

Orson Hyde, the Holy Land, and Brigham Young University

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Thank you, brothers and sisters, for taking time from your busy schedules to be here today. From years of personal experience I know the demands and pressures of attending a large university. How grateful I am that you would step away from your studies or other responsibilities to participate in this devotional. Let me also thank those who provided me with this opportunity to speak.

My wife, Tina, and I returned from Jerusalem in mid-August, after a three-year assignment at BYU's Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies. We were blessed to have been in a unique university facility, where we worked closely with administrators, faculty members, staff, volunteer couples, and hundreds of students in a way rarely afforded most people. Let me also thank my lifelong and eternal companion for her constant support in what has been a very intense and very rewarding three years. Her sacrifices were many and her influence on others immense.

Life is often filled with surprises. While I recognize the need we all have to set goals and to have lifelong plans in place, we often find ourselves taking detours. Some of these can be scenic and short lived. Others take us down unforeseen paths. I suppose my speaking to you today is one of those shorter detours.

Let me explain: After three years in the Holy Land, my wife and I decided a change of pace was

in order when we returned to Utah. Instead of me going back to my office right away, we would spend time with family, find a home, buy a car or two (we sold our home and cars before moving to Jerusalem), and arrange for a trip to Florida to visit Magnolia, our nine-month-old granddaughter, whom I have never met in person. It was a good plan.

Our first week back could not have gone better. We retreated to my in-laws' cabin for some welcome family time, they loaned us a car so that we could get around, and our oldest daughter and her husband graciously took us into their home. Life was good!

Then it happened: two weeks after being back, I received an unexpected invitation to speak today—clearly a deviation from the plan, a few ripples on the calm waters of life. In between finding cars (we have), a home (we closed on it last Friday), and spending time with family, I have quietly been slipping into my office on campus to prepare for this wonderful opportunity. I moved the piles of mail that had accumulated during my absence to one side of my desk and set to work,

David M. Whitchurch, a BYU associate professor of ancient scripture, delivered this devotional address on October 4, 2016.

having determined to say something about the Holy Land.

My first exposure to Jerusalem was in 1984, long before most of you were born. Sister Whitchurch and I had spent a couple of years saving money so that we could participate on a three-week Lands of the Scriptures Workshop offered through LDS Seminaries and Institutes. Our travels took us to Italy, Egypt, and many places throughout the Holy Land. From the minute the plane touched down on the tarmac at the Ben Gurion International Airport near Tel Aviv, I felt like I had come home to see a long-lost family member—like my granddaughter. The emotions were intense and unanticipated. I somehow felt connected to a land I had only imagined, the home of my biblical ancestors and the land where our Savior was born, lived, died, and was resurrected.

I am not the first to have had such an experience. Many people who travel to the Holy Land express similar feelings. For example, when Elder Orson Hyde arrived in Jerusalem on Thursday, October 21, 1841, he said:

As I gazed upon it and its environs, the mountains and hills by which it is surrounded, and considered, that this is the stage upon which so many scenes of wonders have been acted, where prophets were stoned, and the Saviour of sinners slain, a storm of commingled emotions suddenly arose in my breast, the force of which was only spent in a profuse shower of tears.¹

In 1873, Elder Lorenzo Snow, his sister Eliza R. Snow, and President George A. Smith of the First Presidency, along with a few others, traveled to the Holy Land. Elder Snow described his experience this way:

One hour's ride from our lunching place will bring us to Jerusalem. We move on and at length ascend an eminence, and gaze on the "Holy City," Jerusalem. Away to the right is Mount Zion, the city of David. Off to our left, that lofty eminence, with an aspect so barren, is the Mount of Olives, once the favorite resort of our Saviour, and the spot last pressed by his sacred

feet before He ascended into the presence of His Father. These interesting historic scenes, with all their sacred associations, inspire thoughts and reflections impressive and solemn. Yes, there is Jerusalem! Where Jesus lived and taught, and was crucified, where he cried "It is finished," and bowed his head and died!²

Even Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, made a personal connection with the Holy Land upon his arrival in 1867. He came as part of a five-month-long cruise called "The Grand Holy Land Pleasure Excursion."³ As the seventy-five passengers arrived in Beirut, Clemens and seven others decided to ride overland by horse to Jerusalem, where they would meet up with their shipmates.⁴

After leaving Lebanon, Clemens and his company stopped at Caesarea Philippi,⁵ the traditional site where Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."⁶

Clemens said of his visit:

I can not comprehend yet that I am sitting where a god has stood, and looking upon the brook and the mountains which that god looked upon, and am surrounded by dusky men and women whose ancestors saw him, and even talked with him, face to face, and carelessly, just as they would have done with any other stranger.⁷

Here we have a humorist and social satirist who more often than not expressed skepticism about religious matters, yet on this occasion he stepped back from his normal writing style to share what seems to have been a sincere moment of personal reflection.

Time and time again I have seen people come to the Holy Land and express feelings of connection. What is it about this part of the world that evokes such emotion in so many people? Today I would like to respond to that question by sharing with you three miraculous events connected to the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ that occurred in the Holy Land:

1. The travels and dedication of the Holy Land by Elder Orson Hyde.
2. The beautification and dedication of the Orson Hyde Memorial Garden on the Mount of Olives.
3. The acquisition of land for and subsequent construction of the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies.

