

What Can the Architecture of Israelite Temples Teach Us About Creation and the Garden of Eden?

An Old Testament KnoWhy¹ for Gospel Doctrine Lesson 3A:
The Creation (Moses 1:27-42; 2-3) (JBOTLO3A)



Figure 1. Michelangelo, 1475-1564: *Creation of the Sun and Moon*, 1511

Question: In reading the description of the seven days of Creation and the layout of the Garden of Eden, there seems to be more than meets the eye. What insights can be gained about these things from understanding the architecture of the Israelite temples?

Summary: The descriptions of the days of creation in Genesis and the book of Moses differ from those found in the book of Abraham and in modern temples. In contrast to the latter accounts, the narratives in Genesis and the book of Moses seem to have been deliberately shaped to highlight resemblances between the creation of the universe and the architecture of the Tabernacle and later Israelite temples. Understanding these parallels helps explain why, for example, in seeming contradiction to scientific understanding,² the description of the creation of the sun and moon appears *after*, rather than *before*, the creation of light and of the earth. Careful study also reveals that not only the Creation, but also the Garden of Eden provided a model for the architecture of the temple.

Know

The Days of Creation and Temple Architecture. The Latter-day Saints have four basic Creation stories — found in Genesis, the book of Moses, the book of Abraham, and the temple. In contrast to versions of the Creation story that emphasize the planning of the heavenly council and the work involved in setting the physical processes in motion, the companion accounts of Genesis and the book of Moses seem deliberately designed to relate the creation of the universe to temple symbolism. People are more likely to profit from a study of these chapters if they read them from the perspective of temple theology rather than seeing them simply as naïve and outdated pre-scientific cosmology.

Old Testament scholar Margaret Barker suggests that the architecture of the tabernacle and ancient Israel temples is modeled on Moses' vision of the creation.³ In this view, the results of each day of Creation are symbolically reflected in temple furnishings. For example, the light of day one of Creation might be understood as the glory of God and those who dwelled with Him in the celestial world prior to their mortal birth. According to this logic, the temple veil that divided the temple Holy of Holies from the Holy Place would symbolize the “firmament” that was created to separate the heavens from the earth in its original, terrestrial state.⁴

A closer look at the word “firmament” in Hebrew confirms this interpretation as a possibility. Joseph Smith translated Abraham 4:6 as “expanse” instead of “firmament.” The Prophet's choice of the word “expanse” seems to have been based on the Hebrew grammar book that he used during his study of Hebrew in Kirtland.⁵ According to biblical scholar Nahum Sarna: “The verbal form [of the Hebrew term] is often used for hammering out metal or flattening out earth, which suggests a basic meaning of ‘extending.’”⁶ This could well apply to the idea of the spreading out of a curtain or veil. In light of correspondences between the story of Creation in Genesis and the making of the Tabernacle in Exodus, the concept of the firmament as a veil merits further study as a contrasting alternative to other biblical descriptions where it is clearly represented as a solid dome.⁷

