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A Remnant of Joseph

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Chapter 30:

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Moroni said unto them: Behold, we, are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; yea; we are a remnant of the seed of Joseph, whose coat was rent by his brethren into many pieces. (Alma 46:23)

In a speech of encouragement to his troops, the Nephite chief captain Moroni spoke of his people as “a remnant of [the seed of] Joseph” who had been sold into Egypt by his brothers (Alma 46:23–24, 27). This phrase and variations of it appear elsewhere in the Book of Mormon as well (e.g., 3 Nephi 5:23; 10:17; 15:12; Ether 13:6–8, 10).

Readers of the English Bible might suspect that this terminology was borrowed from Amos 5:15, where the prophet wrote, “It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.” However, close analysis suggests that Amos, as well as those whose words are recorded in the Book of Mormon passages cited above, may have been influenced by an earlier passage of scripture.

In Genesis 45:7 we find that when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers who had come to Egypt to buy grain, he said, “God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.” The Hebrew term rendered “posterity” in this verse actually means “remnant” and is the very same word used in the Hebrew of Amos 5:15.

The Genesis passage is particularly interesting because of its subtle yet telling contextual affinity to the

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way the Book of Mormon typically uses the expression *remnant of Joseph*. In both cases the expression appears in contexts that imply or directly convey the idea of being sent to another land in order to be preserved. For example, in rallying his people to repel Lamanite aggressions, Chief Captain Moroni alluded to the Nephites' ancestor Joseph being sold into Egypt when he said of his people, "We are a remnant of the seed of Joseph, whose coat was rent by his brethren into many pieces" (Alma 46:23).

Moroni's point was that the Nephites must keep the commandments so they would be "preserved by the hand of God" as a faithful remnant of Joseph, "while the remainder of the seed of Joseph [would] perish" (v. 24).

This linkage to Genesis 45:7 is particularly apparent in Ether 13:7, where the later Moroni, son of Mormon, writes:

For as Joseph brought his father down into the land of Egypt, . . . the Lord brought a remnant of the seed of Joseph out of the land of Jerusalem, that he might be merciful unto the seed of Joseph that they should perish not, even as he was merciful unto the father of Joseph that he should perish not. (Ether 13:7)

This same general idea of preservation in another land is found in Ether 13:6–10, where Moroni mentions the New Jerusalem to be built up in the land given to the remnant of Joseph, and in 3 Nephi 10:17 and 15:12–14, where the expression *remnant of the seed [house] of Joseph* is used in connection with Lehi's coming to the New World.

In 1829, when he translated the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith had not yet studied Hebrew, so it is highly unlikely that he would have been alert to the nuance in Genesis 45:7 that is so compatible with Book of Mormon

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usage and is not discoverable (and certainly not apparent) elsewhere in the King James Version of the Bible. Because the full implication of this tie between the words of Joseph in Genesis 45:7 and use of the phrase *remnant of Joseph* in the Book of Mormon is clear only by looking at Joseph's words in the original Hebrew, we have here an excellent piece of evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.