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Of the Lineage of Ephraim

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Abstract: This article gives a brief history of the lineage of Ephraim, including Joseph Smith's descent.

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QUESTION: I am seeking information. I studied genealogy at Brigham Young University, and some time ago I read somewhere that the ancestry of Joseph Smith, Jun., had been traced back to Ephraim. Do you know of anywhere, particularly some definite book, that would have this information in it?

I know that I am "of the lineage of Ephraim" and no more.

ANSWER: There is no authentic pedigree known which traces any living person without a break back to Ephraim, the son of Joseph in Egypt. We depend entirely upon the revelations of the Lord, prophetic utterances of his prophets, and inspired declarations of patriarchs in patriarchal blessings for the knowledge that we are of the blood and lineage of Ephraim. Undoubtedly the time will come when we shall have perfect pedigrees, giving every link in the long chain of generations back to Ephraim.

Joseph proved most faithful among the twelve sons of Jacob or Israel. When Reuben, the firstborn, committed serious transgression, "his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: . . .

"For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's." (1 Chron. 5:1-2.)

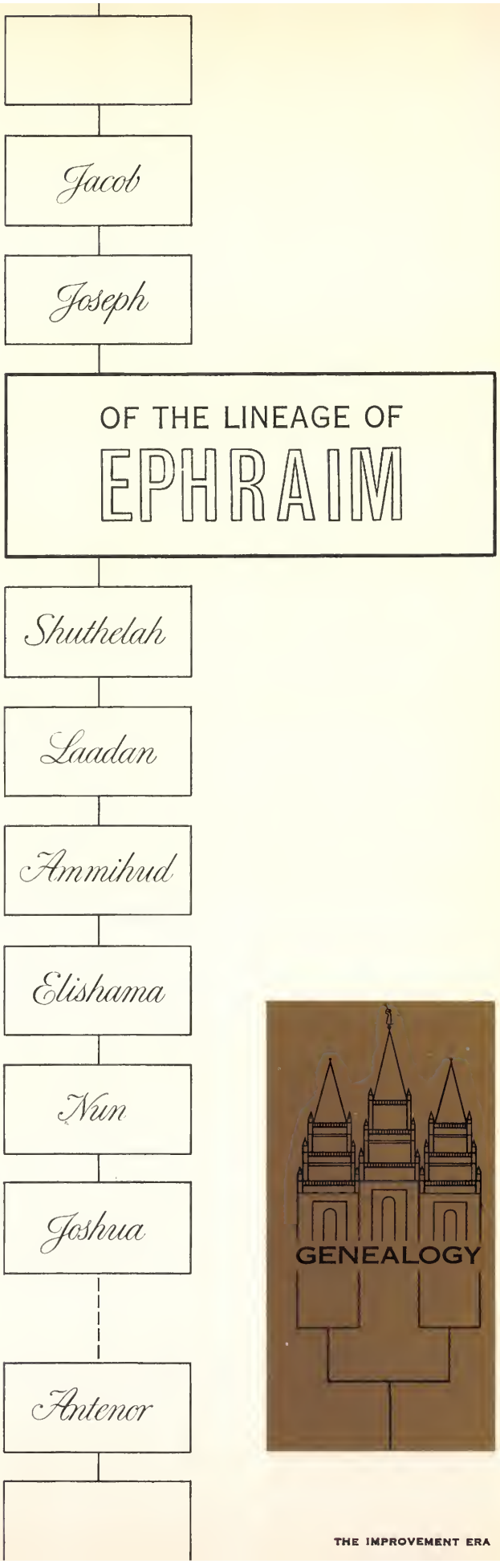
When Jacob in his old age blessed his grandsons Manasseh and Ephraim, the sons of Joseph, he was inspired to give the birthright to Ephraim.

"And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him.

"And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. . . .

"And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

"And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.



"And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

". . . and he set Ephraim before Manasseh." (Gen. 48:13-14, 17-20.)

