



“God Meant It Unto Good”

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

followHIM: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Wednesday.

Podcast Episode Descriptions

Part 1:

What if Joseph’s reunion with his brothers was a carefully designed repentance audit? Professor Stephen Smoot explores the literary brilliance, Egyptian context, and Christ-centered symbolism in Genesis 42-45, showing God can transform betrayal into redemption.

Part 2:

Professor Stephen Smoot continues exploring Genesis 46-50, highlighting Joseph’s wise leadership during the famine, the surprising adoption of Ephraim into the house of Israel, and powerful prophecies preserved in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (the Inspired Version).

Timecodes:

Part 1 -

- 00:00 Part 1 - Professor Stephen Smoot
- 02:25 Episode teaser
- 05:35 Bio
- 07:14 *Informed Saints*
- 08:38 Why study Ancient Egypt?
- 11:28 *Come, Follow Me Manual*
- 12:46 Literary shape of these chapters
- 17:02 Joseph has become “Egyptianized”
- 19:33 Using the NRSV
- 22:32 Test 1
- 25:01 Scripture as art
- 27:45 Reuben has been thinking about Joseph
- 30:22 Motif of younger brother favored
- 33:50 Joseph tests his brothers
- 36:45 Benjamin receives favoritism from Joseph
- 39:57 Silver divining cup
- 41:40 Physical items for revelation
- 46:04 Judah steps in to save Benjamin
- 49:01 Joseph weeps again
- 54:04 Value of stories about conflict
- 59:01 What is forgiveness?
- 1:01:20 End of Part 1 - Professor Stephen Smoot

Part 2 -

- 00:00 Part 2 - Professor Stephen Smoot
- 04:05 Canaanite incursion into Egypt
- 05:00 A famine in Egypt
- 11:29 Is Manasseh older than Ephraim?
- 15:24 When does an older son receive the birthright blessing?
- 19:00 Abrahamic Covenant review
- 21:26 Roles of Ephraim and Manasseh
- 24:55 A different tribe

- 29:09 The Lord has never forgot the Abrahamic Covenant
- 32:10 Archaic Hebrew poetry
- 36:48 Joseph as a fruitful bough
- 38:48 Genesis 50 - Jacob's death
- 42:02 An extended prophecy about Joseph's descendents
- 45:52 Plates of brass included genealogy
- 48:47 Chosen family?
- 51:48 Joseph and William Smith example of imperfect family
- 53:10 Did Joseph witness Jacob and Esau's reunion?
- 56:17 God is an alchemist and a tough family story
- 1:01:48 Jesus on every page of the Old Testament
- 1:05:45 End of Part 2 - Professor Stephen Smoot

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Biographical Information:



Stephen O. Smoot is a scholar specializing in ancient scripture and Latter-day Saint studies. He is a doctoral candidate in Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literature at the Catholic University of America. He holds a master's degree in Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, with a concentration in Egyptology, from the University of Toronto, and bachelor's degrees in Ancient Near Eastern Studies (Hebrew Bible emphasis) and German Studies from Brigham Young University.

Stephen currently serves as an adjunct instructor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University and as a research associate with the Ancient America Foundation. From 2020 to 2025, he was a research associate with the B. H. Roberts Foundation, and from 2015 to 2020, he held the same role with Book of Mormon Central. His scholarship focuses on the intersection of the ancient Near East and Latter-day Saint scripture, particularly the Book of Abraham and the Book of Mormon. In addition, he has published on Latter-day Saint history, with research addressing topics such as the reception of the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham, the Book of Mormon witnesses, Joseph Smith's revelations, and the Latter-day Saint experience in Nazi Germany.

Stephen has contributed to Latter-day Saint publications such as *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*, *Religious Educator*, *Journal of Mormon History*, *Latter-day Saint Historical Studies* and *BYU Studies*, and non-Latter-day Saint publications such as Brill, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, and the *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities*. He is the editor of *The Pearl of Great Price: A Study Edition for Latter-day Saints* and the co-author of the volumes *Joseph Smith's Uncanonized Revelations* and *A Guide to the Book of Abraham* (a special issue of *BYU Studies*).

Beyond academia, Stephen engages in public scholarship through organizations like FairMormon and the Interpreter Foundation, where he addresses topics related to Latter-day Saint history and doctrine. He has also participated in podcasts and conferences, discussing subjects such as the translation of the Book of Abraham, biblical interpretation, and the historicity of Latter-day Saint scriptures. Along with Neal and Jasmin Rappleye, he is a cohost for the podcast *Informed Saints*, produced by the Ancient America Foundation.

Stephen is a native of Salt Lake City, Utah, where he graduated from East High School. From 2009 to 2011, he served as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in northern New England. His previous Church callings have included elders quorum president, elders quorum instructor, gospel

doctrine teacher, branch clerk, and temple worker. He is married to Amberlea Erikson, and they have one son.

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God Meant It unto Good PART 1

GUEST: DR. STEPHEN O. SMOOT



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|---------------------|----------|---|
| Hank Smith: | 00:00:00 | Coming up in this episode on followHIM. |
| Bro. Stephen Smoot: | 00:00:03 | Even when people exercise their agency wickedly or unrighteously or evilly, that will not frustrate or thwart God's power in his purposes that he has for his children. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:00:18 | Hello everyone. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. And doth my co-host yet live? John Bytheway. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:30 | Yeah. I'm still going. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:00:31 | He has a pulse. John, do you know where that question comes from? It's chapter 45 of Genesis when Joseph reunites with his brothers and he says, "Doth my father yet live?" |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:45 | The more I think about this story, this is one of the greatest stories ever. Joseph's life, the lowest of lows in prison, the highest of highs with Pharaoh, his family, they should make a Broadway play out of it or something. They should make a movie. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:01:00 | John, we are privileged today to be joined by brother Stephen Smoot. A year from now, he will be Dr. Stephen Smoot, but right now we're gonna just call him Brother Stephen Smoot, which is an awesome thing to be, a brother. Stephen, welcome to followHIM. |
| Bro. Stephen Smoot: | 00:01:15 | Well, thank you, Hank. Glad to be here. Thank you, John, for having me. I've been watching the podcast for a long time and now I'm in the hot seat myself. So I've stepped up my game hopefully, and this should be a lot of fun. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:01:25 | John and I both know Stephen from the internet, basically. Stephen has been working online doing scriptures with the Interpreter Foundation. Now he's with the Rappleyes, Jasmin and Neal. All things that we 100% support, and we can talk |

more about that. John, last week we were with Dr. Wilcox. We began this story, and now we're going to finish the story of Joseph of Egypt.

- John Bytheway: 00:01:50 The thing that I love is the emphasis on the Lord was with him. In the lowest of lows and the highest of highs, maybe people can feel ... Is the Lord with me? Yes, he's still with us like he was with Joseph. A good takeaway.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:07 Yeah. John, I feel the same way, that if someone is in deep distress, we can read ahead in Joseph's story, and we know the goodness that's coming. We could take that same thing into our lives that if you are in your own chapters 37, 38, 39, 40, there are chapters coming in your life. Stephen, what are you hoping to do today? What are you hoping our listeners walk away with?
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:02:31 Number one, I hope that in our conversation we can look at the really intricate literary structure of this story. The story of Joseph in Egypt, if nothing else, is phenomenal world literature. Reading it as a story, it's powerful, it's impactful. It is very tightly structured as a story. You're going to see recurring motifs, you're going to see moments of deep irony, much pathos we're going to encounter with Joseph weeping when his brothers don't recognize him and all that sort of stuff. Certainly we want to get personal meaning out of the story, but just appreciating it as a work of art, as a work of literary art. That's one thing I hope to discuss and see what we can unpack there. I also hope that we can appreciate how the story ends. We sometimes think it just ends on this happy note of Joseph and the brothers are reconciled and reunited, and that's certainly true, but it also ends with their father giving them a patriarchal blessing. Which I think especially for Latter-day Saint listeners is highly significant.
- 00:03:31 We get two chapters of it. We get chapter 48 with Ephraim and Manasseh, and then chapter 49 is the rest of the sons. I see that as a culmination of this entire story. We walk away with the impression that the story is about how even in times of adversity, God can reach down in our afflictions and help us out of these problems. That's certainly true. More than just that, it culminates with God pronouncing blessings through our covenant patriarch Jacob or Israel onto his children and by extension upon us. So if we see ourselves as part of the story as well, it culminates with that patriarchal blessing. That will be something to look at and hopefully take away from our conversation. The other thing that I hope to add to the conversation in my very modest way is maybe some cultural

contextual notes on the story to help us understand why are they doing the things the way they do.

00:04:23 Why does Joseph have a silver cup that he's using to divine with, things like that. Why don't they recognize Joseph, for example? You'd think you'd recognize your own brother, cultural and historical, and even some fun linguistic stuff I hope to introduce to our conversation. For example, Genesis chapter 49 is some of the oldest poetry of the Hebrew Bible. If you pop open your King James Bible in English, that may obscure the fact that Genesis 49 is really archaic and really beautiful Hebrew poetry. Jacob or Israel is blessing his children in a poetic register using poetic and literary devices. So that'll be kind of fun to sort of note some of these things to sort of all culminate it and package it together to say, this story is a beautiful work of literary art. It is deeply meaningful for us, both from the doctrine we can take from it, but also from the themes, the human elements, and that it culminates with this idea of a patriarchal blessing. And by understanding the cultural and historical context in which this story was written in which it takes place, that can help us appreciate the story even more.

Hank Smith: 00:05:26 This is fantastic. John, I love to be blessed both, hey, how can I live a better life? How can I be more faithful, be closer to God, and become more competent in my scripture study? Understand the Bible more. We're gonna worship God with our heart and mind. If someone is online quite a bit, they already know who Stephen is, but there might be someone out there who's like, who is Stephen Smoot? John, what do you know? Have you, did you hang out outside of his house for a while to get some information? Did you hide in the bushes? What did you find?

John Bytheway: 00:05:59 I actually had Lisa Spice email me some things, so that was helpful.

Hank Smith: 00:06:03 Oh okay. Wow. All right. Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:06:04 Okay. Stephen O. Smoot is a doctoral candidate in Semitic and Egyptian languages and literature at the Catholic University of America. He's currently an adjunct instructor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University and a research associate with the Ancient America Foundation. [Stephen](#) has contributed to Latter-day Saint publications such as Interpreter, a Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship. I love the Interpreter Foundation website. The Religious Educator, Journal of Mormon History, Latter-day Saint Historical Studies, and non Latter-day Saint publications such as Catholic Biblical Quarterly, the Journal

for the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities. How cool is that? He's also editor of The Pearl Great Price, a study edition for Latter-day Saints, and a [co-author](#) of the volumes, Joseph Smith Jr's Uncanonized Revelation, and a guide to the Book of Abraham. That's a special edition of BYU Studies. I could read more, but like you said, hey, I've just seen Stephen's face and heard his voice so many times online, teaching us and defending the faith. I'm just excited to have him here today.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:07:14

Well, thank you. Like I said, it's my pleasure to be here, the followHIM podcast. Now I feel like I'm in the A- League, the big leagues here on the followHIM podcast with you two fine gentlemen. It's been great, my experience publishing and writing, doing research, teaching at BYU, going on various podcasts. Recently, the Rappleyes, Neal and Jasmin Rappleye and I, we started a podcast called [Informed Saints](#). If I may, shamelessly plug our own podcast here. We seek to both address questions and concerns that people have about the church and various topics related to the church. And also, per the name of the podcast, we want to inform Latter-day Saints on the best scholarship that's out there on various topics. We've addressed everything from plural marriage to the Book of Abraham to the first vision accounts to DNA in the Book of Mormon. There's no shortage of interesting topics.

Hank Smith: 00:08:02

I don't think personally I tell the Rappleyes, especially Jasmin, how much I appreciate what she does. Jasmin is in the front lines of Latter-day Saint online work, and we love her. Neal, we love you too, but Jasmin, you have our heart. Now, Stephen, I don't think John could love what you do more unless you flew airplanes. John has a thing for Egyptology that you just see him kind of light up. So what's it been like? That's something that we grew up with watching Indiana Jones. What's it like in real life?

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:08:38

Let me put it this way, perhaps. Whenever undergrad students or others come to me and they express their interest in Egyptology or Near Eastern studies and they say, I wanna go into this subject like you did, I always tell them, you have so much to live for. You have such a bright future. Why would you throw it away going into Egyptology? It's a very niche subject, right? Like, there aren't many out there in the world that study this stuff compared to doctors and engineers. It's been a very gratifying experience for me, both as sort of a career choice, also just in my own personal interest. I see Egyptology and biblical studies emerging in many important ways, and to understand these ancient texts that we have, both our Bible, but also texts in our Pearl of Great Price, even the Book of

Mormon, of course. Having that foundation for me, at least, has been worthwhile to help me understand the scriptural texts.

00:09:31 Besides that, it's also been helpful to help me address questions that people have about the Pearl of Great Price or about the Bible or the Book of Mormon. I really believe strongly in what the Doctrine and Covenants says about seeking learning by study and also by faith. I've tried to have that be one of my cardinal guides in my life, both in my academic career and in my personal devotion and my personal religious profession. I've tried to keep that balance of both academic rigor and groundedness, but also faith and spirituality and acknowledging that these texts that we're studying, that they're more than just dusty old scrolls. They're deeply meaningful and important for us today as scripture. Frankly, it's really great to be able to go to Egypt and do digs and go work on ancient texts and do tours. I've led families over to Egypt, been myself many times.

00:10:17 It's just really connecting with that world that these texts emerged out of, both the Holy Land and Israel, but also in Egypt and other parts of the ancient Near East. It really brings the scriptures alive. You had [Kerry Muhlestein](#), our friend on a little while ago, the scriptures are real is kind of his big push. And one way to learn how the scriptures are real is through these academic disciplines, and that's at least been my experience.

