

“And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.” (Malachi 3:17)

Introduction

God has chosen his people to be his precious treasure. Leading them from bondage and sorrow, delivering them physically and spiritually from the pains of death he guides his people to his Holy Mount in order to seal through sacred covenants the promises of the fathers upon the heads of the children and thus secure them as his precious treasure. This is the story of the Israelite journey from Egypt to the Holy Mount to the Promised Land. This article only covers nine of the many chapters that relate this epic journey of physical and spiritual salvation.

In the expanse of any given nine chapters from scripture, picking and choosing themes at the exclusion of others will by necessity leave many questions unanswered. This article will do just that, focusing on five main themes found in the passages of Exodus 15-20; 32-34 without necessarily answering all of the intriguing questions or following the exact storyline expressed in the chapters. The themes to be discussed in this lesson are: The murmuring of Israel, prophets and prophetic roles, covenant making, types of Christ, healing and atonement.

The Murmuring of Israel

God’s own people tested and tried him in the midst of the tests and trials he offered them for their own growth, instruction, and salvation. Time and again the Israelites came upon a trial or challenge and murmured against Moses and the other God-appointed leaders. In each instance God brought forth a resolution for the instruction and salvation of the Israelites. But the effects were not long-lasting. Let us first reacquaint ourselves with the definition of murmuring and then consider several examples of murmuring from the scriptures.

The Webster’s dictionary defines the English word murmuring as “a half-suppressed or muttered complaint; grumbling; complain.” ((*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1988).)) The act of complaining, even if “half-suppressed,” seems rather innocuous in comparison to other possible sins and transgressions. ((It is possible that the underlying Hebrew word for murmur is actually used to indicate a form of complaining with the intent to kill the person that is the object of complaint. Such an insight seems to also align with the murmuring we see from Laman and Lemuel.)) Nevertheless, this attitude led the Israelites into many grievous follies and difficulties. They were not humble and childlike; they were not willing “to submit,” as King Benjamin once taught, “to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon” his children (Mosiah 2:19).

The Israelites began their murmuring campaign at the waters of the Red Sea with the Egyptian army hot in pursuit. They murmured against Moses for leading them to death in the desert when they might have instead enjoyed the fruits of the land of Egypt. Despite their murmuring God displayed his miraculous powers of deliverance. ((God has the power to both heal/save and destroy using the same agent. For example, God used water to destroy the armies of the Egyptians, but with that same water he saved the Israelites. At the bitter waters of Marah, death taunted the Israelites until God turned the water sweet through the miracle of the tree. God saved the Israelites and promised them healing. The waters that once threatened the Israelites now became their salvation. Ancient Jewish Rabbis suggested that “God’s way of healing is not man’s way. In human healing, that which is used for hurting is not used for healing—one strikes with a knife and heals with a bandage. Not so with God: The very means by which He strikes He also heals.” *Mekhilta Wayhi 5*, in *The Bible as it Was* by James Kugel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 355.)) However, as soon as the Israelites were beyond danger and the immediate euphoria of physical salvation had passed the complaining returned. The Israelites came upon the bitter waters named Marah, ((Marah is a Hebrew word that means “bitter.”)) and being famished of thirst they complained against Moses. The Lord again delivered the Israelites from their suffering by commanding Moses to cast a tree into the bitter waters so that they would be healed. ((Ancient Jewish interpreters suggested that Moses, under instructions from God, healed the bitter waters with a portion of the tree of life. “[God] showed him the tree of life, from which he cut off and took and threw into Marah, and the water of Marah became sweet.” From Pseudo-Philo, *Biblical Antiquities* 11:15.)) Had the Israelites listened more closely to the words of Moses as they partook of sweet waters, they may have understood why God had again saved them: God promised that he would heal all

those who would heed his commandments and obey his law (*torah*).

The journey continued on into the trackless wastes of the Sinai. Not many days after the miraculous salvation at the Red Sea and at the bitter-turned-sweet waters of Marah, the Israelites again fell to murmuring against their God appointed leaders.

And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, *and* when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. (Exodus 16:3)

This manner of language is not unlike the foul stench of complaint near continuously belched forth by Laman and Lemuel during their wilderness trek to the Promised Land.

