

The Plan of Mercy

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Mpango wa Rehema

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Wa Sabini

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The Lord is merciful and our Heavenly Father's plan of salvation is truly a plan of mercy.

Bwana ni mwenye rehema na mpango wa wokovu wa Baba yetu wa Mbinguni kwa kweli ni mpango wa rehema.

A Prophet's Invitation

Last April, soon after the joyful news that the Church had acquired the Kirtland Temple, President Russell M. Nelson invited us to study the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, recorded in section 109 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The dedicatory prayer, said President Nelson, “is a tutorial about how the temple spiritually empowers you and me to meet the challenges of life in these last days.”

I am sure your study of section 109 yielded insights that blessed you. This evening, I share a couple of things I learned as I followed our prophet's invitation. The peace-giving path down which my study led reminded me that the Lord is merciful and that our Heavenly Father's plan of salvation is truly a plan of mercy.

Newly Called Missionaries Serving in the Temple

As you may be aware, “newly called missionaries are encouraged to receive the temple endowment as soon as possible and to attend the temple as often as circumstances allow.” Once endowed, they also “may serve as temple ... workers before they begin missionary service.”

Time in the temple before entering the mis-

Mwaliko wa Nabii

Aprili iliyopita, mara baada ya habari njema kwamba Kanisa limepata Hekalu la Kirtland, Rais Russell M. Nelson alitualika kusoma sala ya kuwekwa wakfu kwa Hekalu la Kirtland, iliyoandikwa katikasehemu ya 109 ya Mafundisho na Maagano. Sala ya uwekaji wakfu, alisema Rais Nelson, “ni mafunzo kuhusu jinsi gani hekalu katika hali ya kiroho hututia nguvu wewe na mimi ili kukabiliana na changamoto za maisha kwenye siku hizi za mwisho.”

Nina uhakika kujifunza kwenu sehemu ya 109 kulitoa ufahamu uliowabariki. Jioni hii, ninashiriki mambo kadhaa niliyojifunza nilipofuatwa mwaliko wa nabii wetu. Njia ya kutoa amani ambayo kwayo utafiti wangu uliniongoza ilinikumbusha kwamba Bwana ni mwenye rehema na kwamba mpango wa wokovu wa Baba yetu wa Mbinguni kwa kweli ni mpango wa rehema.

Wamisionari Wapya Walioitwa Kuhudumu Hekaluni

Kama unavyoweza kufahamu, “wamisionari wapya walioitwa wanahimizwa kupokea endamenti ya hekaluni haraka iwezekanavyo na kuhudhuria hekaluni mara nyingi kadiri hali zinavyoruhusu.” Mara baada ya kupatiwa endamenti, wao pia “wanaweza kuhudumu kama wafanyakazi ... wa hekaluni kabla hawajaanza huduma ya umisionari.”

Muda katika hekalu kabla ya kuingia kati-

sionary training center (MTC) can be a wonderful blessing for new missionaries as they learn more about temple covenants before sharing the blessings of those covenants with the world.

But in studying section 109, I learned that in the temple, God empowers new missionaries—indeed, all of us—in an additional, sacred way. In the dedicatory prayer, given by revelation, the Prophet Joseph Smith prayed that “when thy servants shall go out from thy house ... to bear testimony of thy name,” the “hearts” of “all people” would “be softened”—both the “great ones of the earth” and “all the poor, the needy, and [the] afflicted.” He prayed that “their prejudices may give way before the truth, and thy people may obtain favor in the sight of all; that all the ends of the earth may know that we, thy servants, have heard thy voice, and that thou hast sent us.”

This is a beautiful promise for a newly called missionary—to have prejudices “give way before the truth,” to “obtain favor in the sight of all,” and to have the world know they are sent by the Lord. Each of us surely needs these same blessings. What a blessing it would be to have hearts softened as we interact with neighbors and co-workers. The dedicatory prayer does not explain exactly how our time in the temple will soften others’ hearts, but I am convinced it is bound up with how time in the house of the Lord softens our own hearts by centering us on Jesus Christ and His mercy.