Hank Smith: 00:10:39 Oh, that's fantastic. I have a good friend, Andy McFarland. He had a really difficult experience in Egypt once I'll have to tell you both about. John, aren't you excited? I can tell. I can tell that you're excited. We're gonna talk Egypt today.

John Bytheway: 00:10:53 Yeah. And one of the things that I love is that so many of us love to claim our connection to Joseph, but his wife was an Egyptian. I just think that's cool. If we're part Joseph, we're part Egypt too.

Hank Smith: 00:11:07 Yeah. John, was it you who told me you can get off the plane in Cairo and say, "Don't you know who I am?" I am royalty here. I'm a descendant of the pharaoh.

John Bytheway: 00:11:15 No, that wasn't me.

Hank Smith: 00:11:18 Of Egypt.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:11:19 I'm your long lost cousin.

John Bytheway: 00:11:21 Hello.

Hank Smith:	00:11:22	That's so fun.
John Bytheway:	00:11:23	Well, they didn't recognize Joseph in the story, so I can see how that would happen, you know?
Hank Smith:	00:11:28	Well, let's jump in. God meant it unto good. That's the title of the lesson this week. It had been 22 years since Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. Joseph had suffered many trials, including false accusations and imprisonment. When he finally saw his brothers again, Joseph was the governor of all Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. He could easily have taken revenge on his brothers and considering what they had done to Joseph, that might seem understandable, and yet Joseph forgave them. Not only that, but he helped them see divine purpose in his suffering. God meant it unto good, he told them, because it put him in a position to save all his father's household from famine. In many ways, Joseph was like Jesus Christ. Even though our sins caused Jesus' great suffering, he offers forgiveness, delivering all of us from a fate far worse than famine. Whether we need to receive forgiveness or extend it, at some point, we all need to do both. Joseph's example points us to the Savior, the true source of healing and reconciliation . That is beautiful. What a great way to start. Stephen, how should we begin this lesson? Do you wanna jump right in or do we need some background?
Bro. Stephen Smoot:	00:12:46	Let's first take a look at the literary shape of these chapters so we can see the sort of discrete literary units that are happening here. Genesis 42, where we're gonna start, 42 through 45. I like to call that the repentance trial, the repentance audit of Joseph's brothers. We are going to find out once and for all whether these guys are sincere when they profess to feel sorry for what they did and if they are sincere for their care for the younger brother Benjamin. In other words, we're going to see, to use a scriptural phrase, have they brought forth fruit meet for repentance? Is their repentance sincere? So that's the first thing we're gonna find in chapters 42 through 45. Chapters 46 and 47 is going to be the relocation of the tribes of Israel, the brothers and their families into Egypt and their preservation from the famine.
	00:13:31	Obviously, the famine is looming in the background this entire time in the story. Think of it like it's the Death Star hovering over Alderaan about to blow them up. How is that gonna factor in here? We need to get them into Egypt and we need them to be safe and preserved. That's gonna be those two chapters. As I mentioned earlier, at the outset, chapters 48 through 50 are going to be the covenant blessings that Jacob is going to give to his children and his grandchildren, as a matter of fact. We're

going to have the death, spoiler alert, of both Jacob and Joseph they're gonna die in these chapters. And there's an interesting note or detail about that that the text gives us. And then our closing theology, you had it there, God meant it for good. Joseph's concluding statement. I'll quiz you real quick.

00:14:13 What do you know about Egypt and its status in the ancient world as the place where this is all happening in the story of [Joseph](#), based on what you know about ancient Egypt. We don't know the full chronology of Joseph of Egypt, but we'll put it roughly around maybe 15 or 1400 BC, give or take. What can you guys tell me if I were to quiz you in one of my classes? Why is Egypt so prominent in this story?

John Bytheway: 00:14:35 Obviously it was prosperous. I think the Nile was so important and how it flooded every year. I mean, it, it was so reliable that they could grow crops from it. If that happens, maybe that means there's not famine as often. You're not depending on rain because you've got the Nile.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:14:53 One of the main features, as John just correctly said, Egypt has a big river running down it. That river predictably floods. Those floods bring with them black silt that you can use to grow your crops. If you're stuck in Canaan, which is where the brothers are, which is where Israel is, you don't have a big river. You have a little river called the Jordan, but you don't have a big river called the Nile running down your land. You are dependent on seasonal rains to give water to your crops, which means when famine rolls around, you're much more likely to survive in Egypt, the sort of the bread basket of the ancient world, the emergency pantry of the ancient Near East, if you wanna call it that. You're much more likely to have a better time there than you would be somewhere in like Syria, Canaan, Anatolia.

00:15:35 That's one of the main reasons why it features so prominently. For much of its history, as quote a world empire, if we don't call it that, at least by the measures of the ancient Near East, Egypt has had a very prominent presence in the ancient Levant in the ancient Near East during the time of Abraham, during the time of Joseph, later, New Kingdom Egypt, you think of Ramses, the great Egyptian empire of the New Kingdom. They've always had a cultural and political dominating presence in the region. That combined with the actual geography of Egypt is why we're going to spend so much time in Egypt. Even after the Exodus, there's still machinations happening with the Egyptians in the time of Solomon, then later the time of Jeremiah. Keep that in mind. That's why we're here to begin with. Joseph's office, his position as the vizier.

00:16:22 If you look at what his jobs are when he gets elevated by Pharaoh, he's the chief administrator. In fact, I think it even says Pharaoh gives him his personal seal he can use. He's the overseer of the storehouses and the agriculture. He's a judicial authority. He's also the gatekeeper for foreign dignitaries or foreign delegations coming into Egypt. If you want to imagine what Joseph's responsibilities are, he's the prime minister and he's the treasurer, secretary, and he's the chief justice of the Supreme Court, like all at the same time. So no pressure on you, Joseph. There's been some interesting conversation and discussion and scholarship about how this picture of Joseph in the story maps onto what we know about ancient administrative government roles in ancient Egypt. We don't need to go into that too much. I do also just want to point out that Joseph is thoroughly Egyptianized at this point.

00:17:12 He has an Egyptian name. He's married to an Egyptian woman. He's wearing Egyptian clothes. He even uses an Egyptian interpreter to pretend that he doesn't speak Canaanite or whatever the brothers are speaking at this time. It says how he is shaved. That's a pretty well known facet of ancient Egyptian hygiene, especially for royals and officials and elites and priests. Shaving. Yeah, hair is kind of gross for the ancient Egyptians, at least for priests and for officials and royalties. Typically, they'll shave and they'll wear like fake beards, as opposed to Semitic men, which are commonly wearing beards. There's two things happening here. This is all in service of the story just to explain what's happening, but it also is grounding our story in the world of the ancient Near East. It has, we would call it local flavor, local color. Ancient listeners of this story who are more familiar with this world than we are, they would have picked up on these cues, which both adds to the literary art and, like I said, ratcheting up the drama and the tension of the story, but also gives it a flavor of authenticity.

00:18:14 And it makes it relatable to these ancient peoples who would have had the story available to them. The last thing I'll just mention, and then I'll stop filibustering here. Goshen, the land of Goshen. Where is that exactly? When people say the brothers go down into Egypt, they may assume, oh, are they going to Memphis? Are they going to Thebes? Are they going to these major metropolitan centers? No, it says mostly they're in the land of Goshen, which is, as far as we can tell, the Eastern Nile Delta, basically right by the Sinai Peninsula, right, as you're getting into Sinai. There's a couple reasons why we're going to locate in Goshen. First of all, it's pasture friendly. It's the best place to, like, have your flocks. It's going to be near trade route.

Makes sense that you want to have a good highway to get out of town if you need to pretty quickly.

00:18:57 So you're gonna stick next to the trade routes. You don't wanna go too deep into Egyptian territory because then you might get lost. Also, it's keeping us separated from Egypt's cultural heartland, again, Thebes or Memphis or some of these big cities. You wanna stay in the hinterlands. You don't wanna go so deep into Egypt that you get sucked in and absorbed by Egypt if you wanna think about it in that way. By staying in the Goshen and the Nile Delta, we're creating a buffer zone between the land of promise for Abraham and his family and the land of Egypt, which can be a scary, dark, bad place if you're not careful. Hopefully that will situate us a little bit as we jump into the story.

Hank Smith: 00:19:31 Yeah, that's exciting.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:19:33 We can start at chapter 42. For listeners, I'm going to be using a modern English [translation](#) and I may use the King James occasionally, but I'm going to be using the new revised standard version, specifically the updated edition that came out a few years ago, but the NRSV. Recently, there were some changes made to the church's handbook where they, I don't wanna say allowed, because you're always allowed to use other Bible translations, but they gave suggestions and recommendations for other English Bible translations that could be useful in your personal study. The NRSV is one of them. I've always been using it. I think it's a great modern English translation. If you're listening along and you are disturbed by the lack of thee and thy and saith pronouns and things like that and verb endings, that's okay. It's just because I'm using a modern English translation.

00:20:21 Maybe we can jump right in there then to chapter 42. We don't have to go verse by verse by any means, but maybe it's worth picking up the major plot beats and seeing what we can learn. So the brothers are going to go down into Egypt. They're going to go there to buy food. The reason why we've discussed it's the emergency pantry of the ancient world, especially in times of famine. Of course, they're going to leave behind Benjamin. We know why. Jacob, he's already lost one son as far as he knows. He's not going to lose his other beloved youngest son. Benjamin's gonna stay behind. That's setting it up for later. We get there and the first little literary or narrative nod we get earlier in the story is when they come to Joseph who is disguised. He's the vizier. They don't know it's him.

- 00:21:06 Verse six, "Now, when Joseph was governor over the land, it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground." There you go. You get the payoff from the dream that Joseph earlier had with the seven stars and the seven sheaves of grain bowing down to him. They say, why are you here? We're here to buy food. Verse eight is really sort of our linchpin. Although Joseph had recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. That's what's going to set up the tension leading throughout the rest of the story. The fact that they don't recognize who Joseph is, why not? Why can't they recognize his brother? Because at this point, he's thoroughly Egyptianized. We don't have to necessarily summarize the rest of it. We all know the story.
- 00:21:49 He accuses them of being spies. That's always a perennial problem in the ancient world, foreign people coming into your country, especially Egypt. They're knee-jerk, distressful and suspicious of foreigners coming into the country. Why are you actually here? He's going to accuse them of being spies. We get the setup that Simeon is going to be left behind. They're going to have to go back and get Benjamin to prove that they have a younger brother, because they keep saying, oh, no, we're not spies. We're just here to get food. We have a younger brother. Test one of their sincerity, like I was saying earlier, is are they going to leave Simeon out to dry or are they going to actually follow through and save him? 'Cause at any point, they could leave him in prison. They've already done it once before, gentlemen, what do we care if we lose another brother?
- 00:22:32 We're already at that point where we've done that once before. Test number one, if they are serious about their repentance and their change of heart, are they going to do to Simeon what they already did to Joseph? Are they going to leave him behind? We see sort of a mirror reflection there or a literary repetition. The other thing we'll just kind of mention as we're going through here is we get another mirror scene with the grain that they bring back. A grain with some money, it turns out, in the sacks of grain. Earlier in the story, they bring back the coat, Joseph's torn coat to their father as a token that Joseph is dead, they slaughtered a goat and put blood on it, all that stuff. They're gonna do this again, but now they're bringing back grain, the grain and the sacks of money that comes with it.
- 00:23:15 Both times, it serves as a token for something happening in the story. For the coat, it's Joseph presumably being slaughtered. Jacob believes here with the grain and then with the money, they kind of freak out so they think, why is there money? We

went down there to get the food and pay it, now it's coming back here. It kind of freaks them out. So they don't know what's going to happen here. This is gonna set up for we have to go back down into Egypt eventually. So we see, again, the sort of literary repetition, these motifs recurring back here in new and interesting ways. That's what I see sort of predominantly happening in chapter 42, at least on the narrative level. What the brothers are doing is exactly what you would expect in a famine economy. This will be picked up later in chapter 46 and 47.

00:23:54 When there are threats of famine, that's when the state is going to step in and we're going to have a strong centralized administration. Foreign delegations coming in and wanting food, they're going to have to go through the government, basically. Some people might wonder, why didn't the brothers just go talk to the local farmer or something like that? Could he get them their food? Well, no. In situations like this, you have to go through the administration, you have to go through the government.

John Bytheway: 00:24:18 One of the things I love that you're just pointing out is that there's more than just the storyline. There's so many things that are hidden in plain sight. As far as you're talking about the literary things, it's to imagine that in our time, we've started to see in the Book of Mormon, in a translated document, there are also literary devices. I love how much scholarship recently has pointed out things like parallelisms and chiasmus. While we're reading this storyline, it's fun for you to say, yeah, there's a whole lot more in the way it's presented and the structure in which it's presented that makes you think this is ancient stuff.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:25:00 It's ancient art. I hope that we appreciate that our scriptures are works of literary art. A lot of intentionality went into these stories to tell them the way that they are. I don't think that they're just being made up like fiction, right? They're not just making everything up here. There has been a certain level of deliberate craft to go into how the story is being told, why certain things are emphasized, why certain brothers or characters are quoted the way they are quoted, the dialogue, things like that.

Hank Smith: 00:25:27 You see the same thing in the Book of Mormon when Mormon is an artist as he crafts together the book of Mosiah and Alma and Helaman. I wanna focus for a second on one verse, if you two don't mind. You might have a tendency to think that Joseph is the only one who has suffered because of this decision that they made years and years ago, and we think maybe, oh, they

got away with it. In verse 21, they're talking with each other and Joseph is testing them, and they said to one another, "We are very guilty concerning our brother." This is Joseph they're talking about, "in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us and we wouldst not hear. Therefore is this distress come upon us." Meaning we're still being punished for this. It sounds like this has haunted them for two decades.