And thou art like unto our father, led away by the foolish imaginations of his heart; yea, he hath led us out of the land of Jerusalem, and we have wandered in the wilderness for these many years; and our women have toiled, being big with child; and they have borne children in the wilderness and suffered all things, save it were death; and it would have been better that they had died before they came out of Jerusalem than to have suffered these afflictions. Behold, these many years we have suffered in the wilderness, which time we might have enjoyed our possessions and the land of our inheritance; yea, and we might have been happy. (1 Nephi 17:20-21)

In the case of Laman and Lemuel (and this can be applied to the children of Israel as well) ((The application does not hold for entering the Promised Land, however. We know that God decreed in his wrath that none of the Israelites of the generation delivered from bondage would enter into their rest in the Promised Land. And thus the Israelites wandered for 40 years in the Sinai until that generation died off. What is interesting about this is that it is a mere 250+ miles between Egypt and Canaan, a journey that could be completed in 8 months even if but one mile was traveled per day (or if 20 miles were covered in a day, the journey would take less than two weeks). Compare this to the modern day Exodus of Mormon pioneers who trekked more than 1000 miles in less than a 6 month time period. Perhaps there we can see the difference between faith and obedience of the pioneers as compared to murmuring, contention and disobedience of the original children of Israel.)) it is entirely lamentable that so much joy and peace, yes even in the midst of suffering, was lost because of pointless murmuring. Despite their most crafty words of complaint and murmuring Laman and Lemuel still arrived to the Promised Land in safety and, it was, in language of the creation, “very good.” In fact Nephi declared, “we were blessed in abundance” (1 Nephi 18:24). So what were the consequences of their murmuring complaints? Heartache and bitterness, like the unhealed waters of Marah. Unfortunately, Laman and Lemuel’s personal “waters of Marah” were not healed through the tree of life. Perhaps more humility, patience, and faith in the Lord would have made Laman and Lemuel’s journey and life process more bearable and joyful.

We return to the children of Israel and their murmuring against Moses and Aaron for bread. As he had done previously, Jehovah saved his children. This time he did so by providing “bread from heaven,” known as *manna* ((Manna is a Hebrew interrogatory word literally meaning “what is it?”)) or the divine food of the angels. (“But those who honor the true eternal God, inherit life, dwelling in the luxuriant garden of Paradise for the time of eternity, feasting on sweet bread from starry heaven.” *Sibylline Oracles*, Fragment 3:46-49. “Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels’ food: he sent them meat to the full” (Psalms 78:23-25.)) But the blessings from heaven did not stop there. Just prior to the outpouring of “bread from heaven” God sent unto his children quail, which covered the entire camp providing a source of meat for the famished sojourners. ((This miraculous story of divine feeding by means of quail was repeated in our dispensation. “During February 1846 on the banks of Sugar Creek seven miles west of the Mississippi River Brigham Young established the staging ground for the Exodus from Nauvoo across Iowa. For the rest of that year thousands of Mormons

camped temporarily on Sugar Creek. During October the dramatic ‘Miracle of the Quails’ took place while about 640 destitute Saints, driven from Nauvoo by mob action, were camping on the Iowa river bottoms. On 9 October, flocks of quail, exhausted from a long flight, fell at the feet of the Saints and were gathered for food.” Stanley Kimball, “Nauvoo West: The Mormons on the Iowa Shore,” *BYU Studies* vol. 18 (1977-1978), p. 132. The eyewitness account of this event comes from the journal of Thomas Bullock (Thomas Bullock Journal, 9 Oct. 1846, LDS Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah) found in Bruce A. Van Orden and Brent L. Top, eds., *The Lord of the Gospels: The 1990 Sperry Symposium on the New Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1991), p. 34. “This morning we had a direct manifestation of the mercy and goodness of God, in a miracle being performed in the camp. A large, or rather several large flocks of Quails, flew into camp—some fell on the wagons—some under—some on the breakfast tables—the boys and brethren ran about after them and caught them alive with their hands—men who were not in the church marvelled at the sight—the brethren and sisters praised God and glorified his name, that what was showered down upon the children of Israel in the wilderness is manifested unto us in our persecution. The boys caught about 20 alive and as to the number that were killed—every man, woman and child had quails to eat for their dinner—after dinner the flocks increased in size...Captain Allen ordered the brethren not to kill when they had eaten and were satisfied.”) The Israelites had sufficient for their needs, indeed their needs were satisfied. A kind and merciful God had heard their cries and even their murmurings. He spoke unto Moses making plain the purpose of the miracles,

I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; *and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.* (Exodus 16:12 emphasis added)

Yet again, once the needs were satisfied and the power of the miracle subsided in the hearts and minds of the Israelites the murmuring crept back into their souls much like the way that Satan worked upon the Nephites soon after all people had seen the sign of Christ’s birth.

