, "and it came to pass after these things". Abraham has been tried. He has been tested. He has been proven, but now we're going into training. We're going into a higher level. Now he's gonna say in verse two, <Hebrew>. Take, please, thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, Isaac. And you're gonna do this. Why? Because Jacob chapter four of verse five, it's gonna be in similitude of my only begotten Son.

01:01:16 There's a case where we slow down, look at the text, ask some questions. "And it came to pass after these things" seems like a formulaic thing, like no big deal, but actually I think there's something to it.

Hank Smith: 01:01:28 Wonderful.

John Bytheway: 01:01:29 I'm looking at footnote 2B on the word thine only son and John 3:16. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. So, the similitude you're talking about, even using the word only there.

Hank Smith: 01:01:49 That burnt offering, that was pretty graphic, what you talked about there. But let it say what it says. That's what you told us.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:01:56 Yeah, exactly. Don't sanitize the text. By the way, that's what Abraham says. Like, look at verse three. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, <Hebrew>. By the way, he didn't have to use that. The narrator could've said he got up, but he doesn't get up. He gets up early in the morning. Abraham is on a

different level. He hears the command. He <Hebrew>. He gets up. That was some gringo Hebrew right there. He gets up early in the morning to be obedient to the command of God. So powerful. Then it doesn't seem like they're saying anything like there's no text until verse four. He lifts up his eyes on the third day. This is a pretty sober trip. They don't have Hank along, and John, having fun. We're just trudging towards Moriah. That's an interesting thing. Anyway, that is one way of slowing down, looking at a text, digging deep, finding connections and asking questions of the text.

01:02:59 Again, pretty formulaic. And it came to pass after these things, we'd blow by that. But I always stop my class and go, "What things? What are we talking about?" Abraham. We met him in Genesis 11. This is Genesis 22. People. You realize who we're talking about? Wow. Incredible.

Hank Smith: 01:03:19 I love it. You have another, do you have another couple of examples for us that we're gonna practice?

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:03:24 I do. Let's go to 2nd Samuel chapter 11. The greatest King of Israel. The first King was Saul. If you know your Old Testament, then you had David, then you have Solomon. Before Saul, it was a reign of judges, and one of the greatest judges was Samuel, who's a prophet. In First Samuel chapter eight, he doesn't want the people to have a king. You guys know the story. And they clamor for a king. He says, "Okay, we're gonna give you a king, but man, you guys are gonna, it's gonna be a problem."

John Bytheway: 01:03:54 He lets them act just like you're saying, right?

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:03:57 Exactly. The way history was is not the way history had to be. One of the great lines of President Henry B. Eyring in an interview was when he was asked about keeping the commandments and he said, I want to do what God prefers, not what he permits. That is a fabulous, wonderful way to think about commandments- because when you're with young people, they'll ask you about lines, and then I always bring up the President Eyring quote. Let's do what God prefers, not what he permits. It's a helpful way, it's a helpful frame. And your point, John, like, 1 Samuel 8: he preferred they not have a king, but he permitted their use of agency and gave them a king, but he warned them. So here we are in 2 Samuel 11.

Hank Smith: 01:04:44 Can you see the Lord going, okay, okay. It's gonna take us about 2,500 years to recover from this decision, but- let's go for it.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:04:54 Right? Your call though. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 01:04:55 Your call.

John Bytheway: 01:04:56 Yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:04:57 2nd Samuel 11, for Latter-day Saints, a critical story. Some of our other friends and different religions don't love 2nd Samuel 11 and 12. It's a super important story. So, "And it came to pass, after the year was expired". Now, again, we gotta be careful. We read that in an English context and think, "Oh, it's January one." Right? It's the new year. No, for them, the new year is in the spring. Technically, that would've been ... Aviv is spring. This would've been ... And it came to pass after the year was expired. We're talking spring, "at the time when Kings go forth to battle", because they didn't fight traditionally during winter, "that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon", so that's over in Jordan, "and besieged Rabbah", over in Jordan. Then this line from the narrator:

01:05:47 Whoever's narrating in 2nd Samuel, "but David tarried still at Jerusalem". If you're teaching this or you're studying this, you better slow down right here. And you gotta ask some questions. And the question has to be, why is David staying at Jerusalem if they're fighting in Ammon? And you textualize it. This is a warrior king. He's not afraid. This is ... David is not, "Oh, my word. I'm gonna stay at Jerusalem. I'm afraid." This is a warrior king. Him staying at Jerusalem violates my mantra, which is be where you're supposed to be when you're supposed to be there. If you be where you're supposed to be when you're supposed to be there, it will eliminate most problems in your life. And he's not where he's supposed to be when he's supposed to be there. He is tarrying in Jerusalem, which is weird. He's not with his guys.

