

**3 Nephi 16: 1-3***Other sheep*

1 In 721 B.C. the ten northern tribes of Israel were taken captive into Assyria. From there they were led into the lands of the north and were thereafter lost from the annals of history. They have thus come to be known as the lost ten tribes. Much discussion and extended speculation have taken place as to their whereabouts and the manner in which they will return and be gathered home to the lands of their inheritance. It is common for Latter-day Saints, for example, to cite numerous legends or reminiscences of persons who supposedly heard Joseph Smith state that these Israelites are in the center of the earth on a knob attached to earth, on the North Star on another planet. We shall focus in our discussion of this subject upon what the Book of Mormon teaches on the matter.

In one of his concluding testimonies in the Book of Mormon, Mormon said: “I write unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, twelve tribes of Israel” (Mormon 3:18). If words mean what they say and Mormon knew whereof he spoke, the twelve tribes of Israel were scattered from one end of the earth to the other and but waiting for the message of the Book of Mormon that they might be gathered. When the ten tribes return, among the sacred treasures that they will have with them will be the Book of Mormon (see 2 Nephi 29:13). Because he wrote so eloquently on this subject, we here quote extensively from Elder Bruce R. McConkie:

“Our friend Mormon, as he nears the end of his divinely appointed work, that of preserving the everlasting word as it was had among the Nephites, says: ‘I write unto you, Gentiles, and also unto you, house of Israel, when the work shall commence, that ye shall be about to prepare to return to the land of your inheritance.’ Then, as though this salutation was not sufficient, and lest any should be confused as to the people to whom the Book of Mormon shall go, Mormon wrote: ‘Yea, behold, I write unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, [the] twelve tribes of Israel.’ *Yhr Book of Mormon is written to the twelve tribes of Israel.* And this includes the lost Ten Tribes. For that matter, the New Testament is addressed ‘to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.’ (James 1:1.)

“And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write unto you all’—all the house of Israel. Why? ‘That ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which he shall have among you; and also that the Jews, the covenant people of the Lord, shall have other witness besides him whom they saw and heard, that Jesus, whom they slew, was the very Christ and the very God. And I would that I could persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.’ (Mormon 3:17-22.) That is to say, all Israel, the Lamanites and the Ten Tribes included, shall gathered if and when they believe the Book of Mormon. The Ten Tribes shall return after they accept the Book of Mormon; then they shall come to Ephraim to receive their blessings, the blessings of the house of the Lord, the blessings that make them heirs of the covenant God made with their father Abraham.

“*But, says one, are they not in a body somewhere in the land of the north?* Answer: They are not; they are scattered in all nations [see 1 Nephi 22:4]. The north countries of their habitation are all the countries north of their Palestinian home, north of Assyria from whence they escaped, north of the prophets who attempted to describe their habitat. And for that matter,

they shall also come from the south and the east and the west and the ends of the earth [see 3 Nephi 20:13; Isaiah 43:5-6; Zechariah 2:6]. Such is the prophetic word.

*“But, says another, did not Jesus visit them after he ministered among the Nephites? Answer: Of course he did, in one or many places as suited his purposes. He assembled them together in exactly the same way he gathered the Nephites in the land Bountiful so that they too could hear his voice and feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet. Of this there can be no question. And we suppose that he also called twelve apostles and established his kingdom among them even as he did in Jerusalem and in the Americas. Why should he deal any differently with one branch of Israel than with another?”*

*“Query: What happened to the Ten Tribes after the visit of the Savior to them near the end of the thirty-fourth year following his birth? Answer: The same thing that happened to the Nephites. There was righteousness for a season. And then there was apostasy and wickedness. Be it remembered that darkness was destined to cover the earth—all of it—before the day of the restoration, and that the restored gospel was to go to every nation and kindred and tongue and people upon the face of the whole earth, including the Ten Tribes of Israel....”*

*“And finally, says yet another, will they not come with their prophets and seers? Answer: There is no other way they or any people can be gathered. Of course they will be led by their prophets, prophets who are subject to and receive instructions from, and prophets who report their labors to the one man on earth who holds and exercises all of the keys of the kingdom in their fulness. Did not Paul say that ‘the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets,’ and that ‘God is not the author of confusion? (1 Corinthians 14:32-33.) The Lord’s house is a house of order; it has only one head at one time; Christ is not divided. In this day when the head of the Church can communicate with all men on earth, there is no longer any need for one kingdom in Jerusalem and another in Bountiful and others in whatever place or places the Ten Tribes were when Jesus visited them. This is the promised day when there shall be one God, one Shepherd, one prophet, one gospel, one church, and one kingdom for all the earth,” (Millennial Messiah, pp. 215-17, italics in original.)*