And it came to pass that from this time forth there began to be lyings sent forth among the people, by Satan, to harden their hearts, to the intent that they might not believe in those signs and wonders which they had seen. (3 Nephi 1:22)

In the case of the Israelites they found themselves again murmuring for water. Again the Lord instructed Moses how to save his people. Moses took the rod, by which he had performed the mighty miracles in Egypt and at the Red Sea, and struck a rock. Living water issued forth. In mock irony, Moses named the place “Massah” (meaning “testing, trying, proving” in Hebrew) and “Meribah” (meaning “strife, complaint” in Hebrew) because the Israelites questioned, “Is the Lord among us or not?” (Exodus 17:7).

We may wonder how a people who had been so blessed in first-hand experience with the miraculous and mighty saving power of God could so easily forget. Yet, we too are susceptible as were the Israelites. Christ himself declared of our day:

And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth...and if they shall...reject the fulness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them. (3 Nephi 16:10)

With sufficient examples of Israelite murmuring the principle is clear—trust the Lord, have faith and patience for he knows all our needs and he is mighty to save. This does not mean that He will immediately save us from our present sufferings. Perhaps we may have left behind a prosperous land in exchange for difficult and trying present

circumstances (just like Abraham in Genesis 12-25). Nevertheless, God leads us, if we are willing. And he leads us to our own Promised Lands, more pure and wholesome beyond degree and beyond our experience. If we but trust him throughout the process and journey of life we will find our joy and blessings magnified despite the hardships and sufferings we endured.

Prophets and Prophetic Roles

Exodus 15-20 and 32-34 are rich with examples of prophetic roles such as deliverer, judge, lawgiver, mediator and revelator. Let us consider a few examples.

Moses was called of God to deliver the Israelites out of bondage, both temporally and spiritually. Moses worked mighty works in leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Once in Sinai, however, the work of delivering them from evil and sin was constantly upon Moses' shoulders. He attempted with great love and compassion to spiritually prepare the Israelites to receive the presence of the Lord and the higher law at Mount Sinai (see Exodus 19). Unfortunately, fear as well as sin kept the Israelites from entering into the presence of the Lord (see Exodus 20:18-21; 32).

In addition to his prophetic role, Moses was judge over the children of Israel. Exodus 18:13 records that “Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning until the evening.” The record goes on to explain that such a burden of judgment over so many people is too much for one man, even if that person be a prophetic figure from God. So the Lord offered inspiration to Moses through the mouth of his father-in-law, Jethro, ((Jethro is also called Raguel and Hobab in the OT (perhaps there was some scribal confusion). Jethro was the father of Zipporah, the wife of Moses. Through Zipporah Moses had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer.)) the High Priest ((Where did Jethro derive the priesthood? D&C 84:6-16 offers the following priestly chronology: Moses received the priesthood “under the hand of his father-in-law, Jethro; and Jethro received it under the hand of Caleb; and Caleb received it under the hand of Elihu; and Elihu under the hand of Jeremy; and Jeremy under the hand of Gad; and Gad under the hand of Esaias; and Esaias received it under the hand of God. Esaias also lived in the days of Abraham, and was blessed of him—Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah; and from Noah till Enoch, through the lineage of their fathers; and from Enoch to Abel, who was slain by the conspiracy of his brother, who received the priesthood by the commandments of God, by the hand of his father Adam, who was the first man—”)) of Midian. ((Midian is the name of the son born to Keturah and Abraham. Midian is 4th on the list in Genesis 25:2. Midianites were caravaners and traders between Gilead and Egypt. Gilead was the region along the east bank of the Jordan River between the Galilee and Dead Seas. Reference is often made to the “Balm of Gilead” a spice used for medicinal purposes (see Jeremiah 8:22; 46:11). The Midianites, later associated or grouped with the Ishmaelites, traded such things as slaves, gum, balm, and myrrh. Joseph of Egypt was bought by one of these groups, taken to Egypt and sold into slavery. The Midianites were from the region of Midian, an area on the east coast of the gulf of Aqabah, directly south of Edom (see “Midian” on map 3 in the Bible).)) Jethro praised Moses for teaching the people the statutes and commandments of the law (*torah*) of God. But he also counseled him

Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that *is* with thee: for this thing *is* too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Harken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them, *to be* rulers of thousands, *and* rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: ((This organizational structure follows a common Ancient Near Eastern military organization pattern.)) And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, *that* every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear *the burden* with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee *so*, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace. So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said. (Exodus 18:18-24)

Moses in his prophetic role was also the great lawgiver. Among the many laws and ordinances that God gave unto the children of Israel through Moses (found throughout Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) the most famous of these are the Ten Commandments. Later, another prophet arose in Israel who taught the higher law summarizing not just the Ten Commandments but all of the law (*torah*) and the prophets in two simple yet challenging commands,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Matt. 22:37-39)

One of the most prominent roles of a prophet expressed throughout Exodus 15-20 and 32-34 is that of mediator. Each time that the Israelites had gone astray, Moses turned to the Lord in supplication and prayer on their behalf, pleading that the Lord spare them and remember the covenants and promises of the fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). One of the most striking examples is found in Exodus 32. Before we look at this passage, let us set the context for Moses' intercessory mediation.

In Exodus 19:8 the Israelites covenant to do all things whatsoever the Lord commanded them ((Compare this to the people of King Benjamin who after feeling the power of the Spirit covenant to be God's children. They then received a new name to be called the children of Christ. See Mosiah 4:2; 5:2-5, 7.)) and the Lord promised them in return that they would be his peculiar treasure (Exodus 19:5). Next there are several chapters of Moses ascending Mount Sinai, receiving divine instructions then descending the mountain to share the law with the Israelites. On one of these occasions, after much of the law had been shared with the Israelites and they had covenanted to keep it, Moses was again on Mount Sinai communing with the Lord. In his lengthy absence the children of Israel believed that Moses would never return. They pressed upon ((The Hebrew seems to indicate that Aaron's position of leadership was being challenged. Regardless, it was no excuse for the events that transpired afterwards.)) Aaron to make gods for them that they might worship. Aaron called the people to deliver their gold unto him and with it a golden calf was made. The voice went throughout camp proclaiming in reference to the idol, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Then after a parody of what should have been a sacred, solemn feast of divine worship, they rose up to play. ((The Hebrew word here suggests that the Israelites engaged in sexual promiscuity. This is further confirmed by the fact that when Moses descended from the top of the mount the people were naked "unto their shame among their enemies." Spiritually, the Israelites had adulterated themselves with false gods.))

And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. (Exodus 32:10)

Based on the reading of these passages we learn that not only was the Lord willing to completely annihilate his people, his peculiar treasure, but he was willing to start all over again with Moses and make of him and his posterity the great nation that he desired to make of the Israelites. What happens next is quite remarkable. Instead of allowing the Lord to follow throughout with his wrath and claim solely for himself and his posterity all of the promises of the fathers, Moses plead with the Lord to preserve the covenant people. ((This is not unlike Abraham in Genesis 18 who bargains with the Lord for the salvation of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. In true bargaining style, Abraham talks the Lord down from 50 righteous to 10 righteous that must be found within those cities in order to save them. Unfortunately, Abraham's compassionate effort to mediate was overruled by the lack of righteousness on the part of those he sought to save.)) Moses reminds the Lord of his covenant promises unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Additionally Moses pleads with the Lord that he not destroy the very people he had saved from the Egyptians.

And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty

hand? ex. 32:12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath. Thy people will repent of this evil; therefore come thou not out against them. ex. 32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever. ex. 32:14 And the Lord said unto Moses, If they will repent of the evil which they have done, I will spare them, and turn away my fierce wrath; but, behold, thou shalt execute judgment upon all that will not repent of this evil this day. Therefore, see thou do this thing that I have commanded thee, or I will execute all that which I had thought to do unto my people. (JST— Exodus 32:11-14)

Due to Moses’ successful mediation before the Lord for the Israelites, they were spared certain destruction in an ignominious land.

Moses also functioned as a revelator unto the children of Israel. He was the voice of God, the will of God, and the mind of God unto the children of Israel.

