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The Interrelated Symbolism
and Meanings of the Names
Joseph and Ephraim in Ancient Scripture**

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“THOU ART THE FRUIT OF MY LOINS”: THE INTERRELATED SYMBOLISM AND MEANINGS OF THE NAMES JOSEPH AND EPHRAIM IN ANCIENT SCRIPTURE

Matthew L. Bowen & Loren Blake Spendlove

ABSTRACT: To the ancient Israelite ear, the name Ephraim sounded like or connoted “doubly fruitful.” Joseph explains the naming of his son Ephraim in terms of the Lord’s having “caused [him] to be fruitful” (Genesis 41:52). The “fruitfulness” motif in the Joseph narrative cycle (Genesis 37–50) constitutes the culmination of a larger, overarching theme that begins in the creation narrative and is reiterated in the patriarchal narratives. “Fruitfulness,” especially as expressed in the collocation “fruit of [one’s] loins” dominates in the fuller version of Genesis 48 and 50 contained in the Joseph Smith Translation, a version of which Lehi and his successors had upon the brass plates. “Fruit” and “fruitfulness” as a play on the name Ephraim further serve to extend the symbolism and meaning of the name Joseph (“may he [God] add,” “may he increase”) and the etiological meanings given to his name in Genesis 30:23–24). The importance of the interrelated symbolism and meanings of the names Joseph and Ephraim for Book of Mormon writers, who themselves sought the blessings of divine fruitfulness (e.g., Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob), is evident in their use of the fuller version of the Joseph cycle (e.g., in Lehi’s parenthesis to his son Joseph in 2 Nephi 3). It is further evident in their use of the prophecies of Isaiah and Zenos’s allegory of the olive tree, both of which utilize (divine) “fruitfulness” imagery in describing the apostasy and restoration of Israel (including the Northern Kingdom or “Ephraim”).

The shape and vowelings of the name of Joseph’s youngest son Ephraim (*‘eprayim*) suggests that it meant, or was thought to mean, “doubly

fruitful” or “twice fruitful” as a dual noun.¹ The lexical association between the name Ephraim and the idea of “double fruitfulness” suggests the birthright status he acquired though he was the younger of Joseph’s two named sons (see Genesis 48:13–22).² It further points to the status the tribe of Ephraim afterward held in Israel as the Lord’s “firstborn” (“I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is **my firstborn** [bĕkōrî],” Jeremiah 31:9; cf. *bikkûrîm* = “first fruits” and Joseph as the Lord’s “firstborn bull” [bĕkôr šôrô], Deuteronomy 33:17). Ephraim represented Joseph’s “portion” (*šĕkem*) above his brethren (Genesis 48:22) or “double portion” (Hebrew *pî šĕnayim*)³ belonging thereto (cf. especially D&C 133:34).

In this article, we explore the name Ephraim and its Genesis etiology, “God hath **caused me** [Joseph] **to be fruitful** [*hipranî*]” (Genesis 41:52), as an extension of the double–etiology for Joseph’s name offered in Genesis 30:23–24 (“he hath taken away” or “gathered in” [’*āsap*]; and “he shall add” or “may he add” [*yōsēp/yôsēp*]). To this end, we examine the various texts in the Hebrew Bible that interpret the name Ephraim in terms of “fruitfulness,” often also employing the image of branches. When examined in the context of the biblical etiology for the name Ephraim and the prophetic biblical texts that deal with Joseph and Ephraim, the collocation “fruit of [the] loins” in JST Genesis 48 and 50 and in the Book of Mormon emerges as an important conceptual play on the name Joseph and wordplay on the name Ephraim, making the latter name an important symbol of “fruit” (posterity), being “fruitful,” and the growing and fructification of branches.

“God Hath Caused Me to Be Fruitful”: An Etiology for Ephraim

The Genesis narrative offers paronomastic explanations for all the major patriarchs: Abraham in terms of his destiny to become a “father of many nations [’*ab hāmôn gōyîm*]” (Genesis 17:4–5),⁴ Isaac in terms of “laughter” or “rejoicing” in posterity (*šāḥaq*);⁵ Jacob in terms of “grabbing the heel”

1. See, e.g., Bruce M. Waltke and Michael P. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 118.

2. See also Brian L. Smith, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), s.v. “Ephraim.”

3. See Deuteronomy 21:17 and 2 Kings 2:9.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:2, which records Abraham’s desire to become “a father of many nations,” an apparent autobiographical wordplay on his name.

5. Genesis 17:17; 18:12–15; 21:16. The Genesis narrative further plays on the verb *šāḥaq* in additional senses (see, e.g., Genesis 21:9: “And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.”

or “supplanting” (*āqab*)⁶ “wrestling” (*’bq*)⁷ and “embracing” (*ḥbq*),⁸ and Joseph in terms of both “taking away” (or “gathering,” *āsap*) and “adding” (*yāsap*). The Genesis text explains Joseph’s naming of Ephraim in terms of the verb *pry* (“be fruitful”): “And the name of the second called he **Ephraim** [*’eprāyim*]⁹: For God **hath caused me to be fruitful** [*hipranî*] in the land of my affliction” (Genesis 41:52). Joseph’s reported explanation of his son’s name in terms of a causative verbal form of *pry* is not strictly etymological, nor is it so intended. The main narratological and rhetorical point is to tie the name Ephraim with “fruit” and “fruitfulness.”

The narrator’s inclusion of this explanation of Ephraim’s name in terms of “fruitfulness” — and implicitly as “doubly fruitful” or “twice fruitful” — speaks not simply of Joseph’s “fruitfulness” in Egypt but to Ephraim’s tribal destiny within Israel: to become (again) “fruitful” among the tribes of Israel (cf. Hosea 13:7; cf. Zechariah 10:7–10). Ephraim would embody the *tēbû’ōt* (“fruits”) which Joseph was destined to inherit.¹⁰

“I Will Make Thee Fruitful”

Jacob recounts to Joseph the blessing the Lord had given him at Luz or Bethel (Genesis 35:11),¹¹ which was formally a reiteration of the covenant the Lord had made with Abraham his grandfather and Isaac his father. Here, however, Jacob articulates the content of the blessing in such a way as to recall the first blessing and commandment given to created life (“And [I,] God blessed them, saying, **Be fruitful** [*pěrû*], and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth” Genesis 1:22; Moses 2:22), then to Adam and Eve in the garden (“And God blessed them, and [I,] God said unto them, **Be fruitful** [*pěrû*], and multiply, and replenish [fill] the earth,” Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28), and subsequently reiterated with Noah (“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, **Be fruitful** [*pěrû*], and multiply, and replenish [fill] the earth,” Genesis 9:1).¹² However, Jacob’s description of

6. Genesis 25:26; 27:36; cf. Jeremiah 9:4.

7. Genesis 32:24–25 [MT 25–26].

8. Genesis 29:13; 33:4; 48:10.

9. Pausal form: *’eprāyim* vs. *’eprayim*.

10. See Moses’s final blessing upon Joseph — “the ten thousands of Ephraim, and ... the thousands of Manasseh” (Deuteronomy 33:13–17).