01:06:37 The years passed, and it's not like he needs a rest from war, he's had all winter. "And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed", you gotta stop there. What's strange about that?

John Bytheway: 01:06:49 He's been sleeping before the evening comes.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:06:53 Boom. He's just lazing around playing video games and hanging out in his bed. He's getting up at evening. What, do you get this picture? Are we getting a picture? Like, that's weird. What are you doing? What's going on? It came to pass in an eveningtide

that David arose from off his bed? Yikes. He's not a teenage boy, but he's acting like one. And he walked upon the roof of the king's house. Now, the word walk, this would be a little harder, but I'm gonna throw it out. The word walk there, the word walk in Hebrew is halach. But this is <Hebrew>. <Hebrew> is a verb form, which is intensive reflexive. And this is not my favorite translation. Think about it, you guys. What would be a way to translate "walk" in intensive reflexive? He's just been sleeping all day. He's on the roof and he's <Hebrew> on the roof.

01:07:50 What's another word you might put in there?

John Bytheway: 01:07:52 Pacing?

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:07:53 Pacing. That's the word I translate. He's like a caged lion in my view. And I don't totally know why he's a caged lion. I don't know if he's seen something before or what's going on or he's a caged lion because he knows he shouldn't be there. But my point is, we're reading the text carefully and we're asking questions of the text. He's tarrying in Jerusalem, he's getting up late, and he's <Hebrew>, which is the roof. He's pacing back and forth. There's a battle going on. From the roof, he saw a woman washing herself, and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. You have both been to Jerusalem. You've been to the city of David. The king's house was higher up, and the city slopes down to the pool of Siloam. There's a big slope, and you have the Gihon Spring.

01:08:42 So it's sloping down. It's just south of the Temple Mount. He's up on something at King's house, his roof, and he's able to look down and see a woman bathing. Now, bathing practices in ancient times, especially pre-Roman, pretty primitive. You're gonna bathe in a spring, or a river, or a well, and if you're gonna bathe at home, then it's gonna usually be in some kind of basin, and you're gonna be basically doing a sponge bath, or you're gonna be using oil on your hair, like olive oil, and they had this one thing where they would scrape their skin, but it wouldn't be that often. It could be, in the case of this woman, a purification ritual from her menstrual cycle. So there might be that going on. Does that make sense? But the fact that he's now looking at this woman who's bathing, he has a choice.

01:09:34 He has free will. We're back to agency. He can choose right there to check himself. As Alma would say, cross yourself in these things. Don't go after the lust of your eyes. Alma chapter 39. "And David sent and inquired after the woman", I'm in verse three. "And one said", now look at one. One is italicized. Italicized means what?

