

Lesson 11: Genesis 37–41, “The Lord Was With Joseph”

The Birthright From Israel

The sons of Israel and their mothers

1. Reuben	Leah
2. Simeon	Leah
3. Levi	Leah
4. Judah	Leah
5. Dan	Bilhah
6. Naphtali	Bilhah
7. Gad	Zilpah
8. Asher	Zilpah
9. Issachar	Leah
10. Zebulun	Leah
11. Joseph	Rachel
12. Benjamin	Rachel

Of Israel's 12 sons 6 could argue that they should receive the birthright

Reuben - He was the firstborn of all the sons but he loses the birthright because he slept with Bilhah (Rachel's handmaiden) (1 Chronicles 5:1). However he may not accept the fact that his actions had cost him the birthright

Simeon - Since he was the second son of Leah and next in line following Reuben, he could have assumed the birthright would come to him after Reuben lost his right to it.

Judah - He could have argued that the 2nd and 3rd sons of Leah (Simeon, Levi) lost the birthright because they killed every male Hivite and sacked their city because their prince defiled their sister, Dinah - the massacre of the Shechemites (Genesis 34). The disqualification of these sons of Leah would make him the rightful legal heir.

Dan - Because his mother, Bilhah, was considered Rachel's property, he could argue that he was Rachel's firstborn, not Joseph, and therefore should have received the birthright when Reuben lost it.

Gad - He was the firstborn son of Zilpah and therefore could have thought he should have taken the birthright after Reuben forfeited it.

Joseph - Firstborn of Rachel.

(Old Testament Student Manual Genesis-2 Samuel)

Joseph Sold Into Egypt

The story of Joseph is a good illustration of the gospel principle taught by these two passages

D&C 90:24

24 Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted one with another.

Romans 8:28

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

What is the message of these two passages?

(all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly
all things work together for good to them that love God)

Not, "Only good will happen to you..."

Dieter F. Uchtdorf

"Young Joseph, the son of Jacob, was thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, betrayed, and abandoned. Can you imagine how difficult it was for a young man in his prime to be betrayed, sold into slavery, falsely accused, and then imprisoned?... Joseph must have wondered if God had forgotten him. God had something unimaginable in mind for Joseph. He used this period of trial to strengthen Joseph's character and put him in a position to save his family." (CR, Oct. 2020)

Joseph received the coat of many colors

Gen 37:2-4

2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

Note that Joseph is only 17 years old

What is significant about Joseph receiving the coat from his father?

From the Institute Old Testament manual:

One noted scholar suggested that it was "a tunic reaching to the palms of the

hands and soles of the feet; the long tunic with sleeves worn by young men and maidens of the better class; in the case of Joseph, to have been the badge of the birthright which has been forfeited by Reuben and transferred to Joseph" (Wilson, Old Testament Word Studies, pg. 82).

If indeed this coat signaled that Joseph held the birthright, which may have been in question among the brothers, this fact would explain the intense hostility and jealousy the coat provoked among the other sons of Jacob.... (Old Testament Student Manual Genesis-2 Samuel, "Genesis 37-50: Joseph: The Power of Preparation")

Joseph relates two of his dreams to his brothers that cause them to hate him even more

Gen 37:5-11

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

How did his brothers and father interpret Joseph's dreams?

(Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?

Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?)

Note his father "observed the saying".

Isaac sends Joseph to check of his brothers who are with the flocks

Joseph's brothers sell him to a company of Ishmaelites who bring him to Egypt

Gen 37:13,23-28

13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I.

23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him;
24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.
25 And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.
26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?
27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.
28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

How could such a brutal thing have happened to Joseph when he had shown remarkable obedience to his father and love for his brothers by traveling more than 50 miles to see if they were OK?

Just because you do what is right doesn't mean that only good things will happen to you – but all things will work together for your good...

“Joseph is thrown by his brothers into a pit—a dreadful physical fact. But morally and spiritually, too, it may often seem that the soul of man is in a pit. The realization of this may come with shocking suddenness. Joseph at one moment walked in the sunlight in his coat of many colors; the next moment he was down in stifling darkness. One moment he seemed to have no need of anything; the next moment he had agonized need of everything. So with human souls. From self-sufficiency they may be plunged into paralyzing helplessness and desperate need of God. Yet at Joseph’s worst moment there were unsuspected forces moving for his release. God’s purpose working through its own instruments would carry his life on to deliverance and great destiny. Beyond this verse in Genesis comes the sound of Ps. 40:2, ‘He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock.’” (The Interpreter’s Bible, by G. A. Buttrick, vol. 1, pg. 754-755)

The brothers took Josephs coat to Isaac

Gen 37:31-35

31 And they took Joseph’s coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;
32 And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no.
33 And he knew it, and said, It is my son’s coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

The Brass Plates must have contained more information about Joseph's coat being rent. We learn this in the Book of Mormon

Alma 46

23 Moroni said unto them: Behold, we are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; yea, we are a remnant of the seed of Joseph, whose coat was rent by his brethren into many pieces; yea, and now behold, let us remember to keep the commandments of God, or our garments shall be rent by our brethren, and we be cast into prison, or be sold, or be slain.

24 Yea, let us preserve our liberty as a remnant of Joseph; yea, let us remember the words of Jacob, before his death, for behold, he saw that a part of the remnant of the coat of Joseph was preserved and had not decayed. And he said—Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God, and be taken unto himself, while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment.

Using the story of Joseph, what lesson does Captain Moroni teach the Nephites?

(let us remember to keep the commandments of God, or our garments shall be rent by our brethren, and we be cast into prison, or be sold, or be slain)

Note that it does not say in Genesis that the brothers tore up the coat

What did Jacob prophesy about Joseph's posterity?

(Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God, and be taken unto himself, while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment)

How was this prophecy fulfilled?

Lamanites

Joseph is sold to Potiphar

Gen 39:1-6

1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

2 And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

3 And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

How did the Lord bless Joseph while he was a servant of Potiphar?

(the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man
And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand)

What resulted from these blessing from the Lord?

(from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake)

L. Tom Perry

"They took their seventeen-year-old brother and sold him as a slave to a caravan going into Egypt, a strange land, where they spoke a strange tongue and had strange customs. But the Lord was with this remarkable young man, and he seemed never to be discouraged. Though a stranger, a slave, his countenance must have radiated a special spirit. When offered for sale, he was purchased by a captain of the king's guard. It was only a short time before Joseph had so distinguished himself to the captain that he made him ruler over his house. In authority he was the first servant; and he was made overseer over all the captain had, and the captain put his complete trust, his properties, his income, into the hands of Joseph.

"Joseph was a 'goodly person' and achieved a position of prominence through the help of the Lord." (CR, April 1978)

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

Gen 39:7-12

7 And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

8 But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and

sin against God?

10 And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

11 And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

Here we see two people who are at opposite ends of the moral spectrum

Why was Joseph able to resist Potiphar's wife's advances without hesitation?

(how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God)

Joseph:

Alma describes the sanctified as not being able to look upon sin except with abhorrence. This seems to apply to Joseph

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.

13] And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest.

Dallin H. Oaks

"[Potiphar's wife] tempted him to commit adultery with her. Joseph rejected her advances, telling her he would not betray the trust of her husband, or the even greater trust he would violate by sinning against God in doing what Joseph called 'this great wickedness.' He rejected her again and again. Then one day, when no one else was in the house, she seized hold of his clothing. In a marvelously vivid description, the scripture says, 'And he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.'

"What a persuasive instruction in righteousness! The same teaching was given in this modern revelation: 'And go ye out from among the wicked. Save yourselves. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord' (D&C 38:42). Those words command all of us to follow the example of Joseph." (CR, Oct. 1992)

Compare this with Potiphar's wife's attitude toward sin

Potiphar's wife:

Spencer W. Kimball

“The case of Potiphar's wife is an example of the creeping tentacles of sin. Even though this scheming woman did not succeed in defiling Joseph, her sin was most grievous. The intent was there and the desire and the lust and the coveting. She had ‘already committed adultery with him in her heart and mind.’ as she ‘cast her eyes upon Joseph day by day.’ This woman's transgression did not begin when she ripped the clothes from the body of this fleeing stalwart. Her perfidy had been born and nurtured in her mind and heart in the ‘day by day’ of wanting him, teasing him, desiring him, lusting for him, and coveting him. Her sin was a progressive thing. So, for all the numerous people, who, like this seductive woman, carry in their hearts and minds designs or desires or covetings, deep sin lieth already at their doors.” (CR, Oct. 1962)

Potiphar's wife lied about Joseph and his actions. But note that the Lord continues to bless him

Gen 39:19-23

19 And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.

20 And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

21 But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

23 The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.

How did the Lord bless Joseph while he was in prison?

(The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper)

Hartman Rector Jr.

"Joseph always seemed to do the right thing; but still, more importantly, he did it for the right reason....

“The ability to turn everything into something good appears to be a godly characteristic. Our Heavenly Father always seems to be able to do this. Everything, no matter how dire, becomes a victory to the Lord. Joseph, although a slave and wholly undeserving of his fate, nevertheless remains faithful to The Lord and continued to live the commandments and made something very good of his degrading circumstances. People like this cannot

be defeated." (CR, Oct. 1972)

Joseph in Prison

The Pharaoh's butler and baker were imprisoned with Joseph and were put under his charge by the keeper of the prison
The butler ask Joseph to interpreter his dream

Gen 40:12-15

12 And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days:

13 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

14 But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house:

15 For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

Note that Joseph ask the butler to mention him to the Pharaoh and how he was unjustly imprisoned

The baker then asks Joseph to interpret his dream

Gen 40:18-23

18 And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days:

19 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

20 ¶ And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

21 And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand:

22 But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them.

23 Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.

L. Tom Perry

"The chief butler was restored to his position of prominence in the king's service but forgot all about Joseph in prison for two full years. One day the king had a dream which none of the wise men could interpret. When the chief butler then remembered Joseph, he went to the king and said there was a man in prison who could interpret the dream. The Pharaoh sent for Joseph." (CR, April 1978)

Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dream

Joseph is given the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream by the Lord (kine means cattle)

Gen 41:25-32

25 ¶ And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

26 The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

27 And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

29 Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

30 And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

31 And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.

32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

What was the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream?

(there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:
And there shall arise after them seven years of famine)

Quentin L. Cook

“The scriptures and modern prophets have made it clear that there will be lean years and plentiful years. The Lord expects us to be prepared for many of the challenges that come. He proclaims, If ye are prepared ye shall not fear’ (D&C 38:30). One of the great blessings of the scriptures is that they warn us of challenges that are unexpected but often occur. We would do well to be prepared for them. One form of preparation is to keep the commandments.” (CR, Oct. 2008)

Because it was clear that the Lord was with Joseph, Pharaoh makes him the second most powerful man in Egypt

Gen 41:37-41

37 ¶ And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

What reason does Pharaoh give for granting this power and blessing on Joseph?

(Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is
Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and
wise as thou art)

L. Tom Perry

“Because of the service Joseph rendered, the Pharaoh said unto his servants,
‘Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?’ The
Pharaoh recognized that Joseph was, indeed, directed by the Lord when he
said unto Joseph, ‘forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none
so discreet and wise as thou art.’

“When one follows the course marked by the road signs of the gospel of
Jesus Christ and places his trust in the Lord, its influence is such that it is
manifest not only in action and deed but by a marked and visible change in
his very being. There is a special light and a spirit which radiates from his
eternal soul. It can be described in words like brightness, light, joy,
happiness, peace, purity, contentment, spirit, enthusiasm, etc.” (CR, April
1978)

Because the Egyptians listened to Joseph they were prepared for the seven years of
drought

Gen 41:53-57

53 ¶ And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were
ended.

54 And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and
the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

55 And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for
bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you,
do.

56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the
storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of
Egypt.

57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the
famine was so sore in all lands.

Because Egypt was prepared people all countries came to buy corn from Joseph

Orson Hyde

“Thus, the country to which the chosen of God was banished, was enabled
to feed the starving millions that fled thither for seven long years, and
Joseph was prime minister to the crown, and general superintendent of all
the affairs of Egypt. He controlled all the food that had been laid up in store.
The famine waxed strong in the land from which he was expelled, and they
had nothing laid up in store; for they had no Joseph to warn them of the

approaching distress. They had driven him away, and God greatly blessed the land to which he fled.” (JD, 2:202)

Joseph was given a daughter of Potipherah to be his wife and he had two sons in Egypt

Gen 41:45,50-52

45 And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him.

51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house.

52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

There is a Jewish tradition that Asenath was a daughter of Dinah, Leah’s daughter.

This would mean that she is a descendant of the covenant

Asenath the Daughter of Dinah

The traditions that trace Asenath to the family of Jacob relate that she was the daughter born to Dinah following her rape by Shechem son of Hamor. Jacob’s sons wanted to kill the infant, lest it be said that there was harlotry in the tents of Jacob. Jacob brought a gold plate and wrote God’s name on it... Dinah left Asenath on the wall of Egypt. That day Poti-pherah went out for a walk near the wall with his young men, and he heard the infant’s crying. When they brought the baby to him, he saw the plate and the record of the episode. Poti-pherah told his servants, “This girl is the daughter of great ones.” He brought her to his home and gave her a wet nurse. Poti-pherah’s wife was barren, and she raised Asenath as her own daughter. Consequently, she was called “Asenath daughter of Poti-pherah,” for she was raised in the home of Poti-pherah and his wife, as if she were their own daughter. This narrative teaches that all is foreseen by God. Each of Jacob’s sons was born together with his future spouse, except for Joseph, who was not born together with his mate, since Asenath daughter of Dinah was fit to be his wife. God directed matters so that Joseph would find a wife when he went down to Egypt, and Asenath was suitable for him (Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer [ed. Higger], chaps. 35, 37; Midrash Aggadah [ed. Buber], Gen. 41:45). (Asenath: Midrash and Aggadah | Jewish Women's Archive". jwa.org.)

There is some scriptural evidence of this if you study Genesis 46:

66 members of the House of Jacob came Egypt but 70 end up in Egypt so 4

must have been in Egypt already

In Genesis 46:20 Anenath is mentioned as being in Egypt with Joseph and their two sons

32 descendants of Leah are identified by name (verse 9-15) but verse 15 states that her total descendants are 33

Asenath was already in Egypt and Dinah was the daughter of Leah

Otherwise this is an example of being adopted into the covenant because we know that the birthright goes from Jacob, to Joseph, to Ephraim