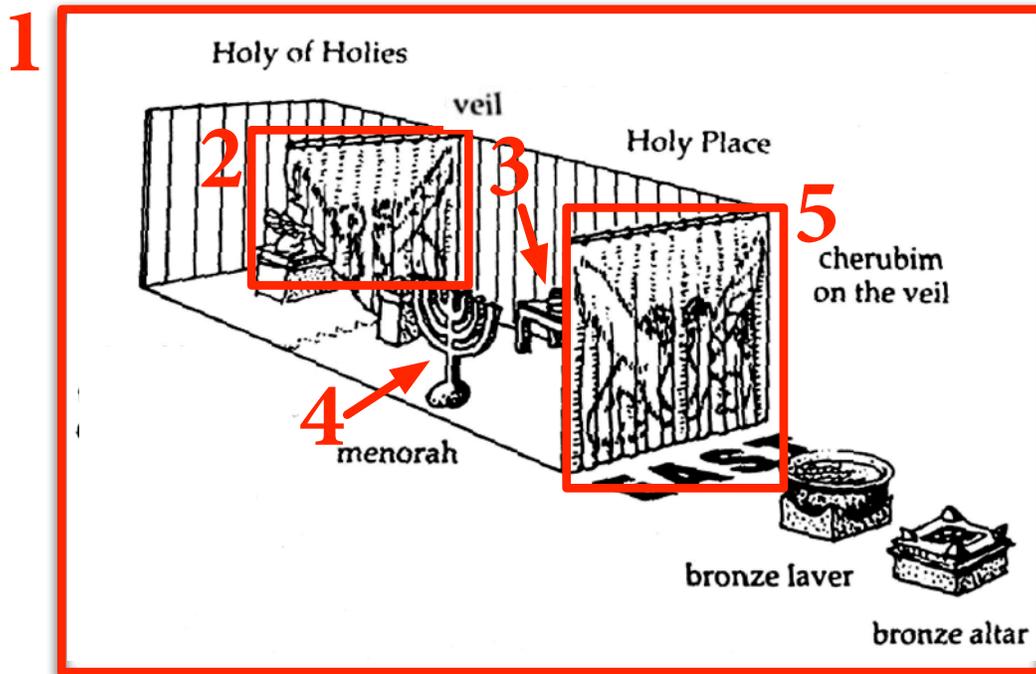


Figure 2. Michael P. Lyon, 1952-: *The Days of Creation and the Temple*, 1994

Louis Ginzberg's reconstruction of ancient Jewish sources is consistent with this overall idea,⁸ as well as with the suggestion of several scholars that a narrative of the Creation story something like Genesis 1 may have been used within temple ceremonies in ancient Israel:⁹

God told the angels: On the first day of creation, I shall make the heavens and stretch them out; so will Israel raise up the tabernacle as the dwelling place of my Glory.¹⁰ On the second day I shall put a division between the terrestrial waters¹¹ and the heavenly waters, so will [my servant Moses] hang up a veil in the tabernacle to divide the Holy Place and the Most Holy.¹² On the third day I shall make the earth to put forth grass and herbs; so will he, in obedience to my commands, ... prepare shewbread before me.¹³ On the fourth day I shall make the luminaries;¹⁴ so he will stretch out a golden candlestick [*menorah*] before me.¹⁵ On the fifth day I shall create the birds; so he will fashion the cherubim with outstretched wings.¹⁶ On the sixth day I shall create man; so will Israel set aside a man from the sons of Aaron as high priest for my service.¹⁷

Carrying this idea forward to a later time, Exodus 40:33 describes how Moses completed the Tabernacle. The Hebrew text exactly parallels the account of how God finished creation.¹⁸ *Genesis Rabbah* comments: "It is as if, on that day [i.e., the day the Tabernacle was raised in the wilderness], I actually created the world."¹⁹ With this idea in mind, Hugh Nibley famously called the temple "a scale-model of the universe."²⁰

The idea that the process of creation provides a model for subsequent temple building and ritual²¹ is found elsewhere in the ancient Near East. For example, this is made explicit in Hugh Nibley's reading of the first, second, and sixth lines of the Babylonian creation story, *Enuma Elish*: "At once above when the heavens had not yet received their name and the earth below was not yet named ... the most inner sanctuary of the temple ... had not yet been built."²² Consistent with this reading, the account goes on to tell how the god Ea founded his sanctuary (1:77),²³ after having "established his dwelling" (1:71), "vanquished and trodden down his foes" (1:73), and "rested" in his "sacred chamber" (1:75).

Parallels in the Layout of the Garden of Eden and of the Temple. Several scholars have found parallels in the layout of the Garden of Eden and that of Israelite temples.²⁴ Elsewhere in the ancient Near East, temple and garden themes were often combined, as illustrated in a famous mural from the Court of the Palms at Mari from about 1800 BCE.²⁵

J. R. Porter writes of how the scene depicted in the mural "strikingly recall[s] details of the Genesis description of the Garden of Eden. In particular, the mural depicts two types of tree," one type clearly being a date palm analogue to the Tree of Life and the other suggesting the biblical Tree of Knowledge.²⁶ As an intriguing parallel to the notion of the Tree of Knowledge as a symbol of the veil of the temple in Jewish and Christian tradition,²⁷ the "Holy of Holies" of the Mari palace would have been shielded from the public view by a veil made of "ornamented woven material" supported by two wooden posts corresponding to this second sacred tree.²⁸

The treelike wooden posts that flank the veil are "guarded by mythical winged animals[— the Assyrian version of the] cherubim"²⁹ who would be responsible for "the introduction of worshippers to the presence of a god."³⁰ As one part of his initiation ceremony, the king would have touched or grasped the hand of the statue of the god of the palace.³¹ Within the innermost sacred chamber, the king raises his right hand, perhaps in an oath-related gesture.³² At the same time, his left hand receives the rod and coil that signified his worthiness for the prerogatives of his office. These two items of regalia corresponded in their general function as construction tools to the later symbols of the square and compass, and served as symbols of divine power.³³