The Lord Answers Joseph Smith’s Plea for Mercy

As I studied the Kirtland dedicatory prayer, I was also struck that Joseph again and again pleaded for mercy—for the members of the Church, for the enemies of the Church, for the leaders of the country, for the nations of the earth. And, very personally, he pleaded with the Lord to remember him and to have mercy upon his beloved Emma and their children.

How must Joseph have felt when, one week later, on Easter Day, April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple, the Savior appeared to him and Oliver Cowdery and, as recorded in section 110 of the Doctrine and Covenants, said, “I have accepted

ka chuo cha mafunzo ya wamisionari (MTC) unaweza kuwa baraka ya ajabu kwa mmisionari mpya kujifunza zaidi kuhusu maagano ya hekaluni kabla ya kushiriki baraka za maagano hayo na ulimwengu.

Lakini katika kusoma sehemu ya 109, nilijifunza kwamba hekaluni, Mungu anawawezesha wamisionari wapya—ndiyo, sisi sote—katika njia ya ziada, njia takatifu. Katika sala hiyo ya uwekaji wakfu, iliyotolewa kwa ufunuo, Nabii Joseph Smith aliomba kwamba “wakati watumishi wako watakapo waendea kutoka nyumbani kwako ... kutoa ushuhuda wa jina lako,” “mioyo” ya “watu wote” ingeweza “kulainishwa”—wote “wakubwa wa dunia” na “maskini wote, wahitaji, na [wale] wanaoteseka.” Aliomba kwamba “chuki zao zipate kutoa njia mbele ya ukweli, na watu wako wapate kukubalika machoni pa wote; ili miisho yote ya dunia ipate kujua kwamba sisi, watumishi wako, tumeisikia sauti yako, na kwamba wewe umetutuma sisi.”

Hii ni ahadi nzuri kwa mmisionari mpya aliyetwa—kuwa chuki “zipate kutoa njia mbele ya ukweli,” “kupata kukubalika machoni pa wote,” na kuifanya dunia ijue kuwa wametumwa na Bwana. Kila mmoja wetu anahitaji baraka sawa na hizo. Ni baraka iliyoje kuwa na mioyo iliyolainishwa tunapozungumza na majirani na wafanyakazi wenzetu. Sala ya kuweka wakfu haielezei hasa jinsi gani muda wetu hekaluni utakavyolainisha mioyo ya wengine, lakini ninashawishika kuwa inaungana na jinsi gani muda katika nyumba ya Bwana unavyolainisha mioyo yetu wenyewe kwa kutuweka sisi kwenye kiini cha Yesu Kristo na rehema Yake.

Bwana Anajibu Ombi la Joseph Smith kwa Rehema

Nilipokuwa nikisoma sala ya kuweka wakfu ya Kirtland, nilishangazwa pia kwamba Joseph tena na tena aliomba rehema—kwa ajili ya waumimi wa Kanisa, kwa maadui wa Kanisa, kwa viongozi wa nchi, kwa ajili ya mataifa ya dunia. Na, binafsi sana, alimsihi Bwana amkumbukena kumhurumia mpendwa wake Emma na watoto wao.

Ni jinsi gani Joseph alipata kuhisi wakati, wiki moja baadaye, siku ya Pasaka, Aprili 3, 1836, katika Hekalu la Kirtland, Mwokozi alipomtokea yeye na Oliver Cowdery na, kama ilivyoandikwa katikasehemu ya 110 ya Mafundisho na

this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house.” This promise of mercy must have had special meaning to Joseph. And as President Nelson taught last April, this promise also “applies to every dedicated temple today.”

Finding Mercy in the House of the Lord

There are so many ways in which we each can find mercy in the house of the Lord. This has been true since the Lord first commanded Israel to build a tabernacle and to place at its center the “mercy seat.” In the temple, we find mercy in the covenants we make. Those covenants, in addition to the baptismal covenant, bind us to the Father and the Son and give us increased access to what President Nelson has taught is “a special kind of love and mercy ... called *hesed*” in Hebrew.

We find mercy in the opportunity to be sealed to our families for eternity. In the temple, we also come to understand with greater clarity that the Creation, the Fall, the Savior’s atoning sacrifice, and our ability to enter again into our Heavenly Father’s presence—indeed, every part of the plan of salvation—are manifestations of mercy. It might be said that the plan of salvation is a plan of happiness precisely because it is a “plan of mercy.”