When Joseph died at the age of 110, he had lived to see Ephraim's children of the third generation. The eldest son of Ephraim was Shuthelah. In the days of Moses, at the first enumeration of the Israelites by tribes, in the wilderness of Sinai after the exodus from Egypt, the tribe of Ephraim numbered 40,500 males over twenty years of age able to bear arms. Elishama, son of Ammihud, the son of Laadan who was descended from Shuthelah, was leader of the tribe of Ephraim, as prince of the tribe of his fathers and captain of the sons of Ephraim. Elishama became the father of Nun, whose son Joshua succeeded Moses as leader of all Israel. Joshua was the chief prince of Ephraim in his day.

From Joshua down there is a long break in the lineage from Ephraim.

Moses Maimonides was born March 30, 1135 at Cordova, Spain, and died December 23, 1204 at Cairo, Egypt. High tribute has been paid him. "He was the greatest theologian and philosopher the Jews ever produced, and one of the greatest the world has seen to this day. As a religious and moral character he is equaled only by a few and surpassed by none." (*Americanized Encyclopedia Britannica,* 20th Century edition, Vol. 6, p. 4048.)

"At his death, . . . the grief at the loss of the 'Light of the Age' was universal in the east as well as in the west. And he has ever since been recognized universally as one of the noblest and grandest men of all times: gifted with the most powerful and brilliant qualities of mind, possessed of the most varied and astounding knowledge, and imbued with deep piety and true religion, borne aloft by undaunted energy and glowing zeal." (*Library of Universal Knowledge,* Vol. 9, p. 380.)

This noted scholar obtained possession of manuscript records and pedigrees said to connect many European families with the house of Israel. In a manuscript commentary on the Old Testament, in which he reviewed the blessings of Jacob upon Judah that "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come" (Gen. 49:10), Maimonides said this was fulfilled in the fact that the then "reigning families of the world were in great part descendants of the House of David, the King of Israel." He gave a list of many princely houses of Europe who were descendants from Israel, representing branches of the house of David.

He also spoke of Antenor, king of the Cimmerians, living north of the Black Sea in the year 443 BC, and called him the *chief prince of Ephraim.* In Hebrew genealogy this would mean he was probably the oldest son of the oldest on down from Ephraim through Shuthelah, Laadan, Ammihud, Elishama, Nun, and Joshua (each of whom was chief prince of Ephraim in his day) in patriarchal order of descent.

From this Antenor, according to old pedigrees yet preserved, but based in earlier generations almost entirely on tradition, the early kings of the Franks traced their descent, as also in later generations the Emperor Charlemagne, and actually most of the families in Europe and America today, royal or otherwise. A person of the present generation who can prove his lineage to royal families can trace his pedigree back to Charlemagne on not only one but many lines.

There is scriptural evidence that the Prophet Joseph Smith was descended from Ephraim and his father Joseph. Before his death the latter told his brethren, ". . . the Lord hath visited me, and I have obtained a promise of the Lord. . . . A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins, . . . and his name shall be called Joseph and it shall be after the name of his father." (Read Genesis 50:24-34, Inspired Version; 2 Nephi 3:4-24.)

President Brigham Young, in a sermon in the Old Tabernacle October 9, 1859, declared:

"Joseph's seed has mixed itself with all the seed of man upon the face of the whole earth. The great majority of those who are now before me are the descendants of that Joseph who was sold." (*JD* 7:290.)

Then, speaking more particularly of the Prophet's lineage, he said:

"His descent from Joseph that was sold into Egypt was direct, and the blood was pure in him. That is why the Lord chose him; and we are pure when this blood-strain from Ephraim comes down pure. The decrees of the Almighty will be exalted—that blood which was in him was pure and he had the sole right and lawful power, as he was the legal heir to the blood that has been on the earth and has come down through a pure lineage. The union of various ancestors kept that blood pure." (*The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine,* Vol. 11, p. 107.)

"The Lord had his eyes upon him, and upon his father, and upon his father's father, and upon their progenitors clear back to Abraham. . . . He has watched that family and that blood as it has circulated from its fountain to (*Continued on page* 998)

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Genealogy

(*Continued from page* 923)

the birth of that man." (*Discourses of Brigham Young,* p. 166.)