The timing of today's speech should not go unnoticed. October 24—twenty days from now—marks 175 years since Elder Orson Hyde, an apostle of the Lord, climbed to the top of the Mount of Olives to pray over the Holy Land. He traveled from Commerce, Illinois (Nauvoo, if you will), to Jerusalem, an endeavor that took him away from home and family on a journey that lasted one week short of thirty-two months and on which he traveled more than 18,500 miles.⁸

October 24 also marks the thirty-seventh anniversary since President Spencer W. Kimball dedicated the Orson Hyde Memorial Garden on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. March 8, 2017—five months from now—will be the thirty-year anniversary of BYU students packing up their belongings at Ramat Rachel, a kibbutz near Bethlehem, and surprising most everyone by moving into the Jerusalem Center. While portions of the building remained unfinished, an occupancy permit had been issued that allowed them to be there, giving the students an opportunity to establish residency in a building that provoked much unwanted international attention.

You might guess that all of these events are integrally connected and deserve some comments. My aims are ambitious, so brevity is in order.

The Travels and Dedication of the Holy Land by Elder Orson Hyde

The Church's connection with Jerusalem rightfully begins with the Prophet Joseph Smith. While we often credit Orson Hyde for the Church's involvement in the Holy Land, we should not overlook the role of the Prophet. He certainly knew the historical and prophetic significance of

the Holy Land. The word *Jerusalem*, for example, is used more than 900 times in the standard works.⁹ Add to that many stories and prophecies about the Holy Land and we begin to get a sense of the significance of this geographically small corner of our Heavenly Father's vineyard. Joseph Smith was well acquainted with the promises of God to bring His people back to "the land of Jerusalem."¹⁰

As early as 1831, right after Hyde's baptism, Joseph Smith told Orson Hyde:

*Thou shalt go to Jerusalem . . . and be a watchman unto the house of Israel; and by thy hands shall the Most High do a great work, which shall prepare the way and greatly facilitate the gathering together of that people.*¹¹

Four years later, when Hyde was called to the apostleship in 1835, Oliver Cowdery, in the presence of Joseph Smith, blessed Hyde that "he [would] be made mighty, and be endued with powers from on high, and go forth to the nations of the earth . . . , both to Jew and Gentile, and to all nations, kingdoms and tongues."¹²

During the 1836 dedication of the Kirtland Temple, Joseph prayed:

*We therefore ask thee to have mercy upon the children of Jacob, that Jerusalem, from this hour, may begin to be redeemed;
And the yoke of bondage may begin to be broken off from the house of David;
And the children of Judah may begin to return to the lands which thou didst give to Abraham, their father.*¹³

The story of Elder Hyde's journey is both remarkable and miraculous. He was born in Oxford, New Haven County, Connecticut, on January 8, 1805, making him almost a year older than Joseph Smith. Hyde's mother died when he was seven,¹⁴ and his father accidentally drowned when he was twelve.¹⁵ At age fourteen he moved from Connecticut to the Western Reserve, near Kirtland, Ohio. On his eighteenth birthday he announced his independence to his caregiver and

set off on his own. For his first job he worked at an iron foundry, where he earned six dollars a month. Other jobs would follow, but it was not long before he got a job clerking at the Gilbert and Whitney store in Kirtland.¹⁶

In 1827, at the age of twenty-two, Hyde attended an evangelical camp meeting that resulted in his baptism into the Methodist Church. Soon afterward he met Sidney Rigdon, who convinced him to join a reformed religious movement started by Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Recognizing his inadequacies and motivated by feelings that he would someday be called upon to teach his new faith, he determined to get a better education.

He began his schooling in the home of Sidney Rigdon, where he was instructed in English grammar.¹⁷ After several months of studying “day and night” with Rigdon, he entered the Burton Academy in Burton, Ohio, to study grammar, geography, arithmetic, and rhetoric. By the time he moved back to Kirtland, he had acquired the tools he needed to take advantage of studying on his own at the local library, where he pored over history, science, and literature.¹⁸

In 1830—the same year the Church was organized—four Mormon missionaries stopped by the town where he was then living, some distance from Kirtland. They preached about “Mormonism.” Hyde wrote of their visit:

Perceiving that they were mostly illiterate men, and at the same time observing some examples of superior wisdom and truth in their teaching, I resolved to read the famed “golden bible,” as it was called.

*Accordingly, I procured the book and read a portion of it, but came to the conclusion that it was all a fiction.*¹⁹

Hyde’s problem came when he found out that people he knew in the Kirtland area, including his mentor Sidney Rigdon, were converting to Mormonism. After a careful and complete reading of the Book of Mormon, he moved to Kirtland, where he was eventually baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Rigdon.²⁰

As a new member, Hyde wanted to know what the Lord would have him do, so he asked Joseph Smith. The revelation that followed stated:

*My servant, Orson Hyde, was called by his ordination to proclaim the everlasting gospel . . . from land to land, in the congregations of the wicked, in their synagogues, reasoning with and expounding all scriptures unto them.*²¹

And so he did. Orson Hyde spent his lifetime preaching the gospel, serving one mission after another.

In September 1834, Orson married Marinda N. Johnson.²² The following story is told by a descendant of Orson Hyde:

*By the time of his wedding Orson had saved \$500. He thought that this fact was unknown, but Joseph Smith came to him and said that he was aware of the money being in Orson’s possession. Orson believed that the Prophet had gained this knowledge through divine means and gave him the money to aid in a Church publication.*²³

Many of you are familiar with Orson Hyde’s remarkable story about his mission to Jerusalem. Orson Hyde was called to serve in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on February 14, 1835.²⁴ In early March 1840 he was in Nauvoo recovering from a serious ailment. He went to bed one night, but before falling asleep he started thinking about “the field of [his] future labors,” and a vision was opened before him. For the next six hours he did not close his eyes as he saw, among other things, “the cities of London, Amsterdam, Constantinople and Jerusalem.” During the vision Hyde was commanded to go to the cities he was shown.²⁵

One month later, on April 6, 1840, Elder Hyde spoke at general conference. He said that “it had been prophesied, some years ago, that he had a great work to perform among the Jews; and that he had recently been moved upon by the Spirit of the Lord to visit that people.”²⁶

When Hyde finished speaking, Joseph Smith motioned to those in attendance and “resolved”

that Hyde should proceed on a mission to Jerusalem.

