

Biblical Evidence of the Book of Mormon By Steven Horne

Part One: A Record of a Branch of the House of Israel

The book of Mormon claims to be a record of a branch of the House of Israel which was led to the American Continent in 600 B.C. The book claims that Lehi and his family were members of the tribe of Joseph. In this first article I will show how this claim is in perfect harmony with Biblical teachings and Biblical prophecy.

Background on the Abrahamic Covenant

To appreciate these claims, it is first necessary that we understand something about the nature of the Abrahamic Covenant, which will help us to understand some of the passages in the Bible which deal with it. Hence, I will begin with some examination of the covenants that God made with the House of Israel. If I am belaboring points you already understand I hope you will be patient with me because we must reach some common ground of understanding before my arguments will make any sense.

The Covenant People Were Foreseen by Noah

The Abrahamic Covenant was foreshadowed by Noah. We read in Genesis chapter 9 that Noah was drunk and his son Canaan "saw the nakedness of his father" and his two brothers "went backward and covered the nakedness of their father." The Bible does not give us enough information to fully understand what happened here, but it is apparent that Canaan did something very wrong, for we read in verse 25 that Noah cursed him. However, the important part is the next two verses. Noah said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem..." and "God shall enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem..." From Shem arose the Semetic (sometimes called the white) race. Shem was the progenitor of Abraham, the father of the covenant. We read in verses 2-5 of Chapter 10 that from Japheth arose the families and nations of the Gentiles (sometimes called the "heathen" nations, or the nations we think of today as the Orientals.)

I think the meaning of what Noah said about Shem is more clear if you read it with a comma between Lord and God, like this: "Blessed be the Lord, God of Shem" or in other words, "Blessed be the Lord, who is the God of Shem." Today, in place of the word Lord we would probably use the name Jesus Christ and thus the passage would read: "Blessed be Jesus Christ, the God of the Semetic people." This interpretation is born out by two things. First, several prophets express the idea that the Abrahamic covenant is one of "I will be your God and you shall be my people." (Jer 30:22, Hosea 2:23 and Zech 13:9) Thus, this foreshadows the fact that this covenant people would come through Shem. Secondly, we find literal fulfillment of these

words when we consider the Christian nations of the earth are the semetic nations. This is not to say that descendants of Japeth or Canaan have not also accepted Christ as individuals, only that as nations they have not accepted him.

When Noah said that Japeth would "dwell in the tents of Shem" he foreshadowed the promise that those Gentiles which accepted the gospel would be adopted into the house of Israel. (See Roman 9:4-8) To dwell in the tents is the equivalent of being adopted into the house. Tents probably were houses Noah and his family were living in after the flood. Thus, those who accept the gospel who are not literally the seed of Shem and Abraham become the seed of Shem and Abraham when they accept the gospel.

The Promises of God to Abraham

However, the promises of God to Abraham were not limited to a spiritual fulfillment. When the Lord first made a covenant with Abraham, it was conditional: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee..." (Genesis 17:1-8) The covenant was conditioned upon Abraham walking uprightly before God. However, after Abraham offered up his son Isaac in similitude of the Only Begotten Son of God, the promise was made unconditionally: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, that because thou has done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee..." (Gen 22:15-18) The unconditional promises given to Abraham included the following:

1. His seed (posterity) would be as the stars of heaven.
2. His seed would possess the gate of their enemies.
3. Through his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed.

In addition he had previously been promised that if he were faithful:

1. Nations would come out of him.
2. Kings would come out of him.
3. The Lord would be "a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

This was to be an everlasting covenant and fits Noah's promise to Shem.

4. The land of Canaan would become an everlasting possession to his seed.

These promised blessings became known as the birthright. Isaac inherited that birthright and Jacob (whose name means "supplanter") also inherited it after his older brother Esau sold it for a little lentil stew. God confirmed this blessing on Jacob and gave him a new name, Israel, which has been interpreted as either "He who prevails with God" or "Let God prevail". Israel was promised that "a nation and a company of nations" would come from his loins (would be his literal descendants).

Now, maybe we've belabored things you already knew, but before we move on, let's examine one important question. Can God lie? If he promises he will do something and swears by himself, will he not fulfill it? Paul said he would as indicated in Hebrews 6:12-17. Hence, these promises and prophecies must be fulfilled or God is a liar and we know God is not a liar, so these promises must be fulfilled. This is important to keep in mind because we are about to make some points few people have understood.

Joseph and his Son's Inherited the Promised Blessings

As we know, Jacob or Israel had 12 sons. One of them was Joseph, who was sold as a slave into Egypt and disappeared to the knowledge of his family for a period of time. In fact, they thought he was dead. When they were re-united, Joseph brought his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh for a blessing. He brought them so that Ephraim would be at Jacob's right hand and Manasseh at this left, but Jacob crossed his hands and gave them this blessing: "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." (Gen 48:15-16)

Joseph protested that the younger was receiving a greater blessing than the elder, but Jacob insisted that Ephraim would be the greater and that "In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh..." He also said that Ephraim would become "a multitude of nations." (48:17-20)

Jacob was adopting Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh as his own in place of his two older sons, Reuben and Simion. (48:5) Reuben had lost the birthright by defiling his father's bed (49:3-4), and hence, Jacob adopted Ephraim as his oldest (birthright) son. Thus we see the promised blessings of Abraham, Issac and Jacob were passed on to one tribe of Israel, Ephraim. This is why the Lord could say through Jeremiah, "I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn." (Jer 31:9, see also I Chronicles 5:1)

The Jews are Only Part of Israel

Much confusion over the meaning of the scriptures has arisen from failing to understand that the Jews are not Israel. The Jews are only one of twelve tribes of Israel and they are not even the birthright tribe. They did not inherit the promise that the Lord would multiply them as the stars of heaven or that through them all nations would be blessed. These promises were given to the tribe of Joseph.

Judah was given a great blessing, but it was not the birthright. Judah was given the right of kings and the promise that the Messiah should come

through his loins. Because Christ was to come through Judah, he was told "...thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise...thy father's children shall bow down before thee..." Judah was told he was a lion's whelp, who would go up from the prey and then crouch down as an old lion who could not be roused up. Further, he was told that he would hold the sceptre (a symbol of political power) which would not depart from him, "nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come..." Shiloh is a word which roughly means "whose right it is." So political power and law-givers would not depart from Judah until the person who had rightful rule (ie, the Messiah) came.

Joseph's Birthright Blessing

These were great blessings, but they were not the birthright blessing. The greatest blessings fell upon Joseph. We read in Genesis 49:22-26 as follows (with my comments added in brackets []).

"Joseph is a fruitful bough [because he inherited the promise that his seed would be as numerous as the stars of heaven or the sands of the earth], even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: [thus the descendents of Joseph were to run over the wall, or leave the boundaries of the land of Canaan]

"The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him:

"But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) [ie, from Jacob's lineage, or Jacob's God-- depending on how you read it--came Jesus Christ Israel's shepherd and rock]

"Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with the blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: [so Joseph's seed would be greatly blessed of God]

"The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: [or in other words, Jacob is saying that he has received a blessing which prevails above--or is greater than--the blessing given to his fathers Abraham and Issac, which blessing extends to "the utmost bound of the everlasting hills"] they shall be upon the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. [Thus, not only did Joseph inherit the birthright blessings, he also inherited blessings that extended beyond the blessings given to Abraham and Issac.]"

The Book of Mormon Records Part of the Fulfillment of these Promises

This is where the Book of Mormon begins to tie into the Bible, because the Book of Mormon is a record of a remnant of the house of Joseph who were led to the Americas by the hand of the Lord. Thus, the prophecy of Jacob was fulfilled, the seed of Joseph "ran over the wall" or crossed the ocean. They inherited a land which was not promised to Abraham or Issac, a land of "everlasting hills" (the Rocky Mountains being the longest mountain chain in the world extending from Alaska to the tip of South America). This land of everlasting hills was given to Issac over and above the promised land of Canaan which his fathers had been promised and Jacob gave this land to Joseph. And note his emphasis that this blessing was on the crown of the head of him who was SEPARATE from his brethren.

The Lord uses history as a means of prophesy. Abraham offering his son Issac was in similitude of the sacrifice of Christ. Pharaoh letting the Israelites go upon the death of the firstborn was in similitude of our being freed from the bondage of sin by the firstborn of all creation, even Jesus Christ. Here we have a new similitude. Joseph was sold into Egypt. He was SEPARATED from his brethren in life and led to a land that was the bread basket of the ancient world. They thought he was dead and gone forever, but lo and behold, he suddenly showed up again and was able to be a means of temporal deliverance for the rest of his father's family.

Likewise, a portion of the seed of Joseph was separated from the rest of Israel and led to the new world where they became lost to the knowledge of the rest of the house of Israel.

The Blessing of Moses on the House of Joseph

This is not the only place, however, where the tribe of Joseph was given these blessings. They were also pronounced on him by Moses in Deuteronomy 33:13-17.

"And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that croucheth beneath,

"And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon,

"And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,

"And for the precious things of the earth and the fullness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren."

Here we see Joseph's posterity being promised a land of great wealth and natural resources, of "ancient mountains" and "lasting hills" (the "utmost

bound of the everlasting hills", again). We also see the hint about Joseph being SEPARATED from his brethren.

The Book of Mormon calls the land of America the "promised land" or the "land of promise" and says that it is a land which is "choice above all other lands". Most of us living in America should be able to see that this is literally true. America is the wealthiest nation on the face of the earth. She has vast resources. Such was the land promised to the seed of Joseph. The Book of Mormon testifies that it was the seed of Joseph who inherited this land in fulfillment of these prophecies. It also promises that this land will be a free land unto those who possess it as long as we "obey the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ." This blessing said that Joseph would inherit a land blessed of God.

The blessing doesn't end here, for another promise is made to Joseph.

"His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim and they are the thousands of Manasseh."

