

Ir-BoM-7
I Know in Whom I Have Trusted
(2 Nephi 3-5)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(These chapters are very important scriptures for our day and for our people)

I. **The Name Joseph is prophetic and important.** It is no accident there is a significant set of prophets through religious history all named “Joseph” (2 Ne. 3:1, 3-9, 15).

A. These include Joseph of Egypt, Joseph the son of Lehi, and Joseph Smith Jr. who was prophetically named after his father (2 Ne. 3:1, 3-9, 15).

B. The name “Joseph” in and of itself is meaningful.

1. Hugh Nibley said the name Joseph is made up of two segments. The first “asif” means “Suffering or Sorrowing.” The name “asaf” means “servant.” The two segments **together signify a “Suffering Servant.”**

2. Others say the Hebrew name is Yaw-saph, and means “to add, to increase.”

3. Likely both meanings are correct. For when all elements are added, the name **“Joseph” means “God’s servant who suffers deeply in order to become highly fruitful.”**

a. Interestingly, the name “Ephraim” also means “fruitful.”

4. President Joseph F. Smith said of his name: “Somehow the name Joseph has fixed in my mind **a sense of sacredness**, as being the name of the Prophet that would not permit me to abbreviate it even if it were borne by my worst enemy... It is very sacred to me, and ...[making a nickname from it] seems to cast not only a slight on his name but on the whole line of Josephs reaching back to him who was sold into Egypt.”

II. **The Book of Mormon is “The Stick of Joseph,”** containing history of Joseph’s descendants.

A. Ezekiel 37 prophesied of this very “Stick of Joseph.”

B. B.H. Roberts tells of the importance of this “Stick of Joseph.”

“The Book of Mormon throughout is true to this Joseph idea; it is impregnated with it. Joseph is the central figure throughout. His spirit runs through the whole scheme of the book. We learn from the Book of Mormon of a great Seer that is to arise from the descendants of this Patriarch Joseph [of Egypt], to bring forth the word of God to them, a thing quite in keeping with the important part to be taken by Joseph and his seed in the affairs of the western world in the last days.

“The reader will observe that this **ancient prophecy is fulfilled in the person of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who, both in his name, his character and his work, meets completely the terms of the prophecy**” (*New Witnesses for God*. Vol 3:103).

III. **We, also “of Joseph,” are to carry on a great work of salvation like the ancient Joseph.**

A. We Latter-day Saints are **descendants of Joseph** either by lineage or by adoption **and are also “last-born” [meaning in The Last Days] and were also “born in the wilderness of ... afflictions”** (2 Nephi 3:1). For the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came forth through times of great afflictions. **We are expected to carry on the work of our ancestor Joseph of Egypt --- which is none other than to save the House of Israel.**

B. We were separated from all others for this purpose, as ancient Joseph was.

“The Lord has brought the Latter-day Saints up into the mountains to prepare them to perform a great service, even as he took Joseph away from his brethren and separated him from them and took him into the land of Egypt to make him a Savior for all the house of Israel. **In a like manner he has separated and brought out from the nations of the world Joseph’s descendants to make them in the last days a Savior to all the branches of the House of Israel**” (Melvin Joseph Ballard).

B. Brigham Young said **a great burden of saving others rests upon us as descendants.**

“It is the House of Israel we are after, and we care not whether they come from the east, the west, the north or the south; ... and it is the very lad on whom Father Jacob laid his hands, [Ephraim, son of Joseph of Egypt] that **will save the House of Israel.** The Book of Mormon came to Ephraim, for Joseph Smith was a pure Ephraimite” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 322).

C. Today, we are “separated” from the world when we attend the Holy Temple, a refuge from the world.

IV. Not only is The Book of Mormon the “Stick of Joseph,” **but the Americas are “The Land of Joseph.”**

A. On several occasions Brigham Young called the Americas the “Land of Joseph” (See *Discourses* 71, 322, 355, 361; See also Ether 13). He saw in vision the Salt Lake Temple and hundreds of temples on the face of the earth. He taught that the Saints, whom he called “sons of Jacob” [but specifically of Joseph], would enter into temples and perform “the ordinances of salvation for themselves and for others” (*Discourses*, 408).

“We have a work to do just as important in its sphere as the Savior’s work was in its sphere. Our fathers cannot be made perfect without us; we cannot be made perfect without them. They have done their work and now sleep. We are now called upon to do ours; which is to be the greatest work man ever performed on the earth...”

“We are called... to redeem the nations of the earth” (*Ibid.*, pp. 406-7).

B. Elder Bruce R. McConkie added, **“It is Ephraim and Manasseh who shall minister salvation unto the whole house of Israel in the last days”** (*Millennial Messiah*, p. 190).

C. President Joseph Fielding Smith said the more correct translation of the beginning of Isaiah 18 is “Hail to the land in the shape of wings.” He once saw a magazine cover featuring the continents of North and South America, made in the shape of a great bird with each continent one of its wings. It helped him understand this prophecy of Isaiah. One wing is for North America, one wing is for South America, the lands of Ephraim and of Manasseh. He pointed out that the rest of this chapter deals with the gathering of Israel. There are many other references to an Eagle searching for its prey. The “prey” in such scriptures means those of Israel who are scattered through the world.

V. Lehi prophesied that while his descendants would fall away for a time, eventually many would return in faithfulness and receive God’s blessings (2 Nephi 4:9).

A. Descendants of Lehi and of Jacob who have gathered into Israel in these last days are myriad. There are great numbers who have returned to him in South and Central America and from the Pacific Islands. In North America also, whole tribes have come back into His fold.

1. In January of 1863, more than 300 Shoshone Indians, mostly women and

children, were massacred at Bear River by a U. S. military group. For ten years the survivors continued to struggle and to suffer indignities. Then one of the chiefs had a vision. Three messengers appeared to him and told him that the God of the Mormons was the true God. They instructed him to go to the Mormons, to be taught, and to be baptized. The Mormons would help them. They also told them that that “the time was at hand for the Indians to gather, stop Indian life, and learn to cultivate the earth...”

This chief was obedient. His people were baptized. The Mormons subsequently did help them, even helping prevent them from being sent to a reservation. And today they gratefully say that all these events helped save their people.

In turn, the Shoshones became faithful Latter-day Saints. For one thing, they donated great labor in the construction of the Logan Temple. Afterwards they were among the first to perform works for their ancestors. Its ward members were among the very few units who, in a 1922 survey, proved to be 100% tithesayers. Today there are still over 500 members of their tribe who continue to serve the Lord and work industriously in various communities. [Taken from *Deseret News*, Jan 24, 2013, pp. C1, C6-C8).

2. The Catawba Indians of South Carolina were originally one of the most powerful of tribes. In spite of friendliness toward the European settlers, they were betrayed and eventually forced upon a reservation. Other Christian faiths tried to convert them, but they were unresponsive. Eventually Latter-day Saint missionaries came among them. They had to come in secret and at night to avoid persecution from others.

The Catawbas began to be baptized and eventually an LDS chapel was built upon their reservation. Soon their church leadership came completely from Native Americans themselves. **The Catawbas feel that knowing they are “of Israel” gives them a respected place among peoples of the world** (p. 44).

In April, 1950, Chief Sam Blue went to Salt Lake City to receive his temple endowments. He also attended General Conference and President David O. McKay invited him to speak at conference. In his speech he reported that by then, 97% of Catawbas were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

After becoming members of the church, **their social, economic and educational status became much higher than that of any other groups of Native Americans** in the East. This was so noticeable that newspapers and magazine reported the phenomenon. Many of them have since migrated West and intermarried with white Latter-day Saints. [This account is from a Master’s Thesis, “The Influence of the Mormon Church on the Catawba Indians of South Carolina” by Jerry D. Lee, 1976.]

VI. Nephi’s beautiful Psalm.

A. Besides the collection of Psalms in the Bible, there are others sung by those experiencing joy after overcoming great trials, such as the Song of Moses in Deut. 32.

B. 2 Nephi Chapter 4:17-35 contains what is called the “Psalm of Nephi.” Several different authors have selected a shortened version of his words and set them to music, including President John S. Tanner, formerly Academic Vice President of BYU. (You can find two versions he made in *The Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 10, Issue 2, 2001.) Also the BYU Men’s Chorus sang a version of the Psalm at April General Conference in 2007. Those who would like to hear Nephi’s Psalm set to music can find these or others listed online under “Nephi’s Psalm.”