

FIRST VOICES

“ . . . in the land of their first inheritance . . . ”

“I speak unto you as the voice of one crying from the dust . . .”

-prophetic words from the past-



RE-INTRODUCTION

Do you find the name *First Voices Journal* interesting? We were hoping that you might find it interesting enough to keep reading. Simply stated its purpose involves the past, present and future of the First Peoples of the Americas. The people indigenous to the Americas before the Europeans began to arrive here are otherwise known as First Nations, Native Americans or American Indians. The primary voices of this journal represent The People. We were also influenced by the Talking Stick tradition of the Cherokee and other nations where all have an opportunity to communicate to others the thoughts, knowledge and wisdom handed down from the elders.

In determining a means that we might provide the message that this journal carries we considered several different titles. After a lot of thought and prayer we chose this one. It is an interesting name (*First Voices Journal*) for a journal that you may not

find anywhere else. We are bringing information that men and women hundreds of years ago gave their lives to preserve for their descendants.

Several factors brought us to the conclusion that this was the proper name for this journal. We were drawn to several quotations from the ancient records translated in 1829 by the power of the Great Spirit. It was printed and presented to the world as the *Book of Mormon*. This record contains a partial, mostly religious history of those people the Europeans discovered here in the Americas.

As you read below the title it says, “...in the land of their first inheritance...” (Mosiah 10:13). Putting aside for the moment any discussion of where the natives of this land came from or how they got to the Americas, we are told in these ancient records that the Great Spirit promised this land to them over 2500 years ago.

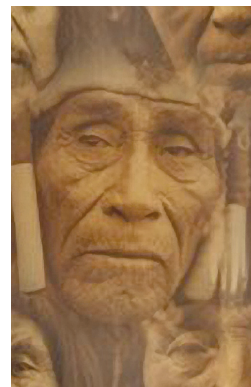
North, Central and South America are the lands promised to the Peoples

of the Americas in these records as well as in Biblical records. “The blessings of thy father have prevailed above [proved to be greater] the blessings of my progenitors [ancestors] unto the utmost bound [farthest point] of the everlasting hills [from their homeland]” (Genesis 49:26) – Jacob, called Israel at this time, speaking prophetically to his son Joseph before his death while they lived in Egypt. The reality in our mind is that this land was covenanted (promise made, contract agreed to) to the Native peoples and one day it will be theirs again as the Great Spirit has promised. The promise, however, contains a contingency: ‘Inasmuch as they keep God’s Commandments.’

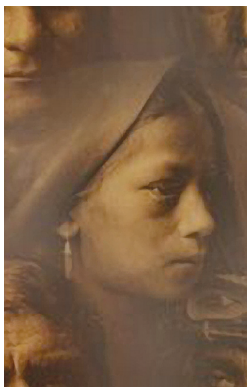
Secondly, we are prompted to consider the voice of those people who have gone on before us, “...I speak unto you as the voice of one crying [pleading] from the dust [the grave, the earth]...” (2 Nephi 33:13). It seems strange that we would literally hear a voice speaking from the dust, but

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it is a powerful event when we do have that experience. What is it exactly? Do we not hear our ancestors speak in the wind? Do we not hear their voices in the ancient teachings? Have you ever considered the fact that unknown to us there was a written history of the ancestors of the natives of the Americas? Why would that be so unlikely? The artifacts and archaeology of the Americas reveal a high level of sophistication of the indigenous cultures over the many centuries. Let us consider for a moment another example, the Dead Sea Scrolls. Much of what has been on the parchments discovered in the 1940's has verified biblical writings of the ancient prophets in Israel. For example, people who were never thought to exist (such as the Hittites) were shown to have had a part in Israel's history.

There is much to be learned yet. Through the ages of time the Great Spirit has not changed nor has the fact that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world as the Messiah, the Holy One of Israel.

Please read on with an open, prayerful mind and feel free to contact us to both share (Talking Stick) and request more information.

