

February 12–18: 2 Nephi 3–5, "We Lived After the Manner of Happiness"

Prophecies of Joseph

To his son Joseph, Lehi related some of the writings of the prophet he was named after, Joseph of Egypt

2 Nephi 3:4-7

4 For behold, thou art the fruit of my loins; and I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried captive into Egypt. And great were the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph.

5 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; not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be broken off, nevertheless, to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord that the Messiah should be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the spirit of power, unto the bringing of them out of darkness unto light—yea, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom.

6 For Joseph truly testified, saying: A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins.

7 Yea, Joseph truly said: Thus saith the Lord unto me: A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins. And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers.

What do we learn about a branch of the descendants of Joseph of Egypt?

(raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel
which was to be broken off)

We have Joseph's prophecy in the JST

JST Genesis 50:24-25

24... 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...

25... 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; for he shall be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the Spirit of power, and shall bring them out of darkness into light: out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom.

What does the Lord promise Joseph of Egypt that He will do for that branch?

(Messiah should be made manifest unto them in the latter days
out of darkness unto light... out of captivity unto freedom)

What does the Lord promise Joseph of Egypt that He will do to bring about this great work?

(A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall... do a work for the fruit of thy loins, *his brethren*)

Who is that latter-day seer spoken of by Joseph of Egypt and what work did he bring forth?

Ronald A. Rasband

“Joseph of Egypt prophesied that in the latter days ‘a seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins’ (2 Nephi 3:6). ‘For he shall do [the Lord’s] work’ (2 Nephi 3:8). Joseph Smith, the prophet of the Restoration, was that seer.” (CR, April 2020)

Brigham Young

"It was decreed in the counsels of eternity, long before the foundations of the earth were laid, that [Joseph Smith] should be the man, in the last dispensation of this world, to bring forth the word of God to the people, and receive the fulness of the keys and power of the Priesthood of the Son of God. The Lord had his eye upon him.... He was foreordained in eternity to preside over this last dispensation." (JD, 7:289-90)

LeGrand Richards

“The Prophet Joseph Smith brought us the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and many other writings. As far as our records show, he has given us more revealed truth than any prophet who has ever lived upon the face of the earth.” (CR, April 1981)

A significant part of this work will be uniting the writings of Judah with the writings of this branch of Joseph

2 Nephi 3:11-12

11 But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins—and not to the bringing forth my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them.

12 Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord.

What do we learn from these verses about the writings of the tribe of Judah and the writings of this branch of Joseph?

(that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together)

Boyd K. Packer

"The stick or record of Judah-the Old Testament and the New Testament-and the stick or record of Ephraim-the Book of Mormon, which is another testament of Jesus Christ-are now woven together in such a way that as you pore over one you are drawn to the other as you learn from one you are enlightened by the other. They are indeed one in our hands. Ezekiel's prophecy now stands fulfilled." (CR, Oct. 1982)

Th result is to bless the descendants Joseph by confounding of false doctrines, laying down of contentions, establishing peace, bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of my covenants"

Lehi Blesses the Children of Laman

2 Nephi 4:3-7

3 Wherefore, after my father had made an end of speaking concerning the prophecies of Joseph, he called the children of Laman, his sons, and his daughters, and said unto them: Behold, my sons, and my daughters, who are the sons and the daughters of my firstborn, I would that ye should give ear unto my words.

4 For the Lord God hath said that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; and inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence.

5 But behold, my sons and my daughters, I cannot go down to my grave save I should leave a blessing upon you; for behold, I know that if ye are brought up in the way ye should go ye will not depart from it.

6 Wherefore, if ye are cursed, behold, I leave my blessing upon you, that the cursing may be taken from you and be answered upon the heads of your parents.

7 Wherefore, because of my blessing the Lord God will not suffer that ye shall perish; wherefore, he will be merciful unto you and unto your seed forever.

Lehi is well aware that children can choose evil despite being brought up in righteous homes by exceptional parents.

Why do you think Lehi would tell his descendants that "if ye are brought up in the way ye should go ye will not depart from it"?