In summary, scholar John Walton observes that "the ideology of the temple is not noticeably different in Israel than it is in the ancient Near East. The difference is in the God, not in the way the temple functions in relation to the God."³⁴ Of course, resemblances between authentic, revealed religion in Old Testament times and the religious beliefs and practices of other peoples do not necessarily imply that the Israelites got their religion by simple assimilation and adaptation from their neighbors. Rather, to believing Latter-day Saints, it provides "a kind of confirmation and vindication"³⁵ that the Gospel was preached in the beginning and at least some of the distorted fragments of truth found anciently outside of biblical tradition may have been the results of subsequent degeneration and apostasy.

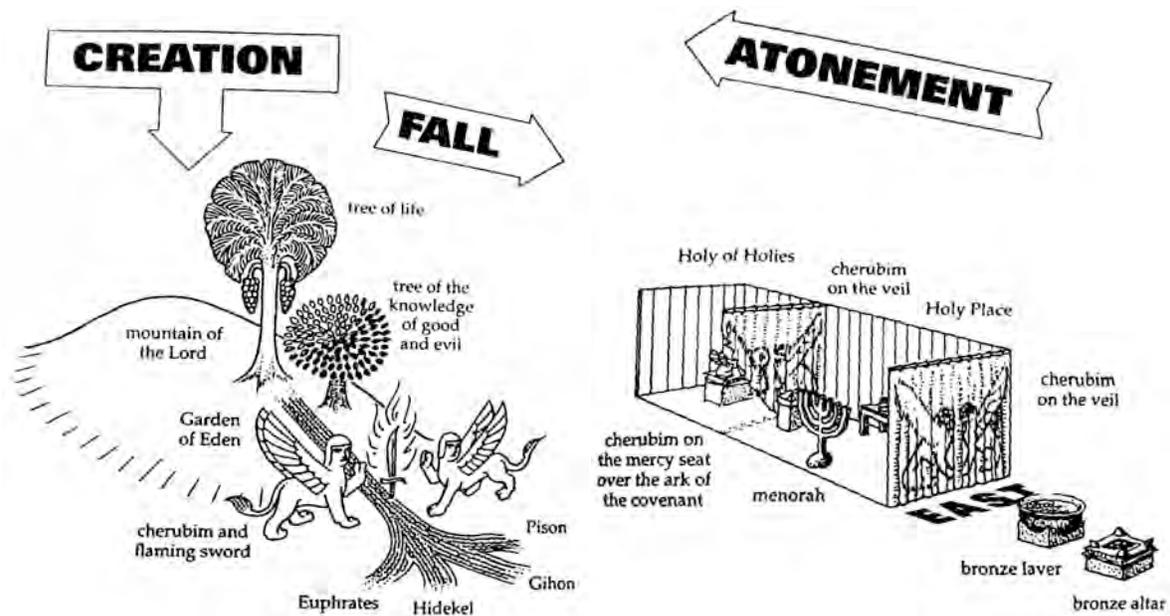


Figure 3. Michael P. Lyon, 1952-: *Sacred Topography of Eden and Temple, 1994*

Relating to the specifics of the biblical version of this story, LDS scholar Donald W. Parry has argued that the Garden of Eden can be seen as a natural “temple,” where Adam and Eve lived in God’s presence for a time, and mirroring the configuration of the heavenly temple intended as their ultimate destination.³⁶ Each major feature of Eden (e.g., the river, the cherubim, the Tree of Knowledge, the Tree of Life) corresponds to a similar symbol in the Israelite temple (e.g., the bronze laver, the cherubim, the veil, the menorah).

Moreover, the course taken by the Israelite high priest through the temple can be seen as symbolizing the journey of the Fall of Adam and Eve in reverse. In other words, just as the route of Adam and Eve’s departure from Eden led them *eastward* past the cherubim with the flaming swords and out of the sacred garden into the mortal world, so in ancient times the high priest would return westward *from* the mortal world, past the consuming fire, the cleansing water, the woven images of cherubim on the temple veils, and, finally, back into the presence of God.³⁷ Likewise, in both the book of Moses and the modern temple endowment, the posterity of Adam and Eve trace the footsteps of their first parents — initially as they are sent away from Eden, and later in their subsequent journey of return and reunion.³⁸

About the journey made within the temple, LDS scholar Hugh Nibley commented:

Properly speaking, one did not go “through” the temple—in one door and out another—for one enters and leaves by the same door, but by moving in opposite directions... The Two Ways of Light and Darkness are but one way after all, as the wise Heraclitus said: “The up-road and the down-road are one”; which one depends on the way we are facing.³⁹

In the book of Moses, chapters 1-4 tells the story of the “down-road” of the Fall, while chapters 5-8 follow the journey of Adam and Eve and the righteous branches of their posterity along the “up-road” enabled by the Atonement. 40 In the book of Moses, the “up-road” is called the “way of the Tree of Life” 41 — signifying the path that leads to the presence of God and the sweet fruit held in reserve for the righteous in the day of resurrection.