Seeking Forgiveness Opens the Door to the Holy Ghost

I am grateful for the beautiful promise in section 110 that the Lord will manifest Himself in mercy in His temples. I am also grateful for what it reveals about how the Lord will manifest Himself in mercy whenever we, like Joseph, plead for mercy.

Joseph Smith’s plea for mercy in section 109 was not the first time his pleas for mercy prompted revelation. In the Sacred Grove, young Joseph prayed not just to know which Church was true, but he also said that he “cried unto the Lord for mercy, for there was none else to whom I could go [to] obtain mercy.” Somehow his recognition that he needed mercy that only the Lord could provide helped open the windows of heaven. Three years later the angel Moroni appeared,

Maagano, alisema, “Nimekubali nyumba hii, na jina langu litakuwa hapa; nami nitajidhihirisha kwa watu wangu kwa rehema katika nyumba hii.” Ahadi hii ya rehema lazima ilikuwa na maana maalumu kwa Joseph. Na kama Rais Nelson alivyofundisha Aprili iliyopita, ahadi hii pia inatumika kwakilahekalu lililowekwa wakfu leo.”

Kupata Rehema katika Nyumba ya Bwana

Kuna njia nyingi ambazo kila mmoja wetu anaweza kupata rehema katika nyumba ya Bwana. Hii imekuwa kweli tangu kwa mara ya kwanza Bwana alipoiamuru Israeli kujenga hema na kuweka katikati yake “kiti cha rehema.” Hekaluni, tunapata rehema katika maagano tunayofanya. Maagano hayo, kama nyongeza ya agano la ubatizo, yanatufunga kwa Baba na Mwana na kutupatia ufikiaji wa kile ambacho Rais Nelson amefundisha kuwa ni “aina maalumu ya upendo na rehema ... unaoitwahesed” kwa Kiebrania.

Tunapata rehema katika fursa ya kuunganishwa na familia zetu milele. Katika Hekalu, pia tunakuja kuelewa kwa uwazi zaidi kwamba Uumbaji, Anguko, dhabihu ya Mwokozi ya kulipia dhambi, na uwezo wetu wa kuingia tena katika uwepo wa Baba yetu wa Mbinguni—hakika, kila sehemu ya mpango wa wokovu—ni madhihirisho ya rehema. Inaweza kusemwa kwamba mpango wa wokovu ni mpango wa furaha hasa kwa sababu ni “mpango wa rehema.”

Kutafuta Msamaha Kunafungua Mlango kwa Roho Mtakatifu

Ninashukuru kwa ahadi nzuri katikasehemu ya 110 kwamba Bwana atajidhihirisha Mwenyewe kwa rehema katika mahekalu Yake. Pia nina shukrani kwa kile inachofunua kuhusu jinsi Bwana atakavyojidhihirisha Mwenyewe kwa rehema wakati wowote ambapo sisi, kama vile Joseph, tunapoomba kwa ajili ya rehema.

Ombi la Joseph Smith la rehema katika sehemu ya 109 halikuwa mara ya kwanza kwa maombi yake ya rehema kusababisha ufunuo. Katika Kijisitu Kitakatifu, kijana Joseph aliomba siyo tu kujua ni Kanisa gani lilikuwa la kweli, lakini pia alisema kwamba “alimlilia Bwana kwa rehema, kwa maana hakukuwa na mtu mwingine ambaye ningeweza kumwendea ili kupata rehema.” Kwa namna fulani, kutambua kwake kwamba alihitaji rehema ambayo ni Bwana pekee

following what Joseph said was his “prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies.”

This pattern of revelation following a plea for mercy is a familiar one in the scriptures. Enos heard the voice of the Lord only after praying for forgiveness. King Lamoni’s father’s conversion begins with his prayer, “I will give away all my sins to know thee.” We may not be blessed with these same dramatic experiences, but for those who sometimes struggle to feel answers to prayer, seeking the Lord’s mercy is one of the most powerful ways to feel the witness of the Holy Ghost.