THE PEOPLE

A fascinating fact has come to our attention and that is what Native American nations call themselves. A glimmer of this discovery is in the preferred title of Native Americans in Canada where they use the term First Nations People. Based on this discovery we started looking at the names of nations throughout the Americas. Both the Navajo and the Cherokee call themselves the People. For Navajo it's Diné and for the Cherokee it's Tsligi. The Osage tribe originally called themselves Ni-U-Kon-Ska, which means *Little Children (or People) of the Middle Waters*. In the northeast, Haudenosaunee is translated as People of the Longhouse and the Sak (often spelled Sauc), speak of themselves as Osa Kiwug or People of the outlet. (For even more evidence of this trait, see www.native-languages.org/original.htm.)

It's also interesting that European and American cultures do not use this term very much, except in one very particular place. Instead, they use terms related to the name of their nation or geographic location. The one main exception is in the Constitution of the United States, which begins, "We, the People."

So where did this tradition of calling themselves the People come from? Consider the following ancient usage: "If **my people**, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). Also, "And the chief of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the **assembly of the people of God [Great Spirit]...**" (Judges 20:2). More startling is the use of the term the People in the ancient record called the Book of Mormon. In it, the phrase is used at least ten times in reference to different groups of people and it is usually followed by a prominent name.

So we see an ancient relationship formed between God and His People in both the Middle East and America. That tradition continued among the Native Americans/First Nations for one very important reason, and more so than among the European culture. Native Americans/First Nations are of Israel. However, for the non-Israelite (Gentile) believer, the ancient Apostle, Peter Bar Jona (literally, Peter son of Jonah), said, "Which in time past were



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not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:10). Many modern day theologians interpret that statement to mean that a replacement took effect; that is, God has a new people and the ancient people are no longer important. But that is opposite to the other ancient Apostle, Paul (Saul of Tarsus), who said to the saints in Rome, “I say then, hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew...” (Romans 11:1 & 2).

Paul continues with some very enlightening reasoning. He says, “Now if the fall of them [Israel] be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles [non-Israel]; how much more their fulness [return]?... For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving [restoration] of them be, but life from the dead?... And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree [non-Israelite], wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches.... For if God spared not the

natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.... For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:12-26). Nowhere does Paul suggest that ancient Israel is forgotten or replaced. Rather, he reaffirms the Old Testament prophets, one of which was Jeremiah, who said, “Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock” (Jeremiah 31:10). And Ezekiel, who said, “Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel” (Ezekiel 11:17).

An ancient American prophet, Nephi son of Lehi, noted that in the end, it’s not who or what you are, but what you have done, that is, obedience to the will of God. His words are: “For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are

the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews [Israelites] as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 30:2).

So as not to cause any confusion, we want to reiterate that Israel (all of the 12 tribes) have a special position before God – that of being His ancient covenant people, which covenant is still intact. However, He has given everyone an opportunity for salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. He has not forgotten His ancient covenants and will give all of Israel, beginning with the descendants of Joseph, son of Jacob (Israel), an opportunity to be gathered to the lands of their inheritance, lands given to them by God. As Jesus said, “...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings...” (Matthew 23:37).

If you become part of the People of the Lord are you no longer part of the Diné or Tsligi? Of course you are! Your heritage remains, in the same way Paul noted how he was of the tribe of Benjamin, but more importantly, you are a follower of Jesus Christ.

You are actually part of three families: your natural family, your covenant family and the Family of God. But there is some responsibility, too. The Book of Mormon reminded the ancient inhabitants over and over again of the promise of inheritance and blessing with the conditional statement ‘inasmuch.’ The leader of the colony that left ancient Jerusalem for America stated, “Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land [America]; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land [America] unto themselves. And if it so be that they shall keep his commandments they shall be blessed upon the face of this land [America], and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever” (2 Nephi 1:9).

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First Voices Journal is published by the **Native American Outreach** of The Church of Jesus Christ, whose headquarters is in **Monongahela, PA, USA**. We invite comments and inquiries from our readers, which may be sent to:

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The faith of The Church of Jesus Christ is based exclusively on the King James Version of the Bible and the Book of Mormon. We are not affiliated with any other religious group of people or church. We have proclaimed this message since 1862.



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*...in preparing the
way for the fulfilling
of his covenants,
which he hath made
to his people who are
of the house of Israel.*

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