Why

A variety of evidences suggest that the architecture and layout of the temple was intentionally mirrored in the account of the days of Creation and the description of the Garden of Eden. An understanding of this layout is crucial to an understanding of the symbolism of the Fall, as will be seen in later articles.

Fittingly, just as the first book of the Bible, Genesis, recounts the story of Adam and Eve being cast out from the Garden, its last book, Revelation, prophesies a permanent return to Eden for the sanctified.42 In that day, the veil that separates man and the rest of fallen creation from God will be swept away, and all shall be “done in earth, as it is in heaven.”43 In the original Garden of Eden, “there was no need for a temple — because Adam and Eve enjoyed the continual presence of God.” Likewise, in John’s vision “there was no temple in the Holy City, ‘for its temple is the Lord God.’”44

Further Study

For more detailed analysis of how the architecture of the temple relates to the layout of the Garden of Eden, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Tree of Knowledge*. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes (2014)*, pp. 51-59. For a more complete analysis of the Investiture Mural from Mari, see J. M. Bradshaw, et al., Investiture Panel. The book is available for purchase in print at Amazon.com and both the book and the articles are available as free pdf downloads at www.TempleThemes.net.

For a verse-by-verse commentary on the Creation chapters in the book of Moses, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 82-212. The book is available for purchase in print at Amazon.com and as a free pdf download at www.TempleThemes.net.

For extensive discussions of a variety of relevant topics in science and Mormonism by faithful scientists and scholars, see D. H. Bailey, et al., *Science and Mormonism 1*. The book is available for purchase in print at Amazon.com and as a free pdf download at www.TempleThemes.net.

For a scripture roundtable video from The Interpreter Foundation on the subject of Gospel Doctrine lesson 3, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNw-RLAtokY>.

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Endnotes

1 Used with permission of Book of Mormon Central. See <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/reference-knowhy> .

2 With respect to the creation accounts in scripture, the Latter-day Saints have avoided some of the serious clashes with science that have troubled other religious traditions. For example, we have no serious quarrel with the concept of a very old earth whose "days" of creation seem to have been of very long, overlapping, and varying duration (Alma 40:8; B. R. McConkie, *Christ and the Creation*, p. 11; B. Young, 17 September 1876, p. 23). Joseph Smith is remembered as having taught that the heavenly bodies were created prior to the earth, asserting that "... the starry hosts were worlds and suns and universes, some of which had being millions of ages before the earth had physical form" (E. W. Tullidge, *Women*, p. 178). For detailed discussions of the book of Moses creation account, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 82-131. For a additional discussion of science and Mormonism, see *ibid.*, pp. 526-530.

3 M. Barker, *Revelation*, pp. 24-25; M. Barker, *Hidden*, p. 18. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 146-149. Of course, the temple-centric view of the Pentateuch is not the *exclusive* model of Creation presented in the Bible, as scholars such as Brown and Smith explain (W. P. Brown, *Seven Pillars*; M. S. Smith, *Priestly Vision*).

4 See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, p. 104.

5 J. Seixas, *Manual*, p. 21.

6 N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 8.

7 From this perspective, Enoch's descriptions is particularly intriguing: "And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still; and yet thou art there." Note that the Israelite temple veil was replete with cosmic and creation symbols (M. Barker, *Boundary*). Materially, the temple veil was a "curtain" like the other curtains used for the Tabernacle, consistent with the NET Bible translation of "veil" as "special curtain" in Exodus 26:31. The translators note that the difference between the veil and other curtains is primarily functional: "The word פָּרֹכֶת (*farokhet*) seems to be connected with a verb that means 'to shut off' and was used with a shrine. This curtain would form a barrier in the approach to God (see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 289)" (NET Bible, Exodus 26:31, n. 38).