11. See also Genesis 28.

12. Genesis 9:7 states similarly, “And you, **be ye fruitful** [*pěrû*], and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

his blessing further plays on the name Ephraim (“doubly fruitful”) and ties its fulfillment to all of the foregoing:

And [God Almighty] said unto me, Behold, **I will make thee fruitful** [*maprĕkā*] and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. And now thy two sons, **Ephraim** [*'eprayim*] and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. (Genesis 48:4–5)

Jacob acknowledges Joseph’s sons Ephraim and Manasseh as the particular fulfillment of the blessings and promises the Lord gave to him as recorded in Genesis 28:3 (“And God Almighty bless thee, **and make thee fruitful** [*wĕyaprĕkā*], and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people”) and 35:11 (“be fruitful [*pĕrĕ*] and multiply”). The same blessings and promises regarding fruitfulness now belong to Joseph through his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

“The Fruit of My Loins”

In the book of Acts we read that king David received a promise from God that Christ would be descended from “the fruit of his loins.”¹³ The phrase *fruit of his loins* (hereafter referred to as FL for “fruit of X loins”) is rarely used in the scriptures. It stands unattested in the King James Version of the Old Testament¹⁴ — although it is attested in the Joseph Smith Translation (hereafter JST) — and occurs only once in the New Testament (see above), once in the Doctrine and Covenants¹⁵ and once in the Pearl of Great Price.¹⁶ However, FL, including its variations (*fruit of*

13. Acts 2:30, where the phrase “καρποῦ τῆς ὀσφύος αὐτοῦ [*karpou tēs osphyos autou*]” can be translated as “fruit of the loins of him.”

14. Jacob used the collocation *fruit of the womb* (*pĕrĭ-bāten* = פְּרִי־בֶטֶן) in Genesis 30:2 when angrily replying to Rachel that God was responsible for leaving her barren. Interestingly, Joseph would become Rachel’s first fruit when God eventually “opened her womb” Genesis 30:22.

15. In D&C 132:30 we read: “Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the *fruit of his loins* — from whose loins ye are, namely, my servant Joseph — which were to continue so long as they were in the world; and as touching Abraham and his seed, out of the world they should continue; both in the world and out of the world should they continue as innumerable as the stars; or, if ye were to count the sand upon the seashore ye could not number them.”

16. In Moses 8:2 we read: “And it came to pass that Methuselah, the son of Enoch, was not taken, that the covenants of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he

my loins and *fruit of thy loins*), is attested nearly 20 times in the Book of Mormon. All of these occurrences of FL, with one exception,¹⁷ are found in a single chapter of the Book of Mormon — in Lehi's blessing of his son Joseph (2 Nephi 3).

FL Usage in the Book of Mormon

In the first three verses of 2 Nephi 3, Lehi directly addresses and blesses his son Joseph. In verses 4 and 5 he introduces the FL phrase and transitions the attention from his son Joseph to his ancestor Joseph, for whom his son has been named:

For behold, thou art the **fruit of my loins**, and I am a descendant of Joseph, which was carried captive into Egypt. And great was the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph. Wherefore Joseph truly saw our day, and he obtained a promise of the Lord that out of the **fruit of his loins** the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel.¹⁸

In verses 6 through 21, Lehi mostly quotes the writings of his ancestor Joseph, presumably from the Brass Plates, in which he records the use of the FL phrase an additional 15 times, for a total of 17 occurrences (see Table 1 below).

While both Lehi and Joseph used the FL phrase twice in this chapter, it is clear from Table 1 that the Lord is the most prolific user of the collocation, using it 13 times, as is also suggested by the distribution of its use in 2 Nephi 3. In addition to these 17 usages of the FL phrase in Table 1, the Lord also used three additional but closely related phrases which are worth mentioning (see Table 2 below).

made to Enoch; for he truly covenanted with Enoch that Noah should be of the *fruit of his loins*."

17. The exception is in Jacob 2:25 where Lehi's penultimate son repeated the same message which is found in 2 Nephi 3 — that God would "raise up" a "righteous branch from the *fruit of the loins* of Joseph" (see further below).

18. The text in these verses differs from that published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All Book of Mormon citations in this paper have been taken from *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, edited by Royal Skousen (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

Table 1¹⁹

#	Verse	Wording	Speaker	Source
1	4	fruit of my loins	Lehi	Plates of Nephi
2	5	fruit of his loins	Lehi	Plates of Nephi
3	6	fruit of my loins	Joseph	Brass Plates*
4	7	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates*
5	7	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates*
6	7	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates*
7	11	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates*
8	12	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates*
9	12	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates*
10	12	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates*
11	14	fruit of my loins	Joseph	Brass Plates
12	18	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates
13	18	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates
14	18	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates
15	19	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates
16	19	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates
17	21	fruit of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates

Table 2

#	Verse	Wording	Speaker	Source
1	11	seed of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates*
2	12	fruit of the loins of Judah	Lord	Brass Plates*
3	1	fruit of the loins of Judah	Lord	Brass Plates*
4	18	spokesman of thy loins	Lord	Brass Plates

19. In Tables 1 and 2, all FL references which show the source as the Brass Plates and are followed by an asterisk are also found in Genesis 50 of the JST. References without the asterisk are not found in the JST and are unique to the Brass Plates. Nephi saw in vision the Hebrew bible and wrote that it contained “many of the prophecies of the holy prophets,” and that it was “like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many” (1 Nephi 13:23). This appears to be one example where the Brass Plates contain a more complete record “of the prophecies of the holy prophets” than the Hebrew bible since not even the JST contains much of the information that Lehi recorded from the Brass Plates in this chapter.

Why the FL Collocation?

So, why would this single chapter in the Book of Mormon use this obscure FL collocation with such frequency when it is rarely found in other books of scripture, including in the other books and chapters of the Book of Mormon? The answer to that question largely resides within the stories of Jacob's adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh as "Israel" and of Jacob blessing his sons in Genesis 49.

Just as Lehi blessed his children and grandchildren prior to his death (2 Nephi 4:12), Jacob (Israel) also gathered his sons and grandchildren around him in the land of Egypt to give them each a final blessing. When blessing Joseph, Jacob said: "Joseph is a fruitful bough [*bēn pōrāt*], even a fruitful bough [*bēn pōrāt*, fruitful son (see below)] by a well; whose branches run over the wall" (Genesis 49:22).²⁰ Twice in this verse Jacob referred to his son Joseph as "fruitful."

When Rachel's firstborn son was born "she called his name Joseph; and said, the Lord *shall add* [*yōsēp*] to me another son" (Genesis 30:24). Joseph's name in Hebrew (*yōsēp*) is a third person causative (*hiphil*) jussive form of the verb *yāsap*, meaning to "add" or "increase."²¹ Later, when Joseph's only full brother was born, his mother called this new son Ben-oni (Genesis 35:18).²² However, apparently not fully pleased with the name, Jacob renamed this son Benjamin. While Jacob did not rename Joseph, he did associate Joseph's name with the idea of being "fruitful" in his blessing, a fitting extension of its original meaning, "may he add" or "may he increase."

