
3 Nephi 5 — I Am Mormon — The Record-Keeper and the Covenant with Jacob

3 Nephi 5: the aftermath of deliverance and the voice of the abridger. After the robbers are defeated, not a living soul among the Nephites doubts the words of the prophets; knowing the signs proved Christ had come, they forsake all their sins and serve God day and night. The captured robbers are imprisoned and preached to; those who covenant to murder no more are freed, those who will not are punished by law — and thus the secret combinations are ended. Twenty-five years pass in peace and righteousness. Then Mormon steps forward in his own voice: this book cannot contain a hundredth part of what was done, but he makes his record from the plates of Nephi and from what he has seen with his own eyes. 'I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon... I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,' called to declare his word that his people might have everlasting life. He bears witness that he is 'a pure descendant of Lehi,' blesses God for bringing his fathers out of Jerusalem and for the knowledge that brings salvation, and turns to the great covenant: surely God has blessed the house of Jacob and been merciful to the seed of Joseph; surely he will again bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord; and as surely as the Lord lives, he will gather all the remnant of the seed of Jacob from the four quarters of the earth and fulfill the covenant he made with the house of Jacob, restoring them to the knowledge of their Redeemer, Jesus Christ. The chapter is the abridger's self-introduction and his great statement of the covenant hope — the gathering of scattered Israel, the remnant of Joseph brought home — that frames the whole purpose of the record he is making.

This is the chapter where the man who has been narrating the whole book finally steps out from behind the curtain and tells us who he is. For chapter after chapter we have heard Mormon's editorial voice — *and thus we see*, the careful weighing of sources, the grief over the unsteady human heart — but here, in 3 Nephi 5, he names himself and tells us his purpose: *I am called Mormon... I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God* (vv. 12–13). And then he tells us *why* he is making this record at all, and the answer reaches far past the Nephites to us, to the latter days, to the scattered remnant of Israel and the great gathering still to come. The chapter is Mormon's self-introduction and his statement of the covenant hope that frames everything — the reason a man at the end of a dying civilization spent his life abridging a thousand years of records onto plates he made with his own hands. He did it for the covenant. He did it because *surely shall he again bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord* (v. 23), and this record is how.

Hebrew Word Studies

sheerit (שְׂרִיט) — "remnant, remainder, what is left over, the surviving few" — sheerit, from shaar, "to remain, be left over"; the remnant that survives a catastrophe, the faithful few preserved when the many are lost. In the prophets, the remnant is the carrier of God's covenant promise through judgment into restoration vv. 23–24 (surely shall he again bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph... will he gather in... all the remnant of the seed of Jacob). Mormon's great covenant hope hangs on a single word — *remnant* — and the Hebrew *sheerit* carries one of the most important and most hopeful ideas in all of scripture. *Sheerit* means *what is left over*, the *surviving few* — and in the prophets it becomes a technical term for the faithful seed that God preserves through judgment so that his covenant is never finally extinguished. The idea runs through the whole Old Testament: when the flood destroys the world, Noah and his family are the *remnant*; when famine threatens Jacob's family, Joseph tells his brothers that God sent him ahead *to preserve you a posterity (sheerit) in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance* (Gen. 45:7) — the very seed of Joseph that Mormon invokes. And the prophets make the *remnant* the heart of the gathering hope: *the remnant (sheerit) of Israel... shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God* (Isa. 10:21); *I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel* (Mic. 2:12); *I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds* (Jer. 23:3). The *remnant* doctrine is the answer to the despair of the scattering: yes, the nation is broken, the people are dispersed, the many are lost — *but a remnant survives*, and through that remnant God keeps every promise he ever made. The covenant is never void, because there is always a *sheerit*, a surviving seed, in whom the promise lives on. This is precisely Mormon's hope, and it is intensely personal to him, because he *is* the remnant. He is *a pure descendant of Lehi* (v. 20), a survivor of the seed of Joseph, writing at the end of his own people's destruction — and he grasps that he and his record are the *sheerit* through whom God will fulfill the ancient covenant. *Surely shall he again bring a remnant (sheerit) of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord* (v. 23). The Nephite nation will die; Mormon will watch it die; but the *remnant* will not be lost, because God preserves a remnant, and through that remnant — and through this record the remnant carries — *all the remnant of the seed of Jacob* will be gathered *from the four quarters of the earth* (v. 24). The doctrine of the *sheerit* is what makes the Book of Mormon a book of *hope* and not merely a tragedy. Mormon abridges the record of a perishing people, but he does so in the confidence that they are a *remnant*, not an ending — that God preserves the surviving seed precisely so that the covenant can be fulfilled through them. And the New Testament carries the same word forward: *even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace* (Rom. 11:5) — there is always a remnant, always a faithful surviving seed, always a *sheerit* through whom God keeps his covenant alive. Mormon writes for that remnant, to that remnant, as a member of that remnant — sending the witness of Christ across the centuries so that the scattered seed of Joseph might be gathered home and *know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ* (v. 26). The remnant is the thread God never lets break; Mormon's whole record is a strand of it, reaching across a thousand years to gather a remnant still.

From the Chapter's Architecture

```cross-references Gen. 45:7 (Joseph: God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity — sheerit — in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance — the remnant of Joseph Mormon invokes, vv. 21–23); Isa. 10:20–22 (the remnant — sheerit — of Israel... shall return... unto the mighty God — the returning remnant, v. 23); Mic. 2:12; 5:7–8 (I will surely gather the remnant of Israel — the gathering of the remnant of Jacob, v. 24); Jer. 23:3 (I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries... and will bring them again to their folds — the gathering from the four quarters, v. 24); Deut. 30:1–5 (the scattering and the gathering of Israel from all nations — the covenant Mormon declares, vv. 24–25); Rom. 11:1–5 (there is a remnant according to the election of grace — the surviving faithful seed, v. 23); 1 Ne. 13:34–42 (the record of the seed of Joseph going forth in the latter days to gather Israel — Mormon's purpose for the record, vv. 23–24); 2 Ne. 3:5–15 (Joseph's prophecy of a choice seer of his seed and the bringing of his people to salvation — the seed of Joseph, vv. 21–23); 3 Ne. 11:8–17 (the descent of Christ among the remnant — the firstfruits of the gathering hope, v. 26); 3 Ne. 21:1–7 (the sign of the gathering and the coming forth of the record to the gentiles and the remnant — the covenant Mormon here declares); Morm. 8:1–9:37 (Moroni completing the record his father began — the abridger's trust handed on, vv. 14–18); Mosiah 18:1–17 (Alma at the waters of Mormon establishing the church — the land Mormon is named after, v. 12). ```