References in Exodus 24:10, Job 6:13; 37:18, and Ezekiel 1:22, 25, 26 describe the "firmament" as a polished dome, somewhat like smoothly hammered metal (Jeremiah

10:9) or sapphire. The concept of the firmament as a solid dome is also supported by references that describe heavenly “waters” literally as “water,” thus the need to fit the sky with “windows” that could open and close as needed for rainfall (e.g., Genesis 7:11, 8:2; Malachi 3:10). However, some late Jewish traditions put forth the idea that in some Creation contexts it may have referred to what Latter-day Saints would call “unorganized matter” (see e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, p. 98).

8 L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:51. See also W. P. Brown, *Seven Pillars*, pp. 40-41; P. J. Kearney, *Creation*; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Cosmology of P*, pp. 10-11. According to Walton, “the courtyard represented the cosmic spheres outside of the organized cosmos (sea and pillars). The antechamber held the representations of lights and food. The veil separated the heavens and earth — the place of God’s presence from the place of human habitation” (J. H. Walton, *Lost World*, p. 82).

Note that in this conception of creation the focus is not on the origins of the raw materials used to make the universe, but rather their fashioning into a structure providing a useful purpose. The key insight, according to Walton, is that: “people in the ancient world believed that something existed not by virtue of its material proportion, *but by virtue of its having a function in an ordered system...* Consequently, something could be manufactured physically but still not ‘exist’ if it has not become functional. ... The ancient world viewed the cosmos more like a company or kingdom” that comes into existence at the moment it is organized, not when the people who participate it were created materially (ibid., pp. 26, 35; cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 5 January 1841, p. 181, Abraham 4:1).

Walton continues:

It has long been observed that in the contexts of *bara'* [the Hebrew term translated “create”] no materials for the creative act are ever mentioned, and an investigation of all the passages mentioned above substantiate that claim. How interesting it is that these scholars then draw the conclusion that *bara'* implies creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). One can see with a moment of thought that such a conclusion assumes that “create” is a material activity. To expand their reasoning for clarity’s sake here: Since “create” is a material activity (assumed on their part), and since the contexts never mention the materials used (as demonstrated by the evidence), then the material object must have been brought into existence without using other materials (i.e., out of nothing). But one can see that the whole line of reasoning only works if one can assume that *bara'* is a material activity. In contrast, if, as the analysis of objects presented above suggests, *bara'* is a functional activity, it would be ludicrous to expect that materials are being used in the activity. In other words, the absence of reference to materials, rather than suggesting material creation out of nothing, is better explained as indication that *bara'* is not a material activity but a functional one (J. H. Walton, *Lost World*, pp. 43-44).

In summary, the evidence ... from the Old Testament as well as from the ancient Near East suggests that both defined the pre-creation state in similar terms and as featuring an absence of functions rather than an absence of material. Such information supports the idea that their concept of existence was linked to functionality and that creation was an activity of bringing functionality to a

nonfunctional condition rather than bringing material substance to a situation in which matter was absent. The evidence of matter (the waters of the deep in Genesis 1:2) in the precreation state then supports this view” (ibid., p. 53).

9 E.g., M. Weinfeld, Sabbath, pp. 508-510; S. D. Ricks, Liturgy; P. J. Kearney, Creation; J. Morrow, Creation.

10 Exodus 40:17-19.

11 Jewish commentators have sometimes taken the term “waters” in the creation account to refer generally to the matter out of which all things were created. For a discussion and sources, see J. M. Bradshaw, God's Image 1, p. 98.

12 Exodus 40:20-21.

13 Exodus 12:8, 25:30

14 For a discussion how the notion of “priestly time” is reflected in the story of the creation of the luminaries, see M. S. Smith, Priestly Vision, pp. 93-94, 97-98.

15 Exodus 25:31-40, 37:17-24.

16 Exodus 25:18-22, 37:6-9.

17 See Exodus 40:12-15. See also M. S. Smith, Priestly Vision, pp. 98-102. “Through Genesis 1 we come to understand that God has given us a privileged role in the functioning of His cosmic temple. He has tailored the world to our needs, not to His (for He has no needs). It is His place, but it is designed for us and we are in relationship with Him” (J. H. Walton, Lost World, p. 149).

18 Moses 3:1. See J. D. Levenson, Temple and World, p. 287; A. C. Leder, Coherence, p. 267; J. Morrow, Creation. Levenson also cites Blenkinsopp's thesis of a triadic structure in the priestly concept of world history that described the “creation of the world,” the “construction of the sanctuary,” and “the establishment of the sanctuary in the land and the distribution of the land among the tribes” in similar, and sometimes identical language. Thus, as Polen reminds us, “the purpose of the Exodus from Egypt is not so that the Israelites could enter the Promised Land, as many other biblical passages have it. Rather it is theocentric: so that God might abide with Israel. ... This limns a narrative arc whose apogee is reached not in the entry into Canaan at the end of Deuteronomy and the beginning of Joshua, but in the dedication day of the Tabernacle (Leviticus 9-10) when God's Glory — manifest Presence — makes an eruptive appearance to the people (Leviticus 9:23-24)” (N. Polen, Leviticus, p. 216).

In another correspondence between these events, Mark Smith notes a variation on the first Hebrew word of Genesis (*bere'shit*) and the description used in Ezekiel 45:18 for the first month of a priestly offering (*bari'shon*): “Thus said the Lord: ‘In the beginning (month) on the first (day) of the month, you shall take a bull of the herd without blemish, and you shall cleanse the sanctuary.’ What makes this verse particularly relevant for our discussion of *bere'shit* is that *ri'shon* occurs in close proximity to *'ehad*, which contextually designates ‘(day) one’ that is ‘the first day’ of the month. This combination of ‘in the beginning’ (*bari'shon*) with ‘(day) one’ (*yom 'ehad*) is reminiscent of ‘in beginning of’ (*bere'shit*) in Genesis 1:1 and ‘day one’ (*yom 'ehad*) in Genesis 1:5” (M. S. Smith, Priestly Vision, p. 47).

Hahn notes the same correspondences to the creation of the cosmos in the building of Solomon's Temple (S. W. Hahn, *Christ, Kingdom*, pp. 176-177; cf. J. Morrow, *Creation*; J. D. Levenson, *Temple and World*, pp. 283-284; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Glory*, pp. 62-65; M. Weinfeld, *Sabbath*, pp. 506, 508):

As creation takes seven days, the Temple takes seven years to build (1 Kings 6:38). It is dedicated during the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles (1 Kings 8:2), and Solomon's solemn dedication speech is built on seven petitions (1 Kings 8:31-53). As God capped creation by "resting" on the seventh day, the Temple is built by a "man of rest" (1 Chronicles 22:9) to be a "house of rest" for the Ark, the presence of the Lord (1 Chronicles 28:2; 2 Chronicles 6:41; Psalm 132:8, 13-14; Isaiah 66:1).

When the Temple is consecrated, the furnishings of the older Tabernacle are brought inside it. (R. E. Friedman suggests the entire Tabernacle was brought inside). This represents the fact that all the Tabernacle was, the Temple has become. Just as the construction of the Tabernacle of the Sinai covenant had once recapitulated creation, now the Temple of the Davidic covenant recapitulated the same. The Temple is a microcosm of creation, the creation a macro-temple.

19 J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah* 1, 3:9, p. 35.

20 H. W. Nibley, *Meaning of Temple*, pp. 14-15; cf. H. W. Nibley, *Greatness*, p. 301; T. D. Alexander, *From Eden*, pp. 37-42. Speaking of the temple and its furnishings, Josephus wrote that each item was "made in way of imitation and representation of the universe" (F. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 3:7:7, p. 75). Levenson has suggested that the temple in Jerusalem may have been called by the name "Heaven and Earth," paralleling similar names given to other Near East temples (see J. H. Walton, *Lost World*, pp. 180-181 n. 12).

21 H. W. Nibley, *Return*, pp. 71-73. See also J. H. Walton, *Ancient*, pp. 123-127; H. W. Nibley, *Meanings and Functions*, pp. 1460-1461; S. D. Ricks, *Liturgy*. For more on the structure and function of the story of Creation found in Genesis 1 and arguably used in Israelite temple liturgy, see J. H. Walton, *Lost World*; M. S. Smith, *Priestly Vision*. W. P. Brown, *Seven Pillars* provides perspectives on other biblical accounts of creation. See J. H. Walton, *Genesis 1*, pp. 17-22 for a useful table that highlights similarities and differences among creation accounts in the ancient Near East. Cf. W. P. Brown, *Seven Pillars*, pp. 21-32.

22 H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, p. 122. The term *giparu*, rendered by Nibley as "inner sanctuary" (*ibid.*, p. 122; compare E. A. Speiser, *Creation Epic*, 1:1, 2 6b, pp. 60-61), has been translated variously in this context by others as "bog," "marsh," or "reed hut." The latter term more accurately conveys the idea of an enclosure housing the sanctuary or residence of the *en(t)u* priest(ess) of the temple. For more about the temple connotation of the Babylonian reed hut and its significance for the story of the flood in the Bible and other ancient flood accounts, see J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *God's Image 2*, pp. 216-221.

