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Title: **Missionary Moments**

Provenance:

Category: **Document**

Person: **John Alexander Clark**

Date:

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The Church’s efforts to construct a building for near-eastern studies in the Holy Land were met with great resistance. The Jewish leaders argued that the LDS Church should not be allowed to construct a building on the selected site when it had never had a presence in the Holy Land previously. It seemed as if nobody wanted the Church to be established in Jerusalem.

But then an important miracle occurred. It was discovered that two Mormon missionaries were buried in a cemetery in Haifa. They had died while establishing the LDS Church in the Holy Land some 90 years earlier, in 1892 and 1895, respectively. The inscription on Elder Clark’s headstone made it very clear who he represented:

“In found remembrance of John A. Clark, son of Ezra and Suzanna Clark, born February 28, 1871 at Farmington, Utah USA, died February 8, 1895 at Haifa, Palestine, a Missionary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.”

Elder Haag’s inscription on his nearby tombstone said essentially the same thing (in German). Although there had also been a mission home in

Haifa before the establishment of the State of Israel, the real property records did not indicate that it had been purchased outright by the Church. Professor David Galbraith points out in his article entitled: “The Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies: Reflections of a Modern Pioneer,” The Religious Educator Vol. 9, No. 1, 2008, “Even though the street and the very building could be located, there was no evidence of any documents that the Church had owned the land outright.” Nevertheless, based significantly on the fact that the Church’s two missionaries’ headstones confirmed the existence of the Church in the Holy Land in the 1890s, the Articles of Association sailed right through the complex approval process without complication.

Although the Church did not acquire the same exact legal status as the original five churches, the Church had miraculously satisfied the requirements of Israeli law for a modern association as a legal entity. This meant that it had all the legal rights associated under Israel law, which included the right to own land and conduct banking business. The Articles of Association were approved on June 16, 1977. Later another Israeli attorney, Joseph Kokia, was retained to successfully guide BYU through the same political minefield in establishing its own legal status in Israel.

It now became clear that one of the important purposes of the Lord in sending these two young men on missions to Palestine was to assist in establishing the Church in the Holy Land a century later. They had not died in vain!

The two LDS missionaries served as witnesses for truth, making it possible for the Church to establish a learning center in Jerusalem almost a century after their deaths. This beautiful center has blessed not only the lives of thousands of BYU students, faculty and members of the Church who have visited the center, but thousands of local residents who have visited the Jerusalem Center for countless lectures and concerts.