Earlier in the Genesis narratives, Isaac blessed Jacob that "God Almighty" would make him "fruitful" ("and make thee fruitful," *wēyapṛēkā*) and "multiply" him so that he would become "a multitude of people" (Genesis 28:3). Later, the Lord himself reaffirmed the blessing when he proclaimed: "I am God Almighty: **be fruitful** [*pēṛē*] and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins" (Genesis 35:11). Interestingly, this divine

20. A literal rendering of this verse could be: "Son fruitful Joseph, son fruitful by spring, daughters step over (or on) wall."

21. For a detailed analysis of this topic, see: Matthew L. Bowen, "Their Anger Did Increase Against Me": Nephi's Autobiographical Permutation of a Biblical Wordplay on the Name Joseph," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 23 (2017): 115–36.

22. For a detailed analysis of this topic, see: Matthew L. Bowen, Onomastic Wordplay on Joseph and Benjamin and Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon, *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 255–73.

imperative for Jacob to “be fruitful” comes *after* the birth of Joseph, the eleventh of twelve sons, which is suggestive of the role that Joseph and his posterity will have in making Jacob “fruitful.”

“Joseph Is a Fruitful Bough”: Fruitful “Son” Joseph

Jacob was blessed and commanded to be fruitful, and Joseph embodies the fulfillment of that promise and command. The KJV renders the opening line of Israel’s blessing to Joseph as “Joseph is a fruitful bough,” but a literal translation from Hebrew yields “a fruitful son [is] Joseph” (*bēn pōrāt yōsēp*).²³ One could even understand this wording as a blessing from Israel that his “fruitful” son “will increase” (*yōsēp/ yōsēp*, cf. Genesis 30:24). Taken together, these facts explain why the Lord repeatedly referred to Joseph’s descendants as the “fruit” of his loins in 2 Nephi 3: Joseph is “fruitful.” That Lehi and Joseph used the FL collocation to refer to their own descendants indicates that they were also aware of the special significance of the FL collocation.

Lehi told his son Joseph, “Thou art the fruit of my loins, and I am a descendant of Joseph” (2 Nephi 3:4). The first line, “Thou art the fruit of my loins” parallels the second, “I am a descendant of Joseph.” In essence, Lehi was saying that his own son Joseph, the “fruitful son,” was the fruit of his loins in the same sense that he was the fruit of his father Joseph, the “fruitful son” of Jacob. In a poetic way, Lehi’s son Joseph is both “fruit” (as the son of Lehi) and “fruitful” (named after their common ancestor Joseph, whose name is etiolized²⁴ with the harvest verb *’āsap* (“gather [in]”; “bring in”; “take away”)²⁵ and its actual etymological source, the verb *yāsap* in the sense of “adding” a son or “branch” (*bēn*) — i.e., “fruit” or posterity. We propose that the abundant use of the FL collocation in JST Genesis 48 and 50 and in the Book of Mormon is best explained as an onomastic wordplay on an allusion to the interrelated meanings of the names Joseph (“may he add”) and Ephraim (“doubly fruitful”).

23. The use of the word *pōrāt* (פֹרֵת) rather than *pārâ* (פָרָא) in this verse is unusual, but not without explanation. “The letters ת (*taw*) and ה (*he*) sometimes alternate, especially in cases of older names. These tend to be spelled with the letter *taw*, while the word it came from evolved from being spelled with a *taw* to being spelled with a *he*. And so scholars think the name Parat most likely comes from the verb פָרָה (*para*), bear fruit, be fruitful.” Abarim Publications’ Biblical Name Vault, s.v. “Parat,” last updated on November 21, 2017, <http://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Parat.html>.

24. See Genesis 30:23–24.

25. Cf. HALOT, 74–75.

“Doubly Fruitful”: Ephraim as Fulfillment or Extension of Joseph’s Name

Prior to the seven years of famine arriving in Egypt, Joseph’s wife, “Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On,” gave birth to two sons,²⁶ Manasseh and Ephraim. The Genesis narrator reports Joseph’s naming these sons as follows:

And Joseph called the name of the firstborn **Manasseh** [*měnaššeh*, participle form of *nšy/nšh*, “one who causes to forget”]: For God, said he, **hath made me forget** [*naššanî*] all my toil, and all my father’s house. And the name of the second called he **Ephraim** [*’epřayim*, a dual form from the root *pry/prh*, to be fruitful²⁷]: For God **hath caused me to be fruitful** [*hipranî*; or, **made me fruitful**] in the land of my affliction (Genesis 41:51–52).

Years after Israel and the rest of his family arrived in Egypt during the time of famine we read that Israel fell ill, so Joseph went to his father’s house and “took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim” (Genesis 48:1). When Joseph arrived at his father’s house several interesting events occurred:

1. Israel first recounted how God had appeared to him years earlier and had blessed him that he would be “fruitful” and would “multiply” and make of him a “multitude of people” (Genesis 48:3–4).
2. He then informed Joseph that his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh,²⁸ were not only to be counted as Joseph’s sons but also as Israel’s, just “as Reuben and Simeon”²⁹ (Genesis 48:5).
3. Whether at this time or another, Israel blessed his two new sons, placing his right hand on Ephraim’s head and his left hand on Manasseh. Joseph tried to correct his father, “Not so,

26. Genesis 41:50.

27. *The Jewish Encyclopedia.com*, (1907), s.v. “Ephraim,” <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5793-ephraim>.

28. It is noteworthy that in verse 1, the two sons of Joseph are mentioned in the order of their births. However, in verse 5 Jacob listed the two sons in the opposite order of their births, placing the younger son (Ephraim) before the older (Manasseh).

29. In this verse Israel paired the two youngest and newest of his sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) with the two oldest (Reuben and Simeon). We learn later that Ephraim is given the birthright over the oldest son Reuben. This is a great example of what Jesus taught when he said: “So the last shall be first, and the first last” (Matthew 20:16).

my father: for this [Manasseh] is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.” Israel, however, responded: “I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh” (Genesis 48:14–20).

4. Israel gave an extra or double portion to Joseph — twice as much as his brothers — showing that the position of firstborn had passed from Reuben to Joseph and to Joseph’s descendants³⁰ (Genesis 48:22).
5. The extra or double portion given to Joseph would also seem to reflect the name of Joseph’s youngest son Ephraim. In Hebrew, one could express “double portion” with the dual construction *pî šēnayim*³¹ (which rhymes with Ephraim), but here in Genesis 48:22, the narrator opts to use the expression “one portion above” *šēkem* (“shoulder” or “portion”) with the preposition *‘al* (“above”).