Remember that Joseph inherited the birthright, part of which was that through him and his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed. Here we have a promise that Joseph's seed, Ephraim and Manasseh would be instrumental in gathering the people (pushing them together) from the ends of the earth. In other words, Joseph's seed would be charged with the responsibility of gathering in the scattered remnants of the house of Israel from the ends of the earth. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies that Israel would be scattered and then gathered again in the last days. However, most people make the erroneous assumption that the Jews are Israel, and hence think that the Jews gathering to the land of Canaan is the only fulfillment this prophesied gathering will have.

The TWO Nations

The kingdom of Israel was united until after the time of King Solomon after which the house of Israel split into two nations. The southern nation was made up of the tribe of Judah plus one-half the tribe of Benjamin, while the rest of the tribes became the northern kingdom. The southern kingdom was thereafter called Judah, but the northern kingdom was called Israel. The northern kingdom was headed by an Ephraimite. This was in fulfillment of the promise made by Jacob or Israel when he said of Joseph's son's, let my name (the name Israel) be named on them. Thus, from that time forward, the Jews were not considered Israel, they were called Judah, while the rest of the tribes of Israel, headed by Ephraim, became known as Israel. This is a very important point because thereafter the Old Testament distinguishes

between Judah and Israel.

Furthermore, this was also a fulfillment of the promise to Jacob that he would make him a "nation and a company of nations." Judah was a nation, Israel under the direction of Ephraim was a "company of nations."

The Bible as we have it is almost entirely a record kept by the tribe of Judah. It is primarily a record of the tribe of Judah. In fact, it records little or nothing about the fulfillment of God's promises to the House of Joseph, while recording a great deal about the fulfillment of his promises to Judah. But the Bible foretells that there would be a record kept for both of these nations. Ezekiel records:

"The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying,
"Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:
"And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand."

Mormon's have commonly referred to the sticks in this passage as scrolls that were to be written upon. However, the word here translated as stick is more frequently translated as "board". Recent archeological evidence has determined that it was common practice at the time of Ezekiel to write upon boards embedded with wax. These boards (or tablets) could be laced together and made into books. Hence, a more recent translation of this passage, the New English Bible, renders it thusly: "These were the words of the Lord unto me: Man, take one leaf of a wooden tablet and write upon it, "Judah and his associates of Israel." Then take another leaf and write on it, "Joseph, the leaf of Ephraim and all his associates of Israel." Now bring them together to form one tablet: then they will be a folding tablet in your hand. When your fellow countrymen ask you to tell you what you mean by this, say unto them, These are the words of the Lord God: I am taking the leaf of Joseph, which belongs to Ephraim and his associate tribes of Israel, and joining to it the leaf of Judah. Thus I will make them one tablet, and they shall be one in my hand. The leaves on which you write shall be visible in your hand for all to see."

The passage then indicates that at the time when these tablets are joined together the Lord God will take "the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side and bring them into their own land..." So the gathering of Israel and Judah (the two nations) would commence in the day when these tablets were joined.

Jesus Christ himself recognized that there were more nations of the

house of Israel than just the Jews when he said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." (John 10:16) He was not speaking of the Gentiles because: 1. He didn't visit them--ie, they did not hear his voice--he only sent missionaries unto them and 2. He made it very plain that "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt 15:24). The Book of Mormon testifies that he not only visited this remnant of the house of Joseph after his resurrection but that he visited all of the scattered remnants of Israel and that all these records will eventually come to light.

Again, the Bible makes it clear that there are more nations of Israel than the Jews and that these nations also had great promises. Doesn't it make sense that Christ would minister to the seed of Joseph as well as the seed of Judah? Doesn't it make sense that God would see to it that a record was kept for both of the great branches of the house of Israel, for the two great nations which came of Jacob? Does it make sense that He would ignore any record of fulfilling his promises unto the house of Joseph, especially when they were the birthright nation? Does God fulfill his promises or doesn't He?

The Lord himself makes it plain in the Book of Mormon that he will fulfill all the promises he made to the House of Israel in these words: "Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, even upon all the nations of the earth? Wherefore murmur ye because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also...For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall speak unto the Nephites [a remnant of Joseph] and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it...And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word shall be gathered in one. And I will show unto them...that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever."

I testify that God has and is fulfilling his promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I testify that the Book of Mormon shows that God has already fulfilled many of his promises unto the tribe of Joseph and that these fulfillments are found in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is a record (a stick or tablet) written upon for Joseph and all the House of Israel his fellows which has been joined with the stick of Judah, the Bible, not to

take its place, but to clarify and reinforce the Bible's message. It is another testament of Jesus Christ. There is hardly a page in the Book of Mormon that does not persuade men to come unto Christ and be saved. It even tells of his visit to this remnant of the House of Joseph in fulfillment of his own prophesy that he had other sheep (who could only have been lost sheep of the House of Israel according to his own words) who were not in Jerusalem, but were in another fold. He gave his words to them also and they recorded it so that when the old world and the new world came together, the books testifying that Jesus is the Christ also came together. And all this has been done so that God could commence his work to gather all of the scattered remnants of Israel together as he foretold he would. And I bear witness that these things are true in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, who is my God and the rock of my salvation.