Joseph Smith explained that wherever the Church was established there should be a patriarch chosen, "even the oldest man of the blood of Joseph or of the seed of Abraham," to bestow patriarchal blessings upon the Saints and to make known their true lineage in Israel. His father, Joseph Smith, Sen., was the first Patriarch to the Church, which position was his by right of birth and lineage. Among the first blessings he gave was one to his son Joseph the Prophet in which these impressive words occur:

"I bless you with the blessings of thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and even the blessings of thy father Joseph, the son of Jacob. Behold he looked after his posterity in the last days . . . and his eyes beheld thee, my son; his heart rejoiced and his soul was satisfied. . . .

"Thou shalt hold the keys of this ministry, both in time and eternity, and thou shalt stand on Mount Zion when the tribes of Jacob come shouting from the north, and with thy brethren, the Sons of Ephraim, crown them in the name of Jesus Christ." (Book 2, Patriarchal Blessings, p. 5.)

In his blessing to his son Hyrum Smith, the aged patriarch promised:

"I bless thee with the same blessings with which Jacob blessed his son Joseph, for thou art his true descendant; and thy posterity shall be numbered with the house of Ephraim, and with them thou shalt stand up to crown the tribes of Israel, when they come shouting to Zion." (*Idem.*)

The fact that Joseph Smith, Jun., was declared to be a "pure Ephraimite" cannot mean, in the light of other scripture, that he was descended solely from Ephraimite ancestors and no others. For in Section 113 of the Doctrine and Covenants is a description of the great Prophet of the latter-days who should hold the keys of the gathering of Israel. Those keys were delivered to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple by Moses. This revelation speaks of "a servant in the hands of Christ who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim, or the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power." And again, ". . . it is a descendant of Jesse, as well as of Joseph, unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering of my people in the last days." (Verses 1-6.)

President Joseph Fielding Smith, grandson of Hyrum Smith the Patriarch, makes this interesting explanation:

"In scattering Ephraim the Lord

D IS FOR DOMESTICITY

BY ELAINE V. EMANS

She spells her housework with a capital D
For Drudgery—
But D is for dusting alabaster doves
And my other loves,
And D is for arranging daisies in a bowl
To feed the soul.
D is for dog-bath, dishes, dirty clothes machined
With pride in things cleaned;
And D is for opening draperies to sunlight,
And drawing them at night.
D is for the heart domesticus *that knows*
When it is blessed—
D is for doing for my dear, who comes and goes
But loves home best.

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had two purposes in mind. First, the scattering was to be a punishment to a rebellious people. Second, it was for the purpose of blessing the people of other nations with the blood of Israel among whom Ephraim mixed himself. . . . it is Ephraim that is now being gathered from among the nations. . . .

"It is essential in this dispensation that Ephraim stand in his place at the head, exercising the birthright in Israel which was given to him by direct revelation. Therefore Ephraim must be gathered first to prepare the way, through the gospel and the priesthood, for the rest of the tribes of Israel when the time comes for them to be gathered to Zion. The great majority of those who have come into the Church are Ephraimites. It is the exception to find one of any other tribe, unless it is of Manasseh. . . .

"It is Ephraim today who holds the Priesthood. It is with Ephraim that the Lord has made covenant and has revealed the fulness of the everlasting gospel. It is Ephraim who is building temples and performing ordinances in them for both the living and the dead. When the lost tribes come—and it will be a most wonderful sight and a marvelous thing when they do come to Zion—in fulfilment of the promises made through Isaiah and Jeremiah, they will have to receive the crowning blessings from their brother Ephraim, the firstborn in Israel. (*The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Vol. 21, pp. 2-3.)

LOVE'S LIGHT

BY LEONA FETZER WINTCH

Our little Navajo, dark by birth,
Sits perched on her heels and digs
the earth.

"The ground is warm and good,"
she said.
"It's where I'd like to make my bed."

As she plays beside our daughter
fair,
The sunshine wreathes her midnight
hair.

I gaze intently. Could this be—
That she looks as white as my own
to me?

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