Elder John E. Page, also a member of the Twelve, then got up and “spoke with much force on the subject of Elder Hyde’s mission, the gathering of the Jews, and the restoration of the house of Israel.”²⁷

On the last day of the conference, Joseph Smith “stated that since Elder Hyde had been appointed to visit the Jews, he had felt an impression that it would be well for Elder John E. Page to accompany him on his mission.”²⁸

Elder Hyde left Nauvoo about a week later, on Wednesday, April 15, 1840. The next day he met up with Elder Page in Lima, Illinois, a town about thirty miles away.²⁹ For the next few months Hyde and Page traveled as circumstances dictated, sometimes together and at other times apart.

While preaching at a public meeting in Philadelphia, Hyde declared that he was on a mission to Jerusalem so that he could dedicate that land for the gathering of the Jews. He also mentioned that Mormon missionaries travel without purse or scrip and that he was looking for financial assistance for his mission. Afterward, a stranger gave him a purse of gold and asked that when he delivered his prayer in the Holy Land, he pray for the donor.³⁰

Since he did not know the name of the donor, Hyde supplicated God during his prayer in Jerusalem to

*look with favor upon all those through whose liberality I have been enabled to come to this land. . . . Particularly do Thou bless the stranger in Philadelphia, whom I never saw, but who sent me gold, with a request that I should pray for him in Jerusalem.*³¹

The identity of the anonymous giver was not made public until 1924. During a sermon given in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, Nephi L. Morris³² mentioned the offering given by the stranger to Orson Hyde when Hyde was in Philadelphia. Two months later Morris received a letter from John F. Beck, who had been in the audience when Morris

had spoken at the Tabernacle. Beck told him that the stranger in Philadelphia whom he had spoken about was his father, Joseph Ellison Beck. John Beck wrote the following in his letter to Morris:

*My father . . . was the man who sent the purse of gold to Elder Orson Hyde, with which to bear his expenses on his mission to Palestine. He did not have much to say about it, but all our family knew very well that he did that generous deed. . . . He did not become rich, but always had money laid aside for a time of need. I have heard the prayer Elder Hyde offered up in his behalf, and am a witness that every feature of it was wonderfully fulfilled.*³³

Let me add a personal connection about Elder Hyde and the stranger who gave him gold. This past summer I was on a field trip with a group of BYU students in the Old City of Jerusalem. After talking about Orson Hyde and his achievements, I asked the students if any of them happened to be a descendant of Orson Hyde. Bryson Ensign, one of the students on the trip, raised his hand and told me he was a direct descendant.

I asked Bryson if he had anything he wanted to add about Elder Hyde. He said that one of his favorite family stories growing up was about the stranger who gave Hyde the purse of gold that helped finance his mission to Jerusalem. I was thrilled to tell him that my son-in-law Joseph Paul Beck was a direct descendant of the person who gave the gold to Orson Hyde.

I took advantage of my speaking assignment today by requesting that Joseph P. Beck offer the invocation for today’s meeting. Joseph is the great-great-grandson of Joseph Ellison Beck. I also asked if Bryson Ensign, the great-great-great-great-grandson of Orson Hyde, would offer the closing prayer. It is a fortuitous ancestral meeting, of sorts, through their posterity.

By December 1840, Elder Hyde was in New York waiting for Elder Page. In January, after receiving a copy of the Nauvoo newspaper, the *Times and Seasons*, Hyde saw a notice written by Joseph Smith:

*Elders Orson Hyde and John E. Page are informed, that the Lord is not well pleased with them in consequence of delaying their mission, (Elder John E. Page in particular,) and they are requested by the First Presidency to hasten their journey towards their destination.*³⁴

Imagine being called to repent by the prophet for all to see in the local newspaper. Talk about pressure. Worried about what to do, Elder Hyde wrote to Joseph Smith to ask if he should go ahead on his own. Without waiting for an answer, he left New York on February 13, 1841—alone.³⁵ As he had seen in vision, Elder Hyde proceeded unaccompanied to London, Amsterdam, Constantinople, and Jerusalem.

Hyde endured many hardships throughout his travels. In a letter he wrote to Joseph Smith while on the Danube en route to Jerusalem, Elder Hyde eloquently expressed gratitude for Joseph’s support during such difficult times:

*The friendship and good will which are breathed towards me through all your letters, are received as the legacy which noble minds and generous hearts are ever anxious to bequeath. They soften the hard and rugged path in which heaven has directed my course. They are buoyancy in depression—joy in sorrow; and when the dark clouds of despondency are gathering thick around the mental horizon, like kind angels from the fountain of mercy, they dispel the gloom, dry the tear of sorrow, and pour humanity’s healing balm into my grieved and sorrowful heart.*³⁶

Hyde concluded this particular letter with a plea for his family: “Lord, bless my wife and children, and the hand that ministers good to them.”³⁷

One of the more difficult legs of Hyde’s journey came while traveling from Smyrna (modern-day İzmir, Turkey) to Beirut, Lebanon, when his ship was becalmed. With little to no wind to move his ship forward, it took nineteen days to arrive at his destination instead of the anticipated four. He ran out of food and resorted to eating snails to sustain his life, of which he said, “The greatest difficulty

was, I could not get enough of them.” When he finally arrived in Lebanon, he was so weak that he did not have the energy to get off the ship.³⁸

Upon his arrival in Beirut, he found the country at war, in which eight hundred people had recently been killed not far from Beirut. In addition, he described a horrific state of lawlessness, murder, and theft going on about him while traveling throughout the Levant.³⁹

Finally he arrived in Jaffa to make the forty-mile trek overland to Jerusalem. Three days later—on October 24, 1841—Hyde got up early in the morning to fulfill the long-awaited mission he had come to Jerusalem to do.

