

# LIGHT REFLECTIONS

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## Enough and to Spare

When I was eighteen, I joined a group of prospective BYU students for a seder feast at Passover time hosted by Professor Victor Ludlow. During that memorable evening, Professor Ludlow taught us a traditional Passover song called “Dayenu” (דַּיֵּנוּ), which translates roughly as “it would have been enough.” The song recounts the history of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt by identifying several divine interventions, any one of which “would have been enough.” Each verse takes the form of: “If He had done X, and not done Y, it would have been enough!” For example, “If He had fed us manna, and not given us the Sabbath, it would have been enough!” A lively chorus then drives home the refrain: “Da-dayenu! Da-dayenu! Da-dayenu! Dayenu! Dayenu!”

I love the idea this song represents. It teaches a profound lesson about gratitude. As I review my life, I see a ceaseless stream of blessings, each of which, standing alone, would have sufficed but has in fact been followed by other and greater blessings.

A recent example comes from last month’s general conference. In his concluding keynote message, President Nelson announced seventeen new temples, with the seventh of them in Milan, Italy, where I served my mission.

My heart leapt at the announcement. A favorite mission companion and I immediately swapped texts sharing the same thought: Our prayers and fasts had been focused for so long on the dream of a temple in Rome that we had hardly dared to contemplate a house of the Lord in Milan. If He had blessed us with a temple in Roma, we felt, and not another in Milano—*Dayenu!*

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Unfortunately, sometimes sincere gratitude for blessings past might morph into entitled fixation of blessings not yet come. It is always true, for the faithful, that the best is yet to be. But this should never blind us to the good that already is. What God once gave would have been enough. What God has already given is enough and to spare.

A recent example from BYU sports:

*With nineteen seconds left on the clock, BYU trails by four. Retzlaff collects the snap, surveys the field, and drops an absolute dime into the waiting arms of Darius Lassiter, who snags the ball at the fifteen yard-line, breaks one tackle, drops another defender to the turf with a gorgeous juke, and glides past yet another, through the end zone for a game-winning score. BYU 38, Oklahoma State 35.*

*I go absolutely bananas. The accumulated tension of a long and hard-fought game erupts in euphoric madness. Whatever patina of administrative dignity I have hitherto tried to preserve now vanishes entirely. I exchange double high fives with everyone in reach, including a total stranger. I scream and shout; I bellow and bray; I holler and halloo. I howl like a lonely wolf with snout upturned against a bad moon rising.*

*Post-game traffic cannot disturb my elation. I float into bed at 1 am and drift into a deep and dreamless sleep. I have, as Churchill put it on a similarly epic occasion, “no need for cheering dreams. Facts are better than dreams.”<sup>1</sup>*

*The next morning my twelve-year-old son is ablaze and abuzz with projections and plans—how swiftly we might ascend the rankings, how far we might go if we can only beat UCF, and then Utah, and then . . .*

*I apply a paternal check to these careening thoughts. Let us, I suggest, simply savor this succulent moment. Let us rejoice in last night’s thrilling victory. Let us bask*

*in being 7-and-0 (as of this writing, 8-and-0). Sufficient unto the day is the euphoria thereof.*

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President Nelson has called gratitude “medicine for the soul” and summoned us to “experience the healing power of gratitude.” Gratitude, he promised, will “soothe our feelings and provide us with a greater perspective on the purpose and joys of life.” “Prayers of gratitude,” he added, “bring forth miracles”<sup>2</sup>—including, I submit, the miracles for us to become the BYU of prophecy.

In addition to “bring[ing] forth miracles,” I believe gratitude will also call down needed revelation as we approach our rendezvous with destiny. The Prophet Joseph Smith’s diary for 30 November 1834 reports: “While reflecting upon the goodness and mercy of the Lord this evening, a prophecy was put into our hearts.”<sup>3</sup> Who can say

what the Lord might put into our hearts when they swell with gratitude to Him?

In this spirit, let me give thanks—all too briefly, far too inadequately—for you, my faculty colleagues. Surely no university faculty anywhere has ever loved the Lord so devotedly and served their students so unstintingly. Thank you for your late nights and early mornings, for your masterful classroom teaching and compassionate private ministering, for your diligence and rigor, your charity and faith. Thank you for all you do to make this university the peerless institution that it is and will become.

If He had let me study here as a student, and not let me join you on this faculty—*Dayenu!*

Enough and to spare.

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<sup>1</sup> Winston S. Church, *The Second World War*.

<sup>2</sup> Russell M. Nelson, *Heart of the Matter: What 100 Years of Living Have Taught Me* (2023) 116, 107, 111.

<sup>3</sup> Journal, 30 November 1834, *Joseph Smith Papers: Journals, volume 1* (2008) 47.