Hank Smith:	01:09:57	I think it means this is where the KJV authors put a word in to make it flow, but it's not really there.
Dr. Ross Baron:	01:10:03	It's not in the text. "And David sent inquired after the woman and said" ... If I read it that way, who's saying this?
John Bytheway:	01:10:11	David is to himself, maybe?
Dr. Ross Baron:	01:10:12	Maybe to himself or whoever he's talking to. "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" In other words, it's framed as a question, but it's really rhetorical, if in fact I'm reading it correctly. Does that make sense? If I take out the one and I say, and said, he already knows who it is. Okay, now wait, wait, wait, wait. By the way, we should ... Batsheva. The Hebrew word, Bathsheba, means daughter of the covenant. The wife of Uriah. Uriah, Uriyyah, is the light of Jehovah. Don't kill the light of Jehohovah. Don't do that. Uriah, who, the Hitite, so it must be a convert or something like that. Here's the interesting thing. Bathsheba's dad, Eliam and Uriah, are both ... In 2 Samuel 23, there's a list of David's 30 mighty men.
	01:11:10	These are like his elite core soldiers, special forces guys. They were his comrades and they were his quote unquote - "trench buddies" before he actually became king. You with me? So Eliam and Uriah are his 30 mighty men. But wait, it gets more. Eliam's dad is Ahitophel who was David's personal counselor. Ahitophel, his son is Eliam. His daughter is Basheba. He took his close friend's wife, daughter, granddaughter. I know. You thought it couldn't have got worse. The point though is I think part of the point of the story is the betrayal. It's a complete betrayal of relationships, a complete betrayal of covenant. It's a complete betrayal of light that just adds to the, the pathos of this story. Once you understand and dig a little deeper and figure out who these people are, it's not just some thing. I personally believe he knew who Bathsheba was. Clearly, he does because Ahithopel is his, like, trusted counselor.
	01:12:24	Uriah and Eliam were his mighty comrades in war. Now he's got this particular situation. I'm trying to model a bit of a close reading of the text, looking at context, looking at relationships, and trying to understand, what can we learn here? What can we learn here? There's a lot more you can say about that, but I think that's good for now on that text.
Hank Smith:	01:12:45	Go slow and let it say what it says.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:12:48 Let it say what it says and ask questions. You could say, "Who's a Ahithophel?" Now, you have sources where you could go to, for example, the LDS Citation Index, go to scriptures and you could have searched Ahithophel. Then you would have figured out, "Whoa, that's Eliam's dad and Bathsheba's his granddaughter. Wait, he's David's trusted counselor. Yikes."

John Bytheway: 01:13:08 Oh. Mm.

Hank Smith: 01:13:09 And it changes the story. It's more impact. It's more, uh-

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:13:12 It does. Yeah. More impact. It's more betrayal.

John Bytheway: 01:13:14 I remember as a teenager when I put it together that the same David who slew Goliath was this David, and it was, it was kind of a gut punch. I was like, "Well, but wait a minute."

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:13:28 It's a hard day. It's a hard day.

John Bytheway: 01:13:33 I love what you said too about ... I want you to say more about that. This, it's sloping. You could probably see everybody's roof from up there.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:13:42 Yep. Anybody who's been to the city of David, and if you go to where the king's house was, it would have afforded you a total opportunity to see everyone below, had they gone outside and been on the roof or been bathing. Like, it would have been an easy look. You guys know, so it goes from high up here, slopes all the way down. Again, the pool of Siloam is south. The Gihon Spring is south and then east. All of that water would have been there. The fact, again, that she's bathing at home, either it's a purification ritual or she is taking a bath, but it would have been more like a sponge bath. There was no, like, running water. Again, adds to the story. What's he doing on the roof? Why is he pacing? Why does he stay at Jerusalem? What's going on in his mind?

Hank Smith: 01:14:28 So many opportunities to stop.

John Bytheway: 01:14:31 Right.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:14:31 To stop. Be where you're supposed to be when you're ... Yeah, you'll get to it. Yeah, you'll get to it.

John Bytheway: 01:14:36 Oh, and the thing that's interesting is they're progressive, a little step and another little step, and another little step. Instead of, "I need to go in the house and sing a hymn," you know?

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:14:51 Sing more than one. I thought it might be fun. Go to Psalms. I wanted to pick a couple of narratives. Now, we're going to go to one that's not a narrative. This is going to be a verse that is particularly powerful. And it's Psalms 82. Okay? Psalms 82.

John Bytheway: 01:15:10 Ooh. We know what 82 is.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:15:12 In 82:6, the translators, they nailed it. Like, the King James guys, they didn't back off on this. 82:6 says, "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High." Ye are gods, that is literally Elohim. That's what it says. It says you're Elohim. And then it says, all of you are "bene" children of Elyon. Elyon, El, you hear the word God there. Elyon is the most high God. Elyon." So "El" is singular for God. Elohim is the masculine plural, the "im" on the end.

01:15:51 So Cherubim is more than one cherub. The "im" is the masculine plural.