Pondering God’s Mercy Opens the Door to a Testimony of the Book of Mormon

A similar principle is beautifully taught in Moroni 10:3–5. We often shorthand these verses to teach that through sincere prayer, we can learn whether the Book of Mormon is true. But this shorthand can neglect the important role of mercy. Listen to how Moroni begins his exhortation: “I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, ... that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.”

Moroni urges us not only to read these things—the records he was about to seal up—but also to ponder in our hearts what the Book of Mormon reveals about “how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men.” It is pondering upon the Lord’s mercy that prepares us to “ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true.”

As we ponder on the Book of Mormon, we might ask: Is it really true, as Alma taught, that God’s plan of mercy assures that every person who ever lived on this earth will be resurrected and that they will “be restored to their ... perfect frame”? Is Amulek right—can the Savior’s mercy satisfy all the bitterly real demands of justice that we would otherwise be obligated to pay

ndiye angeweza kuitoa kulisaidia kufunguka kwa madirisha ya mbinguni. Miaka mitatu baadaye malaika Moroni alionekana kufuatia kile ambacho Joseph alikuwa amesema kilikuwa “sala na dua yake kwa Mwenyezi Mungu kwa ajili ya msamaha wa dhambi zangu zote na upumbavu.”

Mpangilio huu wa ufunuo kufuatia ombi la rehema ni wa kawaida katika maandiko. Enoshi alisikia sauti ya Bwana baada tu ya kuomba kwa ajili ya kupata msamaha. Uongofu wa baba wa Mfalme Lamoni, unaanza kwa sala yake, “Nitaacha dhambi zangu zote ili nikujue wewe.” Huenda tusibarikiwe kwa uzoefu huu wa kushangaza, lakini kwa wale ambao wakati mwingine wanahangaika kuhisi majibu ya sala, kutafuta rehema za Bwana ni moja ya njia zenye nguvu zaidi za kuhisi ushahidi wa Roho Mtakatifu.

Kutafakari Rehema za Mungu Kunafungua Mlango wa Ushuhuda wa Kitabu cha Mormon

Kanuni kama hiyo inafundishwa vizuri katika Moroni 1:3–5. Mara nyingi tunafupisha mistari hii kufundisha kwamba, kupitia sala ya dhati, tunaweza kujua kama Kitabu cha Mormon ni cha kweli. Lakini ufupisho huu unaweza kupuuza jukumu muhimu la rehema. Sikiliza jinsi Moroni anavyoanza mawaidha yake: “Ningewasihi kwamba wakati mtakaposoma mambo haya, ... kwamba mngékumbuka jinsi vile Bwana amekuwa na huruma kwa watoto wa watu, kutokea kuumbwa kwa Adamu hadi chini mpaka wakati ambapo mtapokea vitu hivi, na kuvitafakari katika mioyo yenu.”

Moroni anatuhimiza sio tu kusoma mambo haya—kumbukumbu ambazo alikuwa karibu kuzifunga—lakini pia kutafakarimioyoni mwetu kile ambacho Kitabu cha Mormon kinafunua kuhusu “jinsi Bwana alivyokuwa na huruma kwa watoto wa watu.” Ni kutafakari juu ya rehema za Bwana ambazo zinatandaa “kumuuliza Mungu, Baba wa Milele, katika jina la Kristo, ikiwa vitu hivi si vya kweli.”

Tunapotafakari juu ya Kitabu cha Mormon, tunaweza kuuliza: Je, ni cha kweli, kama Alma alivyofundisha, kwamba mpango wa Mungu wa rehema unahakikisha kwamba kila mtu aliyewahi kuishi hapa duniani atafufuliwana kwamba “watarejeshwa kwa ... sura kamili”? Je, Amuleki yuko sahihi—je, rehema ya Mwokozi inaweza kukidhi mahitaji yote ya kweli ya haki ambayo

and instead “[encircle us] in the arms of safety”?

Is it true, as Alma testified, that Christ suffered not only for our sins but for our “pains and afflictions” so that He could “know ... how to succor his people according to their infirmities”? Is the Lord really so merciful, as King Benjamin taught, that as a free gift, He atoned “for the sins of those ... who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned”?