In speaking of the return of the lost tribes, a modern revelation attests: “He [Christ] shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north countries, and the islands shall become one land; and the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided.” And now we note the millennial setting for the gathering: “And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves.” (D&C 133:23-26.) As to the prophets among the ten tribes in our day, Elder McConkie has written: “Their prophets are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are stake presidents and bishops and quorum presidents who are appointed to guide and direct the destinies of their stakes and wards and quorums.” (*Millennial Messiah*, p.326.) That is, the ten tribes shall be gathered into the fold in the same way as all others: missionaries shall search them out, they shall hear the message of the Restoration

through the Book of Mormon, shall be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and shall thereafter locate themselves in the quorums and wards and stakes where the Saints congregate.

We frequently hear that when the ten tribes return they will bring their scriptures with them. This idea, though not found specifically in scripture, is generally inferred from Nephi's prophecy: "And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews" (2 Nephi 29:13). "Will they not bring their scriptures with them?" Elder McConkie asked. "Probably not; at least there is no such promise. Yes, we and they will have their scriptures; and those scriptures will tell of the visit of the Risen Lord among their forebears. How they shall be brought to light is not known. It may be in much the same way the Book of Mormon was revealed to the world. And once again it will be by or under the direction of the President of the Church, for he holds the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom and of the things that are sealed and hidden up." (*New Witness*, p. 521.)

In summary, to those who argue that the ten tribes are presently together in one large body—totally organized and empowered as members of the Church—we might consider the following:

1. It is an established doctrine of the Church, one easily sustained by each of the standard works, that there was a universal apostasy after the mortal ministry of Christ. That such an apostasy embraced the ten tribes is evident in the Allegory of Zenos (see Jacob 5:29-49).
2. It is an equally well-established doctrine that in the last days there would be a universal restoration of the gospel. That is, the gospel restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith is the gospel that is destined to go to those of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. There is no justification to suppose that every nation, kindred, tongue, and people does not include the ten tribes. Indeed, if the ten tribes were together in a body in 1830 with their prophets, why the necessity of a Joseph Smith and the return of a host of ancient prophets with their keys and authority to him? Surely if all these things were already on the earth the Lord would not ignore them and start from scratch with some other people.
3. The keys of the gathering of Israel and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north—a phrase which seems to mean, more generally, from their scattered condition (see Zechariah 2:6)—were given to the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Keys are the right of presidency, the directing power. They imply responsibility. How could the prophet claim to preside over a people and an event unknown to him? This would be akin to calling a man to preside over some foreign mission but (a) refusing to tell him where the mission was located or (b) allowing him any contact with the people. According to the analogy, all he would be afforded would be an invitation to the mission reunion. Truly, "It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is

known to the church, that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church” (D&C 42:11).

Millet and McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4, pp.104-107

### **3 Nephi 16:4-7**

2 *Book of Mormon brings knowledge of Jesus Christ*

The central purpose of the Book of Mormon is its testament of Jesus Christ. Of more than 6,000 verses in the Book of Mormon, far more than half refer directly to Him.

So, “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26)

Boyd K Packer. Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 8; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 8-9.

### **3 Nephi 16:8-9**

*Lamanites trodden under feet of Gentiles*

3 Unfortunately, these benighted descendants of Lehi had lost the records which we are not reading [Book of Mormon], so they did not know that before their Fair God returned to earth, the Gentiles would come and scatter them to the four winds. They also did not know that after they were conquered it would be another group of Gentiles who would bring them the Gospel and prepare them for the return of the Fair God, Jesus Christ. All the descendants of Lehi were going to have to find out the hard way.

Cleon Skousen, *Treasures from the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Hawkes Publications, 1971], 1:1187.

[Spoken by Chief Seattle in 1854]

4 Your God loves your people and hates mine.  
He puts his strong arm around the white man  
and leads him by the hand,  
as a father leads his little boy.  
He has abandoned his red children.  
He makes your people stronger every day.  
Soon they will flood all the land...  
Your God...  
... came to the white man.  
We never even saw him,  
never even heard his voice.  
He gave...  
... no word for his red children  
whose numbers once filled this land  
as the stars filled the sky.

Chief Seattle’s Vision—*How can one sell the air?* [Summertown, Tennessee: Book Publishing Company, 1992], 62-63.