John Bytheway: 01:15:57 Yurim and Thumim.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:15:58 Urim veTumim is lights and perfections. Im, anytime you hear that im, that is the masculine plural. The feminine plural is ot. Mikvot is like baptismal fonts. Mikvah is the singular mikvot are plural. You with me? In this case, he's saying you are Elohim. You're all Elohim. Which means, again, this is Latter-day Saint theology is that we are not a different species than God. We are literal children of God and woven within us is the capacity to become like him. And he's saying scripturally, "You guys are Elohim." By the way, we could bring in a thousand rabbis. That's what the text says. Now, some will say, some will say. Oh, no, no, no. He means judges here. You're judges. The context is about judgment and your judges. Let me say one other thing about Elohim.

01:16:54 Elohim is plural. All through Genesis one, two, and three, it's Elohim, plural, plural, plural. But we translate it singular. The theology on that from a Protestant Christian view and even from a rabbinic view, to a certain extent, is that Elohim ... Now, listen to what I'm gonna say here, I'm actually using their language, is what's called a "plurality of majesty." Unquote. Meaning that God is too much to be encapsulated in a singular. Therefore, when we refer to God and his character and who he is, we have to use the plural. Do you follow that line of logic? The problem is that's just totally made up.

Hank Smith: 01:17:38 I, but it is like, yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:17:40 It is just 100% made up. That's not in the text. And God refers to himself on the singular and El's all over the place. It's just made up. It's just because it doesn't fit the theology. So, we're gonna say plurality of Majesty.

Hank Smith: 01:17:53 Just quick side note, I think Joseph Smith had an argument with his Jewish Hebrew tutor over that.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:17:58 Yeah, he did. Where he's like, "Well, that's the masculine plural." And he's like, "Yeah, but it doesn't really mean that." And Joseph's like, "No, that's precisely what it means."

Hank Smith: 01:18:06 Yeah. I think it was Truman Madsen who told that story. Yeah, he was like, "Wait, you said this is what it says." Well, that's not what it really says. What do you mean it's not what? You taught me? That's what it says.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:18:19 I know what a masculine plural is when I see one.

John Bytheway: 01:18:23 You go back to Genesis 1:26, let "us".

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:18:27 Us.

John Bytheway: 01:18:27 That sounds plural. Like, man in "our", that sounds plural image-.. and after our, that sounds plural likeness.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:18:34 Right. And the reason they did that, John, in 26 is because you can't conjugate yourself out of a singular there. There's no way to make the text make any sense without the plural. You gotta make all the verbs agree. So, they were just like, "Yeah, we can't even do it and we can't do it." Like, uh, they were wearing white wigs in very cold weather in England going. Okay, we're just gonna make it plural. I mean, that's all we're gonna do. Like, I don't have a way to get around this.

John Bytheway: 01:18:58 All in favor? Okay.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:18:59 All in favor. Yeah, yeah, yeah. No one's gonna care.

John Bytheway: 01:19:02 Could you please say that in Hebrew? I'd love to hear that.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:19:05 Okay, so here's the Hebrew, which is so powerful. And it says this. I get excited. I'm glad you asked me this. It says ani amarti. Now, ani amarti, again, subject first. It's, I have said ... Now, they try and I have said, it should really be something like, even I said. Because when you put the subject first, it's like trying to

say, I'm empowering. So Ani Amarti, I, I said ... And watch this. Elohim Atem, God's you are. Sounds like Yoda a little bit here.

- Hank Smith: 01:19:39 It does, yeah.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:19:40 Even I have said Gods you are. Elohim Atem. Atem is the second masculine plural. You are God's <Hebrew> and children of the most high all of you. So I blocked it out. Like literally that's what the Hebrew says. That's not controversial. I would love to have like 20 rabbis sit down with me, like they're gonna be like, "Yep, that's the right translation." Now, they might interpret it differently, obviously, like theologize it differently, but that's what the text says.
- 01:20:11 Now, people who say, "Oh, the context, you're not reading it in context. This is about judges. Look in verse one. He's judging them." The word judge comes up in verse two, and then verse three, we're talking about justice and defending the poor and the needy. Then we're gonna all die like men. Verse seven. And then verse eight, judge comes up again. A lot of people, they'll go, "No, no, no, no. Elohim, that's judges." Okay, go to John chapter 10. This is where I love where Jesus is like, yeah, this is what I meant by those verses. By the way, John chapter eight, John chapter nine, John chapter 10, some of the most intense back and forth with Pharisees. By the way, John never brings up Sadducee. That word does not occur in the book of John.
- Hank Smith: 01:20:55 Interesting. Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 01:20:56 Really?
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:20:56 Pharisee does, but not Sadducee because I think when he says Pharisee, he wants to go and spit. John is not bashful about who the good guys are and who the bad guys are in his view.
- Hank Smith: 01:21:08 Yeah.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:21:08 Now we have some colleagues who think we're maybe like overreaching on the Pharisees, but if John the beloved were here, he'd be spitting. John chapter 10, let's go to verse 25. Jesus answered them. "I told you and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." And then here it goes, it's getting more intense. "My Father, which gave

them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands." Here it comes, "I and my Father are one." Dun, dun, dun. "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

- 01:21:58 Jesus answered, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do you stone me? The Jews answered saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy;" because thou makest, "thou being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them." Psalms 82:6. "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?" He's not saying they're judges. He is literally responding to their accusation that he's making himself God by quoting the Psalms saying, we're all Elohim. We all have that within us. Verse 35, "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the son of God?" Boom, amazing.
- John Bytheway: 01:22:49 Wow.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:22:50 There's an Old Testament, New Testament connection. Part of scripture study is to make connections and make sure you understand. So somebody says, no, no, no, that's not what it meant. It means judges. And you'd be like, oh, and we get covered into, oh yeah, that's true. No, Jesus said it means you're Gods. Have a super good rest of your day.
- Hank Smith: 01:23:10 Yeah. Right.
- John Bytheway: 01:23:12 Maybe those scholars are just smarter than Jesus.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:23:15 Maybe.
- John Bytheway: 01:23:15 I love that. Jesus used that verse to say no. Clearly he's not talking about judges. I love that.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:23:24 Nope. Otherwise, it makes zero sense.
- Hank Smith: 01:23:27 And Ross, part of that skill you taught us was emphasize the things that Jesus emphasizes. So Psalms 82, I should spend time there.
- Dr. Ross Baron: 01:23:35 By the way, the quote from Psalms 82:6- in John 10, precise. Now that's Greek in John 10, but it is the precise, you know, translation from the Greek to the Hebrew.

Hank Smith: 01:23:46 That's what he's referring to. Yeah.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:23:48 That is power.

Hank Smith: 01:23:49 Ross, one thing that John and I and our, our entire team think about are listeners who are in pain, who are suffering. We have listeners who are going through the suffering of the death of a child or a spouse, a loved one, a divorce. We have listeners in prison. We have listeners who are wracked with mental illness. One of the reasons I invited you is you feel deeply for people. As I've gotten to know you over the years. I don't know exactly where I want you to go with this question other than can the Old Testament help?

John Bytheway: 01:24:28 Mm-hmm.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:24:29 I love the question. Yeah, let me say this. To those suffering and all the things you said, I mean, that's no trivial matter. The deep suffering, I think you know I had stage four cancer when I was 44 years old and stage four is bad because stage five is the spirit world. That was a joke, by the way.

John Bytheway: 01:24:49 That's good.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:24:50 I had chemotherapy, I had surgeries, I had radiation, and we had six kids at home, one son on a mission. It was pretty brutal. And I'm not trying to say that my cancer is the thing and that other people, like, I totally get it, but let me just say this. I like to let scripture study wash over me. What I mean by that is as I study texts and when I had cancer, they had to give me steroids to shrink the tumors. I couldn't sleep. So, I'd be up at 3:00, 2:00 in the morning, literally cannot sleep, and I would read the Psalms, Old Testament.

01:25:31 We've done kind of a deep dive, but sometimes I would just read the Psalms to let the Spirit wash over me and comfort me. And I can testify that it did. It's so interesting you bring that up because I wasn't gonna bring that up, but that is fascinating because literally the word of God in the Old Testament spoke to my soul, gave me comfort and spoke peace. It didn't say everything was gonna be all right. It didn't say I was gonna live, but it washed over me and gave me strength and hope to persevere another day. Testified of Jesus Christ. Sometimes just reading the word of God in humility and in a spirit of seeking that grace from God was so powerful. That to me was powerful, amazing, and unforgettable. I'll be forever grateful to the Lord for his kindness and mercy and patience with me.

Hank Smith: 01:26:28 Ross, I really appreciate that. There's an invitation this year to let these words wash over you. Heal your wounds.

Dr. Ross Baron: 01:26:39 That's exactly right. I love that we're ending with this because it really wasn't a deep dive. At 3:00 in the morning, I was up, everybody in the house is asleep. I'm facing whatever I'm facing. I've opened to the Psalms and I'm reading through them and I'm really not doing a deep dive, but it's healing me, at least spiritually. I can honestly say that in some respects, while I was having cancer, my spirit burned as bright as it had ever burned in my life in terms of my witness of Jesus Christ, my testimony of the reality of what he did and of the reality of the resurrection, of the reality of the Plan of Salvation, of the prophet Joseph Smith and of modern prophets. And it was power. It allowed me to endure well because through the word of God, it healed my spirit and soul.

John Bytheway: 01:27:33 It's not just the exact words or phrases or content that you read. It was putting yourself in that place of pondering, of looking at the word of God and just putting yourself there and letting that wash over you is healing. No matter what you're reading, really, if I can say that.

Hank Smith: 01:27:52 John, isn't that what we're after? In our show, at least? Yeah.

John Bytheway: 01:27:56 That's right. I'm so glad you bore witness of that because hopefully anybody can go and read, not just listen to a podcast and think you're done with scripture today. Oh, no, no, no, no. Go into the words themselves and just read the words themselves. I love it.

Hank Smith: 01:28:14 The great part about this, John, is we get to do this again seven more times with Ross this year.

John Bytheway: 01:28:21 Hank, I was this excited. I'm holding my hand up, and I am so- this is gonna be so good. I can't believe we get to get you back. This is going to be wonderful. Those 10 things, I've got them down. I bet we'll be referring to these often, Hank, as we keep going.

Hank Smith: 01:28:39 Yep. When do we have Ross back?

John Bytheway: 01:28:41 We have Ross back again for another Thoughts to Keep in Mind. Next, we'll be talking about the covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant. And I just don't know how it's possible to understand even the Book of Mormon without understanding the Abrahamic Covenant. What is that? And how are we part of it? I

can't wait to hear what Ross is gonna teach us about that next time.

Dr. Ross Baron:	01:29:04	I'm pretty excited. I got a lot, lot to say about it.
Hank Smith:	01:29:06	Yeah.
Dr. Ross Baron:	01:29:06	It's great.
Hank Smith:	01:29:07	And that's gonna be mid-February. So as we're looking forward to Valentine's Day, we're also looking forward to The Covenant with Ross Baron, Dr. Ross Baron. Yeah, a lot of fun.
John Bytheway:	01:29:16	That's right.
Dr. Ross Baron:	01:29:17	What's more romantic than that?
John Bytheway:	01:29:20	Well, it continues with us. That's what's so interesting. We're chosen. I like to tell my class, kind of like being chosen to mow the lawn. You've chosen to do a work, and that is to bless all the families of the earth. What could be better than that?
Dr. Ross Baron:	01:29:36	No, that's exactly right.
John Bytheway:	01:29:37	We'd like to thank Dr. Ross Baron, and we're so excited we're gonna have him back. Is it seven more times, Hank?
Hank Smith:	01:29:43	Seven more times, baby.
John Bytheway:	01:29:45	As we go through these, I'm excited. It's gonna be wonderful. As we continue our study of the Old Testament, please come and see us again and enjoy this on followHIM.
Hank Smith:	01:29:57	As a thank you to our wonderful listeners, We'd love to gift you the digital version of our book, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It offers short, meaningful insights drawn from our past Old Testament episodes. Visit followhim.co , that's followhim.co to download your free copy today, and you'll also find the link to purchase the print edition. Thank you for being part of our followHIM family. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, Heather Barlow, Amelia Kabwika, Sydney Smith, and Annabel Sorensen. Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Turn to him. followHIM.