Maybe it was directed specifically to Laman's children and not meant to be a general statement.

George Q. Cannon

"There may be faithful men who will have unfaithful sons, who may not be

as faithful as they might be; but faithful posterity will come.... There are many things that we cannot understand, cannot see the reason why they should be so; but these promises are unalterable." (JD, 25:360)

Brigham Young

"I will here say to parents, that kind words and loving actions towards children, will subdue their uneducated natures a great deal better... than physical punishment.... Children who have lived in the sunbeams of parental kindness and affection, when made aware of a parent's displeasure, and receive a kind reproof from parental lips, are more thoroughly chastened, than by any physical punishment that could be applied to their persons....

"Kind looks, kind actions, kind words, and a lovely, holy deportment towards them, will bind our children to us with bands that cannot easily be broken." (JD, 10:361)

The Psalm of Nephi

2 Nephi 4:16-35 is often called The Psalm of Nephi. It is Hebrew poetry

Sideny B. Sperry

"This is a true psalm in both form and ideas. Its rhythm is comparable to the notable cadence of David's poems. It not only praises God but lays bare to us the very depths of Nephi's soul. A study of this psalm reveals how the scriptures delighted Nephi. The influence upon him of the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, and the Psalms is very apparent to the student of scripture." (Book of Mormon Compendium, pg. 153)

He starts by stating that he knows of the great goodness of God and he ponders them continually.

2 Nephi 4:16-19

16 Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.

17 Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.

18 I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me.

19 And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins; nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted.

What blessing can we receive by pondering continually the works of God?

Joseph Smith

"The things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out." (TPJS, pg. 137)

Nephi describes himself as a 'wretched man'. Would you describe him that way? Why do you think Nephi describes himself as a 'wretched man'?

Natural man - carnal, sensual, devilish

Even though his heart groans because of his sins, what is it that gives him hope?

(nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted)

And he knows this hope is well founded because of the great blessings he has received from the Lord

2 Nephi 4:20-25

20 My God hath been my support; he hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness; and he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep.

21 He hath filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh.

22 He hath confounded mine enemies, unto the causing of them to quake before me.

23 Behold, he hath heard my cry by day, and he hath given me knowledge by visions in the night-time.

24 And by day have I waxed bold in mighty prayer before him; yea, my voice have I sent up on high; and angels came down and ministered unto me.

25 And upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away upon exceedingly high mountains. And mine eyes have beheld great things, yea, even too great for man; therefore I was bidden that I should not write them.

He have learned about these blessings as we have studied Nephi.

John A. McCune

"As followers of Christ, we are not spared challenges and trials in our lives. We are often required to do difficult things that, if attempted alone, would be overwhelming and maybe impossible. As we accept the Savior's invitation to 'come unto me,' He will provide the support, comfort, and peace that are necessary, just as He did for Nephi and Joseph. Even in our deepest trials, we can feel the warm embrace of His love as we trust Him and accept His will. We can experience the joy reserved for His faithful disciples, for 'Christ is joy.'" (CR, April 2020)

Nephi acknowledges his weaknesses

2 Nephi 4:26-27

26 O then, if I have seen so great things, if the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men in so much mercy, why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and my flesh waste away, and my strength

slacken, because of mine afflictions?

27 And why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh? Yea, why should I give way to temptations, that the evil one have place in my heart to destroy my peace and afflict my soul? Why am I angry because of mine enemy?

After all the great blessings that Nephi has received, what is it that makes his “soul linger in the valley of sorrow”?

(why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh)

Delbert L. Stapley

“Yielding to the illicit enticements of the flesh is the basest of human instincts, also the cause of much sorrow, unhappiness, and the loss of the clean inward feeling of peace men should strive to obtain. Those who sin deny their God and accept Satan, the author and the father of all sin....

“Satan, recognizing the weaknesses of the flesh, is vigorously attacking the weakened armor in our defenses and far too many are yielding to his enticements to error and sin.” (CR, April 1963)

What sin does Nephi state that he is guilty of?

(I angry because of mine enemy)

But despite his weaknesses he acknowledges that the Lord is able and anxious to help and bless him

2 Nephi 4:28-33

28 Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul.

29 Do not anger again because of mine enemies. Do not slacken my strength because of mine afflictions.

30 Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say: O Lord, I will praise thee forever; yea, my soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation.

31 O Lord, wilt thou redeem my soul? Wilt thou deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies? Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin?

32 May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite! O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road!

33 O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness! O Lord, wilt thou make a way for mine escape before mine enemies! Wilt thou make my path straight before me! Wilt thou not place a stumbling block in my way—but that thou wouldst clear my way before me, and hedge not up my way, but the ways of mine enemy.

Hugh Nibley

"Notice how the image is: Make the way straight for me so I can get through. Then when I go to you, will you put the robe of your righteousness around me and I will be in your protection. My enemy, meanwhile, is blocked in the sand. But don't put any stumbling block in my way so that I can escape." (Teachings of the Book of Mormon, pg. 251)

What does it mean to "shake at the appearance of sin"?

Alma 13:12

Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

Joseph Smith

"The nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views,... till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker." (HC, 2:8)

Nephi makes it clear that he will always put his trust in the Lord

2 Nephi 4:34-35

34 O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh. Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man or maketh flesh his arm.
35 Yea, I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh. Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss; therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God. Amen.

Why do you think that Nephi was able to remove all doubt about God's plan and goodness?

(Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss)

W. Mark Bassett

"Over time human nature has not changed and that the Lord's pattern for learning is timeless. Consider this Old Testament proverb: 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding' (Proverbs 3:5).

"Isaiah explained, speaking for the Lord, 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts' (Isaiah 55:9)....

"Faith and trust in the Lord require us to acknowledge that His wisdom is

superior to our own. We must also acknowledge that His plan provides the greatest potential for spiritual development and learning.” (CR, Oct. 2016)

The Nephites

Lehi dies. Laman and Lemuel continue to persecute Nephi to the point where they again try to kill him.

2 Nephi 5:6,17-18

6 Wherefore, it came to pass that I, Nephi, did take my family, and also Zoram and his family, and Sam, mine elder brother and his family, and Jacob and Joseph, my younger brethren, and also my sisters, and all those who would go with me. And all those who would go with me were those who believed in the warnings and the revelations of God; wherefore, they did hearken unto my words.

17 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cause my people to be industrious, and to labor with their hands.

18 And it came to pass that they would that I should be their king. But I, Nephi, was desirous that they should have no king; nevertheless, I did for them according to that which was in my power.

Nephi protected their lives, taught them to provide for themselves, and provided for their spiritual needs, but he would not be their king and didn't want them to have one.

Why do you think that Nephi was opposed to his people being ruled over by a king?

Maybe he learned the lesson that Samuel tried to teach the Israelites

1 Samuel 8:11-19

11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

13 And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

But they were ruled by kings until Mosiah gave them their freedom. But it seems that all of their kings followed Nephi's example and ruled in righteousness

There are some verses that raise the question about priesthood authority among the decedents of Lehi

2 Nephi 5:16,26-27

16 And I, Nephi, did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land, wherefore, it could not be built like unto Solomon's temple. But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon; and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine.

26 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did consecrate Jacob and Joseph, that they should be priests and teachers over the land of my people.

27 And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness.

What do we know about the priesthood authority that was among the Nephites?

Joseph Fielding Smith

"The Nephites were descendants of Joseph.... There were no Levites who accompanied Lehi to the Western Hemisphere. Under these conditions the Nephites officiated by virtue of the Melchizedek Priesthood.... Jacob makes this explanation regarding the priesthood which he and Joseph held:

"Behold, my beloved brethren, I, Jacob, having been called of God, and ordained after the manner of his holy order, and having been consecrated by my brother Nephi (II Nephi 6:2)." From [this] and numerous other passages we learn that it was by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood that the Nephites administered." (Answers to Gospel Question, 1:124-26)