And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend ((Later in Exodus 33:20 the Lord states, “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.” This statement contradicts what we read in Exodus 33:11. However, if we peruse the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) of the Old Testament we discover a most welcome morsel of truth: “And he said unto Moses, Thou canst not see my face at this time, lest mine anger be kindled against thee also, and I destroy thee, and thy people; for there shall no man among them see me at this time, and live, for they are exceeding sinful. And no sinful man hath at any time, neither shall there be any sinful man at any time, that shall see my face and live” (JST— Exodus 33:20).) ...and the skin of his face shone ((Abinadi, a prophet like unto Moses, also preached the law of God with a shining face. What is remarkable about the Abinadi story was that King Noah and his wicked priests believed that Moses was the great revelator and that his word ought to be obeyed. However, when one came among them speaking in the name of the Lord and whose “face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses’ did while in the mount of Sinai, while speaking with the Lord” they hardened their hearts revealing that neither Moses or God were their true master. Their master was the father of lies (see Mosiah 13).)) while he talked with him...and afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And [when] Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel *that* which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with [God]. (Exodus 33:11; 34:29, 32-35)

Covenant Making

Once the children of Israel reached Mount Sinai many covenants were initiated by God to bind his people to him in mercy, love, obedience, and saving promises. We see that the Lord reached out first to his people. He brought them to his Holy Abode (if we view Mount Sinai as a holy temple) and invited his children to bind themselves to him as his choice and treasured people. It is the same for us. He seeks us. He desires us. He loves us. “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). It is important to recognize that God our Father, the creator of all things has reached out to us who are less than the dust of the earth to establish mutually sealing covenants of love and salvation.

We already mentioned that upon arrival at the Mount the Israelites covenanted to obey all that God would command of them (see. Exodus 19:8). One of the important God-initiated promises at this time is found in Exodus

33.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, *and* go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: And I will send an angel before thee...unto a land flowing with milk and honey. (Exodus 33:1-3)

The Lord renews the promises of the fathers unto the children. God’s covenanting promise of posterity, property, and the blessings of the priesthood is a pattern repeated throughout scripture, beginning with Abraham, then Isaac, then onto Jacob and his children. The tribes of Israel represent one, but an important, link that binds these heroes of faith to each other through the unity of a common covenant with God renewed throughout the generations.

Types of Christ

The Old Testament is a witness of Christ and as such we find multiple types and figures of Christ throughout the Old Testament. Some of the examples we have covered already in this lesson, however, without explicit reference to the way that they typify Christ.

For example, Christ is the living tree that heals all bitter waters (cf. “waters of Marah” in Exodus 15). Christ is the Rock of Heaven (JST—Genesis 7:59) from whom flows all living water just as the water flowed freely from the rock of Horeb (Exodus 17). It was the Master who spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob declaring,

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:13-14)

Christ is the living manna who came down from heaven, born in the House of Bread (Beth-lehem) to be the bread of life, satisfying all of our most important needs, filling our souls with complete sustenance.

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. (John 6:32-35)

Healing and Atonement

If the Old Testament is a witness of Jesus Christ then we would also expect to see witnesses and examples of key attributes of Christ—his healing power and atonement. As our final example we will compare the Promised Land to the healing power of Christ’s atonement. The Promised Land was the ultimate objective God had in saving his people from destitution and bondage. Miraculous intervention to physically and spiritually save them throughout the journey was confirmed and highlighted by sacred covenants along the way.

Like the Israelites of old we all wander in barren wastelands, perhaps lost and in darkness as Lehi was who once expressed the universal experience,

I beheld...that I was in a dark and dreary waste. And after I had traveled for the space of many hours in darkness, I began to pray unto the Lord that he would have mercy on me, according to the

multitude of his tender mercies. (1 Nephi 8:7-8)

The Lord is faithful and full of perfect charity. His tender mercies are upon us. He answers our prayers and leads us to our Promised Land which flows with milk and honey. These two, milk and honey, are symbols of the atonement of Jesus Christ and they are found in full plenitude in the Promised Land. They are the symbols of conversion to God’s truths and his love. ((In the ancient Jewish story called When Joseph Met Asenath, bees feed the divine food of honey to Egyptian Asenath as a symbol of her conversion unto the truth worship of God before she marries Joseph.)) They are sweet and nourishing and completely satisfying. They are the symbols of prosperity and abundance, of which the infinite and eternal atonement is never deficient.

Our personal journey to our Promised Land is no easy process. It is fraught with pain, difficulty, and suffering. Yet as we reflect on God’s everlasting charity unto his people as expressed again and again in the Old Testament we can gather renewed strength to know that God seeks us in covenantal relationship that binds us to his never-ending healing power. In this we can experience the true purpose of mortal life and the potential of eternal lives with God,

Behold this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. And men are, that they might have joy. (Moses 1:39; 2 Nephi 2:25)