

**#12: Isaac, Jacob, Joseph**  
Monte F. Shelley, 11 Apr 2010

**Quotes**

- Heck is where you go if you don't believe in gosh.
- It is never too late to have a happy childhood. (Tom Robbins)

**1. Betrothal and Marriage Covenants**

**Finding a suitable bride:** Men and women rarely interacted. With the approval of the father, a groom's mother, sisters, and aunts were usually responsible to find a suitable bride. **About AD 1000, match makers like Yenta were used.**

The local well was a good place to see the girls of the village. "Twice a day, the women went to the well to obtain the water necessary for cooking, washing, and watering the family animals" (Donna 16). Jacob saw Rachel at a well. Moses met his wife at a well (Ex 2). At a well, Eliezar [God is my helper] offered the first recorded prayer for divine guidance and then saw Rebekah. "The sharing of food or of drink with another is a symbol of covenanting. ... To give even a cup of cold water to a stranger ... is to proffer recognition to the stranger as one worthy of reception. To ask a cup of water of a stranger, is to ask to be received on terms of peace and good-will. ... When [Rebekah] replied 'Drink, my lord,' it was a sign that he was welcome there. ... A drink of water is the simplest form of pledging amity. It is the primitive symbol of hospitality, with its covenant of protection to the guest." (SOSL 106, 108)

"There were only infrequent opportunities to view members of the opposite sex. A girl ... would never have had any public conversations with members of the opposite sex. Such conduct would have caused gossip and damaged her personal and family reputation. ... Love was an emotion to cultivated after marriage rather than before." (Donna, 11, 13)

"Matchmakers such as Yenta ... were mostly used from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. ... Usually, a prospective bride would be looked over by the groom's mother, sisters, or aunts and here features were then duly reported to the family. ... **A good wife was thought to be intelligent, modest, wise ..., obedient, and charming. ... Women of generous dimensions were highly praised and appreciated. ... It was ... important that a bride ... share common origins with her husband and have a strong belief in the God of Israel. ...**" (Donna, 14-15)

"The young girls of that time who were not betrothed could be recognized by their long unbound hair and their lack of a veil. ... The poorer women used pottery and the more well-to-do had brass vessels." (Donna, 16)

"Only a **disobedient and rebellious son** would marry a woman of his own choice without the prior consent of his father." (Donna 17) **Esau** married two Hittite women (Gen 26).

**Betrothal** (*kiddushin*) involved two witnesses and had five parts: (a) *Refusing food or drink* until message (**errand**) delivered (24:33) (b) *bride price* (*mōhar*) negotiated by an agent, the father, or the groom. (Today a ring is customary.) Acceptance is symbolic of acceptance of the husband. **Eight cow wife.** The agent is "the friend of the bridegroom" (John 3:29) or "best man." Eliezar negotiated with Laban for his sister, Rebekah. Shechem's father, Hamor, negotiated with the sons of Jacob for their sister, Dinah (Gen 34). Jacob negotiated with Laban for his daughter, Rachel, who had no brothers.

(c) a *contract* (*ketubah*) specifies the husband's duties to provide food, clothing, lodging, to cohabit and have sex with wife (Ex 21:10), and to ransom or redeem her if she is taken captive.

If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. (Ex 21:10)

**For better or worse.**

Some Arabs:"Suppose our son is a lazy man, and will make a bad husband; suppose he is one who will beat his wife, and will fail to provide her with a good home;—are you willing to give her to him even then? Just as he is?' ... 'It may be she is blind ... lazy and good for nothing. It may be that she will not make a good wife. Perhaps she is in poor health.'" (SOSL 14-22)

A husband has ten obligations toward his wife (or her descendants) and four rights in respect of her. The obligations are (a) to provide her with **sustenance** or maintenance; (b) to supply her **clothing** and **lodging**; (c) to **cohabit** with her; (d) to provide the **\*ketubbah** (i.e., the sum fixed for the wife by law); (e) to procure **medical attention and care** during her illness; (f) to **ransom her if she be taken captive**; (g) to provide suitable **burial** upon her death; (h) to provide for her **support after his death** and ensure her right to live in his house as long as she remains a widow; (i) to provide for the **support of the daughters of the marriage** from his estate after his death, until they become betrothed (see \*Marriage) or reach the age of maturity; and (j) to provide that the sons of the marriage shall **inherit** their mother's *ketubbah*, in addition to their rightful portion of the estate of their father shared with his sons by other wives. The **husband's rights** are those entitling him: (a) to the **benefit of his wife's handiwork**; (b) to her chance gains or finds; (c) to the **usufruct of her property**; and (d) to **inherit her estate**. (EJ-Husbands and Wives)

"Children were a significant source of status [for the wife] in the community who helped to support her in her older years. Jewish legal rules even legislated the minimal frequency of sexual relations based on a man's profession and the amount of time he could spend at home." (Donna 27)

(d) a *dowry* for the bride in case of divorce or the husband's death. The groom or agent gave the bride gifts. The father gave her part of the bride price and slaves, cattle, or land.

Rebekah brought her jewelry and Deborah her nurse. Leah and Rachel brought their handmaids

(e) *Eat and drink* wine to seal the covenant (Gen 24:54).

The marriage covenant was sealed with a cup of wine. Wine represented blood. ... After all the negotiation ... the man would then pour a cup of wine for the woman and place it before her. ... If the woman was willing to receive the man ... she would accept his gift and also drink the cup of wine which sealed the covenant. This showed that she was willing to take his name upon her. This act had to be witnessed by two observers." (Donna 30) She became part of the bride's clan.