He wrote of this occasion:

*As soon as the gates [of the Old City] were opened, [I] crossed the brook Cedron, and went upon the Mount of Olives, and there, in solemn silence, with pen, ink, and paper, just as I saw in the vision, offered up the following prayer to Him who lives forever and ever.*⁴⁰

Here are only small portions of the prayer:

Be pleased, O Lord, to forgive all the follies, weaknesses, vanities, and sins of Thy servant, and strengthen him to resist all future temptations. . . .

Now, O Lord! Thy servant has been obedient to the heavenly vision which Thou gavest him in his native land; and under the shadow of Thine outstretched arm, he has safely arrived in this place to dedicate and consecrate this land unto Thee, for the gathering together of Judah’s scattered remnants, according to the predictions of the holy Prophets. . . .

*Let that nation or that people who shall take an active part in behalf of Abraham’s children, and in the raising up of Jerusalem, find favour in Thy sight.*⁴¹

It was over a year before Elder Hyde returned to America. He traveled back by way of Regensburg, where he spent a number of months working on a Church publication in German.⁴² He finally arrived in Nauvoo on December 7, 1842.⁴³ Gone for a few months shy of three years, he arrived home to his wife and two daughters. What a reunion that must

have been. I think about our own experience in Jerusalem, having been gone slightly over three years. With the advantages of modern communication and home leaves, our hardships pale in comparison to those of Elder Hyde.

The Beautification and Dedication of the Orson Hyde Memorial Gardens

Hyde was not the only Latter-day Saint to travel to Jerusalem. Between 1873 and 1933 other presiding authorities of the Church came to the Holy Land to offer up their prayers unto God. You may recognize from your studies of Church history some of the names of those who traveled there: Albert Carrington, Lorenzo Snow, George A. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Francis M. Lyman, James E. Talmage, and John A. Widtsoe. All of these men were either members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles or the First Presidency, and all traveled to the Holy Land to offer up special prayers, blessing that sacred land.⁴⁴

Latter-day Saints continued traveling to the Middle East in the decades that followed. Elder Spencer W. Kimball visited in 1961.⁴⁵ That April his entire general conference address was about his trip to the Holy Land.⁴⁶ It wasn't long before the BYU Department of Travel Study made a proposal to the BYU Board of Trustees asking them to approve a program in Jerusalem. The matter was referred to the First Presidency. President David O. McKay approved the request with a provision that the program be balanced between time in Arab territory and time in Jewish territory.⁴⁷ That proviso continues to this day.

In 1968, under the direction of Daniel H. Ludlow, dean of Religious Education, twenty students and two faculty members (Professors LaMar C. Berrett and T. Ellis Rasmussen) inaugurated the Jerusalem study abroad program.⁴⁸ Throughout the following years, Church leaders continued coming to the Holy Land: N. Eldon Tanner (1971), Hugh B. Brown (1971), Harold B. Lee (1972), Gordon B. Hinckley (1972), Howard W. Hunter (1972), Neal A. Maxwell (1972),⁴⁹ and James E. Faust (early 1980s).

With an expanding Church presence, the mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, was introduced to members of the Church. During the mid-1970s he contacted Church leaders in Salt Lake City to see if they were interested in developing a five-acre property on the Mount of Olives. He recommended it be named after Orson Hyde. President Kimball took immediate action. The needed funds were raised through donations, and the garden was dedicated by President Kimball on October 24, 1979. Six apostles also attended the dedication, along with nearly two thousand members of the Church.⁵⁰

The Construction and Dedication of the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies

A search for property for BYU was approved as the Jerusalem study abroad program continued to grow. Elder Howard W. Hunter made six trips to the Holy Land in 1979. The day before the Orson Hyde Memorial Garden dedication, President N. Eldon Tanner went to see some twenty-six possible land sites. From those he selected seven or eight to show President Kimball. The eventual site of the center on Mount Scopus was not on the list.⁵¹

The story is told that a party of twelve people went to look at potential properties. The group included Spencer W. Kimball, N. Eldon Tanner, their wives, six members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and others. The last stop of the day was a site slightly south and east of where the current Jerusalem Center building is now located. At some point President Kimball broke off from the others and began to walk northward along the hillside, looking down toward the Kidron Valley. After he had walked a hundred yards or so to a spot overlooking an empty field, he stopped and said, "This is the place."

President Tanner, who had been following close behind and was accompanied by the other members of the party, then said, "All in favor raise your right hand."⁵² When a prophet asks you to raise your hand, it is hard to refuse.

Suffice it to say that the land President Kimball chose was not for sale.⁵³ It was disputed land located on property designated as green space.

The acquisition of the property and the subsequent building of the Jerusalem Center is, in its own right, as miraculous as were Elder Hyde's travels to dedicate the Holy Land. The project would come directly under the office of the First Presidency, with the university as the chief beneficiary.⁵⁴ The First Presidency appointed Elder Howard W. Hunter, assisted by Elder James E. Faust, to represent the Church in this building project. The executive oversight committee was chaired by BYU president Jeffrey R. Holland.⁵⁵ Many others—too many to name—played significant roles in the successful completion of the Jerusalem Center.

One whom I will mention is Robert P. Thorn. Brother Thorn, who had considerable real estate experience, was asked by the Church if he would go to Jerusalem to oversee the acquisition of the property on Mount Scopus. He anticipated being there for a few weeks. It turned out that navigating and getting approval from various politicians and numerous agencies kept him there for one and a half years.⁵⁶

Construction on the Jerusalem Center started in August 1984 and continued nonstop until 1988.⁵⁷ An effort to halt the project began as soon as construction on Mount Scopus began and people found out that the Mormons were the ones doing the building. The Haredi Jewish community, a sect of Orthodox Judaism, feared that the center would provide a foothold for the Church to do missionary activities in the Holy Land.⁵⁸ Every sort of pressure possible was brought to bear against the Church and the university. It became an international news item.⁵⁹ The Knesset and various government officials and offices were involved. Israelis took both sides of the issue, some supporting cultural and religious diversity and others seeing Mormon proselyting and conversion of any Jew as a loss of Jewish identity.⁶⁰

After a thorough investigation, the attorney general of the State of Israel determined that everything the Mormons had done had been done correctly.⁶¹ In the meantime, the work on the building continued.

As already mentioned, BYU students moved into the Jerusalem Center on March 8, 1987, prior to its completion. The center was dedicated in a quiet ceremony on May 16, 1989, by President Howard W. Hunter. There was no press. Those present included President Hunter, Thomas S. Monson, Boyd K. Packer, Jeffrey R. Holland, personnel of the Jerusalem Center,⁶² and a few BYU faculty and Arabic-speaking students who happened to be at the Jerusalem Center on the day it was dedicated.⁶³

The impact of the Jerusalem Center has been profound. When the Jerusalem Center was finished, Jeffrey R. Holland (then president of BYU) took Mayor Kollek on a tour of the building. Mayor Kollek hardly said anything until the end of the tour, when he said:

*You have taken the most beautiful piece of property we could have given you and have done more with it than I thought possible. I consider it the most beautiful building built in Jerusalem in recent years.*⁶⁴

Another view of the Jerusalem Center property is provided by the well-known, best-selling author Giles Milton in his book *The Riddle and the Knight: In Search of Sir John Mandeville, the World's Greatest Traveller*. In his description of modern Jerusalem, Giles Milton wrote:

*In the east, the Hebrew University is sprawled across a hilltop, while the Mormons have recently built a university on the northern hills—a vast building occupying the most enviable site in Jerusalem.*⁶⁵

The first resident director of the Jerusalem Center was David B. Galbraith. He was followed by Martin B. Hickman, George A. Horton, Truman G. Madsen, S. Kent Brown,⁶⁶ Paul H. Peterson, R. J. Snow, Arnold H. Green, and Eran Hayet. A few years after its dedication, James R. Kearl, a former dean of Honors and General Education and, at the time, the associate academic vice president of BYU, was brought on board as the assistant to the university president to oversee

the center.⁶⁷ He remains in that position today, playing a key role in the ongoing success and operation of the Jerusalem Center. Much of the student program, the maintenance of the building, the humanitarian efforts, and the weekly concert series have been influenced by Professor Kearl. Oversight and approvals for the center continue to come under the direction of BYU's president, currently Kevin J Worthen, who in turn reports to the BYU Board of Trustees.

The arrangement of the local administration at the Jerusalem Center is unique. It consists of Eran Hayet (an Israeli) as the Jerusalem Center's executive director; Tawfic Alawi (a Palestinian Christian) as the associate director responsible for logistics and administration; and a BYU faculty representative, such as myself, who oversees the academic program.

Hope for the Future of the Holy Land

Let me conclude by saying a few words about the current situation in the Holy Land. There is no simple way to describe the Holy Land. Jerusalem itself has been continuously inhabited for millennia, during which time it has frequently been the epicenter of religious, political, and cultural conflict. Prophetically, however, we know that these conflicts must be resolved. Isaiah described Jerusalem as a city in which only the righteous will live:

*Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.*⁶⁸

Our students and those associated with the Jerusalem Center in some ways provide a model of cooperation and peace in the Holy City. Kaye Terry Hanson, from her time as the associate director at the Jerusalem Center (1994–96), observed how the Palestinian and Israeli workers at the center provided a “microcosm” of resolving conflict as “they worked [together] side by side.”⁶⁹

I have had similar experiences throughout my tenure at the Jerusalem Center. The center is a model community of students, administrators, faculty, staff, and service volunteers—from varying religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds—who live and work together in harmony. In many ways the center establishes an idyllic pattern of what can happen in this sacred land. It is not perfect by any means, but it is moving in the right direction.

Brothers and sisters, I hope for the day when those who reside in the Holy Land will do so in harmony with one another. It remains unclear to me just how or when the needed events will unfold to bring about this holy status. What remains certain is that the Lord's divine hand will be part of the process.

There is a story in the Bible that I have reflected on many times. As you may recall, Jacob fled from his brother, Esau, under very unfavorable circumstances. The tension between these two brothers was palpable: “Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.”⁷⁰

Understandably, Jacob was unnerved as he heeded the Lord's command to return to the Holy Land.⁷¹ Jacob petitioned the Lord for protection and prepared in every way possible as he nervously anticipated meeting his brother from whom he had fled years earlier.⁷² The Lord's divine intervention was obvious as these two brothers reunited:

And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids.

And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

*And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.*⁷³

This reconciliation required a softening of the heart from both Esau and Jacob. The thirteenth article of faith reminds us to “hope all things.” Brothers and sisters, hope is an essential ingredient that must be maintained throughout our mortal journey. We should not be confused about it and its definition.

In our everyday language we frequently use the word *hope* to convey uncertainty. We hope for certain things, knowing the odds are not in our favor. When events transpire contrary to our hope, we nonchalantly take little notice of what it was we had hoped. For example, “I hope I make it to class on time.” How unlikely that will be when we have hit the snooze button once too often. Or what about the hope that we won’t eat too much over Thanksgiving? Good luck on that one!

In a religious context, however, hope is defined differently. It is a confident expectation of and longing for the promised blessings of righteousness. It demands from us total trust and confidence. Much like faith, hope is unwavering and active. The outcome is certain. Prophets speak of having “a firm hope”⁷⁴ and “a lively hope.”⁷⁵ The prophet Ether taught, “Whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith.”⁷⁶ Paul said, “For we are saved by hope,” and then he added, “If we hope for that [which] we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”⁷⁷

Located north of the Old City, not far from Damascus Gate, is the Garden Tomb. Those who have been there know it well. In the garden is a sign that reads, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem”—a quote from Psalm 122:6. And so we must. We must hope for and pray for peace.

President Howard W. Hunter spoke in the Marriot Center a few months prior to the dedication of the Orson Hyde Memorial Garden. He entitled his talk “All Are Alike Unto God.”⁷⁸ President Hunter’s message was a reminder that God loves His children—all His children. He said:

We need to discover the supreme truth that indeed our Father is no respecter of persons. . . .

At the present time we are engaged in a project of beautifying the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem by a garden, in memory of Orson Hyde, an early apostle of the Church, and the dedicatory prayer he offered on that site. It is not because we favor one people over another. Jerusalem is sacred to the Jews, but it is also sacred to the Arabs. . . .

*Both the Jews and the Arabs are children of our Father. They are both children of promise, and as a church we do not take sides. . . . The purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to bring about love, unity, and brotherhood of the highest order.*⁷⁹

Again, the details of how peace will come about may elude us, but I believe—and have hope—that it will happen.

Last week in a phone conversation with Eran Hayet, I told him about speaking today and asked if he had anything he wanted to share with you. He said to tell you that 175 years ago Orson Hyde came to Jerusalem to pray over the land and that we need to continue those prayers today.

I have every confidence and hope that it will become “the holy city,” as prophesied by Isaiah.⁸⁰ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Orson Hyde, “Letter 1,” 1 January 1842, *A Voice from Jerusalem, or a Sketch of the Travels and Ministry of Elder Orson Hyde* (Liverpool: P. P. Pratt, 1842), 7.

2. Lorenzo Snow, “Letter 56,” 26 February 1873, in *Correspondence of Palestine Tourists; Comprising a Series of Letters by George A. Smith, Lorenzo Snow, Paul A. Schettler, and Eliza R. Snow, of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1875), 205.

3. Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens), *The Innocents Abroad, or the New Pilgrims’ Progress* (Hartford, Connecticut: American Publishing Company, 1869), 645. While the cruise visited various places throughout Europe and Egypt, the main feature of the cruise was to visit the Holy Land.

4. See Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, 431–37.

5. Also known as Baniyas.

6. Matthew 16:13, 16.

7. Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, 472.

8. Orson Hyde departed Nauvoo, Illinois, on April 15, 1840, and returned to Nauvoo on December 8, 1842. Hyde provided limited details about much of his journey to and from Jerusalem. It appears, however, that he used waterways throughout his travels. This type of travel added significantly to the total miles because of meandering rivers and indirect routes. For example, the distance from Amsterdam, the Netherlands, to Regensburg, Germany, using today's Autoroute 3 (Dudelonge motorway) is 470 miles. Traveling via the Rhine and Main Rivers adds 109 miles to the trip. Total travel distance from Nauvoo to Jerusalem and back to Nauvoo is estimated to be 18,567 miles. Some of the water routes he traveled include the Ohio River, Atlantic Ocean, Rhine River, Main River, Danube River, Black Sea, Sea of Marmara, Dardanelles, Aegean Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Nile River (different branches in the Nile Delta), Ionian Sea, Adriatic Sea, English Channel, and Mississippi River.

9. A simple word search from the standard works shows that the word *Jerusalem* is used 939 times (626 times in the Old Testament, 141 in the New Testament, 148 in the Book of Mormon, 19 in the Doctrine and Covenants, and 5 in the Pearl of Great Price).

10. 3 Nephi 20:29; see also 3 Nephi 20:33; Ether 13:5, 11; D&C 45:48–53; D&C 77:15; D&C 133:20; Zechariah 2:12; Zechariah 14.

11. Joseph Smith, quoted by Orson Hyde in *HC* 4:375. In June 1841 Hyde wrote Joseph Smith Jr. while en route to Jerusalem. In his letter he reported progress of his travels and included a copy of a letter he wrote to Solomon Hirschell, the chief rabbi of England (1802–42). Hyde wrote the following in his letter: “About nine years ago, a young man with whom I had had a short acquaintance, and one, too, in whom dwelt much wisdom and knowledge—in whose bosom the Almighty had deposited many secrets, laid his hand upon

my head and pronounced these remarkable words.” While the letter does not mention a name, from the description it seems likely that the young man he was referring to was Joseph Smith Jr.

12. Oliver Cowdery, *HC* 2:189.

13. D&C 109:62–64; emphasis added. Joseph Smith continued to talk about Jerusalem after Orson Hyde's journey to dedicate the Holy Land. During a conference in April 1843, the Prophet said that “Jerusalem must be rebuilt. Judah must return . . . before [the] Son of Man will make his appearance” (“Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 2, 10 March 1843–14 July 1843,” 75, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-2-10-march-1843-14-july-1843/83; in Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841–April 1843*, vol 2. of the Journals series of The Joseph Smith Papers, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011), 338–39; see also *HC* 5:337. The details of how these promises will be fulfilled remain unclear.

14. Due to the death of his mother when he was seven years old, Orson Hyde was placed under the care of a farmer named Nathan Wheeler. Hyde provides very little information about the Wheelers other than that they were a “very good” and “penu-rious” family (Orson Hyde, quoted in “History of Brigham Young: History of Orson Hyde,” *Millennial Star* 26, no. 47 [19 November 1864]: 742).

15. See Hyde, “History of Brigham Young,” 19 November 1864, 742. Orson's father, Nathan Hyde, joined the military shortly after his wife passed away and participated in the U.S. campaign against Britain. Nathan drowned when Orson was twelve years old. Orson described his father as “kind and affectionate” and “quick, athletic, and naturally witty and cheerful.”

16. See Hyde, “History of Brigham Young,” 19 November 1864, 743.

17. See Hyde, “History of Brigham Young,” 19 November 1864, 743–44.

18. Orson Hyde, quoted in “History of Brigham Young: History of Orson Hyde,” *Millennial Star* 26, no. 48 (26 November 1864): 760.

19. Hyde, “History of Brigham Young,” 26 November 1864, 760.

20. See Hyde, “History of Brigham Young,” 26 November 1864, 760–61. Three days after his baptism, Hyde reported: “The Spirit of the Lord came upon me in so powerful a manner, that I felt like waiting upon no one, and withdrew in private to enjoy the feast alone. This, to me, was a precious season, long to be remembered” (page 761).

21. D&C 68:1; see also verse 8.

22. See Orson Hyde, quoted in “History of Brigham Young: History of Orson Hyde,” *Millennial Star* 26, no. 50 (10 December 1864): 791.

23. The story of Joseph Smith asking for money is included in a letter written by Mrs. Ralph E. Woolley to Marvin S. Hill, dated May 19, 1955. Woolley, the granddaughter of Orson Hyde, was told the story by her father, Joseph S. Hyde. In Marvin S. Hill, “An Historical Study of the Life of Orson Hyde, Early Mormon Missionary and Apostle from 1805–1852” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955), 28, note 1.

24. See *HC* 2:181, 184, 187.

25. Orson Hyde, *HC* 4:375–76.

26. *HC* 4:106; the conference was held in Nauvoo, Illinois.

27. *HC* 4:106.

28. *HC* 4:109.

29. See *HC* 4:114.

30. See Nephi Lowell Morris, *Prophecies of Joseph Smith and Their Fulfillment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1931), 301, footnote; see also Orson Hyde, *HC* 4:458.

31. *HC* 4:458.

32. Nephi Lowell Morris was the president of the Salt Lake City Stake from 1904 to 1929 (see Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1941], 761). See also Morris, *Prophecies*, 301, footnote.

33. Morris, *Prophecies*, 302, footnote; see also 301, footnote. Additional information has been included in an email from Julie B. Beck to author (18 April 2012). Julie Beck’s husband, Ramon Beck, is the great-grandson of Joseph Ellison Beck. Joseph Ellison Beck joined the Church in 1842. He and his family migrated to Utah in 1850.

34. *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 6 (15 January 1841): 287; also *HC* 4:274.

35. See Orson Hyde to Joseph Smith, 17 April 1841, in “Communications,” *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 18 (15 July 1841): 482–83. Elder Page wrote Joseph Smith from Philadelphia six months later to explain why he had not left for Jerusalem. Page was noticeably upset with Hyde in his letter for various reasons, including having insufficient funds because of Hyde (see letter from Elder John E. Page to the president and council of the Church, 1 September 1841, in *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* [1841], LDS Church Archives).

However, in June 1841, Elder George A. Smith, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, had met Page in Philadelphia and had advised him to catch up to Hyde in England by taking up contributions so that he could sail on a ship named *Garrick* that was leaving for England in three days. Elder Smith offered to assist Page in every way possible to help him succeed. Page rejected Elder Smith’s suggestion, and “Elder Smith subsequently learned that Elder Page had sufficient money, without collections to have taken him through to England” (*HC* 4:372).

Hyde also wrote Joseph Smith on June 15, 1841, to explain why he had left New York without waiting for Page (see letter in *HC* 372–79; also in “History of Joseph Smith,” *Millennial Star* 18, no. 36 [6 September 1856]: 564–68; also in *Journal History*). This letter by Orson Hyde is important in three ways: (1) It recounts an exchange between himself and Solomon Hirschell, the chief rabbi of England. (2) It is where we learn Joseph Smith told Orson Hyde as early as 1831 that he would travel to Jerusalem and “be a watchman unto the house

of Israel.” (3) It reveals more details of Hyde’s six-hour vision that he experienced in early March of 1840.

36. Orson Hyde, *HC* 4:387. Hyde wrote this letter from Ratisbon (now Regensburg), Germany, on the Danube on July 17, 1841; see *HC* 4:384.

37. Orson Hyde, letter, 17 July 1841, *HC* 4:388.

38. Hyde, “Letter 4,” 20 October 1841, *Voice from Jerusalem*, 34.

39. Hyde wrote two letters while in quarantine: one from Alexandria, Egypt (22 November 1841, “Letter 3,” *Voice from Jerusalem*, 27–33), and the other from Trieste, Italy (1 January 1842, “Letter 1,” *Voice from Jerusalem*, 6–22), on his travels back to Nauvoo. In portions of these letters he briefly recounted the difficulties of the trip and the state of lawlessness he found in Lebanon and Egypt. See also *HC* 4:454–59, 495–99.