The narrator appears to have chosen the noun *šēkem* as a wordplay on Shechem (*šēkem*), the place where Jacob sent his son Joseph to check on his brothers in Genesis 37 and where he did not find them. Shechem is consistently identified with the tribal territory of Ephraim in the Hebrew Bible: Joshua 20:7 (“Shechem in mount Ephraim [*šēkem bēhar ‘eprāyim*]”); Joshua 21:21 (“For they gave them **Shechem** [*šēkem*] with her suburbs **in mount Ephraim** [*bēhar ‘eprāyim*], to be a city of refuge for the slayer”); 1 Kings 12:25 (“Then Jeroboam built **Shechem in mount Ephraim** [*šēkem bēhar ‘eprayim*], and dwelt therein”); and 1 Chronicles 6:67 (“And they gave unto them, of the cities of refuge, **Shechem in mount Ephraim** [*šēkem ... bēhar ‘eprāyim*] with her suburbs”). Slight variations on *šēkem bēhar ‘eprāyim* — “Shechem in mount Ephraim” or “Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim” — virtually constitute a stereotyped phrase.

30. “One portion more than to your brothers probably refers to the ‘double portion’ that the first-born son inherits (Deuteronomy 21:17). The word for portion (*shekhem*) in this difficult verse puns on the name of (the city) Shechem. Note that Shechem appears as a Manassite clan in Josh. 17:2 but as an Ephraimite city in Joshua 20:7.” Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible*, Second Edition, (Oxford University Press, 2014), 89.

31. E.g., Deuteronomy 21:17; 2 Kings 2:9; Zechariah 13:8.

**“The God of Thy Fathers Shall Bless Thee,
and the Fruit of Thy Loins”**

The JST version of Genesis 48 makes an explicit connection between the name Ephraim and the FL collocation. In fact, the text attributes the initial attestation of this phrase to Jacob, rather than to Joseph, who uses it most. As noted previously, Genesis 48 explains why the names Ephraim and Menasseh were “called Israel” — i.e., their respective names were used as separate tribal designations within Israel rather than coming under the name Joseph:

And now, of thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, before I came unto thee into Egypt; behold, *they are mine, and the God of my fathers shall bless them; even as Reuben and Simeon they shall be blessed, for they are mine; wherefore they shall be called after my name. (Therefore they were called Israel.)* And thy issue which thou begetteth after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance, *in the tribes; therefore they were called the tribes of Manasseh and of Ephraim.* (JST Genesis 48:5–6; changes from the KJV in bolded italics)

JST’s etiological repetition of the name Ephraim here is significant in that it firmly sets up what follows in the restored text of Jacob’s prophecy as a prophetic wordplay on the name Ephraim. Hence, the first two instances of the FL idiom thus occur as a wordplay on the name Ephraim in JST:

And Jacob said unto Joseph when the God of my father appeared unto me in Luz, in the land of Canaan; he sware unto me, that he would give unto me, and unto my seed, the land for an everlasting possession. Therefore, O my son, he hath blessed me in raising thee up to be a servant unto me, in saving my house from death; in delivering my people, thy brethren, from famine which was sore in the land; wherefore the God of thy fathers shall bless thee, **and the fruit of thy loins**, that they shall be blessed above thy brethren, and above thy father’s house; for thou hast prevailed, and **thy father’s house hath bowed down unto thee**, even as it was shown unto thee, before thou wast sold into Egypt by the hands of thy brethren; **wherefore thy brethren shall bow down unto thee, from generation to generation, unto the fruit of thy**

loins for ever; For thou shalt be a light unto my people, to deliver them in the days of their captivity, from bondage; and to bring salvation unto them, when they are altogether **bowed down** under sin. (JST Genesis 48:7–11)

Jacob's use of "fruit" (Hebrew *pēri*) in the FL collocation to describe Joseph's posterity who would "be blessed above [Joseph's] brethren" clearly alludes both to the name Ephraim and to the birthright blessing that Ephraim's posterity would receive. Moreover, Jacob's prophecy recalls the harvest imagery of Joseph's dream: "your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance [*wattištaḥāwēnā*] to my sheaf" (Genesis 37:7), pronouncing that prophecy fulfilled ("thy father's house hath bowed down unto thee, even as it was shown unto thee," JST Genesis 48:10). The Genesis narrative mentions that this happened several times when Joseph's brothers came to buy grain (cf. sheaves) in Egypt: "And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth" (Genesis 42:6); "And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth" (Genesis 43:26); "And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, **and made obeisance**" (Genesis 43:28).

Jacob also prophesies future, iterative fulfillment of Joseph's dream ("wherefore thy brethren shall bow down unto thee, from generation to generation, unto the fruit of thy loins forever" JST Genesis 48:10). It is intriguing to consider the imagery of Lehi's dream as reflecting Joseph's dream in this light: "they came forth and **fell down** and partook of the **fruit** of the tree" (1 Nephi 8:30). It has been argued elsewhere that Mormon saw a fulfillment of this prophetic dream in the obeisance or worship of Jesus at the temple in Bountiful, a toponym incidentally, originally given to a place of **abundant** fruit (cf. the names Rabbah and Ephratah, "fruitful").³² One wonders whether Mormon considered the

32. The later Nephite toponym, rendered in translation as "Bountiful" was clearly taken from the earlier "Bountiful" on the coast of Arabia. See 1 Nephi 17:5–6: "And we did come to **the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey**; and all these things were prepared of the Lord that we might not perish. And we beheld the sea, which we called Irreantum, which, being interpreted, is many waters. And it came to pass that we did pitch our tents by the seashore; and notwithstanding we had suffered many afflictions and much difficulty, yea, even so much that we cannot write them all, we were exceedingly

place name important to the fulfillment of Lehi's dream in terms of what transpired at Bountiful: "And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying: Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And **they did fall down** at the feet of Jesus, and did **worship** him" (3 Nephi 11:16–17); "And Nephi arose and went forth, and **bowed himself** before the Lord and did kiss his feet" (3 Nephi 11:19); "And they did all, both they who had been healed and they who were whole, **bow down at his feet, and did worship him**; and as many as could come for the multitude **did kiss his feet, insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears**" (3 Nephi 17:10). The fruit of which the faithful Lamanites and Nephites fell down and partook was the fruit of the one who embodies everything that the tree of life represents (1 Nephi 11:16–24), the one born at Bethlehem-Ephrathah, "house of bread" (see especially Micah 5:2; cf. Matthew 2:1–16; Luke 2:4, 15).

"Out of the Fruit of My Loins"

The wordplay "Joseph is a fruitful son" or "fruitful bough" from Jacob's blessing upon Joseph finds another immediate echo in the prophecy of Joseph in Egypt. Joseph takes up his father Jacob's use of the FL idiom. Prior to his death, JST Genesis 50 preserves a version of a prophecy of Joseph that Lehi had available to him on the plates of brass, from which he quotes in 2 Nephi 3: "the Lord hath visited me, and I have obtained a promise of the Lord, that **out of the fruit of my loins**, the Lord God will raise up **a righteous branch** out of my loins; and unto thee, whom my father Jacob hath named Israel, a prophet; (not the Messiah who is called Shilo;) and this prophet shall deliver my people out of Egypt in the days of thy bondage" (JST Genesis 50). Here, Joseph's prophecy primarily has the meaning of the name of his son Ephraim in mind but perhaps secondarily the interrelated meaning of his own name, "may he [God] add" in the idea of God raising up a "righteous branch out of [his] loins."

The subsequent JST Genesis 50 text of Joseph's FL prophecy about a "choice seer" in the latter-days uses the word "fruit" (Hebrew *pēri*, Egyptian *pr.t*) an additional ten times (for a total of eleven). As noted above, the abundant use of the FL idiom in 2 Nephi 3 is comprised of Lehi's quotation of a text from the brass plates akin to JST Genesis 50 and his use and interpretation of that text for his son, Joseph. These restored texts do not merely help us appreciate how much the figures

rejoiced when we came to the seashore; and we called the place Bountiful, because of its much fruit." Cf. also 1 Nephi 18:6.

and names of Joseph and Ephraim were originally bound-up with the blessings of the patriarchs and especially “fruitfulness” but also how important Joseph’s descendants are to the fulfillment of those promises. The latter-day “choice seer” would fulfill a key role — arguably the key role among these descendants.

**“The Children of Israel Were Fruitful”:
Israel’s Increase in Egypt**

The exodus narrative records the initial fulfillment of the promises made to Jacob and Joseph. The text accordingly emphasizes that the Israelites “were fruitful”: “And **Joseph** died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel **were fruitful** [*pārû*], and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them (Exodus 1:6–7). Here again, the narrator invokes the blessing of Jacob upon Joseph, “Joseph is a fruitful son” or “fruitful bough” — i.e., the *bēnê yiśrā’el* are “fruitful children.” Although the name Ephraim is not present in the text per se, in view of the foregoing wordplay on Ephraim in terms of *pārâ/pērî* the narrator creates a wordplay on “Ephraim” inasmuch as Ephraim had become the “firstborn”³³ and had received the birthright blessing.³⁴ Thus, by means of the ongoing theme of fruitfulness together with wordplay on Ephraim carried over from Genesis, the name Ephraim also becomes a symbol for Israel’s “fruitfulness” in Egypt.

The Psalmist makes an allusion to these events in Psalms 105. He includes the familiar wordplay on Ephraim in terms of fruitfulness: “And he increased [*wayyeper*, literally “made fruitful”] his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies” (Psalms 105:24). In this instance, the verb *pārâ* approaches the hiphil form of *yāsap* in meaning. The Psalmist emphasizes the fulfillment of Jacob’s blessing on Joseph in the “fruitfulness” of Israel in Egypt prior to the exodus.

**“Though He Be Fruitful Among His Brethren”:
Wordplay on Ephraim in Hosea**

Far and away, the biblical prophet/writer who exhibits the most versatility in the rhetorical and literary treatment of the name Ephraim is the 8th-century prophet Hosea. He repeatedly creates paronomastic

33. Jeremiah 31:9.

34. Genesis 48:13–20.

wordplays on Ephraim in terms of the roots *pry* ("fruit") *prh*, *rp*' ("heal"),³⁵ *pr*' ("ass")³⁶ among others.

Hosea's wordplay on Ephraim finally comes home to "fruitfulness" in Hosea 13. The prophet recalls Jacob's blessing upon Joseph as "fruitful son" (Genesis 49:22) in chiding the northern kingdom of Israel, often referred to by the name of its dominant tribe, Ephraim:

The iniquity of **Ephraim** [*'eprayim*] is bound up; his sin is hid. The sorrows of a travailing woman come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children. I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. **Though he be fruitful** [*yapri'*] **among his brethren**, an east wind shall come, the wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up. (Hosea 13:12–16)

In the Masoretic Text, the verb form *yapri'* (*pry/prh*), "though he be fruitful" clearly functions as a wordplay on Ephraim and its connotation "doubly fruitful." From a text critical perspective, however, several difficulties exist.³⁷ Some ancient witnesses (e.g., LXX, Peshitta) attest

35. E.g., Hosea 5:13: "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went **Ephraim** [*'eprayim*] to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not **heal** [*lirpō'*] you, nor cure you of your wound." The pun here emphasizes Ephraim's sickness. The Lord however extended the opportunity for Ephraim (and all of Israel) to repent so that he might heal them: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, **and he will heal us** [*wēyirpā'ēnū*; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up" (Hosea 6:1). Ephraim's (and Israel's exile) eventuates because they do not repent: "When **I would have healed** [*kērāp'ī*] Israel, then the iniquity of **Ephraim** [*'eprayim*] was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without" (Hosea 7:1). Hosea 11:3: "I taught **Ephraim** [*'eprayim*] also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that **I healed them** [*rēpā'tīm*]."

36. In a subsequent oracle, Hosea ties the name Ephraim to the homonymic word *pere'*: "For they are gone up to Assyria, **a wild ass** [*pere'*] alone by himself: **Ephraim** [*'eprayim*] hath hired lovers." (Hosea 8:9)

37. See discussion in Mayer I. Gruber, *Hosea: A Textual Commentary* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark 2017), 551–56.

a Vorlage with the verb *prđ* (“divide”) rather than *pry/prh*. Further complicating matters, the word understood in the Masoretic tradition as a preposition *byn* (*bên*, “between,” “among”) reads *bn* (*bên*, “son”) in the Leningrad Codex.³⁸ The phrase *bên/bên ’ahîm* can thus be variously translated, “a son of brothers/siblings,” “among brethren” (e.g., NAB “Though he be fruitful among his fellows,” NIV “even though he **thrives** among his **brothers**”) or, understanding *’ahîm* as a plural of the Egyptian loanword *’ahû*, “among the reeds” (e.g., NRSV “Although he may **flourish** among **rushes** [or brothers]”; NJPS “Although he may **flourish** among the **reeds**”). However one chooses to render this *crux interpretum*, Hosea emphasizes the Ephraimite hill country’s rarified status (and, by extension, tribal Ephraim’s birth status). Nonetheless, by doing so, Hosea serves to condemn wickedness and apostasy that have fructified within the Northern Kingdom of Israel before and during the prophet Hosea’s time — i.e., the 8th century BCE. In consequence, Ephraim’s “fruitfulness” will — for the near and intermediate future — become unfruitfulness.

Hosea again uses wordplay on Ephraim in terms of “fruit” as subsequently describes Ephraim’s “unfruitful” condition as divine justice overtakes them: “**Ephraim** [*’eprayim*] is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no **fruit** [*pěri’*]: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even **the beloved fruit** [*maḥamadê*] of their womb” (Hosea 9:16). Ephraim’s “unfruitfulness” here means deprivation of posterity including the violent loss of the “beloved fruit of their womb.”

Still another of Hosea’s prophecies, one that looks forward to the return of Ephraim (tribe and nation) to the Lord and its healing, makes abundant use of “fruit” and fructification images:

Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render **the calves** [*pārîm* or, **fruit** – LXX *karpon*] of our lips. Asshur **shall not save us**; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless **findeth mercy. I will heal** [*’erpā’*] **their backsliding**, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: **he shall grow** [*yiprah*] as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. **His branches shall spread**, and his beauty

38. Ibid., 556.

shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, **and grow** [wěyiprēhû] as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. **Ephraim** [ʿeprayim] shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. **From me is thy fruit** [peryĕkâ] **found**. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein. (Hosea 14:1–9 [MT 14:2–10])

From a text critical standpoint, the first “fruit” image is ambiguous. The Masoretic Text (MT) understands the Hebrew consonants *prym* as “calves” (*pārîm*), while the LXX renders the same consonants in Greek as *karpon* “fruit.” In either case, we are dealing with an intentional wordplay on “Ephraim” as a profusion of additional similar sounding words suggests. We should mention here that the phrases “Asshur will not save us” and “in thee the fatherless find mercy” play on the names Hosea and Lo-ruhamah, respectively. They emphasize the mitigation of Ephraim’s punishment and thus the restoration of Ephraim’s “fruit.”