00:26:20 They remember his cries to them. He must have been yelling out for them, don't do this to me. You're my family. Come help me. I know that's not more suffering. I don't want to say, well, they've suffered more than Joseph, but there has been some deep suffering by these brothers for a decision they made 20-something years ago.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:26:42 I'm glad you pointed that out, Hank, because I think in verse 21, we see sincere guilt can be an act of transformative grace if it drives the repentance process. This seems to be one of our important verses where we see, again, I called it the repentance audit, the trial of the brothers. Is their repentance sincere? This is one of our first indications to say that, yes, it is sincere because it's going to impel them or drive them towards, we'll get to the story right, saving Benjamin here. They had two opportunities to leave brothers out to dry, both Simeon and then Benjamin, and both times they step in to do the right thing. A very important verse 21 in chapter 42.

Hank Smith: 00:27:20 Wow. I love what you just said there, Stephen. Transformative guilt, because I'll be honest, there are things in my 47 years on this planet that I regret deeply. Let that guilt work in you, move you to a better way of living. It doesn't have to be just pointless guilt. It can be transformative. I've never thought about that. Thank you.

John Bytheway: 00:27:45 And thank you for saying that, Hank, because I feel the same way. I hear people say, I can go to the next life with no regrets. No, I've got some. I do. I wish I could say that, but use it to move you to be better now. Verse 22. Just Reuben says, "Did I not tell you not to wrong the boy, but you would not listen?" And I just thought, here's Joseph learning something about Reuben right there. He has been thinking about this for 20 plus years.

Hank Smith: 00:28:17 Yeah, he's listening to them discuss him.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:28:21 And they don't know he can hear the whole thing.

Hank Smith: 00:28:22 They don't know. Oh, man.

Bro. Stephen Smoot:	00:28:23	The irony is very rich. We as the readers know that, but the brothers, the characters in the story don't know that yet.
Hank Smith:	00:28:30	Oh, yeah. And he found out about them. The repentance audit, he found out that they truly have been haunted.
Bro. Stephen Smoot:	00:28:40	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	00:28:40	By this decision. Reuben, I told you so. I told you so. I wonder how many times he said that.
John Bytheway:	00:28:45	Did I not tell you not to wrong the boy?
Hank Smith:	00:28:49	I told you you'd regret this. Let's keep going, Stephen.
Bro. Stephen Smoot:	00:28:52	Great. It may be worth pointing out at the very end, chapter 38 Jacob says, "My son Benjamin shall not go down with you for his brother is dead and he alone is left. If harm should come to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring my gray hairs with sorrow down to", and in the King James Bible it's "the grave." That's the translation. In the NRSV, they decided to transliterate the Hebrew, sheol, which could be the grave in the sense of where you go to die. It could also mean like the underworld. We would maybe call it the spirit world. You get little notes here of ancient Israelite cosmology and their beliefs about the afterlife. Little details like that are fun. This is why I recommend you consult other modern translations is because you might miss those little nuances. If Benjamin dies, my gray hairs will go with sorrow down to sheol, down to the pits of the underworld.
	00:29:44	It may be a little bit more dramatic there to think of it in that sense. But any case, we know what Jacob's concern is, why he doesn't want Benjamin to go with the brother. Let's jump into 43. We're gonna continue the story. Verse one, the famine is severe in the land. We need to go back down. We need to get more grain. Judah is going to step in. He's going to persuade Jacob to let them bring Benjamin down. He's going to act as his surety. Verse nine, "I myself will be surety for him." This is Judah speaking to Jacob about Benjamin. You can hold me accountable for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. Judah's stepping up. This is his moment to prove that his repentance is sincere. Hopefully as the readers, we think this is both very moving, but also deeply kind of ironic because remember, who was the brother that wanted to sell him into slavery, Joseph into slavery?

- 00:30:37 It's Judah. He's one of the guys that steps in, gets the bright idea, let's sell him into slavery. It's better that we make a profit off of our brother rather than let him die. Once again, we see the motif of the younger favored brother is in this precarious situation. The older brother steps in. Initially, Judah's the bad guy. Now Judah's gonna be the good guy. We're seeing the transformation happening in Judah there. They load up all their good stuff. They're gonna take double the money with them, it says in verse 12, because they're so spooked by the fact that money was brought back with them unbeknownst to them. Joseph sneaks it in there. They're going over, above and beyond, bring back all this nice stuff to give to the Egyptians to rescue Simeon. They go back in there. Let's start in verse 16. When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, bring the men into the house and slaughter an animal and make ready, for the men are to dine with me at noon.
- 00:31:31 Notice why he does this. It's for Benjamin. He's happy that he sees younger brother. We're gonna give him a big feast, a big banquet, younger brother. The man did, as Joseph said, and brought the man to Joseph's house. Verse 18, it says that they were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house. You can imagine how nerve-racking it would be to have dinner with your boss at their house, with the president of the university or something, right, with the dean. We're bringing them into the house. We can tell why they're scared about this. Maybe we can talk a minute here about this idea of this banquet, why Joseph is slaughtering this animal for them, why they're gonna have this big fancy party with him and this feast. This idea of hospitality, in the West, it's like, okay, you wanna be nice to somebody, give him a glass of water, make sure he's doing okay.
- 00:32:15 You go to the Middle East, people will go out of their way to make sure that your needs are taken care of and that you feel you are a respected guest under their house. Last time I was in Egypt, my wife and I went into a little bookstore that was by our hotel. We walk in there and the shopkeeper speaks very good English. He's very nice, very personable. He offers us some refreshment. Can I get you anything? I politely declined his offer of refreshment, both because I really didn't need it. And he got at me, says, no, no, no. I, I need to get you something. You are a guest in my store. I need to make sure that you're taken care of. So what can I get you? I'm like, well, I guess a glass of water would be fine. He said, no, no, no, no, no.

	00:32:58	Water is for the horses. I need to get you some kind of a drink. He ran outside and got me whatever, some yogurt drink or whatever. I had, like, almost offended him by refusing his offer of hospitality. There is a deeply ingrained, almost religious obligation to take care of strangers and foreigners who may come under your roof. There's two dynamics at play here for why he's going to bust out the nice fatted calf. It's also in service of the bigger story of setting the brothers up here. Joseph's being a little sly in how he's setting this up, but there's also very much a sincere element there of taking care of his family. Let's look at this moment. It should be one of the most touching moments of scripture. It certainly is one of the most touching moments in this story. In chapter 43, verse 26, he brings them, the brothers into his house, and they again bow down to the ground before him, once again, fulfilling the dream. He inquired about their welfare and said, is your father well the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?
Hank Smith:	00:33:59	The old man.
Bro. Stephen Smoot:	00:34:00	You can imagine why that's on Joseph's mind.
John Bytheway:	00:34:03	So, you mentioned that old man. How's he doing?
Bro. Stephen Smoot:	00:34:07	How's he doing? Mm-hmm. They're going to say in verse 28, Your servant, our father is well. He is alive. And they bowed their heads and did obeisance. Then he looked up and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, remember this is his biological brother here, right, not a half brother, and said, "Is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son." Again, he has to keep up the ruse. Oh, this is the guy, right? This is the brother you're saying of course he knows it's Benjamin." Verse 30. "With that, Joseph hurried out because he was overcome with affection for his brother and he was about to weep. So he went into a private room and wept there."
Hank Smith:	00:34:50	He's doing this often.
Bro. Stephen Smoot:	00:34:52	He's a very emotional guy, Joseph is. And you know what? There's nothing wrong with that because if I were in his situation, I'd probably feel the exact same way and do the exact same thing. Deep, deep pathos in this story with examples like this.
John Bytheway:	00:35:06	It's so fun because the reader knows what's going on. The reader knows who he's talking about and the brothers don't.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:35:14 We're in on it with Joseph. Hopefully we're sympathizing with him. Hopefully even this gets us choked up too as we're reading this here in the story. He comes out, he washes his face, and I love this, and controlling himself so he gets his composure back. He has to be Mr. Mean stern Egyptian vizier administrator again as he comes out. He says, serve the meal. This is interesting, this is funny. Verse 33, "When they were seated before him, the firstborn, according to his birthright, and the youngest, according to his youth, the men looked at one another in amazement. " Why would that amaze them, gentlemen? Why do you suppose the brothers are freaking out that he has them seated according to their birth order?

Hank Smith: 00:35:52 Is it that he would know?

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:35:54 Yes, exactly. How does this guy know who's the oldest and who's the youngest? Wow. Again, ratcheting up the tension here in the story. The brothers are though, they are in amazement. Who is this guy and how does he know who we are? The story's ratcheting up, the drama and the tension is ratcheting up. I will point out, again, this banquet, we've talked about the hospitality aspect here and there's the literary function of this banquet to mess with the brothers. We have to also understand, even like today, anciently, these sorts of formal state dinners or banquets, it signals relationship and rank. Seating by birth order, you're establishing this social hierarchy in addition to the impossible moment knowledge, building up the tension. It's not just dinner. There's something more important happening here with this dinner, both in its literary context and its social context, and that should be ratcheting up the tension.

00:36:45 I like in verse 34, "Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs, so they drank and were merry." I love that, right? That little detail. Joseph's favoritism is coming out here for Benjamin. And again, the other brothers should probably be wondering like, why is Benjamin so special? Again, we're repeating though the motif of the favored younger son. The other thing that's happening here in this chapter is the family accountability moment is coming. Joseph is stepping in, and I don't want to say he's, like, messing with his brothers in a trivial way, but he is trying to sort of light a fire under their feet to make them accountable for what they've done, and he's slowly hinting at them that there's more going on here than they perhaps suspect by placing them in the birth order. He's giving Benjamin more food, things like that. If you're one of the brothers, you

should have alarm bells going off in your head, like, who is this guy?

- Hank Smith: 00:37:38 Like I said before, this is one of the best stories ever told. There's all these little intricate details you're going, oh, wow. Five times the food on Benjamin. Benjamin's going, why does this guy like me so much? And the fact that he put them all in their order.
- John Bytheway: 00:37:52 I love that.
- Hank Smith: 00:37:52 Yeah, that's a pretty telling moment.
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:37:54 A couple things in chapter 44 to look at. Now we're getting up to the decisive test for Judah, for the brothers to see if they're really serious about their repentance. We know the story, so we don't wanna summarize it again, but I do want to point out a few things, okay? The ruse that Joseph comes up with here, we all know famously he's going to put the silver cup in Benjamin's sack, and he's going to use that as the ruse to then detain him to test the brothers. Let's take a minute and look at verse five, because this is the detail that some people might miss or gloss over. Joseph tells his servant, this is what you're supposed to go tell to the brothers when you find the cup. Verse four, "Go follow after the men and when you overtake them, say to them, why have you returned evil for good?" Why have you stolen my silver cup? "Is it not from this that my Lord drinks? Does he not indeed use it for divination? You have done wrong in doing this." Gentlemen, when you hear the word divination, what comes to mind?
- Hank Smith: 00:38:55 I think of [Oliver Cowdery](#) automatically, he had the gift of the divining rod.
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:39:00 John, how about you?
- John Bytheway: 00:39:02 Yeah, same thing. I was thinking of he uses it to discern things like water underground, but there must be something. What does an Egyptian use it for?
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:39:12 I'm glad you asked that, John, because I have some notes on it here that we can look at very briefly. Let's point out there's a little bit of ambiguity in this story whether Joseph is actually using the cup for divination. It's part of the ploy to get the brothers in trouble. You could potentially read it as saying, Joseph is just using this as a pretense to get the brothers in trouble, so he's not really using it for divination. He's telling the

servant, tell them I use it for divination to make the cup appear special. It's possible to read it that way. I personally actually hope that he was using it for divination, precisely because Oliver Cowdery, he has a gift of a rod. The Doctrine and Covenants says, Joseph Smith is using seer stones. Other prophets, ancient and modern use these devices that we now consider quote sort of magic.

00:39:57 We won't get into that, that's a whole other subject. It would be within continuity if Joseph is using a silver divining cup for some purpose. Let me read a few notes I have on the practice of divination in ancient Egypt. At its most basic, divination is, again, we call it quote unquote magic. I try to avoid that terminology for different reasons, but we'll say it is an attempt to use to access divine knowledge through supernatural means. Maybe we can put it that way. Typically, you are going to use objects to penetrate the unseen spiritual realm and communicate with supernatural forces to give you knowledge or information. In the ancient world, there's lots of forms of divination that you can do. My favorite form is extispicy, which is reading animal entrails. So you slaughter an animal and you read their entrails and you're supposed to unlock secrets of the universe.

00:40:48 We look at that in kind of our minds blow. The punchline is here, in the ancient world, the ancient mindset, if you believe that the gods control all aspects of the elements and the cosmos, then clearly if there's something out of line in natural things around you, that must be a divine sign of something significant. So if you cut open an animal and you look at their entrails and there's something weird going on with the entrails, that has to be some kind of a sign that a God has stepped into the natural world and influenced it that way for some purpose. That's kind of the baseline assumption for how a lot of this works in antiquity. With that said, let me read a couple of notes here from our friend and colleague at BYU, [John Gee](#), who's a fantastic Egyptologist. He has a great article from the religious study center called Clothes and Cups: The Tangible World of Joseph.

00:41:40 This was published in the book From Creation to Sinai, the Old Testament through the lens of the Restoration, and it's for free on the Religious Study Center website. I recommend our listeners check that out. Quote, "From the Egyptian perspective, using a cup for divination is a known technique. The normal term for a drinking cup in the middle kingdom that's Egypt around the time of 2200 to 1800 BC, middle kingdom is hnw, which in Joseph's time can refer to a shallow bowl, but is

normally used for a generic container. This, however, is precisely the term used in text describing divination cup, hnw. Egyptian texts describing divination through cups reveal a variety of procedures, and they date long after Joseph's time. Most of these cups, though, are said to be copper or pottery, not silver, but that probably reflects the impoverished times in which these late accounts were written. These practices are thought to be much older than the text describing them."

00:42:40 Here we go. I'm gonna read the descriptions. In your mind's eye, ladies and gentlemen, picturing maybe this is what Joseph is doing, either actually or he's pretending to do for the brothers, "the individual is dressed in clean clothes, would have his face bent over the vessel, which was filled with oil, his lights closed while praying. Upon opening his eyes, he would see a light in which the gods would appear and answer questions. In the Egyptian divinatory use, the cup, often given as a young boy or to a young boy, is a means to open the eyes of the user to reveal things otherwise invisible to the eyes." Does that sound familiar, gentlemen?

John Bytheway: 00:43:21 Yes.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:43:21 The fact that in our tradition too, we called Joseph of Egypt a seer. That's language from the Book of Mormon. This is why, again, I hope he's using a cup for divination, but look at this. He closes his eyes, he says a prayer, he opens it, and he sees a light, and in that light, God is able to appear and answer questions. This should be ringing alarm bells for, like, Urim and Thummim, seer stone interpreters, Brother of Jared, shining rocks, things like that. Yeah, we're kind of in that world, that world of divination of divine knowledge coming through physical means, cups, stones, sticks, things like that.

Hank Smith: 00:43:56 Wow. It's interesting to me, if you look at the history of the church, that here are people joining the church early on with Joseph Smith. They know the Bible. It's not odd to them. It's probably amazing to them that here we have a seer. If I read the Bible, I'm going, oh, this is familiar. Interesting how many critics today will look back at early history of the church and think, isn't that crazy? While the people, the converts of that day were thinking, this is proof to me.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:44:28 Yeah. If you're going to get mad at Joseph Smith for using stones as seer stones, if you're going to get mad at Oliver Cowdery for having a sprout or a rod that he's using for divination, you have to get mad at Moses for having a magic stick that he uses to perform miracles. You have to get mad at

the ancient Israelites for having a magic box called the Ark of the Covenant they use to split the river Jordan and perform miracles. You have to get mad at Jesus for spitting in dirt and using that as clay to anoint a man's eyes to heal a blind man. You have to get mad at Elijah and Elisha for having a magic coat that they use to go around to perform miracles. Yeah, I'm being a little facetious here, but you get the punchline. If you take for granted the world of the miraculous and the world of the divine, then who am I to say that God can't use stones or sticks or clothing or boxes of acacia wood in the case of the Doctrine and Covenants or spit in mud with Jesus to a blind man.

00:45:22 It's not my job to step in and say you are or not allowed to use certain physical objects or instruments to channel God's power to perform the miraculous. Like you, Hank, I don't take that criticism too seriously, at least from our friends of other faith traditions that may, oh yeah, I don't have a problem. Magic rocks in the Bible, magic cups in the Bible, no problem. Magic rocks in 1829, well, I don't know about that guy. Is that, that seems a little bit too much, right? Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Hank Smith: 00:45:46 Especially from a resurrected Lord. Here we have someone who died, came back to life, is never gonna die and can leave the planet at will.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:45:54 Walk through walls.

Hank Smith: 00:45:55 Yeah. I'm pretty sure he knows stuff we don't know.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:45:58 We've had our little mini divination lesson here on the followHIM podcast. Let's just jump down. Again, we know the story. They find the silver cup in Benjamin's sack and they're going to take him back, going to arrest him. This is exactly what Judah did not want to have happen. Let's look at Judah's response to this, because there's a lot that reveals about Judah in his plea for Benjamin's release. Judah steps in. He says to Joseph, "Oh my Lord, let your servant speak a word in my Lord's ear, and do not be angry with your servant, for you are like Pharaoh himself." Then he goes and he hashes everything about the dad and we have to go bring the brother back and so forth. Let's go to verse 30. "Now therefore, when I come to your servant, my father and the boy is not with us, then as his life is bound up in the boy's life, when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die. And your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant and our father with sorrow to sheol to the underworld. For your servant became surety for the boy to my father, saying, if I do not bring him back to you, then I will bear the blame in the sight of my father all my life." Verse 33, "Now

therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my Lord in place of the boy and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the suffering that would come upon my father." That is a powerful speech from Judah and it is a beautiful encapsulation of the ministry that Christ performed for us stepping in as our intercessor in times of certain doom. Like Judah, he stepped in to rescue and save us.

00:47:49 I love this, and we see the full character transformation of Judah. He went from the guy who was willing to sell his younger brother into slavery because he hated him because he was a jerk, to now he's going to save his other younger brother after a certain doom was going to befall him. And he even says, "I am a surety for the boy, so let the boy go back with his brothers and I will be a slave to my Lord in the place of the boy." This is great. On the narrative level, it's beautiful. On the theological level, it's beautiful. Hopefully, again, as Christians and Latter-day Saints, we can see the ultimate Christ-like expression that Judah is now stepping into and inhabiting by acting this way. There's a great Christological reading of this that we can take from that.

Hank Smith: 00:48:34 Christ is from the House of Judah.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:48:38 Indeed. There's another nice little element there to that, right?

Hank Smith: 00:48:42 How can I go up to my Father? And you can put your name in there. How can I go up to the Father and John not be with me? How can I go to the Father and Stephen not be with me? I can't. Take me instead so they can go to the Father. It's beautiful. Take me instead.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:49:01 Well, maybe we should get to the big climax of the story, which is chapter 45. We've talked about Judah stepping in as this Christlike figure to be an intercessory figure for Benjamin. I love how chapter 45 verse one begins. "Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood before him." I mean, come on, give the guy a break. He has a lot going on there. He's already had to once before go to the other room to have a good cry to come back. He can no longer control it. And I love the fact that it's in response to Judah stepping up and proving his repentance. Remember, this is the guy that sold Joseph into slavery, that led that. Now he's stepping up and saying I will look after my younger brother. He sends everybody else away. Verse two, he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it and the household of Pharaoh heard it, so this is a right proper cry.

- 00:49:50 It's been bottled up for, what, 20-something years now at this point? Verse four. Joseph came to his brothers, he said, come closer to me. And they came closer and he said, I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. Let's take a minute there and unpack that. There's two things happening here at once. Number one, Joseph identifies that what the brothers did was evil. He calls them out for their evil actions. We don't wanna overlook that. This is not just all's well that ends well and we sort of gloss over this horrible thing that the brothers did.
- Hank Smith: 00:50:33 Who hasn't sold a sibling? Come on. Like, no, this is a big deal.
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:50:38 It's a big deal. You sold your brother Joseph into Egypt, but... So he acknowledges the evil there, right? But do not be distressed or angry because God has sent me to preserve life. So in other words, even in this moment of evil, this evil action that the brothers did, God stepped in and fulfilled it in a sort of redemptive role. My favorite way to describe this is what Lehi tells his son Jacob in 2 Nephi 2. God will consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain. This doesn't negate the evil, the affliction. Rather, the point of the story here, the big moral message is that even in that evil, God is always two or three steps ahead and he will, I like to say he will alchemize it for our good if we have faith and if we have trust in him. It's not just, oh, great. We're all friends again. Oh, no problem, guys. Water under the bridge. No, we have to call out evil for what it is, but we can recognize that God will take the evil around us, the suffering around us, and he can consecrate it for us for a bigger, better noble cause.
- John Bytheway: 00:51:43 And theologically, we can ask, did God predestine that to happen or did God allow them to use their agency badly? And I think it's the latter, but he can always find a way to bring good out of it.
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:51:57 I like that too, John. I think that's right. I think we as Latter-day Saints, we would shy away from any discussion of, like, predestination, the idea that the brothers, they had no agency, no choice in the matter. They just were little puppets, gods puppets on the strings doing all these things. We would understand and say that even when people exercise their agency wickedly or unrighteously or evilly, that will not frustrate or thwart God's power in his purposes that he has for his children. Yes, absolutely. I love also what's happening. So after he says this, okay, I'm your brother, you sold me Egypt. The next thing he asks from the brothers is to go and get dad. Verse nine,

hurry up, go to my father and say to him, thus says your son Joseph. Wait, Joseph's alive? So he wants him to go back and tell their dad that Joseph is alive.

00:52:51 "God has made me Lord of all Egypt, come down to me, do not delay." You can see Joseph's very sincere concern for his family, both for his brothers, especially Benjamin and for his dad. Remember when they came back before? Oh, so yeah, this old man of yours back in Canaan, he's still alive? And then the next thing, go and tell dad I am alive and you need to come down here into Egypt. Verse 10, "You shall settle the land of Goshen. You shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks and your herds that you have." Okay they're gonna go do that. One more thing here to mention. Again, Joseph, he's a little softy here. Verse 14, "He fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept while Benjamin wept upon his neck and he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them after that his brothers talked with him." This is sincere, powerful healing and reconciliation. I don't know if I have it in me to forgive my siblings if they sold me into slavery, right, if I'm being totally honest. Here, it absolutely is on display with Joseph. It's another powerful, pathos-filled moment in the story. Notice the brothers are crying with him. This is real, true, sincere reconciliation of the family. I think it's beautiful.

John Bytheway: 00:54:04 I think the stories that touch us the most are when they're family stories like this. When the Book of Mormon begins with a family with all sorts of problems and there's attempts at reconciliation and they're always trying to do that. Here's one that it turns out that they're all weeping on each other and talking. Reconciliation's a good word there, Hank, because it's a theological word of what the Savior's gonna do for all of us.

Hank Smith: 00:54:30 Yeah. There's an older talk that I remember from 2003. I'm sad that 2003 is an older talk. It was given by [David Sorensen](#), who you might recognize that name John, he is one of our benefactors, he's the father of Steve Sorensen, both of whom have passed away. He tells the story of Chet and Walt. It was over water, which is a pretty big deal in the farming community. Here's what Elder Sorensen said. I grew up in a farming town where water was the lifeblood of the community. I remember the people of our society constantly watching, worrying and praying over the rain, irrigation rights, and water in general. Sometimes my children chide me. They say they never knew someone so preoccupied with rain. I tell them I suppose that's true, because where I grew up, the rain was more than a preoccupation. It was a matter of survival.

- 00:55:31 So he says, "In that type of environment, two men lived near our mountain pasture, whom I will call Chet and Walt. These two neighbors began to quarrel over water from the irrigation ditch they shared. It was innocent enough at first, but over the years, the two men allowed their disagreements to turn into resentment and then arguments, even to the point of threats. One July morning, both men felt they were once again short of water. Each went to the ditch to see what had happened. Each in his own mind reckoning the other had stolen his water. They arrived at the headgate at the same time. Angry words were exchanged, a scuffle ensued. Walt was a large man with great strength. Chet was small, wiry, and tenacious. In the heat of the scuffle, the shovels the men were carrying were used as weapons. Walt accidentally struck one of Chet's eyes with the shovel, leaving him blind in that eye.
- 00:56:25 Months and years passed, yet Chet could not forget nor forgive. The anger that he had felt over losing his eye boiled inside him and his hatred grew more intense. One day, Chet went to his barn, took down the gun from its rack, got on his horse and rode to the headgate of the ditch. He put a dam in the ditch and diverted the water away from Walt's farm, knowing that Walt would soon come to see what had happened. Then Chet slipped into the brush and waited. When Walt appeared, Chet shot him dead. Then he got on his horse, went back to his home and called the sheriff to inform him that he had just shot Walt. My father was asked to be on the jury that tried Chet for murder. Father disqualified himself because he was a longtime friend of both men and their families.
- 00:57:09 Chet was tried and convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. After many years, Chet's wife came to my father and asked if he would sign a petition to the governor, asking for clemency for her husband whose health was now broken after serving so many years in the state penitentiary. Father signed the petition. A few nights later, two of Walt's grown sons appeared at our door. They were very angry and upset. They said that because Father had signed the petition, many others had signed. They asked Father to have his name withdrawn from the petition. He said no. He felt that Chet was a broken and sick man. He had suffered these many years in prison for that terrible crime. He wanted to see Chet have a decent funeral and burial beside his family. Walt's sons whirled in anger and said, if he is released from prison, we will see that harm comes to him and his family. Chet was eventually released and allowed to come home to die with his family.

- 00:58:07 Fortunately, there was no further violence between the families. My father often lamented how tragic it was that Chet and Walt these two neighbors and boyhood friends had fallen captive to their anger and let it destroy their lives. He goes on to give this great talk. You can read the whole thing. It's called Forgiveness Will Change Bitterness To Love and guess which scripture character he brings up in the rest of the talk? Joseph of Egypt. Joseph's will to forgive changed bitterness to love. Towards the end of the talk, Elder Sorensen says, "This is not to say that forgiveness is easy. When someone has hurt us or those we care about, the pain can almost be overwhelming. It can feel as if the pain or the injustice is the most important thing in the world and that we have no choice but to seek vengeance. But Christ, the Prince of Peace teaches us a better way.
- 00:59:01 It can be very difficult to forgive someone the harm they've done us, but when we do, we open ourselves up to a better future. No longer does someone else's wrongdoing control our course. When we forgive others, it frees us to choose how we will live our own lives. Forgiveness means that problems of the past no longer dictate our destinies and we can focus on the future with God's love in our hearts. Tragic story, but a beautiful message of how incredible Joseph's decision is. And this is decades of pain that he suffered.
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:59:38 Yeah, and by all rights, Joseph is entitled to enact his revenge on his brothers. I don't think anybody would necessarily fault him if he did everything he could to meet their evil with justice. Much like Judah being a Christ-like figure, standing in and giving intercession for Benjamin. Joseph is also a Christ-like figure here in how he meets evil with mercy and with reconciliation. Not to excuse that evil or to justify it, but rather to point out the point of the story which we've discussed is that even with that evil, even when people act wickedly, the Atonement could override that and can create that healing that we need to resolve that. That's a beautiful illustration and story for the principle we're trying to talk here, so thank you for that, Hank.
- John Bytheway: 01:00:22 And I love how Joseph tested their hearts to see where they were at. Giving Judah the opportunity to come forth that way and off himself, I think that must have been healing for Joseph just to see that happen.
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 01:00:36 Yeah, I think so too, for sure.
- Hank Smith: 01:00:38 We looked at chapter 44, verse 34 as something the Savior might say, how can I go up to my Father and this person not be

with me? I think it's very similar. You can hear the Savior in verse four of chapter 45, "Come near to me. I pray you. Come unto me. Therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that you sinned, for God did send me to preserve your life." Very much a shadow or a type of Christ in both of these brothers.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 01:01:09 Absolutely.



- John Bytheway: 00:00:01 And now, on to part two with Dr. Stephen Smoot, Genesis 42 to 50.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:07 Stephen, what do we wanna do next?
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:00:09 Well, maybe we can just take a few minutes to discuss chapters 46 and 47. A lot of this is standard narrative. We wanna get the family down into Egypt. We're gonna set up for Jacob and Joseph dying and the Exodus and all that. But there are still a few things to note here. I like what happens in the opening of chapter 46, where when Israel had set out to his journey to come down to Egypt, he has a vision of God. God appears to him in a nighttime vision. You'll notice here the language parallels the language God uses to talk with Abraham, his grandpa. I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt. Remember, Abraham also went down to Egypt at one point. For I will make of you a great nation there. Hey, there you go.
- 00:00:52 That's Abrahamic covenant language. I myself will go down with you to Egypt and I will also bring you up again and Joseph's own hand shall close your eyes. That's pretty beautiful reassurance from God. He's telling Jacob to go down to this strange foreign land that is hostile and there's uncertainty and there's a famine looming. And God reassures him, be not afraid to go down to Egypt. I will go there with you. If you and your personal life are feeling like kind of intimidated to go down into whatever your personal Egypt might be, it could be you have to literally move for a job or for school, you're nervous to go on your mission. Perhaps there's something personally happening in your life that you have to descend down into Egypt as it were to get there. You can take with you this reassurance from the Lord in these verses that he will be with you.
- 00:01:41 You do not have to be afraid. And he will make of you a great nation and give you blessings. I love the reassurance. Joseph's own hand will close your eyes. You're going to see your son Joseph again, and he will be there when the time comes for you

to die. Sometimes our eyes glaze over when we look at the big lists of names of people going to places. But this is actually important for two reasons. Number one, this is what I like to call covenant bookkeeping. When you give all the names of all the descendants of Israel and who's going where. God is keeping tabs on where his covenant people are going. These individuals, these names, these families, they are important to him, and they are important to our storyteller to make sure that we know that your name is not forgotten. Your name matters.

00:02:25 You matter as an individual. I see that happening there on sort of a literary and thematic level, again, covenant bookkeeping, if we want to call it. It also is setting up the Exodus because we're going to go down into Egypt as a big family and we're going to leave Egypt as a big family. No one is being left behind. I also would point out that we get in verse 27 the children of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were them, there were two, Ephraim and Manasseh, we'll talk about that. So even Joseph's grandkids who are half Egyptian, they're a part of the equation here. They're not going to be left out. They get there, the famine hits. This is, again, the big payoff for having Joseph be the vizier and have him be the administrator and heaven be wise and preparing for the famine.

00:03:09 The brothers meet Pharaoh in the first opening couple verses. They get an audience with Mr. President, the Pharaoh there of Egypt. The Hebrew Bible tends to treat Pharaoh as a personal name like it's, Hello, I'm Mr. Pharaoh. Pharaoh, of course, from the Egyptian Peraa, Great House. It's an honorific title for the King. Originally, it's an honorific title for like his administration, like the Great House of the Court of the King. We say today, the White House made an announcement saying this. What they really mean is the President made an announcement. That's where we get Pharaoh turns into kind of a personal name. It becomes through autonomy a name for the king himself. Although originally, it's an honorific title for his administration or his court. If we are in the second intermediate period, around 1500 BC, and if this is the Eastern Nile Delta Goshen, there's actually a decent chance that the Pharaoh here is of Semitic stock, of Canaanite stock like Joseph and his family are.

00:04:05 Around this time, 1600 BC or something like that, 1700 BC, you have an incursion of Canaanites, Semitic speaking Canaanite people we would say. Eastern Levantine Asiatic peoples, they come down into Egypt. They have a big war with the Egyptians and they establish a dynasty in Northern Egypt, lower Egypt, the Nile Delta. That might explain why they're able to meet with Pharaoh in the first place. Again, we can't know for sure, we're

speculating, but that's an interesting idea to me. Perhaps Pharaoh is cool to have them come meet him because they're ethnically related. They're kindred in some regard. The last thing to mention in chapter 47 real quick, let's just take a few minutes to talk about Joseph's land management policy. This starts in verse 13. The reason why I wanna talk about this is because this might make some people uncomfortable, some of the language here of what's going on, but let's make sure we understand it.

00:05:00 We have a crisis, we have a famine. How are we going to survive this [famine](#)? It's really common during disaster economics to want to engage in top down centralization from the government to make sure everything is running smoothly as a way to ensure survival. The way it's described in the text here is basically Pharaoh through Joseph is going to become effectively the landlord of all of Egypt, including all the farmland. The state is going to organize the farming and the granaries and the taxation on the farms. When you look at verses like 20 and 21, it says this, Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. They had a buyback program. Go buy the land. All the Egyptians sold their fields because the famine was severe upon them and the land became Pharaohs. As for the people, he made slaves of them. That's the NRSV, the New Revised Standard Version.

00:05:55 I think King James has something else, but he made slaves of them from one end of Egypt to the other. People will stop there and they'll say, wait a second. I can't believe that Joseph of Egypt would turn people into slaves by forcing to buy their land and take over the farming industry in Egypt. We just need to be very clear that this is an extraordinary crisis they're trying to survive. It's a famine. Slavery, it's not in the sense of like chattel slavery where you have no freedoms, you know, and you're gonna be transported around and the horrible stuff that we associate with slavery. It's not really that level of slavery. It goes on to explain basically that you're going to give 20% of all of your farm and the produce of the farm to the state. You'll stay on the land and work it, but you are compelled through taxation, through quote becoming slaves, as it were, you are compelled to give up a portion of that back to the state to ensure survival.

00:06:48 So what I'm getting at here is when we see verses like this, we can't really map this onto modern social or political or economic things that people argue about. This isn't really capitalism versus socialism. It's not really talking about that. This is an extraordinary circumstance that Joseph asked to step in with a high down centralized command of the government to take

care of the people and to ensure survival. It's for this specific instance.

Hank Smith: 00:07:12 Stephen, this is just what you said it would be. It's both informative. I'm learning about ancient Egypt and scripture, and I'm also learning how to forgive and reconcile. I love this. Let's keep going.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:07:27 Well, great. Let's maybe then talk about Jacob's patriarchal blessings to his kids. Lots of important stuff here, and as Latter-day Saints, this should resonate very deeply with us. At the end of chapter 47, Jacob realizes that he's knocking on death's door here. He says in verse 29, "When the time of Israel's death drew near, he called his son, Joseph, and said to him, if I found favor with you, put your hand under my thigh." Abraham does it with his servant back in Genesis, I think it's 15. This is sort of ritual symbol we're not sure about. "Put it under my thigh and promise to deal loyally and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt. He does not want to be buried in Egypt. He wants to be back with his ancestors in the land of Canaan. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in a burial place." Joseph says he's gonna do that.

00:08:11 We're setting up the blessings that are coming now in chapters 48 and 49. Before we get to there, gentlemen, as Latter-day Saints, we should be thinking of somebody else who was about to die. And so he brought his kids together and he gave them blessings and promises, and it was a whole kind of ordeal. You know what I'm talking about?

Hank Smith: 00:08:29 That would be Lehi.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:08:31 Indeed, Lehi. I think it is a deliberate, mirror narrative pattern happening here. The aged patriarch is about to die, so he calls his family to give them his final benediction, his final blessing. In fact, I think that Lehi probably deliberately and Nephi deliberately patterned their narrative of that after Jacob's example. Let's look at his patriarchal blessing. By the way, you can correct me if I'm wrong here. My wife mentioned this to me. When she received her patriarchal blessing, her patriarch told her. I can give you your capital P patriarchal blessing that gets recorded in the church, but he told her that your father can absolutely give you personal patriarchal blessings that are just as real and powerful and binding for you as I as your patriarch. I just pulled up here the church's [handbook](#) on giving blessings of comfort and counsel, including father's blessings. It says that Melchizedek Priesthood holders may give blessings of comfort and counsel to family members.

	00:09:29	And then it says, "A father who holds Melchizedek Priesthood may give father's blessings to his children. These may be especially helpful when children go to school, go on missions, get married, enter military service, or face special challenges. Parents encourage their children to seek father's blessings in times of need", which would describe our story here as the family is suffering through a famine and trying to survive. "Father's blessings may be recorded for personal use." That's what I was sort of getting at here. The key difference between a patriarchal blessing in the formal sense and a father's blessing is who records it and what it is used for. It says a Melchizedek Priesthood holder does not need to seek permission or approval from a priesthood leader to give a blessing of comfort and counsel or a father's blessing. To learn more about that, how we do it in the church today, it's chapter 18, section 14.1 of the church handbook.
	00:10:21	Imagine with Jacob here, it's sort of a combination of both a patriarchal blessing in the formal sense and a father's blessing in the informal sense. We're kind of bridging that gap here. The first people that Jacob is going to bless are, interesting enough, it's his grandkids. It's Ephraim and Manasseh. This is now in chapter 48. First of all, we all know who Ephraim and Manasseh are. They are Joseph's children. Are they full-blooded Israelites or not, gentlemen?
John Bytheway:	00:10:50	Got some Egyptian in them.
Hank Smith:	00:10:51	They have some Egyptian. Yeah, an Egyptian mother.
Bro. Stephen Smoot:	00:10:54	Indeed. Their mother Asenath is an Egyptian. They are half Israelite, half Egyptian. That's actually important for us, both in the story and today, and we'll discuss sort of the doctrinal significance. Because what that means is Ephraim, Manasseh need to be adopted into the House of Israel, do they not? They need to be adopted into this covenant. You remember that Isaac, he's not able to just go marry any woman that he wants. He specifically goes back to the homeland of his ancestors to find a woman next of kin as it were, someone in their covenant lineage. You have to adopt the kids back into the family. That's important for them. Well, that's what we're gonna do in chapter 48. We're going to have Ephraim, Manasseh brought to Jacob, Israel, in order to adopt them into the House of Israel. In a minute, we can talk about why Ephraim is so important, why Manasseh is so important, but let's just make sure we know what's going on in the story. He brings them there. Pop quiz gentlemen, who's the older brother? Ephraim or Manasseh.

John Bytheway:	00:11:49	Manasseh.
Hank Smith:	00:11:49	Manasseh.
Bro. Stephen Smoot:	00:11:50	Manasseh's the older brother. By all rights, he should be receiving the birthright inheritance. But that's not really what happens. It's this really interesting imagery. So read with me here. Verse eight, Joseph brings his sons to Israel. When Israel saw them, he said, "Who are these?" Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons whom God has given me here." He said, "Bring them, please, that I may bless them." Now, the eyes of Israel were dim with age. We could not see well. That's important for our story. He's near blind. Joseph brought them near to him and he kissed them and embraced them. That's a nice, loving detail. Joseph's a nice guy. Israel said to Joseph, "I did not expect to see your face, and here God has let me see your children also." He removes them from his father's knees, suggesting they're probably little kids, maybe.
	00:12:38	He bows himself, and he takes them both, and here in verse 13. Ephraim is at his right hand toward Israel's left. Ephraim's on the left hand. And Manasseh on his, Joseph's, left hand towards Israel's right hand. Manasseh's on the right, Ephraim was on the left. Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he's going to give them their blessing in verses 15 and 16, echoes the Abrahamic blessing and the Abrahamic covenant very closely. We can just read it. He blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac walked. The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day. The angel who has redeemed me from all harm bless the boys and in them let my name be perpetuated and the name of my ancestors, Abraham and Isaac, let them grow into a multitude on the earth." That's a nice blessing to give your kids.
	00:13:39	That's a textbook, Abrahamic blessing, may they be a great multitude, may they be a blessing. Here's the reaction. Here's the kicker. What's Joseph's reaction to this beautiful blessing, this very intimate moment? It's very nice, it's very loving, very powerful. Verse 17, "When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him." Joseph's not happy about that. That's his immediate reaction. He took his father's hand and removed it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. Joseph said to his father, "Not so my father, since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head." Joseph thinks dad's having a senior moment here. He's old, he's blind. He must be mixed up, you know, which kid is right there.

Dad, I'm gonna help you. I'm gonna cross your hands and put them on. And Jacob's response, verse 19," His father refused and said, I know my son.

00:14:31 I know. He also shall become a people and he also shall be great, referring to Manasseh. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he and his offspring shall become a multitude of nation. He blessed them. Once again, he says it in verse 20, "By you, Israel will invoke blessings saying, God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh." He put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. We as Latter-day Saints hopefully aren't too scandalized by this because we have a figure who is the youngest brother who is kind of an upstart a little bit. In our Book of Mormon, guy by the name of Nephi, who's going to inherit all the blessings of his father as opposed to his older brothers. Also, this of course parallels Joseph himself. Joseph is the younger brother, and this parallels the fact that he will be the main character of the story here, just as Ephraim will be, even though he's the younger brother too.

John Bytheway: 00:15:24 Is there ever a time when the eldest son actually does get the birthright blessing?

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:15:31 We're seeing this recurring theme here, the younger brother inherits. What's going on with Ephraim and Manasseh? Why do we care about this at all as Latter-day Saints? First of all, Ephraim and Manasseh are half Egyptians. They are being adopted into the Abrahamic covenant. I love the fact that Jacob will say they are mine as much as Simeon and Reuben are mine. He is claiming them as his own covenant children. That I think is significant. It's also significant for us. If Ephraim and Manasseh are half Egyptian and half Israelite, they grew up in Egypt, they're speaking Egyptian. They probably don't speak this early dialect of Canaanite, right, that the brothers are speaking. They don't look like them. They don't dress like them. They don't eat like them. They are going to be different from the other kids, from the other members of the House of Israel.

00:16:19 What I see in this story is a great reassurance to those who have joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from different backgrounds, different cultures, different ethnicities, who speak different languages. You do not have to come from pioneer ancestry. You don't have to grow up eating green jello and funeral potatoes. You don't have to go to BYU and root for the Cougars, although you should. You don't have to do that. You are as much a covenant member of the House of Israel if you do not grow up on the Wasatch Front, if you don't have white skin and a short haircut like I do speaking English. This is a

powerful reminder that the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant are available to everybody, either by lineal descent as a member of the House of Israel or through adoption into the House of Israel.

00:17:06 Those blessings were promised to Ephraim and Manasseh. These half Egyptian, half Israelites, they are promised to you despite what your language is, despite what you look like, your culture, your clothes. That does not matter to Jacob. These are his kids as much as my kids are my kids, is what he's saying in this chapter, and they're adopted in. I think that's beautiful for us. I think that goes nicely with the statement in the Book of Mormon that all are alike unto God and he esteems them all together. I love our late [President Russell M. Nelson](#), dearly departed President Nelson has emphasized recently that these blessings are universal for all of God's children. Your standing before God does not depend on the color of your skin or what language you speak or your ethnicity or your culture. It depends on if you are righteously following his commandments and keeping those covenants. Chapter 48 here is a beautiful reassurance of that.

Hank Smith: 00:17:55 Well said. That's not something that I regularly think about, but I bet it is something that someone else might be listening going, thank you for saying that. I've maybe always felt like maybe a second class citizen in the House of Israel, and you are not. You are as much a child of the covenant as anyone else.

John Bytheway: 00:18:13 Yeah, and look where the church is growing. I remember when the announcement was made that there were more members of the church outside of North America than inside, and that was a long time ago. Now, the Church News recently put out those maps, which countries have the most members as a percentage of their population. I was so excited to see the Philippines climbing to number 10. It was like, What? When I was there as a missionary, there was one temple in Manila under construction. I think we're at, is it 13 now? If I get it wrong, I know somebody will email me, but there were four missions, now there's more than 22. So that's a good thing to remember. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:19:00 If someone's listening and they're thinking, what are you guys talking about again? Let's review. The idea is that way back in Genesis 12, and probably even before that, because Abraham says he's seeking the blessings of the Fathers, God made a promise to Abraham that if you are in his family, his descendants would be a blessing to all the earth, and they would receive certain blessings if they kept God's

commandments. If they kept their covenants, if they repented when they did not, they would receive blessings and also be a blessing, to bless the whole earth with this same knowledge. The lineage continues through Isaac, through Rebekah, through Jacob, and Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah, through these 12 sons. You can see that what Stephen's walking us through the same blessings. Let's say you're not a direct descendant. I don't know if anybody could actually even trace if they were a direct descendant of the House of Israel, but you joined the church, you get baptized, you are in the House of Israel, you are in this family.

- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:20:08 Yeah, the covenant adoption of people into the House of Israel that's prominent in Paul's teachings, that's prominent in the Book of Mormon that Gentiles or non-Israelites, they can join the House of Israel to join in the work of the Father in the last days to gather Israel, and it's through the gospel and ordinances of Jesus Christ that we make that happen. Without that fuller perspective, this Abrahamic Covenant in the Hebrew Bible it mostly sort of pertains like land inheritance. I'm grateful that we have added revelation and perspective from the Restoration that says that these blessings in the book of Genesis of land and posterity and safety, that's all really important, but more important are the eternal blessings that come from this blessings of salvation and exaltation that come from keeping and making these covenants. Section 132, the Doctrine and Covenants discusses this Abraham chapter two when Abraham receives his blessing, it expands on this. The blessings of salvation or life eternal come with this covenant. Well said there, Hank. Thank you for helping contextualize that being here in chapter 48, especially.
- Hank Smith: 00:21:10 I have a nephew. His name is Chad Savage. He's adopted into our family. It's funny to him how frequently people will say, oh, you look just like your father, your grandfather, and he'll say, thank you. Very much a part of our family. He's our own.
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:21:26 Yeah. Just a couple more things I'd like to add if we can on this chapter. What are the respective roles of Ephraim and Manasseh? On the one hand, this story is partly trying to explain why Ephraim later becomes so prominent in ancient Israelite history. Ephraim is going to come to, like, dominate the northern tribes of Israel, the northern kingdom of Israel. Ephraim is going to become a shorthand for the northern kingdom amongst Israelite prophets. It does explain why he rises to prominence in that regard. Also, for us as Latter-day Saints, this is important because it's Ephraim and Manasseh, according to our Book of Mormon, who is Lehi a descendant of?

Son of Manasseh. So we have, in our Book of Mormon, a preservation of Manasseh as the covenant partner with Ephraim. I hope that we won't take away from this that your lineage in the church is like a badge of honor.

00:22:18 I'm a Benjaminite, I'm an Ephraimite, and that means I'm so special. No, no, no. What it means is you have a responsibility. And the different tribes, which we'll get to here in chapter 49, are going to have different roles they're going to inhabit. Whatever tribe you're in, you have a part in the kingdom, a part in the House of Israel as part of this great work we're engaged with. That's the message of chapter 48. It's not that you're special or extra righteous or whatever. It's that with great covenant blessings comes great covenant responsibility, if we want to put it in that way. One more thing I do wanna add, we have some significant expansions on this in the Joseph Smith Translation. Both 48 and then 50, which we'll look at, but in chapter 48, we have these expansions in the JST. We don't need to read all of it necessarily.

00:22:59 Rather, what happens is what Joseph Smith restores is this idea that as part of this blessing that Jacob gave to Ephraim and Manasseh is a charge and a promise that their descendants will spiritually save Israel in the Latter-days. We can look at this here. This is like JST, let's look at 9, 10, and 11 in the JST. You can, of course, find this in your footnotes. Read with me along here, verse nine. "In delivering my people" This is Jacob speaking, "thy brethren, from famine which was sore in the land, wherefore the God of thy father shall bless thee, and the fruit of thy loins, that they shall be blessed above all thy brethren and above thy father's house." Verse 10, "For thou hast prevailed." That's like President Nelson, let God prevail. "Thou hast prevailed and thy father's house hath bowed down unto thee, even as it was shown unto thee, before thou was sold into Egypt by the hands of thy brethren.

00:23:55 Wherefore, thy brethren shall bow down unto thee from generation to generation, unto the fruit of thy loins forever." This is verse 11. "Thou shalt be a light unto my people to deliver them in the days of their captivity from bondage and to bring salvation unto them when they are altogether bowed down under sin." That's a beautiful and important expansion on this blessing to know that Joseph and his children, Ephraim and Manasseh and their descendants are going to be instrumental in bringing salvation to the House of Israel. Both we might say literally in their literal restoration in the Latter-days, but also spiritually in bringing them the gospel. And of course, gentlemen, as good self-respecting Ephraimites, what's our job

to do? It is to bring the gospel to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. At least that's what I was told in my patriarchal blessing when I was declared to be the lineage of Ephraim, I was told it's your job to preach the gospel. That is one of the primary responsibilities that Ephraim is going to have to fulfill this prophecy.

Hank Smith: 00:24:55 Yeah. And I know that there are people out there who are maybe not from Ephraim nor Manasseh and they say, well, what am I supposed to do? Well, right now, we're all doing the same thing. We are trying to find Israel using the Book of Mormon right as our tool. We are trying to find Israel and remind them of who they are and bring them in. As John Bytheway likes to say, we are still in the gathering the gatherers phase. We're looking for the House of Israel and they will respond to the Book of Mormon. I think every tribe is. Look, we're all on the same team here working together. There may be separate things that we do likely later on, but right now, I think, John, wouldn't you say? Stephen, wouldn't you say we're all in the work of missionary work trying to find the gatherers?

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:25:43 Absolutely. It's an ongoing process that will only be finished when the great Jehovah himself returns and declares the work is done, that famous statement from Joseph Smith. Up to our eyeballs in this work of gathering the gatherers of Israel. I like that.

John Bytheway: 00:25:56 You know, I've had young people ask me, well, I'm from Dan, what am I supposed to do? And they're looking in Genesis 49. I'm like, well, you can look there if you want, but look at your own patriarchal blessing. That's gonna be more current, more personal for you. And like you said, Hank, go back to Abrahamic Covenant. We're gonna try to bless all the families of the earth and the greatest blessing we can offer them is binding our families together with temple covenants.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:26:22 I have a really profound story to highlight everything we've been talking about here, the gathering of Israel and why it's significant. The story comes by way of my wife, Amberlea, who served her mission in Eastern Ukraine, which from what I've heard, it's fertile ground for the gathering of Israel. This story illustrates this. I'm going to read her account of this experience that she had so that I don't mess up the details. I had her write it up for me so I get it right. This happened in August of 2012 when she was a missionary in Eastern Ukraine. Here's the story. While serving as a missionary in Ukraine, Elder Don R. Clark, a member of the 70, visited a small group of saints. Fewer than a hundred of us gathered in a modest chapel, faithful members,

missionaries, and recent converts. Nothing outwardly remarkable at first glance.

00:27:15 Partway through his remarks, Elder Clark asked how many of us had received our patriarchal blessings. Many hands went up. Then he did something I had never seen before. He began calling out the tribes of Israel slowly, deliberately in birth order. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah. As each tribe was named, individuals quietly stood one by one. Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph, including both Ephraim and Manasseh, and finally, Benjamin. By the end, every tribe of Israel was represented in that small Ukrainian chapel. What I felt in that moment was not loud or dramatic. It was weighty, sacred, ancient. It felt as though something long promised had briefly become visible. Prophecy unfolding not on a world stage, but in a quiet room filled with ordinary disciples. Later, I learned that Elder Clark shared this experience with President Boyd K. Packer, who noted that it was believed to be the first time since the scattering of Israel, nearly 3,000 years ago, that all 12 tribes had been represented in a single gathering. Abraham's faith created a covenant family, and that family, scattered, preserved, and remembered, stood gathered before my eyes. And then she concluded with her testimony. I know the Lord continues this gathering slowly, one by one through baptismal fonts throughout the world.

John Bytheway: 00:29:01 Thank you, Amberlea, for sharing that. We gotta get her on the podcast. That's beautiful writing.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:29:07 Absolutely.

Hank Smith: 00:29:09 When we speak of the gathering of Israel, that's something we've talked about quite a bit on our podcast, John, that when Moroni appears to Joseph Smith, he doesn't talk about restoring Christ's New Testament church, though we do that. He talks about it's time to gather Israel. This is a promise made through Isaiah 750 years before the Savior was even born. That promise to gather Israel was long forgotten after the Savior died. It wasn't very many people. In fact, I don't know if there's any talking about, hey, what about the promise God made to the House of Israel? Then a 17-year-old boy in New York prays. An angel appears, says, my name is Moroni, and it's time to gather Israel. I think the only person who hasn't forgotten this promise is Jesus. He's saying, look, I made a promise. I intend to keep it. [President Nelson](#), of course, as we all know, this was very important to him.

	00:30:10	He brought it to the forefront of our minds. I wanna read this to you. My dear brothers and sisters, these surely are the Latter-days and the Lord is hastening his work to gather Israel. That gathering is the most important thing taking place on the earth today. Think about all the important things we are watching happen on the earth today. He says, "There's nothing more important. Nothing else compares in magnitude. Nothing else compares in importance. Nothing else compares in majesty. And if you choose to, if you want to, you can be a big part of it. You can be a big part of something big, something grand, something majestic." He says, "Participating in the gathering of Israel will require some sacrifice on your part. It may even require some changes in your life. It will definitely take some of your time and energy and your God-given talents.
	00:31:06	Are you interested? Just think of the excitement and urgency of it all. Every prophet commencing with Adam has seen our day. Every prophet has talked about our day. When Israel would be gathered and the world would be prepared for the second coming of the Savior. Think of it. Of all the people who have ever lived on planet Earth, we are the ones who get to participate in this final great gathering event. How exciting is that? You were sent to Earth at this precise time, the most crucial time in the history of the world to help gather Israel. There is nothing happening on this earth now that is more important than that. There is nothing of greater consequence. Absolutely nothing. This gathering should mean everything to you. Why? This is the mission for which you were sent to earth.
John Bytheway:	00:31:58	I would add too, Hank, that he emphasized not just that we're children of God, but that we're children of the covenant. Like you said, Stephen, this is our job.
Bro. Stephen Smoot:	00:32:10	That extends us into chapter 49, which is the blessings to the rest of the kids. The rest of the sons. Chapter 49 of Genesis is really archaic Hebrew poetry. In fact, there's some argument to say that it may be one of the oldest portions of the Bible written, like that we have. These archaic poems, Exodus 15, Judges five and Genesis 49, scholars typically see this as some of our oldest portions of the Hebrew Bible. It's poetry. That means if it's very confusing to you, don't feel too bad because poetry tends to be very confusing with some of its symbolism, some of its language, benefit you to consult other translations besides the King James Bible, because the Hebrew, many places also very obscure. When I was in my PhD coursework, we actually did a whole seminar on the patriarchal narratives in Genesis. Chapter 49 is like a brick wall that you hit in terms of reading,

because trying to parse every little Hebrew word, some of it gets very obscure.

- 00:33:04 There's some corruptions in the text, some unsure readings. It may benefit you to consult different translations to see how different people render it. I do wanna point out a few things here, just to kinda lay that groundwork. One thing I love about these blessings, the literary artistry of the author of our narrator here is on display, the literary artistry of Jacob giving these blessings. Because a lot of these blessings that are given to these individual sons, there is, again, the word of the day, paronomasia. There's play on words. There is puns. He's carefully shaping this poetry using sound, using wordplay in order to convey the meaning that is attending to the name of the son. Each son, their name is evoked and the imagery of that name, the words and the sounds and the associations are used to communicate the blessing. So I'll just use a few examples that are kind of fun.
- 00:33:56 And I'll read some of the Hebrew here to give you a flavor for it of what we get here. Let's start in Judah in chapter eight. Judah's name is connected to and sounds similar to the Hebrew word for praise, yada. In Hebrew, it's Yahuda, Ata, Yodocha, Ahejah, Yadha. Did you catch that? The Yehud, Yahud, kind of that alliteration happening here. Yehuda, Ata, Yodeha, Ehiha, Yadeha. You are the praise of your brothers. Judah, you are the praise of your brothers who are praising you in your hands. There's this fun thing, this association with him, praising Judah. Basically what this is saying, and it goes on to say, Judah's naming something like praise, and so Jacob is saying, you're going to live up to your name by your brothers praising you. There's that artistry in the Hebrew happening there. Famously, of course, in Judah's blessing, we want to look at verse 10.
- 00:34:47 "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler staff from between his feet until tribute comes unto him and the obedience of the people is his." We can read this both in historical terms. The Southern kingdom of Judah will come to dominate politically with the Southern kingdom there after the kingdom splits. But of course, Christologically, we would read this as a Messianic prophecy, that ultimately, the scepter will not depart from Judah's descendant, Jesus Christ, who holds that scepter even today as the King of Kings. If we go down to verse 16, this is the blessing to Dan. Dan's name in Hebrew means judge. What we have in verse 16 is Dan Yadin Amo. Dan will dan his people. Dan will judge his people. The judge will judge. Very fun, clear alliteration there in Hebrew. Here's your Hebrew lesson for the day. There's a thing called a cognate

accusative where the same root is used as both a noun and a verb.

- 00:35:46 Think in the Book of Mormon when Lehi says, "I have dreamed a dream or in other words, I have seen a vision." Here, Dan will dan the people. The Dan, the noun will dan verb the people. So Dan will have this judgment kind of associated with him. And then probably my all time favorite verse in terms of the literary artistry in the Hebrew happening here is verse 19 with Gad. Poor Gad. Nobody thinks about Gad. I mean, we love Gad, but he gets one little verse here. He doesn't really play a big role in the rest of the story. Here's the blessing in Hebrew.
- 00:36:23 Did you hear that? The Gad sounds there in the Hebrew. Gad will be raided by raiders, but he will raid at their heels on that verb (Hebrew), to raid or to plunder or something. In other words, if you're hearing this in ancient Hebrew as the original audience, this sounds like a rhythmic battle cry or chant or something. Gad will gad the gads who gad. You can kind of hear this alliterative emphasis there. That tickles me pink that this entire verse is just this <Hebrew Gad> being used in different ways. Literally, the troops will raid the troop who troops the troops that raid him kind of thing. It's kind of a tongue twister. The last thing we can talk about is Joseph. We wanna talk about Joseph's blessing in verse 22. Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring. His branches run over a wall.
- 00:37:13 The archers fiercely attack him. They shot at him and pressed him hard, yet his bow remained taut and his arms remained agile by the hands of the mighty one of Jacob, by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel. And it goes on in that manner. Verse 26, "The blessings of your Father are stronger than the blessings of the eternal mountains, the bounties of the everlasting hills. May they be on the head of Joseph on the brow of him who is set apart from his brothers." Why is this significant? Well, Joseph's name, Yosef in Hebrew, means like to multiply, to add or to multiply. The theme of the blessing based on his name is that these blessings will be multiplied as a fruitful bough upon Joseph who will spread his branches, imagery of fertility, of fruit, things like that. This, of course, gentlemen ties in with our Book of Mormon, does it not?
- 00:38:04 With the prophecy that Joseph's seed will be preserved as a fruitful bough. We know that a remnant of the line of Joseph made it here into the New World and established themselves, in helping to fulfill this prophecy. It's beautiful, this stuff. You don't have to read the Hebrew, I hope to appreciate why these blessings are important, why they are meaningful, but it helps

to have some of this literary context in mind to know, in a lot of these cases with these sons, the blessings are being shaped on the name and the meaning of the name, and there's this artistry, the significance going in there to bring that out.

John Bytheway: 00:38:37 I love that these names have that sound and the alliteration you showed us, these hidden in plain sight things. If you're not reading it in Hebrew, which most of us are not.

Hank Smith: 00:38:47 Does that leave us Chapter 50, are we to the end of Genesis?

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:38:52 Yeah. We can wrap it up here. End of Genesis. All of this culminates in chapter 50. Jacob dies, and what was interesting is they embalm him. Verse two, we all know they turn him into a [mummy](#). Every little eight-year-old kid that's loved mummies at the museum and Egyptology, they should love this, that they embalm him. Actually, that's significant because embalming is a timely and costly process. You want to do it right. Predominantly, the mummies that we have, they're really nice mummies in museums are like royalty or high officials because they could afford to have a proper mummification. We actually have had like botched mummifications or like very poorly done mummifications. We've recovered examples of that from ancient burials if you're even lucky to get mummified. So we want to do it right. Verse two, Joseph commanded the physicians in his service to embalm their father.

00:39:38 Jacob is getting the Rolls-Royce red carpet treatment for embalming for the afterlife here. They spent 40 days doing this for that is the time required for embalming. And indeed, we have ancient Egyptian instruction manuals for how to embalm people, and it takes about that long. And the Egyptians wept for him for 70 days, so we have a mourning period. You'll notice that down in verse 15, after their dad is dead, the brothers realize that their father being dead, it says, verse 15, Joseph's brothers said, what if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong we did to him? So now that dad's out of the picture, they're worried, okay, now that he's gone, is he gonna come back and get us with a vengeance here? So they approached Joseph saying, your father gave this instruction before he died.

00:40:25 Say to Joseph, I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you. Dad said, pretty please, Joseph, forgive the brothers. Of course dad would say that. Ooh, you know, as you can see them pulling on their neck collar as they say this. "Now, therefore, please forgive the crime of the servants of God of your father." And once again, what's

Joseph's response? Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also wept and fell down before him and said, "We here are as your slaves, but Joseph said, do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me." Once again, he recognizes, even though you acted wickedly and inniquitously against me, God intended it for good in order to preserve a numerous people. That's our big punchline of this whole story.

00:41:14 It does not dismiss when people do bad things or minimize it, but God through the power of the atonement of Jesus Christ can turn that into good for us. Finally, it ends and then we'll touch on a JST thing. Joseph himself is going to die. He's also going to be [embalmed](#). And later, we find out that they're gonna take Joseph's body with them into the land of Israel as well, the land of Canaan. We have like father like son, we get two royal mummifications, two embalmings happening here. Maybe the only other thing to add from a Latter-day Saint perspective that's really important about Genesis chapter 50 is a significant expansion in the JST. JST starting in verse 24, right before Joseph dies, the last thing he says, he gives us extended prophecy about a branch of Joseph's descendants being led to a far away land.

00:42:02 I'm summarizing here. They will be remembered in the covenants of the Lord. God will call a Latter-day prophet named Joseph to join the records of Judah and Joseph and of Aaron serving as spokesman for Moses. So we're going to prophesy about basically the people in the Book of Mormon. We're going to prophesy about Joseph Smith's calling, and we're going to prophesy about the coming of Aaron and Moses, which is kind of interesting. That's our important point here. I do want to point out the fact that JST Genesis 50 is also 3 Nephi chapter three. Lehi's blessings to his son named Joseph. He gives him a, almost a verbatim prophecy or blessing to him. So the question is, gentlemen, what do we do with this? How do we make sense of this? Are these separate revelations or blessings given or did Lehi have access to something on the brass plates or is Joseph Smith restoring something original to Genesis?

00:42:56 There's questions. I'll give you my thoughts and I'd love to hear what you think about this. I suspect based on the description of the Book of Mormon, they have the brass plates and they say in the brass plates are the five books of Moses, the writings of Isaiah and other prophets, the writings of Zenos and Zenock and Neum and these guys and Lehi's genealogy. It seems, if I'm not mistaken, that Lehi has access to some form or version of this blessing that Joseph pronounces at the end of Genesis 50, and

that he uses that as a base text for giving a blessing to his son named Joseph in 2 Nephi chapter three. Fast forward to when Joseph Smith, the prophet, is doing the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, he picks up on the prophecy in 2 Nephi chapter three and sticks a version of that in Genesis 50 to all tie it back together.

00:43:45 Does that make sense? We wanna make sure that we know where this is all coming back to. It originates with Joseph of Egypt. We have it, a version of it in the Book of Mormon. I believe Joseph is inspired to take that out of its Book of Mormon context and slot it back here in this Genesis 50 context in order to wrap it all up so we have a nice continuity there. That's what I think may be happening here. Be curious to hear your thoughts because without the brass plates and without other ancient records, we can't be totally sure. This may be a way to make sense of it and to see how it all fits together.

John Bytheway: 00:44:15 Yeah, I'd never thought of that, but of course, the 2 Nephi 3 is the small plates. So it would have been the last part of the translation process, but the JST came later. I mean, thank you for that reminder. Lehi had access to it somehow, and that idea of a choice seer that's repeated here is amazing. And I could see how he would put that then in the JST.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:44:38 You could see the thematic interest too. There's many Josephs. There's Joseph, the son of Lehi, Joseph Smith the prophet, Joseph of Egypt. We all wanna tie it together. I see the Prophet Joseph Smith as the revelator and translator of these texts. He's the one who deliberately wants to make that tie in that connection. I will just say, of all the different things in here, I love the imagery in verse 31 of JST Genesis 50, which is also 2 Nephi 3, "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." Why are the Bible and The Book of Mormon growing together? There's that imagery of fruit trees growing together.

00:45:22 Together, unto the confounding of false doctrines, laying down of contentions and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, to bring them a knowledge of their fathers in the latter days and a knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord. That's beautiful. If you need a mission statement for the Bible and the Book of Mormon, why do we have these? Why do we care about these books? That's right there. Genesis JST 50, 2 Nephi 3. Establish peace, put away contention and bring people to a

knowledge of their fathers and the covenants that God has made with them.

John Bytheway: 00:45:52 We often say that Lehi was commanded to go back and get the plates of brass or commanded his sons to go get them so that he would have a genealogy, but there's more. This is 1 Nephi 5:14. And it came to pass my father Lehi also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his father's wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph. Yeah, even that Joseph, who was the son of Jacob who was sold into Egypt and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father Jacob and all his households from perishing with famine. There's a great tie in to Joseph. And then there's even in the war chapters, this little thing that we don't have in our Bible about this remnant of the coat of Joseph that hasn't decayed in Alma 46.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:46:40 When I was at Catholic University of America doing my coursework, as you could probably guess from the name, it's a Catholic university. Not exclusively Catholic, but predominantly Catholic, the faculty and students. I, myself, another friend were the only two Latter-day Saints I knew of in our program. Very friendly. I had a great experience. As a matter of fact, I mentioned earlier, I did a class on the patriarchal narratives in Genesis. One of the units for our coursework was basically the reception history of these stories. So for those who don't know what that is, reception history is how these stories were told and handed down and utilized over time by different religious communities. In the New Testament, in the Book of Mormon, even in the Quran, our Muslim friends, Joseph of Egypt is a very significant figure in the Quran. Different religious communities have used these figures from the Bible and have understood them in different ways, and so we explored that. Knowing that I'm a Latter-day Saint, my Catholic professor came to me and he said, Stephen, if it's all right, I would love for you to share with us why or how Joseph of Egypt is significant in the Latter-day Saint faith traditions, specifically in the Book of Mormon.

00:47:48 Could you do that for us? And I was like, sure, I think so. It was genuinely very nerve-racking for me, not because I didn't know the material, it was because I wanted to make sure I properly represented this important figure in our faith tradition to my Catholic friends and my classmates. We read 2 Nephi 3, and yes, Alma 46. My professor was genuinely intrigued by this. This idea that the coat becomes like a symbol for the remnant of the people and all that kind of stuff. A little fun anecdote of how this Joseph figure from our Bible, he shows up in different

contexts and it's really important. He's an important figure for us. We learn a lot from him.

- Hank Smith: 00:48:22 For anybody who's wondering, wait, what are you talking about? There's a point in the war chapters where Captain Moroni talks about the coat of Egypt. We went over this with [Dr. David Boren](#). Do you remember, John? We talked about Hugh Nibley and his work on that account and how it is found in other places, but they're very old sources. We're going thousands of years back.
- John Bytheway: 00:48:44 And there it is in the Book of Mormon.
- Hank Smith: 00:48:47 As we close the book of Genesis, I wanna ask you both a couple of questions and we'll just, let's just talk here. God chose this family. He says in the beginning, this is my chosen family to bless all the families of the earth. Yet this family has problems. Like, they have serious problems. You know, it's not like, oh, occasionally they argue and bicker. We've got betrayal, we've got estrangement, Jacob and Esau, we've got this complicated Hagar and Sarah situation, Leah and Rachel. Then you've got the brothers who sell their brother. Almost by the end of Genesis 50, they're still going, but you're thinking, the Lord ought to get a new family. Let's just start over and choose a different family. What does that tell you that the Lord says, no, this is the family. And here we are. How many years later? Thousands of years later, the Lord is still saying, nope, this is my chosen family. I will get them to their key role.
- John Bytheway: 00:49:59 I think the Book of Mormon starts similarly with a family with all sorts of ups and downs. When you get to the point where you're talking about slaying another family member, that's a problem. Thank you for being so real. That's what I like. Thank you for being so real so that we don't think if our family is messy that we're messed up or something, everybody's messed up. Read the Bible, read the Book of Mormon.
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:50:27 Yes, such as is common to man. I love what both of you guys have said about this. I totally agree with it. We sometimes want to turn scripture characters into, like, superheroes, like little two-dimensional comic book heroes. What you find out is they were real people, real men and women. They had sometimes very messy lives. We can just appreciate that in our stories. I don't think we have to gloss over that or make excuses. We can just be real with the human element in these scriptural characters, both in our Bible and in our Book of Mormon. I think it's important also to remember, besides what you both have said, which I agree with, having a dysfunctional family or having

family members that perhaps aren't as righteous as they could be, maybe we have family or friends who have gone off the covenant path. That is not any sign of indication that you are less righteous as a parent or as a sibling.

- 00:51:14 Abraham was no less Abraham because he had kids and grandkids that were dysfunctional. Lehi was no less a prophet Lehi because of what his sons did. I hope that we'll also take that away from these scriptural accounts. Whatever the messiness of our human condition, it does not make you any less righteous or a covenant heir if you are staying true to your covenants, even if perhaps your children or grandchildren might not. Thank you for bringing that up, Hank. It's worth reiterating that, and hopefully we can see the humanity in these stories.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:42 You know what? It's okay. God uses imperfect people to bring about his purposes.
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:51:48 Is it [Saints](#) volume one where we read about how William Smith and Joseph Smith got in a fistfight in the temple over disagreements? Like that's serious stuff, right? That's Joseph Smith and his family in the Kirtland Temple. He got in a fistfight over disagreements. We love Joseph and William, but come on, man, guys, take it outside. Hopefully it's a little bit relatable. Hopefully we don't beat each other up in the temple. That's the first thing we should say.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:08 Right.
- Bro. Stephen Smoot: 00:52:09 No fisticuffs in the temple. We're okay with the humanity of these people. We can love them all the same.
- John Bytheway: 00:52:15 God's not finished yet. We are all a work in progress. Our families are a work in progress. As you've said, Hank, Joseph couldn't go to the next page and see what was gonna happen when he was in prison. Hang in there because God's not done with you yet and he's really, really good at restoring and delivering and saving and just hang on because the story's not played out yet.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:39 I think it's very refreshing. I also think it's real. I think it can bring solace to someone's heart when they've maybe been raised in some sort of falsehood that God can only use the perfectly obedient to bring about his purposes or that God only cares about the perfectly obedient. He's with these people the whole time. Not to minimize some of the things that happened. They are serious. Joseph does say, you sold me.

John Bytheway:	00:53:06	Yeah, you sold me. I was right there. I remember.
Hank Smith:	00:53:10	But we can work this out. I also like, you can work things out. That doesn't always mean that you can live in the same house with someone. It doesn't always mean that the relationship needs to continue. There are some separations in this book where the Lord separates the family members from each other. These are real people, and they hurt each other. They were able to work it out. And not perfectly. Things are never gonna be the same, but there's a lot of forgiveness in this family. One story that I'll never forget that I don't think I knew as well as these others is Esau allowing Jacob to return, and this is the same Jacob. No wonder Jacob is saying to his son, forgive. Please forgive. And maybe Joseph witnessed that reunion. Do you remember we talked about that, John, that maybe little Joseph witnessed the reunion of his father and his brother, and how they were able to forgive.
	00:54:13	Let's talk about one last thing. We've seen the Savior showing up in types and shadows throughout this entire book with Abraham and Isaac especially. We saw it with Joseph and Judah. Stephen showed it. Right here at the end in chapter 50, and feel free to bring any others up that both of you have seen. I find it interesting that now Jacob is dead. You talked about this earlier, Stephen. They think, oh no, this is what's been holding Joseph back from exacting revenge on us. And Joseph weeps, it's almost as if you don't believe me that I forgive you. Yes. You thought evil against me, but God meant it for good. It reminded me of a story in the gospel of Luke. Both of you know this story. Jesus is at the house of a Pharisee. His name is Simon. This isn't Simon Peter, but apparently he hasn't been very hospitable.
	00:55:12	Stephen talked about how hospitable the Middle East is. Apparently not in this case. This woman comes in and she begins washing the Savior's feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair. Jesus has this exchange with Simon talking about her. He said, verse 47, "Her sins, which are many", like just Joseph did, he's not minimizing it. "Her sins which are many are forgiven." Then look at verse 48. He tells her again. He said unto her, "Thy sins are forgiven." It's almost as if the Savior will reiterate that to us like Joseph does here, where they think, "You couldn't possibly have forgiven me. Do you realize what we did?" And he weeps in chapter 50 and says, "Yes, you thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good. Fear ye not. Look, listen to this. I will nourish you and your children, your little ones, and he comforted them and spake kindly unto them." That is so Christlike.

John Bytheway:	00:56:17	That is, like you said, Hank, a second or third time, Joseph's like, no, no, no, no. God meant this for good. He meant it. He knew what was coming and it just reminds me, you know what I'm gonna say, Hank, that verse section 58, verse three, "you cannot behold with your natural eyes for the present time the design of your God concerning those things, which shall come here after, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation." The whole idea that God has his design and he has read ahead a few pages. Things haven't fully unfolded yet, so hang in there with your faith that God has a way of bringing families back together.
Hank Smith:	00:56:59	As Stephen said, he's an alchemist. Yeah. And he can take this dross and turn it into gold. John, I don't know if I've told this story before. It's a pretty intense story, but I think it fits really well here, and I did receive permission to share it. One of my favorite teachers ever in church education is a man named David Christensen . He was a institute teacher up at the University of Utah for many, many years. He was a mission president in Salt Lake, a speaker at education week, just a delightful person in every way. Well, he told the story once that I have never forgotten. It was about his wife, Pat. He and Pat had a son named Cary. They had other children, but Cary had some mental disabilities that were going to limit him for his entire life. For Cary, school was pretty fun because he was a beloved person among all of his friends at the high school.
	00:57:59	After graduation, Cary started to realize that everyone else is moving on. They're going on missions and getting married, and he is really staring at these disabilities, starting to try to grasp them for the first time, and he has a limited ability to do so. Well, David said for a while, he would get angry. He would get very angry. They'd often have to calm him down and say, it's okay. It's okay. And try to explain to him how he is different. Well, one Sunday morning, David was the stake president. He said, I was in the stake president's office when the phone rang and his stake executive secretary said, you better take this. And he came to the phone and it was his daughter on the phone and she said, Dad, come home quick. Cary's hurt mom. Well, he said he jumped in his car, drove a few minutes back to his house, and there is an ambulance there, a police officer or two, and he is totally phased. Like, you know, what's going on at my house?
	00:59:15	He goes inside and he said the first thing he saw on the couch was his son, Cary, in handcuffs, you know, on the couch by a police officer and he's crying and he's upset. And he said, I went into the kitchen. He said, I was not prepared for what I saw. There is my wife with two EMTs. She's standing up and they're holding her over the sink and blood is pouring from her nose

and mouth. He's just in shock. He's watching these paramedics work with his wife. She had broken bones and they're trying to get her in a place where they can get her into the ambulance and there's his son on the couch and then his other children are crying and yelling. And he says, I'm just in shock. Then he said, one of the officers stood Cary up to put him in one of the police cars. He said, Hank, I have taught the atonement of Jesus Christ my entire career. I've talked about it, taught it, studied it, talked about it. He said, in this moment, I more fully grasped it than ever before. Through all my reading, as they are standing his son up to take him away, there's a hand that reaches on and grabs David's arm and it's his wife.

01:00:44 It's Pat. And he turns to her and through all of this blood that's pouring out into the sink, she says, David, don't let them take him. And he said he kind of came out of his shock and he goes over to the police officer and says, you know, take the handcuffs off of him and let him go. Let him go. And he gets his son and holds his son. And what had happened is Cary had gotten very upset. His mom had gotten after him and he'd gotten very upset and had hurt her. He had taken a chair and hurt her. He said, in that moment, he saw the Savior's love. Thanks, you guys, for letting me tell that story. It really means a lot to me. Stephen, let's give you the last word here. The book of Genesis, perhaps where you see the Lord or what you've learned.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 01:01:43 Thank you for that powerful story and the other points of conversation we've had gentlemen. It's been a great pleasure of mine. I see Jesus Christ on almost every page in the book of Genesis. In every story from Genesis 1 to Genesis 50, I see him explicitly as the God Jehovah, the God of Israel, who steps in. At the creation, he's there with Adam and Eve, he's there with Noah and Enoch. He makes a covenant with Abraham and his children and his family. He is there explicitly on the pages as the Lord Jehovah stepping in to deal with his children. I also see him typologically. I see him symbolically, as we've discussed. I see him as the figure of Joseph forgiving his brothers. I actually loved Hank your comment. Can I return to my father without so-and-so, right? That's actually a beautiful way to see the Savior's intercession for us in these pages.

01:02:36 I see him in the example of Judah, Abraham, Isaac, of course, with the binding of Isaac. We could go on and on. For our readers of the book of Genesis, you're listening to the podcast. I study the book of Genesis academically. In fact, my dissertation is on Genesis chapter one on the Creation account in Genesis. I sometimes have my scholar hat on when I read the book of

Genesis as a scholar of the Bible. That's interesting and that's meaningful to me and worthwhile to me, but even more important to me is my faith and testimony as a Latter-day Saint that Jesus Christ, as we affirm, was Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Christ of the New Testament. Looking at it with that lens and with that set of eyes to see him there on those pages has turned this into, you know what, this is more than just old stories.

01:03:18 They're great stories. I love to teach them the stories, but they can be so much more than that. If you will let the Spirit illuminate you, you will see Jesus Christ there as well, as I have. I thank you for that opportunity to come here and talk with you about this, and I hope that in all of my ramblings, I have had some semblance of a good thought or two that can help us indeed follow Him. There you go, right? Yeah. Tie it all in with the podcast.

Hank Smith: 01:03:41 I love it. Stephen, thank you. Thank you for your time, your expertise. This has really been a joy to walk through these verses with you, see things I've never seen before, and then to feel things that are familiar, but wonderful. Very uplifting.

Bro. Stephen Smoot: 01:03:58 Pleasure is all mine.

Hank Smith: 01:03:59 Thank you so much, Stephen. With that, we want to thank very soon Dr. Stephen Smoot for his expertise and his time with us, we want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen, and every episode we remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We're jumping into the second book of Moses called Exodus on followHIM. As a thank you to our wonderful listeners, we'd love to gift you the digital version of our book, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It offers short, meaningful insights drawn from our past Old Testament episodes. Visit followhim.co, that's followhim.co to download your free copy today, and you'll also find the link to purchase the print edition. Thank you for being part of our followHIM family. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, Heather Barlow, Amelia Kabwika, Sydney Smith, and Annabelle Sorensen.

Speaker 4: 01:05:05 Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Turn to him. Follow him.

followHIM Favorites



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| Hank Smith: | 00:03 | <p>Welcome to followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I share a single story to go with each week's Come, Follow Me lesson. John, we are in Genesis 42 through 50. Same story as last week, Joseph of Egypt. I have a story for you that fits one of the overall messages of Joseph of Egypt, and that is you don't quit. When things go wrong, you just don't quit. And how many times do things go wrong for him?</p> |
| John Bytheway: | 00:30 | <p>Yeah.</p> |
| Hank Smith: | 00:32 | <p>He tries again and again and again, and eventually it works out. Well, John, you and I both have a friend. Her name is Meg Johnson. When Meg was in her early 20s, there was an accident in St. George. She was up in the red cliffs of St. George and fell off of a cliff. Terrible accident, paralyzing her. She becomes a quadriplegic, which means she loses the use of her legs and a lot of the use of her arms. She, of course, goes through surgery after surgery after surgery, attempting to save her life, and then to give her some sort of mobility. She eventually, and through a series of honestly, miraculous events, makes it home. She is now confined to a wheelchair. Well, John, she said there was one day where she was learning how to drink a glass of orange juice again. Here's a woman that was in college, that was dating, having the time of her life, and now here she is just trying to learn how to use a fork again or to pick up a glass.</p> |
| | 01:37 | <p>She told me this. She said there was a moment, I think she was sitting outside on the deck. Her mom had wheeled her outside. She said, you know, I had to make a decision. I could spend the rest of my life wanting my old life back. I could. I could sit every day and want my old life back. Or, she said, I could get busy building my new life. I think Joseph of Egypt hit a couple of those moments when his brothers sell him and he could spend the rest of his life wanting his old life back, but he builds a new life in Potiphar's house. And then he gets betrayed by Potiphar's wife and he could just want either one of those old lives back, but he doesn't. He builds a new life. Every time he gets knocked down, he says, am I just gonna sit here hoping for my old life</p> |

back or am I going to build something new? Well, Meg decides she's gonna start her new life.

02:43 Boy, did she ever. She has started wonderful organizations for girls in wheelchairs. She becomes Miss Wheelchair Utah. She now speaks all over the world as a corporate speaker and as a youth speaker. She changes lives, and it was because she made the decision that she wasn't going to sit and look and say, oh, what if things had been different? She decided instead of looking backwards, she's gonna move forward.

John Bytheway: 03:12 One of the first things she did was lose herself in service. She went to an elementary school and said, can I help you? Right. Principals like, you wanna help us? She helped teach children to read because she could read. There's a movie called Falling Up, the Meg Johnson story just on YouTube, if you wanna see who we're talking about, but that's a great example, Hank. She said, the Lord told her once, don't envy what you do not have anymore because I have given you more. And you're like, whoa, what? Really? Great attitude about taking life on and trying again, like you said. So we love Meg.

Hank Smith: 03:52 Yep. And she has a wonderful life. She has a wonderful husband. She has wonderful children. She's doing very well. A lot like Joseph of Egypt. She took something very painful, very difficult, and you know what, said, this is my life now, and I'm gonna make something of it, and boy has she ever. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. We're with Dr. Stephen Smoot this week, he is an Egyptologist, and if you wanna see how an Egyptologist takes on the story of Joseph of Egypt, come over there and join us on our full podcast, and then come back here next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorites.