

Promises to the Children of Israel

The purpose of Sunday School is to inspire class members to learn, teach, and live the gospel of Jesus Christ every day.

We see in our day the fulfillment of ancient prophecies and promises made to the children of Jacob (or Israel). As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are members of the house of Israel, and we help fulfill these prophecies. Recognizing the latter-day fulfillment of these ancient promises strengthens our faith that God fulfills all of His promises.

Prepare

As you study [Genesis 48–50](#), consider asking yourself:

- What does it mean to me to be a member of the house of Israel? What blessings and responsibilities do I have? How am I fulfilling them?
- How will class members be blessed as they learn about the Lord’s promises to ancient Israel?
- What could class members do to deepen their understanding of their blessings and responsibilities as members of the house of Israel?
- How will I inspire class members to continue learning about, teaching, and applying what they discuss in class?

Encourage personal and family scripture study

Each week, you have the opportunity to encourage class members to have meaningful scripture study, individually and with their families. For instance, you might choose to do one or more of the following:

- Invite one or more class members to briefly explain methods they use to teach the gospel in their families. As part of this discussion, you could spend a few minutes showing class members features of [Mormon.org](#). You could ask them how they might use this resource to teach the gospel in their homes.
- Invite class members to share how they have acted on impressions they received during a previous class or during their personal scripture study.
- Invite several class members to prepare in advance to share and explain verses in [Genesis 48–50](#) that they find particularly meaningful. You could also ask other members in class to share any verses that have been meaningful to them. This activity could take the majority of the time in class.

Teaching in the Savior’s Way

The Savior asked questions that caused His followers to think and feel deeply, and He rejoiced in their expressions of faith. What questions might you ask class members to help them think and feel deeply about the house of Israel? Could these questions encourage expressions of faith?

Learn together and invite to act

Follow the guidance of the Spirit as you select one or more of these activities or create your own based on the scriptures in this outline and the needs of your class.

- **What promises were given to Ephraim and Manasseh?**
Class members could search [Genesis 48:5–22](#) (including the [Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis 48:5–11](#), in the Bible appendix) and the information about [Manasseh](#) and [Ephraim](#) in the Bible Dictionary. Ask them to share what they learn about the roles of Joseph’s posterity and the blessings promised to them. How are these prophecies being fulfilled in the latter days? What are the responsibilities of members of the Church as the house of Israel? To better understand their responsibilities, class members could read and discuss [Doctrine and Covenants 86:8–11](#) or [Abraham 2:9–11](#).

- **What promises were given to Joseph and Judah?**

Before class, you could ask one class member to study the blessings promised to Judah in [Genesis 49:8–12](#) and to prepare to share with the class how these prophecies have been or are being fulfilled. You could ask another class member to study and prepare to tell about the blessings promised to Joseph in [Genesis 49:22–26](#) and [Deuteronomy 33:16–17](#). Encourage these class members to focus their preparation on the scriptures and scripture-study helps such as the [Bible Dictionary](#) and resources on [LDS.org](#). As a class, you could discuss why it is important for us in the latter days to know about these ancient promises.

- **Why do patriarchal blessings contain a declaration of lineage in the house of Israel?**

Class members could scan [Genesis 49](#) and search for ways this chapter relates to patriarchal blessings. To help class members understand patriarchal blessings, you could divide them into two groups and ask each group to study and discuss part of the entry on [patriarchal blessings](#) in *True to the Faith*. Consider asking class members to share how it feels to know that they are of the house of Israel. How could this knowledge influence our decisions and actions? How can we live worthy of obtaining the blessings promised to the house of Israel? (If appropriate, you could invite your stake patriarch to talk to the class about lineage in patriarchal blessings during this learning activity.) You might invite class members to spend time at home reviewing their patriarchal blessings and to study the blessings promised to them as members of a particular tribe.

- **What prophecies did Joseph of Egypt make about the latter days?**

Class members could search [Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 50:24–38](#), in the Bible appendix, and find prophecies about the mission of Joseph Smith (similar statements are found in [2 Nephi 3](#)). You could give class members time to divide into small groups and share what they find. They could also watch the video [“A Seer Will I Raise Up”](#) and share how their lives have been influenced by the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Learning and living the gospel every day

Encourage class members to think about what they learned and felt today. What do they feel impressed to do? They could do one of the following:

- Share something with their families from today’s discussion.
- Continue studying this doctrine in their homes and act on what they learn.
- Obtain or review their patriarchal blessings and look for the blessings promised to individuals as members of the house of Israel.
- Participate in family history and temple work or share the gospel with a friend, neighbor, or family member.

During the coming week, you could send class members suggestions for home study in preparation for next week’s discussion. Encourage them to consider using one of the ideas listed under “Basic Scripture Study Strategies” or “Family Study Ideas” as they review these resources.

Additional learning resources

- [1 Nephi 17:35](#) (those who are righteous are favored of God)
- [Doctrine and Covenants 86:8–11](#) (blessings and responsibilities come to those who are heirs of the covenant)
- [“Sharing the Gospel Naturally,”](#) youth.lds.org
- President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, [“Faith of Our Father,”](#) *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 68–75
- President James E. Faust, [“Priesthood Blessings,”](#) *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 62–64

- Videos: “[Special Witness: Elder Russell M. Nelson](#)” (3:28), “[A Seer Will I Raise Up](#)” (4:57), “[Declaration of Lineage in Patriarchal Blessings](#)” (1:48)
- [Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel](#) (2003), 96–100

Additional insights

- **What is the house of Israel?**

Jacob, who was also known as Israel, was the grandson of Abraham and Sarah. He had four wives, by whom he had 12 sons: from Leah—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun (sons of Leah); Joseph and Benjamin (sons of Rachel); Dan and Naphtali (sons of Bilhah); and Gad and Asher (sons of Zilpah). The descendants of these 12 sons are known today as the 12 tribes of Israel. Collectively, the descendants of the tribes of Israel are known as the house of Israel.

- **What are the responsibilities of the house of Israel?**

Bruce R. McConkie taught: “Those of us who have been gathered again into the sheepfold of Israel are to play the part assigned us in the Lord’s eternal drama concerning his people. . . . The Lord has laid upon us the responsibility to lay the foundation for that which is to be. We have been commissioned to prepare a people for the second coming of the Son of Man. We have been called to preach the gospel to every nation and kindred and tongue and people. We have been commanded to lay the foundations of Zion and to get all things ready for the return of Him who shall again crown the Holy City with his presence and glory” (“Come: Let Israel Build Zion,” *Ensign*, May 1977).

- **How does one become a member of the house of Israel?**

“Every person who embraces the gospel becomes of the house of Israel. In other words, they become members of the chosen lineage, or Abraham’s children through Isaac and Jacob unto whom the promises were made. The great majority of those who become members of the Church are literal descendants of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph. Those who are not literal descendants of Abraham and Israel must become such, and when they are baptized and confirmed they are grafted into the tree and are entitled to all the rights and privileges as heirs” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 3:246; italics deleted).