40. Orson Hyde, letter to Parley P. Pratt, 22 November 1841, in “History of Joseph Smith,” *Millennial Star* 18, no. 49 (6 December 1856): 775; also “Letter 3,” *Voice from Jerusalem*, 29.

41. Hyde, letter to Parley P. Pratt, 775–76; also Orson Hyde, *HC* 4:456–57; see also “Letter 3,” *Voice from Jerusalem*, 29–30.

41. See Hyde, letter to Parley P. Pratt, 776; also Hyde, *HC* 4:459; also “Letter 3,” 32–33.

43. See *HC* 5:200. In 1842 the *Millennial Star*, a paper published in Liverpool, wrote of Hyde’s travels: “He has been in perils by land and sea, in perils among robbers, in perils among Heathens, Turks, Arabs, and Egyptians; but out of all these things the Lord hath delivered him, and hath restored him in safety to the shores of Europe, where he is tarrying for a little season” (“Highly Interesting from Jerusalem,” *Millennial Star* 2, no. 11 [March 1842]: 167; see also *HC* 4:496).

44. See Blair G. Van Dyke and LaMar C. Berrett, “In the Footsteps of Orson Hyde: Subsequent Dedications of the Holy Land,” *BYU Studies* 47, no. 1 (2008): 64–92.

45. See Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball: Twelfth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977), 331.

46. See Spencer W. Kimball, *CR*, April 1961, 77–81.

47. See Richard H. Henstrom and Keith R. Oakes, *The World Is Our Campus: The History of the Division of Continuing Education at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1875–1997* (Provo: Continuing Education, BYU, 1997), 256. See also Ernest L. Wilkinson and Leonard J. Arrington, eds., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, 4 vols. (Provo: BYU Press, 1975–76), 3:723–24.

48. The study abroad program was delayed because of the 1967 Six-Day War.

49. Neal A. Maxwell was commissioner of the Church Educational System at the time.

50. In addition to President Kimball, those present at the dedication of the Orson Hyde Memorial Garden included N. Eldon Tanner, Howard W. Hunter, Ezra Taft Benson, LeGrand Richards, Marvin J. Ashton, and Eldred G. Smith.

51. See Alan R. Casper, “Opposition to the Construction of the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, April 2003), 13.

52. S. Kent Brown, “History of BYU Students in Jerusalem as Remembered and Recorded by S. Kent Brown” (unpublished paper, 1995), 2; in personal file of author. A variant of this story can be found in Henstrom and Oakes, *World Is Our Campus*, 267.

53. See Brown, “History of BYU Students,” 3.

54. See Brown, “History of BYU Students,” 3.

55. See Henstrom and Oakes, *World Is Our Campus*, 264–65. Others on the committee included Dee F. Andersen, William E. Evenson, and special assistant to the president Robert C. Taylor. In 1988, new BYU president Rex E. Lee took over chairing the committee, made up of Bruce C. Hafen, James R. Kearl, Dee F. Andersen, and Robert C. Taylor.

56. See Brown, “History of BYU Students,” 3.

57. See Brown, “History of BYU Students,” 4–7; Henstrom and Oakes, *World Is Our Campus*, 263–64. The team that was assembled to build the Jerusalem Center included Eli Rahat, engineer and

construction supervisor; David Reznik, architect from Jerusalem; Frank Ferguson, architect from Salt Lake City; Robert J. Smith, project financial manager; and Fred A. Schwendiman, project manager. Twenty-nine subcontractors would also be involved with more than three hundred suppliers who provided materials. See Casper, “Opposition,” 16, footnote 10; Brown, “History of BYU Students in Jerusalem,” 6–8.

58. See Henstrom and Oakes, *World Is Our Campus*, 264; Brown, “History of BYU Students,” 4–5; see also Casper, “Opposition,” 22–44, 202–09.

59. See Brown, “History of BYU Students,” 4.

60. See Casper, “Opposition,” 23.

61. See Brown, “History of BYU Students,” 4.

62. See “News of the Church: Jerusalem Center Dedicated,” *Ensign*, August 1989.

63. From a personal correspondence between the author and R. Kirk Belnap, who was present at the Jerusalem Center dedication. Kirk Belnap is a BYU professor in the Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages, October 2016.

64. Teddy Kollek, quoted in LaRene Gaunt, “One Voice,” *Ensign*, April 1993.

65. Giles Milton, *The Riddle and the Knight: In Search of Sir John Mandeville, the World’s Greatest*

Traveller (New York: Picador, 2002), 133. Credit and thanks go to Russell C. Taylor for pointing this out following the devotional presentation on October 4, 2016. Taylor is an associate university librarian for the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

66. See Henstrom and Oakes, *World Is Our Campus*, 265.

67. See Henstrom and Oakes, *World Is Our Campus*, 279.

68. Isaiah 52:1; emphasis added.

69. Kaye Terry Hanson, “The Far and the Near,” BYU devotional address, 3 December 2002.

70. Genesis 27:41.

71. See Genesis 31:3.

72. See Genesis 32.

73. Genesis 33:1–4; emphasis added.

74. Alma 34:41.

75. 1 Peter 1:3.

76. Ether 12:4.

77. Romans 8:24, 25.

78. See 2 Nephi 26:33.

79. Howard W. Hunter, “All Are Alike Unto God,” BYU devotional address, 4 February 1979.

80. Isaiah 52:1.