23 See E. A. Speiser, *Creation Epic*, p. 61 n. 4.

24 E.g., G. K. Beale, *Temple*, pp. 66-80; G. J. Wenham, *Sanctuary Symbolism*; J. M. Lundquist, *Reality*; D. W. Parry, *Garden*; J. A. Parry *et al.*, *Temple in Heaven*; T.

Stordalen, Echoes, pp. 112-116, 308-309; R. N. Holzapfel *et al.*, Father's House, pp. 17-19; J. Morrow, Creation. The imagery of the Garden of Eden as a prototype sanctuary is not incompatible with views that relate the symbolism of the Creation of the cosmos to the temple, as discussed above (see, e.g., M. S. Smith, Priestly Vision; J. H. Walton, Lost World; J. H. Walton, Genesis, pp. 10-31; W. P. Brown, Seven Pillars, pp. 33-77; J. D. Levenson, Temple and World). See also J. M. Bradshaw, God's Image 1, pp. 146-149.

25 For a detailed description of this mural and a comparison the ceremonies by which kings were initiated in Old Babylon and in the Old Testament, see J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, Investiture Panel.

26 This second type of tree with its prominent blossoms is identified by al-Khalesi simply as the "Sacred Tree" (Y. M. al-Khalesi, Palms, pp. 11, 43). Al-Khalesi notes the realism of the date palm but sees the "sacred tree" as "imaginary" in nature (*ibid.*, p. 11).

27 For a detailed exposition of these traditions, see J. M. Bradshaw, Tree of Knowledge.

28 Y. M. al-Khalesi, Palms, p. 18. See also T. D. Alexander, From Eden, p. 22 n. 20.

29 Cf. Moses 4:31.

30 Y. M. al-Khalesi, Palms, p. 67. Barrelet—citing texts associated with Gudea, a ruler of the city of southern city of Lagash, ca. 2144-2124 BCE—conjectures that the three composite animals symbolize the three major areas of the ritual complex where the investiture took place (M.-T. Barrelet, Peinture, p. 24).

31 Y. M. al-Khalesi, Palms, pp. 60-61.

32 See S. D. Ricks, Oaths, pp. 49-50; P. Y. Hoskisson, Nīšum Oath.

33 Y. M. al-Khalesi, Palms, p. 58. Wyatt discusses these items as divine arms that relate the king's military action to the mythic combat of the gods (N. Wyatt, Arms, p. 159): "The actual handing over of the weapons (taken by the king from the hands of the divine image?) indicates a process of direct transmission by touch, comparable to rites of laying of hands, as in investitures, and enthronement rites in which kings sit on the divine throne" (*ibid.*, p. 160 n. 28). Based on fragmentary textual evidence, Wyatt conjectures three elements in the ritual (*ibid.*, pp. 159-160):

Firstly, the king is escorted by the god to the throne of his father, where he presumably takes his seat. This suggests that he approaches the throne accompanied by the image of the god, perhaps holding his hand;

Secondly, he is given the "divine weapons," which are identified as those used by the god in the mythical *Chaoskampf* [i.e., primeval battle between the god and the forces of chaos]. Something of their power and efficacy is evidently to be transmitted to the king;

Thirdly, he is anointed, in the first extra-biblical allusion to the anointing of a king. This most distinctive of Israelite and Judahite rites is now given a pedigree going back a millennium. This is the thus the formal inauguration of [the king's] reign...

Differing from Wyatt in the interpretation of the "rod and ring," Slanski concludes, from both linguistic and archaeological evidence, that the "ring" in the hand of Ishtar could well be an ancient chalk line (K. E. Slanski, Rod and Ring, pp. 47-48), symbolizing the

just rulership of the king. As emblems that symbolically conjoin the acts of measurement and temple foundation-laying with the processes of cosmic creation, the Mesopotamian rod and ring can be profitably compared to temple surveying instruments in the biblical book of Ezekiel (see, e.g., D. I. Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, pp. 512, 515) as well as to the analogous figures of the square and circle (or compass) (H. W. Nibley, *Circle*).

Note that the battle axe that hangs down from Ishtar's left hand in the mural would have been a more fitting symbol of war. Since there is no explicit link between the Mari Investiture Panel and the text on which Wyatt bases his interpretation, Ronan J. Head and I have tentatively concluded that, just as the painting seems to depict an established rite involving the "rod and ring" that authorized the king to build a palace and establish his just rule, so there may have been an analogous ceremony to which Wyatt's text alludes, where the god would stretch out his battle-axe to the king in preparation for war. A biblical parallel to the dichotomy between building and waging war can be found in the story of King David, who was forbidden by God from constructing a temple because of his career as a warrior. For this reason, Solomon his son, a "man of rest," was eventually given the commission to build the earthly House of God (1 Chronicles 22:8-9).

34 J. H. Walton, *Ancient*, p. 129.

35 Summarizing the LDS attitude toward ancient and modern revelation of religious truths, Truman G. Madsen wrote (T. G. Madsen, *Essay*, pp. xvi, xvii):

To say that the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness is restored is to say that something has been lost and regained — but it is not to say that everything has. The Mormon believes that after every outpouring of divine light there is a record of degeneration and loss, the signs of which he thinks he can see in every generation. But Mormons have resisted from the outset the sectarian impulse: the isolation of a text or principle and the insistence that they alone possess and practice it. Exultant at a new revelatory downpour, the Mormon sees the implication: unless the same truths, authorities, and powers can be found in prior times and places; unless there have been genuine prophets, apostles and holy men who were, for all their individual traits, in touch with divine outpourings; unless there have been saints of former as well as of latter days — unless these things are so, Mormonism is without foundation. In other words, Mormonism has no claim to be a viable religion in the present unless it has been a viable religion in the past. And this is not just a halfhearted concession that there has been sort of, or part of, or a shadow of the fulness of the Gospel. It is to say that some, at least, among the ancients had it all. It is to match the thesis that from the early (and supposedly crude) beginnings things have become better; just as often they have, instead, become worse. Spiritual anabolism and catabolism have been at work in the religious life from the beginning. ...

If the outcome of hard archaeological, historical, and comparative discoveries in the past century is an embarrassment to exclusivistic readings of religion, that, to the Mormon, is a kind of confirmation and vindication. His faith assures him not only that Jesus anticipated his great predecessors (who were really successors) but that hardly a teaching or a practice is utterly distinct or peculiar or original in his earthly

ministry. Jesus was not a plagiarist, unless that is the proper name for one who repeats himself. He was the original author. The gospel of Jesus Christ came with Christ in the meridian of time only because the gospel of Jesus Christ came from Christ in prior dispensations. He did not teach merely a new twist on a syncretic-Mediterranean tradition. His earthly ministry enacted what had been planned and anticipated “from before the foundations of the world,” (e.g., John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20; Alma 22:13; D&C 130:20; Moses 5:57; Abraham 1:3) and from Adam down.

36 D. W. Parry, Garden, p. 135. Cf. J. M. Lundquist, Reality; J. A. Parry *et al.*, Temple in Heaven; T. Stordalen, Echoes, pp. 112-116, 308-309; T. D. Alexander, From Eden, pp. 20-23.

37 D. W. Parry, Garden, p. 135.

38 Cf. John 16:28.

39 H. W. Nibley, Message (2005), pp. 442-443.

40 See J. M. Bradshaw, God's Image 1, pp. 328-351.

41 Moses 4:31. See *ibid.*, p. 282.

42 Revelation 22:1-5. See M. Barker, Revelation, pp. 327-333; R. D. Draper *et al.*, Promises; T. D. Alexander, From Eden, pp. 13-15.

43 Matthew 6:10.

44 W. J. Hamblin *et al.*, Temple, pp. 14-15. See Revelation 21:22. Levenson finds a similar concept in his retranslation of the proclamation of the seraphim in Isaiah's vision. Rather than chanting: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts: The whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3), Levenson (J. D. Levenson, Temple and World, pp. 289-290) gives the more accurate rendering of: “The fulness of the whole earth (or, world) is his glory”:

In cultic contexts, the term for “glory” (*kabod*) has a technical meaning; it is the divine radiance ... that manifests the presence of God [cf. Exodus 40:34, 1 Kings 8:11]. ... If my translation of Isaiah 6:3 is correct, then the seraphim identify the world in its amplitude with this *terminus technicus* of the Temple cult. As Isaiah sees the smoke filling the Temple, the seraphim proclaim that the *kabod* fills the world (verses 3-4). The world is the manifestation of God as He sits enthroned in His Temple. The *trishagion* is a dim adumbration of the rabbinic notion that the world proceeds from Zion in the same manner that a fetus, in rabbinic etymology, proceeds from the navel.