**3 Nephi 16:8-13***Israel, Gentiles, Jews*

5 Israel meant the literal descendants of Jacob and the twelve sons of Jacob, or house of Israel. The Gentiles, as the word literally means, were “The other people”.... Eventually both of these words were enlarged in their scope to include land designation—the land where the Israelites lived, and the land where the Gentiles lived. Still a third meaning eventually developed, so that “Israel” designated those who by covenant accept the true religion, and “Gentiles” meant those who did not.

Robert J. Matthews, *Studies in Scriptures*, ed.. By K. Jackson, 8:168-171.

6 After the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed and the Ten Tribes were led away into Assyrian captivity, those of the Kingdom of Judah called themselves Jews and designated all others as Gentiles. It is this concept that would have been taught to Lehi, Mulek and the other Jews who came to the Western Hemisphere to found the great Nephite and Lamanite civilizations. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the Book of Mormon repeatedly speaking of Jew and Gentile as though this phrase marked a division between all men; to find the United States described as a Gentile Nation (1 Ne. 13; 3 Ne. 21); and to find the promise that the Book of Mormon would come forth “by way of the Gentile.”

Title page of Book of Mormon; D&C 20:9

7 The literal descendants of Abraham (Hebrews) include [among others] the descendants of Jacob (Israelites), [and] Judah, (Jews), [Judah was the fourth born son of Jacob]... The basic meaning of the word Gentile is “foreign,” “other,” or “non.” Thus, to a Hebrew, a Gentile is a non-Hebrew, to an Israelite, a Gentile is a non-Israelite; and to a Jew, a Gentile is a non-Jew. In this sense, some Latter-day Saints have referred to those who are not members of the Church as Gentiles, even though the non-members might be Jews! The word Gentile might also be used in several different ways to refer to family, religious, political, or even geographical relationships. For example, a person might be considered an Israelite in a family or blood sense, but might be called a Gentile in a political or geographical sense because he lives in a land or nation that is primarily Gentile, or non-Israelitish.

Daniel H. Ludlow, *Ensign*, Jan. 1991, pp. 51-52.

8 In this Dispensation of the Fulness of times, the gospel came first to the Gentiles and then is to go to the Jews. [See D&C 19:27.] However, the Gentiles who receive the gospel are in the greater part, Gentiles who have the blood of Israel in their veins.

*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr. 5 vols. [1957-66], 4:39.

9 We have heretofore identified the Jews as both the nationals of the kingdom of Judah and as their lineal descendants, all this without reference to tribal affiliation. And we have said, within this usage of terms, that all other people are Gentiles, including the lost and scattered remnants of the kingdom of Israel in whose veins the precious blood of him whose name was Israel does in fact flow. Thus Joseph Smith, of the tribe of Ephraim, the chief and foremost tribe of Israel

itself, was the Gentile by whose hand the Book of Mormon came forth, and the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who have the gospel and who are of Israel by blood descent, are the Gentiles who carry salvation to the Lamanites and to the Jews’

Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah* [1982], 233.

### **3 Nephi 16:10-15**

#### 10 *Gospel removed from wicked Gentiles*

This is a sober warning, a warning directed fairly specifically to the Gentiles in America, including the members of the Church. At that point in time when pride, deceit, hypocrisy, priestcraft, whoredoms, secret abominations, and murder proliferate in America—and to some degree even among the Latter-day Saints—then the Lord’s judgments will be poured out upon the land. That the Saints will be involved in the abominations of the land is frighteningly evident in the Savior’s careful use of language. He states that if “the Gentiles will repent and *return unto me*, saith the Father, behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel” (verse 13, italics added). One cannot *return* to a place where he has not been; this seems to be a reference to a return to the faith. In addition, the Master warns that those who sin against the light “shall be as *salt* that hath lost its savor” (verse 15, italics added). A modern revelation specifies clearly that it is only those who have received the covenant gospel who can become the salt of the earth (D&C 101:39-40). Perhaps this is what the Lord meant when he spoke through Joseph Smith in 1837: “Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of burning, a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord. And *upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth*, saith the Lord; *first among those among you*, saith the Lord, *who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house*, saith the Lord.” (D&C 112:24-26, italic added.) “God will have a humble people,” President Ezra Taft Benson warned. “Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble.” (CR, April 1989, p.6)

Millet and McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary of Book of Mormon*, Vol 4, p. 110-111.

11 These words of our Lord to the Nephites are quoted from Micah 5:8-9 and have reference to the desolations and ultimate burning that shall destroy the wicked at the Second Coming. Except for a few who are the humble followers of Christ, the Gentiles will not repent. They will revel in their abominations and sin against the restored gospel, and they will be burned by the brightness of our Lord’s coming while the righteous—here called the remnant of Jacob—shall abide the day. And then, in the prophetic imagery, it will be as though the remnant of Israel overthrew their enemies as a young lion among the flocks of sheep.

Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982], 48

12 It is not a war that a few Lamanites or any remnant of Israel shall wage against Gentile oppressors; the Lord does not operate in that manner. When he comes the wicked shall be destroyed and the righteous preserved; those who have not hearkened to the prophets shall be cut off from among the people; thus, the “enemies” of Israel “shall be cut off.” And it shall be with

power, as though a young lion went forth rending and tearing in pieces a helpless flock of sheep. And so, if the Gentiles do not repent and believe in Christ after the gospel is restored among them, then when the Lord comes, they will be destroyed and the triumph of Israel—because they kept the commandments and did receive the gospel—that triumph will be complete.

Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982], 334-335.

13 The Gentiles might as well realize that this land has been consecrated to Lehi's descendants forever (2 Nephi 10:19), and stop despising them and the Jews alike (2 Nephi 29: 4-5). If the Gentiles in the Promised Land, having been given their chance and great blessings do not repent and turn from their evil ways (Mormon 5:22), the time will come when "a remnant of Jacob shall go forth among you as a lion, and tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver" (Mormon 5:24). Who is the remnant of Jacob? The Lord in person told the mixed Nephites and Lamanites that heard him in the temple, that these words of Isaiah applied to them: "... and ye shall be in the midst of them who shall be many; and ye shall be among them as a lion... and as a young lion among the flocks of sheep..." (3 Nephi 20:16). Though unable to put up a resistance because the Lord will no longer be with them, "if the Gentiles do not repent after the blessing which they shall receive, after they have scattered my people" (3 Nephi 20:15). So Lehi's descendants are to stage a comeback after the Gentiles have scattered them as chaff and had everything their own way. The second half of the story is still in the future, but the first half has been thoroughly fulfilled.

Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 420-421.

### 3 Nephi 10

14 **I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them.** In a modern revelation the Lord repeated his prophecy made to his Apostles about the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. "And when that day shall come, shall a remnant [of Israel, the Jews] be scattered among all nations; but they shall be gathered again; but they shall remain [in their scattered condition] until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled... And when the times of the Gentiles is come in [that is, speaking in retrospect, when the restoration of the gospel takes place], a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel; but they receive it not." That is, there are many in the dispensation of the fulness of times who refuse the glories and wonders of the Lord's new and everlasting covenant. "For they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men. And in that generation shall the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (D&C 45:24, 25, 28-30.) In the ultimate sense, it appears that the fulness of the Gentiles—the time when the gospel goes on a preferential basis to Jews and Lamanites—is millennial. "When will the Lord take the gospel from the unbelieving Gentiles? It will be when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, when he remembers the covenant made with his own people, when the hour for millennial glory has arrived." (Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, p. 241.)

Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary of Book of Mormon*, Vol.4, p. 111.

**3 Nephi 16:15**

15

**I will suffer my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down.** This is a theme, a recurring theme, in the Savior’s teachings to his American Hebrews (see 3 Nephi 20:16; 21:12), and one to which Mormon later refers (Mormon 5:24). There has been much discussion concerning its meaning. Many Latter-day Saints conclude that it refers to a type of Lamanite uprising, a rebellion by Lamanites (identified in this interpretation as “a remnant of Jacob”—see 3 Nephi 20:16; 21:12; Mormon 5:24) against the “Gentiles” in America. We have chosen to take another approach to these passages.

It is interesting that in 3 Nephi 21 the Master quotes a prophecy from Micah 5:8-14, an oracle which uses language similar to that above. According to this account the rending of the Gentiles, this metaphor of a lion among the sheep, takes place in a day when such things as witchcrafts, soothsayers, idolatry, immorality, priestcrafts, lying, and deceit are all destroyed and done away. When will such things be done away? Clearly, after the Lord comes and the millennial day has begun. It would seem that the image of the remnant of Israel rending its Gentile enemies is symbolic of Israel’s ultimate victory over its foes, a victory which comes when the Savior returns and the wicked are destroyed. “Except for a few who are the humble followers of Christ, the Gentiles will not repent. They will revel in their abominations and sin against the restored gospel, and they will be burned by the brightness of our Lord’s coming while the righteous—here called the remnant of Jacob—shall abide the day. And then, in the prophetic imagery, it will be as though the remnant of Israel overthrew their enemies as a young lion among the flocks of sheep.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, p.248; see also p. 242; *Mortal Messiah* 4:334-35.)

Ibid. pp. 111-112.