Is it true, as Lehi said, that “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy”? And is it really true, as Abinadi testified, quoting Isaiah, that Jesus Christ was “wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed”?

In sum, is the Father’s plan as taught in the Book of Mormon really this merciful? I testify that it is and that the peace-giving and hopeful teachings of mercy in the Book of Mormon are true.

Still, I imagine that some may be struggling, despite your faithful reading and prayers, to realize Moroni’s promise that Heavenly Father “will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.” I know this struggle because I felt it, many years ago, when my own first couple of reads of the Book of Mormon did not yield an immediate and clear answer to my prayers.

If you are struggling, may I invite you to follow Moroni’s counsel to ponder on the many ways the Book of Mormon teaches “how merciful the Lord hath been [to] the children of men”? Based on my experience, I hope that when you do, the peace of the Holy Ghost can enter your heart and you can know, believe, and feel that the Book of Mormon and the plan of mercy it teaches are true.

I express my gratitude for the Father’s great plan of mercy and for the Savior’s willingness to carry it out. I know that He will manifest Himself in mercy in His holy temple and in every part of our life if we will seek Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

tungelazimika kulipa na badala yake “[kutuzingira] katika mikono ya usalama”?

Je, ni kweli, kama Alma alivyoshuhudia, kwamba Kristo aliteseka si tu kwa ajili ya dhambi zetu bali kwa ajili ya “maumivu na mateso” ili kwamba aweze “kujua ... jinsi ya kuwasasidia watu wake kulingana na unyonge wao”? Je, Bwana kweli ni mwenye rehema, kama Mfalme Benjamin alivyofundisha, kwamba kama zawadi ya bure, alitoa dhabihu ya kulipia dhambi “za wale ... ambao wamekufa bila kujua mapenzi ya Mungu juu yao, au ambao wametenda dhambi kwa ujinga”?

Je, ni kweli, kama Lehi alivyosema, kwamba “Adamu alianguka ili wanadamu wawe; na wanadamu wapo, ili wapate shangwe”? Na je, ni kweli, kama Abinadi alivyoshuhudia, akimnukuu Isaya, kwamba Yesu Kristo “alijeruhiwa kwa ajili ya makosa yetu, alichubuliwa kwa ajili ya maovu yetu; adhabu ya amani yetu ilikuwa juu yake; na kwa kupigwa kwake sisi tumepona”?

Kwa jumla, je, mpango wa Baba kama ulivyofundishwa katika Kitabu cha Mormoni kweli ni wa rehema? Ninashuhudia kwamba ni wa rehema na kwamba mafundisho ya amani na tumaini la rehema katika Kitabu cha Mormoni ni ya kweli.

Bado, nadhani kwamba inawezekana wengine wanapambana, licha ya kusoma kwa uaminifu na sala zako, kutambua ahadi ya Moroni kwamba Baba wa Mbinguni “atadhihirisha ukweli kwako, kwa nguvu ya Roho Mtakatifu.” - Najua mahangaiko haya kwa sababu niliyahisi, miaka mingi iliyopita, wakati usomaji wangu wa kwanza wa Kitabu cha Mormoni haukutoa jibu la haraka na la wazi kwa sala zangu.

Ikiwa unapambana, naomba nikualike ufuate ushauri wa Moroni ili kutafakari juu ya njia nyingi ambazo Kitabu cha Mormoni kinafundisha “jinsi Bwana alivyokuwa na huruma [kwa] watoto wa watu”? Kulingana na uzoefu wangu, natumaini kwamba, unapofanya hivyo, amani ya Roho Mtakatifu inaweza kuingia moyoni mwako na unaweza kujua, kuamini, na kuhisikwamba Kitabu cha Mormoni na mpango wa rehema unaofundishwa ni vya kweli.

Ninatoa shukrani zangu kwa mpango mkuu wa rehema wa Baba na kwa utayari wa Mwokozi kuutekeleza. Ninajua kwamba atajidhihirisha Mwenyewe kwa rehema katika hekalu Lake takatifu na katika kila sehemu ya maisha yetu ikiwa tutamtafuta. Katika jina la Yesu Kristo, amina.