

Judah and Joseph - Enemies No More

This is the story of two brothers, both honored amongst their brethren, both marked and destined for leadership, and both with essential and separate roles to play, roles that are even now being carried forward in their posterity.

The story begins with a problem that is all-too-common in large families with notable children: it begins with competition and jealousy. It's a natural enough thing to occur, but in this particular family, it was a legacy that had been passed along with their mother's milk; it would seem that everyone in this family was competing for the same thing: mother and child alike, all wanted to be the favorite darling of Father Jacob. What was a father to do? How could he possibly choose?

In many ways, his sons made the choice for him. His firstborn, Reuben, polluted his birthright by sleeping with his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22). The next two eldest, Simeon and Levi, brought calamity down upon the family by deceiving their sister's in-laws, and then murdering them while they were recovering from being circumcised, a good faith arrangement the in-laws had made in order to ally themselves with the family of Israel (see Gen. 34).

The next two eldest sons of the sisters Leah and Rachel were Judah and Joseph, respectively. Judah seemed to do okay in keeping out of trouble, except that when he became a grown man, he married outside of the covenant to a Canaanite woman. His first two sons were evil, and the Lord struck them down. Fearing that he might lose his remaining son, Judah failed to honor his word to his widowed daughter-in-law, Tamar, and she, seeking the family he had promised her, tricked him into sleeping with her and fathering her child. Judah accepted his reproof, however, recognized his wrong, and finally did right by Tamar. From Judah and Tamar's posterity comes King David and Jesus, who is called the Christ (see Matt. 1:3).

Apart from the reason given in the play "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," (that Jacob loved Rachel best), one can't help but understand why Joseph ended up being Jacob's favorite son; the son chosen to carry the birthright of Israel. While it is true that Joseph gave in to the temptation to "tattle-tale" on his older brothers, and to regale the family with his dreams of their bowing down to him, we are forced to admit that this would be perfectly normal behavior for any 17-year-old in Joseph's position (see Gen. 37). We also have to admit that Joseph maintained his integrity and honored his covenants despite the most trying circumstances, including being cast out of the family circle and into a prison pit. It's not surprising, therefore, that with 20/20 hindsight, all of the brothers would probably have acknowledged that Joseph deserved and earned the right to lead the family through his priesthood birthright by virtue of the fact that he was the one who most understood and honored the covenants that had been passed down through the patriarchs before him.

The story does not end that simply, however, for this is the story of a family, and all families are complicated.

Judah Came to Redeem Himself.

Despite the fact that Judah was an active participant in selling Joseph into Egypt - in fact, it was his idea (Gen. 37:26-27) - and despite the fact that Judah stumbled around a bit in his early days, he nevertheless came to redeem himself in the "Joseph problem," and in fact, offered himself a ransom in the stead of his younger brother Benjamin when Joseph trapped them by hiding his cup in Benjamin's saddlebags (Gen. 44:33). Joseph had set the perfect test to see if his brothers had changed, and no one showed more evidence of a change of heart than Judah did. His confession

Judah and Joseph - Enemies No More

that “God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants” (Gen. 44:16) did not pertain to the present circumstances: Judah knew that they had not taken the cup, but his frank confession to Joseph revealed the fact that Judah had taken responsibility for his former crime against his brother and his father, and was seeking redemption now in offering himself as Joseph’s slave.

Joseph Revealed Himself

It was at this evidence of Judah’s contrition that Joseph could no longer “refrain himself,” wept aloud, and revealed himself to his brothers (Gen. 45:1-3). With heart-rending emotion, Joseph not only forgave his brothers for their crime against him, but tried to comfort them with the reassurance that all had happened according to God’s plan. “Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life É God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance,” Joseph said, and thus not only gave reason for his immediate mission, but also provided the everlasting mission that his own posterity would inherit: that of saving and preserving the lives of the posterity of the children of Israel through the covenant blessings of the priesthood (Gen. 45:5,7).

With peace at last between the original twelve, how is it that enmity and competition once again arose amongst Israel’s posterity, and specifically, between the tribes of Judah and Joseph? To gain a clearer understanding, we must look to the patriarchal blessings given to each of the sons as Father Jacob approached the end of his life, for both Judah and Joseph were given blessings of leadership and honor that would reverberate throughout the ages, and in fact, are still relevant to the two tribes today.