"Through partaking from the same loaf at the same table, even strangers became *companions*, a word whose literal meaning is 'one with whom bread is broken.'" (Donna, 20)

<sup>50</sup> Then Laban and Bethuel ... said, ... <sup>51</sup> Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go. ... <sup>53</sup> And the servant brought forth jewels [HEB **things**] of silver, and ... gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious **things**. <sup>54</sup> And they did **eat and drink**. (Gen 24:50-54)

After betrothal, the bride was consecrated unto the groom and unavailable to others. Cohabitation was forbidden until after the marriage. Betrothal could be dissolved only by death or divorce. The groom would lose the bride price and the dowry gifts for breach of promise without good cause. (EJ-Marriage)

“Gradually, *mohar* [bride price] was superseded by the *ketubbah* [contract] custom according to which the husband merely assumed the responsibility of compensation to his wife in case he divorced her.” (EJ-Dowry)

“Marriage normally was by dowry: the groom gave a dowry to the bride which constituted her protection and children’s inheritance. If there were no dowry, then there was no marriage, only concubinage. ... She is legally protected from being either a concubine or a slave; she cannot even be sent out into the fields like a slave.” (Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 176)

*Marriage* (*nissu'in*) could be as much as a year later. Anciently, this involved two witnesses and had at least four parts: (a) a feast, (b) a wedding ceremony, (c) the bride entered the groom’s house and cohabited with him (carried over the threshold), and (d) the bridal week (honeymoon) (EJ-Marriage).

Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel ... [and] she took a veil, and covered herself. (24:65)

#### First record of smoking in the Bible

A bride is behind a veil when her husband comes to claim her, and only by marriage is that veil lifted to him. Rebekah seems to have had no thought of veiling her face against the stranger Eliezar, or against the passers by. ... But when ... she was told that Isaac was coming ... ‘she took her veil and covered herself.’ In many parts of the East the specific celebration of the marriage rite is called to-day ‘the lifting of the veil,’ or ‘the uncovering of the face,’—a primitive custom which has its survival here in the West in the bridegroom’s lifting the veil of his bride at the conclusion of the marriage service and giving to her a husband’s kiss. (SOSL 42–43)

Laban ... made a feast. ... In the evening, he took Leah ... to [Jacob], and he went in unto her. ... Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.” (Gen 29:22–23, NIV 27)

The second part of the ceremony took place at a later date and was called *nissu'in* (marriage proper). It was also called *huppah* (see below) after either the groom’s house to which the bride was led or the canopy, symbolic of that house, under which the ceremony took place. (EJ-Marriage)

#### Wives and concubines

Abraham married Sarai (wife), Hagar (concubine), and Keturah (wife). Isaac married Rebekah (wife). Jacob married Leah (wife), Zilpah (concubine), Rachel (wife), and Bilhah (concubine).

“A concubine is woman, usually a slave, married to a man, but who had less legal status in terms of inheritance than a wife.” (JWOT, 65)

Wives who were barren or past childbearing gave their handmaids (slaves) to their husbands as concubines so the wives might have “children by her” (Gen. 16:2; 30:3; 30:9).

Ancient marriage arrangements often stipulated that if the wife was barren, she must provide a handmaiden for her husband (cf. Code of Hammurapi ... and the adoption contract from Nuzi in Pritchard, Texts, 220). ... If the wife later bore

children of her own, they took precedence in the inheritance over those of the handmaiden (Gen. 21:12; cf. Code of Hammurapi, 170), although the latter did receive a share (usually on condition that their father had granted them legal recognition; Code of Hammurapi, 171). ... A concubine may be defined by Jewish laws as a woman dedicating herself to a particular man, with whom she cohabits without \*kiddushin [betrothal/consecration] (see \*Marriage) or \*ketubbah [deed given at betrothal]. (EJ-Concubine)

## 2. Firstborn — Birthright

In the time of the ancient patriarchs, the firstborn son received the birthright (Gen. 43:33) and thus inherited the leadership of the family upon the death of the father. The firstborn ... could lose his birthright by unrighteousness.

Under the law of Moses, the firstborn son was regarded as belonging to God [BD and special ordinances were provided for his redemption.] The firstborn received a double portion of his father’s possessions (Deut. 21:17). After his father’s death, he was responsible for the care of his mother and sisters. ...

The firstborn symbolized Jesus Christ and his earthly ministry, reminding the people that the great Messiah would come (Moses 5:4–8; 6:63). Jesus was the firstborn of the spirit children of our Heavenly Father, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, and the first to rise from the dead in the resurrection (Col. 1:13–18). Faithful Saints become members of the Church of the Firstborn in eternity (D&C 93:21–22). (Guide to the Scriptures)

The firstborn son of the first wife normally received the birthright.

**Rights:** (a) a double portion of flocks, land, and other property, (b) leadership of family, (c) special family possessions (e.g., coat of many colors; sword of Laban, plates of brass, Liahona), and (d) priesthood keys to preside as family religious leader.

**Duties:** (a) care for mother, sisters, and sons’ widows, and (b) preside over family tribe or clan.

#### Birthright/firstborn rights and duties → Christ

| Abraham                             | Isaac                        | Jacob                           | Joseph                 | Nephi                |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| ? of 3 sons                         | 2 <sup>nd</sup> of 8         | Youngest twin                   | 11 <sup>th</sup> of 12 | 4 <sup>th</sup> of 6 |
| Father prepared to kill him         | Brother(s) tried to kill him |                                 |                        |                      |
| Found refuge in foreign land        |                              |                                 |                        |                      |
| Wife barren for many years          |                              |                                 |                        |                      |
| Wife conceived through power of God |                              |                                 |                        |                      |
| Wife designated birthright son.     |                              | Birthright: son of favored wife | Jacob designated       | Lord chose           |

\* table adapted from *Hidden 61*.

Abraham=father of nations; Jacob=father of Israel; sons→Christ  
Like Eve, Sarah and Rebekah helped their husbands get it right.

Isaac was firstborn of wife. Ishmael was firstborn of concubine.

Reuben was firstborn of first wife. He lost his birthright because of adultery with his father’s concubine (1 Chr 5:1). Joseph was firstborn of second wife (intended first wife).

Ephraim was youngest of first wife. Jacob crossed his hands.

Nephi was fourth of six sons and was chosen by the Lord to receive the birthright (1 Ne 2:21–22; 3:29)

These exceptions to the rule suggest that Christ would not come with power or right (as Jews expected) but like a younger son, without position or greatness. It also shows that exaltation does not come by right of birth or religious affiliation (as Jews believed), but by personal righteousness. (*Hidden*, 62–63)

### 3. Jacob and Esau

<sup>25:27</sup> Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.

<sup>B</sup> HEB whole, complete, perfect, simple, plain.

Jacob studied at the schools of Shem and Eber, and spent all his life in the pursuit of learning; while Esau became a dissipated idolater. (EJ-Jacob)

Esau ... sold his birthright unto Jacob. <sup>34</sup> Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink. (25:33–34)

Esau killed Nimrod and two of his men. He took the garment Nimrod got from his father, Cush, and fled from his other men. When Esau got to his father's house, he was exhausted and ready to die. He said unto Jacob, "I shall die this day, and wherefore then do I want the birthright? And ... Esau sold his birthright to Jacob." (Jasher 27:1–14).

Jasher 27:10. [Esau killed Nimrod and two of his men.] <sup>10</sup> When Esau saw the mighty men of Nimrod coming at a distance, he fled, and thereby escaped; and Esau took the valuable garments of Nimrod, which Nimrod's father had bequeathed to Nimrod, and with which Nimrod prevailed over the whole land, ... and he came unto his father's house wearied and exhausted from fight, and he was ready to die through grief when he approached his brother Jacob and sat before him. <sup>12</sup> And he said unto his brother Jacob, Behold I shall die this day, and wherefore then do I want the birthright? And Jacob acted wisely with Esau in this matter, and Esau sold his birthright to Jacob, for it was so brought about by the Lord. ... <sup>14</sup> And Jacob wrote the whole of this in a book, and he testified the same with witnesses, and he sealed it.

Rebekah guided Jacob in deceiving Isaac to receive the birthright.

"Jacob appears to have stolen the birthright from his brother, Esau—that he received it unjustly through deceit and trickery. But what does the scriptural record say concerning this matter? The record indicates that Esau not only sold his birthright, but 'despised' it (Gen. 25:34), and that he further disqualified himself for these blessings by marrying nonbelievers 'which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah' (Gen. 26:35). "When the time came for Isaac to bless his two sons, Rebekah, who learned through a revelation she had received that Jacob was to rule over his brother (see Gen. 25:23), went against the cultural tradition and helped Jacob, the younger son, receive the blessing. When Esau came to claim his blessing, Isaac realized that the important rights of priesthood presidency did, in fact, belong to faithful Jacob, not to unworthy Esau: 'Yea,' said Isaac, 'and he shall be blessed' (Gen. 27:33). If the prophet-patriarch had acted improperly, he had the priesthood right to revoke Jacob's blessing. But he didn't do so, knowing that he had done the will of the Lord. Perceiving that Esau's concern was for the loss of the temporal gain instead of spiritual blessings, Isaac promised him prosperity, but he also reaffirmed the blessing of Jacob (see Gen. 27:37–40)." (Edward J. Brandt, "Understanding the Old Testament: Keys to Resolving Difficult Questions," *Ensign*, Sept. 1980, 30–31)

Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing ... and Esau said ... [When my father dies,] then will I slay my brother Jacob. (27:41)

Rebekah had Isaac send Jacob to Haran to find a wife. (Gen 28)

Isaac ... gave [Jacob] many gifts, ... with silver and gold, and he sent him away. ... <sup>31</sup> When Jacob went ... Esau called ... his son Eliphaz, and ... [said,] pursue Jacob ... slay him ...

and take all belonging to him. ... <sup>33</sup> Eliphaz ... took ten [men] ... and pursued Jacob. ... <sup>36</sup> Jacob ... supplicated Eliphaz ..., <sup>37</sup> Behold all that I have ..., that take ... and do not slay me. ... <sup>38</sup> The Lord caused Jacob to find favor in the sight of Eliphaz ... Eliphaz ... took all ... [and] they left him nothing. ... <sup>40</sup> Esau was indignant at Eliphaz.. (Jasher 29:30–40)

Jasher 29:30 Isaac finished commanding Jacob and blessing him, and he gave him many gifts, together with silver and gold, and he sent him away. ... <sup>31</sup> When Jacob went ... to Haran Esau called unto his son Eliphaz, and ... [said,] pursue Jacob ... and slay him ... and take all belonging to him and come back. ... <sup>33</sup> Eliphaz ... took ten of his mother's brothers with him and pursued Jacob. ... <sup>36</sup> Jacob ... supplicated Eliphaz and his men, saying ..., <sup>37</sup> Behold all that I have and which my father and mother gave unto me, that take unto thee and go from me, and do not slay me. ... <sup>38</sup> And the Lord caused Jacob to find favor in the sight of Eliphaz ... and Eliphaz and his men took all belonging to Jacob together with the silver and gold that he had brought with him from Beersheba; they left him nothing. ... <sup>40</sup> Esau was indignant at Eliphaz his son ... because they had not put Jacob to death.

### 4. Jacob and Rachel

When Jacob saw Rachel ... Jacob ... rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban. ... <sup>11</sup> And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

Jacob told Rachel that he was the son of Rebecca, her father's sister, and Rachel ran and told her father, and Jacob continued to cry because he had nothing with him to bring to the house of Laban [having been robbed on the way]. (Jasher 30:9)

Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel. ... <sup>20</sup> And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed ... *but a few days, for the love he had to her.* (29:18)

After Jacob complained about getting Leah not Rachel, Laban said, "Fulfil her week, and we will give thee [Rachel] ... [for 7] other years. <sup>28</sup> And Jacob ... fulfilled her week; and he gave him Rachel ... to wife. ... <sup>30</sup> He went in also unto Rachel ... and served ... yet [7] other years." (29:27–30)

First of several examples of karma: deceiving the deceiver.

### 5. Jacob returns to Canaan

Jacob served Laban six more years for wages (cattle). Before leaving Laban, he consulted with his wives.

<sup>14</sup> Rachel and Leah ... said ..., *Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?* <sup>15</sup> ... for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money.

"The dowry was an important part of marriage. We meet it first in Jacob, who worked seven years for Laban to earn a dowry for Rachel (Gen. 29:18). The pay for this service belonged to the bride as her dowry, and Rachel and Leah could indignantly speak of themselves as having been 'sold' by their father, because he had withheld from them their dowry (Gen. 31:14, 15). It was the family capital; it represented the wife's security, in case of divorce where the husband was at fault. If she were at fault, she forfeited it. She could not alienate it from her children. There are indications that the normal dowry was about three years' wages. The dowry thus represented funds provided by the father of the groom, or by the groom through work, used to further the economic life of the new family. If the father of the bride added to this, it was his privilege, and customary, but the basic dowry was from the groom or his

family. The dowry was thus the father's blessing on his son's marriage, or a test of the young man's character in working for it." (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, 176-77; OT-I)

Rachel stole Laban's images before they left Haran. Scholars believe they were idols, devices to tell the future, or tied to legal rights of inheritance. Laban came after Jacob, but he could not find the images because Rachel sat on them. Jacob accused Laban of deceiving him and changing his wages ten times.

Rachel stole these images ... that Laban might not know through them where Jacob had gone. (Jasher 31:44)

There is much debate among scholars about what the images were that were stolen by Rachel and what they represented. The Hebrew word which is sometimes used for small images of false gods is *teraphim*. Some translators render the word as "household gods." Was Laban an idolator? If so, why did Jacob go all the way back to Haran to find a wife if they were idolators like the Canaanites? Others believe they were astrological devices used for telling the future. But this suggestion raises the same question. One scholar theorized that these images were somehow tied in with the legal rights of inheritance (see Guthrie, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 104). If this theory is correct, the possessor of the *teraphim* had the right to inherit the father's property. This circumstance would explain why Rachel stole the images, since her father had "stolen" her inheritance (Gen 31:14-16). It would also explain Laban's extreme agitation over their loss and Jacob's severe penalty offered against the guilty party (Gen 31:31). (OT-I)

Jasher 31:43 And some make them in the figures of men, of gold and silver, and go to them in times known to them, and the figures receive the influence of the stars, and tell them future things, and in this manner were the images which Rachel stole from her father. 44 And Rachel stole these images which were her father's, in order that Laban might not know through them where Jacob had gone. 45 And Laban came home and ... sought his images to know where Jacob had gone, and could not find them, and he went to some other images, and he inquired of them and they told him that Jacob had fled from him to his father's, to the land of Canaan.

Laban said, "Let us make a covenant." They gathered stones for a pillar to be a witness, "offered sacrifice ... and they did eat bread" (31:54). Laban returned home the next morning.

When Jacob and Laban had differed and were newly in accord, they cemented their restored friendship by eating together on the heap of stones which they had raised as a memorial of the covenant. Under the Levitical law, the sacrifice of 'peace offering,' or the 'sacrifice of completion,' as it has been called, whereby restored or completed covenant relations with their God were indicated by the Israelites, was an offering of which the offerer himself partook, as if he were sharing the covenant hospitality of his God. ... A place at the table of a Divine host has been a pledge of Divine protection to the guest. (*SOSL* 108-109)

(Jasher 31:54-64) Laban sent some of his men to tell Esau that Jacob had taken his daughters, gods, and property secretly. "63

If it be thy wish to go to him, go then and there wilt thou find him, and thou canst do unto him as thy soul desireth; and Laban's messengers came and told Esau all these things. 64 And Esau heard all the words of Laban's messengers, and his anger was greatly kindled against Jacob, and he remembered his hatred, and his anger burned within him."

"Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother." (32:3)

The messengers sent by Jacob to Esau (Gen. 32:3) were in reality angels, and their huge numbers terrified Esau. (EJ-Jacob; Jasher 32:27-39)

Jasher 32:27 And the Lord heard the prayer of Jacob on that day, and the Lord then delivered Jacob from the hands of his brother Esau. 28 And the Lord sent three angels of the angels of heaven, and they went before Esau and came to him. 29 And these angels appeared unto Esau and his people as two thousand men, riding upon horses furnished with all sorts of war instruments, and they appeared in the sight of Esau and all his men to be divided into four camps, with four chiefs to them. 30 And one camp went on and they found Esau coming with four hundred men toward his brother Jacob, and this camp ran toward Esau and his people and terrified them, and Esau fell off the horse in alarm, and all his men separated from him in that place, for they were greatly afraid. ... 39 And when Esau beheld the evil which the four angels had done to him and to his men, he became greatly afraid of his brother Jacob, and he went to meet him in peace.

## 6. Jacob "wrestled" a man and got a new name

Jacob ... wrestled a man. ... 25 When ... [the man] prevailed not against him. ... [Jacob] said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. ... 28 He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel [*God prevails* or *man seeing God*]: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. ... 30 Jacob called the name of the place Peniel [*IE The face of God*]: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

**Nibley:** The climax and culmination of the Coronation rites was a ritual embrace of father and son. ... "The embracing ... of the king by the god is the definitive consecration" of the new king, who at that moment ... becomes fully consecrated, crowned and sanctified. ... Before becoming a king ... he must first become a priest, and for that ... he must be "purified with divine water, receive a garment, be crowned and led into the sanctuary to receive the embrace of the god, the head of the Temple." ... One of the most puzzling episodes in the Bible ... [is] the story of Jacob's wrestling with the Lord. When one considers that the word ... translated by "wrestled" ... can ... mean "embrace," and that it was in this ritual embrace that Jacob received a new name and the bestowal of priestly and kingly power at sunrise (Gen 32:24ff), the parallel to the Egyptian coronation embrace becomes at once apparent. (*Message*, 430-434)

Some believe that Israel (yisrā'el) comes from "šārāh 'el" which means "God persists or prevails" (*BDB*, s.v. "יִשְׂרָאֵל"; *BD*, s.v. "Israel"). However, Origen says that Israel means "man seeing God" (Origen, *De Principiis*, 4.2.22 [*ANF* 4]; Origen, *Commentary on John*, 2.25 [*ANF* 9]) which would come from "yis rā'āh 'el." Both meanings fit the context which says, "thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for... thou... hast *prevailed*. ... And Jacob... [said] I have seen God face to face" (Gen. 32:28, 30). (Shelley, *Remembering Christ...*, 51)

## 7. Jacob buried Rachel (Gen 35)

The meanings of the Hebrew names in the Old Testament account of Rachel's burial suggest interesting parallels with the nativity story. "And they journeyed from **Beth-el** [*House of God*]; ... and **Rachel** [*ewe or female sheep*] ... had hard labor. ... As her soul was in departing, (for she died) she called his name **Ben-oni** [*son of my sorrow*]; but his father called him **Benjamin** [*son at the right hand*]. Rachel ... was buried in the way to **Ephrath** [*fruitfulness*], which is **Beth-lehem** [*house of bread*]. ... And **Israel** [*God prevails or man seeing God*] ... spread his tent beyond **Migdal Eder** [*tower of the flock*]" (Gen. 35:16–21). Like Benjamin, Jesus was Mary's "son of sorrow" during the crucifixion and was later seen standing on "the right hand" of God. (Shelley, *Remembering Christ at Christmas*, 51)

## 8. Joseph and the Coat of Many Colors

Israel ... made him a coat of *many*<sup>c</sup> colours. (Gen 37:3)

<sup>c</sup> The Septuagint word indicates many colors, but the Heb. term may indicate simply a long coat with sleeves.

NIV a richly ornamented robe; RSV a long robe with sleeves.

"'Coat' is translated from the Hebrew word *kuttonet*, and it can mean either garment or robe. This is the very same word used to identify one of the vestments worn by the temple priests of Israel from the time of Moses onward (see Ex 28:39). Indeed, it was understood among later Jewish authors that Joseph's vesture was nothing less than 'the holy tunic of the priest.' ... It is the considered opinion of some biblical interpreters that Joseph's 'coat' was not only a 'royal garment' but it also signified 'the claim of the Joseph tribes to a royal authority independent of the tribe of Judah.' ... Joseph's distinctive vesture could be seen as both the clothing of a king and a priest. This comes as little surprise when one considers that in Jewish lore the gift that was given by Jacob to Joseph was exactly what he himself had received as part of the birthright blessing, 'the garments made by God for Adam.'" (Matthew B. Brown, *The Gate of Heaven*, 43–44)

**Hugh Nibley:** Here the survival of Joseph's garment guarantees and typifies the survival of Joseph (Alma 46:24).

In the tenth century ... Tha'labi, collected in Persia a great many old tales and legends about the prophets of Israel. ... Among other things, Tha'labi tells a number of stories, which we have not found anywhere else, about Jacob and the garment of Joseph. In one... there were in the garment of Joseph three marks or tokens when they brought it to his father. ... According to ad-Dahak that garment was of the weave [pattern, design] of Paradise, and the breath [spirit, odor] of Paradise was in it, so that it never decayed or in any way deteriorated [and that was] a sign [omen]. And Joseph gave them that garment, and it was the very one that had belonged to Abraham, having already had a long history...

Note here that there were two remnants of Joseph's garment, one sent by Joseph to his father as a sign that he was still alive (since the garment had not decayed), and the other, torn and smeared with blood, brought by Judah to his father as a sign that Joseph was dead. Moroni actually quotes Jacob ("Now behold, this was the language of Jacob") as saying: "Now behold, this giveth my soul sorrow; nevertheless, my soul hath joy in my son" (Alma 46:25-26)...

"These interesting little details are typical apocryphal variations on a single theme, and the theme is the one Moroni mentions; the rent garment of Joseph is the symbol both of his

suffering and his deliverance, misfortune and preservation." (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 218-20)

"In Alma 46:21-24 we read of a particular ceremony associated with the story of Joseph's garment. Because Jewish tradition indicates that Joseph's garment was the high priestly garment of Adam, this passage may have more meaning than previously supposed." (Donald W. Parry, *Temples of the Ancient World*, p. 695, footnote 50)

## 9. Joseph was sold into Egypt

Joseph's brothers "conspired against him to slay him" (37:18). Reuben suggested they throw him into a pit so he could later return him to Jacob. Judah suggested they sell him so they sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver. They then told Jacob that an animal killed Joseph. In Egypt, Joseph was sold to Potiphar.

20 pieces of silver is the same price specified later in the Mosaic law for a slave between 5 and 20 (Lev 27:5). The price for a slave was 30 pieces of silver (Ex 21:32). (OT-I)

**Joseph deceived by his sons as he deceived his father.**

## 10. Judah and Tamar (Gen 38)

Judah committed adultery with Tamar, his widowed daughter-in-law, and threatened to kill her when she became pregnant until he learned that he was the father. She had twins: Pharez and Zarah.

"The sordid account of Judah and Tamar contains some genealogical facts pertinent to an important family line, that of King David (Ruth 4:18-22; Mt 1:3 Lk 3:33). Perhaps it can assure readers that they can excel in spite of problems in their ancestry; Jesus of Nazareth was born of that genealogical line.

"There is also some satisfaction to one's sense of justice in that a self-righteous man, who was willing to have his daughter-in-law punished for adultery, had to face up to his own sins." (Ellis T. Rasmussen, *A Latter-day Saint Commentary on the Old Testament*, 70)

## 11. Joseph and Potiphar's Wife (Gen 39)

Potiphar's wife enticed him "day by day ... to lie with her."

"When she could not ... persuade him, ... her desire threw her into a grievous sickness." The Egyptian women mocked her, and when she invited them to a feast, she presented each of them with a knife and fruit. She then ordered Joseph to appear before the guests, and when they looked upon him, they were so enraptured by his beauty that they cut their fingers with the knives. "They said ... this slave ... has overcome us, and we could not turn our eyelids from him on account of his beauty. And she said ... I see him day after day. ... How then can I keep ... from perishing ...?" (Jasher 44:26–35)

One day "she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled."

Joseph was afraid of her at her doing this thing, and he rose up to flee from her, and she seized the front of his garments, and in the terror of his flight the garment which Zelicah seized was torn, and Joseph left the garment in the hand of Zelicah, and he fled and got out, for he was in fear. (Jasher 44:54)

<sup>20</sup> Joseph's master ... put him into the prison.

Potiphar took Joseph ... before the priests, who were judges. ... <sup>74</sup> The priests said, ... Bring ... Joseph's torn garment, ... and if ... the tear is in front ... then his face must have been opposite to her and she must have caught hold of him, to come to her. ... <sup>75</sup> They brought Joseph's garment ... and they saw

... the tear was in front ... and all the judging priests knew that she had pressed him, and they said, The judgment of death is not due to this slave for he has done nothing, but his judgment is, that he be placed in the prison house on account of the report. (Jasher 44:69)

**Josephus:** “Now Joseph, commending all his affairs to God, did not betake himself to make his defense, nor to give an account of the exact circumstances of the fact, but silently underwent the bonds and the distress he was in, firmly believing that God, who knew the cause of his affliction and the truth of the fact, would be more powerful than those that inflicted the punishments upon him” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book II, v:1).”

**Islam:** Joseph was saved from her designs because Allah was with him. His shirt, which was torn from behind, was definite proof that the woman had not protected herself from the intentions of Joseph, but that she had attacked and attempted to seize hold of him when he had fled from her presence. (EJ-Joseph)

The keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of the prison.

### 12. Joseph interpreted dreams (Gen 40–41)

Joseph interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh’s butler and chief baker.

They said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and *there is no* interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you. (40:8)

Two years later, Joseph interpreted Pharaoh’s dream of seven cows and heads of grain (NIV). “Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;<sup>43</sup> And he made him to ride in the second chariot ...; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. ...<sup>45</sup> Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On.<sup>46</sup> And Joseph was thirty years old.”

The angel Gabriel, however, taught Joseph the traditional 70 languages, so that he could qualify to be ruler of Egypt (Sot. 36b). His elevation to power was the reward for his virtuous life (Gen. R. 90:3, et al.). Joseph’s marriage to Asenath, daughter of Poti-Phera, priest of On (Gen. 41:45), is legitimized by late Midrashim which represent Asenath as Dinah’s daughter (and hence Joseph’s niece) later adopted by Potiphar, who is identified with Poti-Phera. (EJ-Joseph)

The unpleasant events in our lives are often the means God uses to prepare us for later blessings.

Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted one with another. (D&C 90:24; Rom. 8:28)

“all things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom 8:28).

All things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name’s glory, saith the Lord. (D&C 98:3)

### 13. Joseph’s brothers come for food (Gen 42–45)

*Jacob sends his sons to buy grain in Egypt—They bow before Joseph—He accuses them roughly, imprisons Simeon, and sends them back for Benjamin.*

Joseph accused them of being spies and put them in prison for 3 days (42:17). Simeon who suggested they kill Joseph earlier (Jasher 41:25) imprisoned. Joseph sends food and money back.

<sup>42:21</sup> They said one to another, We *are* verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.

*Jacob is persuaded to send Benjamin to Egypt—Joseph’s brethren make obeisance to him —They all eat and drink together.*

*Joseph arranges to stop the return of his brethren to Canaan—Judah offers himself in place of Benjamin for their father’s sake.*

*Joseph makes himself known to his brethren—They rejoice together—Pharaoh invites Jacob and his family to dwell in Egypt and eat the fat of the land.*

<sup>45:4</sup> I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. ...<sup>5</sup> Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

<sup>50:20</sup> Ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.

**Orson Hyde:** “It is not infrequently the case, that plans and measures devised by the greatest cunning, ingenuity, and wisdom of the wicked against God’s chosen, prove to be the most impressive and happy means to bless and exalt those against whom these plans are laid.” (*JD* 2:204)

**Tom Robbins:** It is never too late to have a happy childhood.

**Hartman Rector Jr:** “[The] ability to turn everything into something good appears to be a godly characteristic. Our Heavenly Father always seems able to do this. Everything, no matter how dire, becomes a victory to the Lord. Joseph, although a slave and wholly undeserving of this fate, nevertheless remained faithful to the Lord and continued to live the commandments and made something very good of his degrading circumstances. People like this cannot be defeated.” (*Ensign*, Jan 1973, p130)

**Robert H. Schuller:** “A Jew, one of many hiding from Hitler, once knew such a dark time. We know neither his name nor his face, but we know about his faith. For scrawled on the basement walls of a German house are these courageous words:

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- I believe in God, even when He is silent.”

(*Move Ahead With Possibility Thinking*, pp174-175)

### 14. Messiah Ben-Joseph and Messiah Ben-Judah

“According to the Talmud, the Messiah will be a descendant of the House of David and will be preceded by a secondary Messiah, from the House of Joseph . . .” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) When the Chief Rabbi, Avraham HaKohen Kook was appointed in Palestine in the 1920’s, he was asked if the Jews could now build the Temple (destroyed since year 70 A.D.). His response was that the priestly rights were gone and referred to the great 12<sup>th</sup> century rabbi Moses Maimonides. Maimonides said, in effect, “We are waiting for a Messiah Ben-Joseph, to him will be given the keys of the gathering of Israel, he will restore Temple worship.” (Rona 11)

## 15. Jacob wants to be buried in Canaan (Gen 47)

<sup>47:9</sup> Jacob said ..., The ... years of my pilgrimage are [130] years: few and evil [IE unpleasant] have the days ... of my life been.

The word which is translated as “evil” actually means “sorrowful” or “full of toil and trouble.” Remembering Jacob’s flight to Haran to escape Esau’s wrath, his years of labor for Laban, his wives and their contentions, his pilgrimage in the land of Canaan, the death of Rachel, and his years of sorrowing for the loss of Joseph contributes to a better understanding of why he would say his days were full of trouble and toil. (OT-1)

[Jacob] said, God ... <sup>c</sup> fed me all my life long. (48:15)

HEB shepherded; i.e., who was my shepherd

## 16. Jacob blessed his sons and Ephraim and Manasseh

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 [LXX crossing] his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. ... <sup>17</sup> When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him (48:14–17)

“In the same way that priests lift their hands in blessing, so parents place their hands on the heads of their children when they bless them. (For example, in the Bible, Jacob blessed his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, by placing his hands on their heads.) Placing the hands on another person is symbolic not only of transferring blessing but also of passing on authority. In talmudic times, scholars received their rabbinic ordination through the symbolic act of placing of the hands [known as semikhah].” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr; Rona 11.*)

<sup>49:H</sup> *Jacob blesses his sons and their seed—Reuben, Simeon, and Levi are chastened—Judah shall bear rule until Shiloh (Christ) comes—Joseph is a fruitful bough by a well—His branches (the Nephites and Lamanites) to run over the wall—The Shepherd and Stone of Israel (Christ) shall bless Joseph temporally and spiritually—Jacob chooses to be buried with his fathers in Canaan—He yields up the ghost and is gathered to his people.*

## 17. Joseph was a type for Christ

- Both were granted a new name: Joseph=Zaphnath-paaneah (Gen. 41:45), Jesus’ divine name was Christ. Although its meaning is uncertain, the Rabbinical commentaries, following the Targum, interpret [Zaphnath-paaneah] as “he who reveals that which is hidden.” (BD Zaphnath-paaneah)
- Both were good shepherds.
- Both were known as the most loved of their father.
- Both were clothed in authority and power of their father. Joseph was given the ‘coat of many colours’ (Gen. 37:3).
- Both revealed future things (JST Gen. 50:24-38; Matt. 24).
- Both obeyed the will of their fathers and responded to their calls to serve, saying, ‘Here am I’ (Gen 37:13; Abr 3:27).
- Both were promised a future sovereignty, speaking equally of a temporal and an eternal role.
- Both were betrayed by their brothers, at which time they were stripped of their garments.
- Both were cast into a pit: Christ to the world of spirits, Joseph into an empty cistern.
- Both were betrayed with hypocrisy (Gen. 37:27; John 18:31).
- Both were sold for the price of a slave their age. Judah sold Joseph for 20 pieces of silver (Gen 37:26-28) and Judas (Greek for Judah) sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (Mt 26:15).

The attempt to destroy them set in motion events that would save the house of Israel from death.

- The blood-sprinkled coat of each was presented to his father. Joseph’s coat was dipped in goat’s blood (Gen. 37:31-32). The blood of Jesus Christ as the blood of the scapegoat, a sin offering, was symbolically presented to the Father.
- Both blessed those with whom they labored in prison (Gen. 39:21-23; D&C 138).
- Both were servants, and all that they touched were blessed.
- Both were tempted with great sin and both refused its enticements (Gen. 39; Matt. 4:1-11).
- Both were falsely accused: Joseph by Potiphar’s wife, Christ by false witnesses.
- Both stood as the source of divine knowledge to their day and generation.
- Both were triumphant, overcoming all.
- Both were granted rule over all (Gen. 41:40; 1 Pet. 3:22).
- Both were thirty years old when they began their life’s work (Gen. 41:46; Luke 3:23).
- Both were saviors to their people, giving them the bread of life “without price” (Isa 55:1). Joseph saved his family temporally; Christ as the Bread of Life saves mankind spiritually.
- The rejection of both brought bondage upon the people.
- Both were unrecognized by their people (Gen. 45:3-5; D&C 45:51-53).
- Both would be recognized and accepted by their brothers only at the ‘second time’ (Acts 7:13; D&C 45:51-53).
- Joseph’s brothers bowed to him in fulfillment of prophecy. All will bow the knee to Christ (Gen. 43:26-28; D&C 76:110).
- Through both, mercy is granted to a repentant people. As Joseph’s brothers sought forgiveness of him, so Christ’s brothers will eventually seek forgiveness of him.
- After the reconciliation, Israel is gathered. Having manifest himself to his brothers, Joseph charged them to return and bring their father and families to Egypt. So it shall be in the last days. After Israel have returned to their God, they, like Joseph’s brothers, shall be sent to bring all the family of Israel into the kingdom ruled by Christ.” (adapted from Joseph Fielding McConkie and Donald W. Parry, *A Guide to Scriptural Symbols*, 71-72)

## Conclusion

The marriage covenant testifies of Christ who is referred to as the bridegroom (Jn 3:29). The birthright rule and exceptions testify of Christ. Joseph is a type of Christ.

All things work together for good to them that love God. (Rom 8:28)

All things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name’s glory, saith the Lord. (D&C 98:3)

<sup>50:20</sup> Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

**READ Orson Hyde and Neal A. Maxwell Quotes**

**Living the gospel does not prevent all pain, suffering, and trials; but it helps us through those difficult times.**

## Quotes

**Orson Hyde:** It is not infrequently the case, that plans and measures devised by the greatest cunning, ingenuity, and wisdom of the wicked against God's chosen, prove to be the most impressive and happy means to bless and exalt those against whom these plans are laid. (*JD* 2:204)

**Neal A. Maxwell:** How can you and I really expect to glide naively through life, as if to say, Lord, give me experience, but not grief, not sorrow, not pain, not opposition, not betrayal, and certainly not to be forsaken. Keep from me, Lord, all those experiences which made Thee what Thou art! Then let me come and dwell with Thee and fully share Thy joy!

**Hartman Rector Jr.:** [The] ability to turn everything into something good appears to be a godly characteristic. ... Joseph, although a slave, ... remained faithful to the Lord ... and made something very good of his degrading circumstances. People like this cannot be defeated. (*Ensign*, Jan 1973, 130)

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- I believe in God, even when He is silent."

(*Move Ahead With Possibility Thinking*, 174–175)

**Rabbis of the Talmud:** A truly rich man is one who is happy with his portion in life and does not envy others.

**3 Day Hospitality Rule:** [If] a guest seems disposed to prolong his stay beyond the 'three days of grace,' his host will suggest to him on the morning of the fourth day, that, as he is now one of the family, there is ... household work to be done in which he can bear his part; and so he is set at work for his living." (*SOSL* 105)

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### Sources:

- HC = History of the Church
- OT-I = Old Testament Institute manual
- KD = Keil-Delitzsch *Commentary on the Old Testament*
- *SOSL* = Trumbull, *Studies in Oriental Social Life*.
- Sarna = Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*
- *Hidden* = James L. Ferrell, *The Hidden Christ*
- EJ = *Encyclopedia Judaica*
- Wight = Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*,
- *JWOT* = Holzappel, *Jehovah and the World of the Old Testament*.
- Rona = Daniel Rona, [www.israelrevealed.com/comp-sup-r.htm](http://www.israelrevealed.com/comp-sup-r.htm), On-line Lesson Manual Supplement
- Donna = Donna B. Nielsen, *Beloved Bridegroom*,
- *Message* = Hugh Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition