

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
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*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Macmillan Publishing Company
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



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received by baptism into his church” (D&C 20:37). Baptism symbolizes the washing away of sins as well as a rebirth and the beginning of a new life on earth leading to eternal life with God.

Baptism is followed by confirmation into the Church by the LAYING ON OF HANDS of one holding the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD. During this ordinance, the new convert is confirmed a member of the Church and receives the gift of the Holy Ghost. This is typically a momentous and joyous occasion for all involved. Following his confirmation the convert is presented for acceptance by the local membership as a member in full fellowship and embarks on a life of spiritual growth through obedience to the laws of God and activity and service in the Church.

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LINDA A. CHARNEY

JOSEPH OF EGYPT

[This entry consists of three articles:

Joseph, Son of Jacob
Writings of Joseph
Seed of Joseph

Latter-day Saint scripture portrays a broader interest in Joseph of Egypt than the Bible does. The article Joseph, Son of Jacob deals with the resulting wide sweep of LDS interests in Joseph, including the promises of the Lord about the latter-day importance of Joseph’s posterity and his ancestral relationship to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The article Writings of Joseph treats specifically the matter of the writings of Joseph preserved in LDS scripture. The article Seed of Joseph focuses on the ancestral connection between Book of Mormon peoples and Joseph, son of Jacob.]

JOSEPH, SON OF JACOB

The Book of Mormon prophet NEPHI₁ said of Joseph, son of Jacob, “He truly prophesied concerning all his seed. And the prophecies which he wrote, there are not many greater” (2 Ne. 4:2). Latter-day Saints hold Joseph to be a progenitor of a branch of the house of Israel, including certain BOOK OF MORMON PEOPLES about whom he prophesied. Additionally, he is honored as an ancestor of the Prophet Joseph SMITH and many Church

members and as one who prophesied concerning the RESTORATION of the gospel of Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith.

The current Bible text preserves little scripture attributed to Joseph of Egypt. However, some writings of Joseph were recorded on the PLATES of brass, a scriptural record brought to the Western Hemisphere from Jerusalem by the prophet LEHI, and known among the Book of Mormon people. Another prophecy, restored by Joseph Smith, is now found in the JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION (JST) Genesis 50. In this text, the ancient Joseph prophesied the bondage of his father’s family in Egypt and their eventual deliverance by Moses, and specifically names him and his brother, Aaron. Moses was to deliver Israel from Egypt, have power over the Red Sea, receive commandments from God, and be assisted by Aaron as his spokesman (JST Gen. 50:24, 29, 34–35).

The same source indicates that the Lord visited Joseph, promising him a righteous posterity, a branch of which would be separated from their kindred and taken to a distant country (JST Gen. 50:25–26). According to the Bible, Jacob had already prophesied that Joseph’s branches—Ephraim and Manasseh—would inherit the “utmost bound of the everlasting hills” (Gen. 49:26). Moses described the new land of their inheritance as containing riches of both heaven and earth (Deut. 33:13–15). The Book of Mormon records the partial fulfillment of these prophecies with the exodus of the families of Lehi, a descendant of Manasseh (Alma 10:3), and Ishmael, a descendant of Ephraim (JD 23:184), to the western continents. The Book of Mormon is called “the stick of Ephraim” in modern revelation (D&C 27:5) and both “the stick of Ephraim” and “the STICK OF JOSEPH” (Ezek. 37:15–28, esp. verses 16 and 19).

Notwithstanding Israel’s anticipated deliverance from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, Joseph of Egypt also foresaw that the Israelites would eventually be scattered. Still he was assured that they would be remembered by the Lord and that he would bring their descendants out of “bondage” in the LAST DAYS. A “choice seer” was to be raised up, a descendant of Joseph, who would bear his name and whose father would also bear the same name. The prophecy stated that this latter-day Joseph would be highly esteemed by Joseph’s descendants and would bring them knowledge of their progenitors. Moreover, he would be like both Joseph and Moses. As the ancient Joseph gathered his father’s family in Egypt

and supplied them with bread during famine, so the latter-day Joseph would gather their descendants from the ends of the earth to feast upon the words of everlasting life. Like Moses, he would bring forth the word of God (the Book of Mormon and other revelations), which would testify of, and sustain, other words of God that had already gone forth (the Bible), thereby confounding false doctrines and laying contentions to rest. As Moses would liberate Israel from Egyptian bondage, the “choice seer” of the last days would liberate them from the bondage of false traditions; as Moses would reveal a new COVENANT and prepare Israel to enter the PROMISED LAND, so his latter-day counterpart would reveal a NEW AND EVER-LASTING COVENANT and prepare modern Israel, the Church, for the day of Christ’s millennial reign (JST Gen. 50:24–38; cf. 2 Ne. 3; JST Gen. 48:11).

When Joseph Smith’s father, Joseph SMITH, Sr., acting in his office of PATRIARCH, gave his son a PATRIARCHAL BLESSING, he further illuminated what was known to the ancient Joseph.

I bless thee with the blessings of thy fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and . . . thy father Joseph, the son of Jacob. Behold, he looked after his posterity in the last days, when they should be scattered and driven by the Gentiles, and wept before the Lord; he sought diligently to know from whence the Son should come who should bring forth the word of the Lord, by which they might be enlightened, and brought back to the true fold, and his eyes beheld thee, my son; . . . and he said, As my blessings are to extend to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills; as my father’s blessing prevailed, over the blessings of his progenitors, and as my branches are to run over the wall, and my seed are to inherit the choice land whereon the Zion of God shall stand in the last days, from among my seed, scattered with the Gentiles, shall a choice Seer arise, whose bowels shall be a fountain of truth, whose loins shall be girded with the girdle of righteousness, whose hands shall be lifted with acceptance before the God of Jacob to turn away his anger from his anointed, whose heart shall meditate great wisdom, whose intelligence shall circumscribe and comprehend the deep things of God, and whose mouth shall utter the law of the just . . . and he shall feed upon the heritage of Jacob his father [*Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 23 (Oct. 1932):175].

A blessing pronounced by Joseph Smith on Oliver COWDERY (Dec. 18, 1833) notes that Joseph of Egypt had seen Oliver in vision and knew of his scribal role in the translation of the Book of Mormon. Oliver was also told that Joseph of Egypt

knew that Oliver would be present when the AARONIC PRIESTHOOD, or lesser priesthood, was restored and again when the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD, or higher priesthood, was restored by messengers who received it from Jesus during his earthly ministry (Joseph F. Smith, *IE* 7 [Oct. 1904]:943). With the restoration of these priesthoods in 1829 and the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830, the stage was set for fulfilling Moses’ promise that the posterity of Ephraim and Manasseh would “push” or gather scattered Israel from the four quarters of the earth (cf. Deut. 33:17).

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JOSEPH FIELDING MCCONKIE

WRITINGS OF JOSEPH

Certain prophecies of Joseph of Egypt were preserved on brass plates carried by NEPHI₁ from Jerusalem to the Americas in approximately 590 B.C. The Book of Mormon makes available some of these prophecies. Although it is not known when Joseph’s prophetic texts were recorded, they are doubtless very ancient. By contrast, the *History of Joseph, Prayer of Joseph, Testament of Joseph, and Joseph and Asenath* are considered to be Hellenistic Jewish writings, dating between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200, and are of unknown authorship (see Charlesworth). Joseph SMITH noted “writings of Joseph” on papyri that he owned (*HC* 2:236).

According to Alma 46:24, Jacob the patriarch saw that part of Joseph’s coat would be preserved, symbolizing a remnant of Joseph’s seed (cf. *CWHN* 6:211–21). In addition, two similar though not identical texts from Joseph are preserved in 2 Nephi 3 and JST Genesis 50. Both prophesy that Moses will arise, that writings from “the fruit of the loins of Judah shall grow together” with writings of Joseph’s descendants, and that a seer named Joseph—whose father would also be named Joseph—would appear in the last days (2 Ne. 3:6–17; JST Gen. 50:24–35; for similar expectations in pseud-epigraphic texts, see McConkie). Associates of Joseph Smith saw him as the predicted seer, as did Joseph Smith himself. For instance, President John TAYLOR affirmed:

God called [Joseph Smith] to occupy the position that he did. How long ago? Thousands of years ago . . . Prophets prophesied about his coming, that a man should arise whose name should be Joseph, and that his father's name should be Joseph, and also that he should be a descendant of that Joseph who was sold into Egypt [JD 26:106].

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JAMES R. CLARK

SEED OF JOSEPH

The Book of Mormon teaches that Joseph, son of Jacob, "obtained a promise of the Lord" that his seed would become a "righteous branch unto the house of Israel" (2 Ne. 3:5) and that a latter-day descendant also named Joseph would have a rôle in bringing Joseph's seed and all the house of Israel "unto salvation" (2 Ne. 3:15).

While many of Joseph's posterity were among the ten tribes of Israel taken into captivity about 722 B.C. (2 Kgs. 17:5–6), a few descendants had settled in Jerusalem some 200 years earlier (cf. 2 Chr. 15:9–10). From those came the Book of Mormon leaders LEHI and ISHMAEL, who, about 600 B.C., led their families to the Western Hemisphere. Their descendants were later called "a remnant of the seed of Joseph" (Alma 46:23–24). Lehi reported that Joseph's prophecies concerning his seed included the following: (1) they would become a righteous people; (2) the Messiah would manifest himself to them; (3) a latter-day SEER like Moses, raised up by God from Joseph's seed, would himself be called Joseph (2 Ne. 3:1–25); and (4) the righteous seed of the ancient Joseph who accept the gospel will help in building the NEW JERUSALEM and will participate in events of the LAST DAYS (3 Ne. 20:10–28; 21:2–26).

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LIESEL C. MCBRIDE

JOSEPH SMITH—HISTORY

The account called Joseph Smith—History, as it appears in the Pearl of Great Price, tells of the Prophet's experiences from his early years through May 1829. Franklin D. Richards, an early apostle, extracted this part of Joseph SMITH's history from the much longer HISTORY OF THE CHURCH printed in the TIMES AND SEASONS (T&S 3:726), and published the extract in 1851. In the preface of the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price, Richards expressed a hope that this collection of precious truths would increase the members' ability to defend the faith. Joseph Smith—History, the name now given to the historical extract, became canonized scripture to the members of the Church when they accepted the Pearl of Great Price by vote at the October 10, 1880, General Conference (see PEARL OF GREAT PRICE: CONTENTS AND PUBLICATION).

This account in the Pearl of Great Price was not the first attempt to record the Prophet's early experiences. From the organization of the Church in 1830, he understood the importance of keeping records but his efforts were hindered by lawsuits, imprisonments, poverty, and mobs. John Whitmer kept a history between 1830 and 1832 that was lost for many years but is now available again, and Oliver COWDERY wrote eight letters about Joseph Smith's early visions that were published in MESSENGER AND ADVOCATE in 1834–1835. Joseph Smith began work on a history between July and November 1832; it opened with the words "A History of the life of Joseph Smith, Jr., an account of his marvilous [sic] experience," and described his early visions. Various clerks and historians made three more beginnings between 1834 and 1836. In the trying years 1837 and 1838, Joseph Smith and the First Presidency worked on the history of the Church, sometimes taking a grammar lesson before the writing sessions. Finally, in June 1839, Joseph undertook the work again. Materials from the previous efforts were assimilated into this new history, which eventually was published in the *Times and Seasons*, beginning March 1, 1842 (T&S 3:706). Joseph Smith—History, as we now have it in the Pearl of Great Price, was part of this 1839 version of the history of the Church.

The history introduces Joseph by giving a brief record of his ancestry and his own birth on December 23, 1805, in the township of Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, one of eleven children