Dear Editor,

My compliments to you and *Dialogue* for the Fall 2024 Roundtable section, "Fifty Years Since Lester Bush, 'Mormonism's Negro Doctrine.'" My family and I appreciated relearning that history and evolution.

We especially discussed an interesting contrast between Robert Rees's and Newell Bringhurst's new articles there. Rees emphasized that the old racial doctrine was "counter to the very clear language of the Book of Mormon." But Bringhurst had determined that even Bush's big essay of 1973 had not probed systemic origins of the ban and had completely ignored the Book of Mormon's role in the "formation of innate LDS racist attitudes."

It seems to us that in its ambivalence, everything racial in the Book of Mormon has its origination heavily derived from the Old Testament. I searched your online archive for articles or essays that highlight this Judaic ethnocentricity independent of our resultant issue with Black people. After seeing a mild and indirect article (for correcting "chosen") by Eugene England and another mentioning "chosen lineage" (relating to gender) by Cory Crawford, I did come across a more pointed essay naming one of the other Abraham bloodlines in the Fall 1989 *Dialogue* issue. It was impressively written with the credibility of a Palestinian-Israeli-Arab convert, Ehab Abunuwara's "Nothing Holy: A Different Perspective of Israel."

I guess I'm writing this as a letter to the editor, asking that you republish Abunuwara's sobering essay after thirty-five years. As a sampling for you, here are a couple quotes that are more bluntly honest than Deseret Book's admirable 2018 *Peace for a Palestinian* by convert Sahar Qumsiyeh and seem especially prescient nowadays for "Israel first" policies by both the Biden and Trump administrations and for President Nelson's urgence to be more prepared for the Second Coming. From Abunuwara:

> I am afraid that Latter-day Saints have surrendered to the Jews more than material things by their irrational fascination with Israel and their distorted understanding of the meaning of "Chosen People."
>
> The possibility of peace would be a devastating blow to Christian eschatologists who prefer to see this conflict as God-inspired, leading eventually to Armageddon and the return of the Savior. Such kingdom watchers, whose motto might be, "Blessed be the warmongers, for they will hasten the kingdom of God," could hinder American attempts [Carter and Bush I] to bring a just and enduring solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. I fear that many Latter-day Saints might be found among such a group.

Nine years after his 1989 essay, I see that another halting article was published in *Dialogue* by his wife, Kimberly Jensen-Abunuwara, still mournful of the pervasive LDS and US-American bloodline prejudice in favor of Jews over Arab Israelis. Perhaps hers should be republished as well. Two quotes from her essay:

> During the summer of 1995 I had cajoled my husband into attending our graduation ceremony and being hooded together as Ph.D.s. We learned, too late, that the center piece of the commencement would be the presentation of an honorary doctorate to Teddy Kollek, former mayor of Jerusalem. Mormons tend to be captivated by Israel and, because of narrow interpretations of certain prophecies, are fixated on the Jewish people. A stadium of unknowing, unthinking Mormons was aflutter at having this figure in their midst. My husband, on the other hand, was confronted with a man who had taken land from Palestinians and supported the unfair construction of Jewish settlements in Jerusalem.
>
> And though I'd like to, I can't belong with other young Arab mothers hoisting children onto a bus in the heat. How can I share their indignation or even fear of uzi-armed Jewish–Israeli soldiers seated across the aisle when my tax dollars paid for their guns?

In the same vein, I have recently encountered poetry by Naomi Shihab Nye, an Arab American poet, that offers still-needed stimulus for reconsidering our Old Testament bias. She is a favorite of one of my sisters, two of whom have poems published in your most recent issue (Anita Tanner and Dixie Partridge). Here's a stanza from a Nye poem entitled "Blood":

> Today the headlines clot in my
> blood.
> A little Palestinian dangles a toy
> truck on the front page.
> Homeless fig, this tragedy with a
> terrible root
> is too big for us. What flag can we
> wave?
> I wave the flag of stone and seed,
> table mat stitched in blue.

An alternative or companion suggestion to call for papers need not be limited to the religiously escalated Israeli–Palestinian conflict nor to our progress with Black people. Rather, it could more broadly explore the West's divine favoritism for the narrowed Abraham-Isaac-Jacob lineage by the Old Testament, beyond the useful treatment in the Bradley Cook article twenty-two years ago ("The Palestinian–Israeli Conflict Reconsidered," Spring 2003 *Dialogue*) and mention by Robert A. Rees in the same Spring 2003 issue

("America's War on Terrorism: One Latter-day Saint's Perspective"). By now, our belief in the New Testament and Book of Mormon should have superseded the Old Testament's tribal system with "God is no respecter of persons" and "all are alike unto God"; but it hasn't.

Perhaps such an examination would expose this further overreach in the "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21). As Brigham Young University professor Andrew C. Reed has written,

> In its theology—if not fully within its practice and rhetoric—early Mormonism rejected traditional Christian supersessionism (the notion that the gospel of Christ completely outmoded and supplanted the Old Testament, the law of Moses, and the religion of the Israelites), opting instead for a view that emphasized the centrality of covenant and universality of its application. In so doing, they joined a powerful wave of American Christian thought that emphasized the continued covenant with Israel, mediated through a profound sense of American exceptionalism. . . . Joseph Smith obtained much of his theological understanding through Protestant theologians and drew upon themes and ideas common to his era. . . . For Joseph Smith, as well as many of the earliest Saints, the belief that their message contained in sacred scripture needed to reach all people led to strong rhetoric that reeked of philosemitic overtones. For early Latter-day Saints, it made perfect sense that Jews were God's chosen people. . . . They, like many European Christians, esteemed Jews as necessary partners." ("Framing the Restoration and Gathering: Orson Hyde and Early Mormon Understandings of Israel, Jew, and the Second Coming," in *Foundations of the Restoration: Fulfillment of the Covenant Purposes,* edited by Craig James Ostler, Michael Hubbard MacKay, and Barbara Morgan Gardner [Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2016], 228.)

Thank you for all *Dialogue*'s timely work to advance needed topics and poetics. I look forward to your thoughts and insight.

Appreciatively,
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