This is also the force of the next two wordplays, *yiprah*, “he shall grow” (v. 5 [MT 6]) and *wěyiprēhû* “and [they shall] grow” (v. 7 [MT 8]). In both instances, Hosea enhances the fruitfulness imagery of the surrounding text with his use of the verb *prh* (“sprout, shoot,”³⁹ i.e., “grow”). The verb forms *yiprah* and *wěyiprēhû* thus function as paronomasia on the name Ephraim and its connotation, “doubly fruitful.” Following Israel-Ephraim’s apostasy and repentance, they will again fruitfully “grow” and spread abroad.

All of this leads to the climactic wordplay in the Lord’s response to Israel-Ephraim’s repentance and denunciation of idols: “From me is **thy fruit** [peryĕkâ] found.” The day will come when the Lord himself will confront Israel-Ephraim with the truth: he himself is source of Israel’s and Ephraim’s “fruitfulness.” Hosea’s prophecy seems to presuppose a time and a situation in which Israel and Ephraim — in spite of past apostasy, scattering, and exile — have grown gloriously “fruitful.”

Fruitful Branches: Wordplay on Ephraim in Isaiah

In a similar way, several texts in the corpus of Isaiah’s writings employ language that echoes or recalls Genesis material that deals with Joseph

39. HALOT, 965–66.

and Ephraim. These passages also employ forms of the root *pry/prh* and *prh* juxtaposed with “branch” terminology of different kinds, evoking the idea of fruitful branches.

**“The Branch of the Lord [Shall] Be Beautiful and Glorious,
and the Fruit of the Earth ... Excellent”**

One of the first Isaianic prophecies (in terms of the present canonical order) that looks forward to the fructification of Israel comes in Isaiah 4. Although Isaiah does not directly mention the names Joseph and Ephraim, the text hints at their names through the use of the phrase, *’ēsōp herpātēnû* “to take away our reproach,” the noun *pērî* (“fruit”), and “branch” imagery:

Genesis 30:23–24 and 49:22	Isaiah 4:1–2 (2 Nephi 14:1–2)
<p>And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach [<i>’āsap ’ēlōhîm herpātî</i>]; And she called his name Joseph [<i>yôsēp</i>] and said, The Lord shall add [<i>yôsēp</i>] to me another son [<i>bēn</i>] (Genesis 30:23–24)</p> <p>Joseph is a fruitful bough [<i>bēn pōrāt</i>, fruitful son], even a fruitful bough [<i>bēn pōrāt</i>] by a well; whose branches [<i>bānôt</i>, literally “daughters”] run over the wall. (Genesis 49:22)</p>	<p>And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach [<i>’ēsōp herpātēnû</i>]. In that day shall the branch [<i>šemah</i>] of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit [<i>pērî</i>] of the earth shall be excellent and comely [<i>tip ’eret</i>] for them that are escaped of Israel.</p>

The phrase *’ēsōp herpātēnû* constitutes an echo of — and possibly a direct allusion to — the first part of the dual etiology for Joseph’s name Genesis 30:23–24 in terms of Rachel’s statement *’ēsōp herpātēnû*, “God hath taken away my reproach. Not only do we find in these two passages the only combination of the verb *’āsap* and *herpâ* in the Hebrew Bible, but, viewed together, these two passages help us see the idiom *’āsap herpâ* as an image of fructification. Rachel becomes fruitful in the birth of her son Joseph (and doubly fruitful with the birth of Benjamin when the Lord “adds” to her another “son” (*bēn*) or “bough”/“branch” (Genesis 49:22).

The northern kingdom of Israel's (Ephraim's) "fruitfulness" (or the lack thereof) can be further discerned in texts like Isaiah 28:1, 3–4, which use the name Ephraim as an inverted (negative) symbol of fruitfulness: "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of **Ephraim** [*'eprayim*], whose glorious beauty [*tip'artô*] is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!" (v. 1); "The crown of pride, the drunkards of **Ephraim** [*'eprayim*], shall be trodden under feet: and the glorious **beauty** [*tip'artô*], which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower" (v. 3–4). Here too, however, the prophecy envisions this "unfruitful" condition's eventual reversal: "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of **beauty** [*tip'ârâ*], unto the residue of his people" (v. 5). This prophecy plays negatively on the name Ephraim in terms of the noun *tip'ârâ*, from the root *p'r*.

"A Branch Shall Grow Out of His Roots" (Isaiah 11; 2 Nephi 21)

Nevertheless, although some of the prophecies of Isaiah inveigh against the sinfulness of Ephraim, Isaiah 11 ultimately has a hopeful outlook. Joseph Smith records that Moroni, as an angel or resurrected personage, quoted Isaiah 11 in its entirety, no less than four times with the explanation that it was about to be fulfilled (cf. Joseph Smith — History 1:40). Thus, Latter-day Saints usually understand Isaiah 11 as constituting a prophecy regarding the latter-day gathering of Israel and the millennial reign of the Messiah. The prophecy, which concludes with a positive declaration regarding the broken and sometimes tumultuous relationship between Ephraim (Israel) and Judah begins with the description of a fruitful branch: "And there shall come forth **a rod out of the stem of Jesse**, and a Branch [*nēšer*] shall **grow out** [*yipreh*] of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1). The verb *yipreh*, from *pry/prh* ("to be fruitful") echoes the name Ephraim.

When Isaiah returns to the subject of Jesse's "roots" near the end of Isaiah 11, he uses language that evokes the double-etymology of the name Joseph in direct connection with the name Ephraim:

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord **shall** set his hand **again** [*yôšîp*] the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign

for the nations, and shall **assemble** [*wě'āsap*] **the outcasts of Israel**, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. 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**. (Isaiah 11:10–13; 2 Nephi 21:10–13)

This prophecy, quoted and alluded to repeatedly in the Book of Mormon (e.g., 2 Nephi 6:14; 21:11–12; 25:17; 29:1; Jacob 6:2; 3 Nephi 5:23–26) employs both key verbs that the Genesis text uses to etiologize the name Joseph. It is significant that both verbs are juxtaposed with the name Ephraim in this prophecy of the gathering and restoration of the whole family of Israel. The verb form *yôsîp* clearly evokes the name Joseph, as does the verb *wě'āsap*, which further evokes images of “gathering in” (e.g., of fruit) at the harvest.⁴⁰ The presence of the name Ephraim suggests intentional onomastic allusions to Joseph.

The “root of Jesse” in this prophecy is a figure clearly related to the “stem of Jesse,” “the rod out of the stem of Jesse,” and the “branch” that would *yipreh* or “grow” out of his “roots” — that verb echoing the name Ephraim. Significantly, Joseph Smith offered the following interpretation of Isaiah 11:1–5, 10, broadly identifying the “stem,” “rod,” and fruitful “branch”:

WHO is the Stem of Jesse spoken of in the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th verses of the 11th chapter of Isaiah? Verily thus saith the Lord: It is Christ. What is the rod spoken of in the first verse of the 11th chapter of Isaiah, that should **come of** [cf. “grow out of” — *yipreh*] the Stem of Jesse? Behold, thus saith the Lord: It is **a servant in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power**. What is the root of Jesse spoken of in the 10th verse of the 11th chapter? Behold, thus saith the Lord, it is **a descendant of Jesse, as well as of Joseph**, unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering of my people in the last days. (D&C 113:1–6)

40. See, e.g., Exodus 23:10 “And six years thou shalt sow thy land, **and shalt gather** [*wě'āsaptā*] in the fruits thereof”; Leviticus 25:3 “Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and **gather in** [*wě'āsaptā*] the fruit thereof”; Leviticus 25:20: “And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor **gather** [*ne'ēsōp*] in our increase.”

Joseph offers his interpretations of these figures with divine authority, using the prophetic “messenger” formula “thus saith the Lord.”⁴¹ He identifies “the stem of Jesse” as Christ. However, he identifies the “rod out of the stem of Jesse” as someone distinct from Christ (or the Messiah) — i.e., an Ephraimite (“of Ephraim”) or “of the house of Joseph” who is also a descendant of Jesse — and thus, presumably, also partly of Judahite descent.

“A Righteous Branch from the Fruit of the Loins of Joseph”

When Jacob addressed the people of Nephi at their temple in the land of Nephi “under the reign of the second king,”⁴² in order to condemn Nephite materialism and the incipient practice of polygamy, Jacob began his address by using the FL collocation from the plates of brass: “Wherefore thus saith the Lord: I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a **righteous branch** [cf. *ṣemaḥ ṣaddîq*]⁴³ **from the fruit** [Hebrew *pěri*; Egyptian *pr.t*] **of the loins of Joseph**” (Jacob 2:25).

Jacob’s language alludes, first, to Joseph’s words as preserved in JST Genesis 50:24–25:

I [Joseph] have obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit [Hebrew *pěri*; Egyptian *pr.t*] of my loins, the Lord God will raise up a righteous branch out of my loins; and unto thee, whom my father Jacob hath named Israel, a prophet; (not the Messiah who is called Shilo;) and this prophet shall deliver my people out of Egypt in the days of thy bondage. And it shall come to pass that **they shall** be scattered **again** [cf. *yōsipû/ yôšipû*]; and a branch shall be broken off, and shall be carried into a far country; nevertheless they shall be remembered in the covenants of the Lord, when the Messiah cometh.

Secondly, Jacob’s language alludes to Lehi’s use of the same text in his final admonition to his son, Joseph: “Wherefore Joseph [*yôšēp*] truly saw our day. And he obtained a promise of the Lord that out of the **fruit** [Hebrew *pěri*; Egyptian *pr.t*] of his loins the Lord God would raise up a

41. Donald W. Parry, “Thus Saith the Lord”: Prophetic Language in Samuel’s Speech,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 181–83, citing David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 88–100.

42. Jacob 1:15.

43. Jeremiah 23:5; cf. “branch of righteousness [*ṣemaḥ ṣēdāqâ*]” (Jeremiah 33:15–16).

righteous branch unto the house of Israel, not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be broken off” (2 Nephi 3:5). Jacob had alluded to this prophecy on another occasion when addressing the Nephites: “And now **I** Jacob speak unto you **again** [cf. *’ôšîp*], my beloved brethren, concerning **this righteous branch** of which I have spoken” (2 Nephi 10:1). Jacob’s repeated allusions to a “righteous branch” from Joseph and “fruit” echo the Genesis wordplay on Joseph and Ephraim, also establish a lexical, thematic, and onomastic context for Jacob’s lengthy quotation of Zenos’s allegory of the olive tree, which makes extensive use of “fruit” terminology and the *yāsap/yôšîp* (+ verbal component) idiom.

“That I May Preserve the Fruit Thereof unto Myself”

Jacob’s use of a term translated “fruit” — almost certainly Hebrew *pēri* or its Egyptian cognate *pr.t* — constitutes an important Leitwort in Zenos’s allegory of the olive trees (Jacob 5), occurring some 67 times,⁴⁴ and a verb rendered “grow”/“grew” occurring eight times.⁴⁵ In the broad, overarching context of the scattering and gathering (cf. Hebrew *’āsap* and Joseph) of Israel and couched in terms of horticulture and harvest, it is difficult not to hear echoes of the name Ephraim and Joseph throughout the allegory. Add to the foregoing Zenos’s apparent abundant use of the Hebrew *yāsap/yôšîp* + verbal idiom in describing iterative divine action on behalf of the vineyard that recalls the name Joseph (*yôšēp*):

- “**that we may labor again** in the vineyard” (Jacob 5:29)
- “And **we will nourish again** the trees of the vineyard” (5:58)
- “**I have grafted** in the natural branches **again** into their mother tree” (5:60)
- “**that all may be nourished once again** for the last time” (5:63)
- “the branches of the natural tree **will I graft in again** into the natural tree” (5:67)
- “thus **will I bring them together again**” (5:68)

This divine, iterative (*yôšîp*-) action brings about the intended “fruitfulness” of the vineyard, recalling both the meaning of the name Joseph (“may he add”; “may he do again”) and the name Ephraim (“doubly fruitful”):

44. Jacob 5:8 (1 x), 13 (2 x), 17–20 (11 x), 22–33 (15 x), 33–42 (10 x), 45–46 (4 x), 52 (1 x), 54 (2 x), 60–61 (6 x), 64–65 (2 x), 68 (1 x), 71 (1 x), 71–77 (11 x) = 67 times.

45. Jacob 5:3, 37, 48, 64–66 (4 x), 73.

- "that I may preserve **again** good **fruit**" (Jacob 5:33)
- "that ... the trees of my vineyard **may** bring forth **again** good **fruit**" (5:60)
- "that I may have joy **again** in the **fruit** of my vineyard" (5:60)
- "that I may bring forth **again** the natural **fruit**" (5:61)
- "there **began** to be the natural **fruit again** in the vineyard" (5:73)
- "the trees **had** brought **again** the natural **fruit**" (5:74)
- "and it **hath** brought unto me **again** the natural **fruit**" (5:75)⁴⁶

The allegory closes with the pairing of the same terms in connection with a final, post-millennial, eschatological gathering, "when the time cometh that evil **fruit shall again** come into my vineyard, then will I cause the good and the bad to be **gathered**; and the good will I preserve unto myself ..." (Jacob 5:77). The Hebraistic and Egyptianistic metonymy of "fruit" as posterity constitutes a critical hermeneutical key to understanding Zenos's allegory. If we fail to recognize this symbol, we will miss what the allegory is attempting to teach us about divine fruitfulness and God's love for his posterity. Statements of intent and purpose from the Lord of the Vineyard, such as "I may preserve the fruit thereof unto myself" (Jacob 5:8; cf. v. 11); "that I may preserve unto myself the natural branches of the tree, and also that I may lay up fruit thereof against the season unto myself" (Jacob 5:13); "that I may preserve [the fruit] unto mine own self" (Jacob 5:20, 23); "that I may preserve again good fruit thereof unto mine own self" (Jacob 5:33; cf. 36–37, 46, 53–54, 60, 74–75) must be understood with this symbolism in mind. The will of the Lord of the Vineyard is, in essence, to "seal" his fruit or posterity "his" (see Mosiah 5:15)⁴⁷ — i.e., "preserve" or "seal" it to himself.⁴⁸

Finally, we should point out that Jacob interprets Zenos's entire allegory of olive tree and the fruitfulness of the Lord's vineyard in terms of Isaiah 11:11: "And the day that **he shall set** his hand **again** [*yôšîp*] the second time to recover his people [Isaiah 11:11], is the day, yea, even the last

46. Matthew L. Bowen, "I Have Done According to My Will': Reading Jacob 5 as a Temple Text," in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored*, Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry, eds. (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books; Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2016), 235–72.

47. On the idiom, "seal you his," see John Gee, "Book of Mormon Word Usage: 'Seal You His,'" *Insights* 22/1 (2002): 4.

48. Bowen, "I Have Done According to My Will," 251–52.

time, that the servants of the Lord shall go forth in his power, to nourish and prune his vineyard; and after that the end soon cometh” (Jacob 6:2). As has been noted elsewhere, Isaiah’s use of the *yôšîp* idiom, especially as understood in a Nephite context, strongly hints at the name Joseph.⁴⁹ Iterative (divine) action — Hebrew *yôšîp* — on behalf of the vineyard in the allegory achieves its intended fruitfulness.⁵⁰ Jacob “For behold, after that ye have been nourished by the good word of God all the day long, will ye bring forth evil **fruit**, that ye must be hewn down and cast into the fire?” (Jacob 6:7). Partaking of the “divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4) or the “heavenly gift” (Hebrews 6:4; 4 Nephi 1:3; 12:8) requires our “bringing” or producing “**again** the natural **fruit**” (Jacob 5:74) and “bring[ing] forth good fruit” (Jacob 5:27, 54).

Conclusion

Whether he was named Ephraim (“doubly fruitful” or “twice fruitful”) or originally another derivational form of *pěri* (fruit), it is clear that the promises made by Jacob to Joseph passed on to his second son. While Joseph is the embodiment of Jacob’s blessing, Ephraim represents its fulfillment.

From a Latter-day Saint perspective, we understand that those promises and blessings are iterative and thus continue to find fulfillment in the descendants of Joseph. One modern-day revelation offers the following prophecy regarding “the children of Ephraim” using the language of Jacob’s blessing upon Joseph in Genesis 49:

[T]hey [who are in the north countries] shall bring forth their rich treasures unto **the children of Ephraim, my servants**. *And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence.* And **there shall they fall down and be crowned** with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even **the children of Ephraim**. And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and **the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows** (D&C 133:30–34, emphasis added).

49. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘He Shall Add’: Wordplay on the Name Joseph and an Early Instance of Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon,” *Insights*, 30/2 (2010): 2–4; idem, “Wordplay on Joseph and Benjamin,” 255–73.

50. Bowen, “I Have Done According to My Will,” 247–48.

This prophecy of the coming of gathered Israel to the children of Ephraim, where they “fall down”⁵¹ and are “crowned with glory” offers an imagistic look at what to “c[o]me forth and f[a]ll down and part[ake] of the fruit of the tree” (1 Nephi 8:30; cf. also 3 Nephi 11) can look like within the context of the latter-day gathering of Israel. It also stands as a latter-day fulfillment of Joseph’s dream in which he saw his father’s family “bow down” to him (Genesis 37:7–10; JST Genesis 48:10–11). Moreover, it shows how the “children of Ephraim” as “servants of the Lord” stand as types of Jesus Christ himself, the “firstborn” and “firstfruit” of God the Father.⁵² “The richer blessing” or double portion (cf. *pī šēnayim*) that rests “upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows” makes it incumbent that latter-day Ephraimites always nourish the “word” and “look forward with faith to the fruit” of the “tree of life” or the “tree springing up unto everlasting life” within them (Alma 32:41; 33:23). Then they will, as Jesus stated, “br[ing] forth **fruit**, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold” (Matthew 8:13, 23).

As we have endeavored to show, the Hebrew Bible consistently associates the name Ephraim with fruitfulness. The book of Genesis in particular makes the name and naming of Joseph’s son Ephraim the culmination of a “fruitfulness” theme that begins with the creation account⁵³ and inexorably moves toward the miracle of God’s making Abraham and Sarah fruitful out of barrenness.⁵⁴ The Lord reiterates these promises with Abraham’s posterity. He fulfills his promise to make Jacob-Israel fruitful,⁵⁵ as his son Joseph becomes doubly fruitful in Ephraim.⁵⁶

All of the foregoing helps us to appreciate the promises made to the patriarchs as a backdrop to divine fruitfulness, at which the names Joseph and Ephraim, the prophecies of Isaiah, and Zenos’s allegory all hint:

Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the **fruit** of his loins — from whose loins ye are, namely, my servant **Joseph** — which were to **continue** so long as they

51. Cf., e.g., Psalm 72:11: “Yea, all kings shall **fall down** [*wěyištaḥwú*, i.e., fall down in worship] before him: all nations shall serve him.” See Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828), s.v. “Fall,” <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/Fall>). Fall down = “to prostrate oneself in worship.”

52. See, e.g., Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15 (cf. 1:18); Hebrews 1:6 (cf. Hebrews 11:12; D&C 76:54, 94; 77:11; 78:21; 88:5); Revelation 3:14; D&C 93:21.

53. Genesis 1:22, 28; 8:17; 9:1, 7.

54. Genesis 17:20.

55. Genesis 28:3; 35:11; 48:4.

56. Genesis 41:52; 48:4–22.

were in the world; and as touching Abraham and his seed, out of the world **they should continue**; both in the world and out of the world should they continue as innumerable as the stars; or, if ye were to count the sand upon the seashore ye could not number them. This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham; and by **this law is the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth himself.** (D&C 132:30–31)

We live in the time of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy that “the desert shall rejoice and **blossom** [*wētīprah*] as the rose” (Isaiah 35:1) — even the time that “the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose” (D&C 49:24). However, the Lord’s warning to the Latter-day Saints of Kirtland, Ohio in 1831 remains in effect for Latter-day Saints today: “For, verily I say that the rebellious are not of the blood of Ephraim, wherefore they shall be plucked out” (D&C 64:36).

In the final analysis, we believe that the complex nexus of onomastic connections and associations with Ephraim throughout ancient scripture are ultimately better understood as reflecting the work of ancient authors who knew and used Hebrew and Egyptian, rather than that of a 19th-century frontier English speaker.

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