Prophecies

To Judah, Jacob prophesied:

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise:
thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy
father’s children shall bow down before thee. . .

. . . The scepter shall not depart from Judah,

nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and
unto him shall the gathering of the people be (Gen. 49:8-10).

Judah, then would have the right of kingship, a promise renewed with David, and continued down the line until the birth of Jesus, who is Shiloh. While Joseph had been correct in dreaming that his family would bow down to him, Judah’s blessing promised the same to him and to his posterity. In point of fact, while the northern kingdom of Israel had many kings come and go, only in Jerusalem could the king point to a direct and continuing bloodline, a bloodline that had been promised to Judah.

Joseph’s blessing also prophesied of rich blessings of leadership. Through Joseph’s line would also continue the birthright of priesthood covenants:

Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a
well; whose branches run over the wall:

Judah and Joseph - Enemies No More

The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him,
and hated him:

But his bow abode in strength,

and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of
Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee;

and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven
above, blessings of the deep that lieth under,

blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:

The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my
progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills:

they shall be on the head of Joseph,

and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren
(Gen. 49:22-26).

Joseph's lineage would produce many "branches" that would carry the fruit of the covenant
into many vineyards and climes. Moses added to and clarified the blessings of the two brothers
when he blessed each of the tribes before their taking possession of the promised land. To Judah
he promised:

This is the blessing of Judah: and he said,

Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah,

and bring him unto his people:

let his hands be sufficient for him;

and be thou an help to him from his enemies" (Deut. 33:7).

To Joseph he added:

Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven,

for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,

and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by
the moon,

and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting
hills,

and for the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof,

and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush:

let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph,

Judah and Joseph - Enemies No More

and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.

His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manesseh (Deut. 33:13-17).



Moses' blessing does clarify the role of Joseph, a role that Joseph himself performed in saving Israel during the famine; Joseph's posterity is to gather the tribes of Israel together again, uniting the family for time and all eternity. Even as Moses was delivering the tribes to the land promised to their fathers, he was prophesying of their scattering and eventual gathering again, this time, to "go no more out" (see Helaman 3:30).

The fact that these two tribes - Judah and Joseph - held the keys of leadership is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the setup of the Camp of Israel. Under Moses' direction, Judah led the Camp in marching forward and set their tents on the East of the Camp, while Ephraim (for Joseph) took the rear-guard, encamping to the West. Both were dangerous positions, with the sacred responsibility of safeguarding their brethren under the direction of God.

Being aware of this ancient positioning gives us a more clear understanding of Nephi's prophecy that "the last shall be first, and the first shall be last" pertaining to the Gentiles and the Jews, the tribe of Joseph, or

Ephraim, having come to be associated with the Gentiles. How did that happen, we might ask.

King David and Israel United

Israel was first united under the leadership of Judah, with David as the first king of [united] Israel, as prophesied in Judah's patriarchal blessing. "Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh," (see 2 Sam. 5) the tribes said to David, having come to love him for his humble honesty, his willingness to shed his blood in their defense, and for his commitment to God.

Rehoboam Divided the Kingdom Again

The unity of Israel was short-lived, however, for it survived only two kings: David and his son, Solomon. Solomon, having departed from his reliance on God and from his covenants, had raised a foolish son, Rehoboam, who divided the kingdom with his threat of increased taxation, and his refusal to listen to his people. It was at the crucial moment of Rehoboam's declaration of intent for his stewardship as king that Joseph, or Ephraim, raised their head in rebellion. "And when all Israel saw that the king would not hearken unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? and we have none inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to your tents, O Israel: and now, David, see to thine own house" (2 Chron. 10:16).

Judah and Joseph - Enemies No More

The words that the people use in this declaration make it clear that all have remembered that there are actually two leading tribes in Israel: "What portion do we have in David? We don't have an inheritance in Jesse!" These are Judah's promises! What do we have to do with those? "O Israel, see to thine own house!"

Jeroboam and the Ten Northern Tribes of Israel

Quick to fill the void, Jeroboam of Ephraim presented himself as leader for the ten tribes who separated themselves from Judah, and the king and the temple in Jerusalem. He grabbed at the birthright, and divided Israel forever. Furthermore, he led the ten northern tribes into false worship, as he feared that if the people returned to Jerusalem for temple worship, they would turn again to Judah's leadership. Jeroboam goes down in the annals of the Old Testament as "he who made Israel to sin," for having set up golden calves at the northern and southern ends of his kingdom, and instructing his people to worship them as the gods who brought them out of Egypt (see 1 Kings 12:26-30; 2 Kings 10:31).

The Northern Kingdom, home to the ten tribes, never returned to their worship of the true God, or to honoring their covenants. By the time that they were carried away by Assyria, they had lost their identity as God's covenant people, and became assimilated by the populations around them. In this way, Ephraim, or Joseph, blinded to their identity and sacred role, became part of the "Gentiles."

Joseph, once again, was separated from his brethren, and sent to foreign lands.

Between Jeroboam, first Ephraimite king of the Northern Kingdom, and the Assyrian invasion that dispersed the ten tribes, there were many battles and wars between Joseph and Judah.

Israel, or the Northern Kingdom, knew only wicked kings, like Ahab, who married Jezebel, and introduced Baal worship as the official religion of Samaria and the ten tribes. Judah, on the other hand, had a succession of righteous and wicked kings, each influencing the bitter feud that existed between the northern tribes, under the leadership of Ephraim, and the southern tribes, under the leadership of Judah.

Although he wanted to force a reconciliation, Judah's king Rehoboam, who had first caused the division, "obeyed the words of the Lord" and turned back from fighting against Jeroboam (2 Chron. 11:1-4). However, some years later, Jeroboam did not hesitate to go against Judah's King Abijah with an army twice the size of Judah's.

Abijah warned Jeroboam with these chilling words: "Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel; Ought ye not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?" "And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper" (2 Chron. 13:4-5,12). Abijah was right in his assessment; the Lord aided Judah in the battle, and 500,000 of Jeroboam's men fell, including Jeroboam himself.

The Lord's covenant promise to Judah and David held true and was evidenced throughout the history of the tribes. Even when wicked kings sat upon the throne in Jerusalem, "Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him always a light, and to his children" (2 Kings 8:19).

Judah and Joseph - Enemies No More

Wicked King Amaziah of Judah demanded war with Israel and was defeated (2 Chron. 25).

Wicked King Ahaz of Judah was also defeated by Israel, who carried away 200,000 captives to Samaria (2 Chron. 28:8). Nevertheless, even under those conditions, the Lord helped Judah: the prophet Oded instructed Israel to let the Jewish captives go, or the wrath of the Lord would come down upon them. In response to the prophet's warnings, Israel fed and clothed the Jewish captives and took them back as far as Jericho (2 Chron. 10-11). It is at that time that Ahaz sent to Assyria for help (2 Chron. 28:16). In his anger against God, Ahaz gave tribute to Assyria from the temple, and shut the doors of the temple, turning to false worship instead of to Jehovah (2 Chron. 28:23-25). Even with these wicked Jewish kings, the Lord kept His promises to David.

King Hezekiah attempts reconciliation

We cannot discuss the kings of Judah without mentioning King Hezekiah, his religious reforms, and his attempts to bring reconciliation to all the tribes of Israel. Although in his time, Assyria defeated the Northern Kingdom, and carried away the majority of the ten tribes, still Hezekiah sent messengers throughout the kingdom, inviting all who remained to come to the temple in Jerusalem and participate in a great Passover celebration. He wrote: "Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see. Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. For if ye turn again unto the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him" (2 Chron. 30:6-9). Although a handful accepted Hezekiah's invitation, most "laughed him to scorn and mocked him" (2 Chron. 30:10).

Hezekiah and his grandson, Josiah, were the last kings of Judah who sought for Israelite unity and reached out in the spirit of reconciliation. Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, was so wicked that despite his son, Josiah's, efforts, the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem had already been determined, and Judah was brought into captivity by Babylon (see 2 Chron. 34). Although they were allowed to return to Jerusalem under the Median and Persian kings Cyrus and Darius, most of the Jews remained dispersed throughout the known world, a condition referred to as "The Diaspora."

And thus we have the dispersion of Israel, the ten tribes scattered and lost to the knowledge of their beginnings and the covenants that brought them together, and the Jews, who through affliction and terrible trial, have separated themselves from the rest of mankind who have hunted and betrayed them throughout the ages.

Who will remedy this awful predicament? Joseph will! In Joseph's name (Ephraim), Jeroboam divided Israel, but he had wrested what was not rightfully his, and out of time. Now, the Lord has called for Joseph, through Ephraim, to step forward to fulfill the role that the first Joseph had originally filled: to save Israel and her posterity, and to unite them, never to be divided again.

Just before his death, Joseph, that birthright son of old, prophesied regarding two prophets, or seers, who would help to gather the children of Israel in two different time periods. One was

Judah and Joseph - Enemies No More

Moses, who delivered Israel out of the hands of the Egyptians, and brought them back into a covenant relationship with Jehovah, in fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham.

Second Prophet for the latter days

The second prophet, Joseph declared, would come forth in the latter days, and help to “bring [the scattered tribes of Israel] to the knowledge of the covenants which [the Lord had] made with [the] fathers” (JST Gen. 50:28). There are many covenants that were made to the fathers, including the original patriarchal blessings, which have been lost, but must be remembered. According to Joseph, this latter-day seer would be given a multi-fold mission, which would include the translation of a sacred book from the tribe of Joseph, that together with the book that had come forth from the Jews or Judah, would “confound false doctrines, lay down contention, establish peace, and unite the tribes in a knowledge or remembrance of their ancient fathers and the covenants the Lord had made with them” (JST Gen. 50:31).

Joseph of Egypt revealed that the name of the latter-day prophet who would perform this great work would also be Joseph. “He shall be like unto you,” the Lord promised ancient Joseph; for the work that he shall do “shall bring my people unto salvation” (JST Gen. 50:33). How right it is that this great latter-day prophet, Joseph Smith, an Ephraimite, should carry the same name as he who inherited the original promise, and perform the same work of saving Israel, by bringing them back to the covenant fold under the blessings of the priesthood (see *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:252-253).

Even as the original twelve sons and their father gathered under the protection of their brother Joseph, to be nourished and to save their lives, even so, the tribe of Joseph must now go forth to take the life-saving nourishment of the gospel of Jesus Christ to their brethren throughout the world.

Joseph Smith cried out on behalf of Judah

It is evident that despite his youth and lack of knowledge regarding ancient empires and peoples, Joseph Smith had the gathering of Israel planted firmly in his mind and heart early on. His study of the Book of Mormon surely taught him the importance of this work, as he translated passages such as this from the prophet Nephi:

And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. And I will show unto them that fight against my word and against my people, who are of the house of Israel, that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever (2 Ne. 29:14).

In the dedicatory prayer on the first temple of this dispensation, Joseph Smith, under the direction of the Spirit, cried out in behalf of Judah, and the process of uniting the tribes again began in earnest. Joseph prayed:

. . . thou knowest that thou hast a great love for the children of Jacob, who have been scattered upon the mountains for a long time, in a cloudy and dark day.

We therefore ask thee to have mercy upon the children of Jacob, that Jerusalem, from this hour, may begin to be redeemed;

Judah and Joseph - Enemies No More

And the yoke of bondage may begin to be broken off from the house of David;

And the children of Judah may begin to return to the lands which thou didst give to Abraham, their father.

. . . That they may lay down their weapons of bloodshed, and cease their rebellions.

And may all the scattered remnants of Israel, who have been driven to the ends of the earth, come to a knowledge of the truth, believe in the Messiah, and be redeemed from oppression, and rejoice before thee (D&C 109:61-67).

Apostle Orson Hyde's Mount of Olives prayer

In accordance with Joseph's prayer for Judah, and under the direction of the Lord, the apostle Orson Hyde was sent to dedicate the Holy Land for the return of the Jews in 1841. After a troubling and risk-filled journey, Elder Hyde finally arrived in Jerusalem, and climbed the Mount of Olives, overlooking the Temple Mount. There, he offered the following prayer:

. . . O Thou, Who didst covenant with Abraham, Thy friend, and who didst renew that covenant with Isaac, and confirm the same with Jacob with an oath, that Thou wouldst not only give them this land for an everlasting inheritance, but that Thou wouldst also remember their seed forever. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have long since closed their eyes in death, and made the grave their mansion. Their children are scattered and dispersed abroad among the nations of the Gentiles like sheep that have no shepherd, and are still looking forward for the fulfillment of those promises which Thou didst make concerning them . . .

. . . Incline them to gather in upon this land according to Thy word. Let them come like clouds and like doves to their windows. Let the large ships of the nations bring them from the distant isles; and let kings become their nursing fathers, and queens with motherly fondness wipe the tear of sorrow from their eye.

Thou, O Lord, did once move upon the heart of Cyrus to show favor unto Jerusalem and her children. Do Thou now also be pleased to inspire the hearts of kings and the powers of the earth to look with a friendly eye towards this place, and with a desire to see Thy righteous purposes executed in relation thereto. Let them know that it is Thy good pleasure to restore the kingdom unto Israel -- raise up Jerusalem as its capital, and constitute her people a distinct nation and government, with David Thy servant, even a descendant from the loins of ancient David to be their king (History of the Church, Vol. 4, Chapter 26).

There it was at last: a stronghold dedicated for Judah's return, with a descendant of David as king, and Joseph led the prayer! Is it a coincidence that after nearly 2,000 years of dispersion, the Jews established the state of Israel in 1948, almost exactly 100 years following Elder Hyde's dedication?

David Ben-Gurion famous statement

The first Prime Minister of that state of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, once said "You know, there are no people in this world who understand the Jews like the Mormons" (Benson, "A Message to Judah from Joseph," *Ensign*, Dec. 1976). Ben-Gurion requested "all the information" that could be provided to him on Orson Hyde's visit to Palestine (Ibid).

Judah and Joseph - Enemies No More

Father Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, pronounced covenantal blessings upon the heads of each of his sons, with Judah and Joseph both receiving blessings of leadership. Moses reiterated those blessings, substituting the names of Ephraim and Manasseh for Joseph's name. To reiterate Moses' blessing, he said:

. . . Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph,

and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.

His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim,

and they are the thousands of Manasseh (Deut. 33:13-17).

In every LDS temple, a baptismal font rests upon the backs of twelve oxen. Twelve tribes of Israel, but there are not the representations of eagles, lions, or asses carrying the font of life-giving water. The ox is the symbol of Ephraim, Joseph's birthright son, and Ephraim (or Joseph), bears the responsibility of carrying the gospel to every living soul.

Prophecies of Prophet Ezra Taft Benson

In that spirit, a prophet in our dispensation, Ezra Taft Benson, has added his own prophecies regarding Judah and Joseph:

Of far greater value than the physical sustenance that Joseph of old provided his brethren is the sustenance that modern Joseph has to offer modern Judah today. We offer freely bread to eat and water to drink. I repeat, our interest in Judah is one of kinship, for we are your brothers. We come with a message and say, "We have 'living water' from its true source and well, which, if a man will drink it, 'shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life'" (D&C 63:23).

In Jacob's blessing to Judah, he declared: "Judah is . . . as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?" (Gen. 49:9; italics added). We come as messengers bearing the legitimate authority to arouse Judah to her promises. We do not ask Judah to forsake her heritage. We are not asking her to leave father, mother, or family. We bring a message that Judah does not possess. That message constitutes "living water" from the Fountain of living water.

Our prophet, Joseph Smith, was given a commandment by the Lord to "turn the hearts of the Jews unto the prophets, and the prophets unto the Jews" (D&C 98:17). We are presently sending our messengers to every land and people whose ideology permits us entrance. We have been gathering Joseph's descendants for 146 years. We hope you, who are of Judah, will not think it an intrusion for us to present our message to you. . . . We honor your commitment to your unique heritage and your individuality. We approach you in a different way than any other Christian church because we represent the restored covenant to the entire house of Israel.

Yes, we understand the Jews, as David Ben-Gurion said. We understand them because we belong to the same house of Israel. We are your brothers - Joseph. We look forward to the

Judah and Joseph - Enemies No More

day of fulfillment of God's promise when "the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel" (Jer. 3:18) (Benson, "A Message to Judah from Joseph," Ensign, December 1976).

Time for enmity to depart

Isaiah, the beloved prophet from the tribe of Judah, prophesied:

The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim (Isa. 11:13).

Now is the time for that enmity to depart, now is the time for the brothers to reunite. Judah and Ephraim (or Joseph) in the positions of leadership and trust in the Camp of Israel, marching together in declaring the truths of covenants restored.

Judah was promised kingship "until Shiloh come, and unto HIM should the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:8-10). Shiloh, who is Jesus Christ, has come. From the tribe of Judah, a descendant of David, we gather under Him . . . and to Him. Judah has given us this most precious Gift, amongst many others, including the records of the covenants. Joseph is the restorer; he has brought remembrance to Israel, and through the blessings of the priesthood, invites all to come into the covenant family of Israel again, enemies no more, but brothers at peace, forever.