

ANCIENT
TEMPLE WORSHIP

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To Jamie Brown

CUBE, GATE, AND MEASURING TOOLS: A BIBLICAL PATTERN

Matthew B. Brown

The purpose of this paper¹ is to draw attention to several sets of matching themes which are found in descriptions of the ancient Israelite temple and portions of the apocalypse written by the apostle John. The information associated with these sets can be applied to the task of interpreting the respective texts where they are found and they can also be used to demonstrate a surprising way whereby the covenant people of the Old and New Testaments were interconnected.

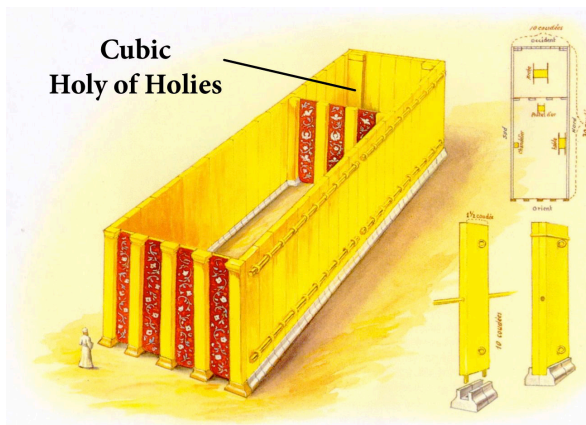


Figure 1: The Holy Place and the Holy of Holies
of the Tabernacle

The first point of comparison in the aforementioned matching sets has to do with the most sacred area in the Israelite temple known as the Holy of Holies. The perfectly cubical shape of this room was revealed in a vision to the prophet Moses while he met with the Lord on Mount Sinai (Exodus 25:8–9). Long after Moses incorporated this room into the Tabernacle it was replicated on a larger scale inside of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6:20). Four pillars were placed on the east side of the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:32–33), which logically would have created three narrow gateways that provided access to the room (see Figure 1).

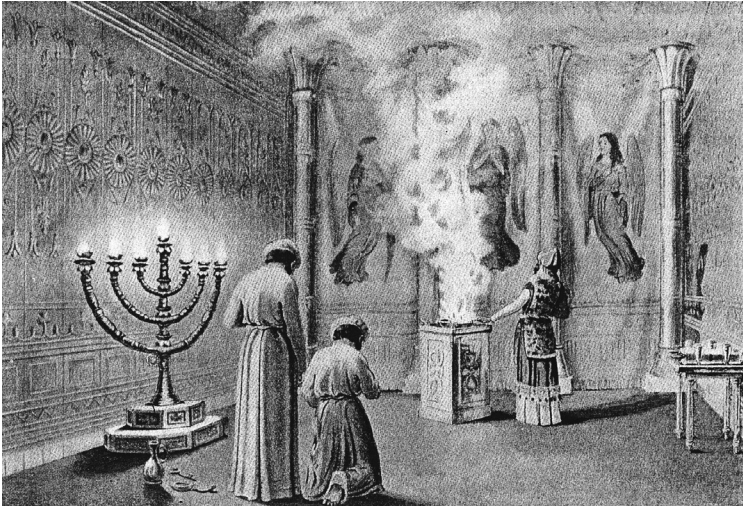
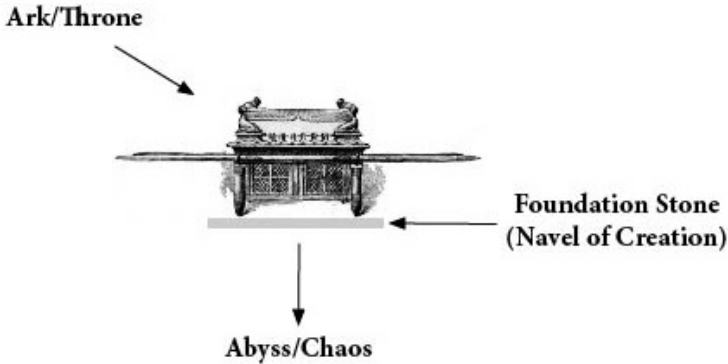


Figure 2: Interior of the Holy Place.

A veil was stretched across these pillars and cherubim, or angelic guards, were embroidered on the veil (Exodus 26:31–32; cf. Genesis 3:24). The exact number of cherubim embroidered on the veil is not stated in any Old Testament text, but, as seen in Figure 2, there may have been only three: one per gateway. The main reason this idea should be taken into serious consideration is the fact that once it is accepted, a matching pattern then emerges in the last volume of the New Testament.

In chapter 21 of the book of Revelation, the apostle John is shown the heavenly city of New Jerusalem, and he sees that it is shaped like a perfect cube. He also sees that it has three gates on each of its four sides, and one angel is standing guard at each of the gates (vv. 12, 16).

It can be determined with a degree of certainty that the heavenly New Jerusalem and the earthly Holy of Holies were parallel objects because of an important object that each of them contained. The Ark of the Covenant sat in the Holy of Holies of the earthly temple. There are a number of Bible scholars who believe that the Ark of the Covenant was a representation of God's throne² — which means that the Holy of Holies would have symbolically represented the throne room of the Heavenly King. When John the Revelator entered into the heavenly New Jerusalem, he saw that the throne of God was there (Revelation 22:3). This explains why John said that he saw no temple inside of the heavenly New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:22). He was standing inside the Holy of Holies of the heavenly temple.



**Figure 3: “The Lord sitteth upon the flood;
yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever” (Psalm 29:10)**

Figure 3 contains notations which are relevant to the discussion at hand. Psalm 29:10 in the King James Bible reads this way: “The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.” This is another way of saying that the throne of God was considered to be stationed over a body of water. In the mythology of ancient Israel (and several other regions of the ancient Near East), it was taught that at the time of creation God conquered chaos — or the chaos monster — which was signified by the boisterous waves of the sea. At one point in time, there was a symbolic rock placed directly in front of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies called the “Foundation Stone.” This rock represented the first portion of earth which arose from the sea at the time of creation. It was, therefore, considered to be the center, or navel, of creation, and the Israelites believed that it served as a sort of capstone over the chaotic sea.³ These ideas will play a role in the discussion which follows.

In Figure 4 there are two more references to the book of Psalms. If it is accepted that the Ark of the Covenant represented God’s throne, then these verses from Psalm 9 and Psalm 96 take on added meaning. They say, essentially, that there are specific attributes associated with God’s throne or His kingship. These attributes are listed in the King James Version of the Bible as righteousness, truth, and uprightness. By extension, these throne attributes are connected with the Holy of Holies or throne room.

This is very significant since there are several Psalms which have been identified as temple entrance liturgies, and one of them (Psalm 15) names the very same throne attributes as requirements for entering through the temple’s veiled gateway.⁴ What is even more interesting,

Holy of Holies

Psalm 9:7-8

Psalm 96:13



Righteousness Truth Uprightness

Figure 4: Three specific attributes associated with God's throne or his kingship

however, is that if the content of Revelation chapter 21 is considered in this light, it can be seen that the same temple entrance requirements are listed for the heavenly New Jerusalem — they are just named in a slightly different way than in Psalm 15:

Psalm 15:1-2: Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? He that walketh *uprightly*, and worketh *righteousness*, and speaketh the *truth* in his heart.

Revelation 21:27: And there shall in no wise enter into [New Jerusalem] anything that *defileth*, neither whatsoever worketh *abomination*, or maketh a *lie*.

Since there were three different veiled gateways in the Tabernacle built by Moses, the question naturally arises as to which gate the temple entrance liturgies applied to. Some early Jewish rabbis taught that the Psalm 24 entrance liturgy was used by the Israelite king in order to gain access to the Holy of Holies,⁵ while there are some modern scholars who believe that the entrance liturgies were employed by regular members of Israelite society in order to get through the first gate which led into the temple courtyard.⁶

Here is a brief description of what happened — according to some commentators — when the Psalm 15 entrance text was being put to use:

- the location was a temple gate.
- the worshipers inquire[d] of the priest as to the qualifications for admission”; this was a question pertaining to “the nature

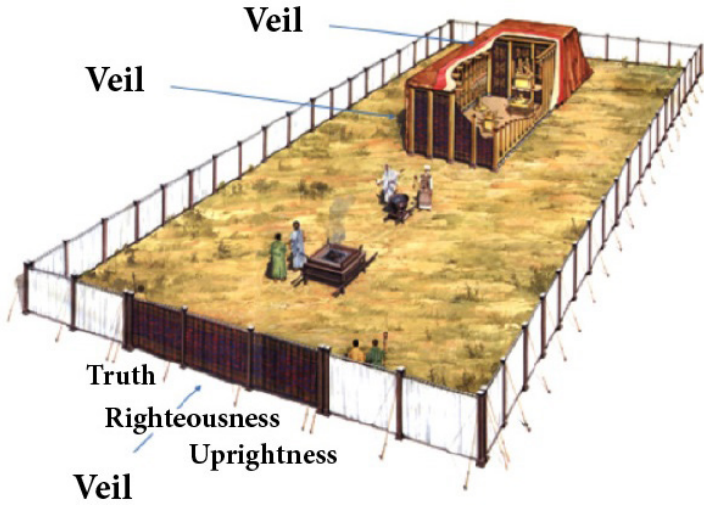


Figure 5: Veiled gateways of the Tabernacle

and character of the person who desire[d] to enter God’s presence.”

- “the priest respond[ed] by specifying the requirements.”
- the exchange “conclude[d] with a blessing.”⁷

One scholar notes that the Psalm 15 question regarding entry requirements is addressed to the Lord because He alone “decides who may appear before Him.” Yet, it is “a priestly speaker” or proxy who answers on the Lord’s behalf from inside of the temple entryway.⁸

By way of a brief historical digression, it is important to mention two things here. First, if a comparison is made between the book of Revelation Holy of Holies material and some of the teachings of Jesus Christ recorded in Luke chapter 13, an interesting pattern emerges. During a discussion about personal salvation in Luke 13, the Savior states that people will come from the four cardinal directions in order to enter into the kingdom of God (this may be a two-dimensional reference to the cube; reference to the kingdom suggests a throne). Furthermore, Jesus Christ indicates that there will be a gateway for entry into the kingdom, and people will engage in a conversation with a gatekeeper and be told of entry requirements (this, again, suggests the Holy of Holies of the temple). Passage through the gate is not to be automatic or easy, however, as evidenced by Luke 13:24, where the Lord states that the gate is narrow (*stenēs*),⁹ and not everyone is granted access. In addition, the Savior alludes to the fact that those who do enter through the gate will have to “strive” to do so. The Greek



Figure 6: A Catholic officiator with a small mallet as part of an entrance liturgy

word that underlies the translation “strive” (*agōnizesthe*) means to struggle or contend, as in a physical contest.¹⁰ The second thing to mention is the act of knocking, which is referred to in Luke 13:25. In Figure 6 a Catholic officiator with a small mallet can be seen engaged in an entrance liturgy. He knocks three times and recites part of Psalm 24 — which is an ancient Israelite temple entrance text. This triple knocking and Psalm citation ceremony can be traced back among normative Christians to a very early period. For example, if Luke 13:22-30 is compared with the chapters 21 and 22 of the book of Revelation a clear set of parallels materializes (see Appendix).

Returning now to the temple entrance requirements of Psalm 15; *righteousness*, *truth*, and *uprightness* are the royal attributes of morality which are named as necessary to pass by the Lord’s proxy at the temple gate. It is interesting to note that each of these attributes can be tied to specific architectural tools (next sections of this chapter), which, in turn, can be connected to the entrance liturgies in a secondary way (last sections of this chapter).

Righteousness

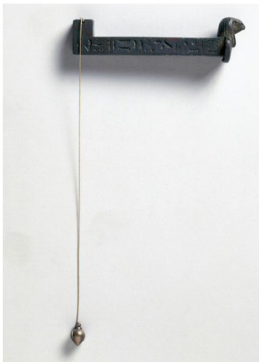


Figure 7: An Egyptian merkhet (plumb line), used to measure time

In the Psalm 118 entrance liturgy, the gate of the temple is specifically called “the gate of righteousness,” and in Isaiah 28:17 the Lord states, through one of His temple priests, that He judges “righteousness” by symbolically taking a measurement with a cord or a string. There is some disagreement among scholars over the exact identity of the instrument used by the Lord in His act of judgment, but whether it is a plumb line (the Egyptian instrument in Figure 7 was used to measure time) or a leveling line, it is still the same basic thing — a piece of cord or a string. Hence the temple gate, the moral attribute of righteousness, and the cord or string can be linked to each other.



Figure 8: An Egyptian leveling line

There are a number of places in the Old Testament where God is depicted as utilizing a cord or string in order to measure His covenant people (see 1 Kings 21:13; Isaiah 28:17; 34:11; Lamentations 2:8; Amos 7:7–8). This imagery, says one commentator, is “a metaphor for divine judgment” and “it may be that the idea [being put forward by this act is] a strict, predetermined measure from which God will not deviate.”¹¹

Truth



Figure 9: Christ with a compass

The Psalm 15 temple entrance text combines the concept of “truth” with a person’s “heart” (v. 2), while in the book of First Kings, walking in the “truth” with all of one’s “heart” is a divinely mandated prerequisite for occupying the kingly throne in ancient Israel (1 Kings 2:4; cf. Isaiah 16:5).¹² Indeed, in Psalm 86:11 the Israelite king proclaims the he will indeed walk in God’s “truth” (cf. Isaiah 38:3; 1 Kings 3:6).¹³

Psalm 89:8 mentions faithfulness as being “round about” God while a Jewish Targum of the same verse clarifies that it is “truth” which surrounds Him.¹⁴ Since the Hebrew word which underlies the King James phrase “round about” (*sabib*) can be rendered as “circumference” or “circuit,” the general imagery invoked is that of a circle. God being encircled by truth hints at a specific architectural tool employed in constructing a round shape: a builder’s compass.

Uprightness

In Psalm 15:2 the gate entry requirement of acting “uprightly” is a bit problematic since the Hebrew word being translated there does not match a clear pattern of words found throughout the Bible. The Hebrew word *tamim* underlies verse 2, but the parallel text of Isaiah 33:15 uses a different word for “uprightly” — *mesar* (see Figure 10). One of the meanings of *mesar* is “straightness” or “rectitude” in the figurative sense, and it comes from the Hebrew word *yashar*, which can also be translated as “straight.” This is significant since Psalm 140:13 (which likewise parallels Psalm 15:1–2) says that the “upright” will dwell in God’s presence, but it is translating the Hebrew word *yashar*, which can be rendered as “straight.”

Psalm 15:1	Isaiah 33:14-15	Psalm 140:13	Psalm 5:7-9
Uprightly (<i>tamim</i>)	Uprightly (<i>meshar</i> — from <i>yashar</i>)	Upright (<i>yashar</i>)	Straight (<i>yashar</i>)
Righteousness (<i>tzedeq</i>)	Righteously (<i>tsedaqah</i>)	Righteous (<i>tsaddiq</i>)	Righteousness (<i>tsedaqah</i>)
Truth (<i>emeth</i>)			Faithfulness in the mouth, leaving [lie] (<i>kun; kazab</i>)
Who shall dwell? Tabernacle	Who shall dwell?	Dwell in Thy presence	I will come into Thy house

Figure 10: Comparison of references in the Psalms and Isaiah

1 Kings 3:6	2 Kings 22:2	Psalm 45:6
Uprightness (<i>yesharah</i> — fem. of <i>yashar</i>)	Right (<i>yashar</i>) not to right or left	Right (<i>mishar</i> — from <i>yashar</i>)
Righteousness (<i>tsedeqah</i>)		
Truth (<i>emeth</i>)		

Figure 11: Comparison of references in 1 and 2 Kings and Psalm 45:6

Here are some other points to consider (see Figure 11). In 1 Kings 3:6, it is said that the king of Israel walks in “uprightness,” but the word being translated is *yesharah*, the feminine form of *yashar*, which can mean “straight.” Evidence that this is an acceptable way to understand the meaning of the Hebrew word can be found in 2 Kings chapter 22,

verse 2, where it is made known that the Israelite king did that which was *yashar* in the sight of the Lord, turning neither to the right nor to the left. This seems to be a clear reference to an undeviating or “straight” line. A reference to God’s throne in Psalm 45:6 is relevant here. It says, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.” The Hebrew word translated here as “scepter” (*shebet*) can also be rendered as “rod,” and the word that describes it in the King James Bible (i.e., “right”) is a rendition of the Hebrew word *mishor* which is derived from *yashar* which can mean “straight.”

Psalm 5 — which has itself been “associated with the “entrance liturgies”¹⁵ and is rehearsed by the Israelite king — happens to list some of the Psalm 15 temple entrance requirements within it, but verse 8 of the King James Version actually renders *yashar* as “straight.” The reason all of this is relevant is that in both ancient Asia and ancient Mesopotamia, a good king was said to wield a “straight scepter.”¹⁶

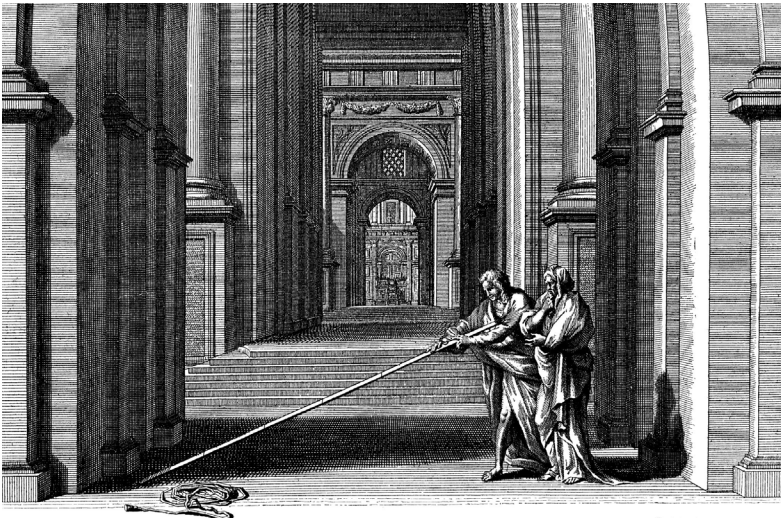


Figure 12: Ezekiel with an angel holding a linen rope or cord and a measuring reed or rod

There is an intriguing section of the Old Testament where the rod image is tied together with the cord image, and both are mentioned along with an Israelite temple gate. When the prophet Ezekiel (who was a temple priest) was shown a visionary model of the Lord’s sanctuary, he met an angel in the east entrance of that temple complex. This gateway seems to have served as a station for guards,¹⁷ and so it was roughly equivalent to the veiled tabernacle gate with cherubim embroidered upon it. The angel

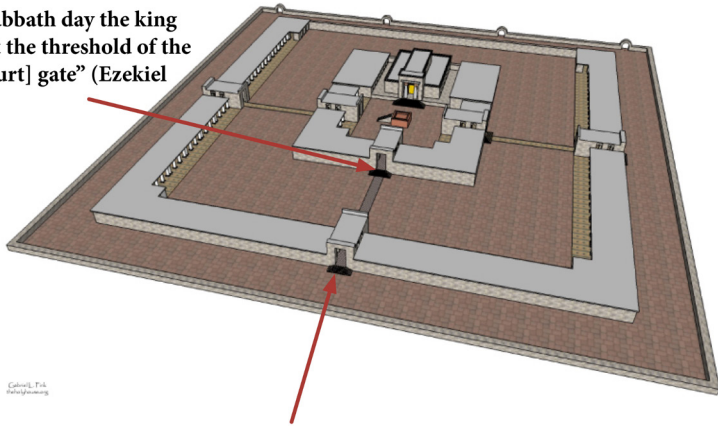
who met with Ezekiel was holding two objects: a linen rope or cord and a measuring reed or rod (see Ezekiel 40:3 and Figure 12). The rod (*qaneh*) was used for measuring short distances, while the cord measured longer ones.¹⁸ It should be noted that in ancient Mesopotamia, the “rod and ring” motif (which has been identified in some instances as a “rod and rope”) is interpreted by several scholars as “surveying tools used for laying straight lines,” “tools for laying out straight foundations.” Ideologically, it is said that a deity would interact with the earthly Mesopotamian king so that he would be able to “guide the land straight.” A deity is sometimes depicted on Mesopotamian monuments actually handing the aforementioned objects to the earthly king. It is believed by some writers that these two items signified “righteous kingship sanctified by the gods.”¹⁹

It seems pertinent that the rod and cord motifs can be detected both directly and indirectly in association with the Holy of Holies cube described in the book of Revelation. Just like in the book of Ezekiel, the angel of Revelation uses a rod to measure the temple (Revelation 21:15-17). The text does not say that the Revelation angel carried a measuring cord like his counterpart in Ezekiel’s book, but the cord is implied by the fact that Ezekiel’s angel used his cord to measure the life-giving river of water coming out of the temple, while the book of Revelation actually describes the life-giving river of water issuing forth from God’s throne inside the Holy of Holies cube.

There is one additional point to make with regard to Figure 12. The apostle John states in Revelation 11:1 that he was handed a “reed like unto a rod” by an angel and instructed to use it to measure people who were in the temple. The word translated there as “rod” is *rhabados* and can be rendered as “scepter,” which is appropriate because John indicates that at some point in time he himself had achieved the status of kingship (see Revelation 1:5-6) and, like it has previously been stated in this paper, kings measure people as an act of judgment.

Figure 13 displays a model of the visionary temple shown to the prophet Ezekiel and at the bottom can be seen an arrow pointing to the location of the gate where the angel stood with the cord and the rod. Off to the left is another arrow pointing to an inner gateway, and the explanation I will now give will provide the bridge to the concepts presented in the remainder of this chapter. It was at this temple gate that the king of Israel was to kneel and worship the Heavenly King at the gate of the inner court. Ezekiel 46:1-2 mentions that one of the times when the earthly king was required to do this was on the Sabbath — after “six working days” — which is a clear reference to the creation theme. Psalm

On the Sabbath day the king kneels “at the threshold of the [inner court] gate” (Ezekiel 46:1-2)



Measuring tools at the guarded eastern gate (cord and rod)

Figure 13: Exterior of the Temple of Solomon showing the location of the two gates mentioned

5, which has been “associated with the “entrance liturgies,” depicts the Israelite king entering the temple complex and bowing down (*shachah*) or kneeling toward the temple proper, where the throne of God was located²⁰ (cf. Psalm 95:3, 5-6).

This all leads to a rather peculiar aspect of the temple entrance liturgy texts:

Psalm 24:1-2: The *earth* is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the *seas*, and established it upon the floods.

Revelation 21:1, 5: And I saw a new heaven and a new *earth*: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more *sea* And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.

At the very beginning of Psalm 24, there is a distinct reference to the creation of the earth which evokes the “center” or “navel” imagery mentioned earlier — i.e., the earth is founded on the sea. Some scholars find in this passage a reference to the “conquering chaos” theme and God’s dominion or kingship.²¹ The argument for a “conquering chaos” theme is strengthened by the fact that Revelation 21, verses 1 and 5, repeat the earth and sea motifs, and their context has been identified as that of creation and conquering chaos.²²



Figure 14: “When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth” (Proverbs 8:27)

The question to ask, then, is this: “Why are creation and conquering chaos themes placed in association with a temple gateway entrance liturgy?”

The answer may lie in a theme which has been discussed throughout this paper — measuring tools. “The Bible posits a God who builds,” says one commentary, and so “God is portrayed [in the Bible] as a master builder in His work of creation.”²³ Proverbs 8:27 states that during the cycle of creation, God marked out a circle on the sea or the abyss, which not only ties this verse to chaos ideology but also implies that God — as depicted in Figure 14 — used a compass to draw the circular boundary for the chaotic waves of the sea.²⁴

Just two verses later, in Proverbs 8:29, there is another reference to God’s creative activity: “I was there when [God] appointed (*chaqaaq* — marked out) the foundations of the earth.” If this action is thought of in architectural terms, then a specific measuring instrument readily suggests itself. In ancient Egypt — Israel’s neighbor to the south — the foundation of a building would sometimes be marked out by first creating a base-line and then employing a set square in order to ensure that each of the foundation lines would be laid out at precise 90° angles.²⁵

Finally, there is Job chapter 38, verse 5, to consider, where the Lord “describe[s] His creation of the earth as stretching out a line over it,” implying that “everything about the earth’s constitution was subject to



Figure 15: Egyptian depiction of stretching out a line

His exact specifications.”²⁶ Yet, it should also be remembered that in the context of kingly judgment, “God is depicted [in the Bible] as actively bringing chaos to bear on man’s rebellion Isaiah reveals God as the ‘builder’ of chaos: paradoxically, the Creator God will ‘stretch out the measuring line of chaos and the plumb line of destruction’ (Isaiah 34:11). Like many images of judgment,” says one author, “chaos is seen as a temporary reversal of the creation order.”²⁷

Additional scriptural references show that what has just been discussed did not apply only to the Heavenly King but also to His earthly vice-regent as well. On the day when the earthly king received his initiation into office, he was told that his hand would be placed on the sea to conquer it, just as God had done (Psalm 89:9, 25), and the mortal sovereign was also given a scepter as part of his regalia (Psalms 2; 110). Other scriptures report that the earthly king laid the foundation of Israel’s temple (1 Kings 5:17; Ezra 6:3; Zechariah 4:9) and that he employed a measuring line while constructing it (Zechariah 4:9-10). Hence, all of the objects associated with the King of Heaven earlier in this paper can also be linked with the early king of Israel.

In addition, there are references from acknowledged kingship initiation texts demonstrating that on the day when the mortal king of Israel ascended the throne, he received the three attributes which were required for passage through the temple barriers: *righteousness*, *uprightness*, and *truth*. As previously mentioned in this study, it is known that these particular attributes can be identified with specific architectural tools:

Psalm 72:1-2: Give the king ... O God ... thy *righteousness*
He shall judge thy people in righteousness.

Psalm 19:13: [God] keep [the king] ... then shall [he] be *upright* (*tamam*; cf. Psalm 15 entrance liturgy).

Psalm 89:24 (cf. Psalm 101:7): [God’s] faithfulness (*emunah* = truth) ... shall be with [the king].

Finally, there is 1 Kings 3:6 to contemplate:

And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in *truth*, and in *righteousness*, and in *uprightness* of heart with thee.

Here it is confirmed that the king of Israel did, in reality, exemplify the three divine throne attributes which would enable a person to pass into the Lord's presence in His temple throne room.

In summary, this chapter has endeavored to demonstrate that there is a hitherto unrecognized but detailed, matching pattern embedded within the Old and New Testaments. This pattern shows that the cubic Holy of Holies in the Israelite temple represented the heavenly throne room of the Heavenly King. This room had three guarded gateways which could be passed only by those who possessed three royal attributes which were, in turn, connected with specific liturgical actions and tools. These tools of architecture and measurement were also associated with kingship motifs of creation and conquering chaos, and on the day when a person was initiated as a king in ancient Israel, all of these concepts were applied to him. From a much broader perspective, the material in this paper also points to the fact that certain temple ideologies and actions were not abandoned by the Christians of the biblical period but were, in fact, perpetuated by them.

Appendix

In Luke 13:22–30 Jesus Christ speaks of obtaining salvation in the kingdom of God and links the attainment of such a state with passing through a gateway. If this entire block of verses in the book of Luke is compared with the 21st and 22nd chapters of the book of Revelation a clear set of parallels materializes. Since the chapters in Revelation are describing the heavenly New Jerusalem (which is the prototype for the Holy of Holies of the Israelite temple) it can be deduced that Luke 13:22–30 is referring to the same thing. Here are the fourteen correspondences between these biblical texts which make this deduction possible.

- Luke 13:22 – “Jerusalem”
- Revelation 21:2 – “new Jerusalem”
- Luke 13:23 – “Lord, are there few that be saved?”
- Revelation 21:24 – “them which are saved shall walk in [New Jerusalem]”
- Luke 13:24 – “enter in at the ... gate”

- Revelation 22:14 – “enter in through the gates [of New Jerusalem]”
- Luke 13:24 – “many ... will seek to enter in, and shall not be able”
- Revelation 21:12 – “at the gates [of New Jerusalem] ... [there are] angels”¹; Revelation 21:27 – “there shall in no wise enter into [New Jerusalem] any ... but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life”; Rev 22:14 – “they that do [God’s] commandments [i.e., the obedient] ... may enter in through the gates”
- Luke 13:25 – “the master of the house Lord”
- Revelation 21:5 – “God himself shall be with them [in New Jerusalem]”
- Luke 13:25 – “is risen up, and hath shut to the door”
- Revelation 21:25 – “the gates of [New Jerusalem] shall not be shut”
- Luke 13:25 – “I know you not”
- Revelation 21:27 – “they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life [enter New Jerusalem]”
- Luke 13:26 – “We have eaten and drunk in thy presence”
- Revelation 22:1–2 – “a pure river of water of life ... proceeding out of the throne [in New Jerusalem] and on either side of the river ... [is] the tree of life, which bare[s] ... fruits”
- Luke 13:26 – “thou hast taught in our streets”
- Revelation 22:2 – “the street of [New Jerusalem]”
- Luke 13:27 – “depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity”
- Revelation 21:27 – “there shall in no wise enter into [New Jerusalem] anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie”
- Luke 13:28 – “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”
- Revelation 21:4 – “there shall be no ... sorrow, nor crying [in New Jerusalem]”
- Luke 13:28 – “ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God”
- Revelation 21:24 – “the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into [New Jerusalem]”
- Luke 13:29 – “they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south”

- Revelation 21:13 – “On the east [side of New Jerusalem] three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates”
- Luke 13:30 – “there are first which shall be last”
- Revelation 22:13 – “I am ... the first and the last”

Considering that in this paper Revelation 21:17 has been shown to reflect the Psalm 15 temple entrance liturgy, it may be profitable to more closely consider the liturgical entrance aspects of Luke 13:22–30. There is a narrow, closed gate; a guard stands on the gate; the attention of the gatekeeper is obtained by knocking at the gate; a request for entry through the gate is made; a conversation takes place between the gatekeeper and the person seeking entrance; entry requirements are indicated by the gatekeeper; entrance is granted only if the entry requirements are met.

Since Luke 13 and Revelation 21 are Christian documents it is also noteworthy that some of the early Christians incorporated the Psalm 24 temple entrance text and the act of knocking into their ascension ideology and gateway liturgies.

The second century Christian writers Justin Martyr²⁸ (ca. AD 150) and Irenaeus²⁹ (ca. AD 185) applied the phraseology of Psalm 24:7–10 to Jesus Christ’s ascent into heaven after He had been resurrected from the dead. And they both specified that the Savior entered heaven through its gates. This psalm would have held a place of great significance among the early Christians since it had been recited in the courts of the Israelite temple on the very day that Jesus Christ arose from the tomb.³⁰

At some point in time the questions and answers associated with Psalm 24:7–10 were incorporated as a liturgical element in some of the early Christians’ church dedication rites.³¹ This incorporation can be detected on 24 December 526 when the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople was rededicated. On this occasion a procession of the faithful sang Psalm 24 as the patriarch (holding a copy of the Gospels as a representation of Jesus Christ) passed through the doors.³² One liturgist has pointed out that this ceremony fulfilled, “even if only symbolically, the ancient liturgy of entrance into the temple.”³³ Paul the Silentiary (d. AD 575–580), who was an imperial officer in Emperor Justinian’s palace, spoke of the Sanctuary or Holy of Holies area of the Hagia Sophia in this way: “the screen gives access to the priests through three doors.”³⁴ This architectural arrangement is reminiscent of the three gateways on the east side of the Holy of Holies of the Israelite Tabernacle and also the three gates on each side of the New Jerusalem-Holy of Holies cube.³⁵

In the records of subsequent dedication ceremonies the element of knocking on the church door is found coupled together with the questions and answers found in Psalm 24:7–10. The Gallican dedicatory ritual in France “at the beginning of the eighth century” records some of the points of drama that took place. A lone cleric would be shut up on the inside of the church; the bishop approached the door; the bishop then said the Psalm 24:7–10 antiphon while touching the lintel of the structure; while a similar psalm was being chanted, the door was opened and the bishop entered.³⁶ One commentator on the 8th century Gallican rite says that once the procession “reaches the entrance to the church ... the bishop strikes the sill three times with his staff and orders the doors to be opened,” and the procession continues through the entryway.³⁷

The triple striking of the door and the interrogatories and responses of Psalm 24 are present in Christian church dedication documents of the mid-tenth century³⁸ and continue to be found throughout the Middle Ages.³⁹ One important clue about the meaning of all this can be found in the writings of Hugh of St. Victor. He stated that during the dedication ordinance, the bishop represented Jesus Christ, and it was he who enacted “the threefold striking of the lintel of the main door.”⁴⁰ Thus, we are brought back to the idea put forward by Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, in much earlier times, that Psalm 24:7–10 was associated with Christ’s ascent through the gates of heaven, or the heavenly Jerusalem.

Figure Credits

1. The Holy Place and the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle. http://www.templebuilders.com/enlargement_tabernacle5.php.
2. Charles F. Horne and Julius A. Bewer, eds., *The Bible and Its Story Taught by One Thousand Picture Lessons* (New York: Francis R. Niglutsch, 1908), vol. 2. http://www.wcg.org/images/b2/_0303160501_039.jpg (accessed 2 October 2014).
3. Rendered by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw after a concept by Matthew B. Brown. Image: J. James Tissot, 1836-1902: *The Ark of the Covenant*, ca. 1896-1902. In J. James Tissot. *The Old Testament: Three Hundred and Ninety-Six Compositions Illustrating the Old Testament*, Parts 1 and 2. 2 vols. Paris, France: M. de Brunhoff, 1904, 1:229.
4. Rendered by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw after a concept by Matthew B. Brown. Image: J. James Tissot, 1836-1902: *The Ark of the Covenant*, ca. 1896-1902. In J. James Tissot. *The Old Testament: Three Hundred and Ninety-Six Compositions Illustrating the Old*

- Testament*, Parts 1 and 2. 2 vols. Paris, France: M. de Brunhoff, 1904, 1:229.
5. Rendered by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw after a concept by Matthew B. Brown. Image: James Harpur, ed., *Great Events of Bible Times* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 44–45.
 6. Bishop knocking three times on a cathedral door. <http://www.antigonishdiocese.com/BishopDunnsInstallationAsBishopofAntigonish/theritualbegins.html> (accessed 2 October 2014).
 7. Egyptian *merkhet* (plumb) line. <http://www.ssplprints.com/lowres/43/main/16/94993.jpg> (accessed 2 October 2014).
 8. Egyptian leveling line. <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/tomb.htm> (accessed 2 October 2014).
 9. Image from the J. Paul Getty Museum, French, ca. AD 1400. <http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=1666&handle=li> (accessed 2 October 2014).
 10. Rendered by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw after a chart by Matthew B. Brown.
 11. Rendered by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw after a chart by Matthew B. Brown.
 12. Charles F. Horne and Julius A. Bewer, eds., *The Bible and its Story Taught by One Thousand Picture Lessons* (New York: Francis R. Niglutsch, 1908), vol. 8. <http://www.gci.org/files/images/b8/b8a%20%288%29.jpg> (accessed 2 October 2014).
 13. Rendered by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw after a concept by Matthew B. Brown. Image by Gabriel Fink, Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Temple-of-Solomon-Exterior.jpg> (accessed 2 October 2014).
 14. Photograph by Matthew B. Brown.
 15. Egyptian stonemason with measuring line, New York Public Library.

Notes

1. Latter-day Saint writings which have previously dealt with themes in this paper include John Gee, “The Keeper of the Gate” in Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *The Temple in Time and Eternity* (Provo, UT: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999) 233–73; Donald W. Parry, “Who Shall Ascend into the Mountain of the Lord? Three Biblical Temple Entrance Hymns” in Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks, eds.,

- Reason, Revelation, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen* (Provo, UT: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002) 729–42; Hugh W. Nibley, “Return to the Temple.” In *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, Don E. Norton, ed. (*The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 12. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1992) 42–90; Hugh W. Nibley, “The Early Christian Prayer Circle.” In *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks, eds. (*The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 4. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987) 45–99; “Sacred Vestments”; *FARMS Review*, 8:2, 1996, 261; Hugh W. Nibley, “Sacred Vestments.” In *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, Don E. Norton, ed. (*The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 12. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992) 91–138; Michael Lyon, “Set Design for the Final Scene in The Magic Flute,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, 43:3, 2004, 270–72; Daniel Belnap, “The Divine Warrior in Jacob’s Speech of 2 Nephi 6–10,” *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture*, 17:1, 2008, 20–39.
2. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, “YHWH SABAOth — The Heavenly King on the Cherubim Throne.” In T. Ishida, ed., *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1982) 109–38.
 3. “As the navel is set in the middle of a person so is Erez Israel the navel of the world, as it is said: ‘That dwell in the navel of the earth’ [Ezekiel 38:12]. Erez Israel is located in the center of the world, Jerusalem in the center of Erez Israel, the Temple in the center of Jerusalem, the *heikhal* in the center of the Temple, the ark in the center of the *heikhal*, and in front of the *heikhal* is the *even shetiyyah* [‘foundation stone’] from which the world was started” (Tanh. B., Lev 78; and see Sanh. 37a; Song R. 7:5 no. 3). In the book of 2 Enoch “the metaphor ‘navel of the earth’ is connected with the site of Adam’s creation” (Gerald Y. Bildstein, “*Even Shetiyya*.” In Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, eds. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan, 2007) 6:574–575. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*, <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587506158&v=2.1&u=imcpl11111&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w&asid=5b2e3f11e8e710fb28e79870807eb950> (accessed 9 October 2014).
 4. The Psalm 24 temple entrance text lists the same three requirements

as Psalm 15 but in different terms: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean [*naqi* = guiltless, innocent (matches the *tamim* = ‘upright’/‘blameless’ requirement of Psalm 15)] hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul [*nephesh* = appetite, passion] unto vanity (*shav* = moral ruin, opposite of the ‘righteousness’ of Psalm 15), nor sworn deceitfully [opposite of the ‘truth’ of Psalm 15].”

5. See Alan Cooper, “Psalm 24:7–10: Mythology and Exegesis,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 102:1, March 1983, 41, footnote 28; Israel W. Slotki, “The Text and Ancient Form of Recital of Psalm 24 and Psalm 124,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 51:3, September 1932, 220–21.
6. See John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 361.
7. Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983) 150–51. The Psalm 15 promise is of “stability” and is implied in the Psalm 24 entrance liturgy by the phrase “Who may stand?” — i.e., the imagery of feet. In Psalm 24 the entrant is identified as a seeker of the face of God (Craig C. Broyles, “Psalms Concerning the Liturgies of Temple Entry.” In Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller, Jr., eds., *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* [Boston: Brill, 2005] 251). Psalm 26:12 matches the ‘stability’ promise of Psalm 15 — “I do not slip’ because ‘in Yahweh I have trusted” (v. 1) / “my foot stands on level ground’ because ‘I bless Yahweh” (v. 12) (*ibid.*, 266). Krause states that “verse 26 [of Psalm 118] is a special liturgical piece which now doubtlessly belongs to the liturgy of entry and the gate. From the inside of the sanctuary ... the word of blessing is called out by priests to those coming in (cf. Psalm 24:5). He who enters the gates receives the blessing of Yahweh (Numbers 6:23 [and 24–27])” (2:400). The Psalm 118 entrance liturgy (which may have a royal background) pertains to the eastern gate of the courtyard. “The king requests admission to the temple forecourt The gatekeepers willingly accede to the request for him ... to enter This cultic occasion is opportunity ... for receiving [a] priestly blessing [A request is made for a blessing from Yahweh and] in response the priests pronounce blessings ... upon the king who is present.” Psalm 118:26 “is a priestly blessing” (Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150* [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983] 122–24). “The blessing pronounced by the priests [in Psalm 118]

greet (vv. 26–27) at the gate of the temple those who enter through it” (Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962] 724). The “name of God” in the answer of Psalm 24 [cf. the Numbers 6 priestly blessing] has the effect of a “key” by which the gate is opened and the glory of God appears or is manifest (ibid., 235).

8. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988) 226–28. In the Psalm 118 entrance liturgy the doorkeeper informs the person seeking entrance that only the righteous can pass through the Lord’s gate and the entrant replies by confirming that he meets that requirement (see S. B. Frost, “Asseveration by Thanksgiving,” *Vetus Testamentum*, 8:4, October 1958, 380–81).
9. Gerhard Friedrich, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 7:604.
10. Ibid., 1:134; cf. the content and context of Genesis 32:24–30.
11. Delbert R. Hillers, *Lamentations: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 99.
12. The book of Proverbs associates “truth” with a person’s “heart” (3:3) and also states that truth preserves (guards, protects) the king (20:28).
13. Hence, for the king, the attribute of truth was also associated with the path or course he walked through life.
14. John Gill, *Expositions on the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982), commentary on Psalm 89:8.
15. Michael D. Coogan, Mark Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and PHEME PERKINS, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 779.
16. In ancient Mesopotamia the notion of having a “straight scepter” was applied to good or righteous kings at their coronation (*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 118:1, January–March 1998, 89). In ancient Asia the same applied: “In poetry the king’s scepter frequently functions as a symbol of his fitness as a ruler. The ‘straight scepter’ (*ceñkōl*) symbolizes the king who upholds dharma, and the ‘bent scepter’ (*koṣuñkōl*) symbolizes the king who fails to do so” (Sheldon I. Pollock, *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003], 298, footnote 69).

17. See Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990) 229.
18. See Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998) 512, 515.
19. Kathryn E. Slanski, “The Mesopotamian ‘Rod and Ring’: Icon of Righteous Kingship and Balance of Power between Palace and Temple” in Harriet Crawford, ed., *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 41, 57. In the Sumerian text called “Inana’s Descent into the Nether World” mention is made of a person holding both the “measuring rod and measuring line” in their hand (line 25, ETCSL Translation, t.1.4.1). Set-square and level line amulets were “almost invariably found together” on the bodies of some mummified Egyptians of the Saite Period (664–525 BC) and later. “Possession of a set-square amulet would guarantee its owner everlasting rectitude, a plummet eternal equilibrium.” The was-scepter mummy amulet — likewise associated with the Saite Period and later — stood for the royal “dominion” to be swayed by the deceased in the afterlife (Carol Andrews, *Amulets of Ancient Egypt* [Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994] 80, 85–86). According to Chinese historian Sima Qian, the Emperor Yu of Xia (ca. 2205 BC) carried a plumbline in his left hand and a compass and square in his right hand while doing the survey work necessary to bring floods under control (Victor J. Katz, ed., *The Mathematics of Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, India, and Islam: A Sourcebook* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007] 191). As early as the Warring States Period (475–221 BC), the Chinese compass and square “symbolized fixed standards and rules that impose order on unruly matter.” Eventually two Chinese creator deities began to be portrayed with these tools in their hands. The queen deity held the compass and was associated with bringing “ordered space out of the chaos of the flood” while the king deity was shown grasping the square and was “credited with the invention of kingship.” In a funerary context these regal beings served as “doorkeepers” or “guardians of boundaries” who “marked the division between inner and outer” spaces (cf. Genesis 3:24; Exodus 26:31). The placement and depiction of these deities signified “transfer to another realm” (Mark E. Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China* [Albany: State University of New

- York Press, 2006] 125–27).
20. Michael D. Coogan, Mark Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and PHEME PERKINS, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 779.
 21. The first two verses of Psalm 24 are about “the dominion of God over the whole world” (i.e., His kingship) and “the fact that God conquered the chaotic powers of the primeval waters” (Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962] 232–33). Psalm 24:2 refers specifically to “the chaotic primeval waters ... defeated and pacified by God the creator” (Michael D. Coogan, Mark Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and PHEME PERKINS, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, 3rd ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 2007] 794).
 22. “In Revelation, as elsewhere in biblical and Second Temple literature, the sea represents the mythical forces of chaos” (Celia Deutsch, “Transformation of Symbols: The New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:1–22:5,” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 78:1–2, 1987, 106–26, at note 58). See also Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999) 990.
 23. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1998) 128.
 24. Some of the medieval artworks depicting God creating with an architect’s compass were based on Proverbs 8:27 (see John B. Friedman, “The Architect’s Compass in Creation Miniatures of the Later Middle Ages,” *Traditio*, 30, 1974, 419–29).
 25. See Dick Parry, *Engineering the Pyramids* (Stroud, England: Sutton Publishing, 2004) 64–66.
 26. R. Laird Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980) 2:791.
 27. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1998) 136. “Job 38:5 pictures God using ... tools to construct the cosmos out of chaos. Conversely, however, with a clear reference to Genesis 1:2 (where the precreational chaos is described as ‘without form [Hebrew *tohu*] and void [*bohu*]’), Isaiah [34:11] prophesies

that God will use ‘the line of confusion [*tohu*] ... and the plummet of chaos [*bohu*]’ as instruments of vengeance against a people who oppose His purposes” (Geoffrey W. Bromily, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986] 3:295).

28. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter 36.
29. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 4, chapter 33, paragraph 13.
30. See Allen Cabaniss, “The Harrowing of Hell, Psalm 24, and Pliny the Younger: A Note,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, 7:2, April 1953, 69.
31. It is generally accepted that the Christian church dedication ceremony ultimately had a Byzantine origin (see Irene R. Makaryk, trans., *About the Harrowing of Hell: A Seventeenth-Century Ukrainian Play in Its European Context* [Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1989] 57).
32. See Vitaly Permiakov, “The Rite of Consecration of a Church in the Eastern Traditions,” *Fifth International Theological Conference of the Russian Orthodox Church*, November 2007, 6.
33. Ignazio M. Calabuig, “The Rite of the Dedication of a Church,” in Anscar J. Chupungco, ed., *Handbook for Liturgical Studies. Vol. 5: Liturgical Time and Space* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000) 345.
34. Allan Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture from the Early Church to the Middle Ages* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008) 72. The triple entryway into the most holy area of the Hagia Sophia was possibly a precursor to the three doors of the later iconostasis barriers for the Sanctuary/Holy of Holies and the three doors found on the sides of some medieval cathedrals, such as Chartres.
35. “The Christian sanctuary is, liturgically and mystically, an image of the heavenly Jerusalem, the eschatological vision described by the Book of Revelation. The medieval dedication rite establishes this relationship in explicit terms.” Medieval consecration/dedication liturgies characteristically include an exchange of the Psalm 24:7–10 text between bishop and deacon near the beginning. In addition, it should be noted that “the Epistle for the Mass of Consecration is from ... Revelation 21:2–5, which serves as a standard lesson in virtually all consecration rites of the period” (Laurence H. Stookey, “The Gothic Cathedral as the Heavenly Jerusalem: Liturgical and Theological Sources,” *Gesta*, 8:1, 1969, 35).
36. Louis Duchesne, *Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution*, 3rd ed. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1910) 409.
37. Ignazio Calabuig, “The Rite of the Dedication of a Church,” in Anscar

- J. Chupungco, ed., *Handbook for Liturgical Studies* (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997-2000) 5:350. It is curious that the triple knocking on the church door appears in the dedication documents during this timeframe since the origin of this practice may possibly be traced back to the monasteries. In an Italo-Greek manuscript written after ad 842 at the monastery of St. John Studios in Constantinople it is said, "When the liturgy is finished, the wooden *semantron* is sounded three times" (John P. Thomas and Angela C. Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' "Typika" and Testaments, Volume 1* [Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000] 109). The Syrian Christians have a long-standing tradition that the *semantron* originated with God telling Noah to create one out of wood and also a mallet of the same material to strike it with. The Almighty reportedly told the patriarch, "Strike this instrument three separate times every day" (John O'Brien, *A History of the Mass and the Ceremonies in the Eastern and Western Church* [New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1879] 148). An early seventh century author points to one of the liturgical uses of the *semantron* by posing the question: "Why do we sound the *naqosha* [or *semantron*] again at the last Session, and open the door of the sanctuary ... ?" (Sebastian P. Brock, "Gabriel of Qatar's Commentary on the Liturgy," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 6:2, July 2003, memra 3, #5, f. 115b). The sanctuary of some eastern Christian churches is called the Holy of Holies.
38. Aimé G. Martimort, "Liturgical Signs," in Irénée H. Dalmais, et al., *The Church at Prayer. Vol. 1: Principles of the Liturgy*, Revelation ed., (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987) 220.
 39. See the example recorded by William Durandus in John M. Neale and Benjamin Webb, trans., *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893) 92-93.
 40. Paul F. Bradshaw, *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002) 132. The triple knocking on a church door, employment of the Psalm 24 question and answer dialogue, and the bishop representing Christ can all be found in the Harrowing of Hell dramas of the Middle Ages (AD 1358-1377), but this may simply be a variation of the dedicatory rite (see Ann Faulkner, "The Harrowing of Hell at Barking Abbey and in Modern Production," in Clifford Davidson and Thomas H. Seiler, eds., *The Iconography of Hell* [Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992] 141, 147). Harrowing themes with Christ on one

side of a barrier and believers on the other side who petition Him with the words, “open to us the door” (cf. Luke 13:25) are found in the forty-second Ode of Solomon (James R. Harris and Alphonse Mingana, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon* [New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1920] 2:405) — a document which some scholars have dated to AD 100–125 and classify as a normative or non-gnostic Christian initiation text (see James H. Charlesworth, *Critical Reflections on the Odes of Solomon* [Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998] 23, 25).

Matthew B. Brown (1964–2011) earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Brigham Young University, was an author and historian whose emphasis was on the history and doctrine of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, and wrote several nonfiction books and research-based articles for the Neal A. Maxwell Institute of Religious Scholarship at BYU. He worked as compiler and editor of the *Journal* for the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR; now FairMormon). He is survived by his wife Jamie.

THE TABERNACLE: MOUNTAIN OF GOD IN THE CULTUS OF ISRAEL

L. Michael Morales

Introduction

That the narratives leading up to the tabernacle have had its cultus in view as a major goal may be surmised by the centrality of the cultus in the Torah, as well as the parallels (lexical and thematic) between those narratives and the tabernacle account.¹ By way of introduction, we will consider briefly the former, the centrality of the tabernacle cultus. Unfolding through the events at Sinai recorded in Exodus 19 through Numbers 10, worship via the tabernacle is the literary heart and theological apex of the Torah.² Even the sheer amount of this narrative is misleading, moreover, inasmuch as much of the literature outside Exodus 19—Numbers 10 has also been demonstrated to be concerned with cultic matters and likely, in Genesis 1—Exodus 18, in such a way as to anticipate Israel's tabernacle cultus.³

More narrowly, chapters 19-40 of Exodus may be considered, formally, a meticulously composed, coherent story that culminates with the glory cloud's descent upon the completed tabernacle.⁴ Justifiably, then, Davies believes "worship" has a strong claim to be the central theological theme of Exodus, linking together salvation, covenant, and law — a theology, what's more, going back as far as can be discerned in the history of the tradition.⁵ Now beyond all else to which the tabernacle/המשכן cultus and its rituals pertain, one must keep in view the fundamental understanding of it as the dwelling/שכן of God (cf. Exodus 25.8-9; 29.45-46), so that "worship" may be defined broadly as "dwelling in the divine Presence." Already, then, the bookends of the Genesis-through-Exodus narrative begin to emerge: the seventh day/garden of Eden (Genesis 1-3) and the tabernacle Presence of God among his cultic community (Exodus 40).

The building of the tabernacle, then, with the establishment of its cult, may be seen as a major goal of the exodus — a goal that includes the constitution of Israel as a cultic community (עדה *edah*) living in the divine Presence.⁶ This goal is evident not only by the centrality of worship

in the Torah, but also by explicit statement. At the very outset of the tabernacle narrative, YHWH's purpose is manifested: "Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25.8). This narrative goal is repeated in 29.45-6:

I will dwell among the sons of Israel, and I will be their God. They shall know that I am YHWH their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am YHWH their God.

That these explicit lines are not merely incidental but programmatic is evident, further, by the lengthy description of the follow-through on the "let them make me a sanctuary" directive. While modern sensibilities find tedious the mass of repetitive material constituting thirteen of the remaining sixteen chapters of Exodus, yet from the ancient Near East (ANE) perspective this concentration manifestly brings one to the heart of the narrative.⁷ The overall movement from slavery to worship, from building for Pharaoh to building for YHWH⁸ is in line with parallel ANE literature, such as the Ugaritic epic of Baal and the Babylonian "Epic of Creation," whereby the building of a victorious deity's house/temple forms the epic's climax.⁹ Thus, comparisons with other building narratives from the Bible (1 Kings 5.15-9.25) and Mesopotamian and Ugaritic sources manifest, not only that the tabernacle story's overall structure is deliberate and well ordered, following a standard literary pattern or building genre,¹⁰ but also the ideological weight of the tabernacle itself. The building section within the larger cycle, furthermore, is itself unified by the recurrent theme that Moses was shown the "pattern" (תבנית *tabnit*) of the tabernacle by God while he was on the mountain (25.9, 40, 26.30, 37.8),¹¹ a theme functioning to underscore the importance of the cultus. Because insufficient consideration of the tabernacle account necessarily results in a "superficial grasp" of the book's significance,¹² the literary weight of the tabernacle material must be balanced by its theological weight. The dramatic question — and tension — of how the prospect of a return to dwelling in the divine Presence will be made possible via a tabernacle constructed according to the divinely revealed heavenly "pattern," and this prospect in light of the thunderous fury of the fiery Presence just experienced at Sinai — all this must be impressed upon the reader. The balance of the book of Exodus, to summarize, is devoted to the tabernacle, the establishment of which, far from being a subsidiary interpolation, is the climax of the epic, the resolution toward which that narrative has progressed.¹³

Glimpsing now a sketch of the tabernacle's centrality within the narrative progression leading up to it, its function as dénouement will appear more clearly. As the creation account of Genesis 1-3 would surely have catechized its original audience, the high goal of worshiping the Creator in the glory of his Presence upon the holy mount had been frustrated by Adam's transgression and the consequent exile from the garden.¹⁴ The ensuing narrative, rather than normalizing life outside of Eden (so as to make the account merely a story about "lost innocence" or "why things are the way they are," i.e., an etiology), intensifies the predicament and underscores the issue as crucial to the drama (and, thus, an *eschatological* point). For example, the use of "to banish" גרש in the Cain narrative (4.14; cf. 3.24) suggests that "in some sense Cain's exile is a repetition and intensification of Adam and Eve's exile."¹⁵ This intensification reaches an apex as the profanation of creation (as macro-temple) finally calls for an end/return to chaos, righteous Noah, with his household and a remnant of creatures, being delivered through an ark whose plans are divinely revealed, one of several features serving to portray it as a kind of typological temple. The scattering from the tower of Babel may be interpreted, through an anti-gate liturgy pattern, as a further removal from the Presence of God whose own deliberate plan for allowing re-entrance into the divine Presence begins with the call of Abraham and culminates in the divine in-filling of the tabernacle, Babel and the tabernacle being antipodes in the narrative arc.¹⁶ New mediated access to that Presence of life thus becomes, not merely a means of "worship" for the Israelite, but the means by which the order and purpose of creation is reestablished—that is, creation and cult are of a piece.¹⁷ Thus Hurowitz is correct in positing that the "crucial event around which all the activities focus is God's entry and manifestation within the newly built abode."¹⁸ If, as we have seen, the creation account is oriented toward the Sabbath, i.e., life in the divine Presence, then it makes sense that the account of history itself should be like oriented. Understanding the loss of the divine Presence as the central catastrophe of the biblical drama, then one begins to see the tabernacle as *mishkan*, the locus of God's Presence in the midst of his people,¹⁹ as the (at least initial) resolution.²⁰ As already stated, this dénouement is in accord with the general tenor of the Pentateuch in which numerous stories reflect points of priestly interest.²¹ The pattern of Exodus, then, offers a glimpse, a micro-narrative, of the entire biblical narrative itself.²²

I. THE TABERNACLE PRE-FIGURED

In this chapter we will consider further how the tabernacle cultus “fulfills” plot expectation, the tabernacle’s significance being derived from and infused into the previous narrative(s). We will, accordingly, (1) rehearse some of the parallels between the creation, deluge, and Sinai narratives and the tabernacle account; (2) examine how the high priest’s office functions as something of a new Adam, as the righteous one able to ascend the mount of YHWH; and (3) consider how the completed tabernacle resolves the storyline of Genesis—Exodus, via the biblical theological theme of “to dwell in the divine Presence.”

A brief overview of the parallels between the creation and deluge accounts and the tabernacle will be considered before we turn to the parallels between Sinai and the tabernacle. Our point will be to understand that the tabernacle subsumes meaning and significance from those previous accounts — it is, in many respects, the Pentateuch’s centripetal force and goal.

A. From Creation to the Tabernacle

Creating the cosmos and building the tabernacle are literarily linked, the latter being a microcosm of the former.²³ Blenkinsopp identifies precisely these two accounts as the first two major “nodal points” of (P’s narrative in) the Pentateuch: the creation of the cosmos as a precondition for worship (Genesis 1.1-2.4a), and the building and dedication of the wilderness sanctuary (Exodus 40.1-33).²⁴ While the creation may be understood legitimately in terms of a temple, it is also important to see that the tabernacle/temple constitutes something of a new creation within the old, a micro-cosmos within the macro, designed to mediate the paradisaic Presence of the Creator. Thus one is not surprised to find the literary parallels between the creation and tabernacle narratives.²⁵ While not rehearsing those parallels here, we merely recall how the *הוהו* of God is instrumental both in the building of the cosmic temple, the world (Genesis 1.2), and in the micro-cosmic world, the tabernacle (Exodus 31.1-11), the former amidst the chaos of water (*ההוה*), the latter amidst the chaos of wilderness (*ההוה* Deuteronomy 32.10).²⁶ This like source of wisdom/skill/power is matched by like method, both creation and tabernacle construction featuring “separation”/בדל: whereas the firmament is created to “separate” (*hiphil* participle of בדל) the waters (Genesis 1.6), so the tabernacle veil is to “separate” (*hiphil qatal* of בדל) the holy place from the holiest place (Exodus 26.33).²⁷ Finally, the chronology of the building projects are also linked: the consecration of the

tabernacle lasted seven days, a heptadic pattern connected to the Sabbath ordinances.²⁸ Perhaps above all other parallels, it is the Sabbath linking of the tabernacle to creation that generates the theological profundity and function of the cultus: via the mediation of the tabernacle cultus alone, the purpose of creation may be realized.²⁹ The Sabbath, therefore, forms a bridge, an *inclusio*, linking creation with cultus as its climax,³⁰ the tabernacle manifestly created as a mini-cosmos oriented to the Sabbath.³¹

The cosmological parallels between creation and the tabernacle are in accord, further, with the cosmological import of several of the tabernacle appurtenances, as later explained within the temple system.³² The altar is called הרֵאֵל (also referred to as אֲרָאֵל) “the mountain of God” (Ezekiel 43.15-16) with its base named חֵיק הָאָרֶץ “the bosom of the earth” (Ezekiel 43.14).³³ The Basin הַיָּם מוֹצֵק as well is likely to be read with cosmic significance as “The Sea has been restrained!”³⁴ It also appears evident that the menorah was a stylized tree of life (cf. Exodus 25.31-40).³⁵

The tabernacle, then, “is a microcosm of creation, the world order as God intended it writ small in Israel.”³⁶ The parallels thus established, when ὕψωσιν fills the tabernacle, this is “a sign that the new ‘creation’ has been achieved.”³⁷ Interestingly, the sixth century Egyptian Christian Cosmas, in his book *Christian Topography*, posited that the creation account of Genesis 1 was Moses’ description of the תְּבִיטָה shown him atop Sinai, and that “the tabernacle prepared by Moses in the wilderness ... was a type and copy of the whole world”:

Then when he [Moses] had come down from the Mountain he was ordered by God to make the tabernacle, which was a representation of what he had seen on the Mountain, namely, an impress of the world. ... Since therefore it had been shown him how God made the heaven and the earth, and how on the second day he made the firmament in the middle between them, and thus made the one place into two places, so Moses, in like manner, in accordance with the pattern which he had seen, made the tabernacle and placed the veil in the middle and by this division made the one tabernacle into two, the inner and the outer.³⁸

B. From the Ark of Noah to the Tabernacle

One might also recall the “striking parallels between the tabernacle and the ark of Noah,”³⁹ the ark itself a micro-cosmos. Again, while not detailing the parallels here, we merely note the general correspondence

that even as “Noah did according to all that God had commanded him, thus did he” (Genesis 6.22) in relation to the ark, so “according to all that YHWH had commanded Moses, thus did the Israelites all the work” (Exodus 39.42) in relation to the tabernacle, both narratives emphasizing the New Year (Genesis 8.13; Exodus 40.2).⁴⁰

When the tabernacle narrative is made to include the broader context of Exodus, then many more parallels are manifest: God “remembering” for the sake of deliverance (Genesis 8.1; Exodus 2.24); sending a “wind” (Genesis 8.1; Exodus 14.21); the appearing of “dry ground” (Genesis 8.13-14; Exodus 14.21-22).⁴¹

Ross, further, captures both the parallels and the pattern (through the waters → to the mountain → for worship) when he writes:

Just as God had judged the world in Noah’s day and brought Noah’s family through the Flood, compelling them to worship the Lord with a sacrifice, so he judged Egypt and brought Israel through the waters of the Red Sea to worship and serve him on the other side.⁴²

Scholars have also noted how the salvation found in the ark during the forty-day period of rain parallels that amidst the presence of the tabernacle during the forty-year period in the wilderness.⁴³

As mentioned already with regard to creation parallels, so now with regard to deluge parallels with the tabernacle: while it is legitimate to view the ark in terms of temple symbolism, one has not satisfied the significance of those parallels until the tabernacle itself, as the narrative goal, has subsumed something of the meaning of the ark. Likely, it is the redemptive aspect that informs the parallels between ark and tabernacle, the tabernacle constituting the divinely revealed means of refuge. Here, protology swirls into eschatology, and the cosmogonic pattern proves to be mythic in the sense of being in *illo tempore*.⁴⁴ From one perspective, it may be said that Adam’s transgression and expulsion “interrupted” the eschatological goal of the original cosmogonic pattern. For our purposes, we simply note the deluge narrative, as with the creation account, has been shaped with a view to the tabernacle cultus.

C. From Mount Sinai to the Tabernacle

On Mount Sinai, Clifford notes, YHWH has his tent, and the earthly copy of the tent will mediate his Presence to his people.⁴⁵ What we would like to consider here is the narrative transition from the former to the latter. To be sure, the narrative accounts of each are linked together. For example,

the motifs in Exodus 24.15b-18a of (1) Sabbath chronology, (2) the כבוד of YHWH, (3) use of the term שכן, and (4) the introduction speech formula ויקרא, serve to link the mountain of God with the tabernacle pericope, essentially transforming the covenant ceremony into a preparation in worship for the establishment of the tabernacle cult.⁴⁶ More specifically, we note first, and simply, that the tabernacle structure itself comes into existence within the sacred space established by the presence of the mountain of God.⁴⁷ But further, and as early as the elders' vision of God on Mount Sinai in Exodus 24.10-11, we find a description of the heavenly sanctuary, its blue sapphire being a common feature of temples in the ancient Near East, so that already the theophany of the mountain "gives way to temple imagery," to "the vision of God in the heavenly temple."⁴⁸ Then, of course, the תבנית for the tabernacle is revealed precisely from Sinai's summit. Dozeman and Niccacci note, significantly, it is upon the seventh ascension that the tabernacle cultus is revealed,⁴⁹ so that the "revelation and construction of the wilderness sanctuary participate fully in the mythology of the cosmic mountain."⁵⁰ This participation in mythology also includes a sharing of terminology. Indeed, the great statement of Exodus 24.16 that would ever after symbolize Sinai, namely, that "the glory of YHWH dwelled upon Mount Sinai," begins with the word וישכן, offering a preview of the following section's subject, the work of the משכן, so that the tabernacle is a kind of miniature Sinai.⁵¹ Consistently, the sacred mountain in Exodus 15.17 (whether precisely identified with Sinai or not),⁵² the tabernacle (Exodus 25.8; Leviticus 16.33), and the Jerusalem temple (1 Chronicles 22.19; Isaiah 63.18) are each referred to as מקדש *miqdāš*.

Now since a defining feature of any ANE temple is its being an "architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain,"⁵³ one would expect parallels between them in that embodiment — such is, in fact, the case. In the following ways the narrative brings out the tabernacle's function as a portable Sinai:⁵⁴

1. the three districts of holiness common to each;
2. YHWH communicates with Moses from the mountaintop and the Holy of Holies;
3. the glory cloud envelops both;
4. the two tablets derived from Sinai's summit are placed in the tabernacle's parallel Holy of Holies;
5. mediation of the divine Presence is via sacrifice.

To flesh out each of these points now, Rodriguez offers a helpful summary of (1) some of the architectural similarities between Sinai and the tabernacle, followed by his illustration:⁵⁵

The similarity of arrangement here [Sinai] with that of the subsequent tabernacle is striking. The fence around the mountain, with an altar at the foot of the mountain, would correspond to the court of the sanctuary with its altar of burnt offering; the limited group of people who could go up to a certain point on the mountain would correspond to the priests of the sanctuary, who could enter into the first apartment or “holy place”; and the fact that only Moses could go up to the very presence of Yahweh would correspond to the activity of the high priest, who alone could enter into the presence of Yahweh in the inner apartment of the sanctuary, or “most holy place.”

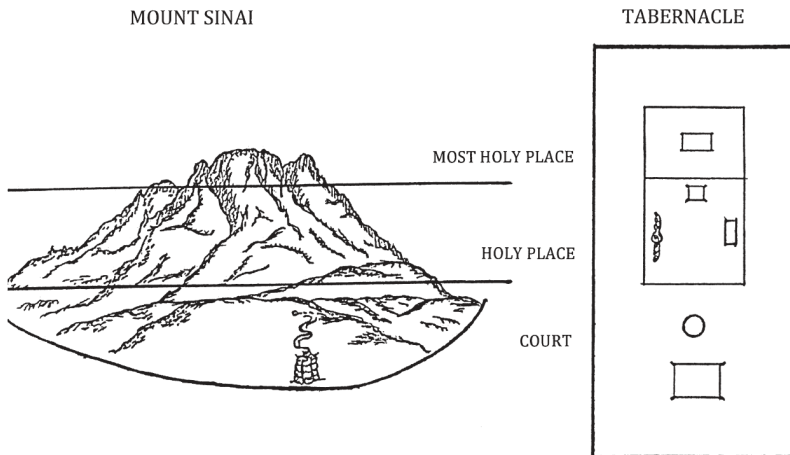


Figure 1: Mount Sinai and the Tabernacle (Sketch by Angel M. Rodriguez)

The Torah, further, brings out the (2) parallel function between mountain and tabernacle as the locus of divine speech (מִן־הַר *min-hāhār*/מֵאֵהָל *mē’ōhel*), so that chapters 19-40 may be said to be a story “dedicated to the divine movement from mountain to tent”:⁵⁶

And YHWH called to him from the Mountain, saying...
 And YHWH called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...

Knohl highlights the significance of the tabernacle as a locus of revelation:

Prior to the construction of the tabernacle, God said to Moses, “There I will meet with you, and I will impart to you—from above the cover, from between the two cherubim that are on top of the Ark of the Pact—all that I will command you concerning the Israelite people” (Exodus 25.22). After it was set up, we read, “When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him, he would hear the voice addressing him from above the cover that was on top of the Ark of the Pact between the two cherubim: thus He spoke to him” (Numbers 7.89). God, who is seen above the cover (כַּפֶּרֶת), meets Moses there and commands the children of Israel.⁵⁷

Continuing, Weinfeld provides evidence that (3) the building of the tabernacle is stylistically paralleled to Mount Sinai, specifically with reference to the glory cloud — an idea, he notes, is found already in Nachmanides:⁵⁸

Exodus 24.15-16	Exodus 40.34-Leviticus 1.1
When Moses had ascended the mountain, the cloud covered (הענן) the mountain. The Presence of YHWH (כבוד־יהוה) abode on Mount Sinai and the cloud hid it for six days. On the seventh day He called to Moses (ויקרא אל־משה) from the midst of the cloud.	... the cloud covered (ויכס הענן) the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of YHWH (יהוה וכבוד) filled the Tabernacle. Moses could not enter because the cloud had settled upon it (cf. 1 Kings 8.10-11). YHWH called to Moses (ויקרא אל־משה) ... from the Tent of Meeting.

Cassuto had already noted the poetic parallelism of 40.34 is entirely similar to 24.15-16:⁵⁹

And the cloud covered the tent of meeting,
and the glory of YHWH filled the tabernacle (40.34)

And the cloud covered the mountain;
and the glory of YHWH dwelt upon Mount Sinai (24.15-16)

Briefly, with reference to (4) the tables of the Law, we simply point out that the places of their origin (Sinai’s summit) and keeping (Holy of Holies) correspond to each other typologically. Finally, another parallel between Sinai and the tabernacle cultus is found in (5) how the problem

of the divine Presence amidst a sinful people is remedied — namely, by sacrifice:

The divine Presence in the midst of Israel necessitated sacrifice. This is implied in the connection between the end of Exodus, where the glory fills the ‘tent of meeting’ (Exodus 40.34-35), and the opening verse of Leviticus where YHWH calls Moses to give him instruction regarding sacrifice. Leviticus 9 records the occasion when the entire worship system commenced operation. The essence of the ceremony is summarized in Leviticus 9.22-24. All elements of Exodus 24.1-11 are repeated: (1) YHWH appears to the people (the central benefit of the covenant), (2) the priests make sacrifice and peace offerings (a communal meal would follow that celebrates covenant fellowship), and (3) Aaron speaks a word of blessing to the people (implying benefits of the covenant, perhaps similar in content to the blessings defined in Leviticus 26.4-13). The Levitical sacrifices functioned to maintain and celebrate covenant relationship, sanctifying the nation in service of the holy God in her midst.⁶⁰

Because of the cultic remedy for sin, “the fire that dwells in their midst” does not consume Israel (40.34-38; cf. 3.3, 24.17).⁶¹

In conclusion, there appears to be a deliberate narrational catechesis regarding the transition from Sinai to the tabernacle cultus, so that one may understand with Childs that what happened at Sinai “is continued in the tabernacle.”⁶² This however amounts to a fundamental understatement unless one first views Sinai as the culminating cosmic mountain (subsuming Eden and Ararat in the narrative trajectory toward the tabernacle), the fulfillment of the cosmogonic pattern: through the Sea (Exodus 14) → to Mount Sinai (Exodus 19) → for worship (Exodus 24), and as the summit from which the divine blueprint for the tabernacle, as with the ark of Noah, is revealed. In sum, when the glory cloud transitions from Sinai to the tabernacle Holy of Holies, what is continued in the tabernacle includes Sinai’s summation of creation (Genesis 1-3) and deliverance (Genesis 6-9).

II. THE GATE LITURGY

Throughout the creation, deluge, and Sinai narratives, the gate liturgy question (“Who shall ascend the mount of YHWH?”) — so we have advanced — runs like an undercurrent. Finding liturgical expression within the context of the Solomonic temple (Psalms 15, 24), the gate liturgy becomes somewhat expected in the setting of the tabernacle. Such is, in fact, the case, as we will go on to demonstrate below. The gate liturgy will be found, however, in much the same way and manner as in the previous narratives — that is, as an undercurrent within the depths of the narrative, a narrative-unfolding ideology shaped by the cosmic mountain. In our attempt to make manifest the gate liturgy within the tabernacle cultus, we will consider the high priest as symbolizing Adam, and then his entrance into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement as an “ascent.”

A. The High Priest as Adam

One cannot understand the tabernacle cultus adequately apart from considering its personnel, the priesthood.⁶³ The role of the priesthood must be understood in light of the overarching conceptual pattern of the tabernacle as a renewed cosmos.⁶⁴ For his part, the priest represented the restored creation as pertaining to humanity — he had to be perfect as a man.⁶⁵

Fletcher-Louis fills in a key piece when he notes that “the high priest was also believed to be the true or second Adam. This idea is probably present already in Ezekiel 28.12-16 and is otherwise clearly attested in Sirach 49.16-50.1 (Hebrew text).”⁶⁶ He notes further that “the Adamic identity of Aaron is fundamental to the theology of P;” with the priest/new Adam “doing what Adam failed to do in the temple-as-restored-Eden,”⁶⁷ so that, according to the cultic worldview, “the God-intended humanity of Genesis 1 is thus recapitulated, and sacramentally reconstituted, in Israel’s priesthood, in the temple-as-microcosm.”⁶⁸ That Adam may be considered justly in priestly terms, even as an archetypal high priest, has already been addressed in our second chapter, and such an understanding is also evident from early sources of interpretation.⁶⁹ In his *Legends of the Jews*, for example, Ginzberg notes: “On the sixth, the last day of creation, man had been created in the image of God to glorify his creator, and likewise was the high priest anointed to minister in the tabernacle before his Lord and creator.”⁷⁰ It may even be precisely because he is an Adam-figure that the priest’s sin propagated guilt among the

entire people (Leviticus 4.3).⁷¹ Even the terms for the priestly garments, כבוד (“glory”) and תפארת (“honor”), forming an *inclusio* around the account of the vestments in Exodus 28, are used of the glory theophany of YHWH, demonstrating that “the priest was appropriately attired to enter a renewed cosmos and stand in the presence of the divine resident of this cosmic temple.”⁷² Thus the priest in the representation or *drama*⁷³ of the cultus, dressed in such glorious raiment, portrayed humanity in its newly created purity, no longer separated from the divine Presence through the rebellion and expulsion recounted in Genesis 3, but able — as the pre-eminent “holy” person — to ascend the mount, to enter the Holy of Holies.⁷⁴ It is important to see, further, that the high priest inherited Moses’ role, discussed earlier, as mediator:

One might picture priests as mediating an ascending movement toward God in their installation rite of passage and their holy and clean life-styles and a concurrent descending movement of oracular messages from God, authoritative declarations, trustworthy torah, and effective blessings in Yahweh’s name. The mediating and revelatory role of the priest, the one who by virtue of his office was “near” Yahweh (Ezekiel 42.13; 43.19; compare Exodus 19.22), is well expressed in a popular saying about priests that has God declare: “Through those near me I will make myself holy, and before the entire people I will glorify myself” (Leviticus 10.3).⁷⁵

Another parallel between Moses and the high priest’s office may be found in relation to their deaths. As Wenham notes, the high priest’s atonement labors were not only accomplished on the high holy Day of Atonement, but even, finally, through his own death:

At the pinnacle of the system stood the high priest. . . . These day of atonement ceremonies enabled God to continue dwelling among his people despite their sinfulness. The atoning work of the high priest culminated in his death. This purged the land of the blood guilt associated with violent death and allowed those convicted of manslaughter to leave the cities of refuge and return home (Numbers 35.28, 32).⁷⁶

This in mind, and returning to Moses, Israel’s hope of entering the land appears throughout the book of Deuteronomy to be theologically connected to the death of Moses — a final gesture of atonement from the one who as mediator served as something of a paradigm for the high

priest.⁷⁷ Moses is portrayed, so notes von Rad, as a “suffering mediator,” whose death outside the land is to some extent depicted as “vicarious for Israel.”⁷⁸

In relation to the tabernacle, then, there is a sense where Aaron’s role (who, incidentally, was not allowed to enter the top of the mount) was to portray in the drama of liturgy the role of Moses in relation to the cosmic mountain (and thus of Adam to Eden’s mount) — that is, via entering the tabernacle Holy of Holies, the high priest as mediator⁷⁹ represents the one “able to ascend” the summit of the cosmic mountain.⁸⁰ To be sure, “ascending the mountain and entering the Holy of Holies amount to the same thing.”⁸¹ The cosmogonic pattern in mind, moreover, it is interesting that in the construct of the tabernacle, Aaron and his sons would wash themselves at the laver (cosmic waters?) upon every approach to the altar (cosmic mountain?).⁸² Precisely as the one who inherits Moses’ mediatory role in the Pentateuch, then, “Aaron, the chief priest, is the messiah.”⁸³

The high priest alone is *הַכֹּהֵן הַמְּשִׁיחַ* *hakkōhēn hammāšīah* (cf. Leviticus 4.3, 5, 16; 6.22). We turn now to consider the primary purpose of that anointing.

B. Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of YHWH?

The tabernacle, immediately dominating the literary landscape and encircled by the tribes of Israel, constituted sacred space, guarded by the Levites so that anyone who did not belong to the priestly families and who attempted entrance was subject to the death penalty: “any outsider who encroaches shall be put to the death” (Numbers 3.10, 38).⁸⁴ Its three zones of intensifying holiness (outer courtyard, holy place, Holy of Holies) corresponded respectively to the mountain of God’s base, midsection, and peak, a symbolism naturally generating the question of who may approach (ascend). Only those ordained may draw near to God (Numbers 16.5, 9, 10; 17.5; Leviticus 21.17).⁸⁵ Significant to the gate liturgy theme already developed with reference to Moses and Mount Sinai, especially given our consideration of “door” (פֶּתַח) and its relation to the gate liturgy in previous chapters, the presentation of the ordination of Aaron and his sons in Leviticus 8-9 “is focused spatially on the door of the tent of meeting (Leviticus 8.3, 33). Indeed, the entire seven day period of the priests’ ordination is a time when Aaron and his sons are to remain at the door of the tent.”⁸⁶ The essence of the priestly role, then, was access to the Presence, as evident by the vocabulary used to describe such movement: עָמַד, נָגַשׁ, קָרַב, along with phrases in relation to YHWH that

utilize the prepositional form לפני, and with priests being defined as: יהוה-קרובים ליהוה (“the ones who draw near to YHWH,” Exodus 19.22), קרובים ליהוה (“those who approach YHWH,” Ezekiel 42.13; cf. 43.19; Leviticus 10.3).⁸⁷ Thus, while uncertainty remains concerning the original meaning of the word translated “priest,” the suggestion, widely accepted by scholars, that כהן *kōhēn* derives from the verb כון (“to stand”), so that the priest is defined as one who stands before the divine Presence, appears plausible.⁸⁸ This is, of course, especially the case with the high priest whose “special status emerges from the entire structure of the priestly cult according to which only the High Priest may minister inside the tent of meeting, before the ark, whereas ordinary priests may officiate only outside the tent,”⁸⁹ that is, his special status emerges from his being the sole ascender to the (typological) mount’s summit, the “who” in the question: “Who may ascend the mount of YHWH?”

The focus of Israel’s cultic calendar was upon entering the Holy of Holies, after elaborate preparations (Leviticus 16.2-17), one day out of the year, the Day of Atonement, a privilege granted the high priest alone⁹⁰ — his “most critical role.”⁹¹ Indeed, this annual ritual of penetrating into the divine Presence may be considered the archetypal priestly act,⁹² whereupon Adam-like he fulfills the cosmogonic pattern:

Once a year on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, Adam’s eastward expulsion from the Garden is reversed when the high priest travels west past the consuming fire of the sacrifice and the purifying water of the laver, through the veil woven with images of cherubim. Thus, he returns to the original point of creation, where he pours out the atoning blood of the sacrifice, reestablishing the covenant relationship with God.⁹³

Significantly, then, in the consecration of the priesthood, only Aaron is anointed (Exodus 29.7; cf. Leviticus 8.12), his anointing constituting a “gesture of approach” with particular reference to the gate liturgy.⁹⁴ “Priestly unction was a rite of passage to a new status and effected passage from the outer, profane world to the sanctity of the tabernacle precinct.”⁹⁵ Even for the high priest, however, this privileged entrance was permissible merely one day a year and by measured obedience alone.⁹⁶ The Day of Atonement narrative begins, in fact, with the command for Aaron *not* to enter (at just anytime), and this command is itself bracketed by a threefold mention of death — that of his sons (for having approached in an unauthorized manner) and the prospect of his own (for doing likewise, cf. 16.13):

YHWH spoke to Moses after the death (מות) of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near (קרַב) before the face of YHWH and died (וימתו). Thus YHWH said to Moses, “Speak to Aaron your brother that he not enter (אל־יבא) at just any time into the holy place within the veil...lest he die (לא ימות). – Leviticus 16.1-2

Furthermore, only as representative of the renewed humanity—as a new Adam, were Aaron and his descendants permitted access to the cultic mount of YHWH:

Speak to Aaron, saying, “Any man of your seed in their generations, if he has a blemish, shall not draw near to bring near (לא יקרַב להקרִיב) the bread of his God. For any man who has a blemish shall not draw near (לא יקרַב): a man blind or lame, who has a mutilated face or any limb too long, or a man with a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or dwarf, or a man with a defect in his eye, or scaled skin or scab, or is a eunuch. Any man with a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall not approach to bring near (לא יגִש להקרִיב) the fire offerings of YHWH. He has a blemish—he shall not approach to bring near (לא יגִש להקרִיב) the bread of his God. – Leviticus 21.17-21

Returning to the Day of Atonement, the weight of this annual drama (and thus of the gate liturgy itself) is manifest by its literary centrality: Leviticus is the center of the Torah,⁹⁷ and atonement is the central theme of Leviticus,⁹⁸ with its own center, chapter 16,⁹⁹ highlighting the Day of Atonement chiastically:¹⁰⁰

FRAME: “And YHWH said to Moses...” (16.1)

- A. Aaron should not go into Holy of Holies any time he wishes (16.2)
- B. Aaron's sacrificial victims, special vestment (16.3-4)
- C. Sacrificial victims provided by people (16.5)
- D. Aaron's bull, goat for sin-offering, goat for Azazel (16.6-10)
- E. Aaron sacrifices bull (16.11-14)
- F. Goat sacrificed as sin-offering (16.15)
- X. Leviticus – chapter 16 → X. Atonement (16.16-20a)
- B'. Numbers → F'. Goat sent to wilderness (16.20b-22)
- A'. Deuteronomy → E'. Aaron's closing activities (16.23-25)
- D'. Goat for Azazel, Aaron's bull, goat for sin-offering (16.26-28)
- C'. People rest and humble themselves (16.29-31)
- B'. Anointed priest officiates wearing special garments (16.32-33)
- A'. Anointed priest makes atonement once a year (16.34)

FRAME: As YHWH commanded Moses...” (16.34)

In the drama of liturgy, the Day of Atonement was the “most intimate of the representations of access” to the divine Presence.¹⁰¹ Indeed, the importance of this day to the theology of the cult cannot be overestimated:

The goal of the Torah is holiness, which can be symbolically achieved in the cult. This occurs properly through atonement. The act of dedication to God, by which the distance from what is holy is symbolically bridged by the substitutionary offering of blood, is so central for the cult of the Priestly Document, that not only is the great day of atonement the highest holy day, but also every sacrifice takes on the nature of atonement, for it is only atonement, not offering a gift, that can express the meaning of the cult.¹⁰²

Given the concentric structure of the Pentateuch, with the central book of Leviticus being organized as something of a literary tour of the tabernacle so that the reader, in the footsteps of the high priest, penetrates into the holiest,¹⁰³ then it becomes apparent that the height of the gate liturgy — the concern for who may approach the divine Presence (and how) — has been reached within the tabernacle Holy of Holies in Leviticus 16, the cultic peak of YHWH’s mount which extends outward to the literary edges of the Pentateuch. Subsuming meaning from the surrounding narratives, the Day of Atonement also exerts a centrifugal force upon the rest of the Torah. R. M. Davidson’s diagram illustrates the architectural centrality of this once-per-year mythic event of approaching the divine Presence:¹⁰⁴

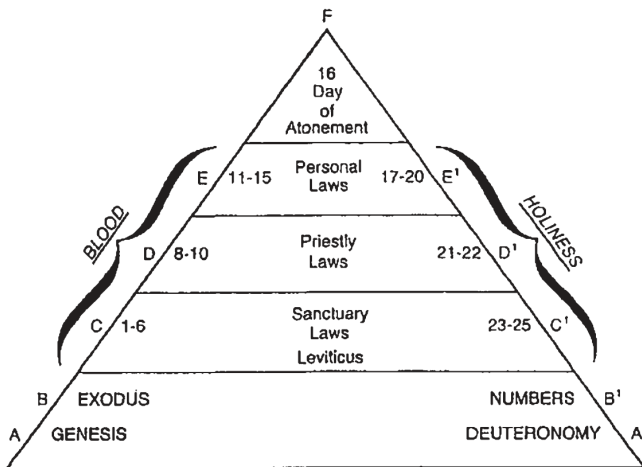


Figure 2: Diagram of Leviticus

This most intimate approach to the divine Presence, moreover, begins with the ceremonial washing of the high priest (Leviticus 16.4: אֶהֱבִישֶׁוּ וְרָחַץ בַּמִּיָּם), likely via the laver (cf. Leviticus 8.6-9; Exodus 30.17-21), thus fulfilling the cosmogonic pattern: through the waters (laver) → to the summit of YHWH's mountain (Holy of Holies) → for worship (with cultic atonement signifying the highest gesture of worship). Viewing the Day of Atonement rite as a particularly cosmogonic ritual, what is more, fits logically with its position within Israel's cultic year. While the completion of the tabernacle, as a new "creation," resonates with the New Year, the Day of Atonement ritual has also been associated with the New Year,¹⁰⁵ often compared to the Babylonian *akitu* festival.¹⁰⁶ This correspondence with the New Year appears sound, furthermore, inasmuch as the Day of Atonement ritual functions to renew the cosmos, seeking "both to address and repair the breakdown in divinely established distinctions of holy/profane, pure/impure, and order/chaos," and thus sustains and reclaims the divine intention for the created order.¹⁰⁷ In priestly theology, "liturgy realizes and extends creation through human reenactment of cosmogonic events."¹⁰⁸

Finally, the gate liturgy theme continues to run as an undercurrent throughout the book of Numbers, particularly evident in chapters 16-17, with the focus having shifted from mountain to tabernacle and from Moses to Aaron, precisely in relation to the latter's role as high priest. Here three episodes take place, the third being a symbolic reenactment of the previous events, to vindicate not merely "the exclusive right of the Levites to draw near to God" as commentators widely acknowledge,¹⁰⁹ but the special prerogative of Aaron to draw near within the holiest as the appointed high priest. Wenham provides an exceptional summary:¹¹⁰

In the first of these [episodes] the non-Levites and Levites try to usurp the priestly prerogatives of Aaron's family and offer incense within the tabernacle and die in divine judgment (chapter 16). In the second story a plague breaks out and Aaron saves the nation by offering incense (17.1-15). The first set of traditions about Korah, Dathan and Abiram shows the special status of Aaron in a negative way, by relating what happens to those who usurp his prerogatives. The second gives a positive demonstration of his effective mediation making atonement for the people's sin.

The third story, culminating with the budding of Aaron's rod, symbolically reenacts the previous narratives. Wenham provides four

lines of reasoning to demonstrate this: (1) the Hebrew word *מַטֵּה* *matteh* means both “tribe” and “rod”; (2) the names of the tribes are written on the rods illustrating that the latter represent the former; (3) the rods are deposited in the tent of meeting before the testimony, in the divine Presence, paralleling the instructions given previously to Korah and his company (16.16); (4) the demonstration of Aaron’s unique status takes two days, just as for the previous two trials.¹¹¹ Thus there are

three consecutive tales each making much the same point: that only Aaron and his tribe have a right to draw near to God. ... Aaron’s rod was put back “before the testimony,” symbolically confirming that he alone has the right to draw near to God (17.25, cf. 16.5, 17.5). Once the symbolic equation of the rods with the tribes has been noted, other features in the story are clarified. When the rods are removed from the tent of meeting, they show no signs of life. Their deadness symbolizes the death that will overtake these tribes if they attempt to enter God’s presence. Hence their outcry to Moses, “Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone. Everyone who comes near... to the tabernacle of the Lord, shall die. Are we all to perish?” (v 27-28). These verses form the climax to the story of Aaron’s rod.¹¹²

Significantly, the almond blossom of Aaron’s rod also has relevance to the gate liturgy, and the Day of Atonement:

[Almond trees] blossom early, which may explain their name, *šāqēd*, “watcher” ... It was the duty of the priests and Levites to guard the nation spiritually, by teaching the people of Israel and keeping trespassers out of the tabernacle (Leviticus 10.11; Numbers 3-4). Finally almond blossom is white. In many cultures white symbolizes goodness, purity, authority and divinity. In Israel white linen was worn by the high priest when he entered the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement (Leviticus 16.4).¹¹³

These stories, in sum, clearly catechize Israel regarding who may and who may not approach the divine Presence. That is, their meaning unfolds within the context of cosmic mountain ideology and the cultic question of the gate liturgy: “Who shall ascend the mountain of YHWH?” Indeed, and independently confirming our study, Nihan, who believes P’s narrative culminates with the Day of Atonement, writes: “The gradual

restitution of the divine presence in Israel's sanctuary is thus structured on the model of an ancient Near Eastern ritual of temple entrance, which finds its climax in the great ceremony of Leviticus 16."¹¹⁴

Thus far, then, we have traced the evolution of the gate liturgy as a symbol: cosmogonic pattern (Genesis 1-3) → cosmogonic + redemptive/eschatological pattern (Genesis 6-9) → micro-cosmogonic + redemptive/eschatological pattern (Exodus 14-24) → ultimately, to the cultic pattern (Leviticus 16), which subsumes the cosmogonic and redemptive/eschatological significance even while lending them a liturgical context. The shift to the cultic pattern follows YHWH's cloud of glory as it descends from the height of Mount Sinai upon the tabernacle Holy of Holies, to which movement we now turn.

III. TO DWELL IN THE DIVINE PRESENCE

The biblical-theological goal and dénouement of the narrative arc from Genesis 1-3 to Exodus 40 may be surmised from the descent of the glory cloud upon the tabernacle. Justly does Rodriguez mark Exodus 25.8 as a key text, the divine command forming a link between the first twenty-four chapters of Exodus and the final fifteen: "And let them make me [YHWH] a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst."¹¹⁵ The tabernacle cultus perpetuates the purpose and goal of the exodus deliverance, first fulfilled at the foot of Sinai: worship, variously described as "sacrifice"/זבח (Exodus 3.18; 5.3; 8.27-29; 10.25); "celebrate a festival"/הגג (Exodus 5.1; 8.20; 10.9); "serve," "worship"/עבד (3.12; 4.23; 7.16; 8.1, 20; 9.1, 13; 10.3, 7, 8, 11, 24, 26; 12.31).¹¹⁶ Indeed, this was the sign given Moses: "When you have brought forth the people from Egypt you [pl.] will worship God upon this mountain" (3.12). As the archetype of the tabernacle,¹¹⁷ Mount Sinai—the eschatological experience of being delivered through the waters and brought to the mountain of God for worship — would thus be prolonged and maintained via the tabernacle cultus.¹¹⁸ As cosmic mountain, furthermore, Sinai's summit corresponds to Eden, paradisiacal features and symbolism also being subsumed by the tabernacle. The key link here is that the תבנית is "a model of the cosmic Tabernacle of Yahweh," with "the earthly shrine as a microcosm of the cosmic shrine."¹¹⁹ Thus returning to Exodus 25.8, we find the divine intention clearly expressed as "to dwell/tabernacle" (שכן)¹²⁰ amidst his people. It is a sound suggestion, then, that *the cultic mediation of the Presence of YHWH via the tabernacle has been in view in the Torah's narrative ever since that Presence was lost with the exile out of paradise in Genesis 1-3, informing the tabernacle symbolism found therein.*

The central plot of the story of Exodus 19-40 being “dedicated to the divine movement from mountain to tent,”¹²¹ the book of Exodus thus ends with a climax that may serve as something of a bookend with the creation account in as much as it describes a completed temple-building project sanctified by the presence of YHWH (40.34-35):

Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of YHWH filled the tabernacle.

And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of YHWH filled the tabernacle.

The cloud and Presence of glory¹²² that is, “the visible manifestation of the divine Presence, not a substitute for it,”¹²³ having rested atop Mount Sinai now moves upon the tabernacle, the building project that is both a proclamation of YHWH’s cosmic rule and something of an “incarnation” of the triumphant King amidst his vassals.¹²⁴ As Buber has it, the כבוד is that “fiery ‘weight’ or ‘majesty’ of God radiating from the invisible, which now ‘fills’ again and again the ‘dwelling’ of the tent (40.34), just as it had ‘taken dwelling’ upon the mount (24.16).”¹²⁵ In this profound gesture, the God of the Patriarchs, *El Shaddai*, becomes the God of the sons of Israel, of the nation of Israel, to be worshiped corporately through the tabernacle cultus alone.¹²⁶

The story of chapters 19-40 as a whole, framed by 19.3 and Leviticus 1.1, “presents how the locus of theophany was changed from mountain to tabernacle.”¹²⁷

This transference and transformation, it may be argued, moves literarily via three steps: (1) establishing the God of creation as the God of the Patriarchs through the narratives of Genesis; (2) establishing the God of the Patriarchs as the God who calls Moses (Exodus 3.6, YHWH declares: “I am *the God of your father* — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”; cf. Exodus 15.2);¹²⁸ (3) the glory cloud’s moving from the cosmic mountain (religion of the Patriarchs) to the tabernacle (cultus of Israel).¹²⁹ That there appears to be deliberate narrative intention to demonstrate continuity between the cosmic mountain religion of the forefathers and the tabernacle/temple cultus of the original audience seems beyond question — and our suggestion, that the creation, deluge, and exodus narratives “pre-figure” the tabernacle cultus, thereby follows as well. Moses’ “mountain experience” in Exodus 24 will thus become the community’s via the tabernacle:

At first, the encounter is reserved for Moses. But the central significance of the Sinai narrative is to demonstrate how this encounter is made transferable, so that it can happen for the whole congregation. Therefore Moses, within the fire, receives the model for the sanctuary, which undoubtedly is heaven itself, the place where God's own glory shines forth. Therefore the tent of meeting is built, and the cloud of God's presence moves from Sinai, the world mountain, into the sanctuary, where it is possible for all to encounter God in cultic praise.¹³⁰

After being tutored in Moses' ability to ascend, the utterly unexpected statement in 40.35 that he is "not able (לא־יכל) ... to enter (לבוֹא)" is indeed remarkable. In Exodus 33.20, YHWH had prohibited Moses from entering his Presence too directly ("You are not able (לא תוכל) to see my face..."), so that the prohibition here would seem to imply that YHWH's Presence via the tabernacle though mediated is nonetheless a real Presence not to be trifled with — the tabernacle, in other words, provides for YHWH's immanence while safeguarding his transcendence,¹³¹ with the ritual divine Presence becoming "the highest form of religiosity."¹³² The tabernacle thus becomes the one locus in all the earth for God's Presence to dwell, and the intensity of this glorious mystery is so powerful, Moses is not able to enter.¹³³ Brisman expresses the sublimity of the account well:

Here the sense of God as beyond human activity is troped as the presence of God before human activity: Filling that Tabernacle, God prevents ("goes before" and thwarts) Moses from filling his duty. It is a happy prevention, this dedicatory vision of the presence of God. ... For the Priestly writer to conclude Exodus with a vision of God filling the Tabernacle, he needs to look beyond the priestly business of God's work to a vision of the Divine Presence that prevents and overwhelms the priesthood — and even Moses himself.¹³⁴

More to the point, with YHWH's descent upon the tabernacle, the new cosmos has been sanctified by his Presence. *While there is a new creation, however, as yet there is no new humanity* — a dramatic tension to be remedied in Leviticus 1-9, as Aaron is consecrated to be the new Adam, approaching the divine Presence via divinely sanctioned sacrifices.¹³⁵

As the cloud descends upon the tabernacle, God entering his dwelling place and filling it with the כבוד, the book's end not only forms a counterpart to the *deus absconditus* of the opening chapters of Exodus,¹³⁶ although YHWH's "filling" (מלא) the tabernacle (40.34, 35) forms an *inclusio* with the sons of Israel "filling" (מלא) the land of Egypt (1.7),¹³⁷ but also a bookend with the prologue to the Torah, the creation account of Genesis 1-2.3, where upon completing the cosmic temple, God enters his dwelling place in the enthronement of the Sabbath.¹³⁸ It might even be said that the creation begun in Genesis 1 comes to fulfillment, however partial, with the establishment of the tabernacle cultus.¹³⁹ Moreover, the re-creation account of the deluge is also fulfilled by the tabernacle climax of Exodus since the "arrival of the Israelites at Sinai sets in motion acts of atonement, administered by a sanctified priesthood, which will provide the antidote to the pollution, which causes the flood."¹⁴⁰ The tabernacle was "raised" (הוקם), what's more, on "the first day of the first month" (40.2, 17), the same day the covering was removed from the ark for Noah to gaze upon a renewed creation (Genesis 8.13), that is, on New Year's Day.¹⁴¹ This new beginning marks the creation (בראשית Genesis 1.1), deluge (בראשון Genesis 8.13), and tabernacle (הראשון 40.17) narratives. The undercurrent of these accounts, the drama and *telos* of the biblical narrative, particularly as it culminates in the tabernacle story, is the gaining of life in the Presence of the Creator:

[T]he tent located in the heart of the camp was first and foremost a place where the Glory of God was constantly present. God appeared in the cloud above the cherub covering that rested on the ark of the Pact: "for I appear in the cloud over the cover" (Leviticus 16.2). Consequently, the Tent of Meeting was called a tabernacle משכן (from the root שכן 'to dwell'), because it was the fixed dwelling place of the Divine Glory. The constant presence of the Glory in the Tent is expressed in the cult of the fixed daily offering (תמיד), in whose framework the priests offered the daily burnt offering, burned the incense, lit the eternal light, and arranged the showbread on the table. Only the perpetual presence of God's glory within the Tent of Meeting can explain the complex of acts performed in the daily worship.¹⁴²

The period from the expulsion from paradise until Sinai had been marked by God's dealings with humanity "from afar."¹⁴³ Now, so the message of the tabernacle narrative, the divine Presence is "not merely on

an ethereal, cosmic plane” (lost through the expulsion), but is “historically present to Israel.”¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Nihan writes:

Yahweh’s return, eventually reported in Exodus 40.34, corresponds to the restitution of the divine presence *in Israel* after the Flood; the significance of this event is highlighted by the various inclusions with the creation account in Genesis 1. This device, with its mythical background, indicates that in Israel’s sanctuary, as a space set apart from the profane world and as a “model” (תבנית) of the divine palace, *the order initially devised by God at the creation of the world can now be partly realized*. ... Accordingly, it is in Israel’s sanctuary, specifically, that the creator God has chosen to dwell (Exodus 25.8-9; 29.45-46; 40.34) and where, therefore, he can be permanently encountered (root עָדָה, see especially Exodus 25.22 and 29.43), as in the creation before the Flood. Conversely, this means that it is Israel’s cult which guarantees the permanence of the divine Presence, and hence the stability of the cosmic order.¹⁴⁵

The Presence of YHWH among his people, then, is a — perhaps, *the* — major theme of Exodus, and indeed of biblical theology.¹⁴⁶ The book of Exodus may be traced according to the movement of the divine Presence, as Moshe Greenberg had already noted in 1969:

It is possible to epitomize the entire story of Exodus in the movement of the fiery manifestation of the divine presence. At first the fire burned momentarily in a bush on the sacred mountain, as God announced his plan to redeem Israel; later it appeared for months in the sight of all Israel as God descended on the mountain to conclude his covenant with the redeemed; finally it rested permanently on the tent-sanctuary, as God’s presence settled there. The book thus recounts the stages in the descent of the divine presence to take up its abode for the first time among one of the peoples of the earth.¹⁴⁷

Ending where Genesis had begun,¹⁴⁸ the book of Exodus marks the historic cultic return to the lost Presence of the Creator, the tabernacle mediating paradise to the exiled descendants of Adam.¹⁴⁹ Israel thus becomes a “microcosm of life in creation as God originally intended it,” lived worshipfully in the Presence of God dwelling in — or, perhaps better, “incarnated” through — the tabernacle, “a kind of *material ‘body’ for God*.”¹⁵⁰ Because this crescendo at the end of Exodus also provides the

dénouement for the beginning of the Exodus narrative,¹⁵¹ the theme of slavery and liberation is taken up into the understanding of the cultus: true freedom is the life of worship where YHWH is in the midst of his people.

In sum, the “encounter with God at Sinai represents the beginning of legitimate cultic worship,”¹⁵² the beginning of humanity’s return through the gates of YHWH’s holy mount, and thus a “foretaste of the final joys of life in the Presence of God”¹⁵³ — this, then, is what the tabernacle cultus signifies as the cultic mountain of God.

CONCLUSION

We have seen how the cosmic mountain, as expressed through historical mounts in the narrative of the Pentateuch, gave way to the tabernacle cultus informed by it: the כבוד moved from Sinai to the tabernacle, the three part structure of the tabernacle corresponding to the three parts of the mountain with the Holy of Holies representing the clouded summit. As the peaks of Sinai and the Ararat mount had echoed Eden in their respective narratives, so the Holy of Holies corresponds to Eden and the blessing of the divine Presence, and the high priest portrays Adam (/Noah/Moses). Thus the narrative arc from Genesis 1-3 to Exodus 40 may be traced as the expulsion from the divine Presence to the gained re-entry into the divine Presence via the tabernacle cultus, from the profound descent of Adam to the dramatic “ascent” of the high priest into the Holy of Holies, particularly on the Day of Atonement.¹⁵⁴

Notes

1. For discussion of the tabernacle from a historical perspective, see F. M. Cross, Jr., “The Tabernacle: A Study from an Archeological and Historical Approach,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 10.3 (1947) 45-68; F. M. Cross, “The Priestly Tabernacle in the Light of Recent Research,” pp. 91-105 in *Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives*, T. G. Madsen, ed. (RSMS 9; BYU Religious Studies Center, 1984); R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, J. McHugh, trans. (1961; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 294-97; M. Haran, “Shiloh and Jerusalem: the Origin of the Priestly Tradition in the Pentateuch,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81.1 (1962) 14-24; V. W. Rabe, “The Identity of the Priestly Tabernacle,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 25.2 (1966) 132-34; W. H. Shea, “New Light on the Exodus and on the Construction of the Tabernacle: Gerster’s Protosinaitic Inscription No. 1,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*

- 25.1 (1987) 73-96; G. J. Wenham, "Deuteronomy and the Central Sanctuary," *Tyndale Bulletin* 22 (1971) 103-18.
2. S. E. Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999) 66-68. Cf. E. G. Newing ("Rhetorical and Theological Analysis of the Hexateuch," *South East Asia Journal of Theology* 22 [1981] 7-11) for the divine Presence of Exodus 33, within the Sinai Covenant (Exodus 19-Numbers 10), being central to the Hexateuch.
 3. G. J. Wenham notes, e.g., how the high points of Genesis involve sacrifice (Cain/Abel - Genesis 4, Noah - 8, Abraham - 22) ("The *Akedah*: A Paradigm," pp. 399-404 in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, D. P. Wright, D. N. Freedman, A. Hurvitz, eds. [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994]), and S. D. Walters reads the *akedah* account of Genesis 22 as prefiguring the entire cultic system ("Wood, Sand and Stars: Structure and Theology in Genesis 22:1-19," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 3.2 [1987] 301-30).
 4. M. R. Hauge, *The Descent from the Mountain: Narrative Patterns in Exodus 19-40* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) 100.
 5. G. Davies, "The Theology of Exodus," pp. 137-52 in *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in Old Testament Interpretation in Honour of Ronald E. Clements* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 138, 149.
 6. B. W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress) 86, 107. See also G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (1962; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 233-34; G. Davies, "The Theology of Exodus," 144.
 7. P. Enns, *Exodus* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000) 506.
 8. T. E. Fretheim, *Exodus* (Int; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991) 263-64.
 9. T. E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 263-64. Cf. P. Miller, Jr., *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) 117; F. M. Cross Jr., "The Divine Warrior in Israel's Early Cult," *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations*, A. Altman, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966) 19ff; A. C. Leder, "The Coherence of Exodus: Narrative Unity and Meaning," *Calvin Theological Journal* 36 (2001), 262-65; T.B. Dozeman, *Exodus* (ECC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 573-74. For *Enuma elish* see A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1969). For the Baal and Yamm story, see A. Herdner, *Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra - Ugarit de 1929 à 1939*, 2 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale

- et librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1963); K. L. Sparks, "Enuma Elish and Priestly Mimesis: Elite Emulation in Nascent Judaism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126.4 (2007) 625-48 (esp. 635-42).
10. V. A. Hurowitz, "The Priestly Account of the Building of the Tabernacle," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105.1 (1985) 21-30.
 11. B. A. Levine, "Tabernacle Texts of the Pentateuch," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85.3 (1965) 308. Cf. F. M. Cross Jr., "The Tabernacle," 54.
 12. Cf. A. C. Leder, "Reading Exodus to Learn and Learning to Read Exodus," *Calvin Theological Journal* 34 (1999) 16.; T. E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 263.
 13. W. W. Hallo, "Exodus and Ancient Near Eastern Literature," pp. 367-77 in *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, W. G. Plaut, ed. (New York: UAHC, 1981) 376-77.
 14. A. C. Leder, "The Coherence of Exodus," 254.
 15. R. Hendel, "Leitwort Style in the J Primeval Narrative," pp. 93-109 in *Sacred History, Sacred Literature: Essays on Ancient Israel, the Bible, and Religion in Honor of R. E. Friedman on his Sixtieth Birthday*, S. Dolansky, ed. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008) 99.
 16. The "stairway" connecting heaven and earth is a theme running through the tower of Babel (Genesis 11.4), and Jacob (Genesis 28.12, 17) narratives, culminating at the end of Exodus. Cf. J. L. McKenzie, *A Theology of the Old Testament* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974) 51.
 17. See T. E. Fretheim, "The Reclamation of Creation: Redemption and Law in Exodus," *Interpretation* 50.3 (1996) 364; L. Brisman, "On the Divine Presence in Exodus." *Exodus: Modern Critical Interpretations*. H. Bloom, ed. (New York: Chelsea House, 1987) 106.
 18. V. A. Hurowitz, "The Priestly Account of Building the Tabernacle," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105.1 (1985) 22. Cf. J. I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC. Waco: Word, 1987) 499.
 19. B. W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 108.
 20. Cf. G. Davies, "The Theology of Exodus," 140, 150; T. E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 264.
 21. P. J. Budd, "Priestly Instruction in Pre-Exilic Israel," *Vetus Testamentum* 23.1 (1973) 6.
 22. A. C. Leder, "The Coherence of Exodus," 255-56.
 23. A. C. Leder, "Reading Exodus to Learn," 19; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "God's Image, His Cosmic Temple and the High Priest," pp. 81-99 in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, T. D. Alexander, S.

- Gathercole, eds. (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 2004) 89.
24. J. Blenkinsopp, "Structure and Meaning in the Sinai-Horeb Narrative (Exodus 19-34)." *A Biblical Itinerary: In Search of Method, Form and Content; Essays in Honor of George W. Coats*. E. Carpenter, ed. (JSOTSup 240; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 113; J. Blenkinsopp, "The Structure of P," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38 (1976) 275-92. Therefore, if, as Propp states, "Creation is complete only when God's reign on earth commences at Sinai" (William C. H. Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, (AB 2. New York: Doubleday, 1999) 561), then that reign must be understood as continuing via the two revealed gifts of Sinai's summit: Torah and the tabernacle תבנית, or, as T. B. Dozeman has it, "the revelation of the law and the cult at the mountain of God" (*Exodus*, 349-50). For the relation of law to sacred mountains, see J. M. Lundquist, "Temple, Covenant, and Law, in the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament." *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*. Donald W. Parry, ed. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994) 281-84. For the *tabnit*, see D. N. Freedman, "Temple without Hands." *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times*. (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology of Hebrew Union College — Jewish Institute of Religion, 1981) 26; J. D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 140-41. The connection between the cosmic mountain of God, temple worship, and creation is firmly established for ANE culture.
 25. See summary in J. A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on the Image of Israel in Exodus 19.6* (JSOT Supplement 395; London: T&T Clark, 2004) 144-49.
 26. This observation is noted in many commentaries. See, e.g., T. E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 269-71.
 27. P. H. Seely, "The Firmament and the Water Above, Part II: The Meaning of 'The Water Above the Firmament' in Genesis 1.6-8." *Westminster Theological Journal* 54 (1992) 40.
 28. J. L. Morrow, "Creation and Liturgy: The Liturgical Background of Genesis 1-3." Trends of Ancient Jewish and Christian Mysticism Seminar at the University of Dayton, Dayton, OH, February 26, 2008, 5. The Sabbath, in fact, appears to tie the creation (Genesis 2.1-3), deluge (Genesis 8.6-12), Sinai (Exodus 24.16-18), and tabernacle accounts (Exodus 35.1-3), the tabernacle not only being completed in seven speeches (with the seventh addressing the Sabbath) and by seven acts of Moses who did "just as YHWH commanded" (cf. Exodus 40.19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32), but structurally forming something of

an inner frame in the tabernacle pericope.

29. J. D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *The Journal of Religion* 64.3 (1984) 288. Cf. also P. Elbert, "Genesis 1 and the Spirit: A Narrative-Rhetorical Ancient Near Eastern Reading in Light of Modern Science," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15.1 (2006) 27ff.
30. B. W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 108.
31. The Sabbath, then, must be considered of a piece with temple theology. See D. C. Timmer, *Creation, Tabernacle, and Sabbath: The Sabbath Frame of Exodus 31:12-17; 35:1-3 in Exegetical and Theological Perspective* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2009) 144.
32. S. Il Kang, "The 'Molten Sea,' or Is It?" *Biblica* 89 (2008) 102.
33. S. Il Kang, "The 'Molten Sea,' or Is It?" 102.
34. S. Il Kang, "The 'Molten Sea,' or Is It?" 101-03. This would, to be sure, be a direct link to Genesis 1, the constraining of the sea being a major expression of YHWH's kingship (cf. Genesis 1; 6-9; Exodus 14-15; Psalms 104.9; 33.7; Job 26.10; Jeremiah 5.22). Il Kang ties the Basin to a possible New Year's enthronement festival whereby YHWH's kingship was declared (cf. Psalm 89). Cf. Genesis 1.9-10 and 1 Kings 7.23; D. W. Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary." *Temples of the Ancient World*. D. W. Parry, ed. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994) 138; J. L. McKenzie, *A Theology of the Old Testament* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974) 52.
35. See C. L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah* (Missoula: Scholars, 1976) 36-38; G. J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story." *I Studied Inscriptions From Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*. Richard S. Hess and David T. Tsumura, eds. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994) 401; D. Parry, "Garden of Eden," 128-29; J. V. Fesko, *Last Things First: Unlocking Genesis with the Christ of Eschatology*. (Fearn, Ross-shire, GB: Mentor, 2007) 62.
36. T. E. Fretheim, "'Because the Whole Earth is Mine': Theme and Narrative in Exodus." *Interpretation* 50.3 (1996) 238.
37. P. J. Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Exodus 25-40," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89.3 (1977) 381.
38. Cosmas, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk*, tr. J. W. McCrindle (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1897) 24, 145, 150. Cosmas even describes the earth as a rectangular box (30ff.), that is, in the shape of the tabernacle/temple (and, significantly, the ark of Noah). Cf. M. Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of*

- Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2004) 195; M. Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (2000; London: T&T Clark, 2004) 17-18.
39. T. E. Fretheim, "Because the Whole Earth is Mine," 238.
 40. J. Blenkinsopp, "The Structure of P," 283. Cf. J. Blenkinsopp, "Structure and Meaning," 113; W. W. Hallo, "Exodus and Ancient Near Eastern Literature," 377.
 41. J. H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 127. See T. E. Fretheim's summary, *Exodus*, 268-69.
 42. A. Ross, *Genesis* (CBC; Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2008) 74.
 43. J. H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 126; B. Waltke (with C. J. Fredericks), *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) 135, 152.
 44. Cf., e.g., M. Barker's discussion, on the temple's symbolizing the "eternal present," *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008) 58-65. Thus, when Asaph approached "the sanctuary of God" (מִקְדָּשׁ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ *miqdēšē- 'ēl*), he understood "their end" (לְאַחֲרֵיָם *le'aharītām*).
 45. R. J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972) 191.
 46. J. McCrory, "'Up, Up, Up, and Up': Exodus 24.9-18 as the Narrative Context for the Tabernacle Instructions of Exodus 25-31," *SBL Seminar Papers* (1990) 570-82. Cf. D. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994) 183.
 47. E. Carpenter, "Exodus 18: Its Structure, Style, Motifs and Function in the Book of Exodus." *A Biblical Itinerary: In Search of Method, Form and Content; Essays in Honor of George W. Coats*. E. E. Carpenter, ed. (*JSOTSup* 240; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 105.
 48. T. B. Dozeman, *Exodus*, 6, 563. Cf. also 567-75. He refers to the Exodus 24 event as "a worship service on the cosmic mountain before the heavenly temple of God" (*God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology and Canon in Exodus 19-24* (*SBLMS* 37. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 113).
 49. T. B. Dozeman, "Spatial Form in Exodus 19.1-8a and in the larger Sinai Narrative," *Semeia* 46 (1989) 87-101; A. Niccacci, "Workshop: Narrative Syntax of Exodus 19-24." *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tillburg Conference*. E. van Wolde, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 224.
 50. T. B. Dozeman, *Exodus*, 574.

51. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*. I. Abrahams, trans. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961) 316, 484. Cf. B. S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1974) 638; P. Enns, *Exodus*, 493.
52. See B. D. Russell, *The Song of the Sea: The Date of Composition and Influence of Exodus 15:1-21* (SBL 101. New York: Peter Lang, 2007) 54-55; C. Meyers, *Exodus* (NCBC. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 208.
53. Indeed, this is Lundquist's primary proposition. Cf. his "What is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology" pp. 205-19 in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, H. B. Huffmon, F. A. Spina, A. R. W. Green, eds. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 207.
54. Cf. N. M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1966) 203-04. See also P. Enns, *Exodus*, 391; Edwin C. Kingsbury, "The Theophany Topos and the Mountain of God," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86.2 (1967) 205-10; J. A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 140; R. J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain*, 123; M. Haran, "The Non-Priestly Image of the Tent of MO'ED," pp. 260-275 in *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into Biblical Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School*, M. Haran (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1985) 267; O. Keel, *Symbolism*, 129-34; R. E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965) chapters 2, 5 (17-27, 63-78); M. Fishbane, "The 'Eden' Motif," *Biblical Texts and Texture*, 114. The term "portable Sinai" is utilized by various commentators, such as, e.g., T. E. Fretheim (*Exodus*, 274), N.M. Sarna (*Exodus*. (JPS Torah Commentary. Philadelphia: JPS, 1991) 237); P. Enns (*Exodus*, 493).
55. A. M. Rodriguez, "Sanctuary Theology in Exodus," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24 (1986) 132-34. Cf. N. M. Sarna's synopsis of parallels in *Exodus*, 105.
56. Cf. M. R. Hauge, *The Descent from the Mountain*, 22. Cf. A.C. Leder, "The Coherence of Exodus," 268.
57. I. Knohl, "Two Aspects of the 'Tent of Meeting,'" pp. 73-79 in *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg*, M. Cogan, et al., eds. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997) 73; T. E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 277.
58. M. Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple and the Enthronement of the Lord: The Problem of the *Sitz im Leben* of Genesis 1:1-2:3." *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*. A. Caquot

- and M. Delcor, eds. (*Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 212. Kevelaer: Butzon and Bercker, 1981) 504-05. See also J. I. Durham, *Exodus*, 500; M. Oliva, "Interpretación teológica del culto en la pericopa del Sinaí de la Historia Sacerdotal," *Biblica* 49 (1968) 345-54; V. P. Hamilton, "כֹּהֵן, tabernacle," in *Theological Words of the Old Testament*. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., B. K. Waltke, eds. (Chicago: Moody, 1980) 2:926.
59. U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 484.
 60. J. W. Hilber, "Theology of Worship in Exodus 24." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39.2 (1996) 187. Cf. D. Janzen, "Priestly Sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible: A Summary of Recent Scholarship and a Narrative Reading," *Religion Compass* 2.1 (2008) 38-52.
 61. A. C. Leder, "The Coherence of Exodus," 260.
 62. B. S. Childs, *Exodus*, 540. Cf. B. S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986) 163. Cf. R. E. Clements, *God and Temple*, 22; D. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus*, 185; N. M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 190-91, 203; U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 319.
 63. See R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 348; M. Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, 17; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "The High Priest as Divine Mediator in the Hebrew Bible: Daniel 7.13 as a Test Case," pp. 161-93 in *SBL 1997 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 36; Atlanta: SBL, 1998) 188.
 64. Thus J. A. Davies (*A Royal Priesthood*, 150) asks the key questions: "If the tabernacle had an overarching conceptual rationale along the lines sketched above, what role did the person of the priest play in that rationale? What impression was conveyed to the Israelite community as day by day they saw their priests, dressed in their finery, enter God's house to attend upon him and to enjoy his company in the surroundings of an ideal world?" See also his comments on 164-65.
 65. See M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London and New York: Routledge, 1966) 64. Cf. G. J. Wenham, *Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 24; A. T. M. Cheung, "The Priest as the Redeemed Man: A Biblical-Theological Study of the Priesthood," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29.3 (1986) 265-75.
 66. C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "God's Image, His Cosmic Temple and the High Priest," 96; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 42; Leiden: Brill, 2002) chapters 3, 7 and 11. Cf. also M. Barker, "The High Priest and the Worship of Jesus," pp. 93-111 in *The Jewish Roots of the Worship of Jesus*, C. C. Newman, et al., eds. (*JSJSup* 63; Leiden: Brill, 1999). For the traditional correlation between the vision of Moses

- in the Sinai pericope and Ezekiel 1, see L. Teugels, "Did Moses See the Chariot? The Link Between Exodus 19-20 and Ezekiel 1 in Early Jewish Interpretation," pp. 595-602 in *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction-Reception-Interpretation*. M. Vervenne, ed. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996).
67. C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part I," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 4.2 (2006) 159 and fn 8 (see also 159 fn 10).
 68. C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 2," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 5.1 (2007) 76. A. T. M. Cheung similarly states: "The purpose of the sacrificial duties was not simply for the putting away of sin. This was but a means to the ultimate end of regaining the priesthood, which entailed access to God's sanctuary (which access was free for Adam, the primal man-priest, before the fall) and hence the restoration of fellowship with God. ("The Priest as the Redeemed Man," 268).
 69. J. Marcus, "Son of Man as Son of Adam, Part II: Exegesis," *Revue Biblique* 110 (2003) 374 and footnote 14.
 70. L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: JPS, 1911) 150.
 71. Cf. R. D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993) 73.
 72. J. A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 158. For "glory" ascribed to YHWH, see Exodus 24.16-17; Isaiah 4.5; Psalm 57.6 [5]; for "honor," see Isaiah 46.13, 63.15; Psalms 71.8; 96.6; 1 Chronicles 29.11. Fletcher-Louis, further, posits five lines of reasoning to argue that "within the cult at least, the high priest takes on some of God's identity in the victory over the forces of chaos," an argument that, if valid, strengthens the Chaoskampf parallel between creation and cult (C. Fletcher-Louis, "The High Priest as Divine Mediator," 186-92). Cf. M. Carden, "Atonement Patterns in Biblical Narrative: Rebellious Sons, Scapegoats and Boy Substitutes," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 5.1 (2009) 04.5.
 73. This term "drama" is used here advisedly. See R. D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priesthood*, 71.
 74. R. D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priesthood*, 158-59, 166, 168, 202. Because, among other things, the high priest represented the people to God, it is important to see the nation of Israel, God's son (cf. Exodus 4.22), as symbolizing a new Adam as well. C. Dohmen

- notes how via the covenantal agreement Israel in effect becomes a new entity, a cultic community (Exodus 19-40, 60f). Cf. J. H. Hayes, "Atonement in the Book of Leviticus," *Interpretation* 52 (1998) 8; S.W. Hahn, "Worship in the Word: Toward a Liturgical Hermeneutic." *Letter and Spirit* 1 (2005) 111.
75. R. D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 52.
 76. G. J. Wenham, *Numbers*. (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 4. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2008) 54.
 77. See D. T. Olson, *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Reading* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1994). Throughout his work, Olson points out how the theme of Moses' self-denial pervading Deuteronomy and climaxing with his death and burial, is consistently portrayed as the means of life and continuing journey for Israel—that is, for the sake of Israel (57-58; 61; 67). He further notes: "The atoning death of the young heifer (21.1-9) resembles in theme and vocabulary the interpretation of Moses' death outside the land as vicarious atonement for Israel (Deuteronomy 1.37; 3.26; 4.21)" (124). Olson justly notes throughout the complexity of Deuteronomy's portrayal of Moses' death as he is also dying for his own sin — he does not merely die in their stead but ahead of Israel (165),
 78. G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol 1, D. M. G. Stalker, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 294-95.
 79. Cf. C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "The High Priest as Divine Mediator." He also notes that, in extra-biblical literature, Enoch's heavenly ascent "looks most like the high priest's annual visit to the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement" (180).
 80. See C. Meyer, *Exodus*, 282-83.
 81. N. Wyatt, "Degrees of Divinity: Some Mythical and Ritual Aspects of West Semitic Kingship," pp. 191-220 in "*There's Such Divinity Doth Hedge a King*": *Selected Essays of Nicolas Wyatt on Royal Ideology in Ugaritic and Old Testament Literature* (SOTS; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) 198.
 82. Cf. Exodus 40.32. Furthermore, the approach to the altar was eastward (this is made explicit in Ezekiel 43.17).
 83. C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah," 161.
 84. I. Knohl, "Two Aspects of the 'Tent of Meeting,'" 73.
 85. C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 2," 78. M. Barker notes well: "The mediators who passed between the two worlds were vital to the cult" (*Gate of Heaven*, 62).
 86. F. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the*

- Priestly Ideology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990) 49. Furthermore, the tabernacle veil, the פרכת, “functions as an objective and material witness to the conceptual boundary drawn between the area behind it and all other areas” (33). While Gorman here refers specifically to the כפרת within the Inner Sanctum, it is the veil that marks the separation.
87. Cf. R. D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 52, 61.
 88. Cf. F. B. Holbrook, “The Israelite Sanctuary,” pp. 3-36 in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, F. B. Holbrook, ed. (Silver Spring, MD: BRI, 1989) 20-21; R. Abba, “Priests and Levites,” *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* (1962) 3:877; J. J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Grand Rapids: BMH Books, 1971) 270-71; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 346.
 89. B. A. Levine, “Tabernacle Texts of the Pentateuch,” 311. For the emphasis on Aaron particularly throughout the prescriptive section, chapters 28 and 29, his name mentioned some sixteen times in chapter 28 alone, see C. Meyers, “Incense Altar and Lamp Oil in the Tabernacle Texts,” pp. 13-21 in *Sacred History, Sacred Literature: Essays on Ancient Israel, the Bible, and Religion in Honor of R.E. Friedman on his Sixtieth Birthday*, S. Dolansky, ed. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008).
 90. J. A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 162. For the emphasis of on the Day of Atonement in the Priestly writing, see R. D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 127ff. Cf. M. Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004) 10; 53-73; M. Barker, “Atonement: The Rite of Healing,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 49.1 (1996) 1-20.
 91. R. D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 13. Nelson also notes that the Urim and Thummim became obsolete except for their use on the Day of Atonement, for the selection of goats (42).
 92. R. D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 148.
 93. D. W. Parry, “Garden of Eden,” 135. Cf. S. W. Hahn, “Worship in the Word,” 112; M. Barker, “Beyond the Veil of the Temple: The High Priestly Origin of the Apocalypses” (Presidential address to the Society for Old Testament Study; published in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51.1 [1998]) accessed at: www.jbburnett.com/resources/barker/barker_beyond%20the%20veil.pdf.
 94. D. W. Parry (“Ritual Anointing with Olive Oil in Ancient Israelite Religion,” pp. 262-89 in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5*, S. Ricks, J. Welch, eds. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994]) refers to this anointing as a “gesture of approach,” linking it with the entrance liturgies of Psalms 15, 24, and

- Isaiah 33.14-17 (“Who Shall Ascend into the Mountain of the Lord?: Three Biblical Temple Entrance Hymns,” pp. 729-42 in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, D.W. Parry, et al., eds. [Provo: FARMS, 2002]). Thus the long-awaited “Anointed One” might well be defined by his “entrance” work (cf. Hebrews 10.19-22; 12.22-24).
95. C. Meyers, *Exodus*, 246. Cf. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, II, 348; D. Fleming, “The Biblical Tradition of Anointing Priests,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117.3 (1998) 401-14; S. Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition* (HSM, 30; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980) 110; J. A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 160-61.
 96. Cf. C. Nihan: “As regards Leviticus 16, it is undoubtedly the most important ritual in the whole book of Leviticus. It occurs once a year, and it is on this occasion that both the sanctuary (cf. 16.14-19) and the community (16.20ff.) are purified from all the impurities contracted during the year, whether physical or moral in nature. It is the *only* ceremony in the entire book during which Aaron is admitted into the inner-sanctum, and therefore in the presence of the deity. ... Moreover, the central character of chapter 16 is also supported by a series of formal devices. Its introduction in v 1-2aa is absolutely unique in Leviticus and ... chapter 16 is concluded in v 34b by a notice reporting the execution of “all what Yahweh had commanded to Moses,” a feature unparalleled so far in Leviticus ...” (*From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch* [FAT 25; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007] 96-97 [emphasis original]).
 97. Many scholars have noted that this five-book structure, with Leviticus at the center, is not likely to have been coincidental. The notion that it simply took five scrolls to fit the entire Torah does not adequately account for the cutoff points of each book, including chronological markers (M. S. Smith, “Matters of Space and Time in Exodus and Numbers,” pp. 182-207 in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Conversation with Brevard S. Childs*, C. Seitz, K. Greene- McCreight, eds. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999] 201; R.P. Knierim, *The Task of Old Testament Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995] 353), nor for the symmetry of the pentad: Exodus and Numbers are nearly the same exact length (16,713 and 16,413 words respectively) while Leviticus, the central book, is by far the shortest (11,950 words—half the length of Genesis). Furthermore, that the Psalter was deliberately divided into five books manifests an early awareness that the Pentateuch’s five-fold structure is theologically significant.

- Cf. G. A. Klingbeil, *Bridging the Gap: Ritual and Ritual Texts in the Bible* (BBRSup 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007) 155ff.; Y. Radday, "Chiasm in Tora," *Linguistica Biblica* 19 (1972) 21-23; W. Shea, "Literary Form and Theological Function in Leviticus," pp. 131-68 in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, F. Holbrook, ed. (Washington, DC.; BRI, 1968); D. L. Christensen, "The Pentateuchal Principle within the Canonical Process," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39.4 (1996) 537-48 (539); M. Carden, "Atonement Patterns in Biblical Narrative," 04.11; A. C. Leder, *Waiting for the Land* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2010) 34-35. Sailhamer marginalizes the Pentateuch's fivefold structure (*The Pentateuch as Narrative* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992] 1-2), a point that may be connected to his downplaying the significance of the cultus. Cf. C. Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 69-76.
98. M. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 231-34.
99. Apart from taking the space to justify this assertion, suffice it to note that the widest consensus on any "center" for Leviticus appears to mark chapter 16. See, e.g., R. M. Davidson, "The Eschatological Structure of the Old Testament," pp. 349-66 in *Creation, Life, and Hope: Essays in Honor of Jacques B. Doukhan*, Jiri Moskala, ed. (Berrien Springs: AUTS, 2000); J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus 1-27* (WBC 4; Dallas: Word, 1992) 217; G. A. Klingbeil, *Bridging the Gap*, 155ff.; D. Luciani, *Sainteté et pardon. Vol 1: Structure littéraire du Lévitique* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005); R. Rendtorff, "Leviticus 16 Als Mitte Der Tora," *International Review of Biblical Studies* 11.3/4 (2003) 252-58; D. W. Rooke, "The Day of Atonement as a Ritual of Validation for the High Priest," pp. 342-64 in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, J. Day, ed. (New York: T&T Clark, 2007) 342; W. H. Shea, "Literary Form and Theological Function in Leviticus," pp. 131-68 in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, F. B. Holdbrook, ed. (DRCS; Washington, DC: BRI, 1986); C. R. Smith, "The Literary Structure of Leviticus," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 70 (1996) 17-32; T. Seidl, "Levitikus 16 – 'Schlussstein' des priesterlichen Systems der Sündenvergebung," pp. 219-48 in *Levitikus als Buch*, H.-J. Fabry, H.-W. Jüngling, eds. (BBB 119; Berlin: Philo, 1999); W. Warning, *Literary Artistry in Leviticus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); E. Zenger ("Das Buch Levitikus als Teiltexat der Tora/des Pentateuch Eine synchrone Lektüre mit kanonischer Perspektive," in *Levitikus als Buch*, 71) and B. Jürgens (*Heiligkeit und Versöhnung: Leviticus 16 in*

seinem literarischen Kontext [HBSt 28; New York: Herder, 2001] 126-86) both posit chapters 16-17 as the center. Besides, a few who have posited Leviticus 19 as the center of Leviticus, nonetheless suggest that atonement appears thematically central to the book. Mary Douglas infers that atonement is the central theme of Leviticus (*Leviticus as Literature*, 231-34), as does Kline, illustrated by this quote: "This structure can be interpreted as an analogical representation of the Tabernacle with chapter 19 parallel to the Ark of the Covenant, the inner array the Holy of Holies, the middle array the Holy Place, and the outer array the courtyard. The experience of reading Leviticus, according to this analogy, places the reader in a position analogous to the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. Like the High Priest, the reader follows the inner path to holiness at the center of the book, passing through the courtyard and the Holy Place to the Holy of Holies. This path is reversed in the second half as the reader-High Priest returns to society when exiting the Tabernacle" ("The Literary Structure of Leviticus," *The Biblical Historian* 2.1 [2006] 11).

100. A. M. Rodriguez, "Leviticus 16: Its Literary Structure," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 34.2 (1996) 269-86 (283). The chiasm presented varies slightly from that of Rodriguez. D. Luciani's chiastic outline of Leviticus 16 contains significant overlap, tending to confirm the focus upon the accomplished purgation of the tabernacle (*Sainteté et pardon*, 386). Cf. also G. A. Klingbeil, *Bridging the Gap*, 155ff; J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, 232. For Leviticus 19 as the ring center, see M. Douglas, "Poetic Structure in Leviticus," pp. 239-56 in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, D. P. Wright, D. N. Freedman, A. Hurvitz, eds. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995).
101. J. A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 162. Ultimately, then, the gate liturgy is via substitutionary atonement, the mythic pattern of (substitutionary) death and rebirth being at the heart of the sacrificial system of Israel's cultus. Cf. "Rebirth," pp. 696-97 in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman III, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998) 697. Every sacrifice had atonement at its heart, both pointing toward and deriving significance from the high Day of Atonement.
102. H. Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981) 74.
103. See Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*; M. Kline, "The Literary

- Structure of Leviticus”; G. A Rendsburg, “The Two Screens: On Mary Douglas’s Proposal for a Literary Structure to the Book of Leviticus,” *JSQ* 15 (2008) 175-89.
104. R. M. Davidson, “Assurance in the Judgment,” *Adventist Review* (1988) 20, based on W. H. Shea, “Literary Form and Theological Function in Leviticus,” pp. 131-68 in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, F.B. Holbrook, ed. (Washington, DC: BRI, 1986) 18.
 105. Cf., e.g., J. Morgenstern, “The Cultic Setting of the ‘Enthronement Psalms,’” *HUCA* 35 (1964) 1-42 (esp. 8-14). His discussion of the enigmatic “closing of the gate” ceremony (13f) may be informed by the gate liturgy we have developed, including reference to YHWH’s shutting of the ark’s door.
 106. See, e.g., R. E. Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005) 362-78; R. E. Gane, “The Nanshe New Year and the Day of Atonement,” Paper presented at SBL in San Francisco, CA, 1998; J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 1067-71. On the *akitu* festival, see W. G. Lambert, “The Great Battle of the Mesopotamian Religious Year: The Conflict in the *Akitu* House (A Summary),” *Iraq* 25 (1963) 189-90; J. A. Black, “The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon: ‘Taking Bel by the Hand’ and a Cultic Picnic,” *Religion* 11 (1981) 39-60; B. D. Sommer, “The Babylonian *Akitu* Festival: Rectifying the King or Renewing the Cosmos?” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 27 (2000) 81-95; S. A. Pallis, *The Babylonian Akitu Festival* (Copenhagen: A. F. Horst, 1926); H. Zimmern, *Das babylonische Neujahrfest* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1926); C. Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 508ff; 613, who notes: “the entire ceremony of chapter 16, as the Mesopotamian *akitu* Festival, corresponds to the re-establishment of cosmic order and may therefore be regarded as a ritual re-enactment of God’s primeval victory over chaos at the creation of the world. *This ritual process of re-creation makes possible God’s permanent presence in Israel...*” (613; emphasis original).
 107. S. E. Balentine, *The Torah’s Vision of Worship*, 65. F. H. Gorman states: “Thus, the ritual [of the Day of Atonement] reflects the need for an annual reestablishment of the order of creation, an order consisting of cosmic, social, and cultic categories. As such, the ritual reflects characteristics of annual new year festivals. This is an annual ritual concerned with the reestablishment of the prescribed and

- founded order of creation in which the community situates itself in the world, a world constructed and enacted ritually” (*Ideology of Ritual*, 61-62).
108. J. D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) xxvi.
 109. G. J. Wenham, “Aaron’s Rod (Numbers 17.16-28),” *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93.2 (1981) 280-81.
 110. G. J. Wenham, “Aaron’s Rod,” 280.
 111. G. J. Wenham, “Aaron’s Rod,” 280. C. Nihan, moreover, links these stories via the censer-incense to that of the deaths of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10, claiming the point of the latter is the same: the high priest’s sole prerogative to enter the Holy of Holies (*From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 582).
 112. G. J. Wenham, “Aaron’s Rod,” 280-81. Their reaction is similar to Isaiah’s after being ushered into the heavenly sanctuary (Isaiah 6.5).
 113. G. J. Wenham, “Aaron’s Rod,” 281.
 114. C. Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 614; see also 350.
 115. A. M. Rodriguez, “Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus,” 128.
 116. This is recognized in most commentaries.
 117. J. Milgrom, *Studies in Levitical Terminology* 1 (Los Angeles: U of CA Press, 1970) 44-46. P. Enns, among other commentators, also posits Mount Sinai as the “pattern” for the tabernacle (*Exodus*, 488).
 118. A. M. Rodriguez, “Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus,” 134.
 119. F. M. Cross, Jr., “The Priestly Tabernacle in the Light of Recent Research,” 93-94.
 120. Cf. F. M. Cross, Jr., “The Tabernacle,” 64-66; A. M. Rodriguez, “Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus,” 129-30.
 121. M. R. Hauge, *The Descent from the Mountain*, 22. This connection, he suggests, is connected with the role of the human actors who may not ascend the mountain, making the divine descent to the tabernacle necessary (99).
 122. For the cloud of Glory symbolizing the divine Presence, cf. J. Plastaras, *The God of Exodus: The Theology of the Exodus Narratives*. (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1966) 272-73.
 123. G. Davies, “The Theology of Exodus,” 141. He further supports this understanding in footnote 12 of the same page, noting that the LXX renders the phrase *w^ešākantī b^etōkām* in 25.8 with *καὶ ὁφθβσομαι ἐν ὑμῶν*.
 124. Cf. A. C. Leder, “The Coherence of Exodus,” 268.

125. M. Buber, "Holy Event (Exodus 19-27)," pp. 45-58 in *Exodus: Modern Critical Interpretations*, H. Bloom, ed. (New York: Chelsea House, 1987) 51, originally published in *On the Bible: Eighteen Studies by Martin Buber* (New York: Schocken, 1968).
126. For a similar succession of the names for the deity, cf. B. W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 86. The "alone" here derives from our understanding of the function and role of Exodus 32 set in the midst of tabernacle instruction and construction. Note the parallels between Exodus 24 and 32, A. Phillips, "A Fresh Look at the Sinai Pericope: Part 1," 51; F. Polak, "Theophany and Mediator: The Unfolding of a Theme in the Book of Exodus." *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction-Reception-Interpretation*. M. Vervenne, ed. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996) 141. Further, the making, breaking, and remaking of the covenant in Exodus 19-34 corresponds with the overall pattern of Genesis 1-11, old creation, destruction, new beginning (J. Blenkinsopp, "Structure and Meaning," 111; T. E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 272). See also R. E. Hendrix, "A Literary Structural Analysis of the Golden-Calf Episode in Exodus 32.1-33.6," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 28.3 (1990) 211-17; R. W. L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34* (*JSOTSup* 22; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983).
127. M. R. Hauge, *The Descent from the Mountain*, 62.
128. P. D. Miller, e.g., considers this the oldest attestation identifying YHWH with the God of the fathers (*The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* [*HSM* 5; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973] 114). Cf. P. Enns, *Exodus*, 297-98. Moses is thus portrayed as the "last Patriarch," YHWH meeting him at the entrance of his own (Moses') tent (Exodus 33.7-11; cf. Genesis 18.1; A. Cooper and B. R. Goldstein, "At the Entrance to the Tent: More Cultic Resonances in Biblical Narrative," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116.2 [1997] 201-15). With the movement of the glory cloud to the tabernacle, worship shifts from family clan to national cultus.
129. This is not unlike M. Buber's observation that while the deity remains the same from the patriarchal age to that of the Exodus tradition, it is the people (Israel as a nation) that changes. See "Holy Event (Exodus 19-27)." Cf. also Fretheim's theological reflection on the shift in divine abode from mountain to tabernacle (*Exodus*, 272-73).
130. N. Lohfink, *The Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of the Priestly*

Narrative and Deuteronomy. L. M. Maloney, trans. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994) 130.

131. Cf. A. M. Rodriguez, "Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus," 131-37. J. I. Durham (*Exodus*, 500-01), in agreement with U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 484), is likely right in pointing out "no real discrepancy" here in Moses' inability to enter since even in Exodus 24.15-18 (as well as in 19.20) it is clear that he had to wait until YHWH's invitation (24.17) which, in the tabernacle context, probably occurs in Leviticus (either 1.1 or 9.23). However, and given the lack of objective discrepancy, Exodus 40.35 still makes Moses' inability to enter the Presence a matter of literary emphasis not found in the narrative of chapter 24, and thus crucial for interpretation. B. S. Childs (*Exodus*, 638) suggests that here Moses' role gives way to the priestly role of Aaron (Leviticus 9.23). To be sure, Aaron's "future" role has been in preparation throughout the narrative, as suggested by his singular privilege of accompanying Moses up the Mount in Exodus 19.24 (P. Enns, *Exodus*, 395). However, Enns's suggestion that Moses' inability to enter represents "a heightening of God's presence" is appealing (*Exodus*, 599), functioning perhaps to confirm the validity of the tabernacle cultus (even as the fearful theophany had previously functioned to validate Moses' mediatorial role, Exodus 19.9). Cf. D. K. Stuart, *Exodus* (NAC. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006) 792-93; T. B. Dozeman, *Exodus*, 765-66. So, the point is not simply that Moses' role gives way to the priesthood, but includes the essential shift from approaching the divine Presence upon the cosmic mountain to approach via the ordained cultus — that is, the tabernacle, the text is emphasizing, is part of a "regulated" cultic complex. Cf. M. R. Hauge, who traces the narrative development of the four *visio Dei* episodes (20.18-21; 24.17; 33.8-10; 40.34-38) and sees a role reversal between Moses and the people in this final and climactic scene (*The Descent from the Mountain*, 41, 58).
132. M. R. Hauge, *The Descent from the Mountain*, 101.
133. C. Meyers, *Exodus*, 283.
134. L. Brisman, "On the Divine Presence in Exodus," 108.
135. For a similar reading, see C. Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 231ff.
136. F. Polak, "Theophany and Mediator," 147. T. B. Dozeman also notes the "absence of God" in the beginning of Exodus (*Exodus*, 44).
137. A. C. Leder, "Reading Exodus to Learn," 20; D. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus*, 1-24.

138. The enthronement emphasis may also be seen in the instructions for building the tabernacle (chapter 25), as B. A. Levine is likely correct in seeing the order of items in relation to relative importance with the ark, as “the central object of the cult” as well as YHWH’s throne, coming first (“The Descriptive Tabernacle Texts of the Pentateuch,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85.3 [1965] 307). This priority, to be sure, is organized by degree of holiness — see M. Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978; reprinted, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1985); P. P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* (JSOTSup 106; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); C. Meyers, *Exodus*, 224-25. The ark is “the supreme post-Sinai symbol of the Presence of Yahweh” (J. I. Durham, *Exodus*, 350). Cf. P. Enns, *Exodus*, 511.
139. Cf. F. Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 42; T. E. Fretheim, “Reclamation of Creation,” 364-65 footnote 26; N. M. Sarna, *Exodus*, 237.
140. T. B. Dozeman, *Exodus*, 439.
141. Commonly recognized by scholars. See A. C. Leder, “Reading Exodus to Learn,” 26.
142. I. Knohl, “Two Aspects of the ‘Tent of Meeting,’” 73. Cf. M. Fishbane, *Biblical Text and Texture: A Literary Reading of Selected Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979) 13.
143. Cf. J. Plastaras, *The God of Exodus*, 258.
144. R. P. Gordon, *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Versions: Selected Essays in Honor of Robert P. Gordon* (SOTS. Burlington: Ashgate, 1988) 29.
145. C. Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, 65 (emphasis in original).
146. See J. D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Exodus*. Vol. 2. (Darlington, England; Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 2000) 143; F. Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 48.
147. M. Greenberg, *Understanding Exodus*, 16-17.
148. For literary and thematic parallels between the creation account and the completion of the tabernacle, cf. M. Fishbane, *Biblical Text and Texture*, 12-13; R. S. Hendel, “The Poetics of Myth in Genesis,” pp. 157-70 in *The Seductiveness of Jewish Myth*, S. D. Breslauer, ed. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997) 163-64.
149. A. C. Leder states: “Remarkably, Exodus ends where Genesis begins. Or, to put it another way: The end of Exodus picks up where Adam’s and Eve’s sin created a disjunction between the presence of God and human history” (“Reading Exodus to Learn,” 30). Cf. P. Enns,

- Exodus*, 285. Similarly, J. H. Walton: “As Exodus 40 describes the glory of the Lord filling the temple, the Israelites experience what is, in effect, a return to Eden — not in the sense of full restoration, but in the sense that God’s presence again takes up its residence among people, and access to God’s presence, however limited, is restored” (“Equilibrium and the Sacred Compass: The Structure of the Book of Leviticus,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11.2 [2001] 296).
150. T. E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 240-41, 315 (emphasis original). Cf. C. Meyers, *Exodus*, 222-23; J. K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, 327; J. D. Currid, *Exodus*, vol. 2, 369.
 151. See M. Greenberg’s assessment for the book of Exodus as a literary unit within the Torah, having its own prologue and epilogue, etc., *Understanding Exodus*, 2-3.
 152. M. Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*. J. S. Bowden, trans. (OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 200.
 153. B. S. Childs, *Exodus*, 239. Similarly, P. Enns, *Exodus*, 301, 506; D. C. Timmer, Creation, Tabernacle, and Sabbath, 145. See also the Eden-temple parallels in M. Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T & T Clark, 2003) 47.
 154. Cosmic mountain ideology may serve to unfold the meaning of other cultic rituals as well. E.g., the Day of Atonement liturgy may be of a piece with the later Tamid ritual whereby the lamb was slain at the sound of the opening of the temple gates at dawn (see m.Tamid 3.1-5, 7) — entrance into YHWH’s abode via sacrifice. Interestingly, some have posited that the Day of Atonement morning *Tamid*, in particular, serves as the context for the temple themes in John’s Apocalypse. Cf., e.g., J. Paulien, “The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary and Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 33.2 (1995) 245-64. See also D. Hamm, “The *Tamid* Service in Luke-Acts: The Cultic Background behind Luke’s Theology of Worship,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65 (2003) 215-31.

This chapter has been adapted from L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus (Biblical Tools and Studies* 15, Leuven, The Netherlands: Peeters, 2012) 245-277.

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STANDING IN THE HOLY PLACE: ANCIENT AND MODERN REVERBERATIONS OF AN ENIGMATIC NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

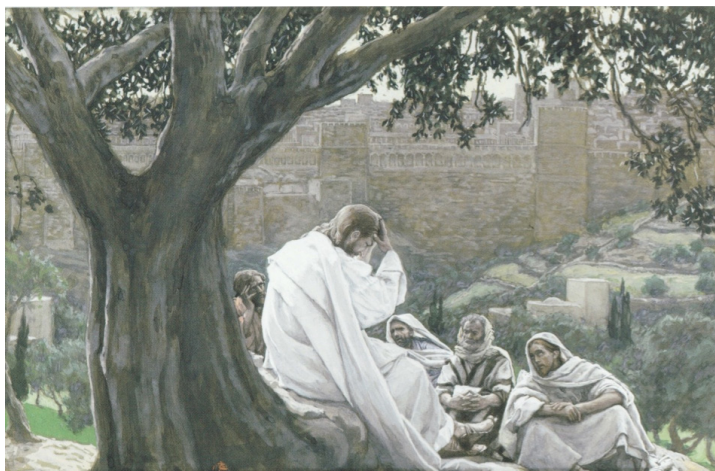


Figure 1: J. James Tissot, 1836-1902: *The Prophecy of the Destruction of the Temple, 1886-1894*

Immediately after His prophecy about the destruction of the temple, and just prior to the culminating events of the Passion week, Jesus “went upon the Mount of Olives.”² Here, in a setting associated with some of His most sacred teachings,³ His apostles “came unto him privately” to question him about the “destruction of the temple, and the Jews,” and the “sign of [His] coming, and of the end of the world, or the destruction of the wicked.” Within this discourse, Jesus gave one of the most controversial prophecies of the New Testament:

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation ...
stand in the holy place ...

Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains:⁴

The gospel of Mark is at variance with the wording of the gospel of Matthew, though the two accounts agree in general meaning. Instead of saying that the “abomination of desolation” will “stand in the holy place,”⁵

Mark asserts that it will be “standing where it ought not.”⁶ Luke, writing to a Gentile audience that was not as familiar with the temple and its customs as were the Jews addressed by Matthew, describes the sign in a more general way, referring to how Jerusalem would be “compassed by armies.”⁷ Though the interpretation of these verses has been contested, the sense of the Greek text underlying them is clear.

Comparing the verse in Matthew to its equivalent in the Joseph Smith Translation (JST), we see that the Prophet has rendered this passage in a way that radically changes its meaning. Rather than describing how the “*abomination of desolation*” will “stand in the holy place,”⁸ the JST version enjoins the *apostles* to “stand in the holy place”⁹ when the “abomination of desolation” appears. In these and related verses in the Doctrine and Covenants, the sense of this phrase in the synoptic gospels is turned upside down. Rather than describing how an *evil thing* would stand the holy place, thereby *profaning* it, modern scripture applies the phrase to the apostles and the saints, admonishing *them* to stand in holy places and thereby be *saved*.

Though several LDS scholars have offered interpretations and personal applications of the sense of these words as given in modern scripture, no one has yet, to my knowledge, seriously explored how this change in meaning could be explained and defended.¹⁰ It is easy to see how, on the face of it, some might be (erroneously) led to conclude that Joseph Smith’s rendering of the verse in question was an obvious and embarrassing mistake, based on his admittedly rudimentary acquaintance with the Greek text of the New Testament. In this article, however, my purpose is to advance an alternative claim: namely, that in the scriptural word picture of the righteous standing in holy places, Joseph Smith’s interpretation of the prophecy — whether or not a consonant Greek reading is ever found — resonates with a potent metaphor from the heart of Judaism and early Christianity. Speaking more generally, I find this to be a powerful example of how, as expressed in the words of Yale professor Harold Bloom, elements of Mormon scripture “recapture ... crucial elements in the archaic Jewish religion. ... that had ceased to be available either to normative Judaism or to Christianity, and that survived only in esoteric traditions unlikely to have touched [Joseph] Smith directly.”¹¹

Throughout this article, I will consciously, though not exclusively, use forms of argument that are encountered much more rarely today than they were in biblical times: specifically, midrash, allegory, and typology. About the unfortunate near abandonment of these ancient modes of biblical interpretation, Old Testament scholar James Kugel observes:¹²

What [modern exegetes] generally share (although there are, of course, exceptions) is a profound discomfort with the actual interpretations that the ancients came up with — these have little or no place in the way Scripture is to be expounded today. Midrash, allegory, typology — what [on earth] for? But the style of interpretation thus being rejected is precisely the one that characterizes the numerous interpretations of Old Testament texts by Jesus, Paul, and others in the New Testament, as well as by the succeeding generations of the founders of Christianity....

Ancient interpretive methods may sometimes appear artificial, but this hardly means that abandoning them guarantees unbiased interpretation ... At times, [modern] interpretations are scarcely less forced than those of ancient midrashists (and usually far less clever).

Apart from trying to make sense of obvious references to the book of Daniel, modern interpretations of the Olivet prophecy tend to focus more on pinpointing historical events that might have been seen as fulfilling Jesus's words than on understanding the significance of these words and their meaning in a temple context.¹³ Lacking an understanding of the temple context of these words, scholarly commentary typically rewards our efforts to understand the passage with unsatisfying surveys the journalistic dimensions of who, what, when, and where the “abomination of desolation” may have occurred while leaving us in ignorance about what seemed to be most important to those ancient readers. To premoderns, a “literal” interpretation was not one that laid out the bare facts of the matter in documentary fashion, but rather one that emphasized what the letters, i.e., the words, actually say. These are two very different modes of interpretation. As James Faulconer observed: “‘What x says’ [i.e., the premodern idea of “literal”] and ‘what x describes accurately’ [i.e., the modernist idea of “literal”] do not mean the same, even if the first is a description.”¹⁴ What is missing from most modern commentaries, as excellent as they are in so many respects, is a consideration of how an interpretation of Matthew 24:15-16 might be informed by ancient perspectives on biblical passages that relate to the concept of something “standing in the holy place” — whether the reference is to an evil thing (i.e., the abomination of desolation as in the KJV) or to a righteous individual (i.e., a faithful disciple of Jesus, as in the JST).

I believe that careful examination of such passages in the Bible, in connection with the light shed by Jewish midrash and contemporary

scholarship, will show that the idea behind Joseph Smith's application of the concept of standing in the holy place in the JST and the additional concept of not being "moved" in the Doctrine and Covenants,¹⁵ far from being a modern invention, reverberates throughout the religious thought of earlier times. Indeed, as Jewish scholar Avivah Zornberg has argued, the Hebrew Bible teaches that standing in the holy place — "hold[ing one's] ground," as it were, in sacred circumstances — is a powerful symbol of the central purpose of existence. This purpose can be expressed as follows: "being — *kiyyum*: to rise up (*la-koom*), to be tall (*koma zokufa*) in the presence of God."¹⁶

In the remainder of the article, I will explore how one's fitness to stand in holy places might be understood in a way that is consistent with Joseph Smith's reading of the prophecy of Matthew 24:15-16. I will show the importance of this idea in the Old and New Testament — and its particular relevance for our own time. I will begin by a selective survey of Old Testament references to patriarchs, priests, and prophets who stood in holy places.¹⁷ I will also give some examples of the use of the biblical concept of "not being moved." Because the ideas of "standing in the holy place" and "not being moved" do not co-occur explicitly in the Bible, I will pursue the discussion by exploring three biblical accounts that are of particular significance because they contain both positive and negative instances of the fitness of individuals to stand in holy places coupled with the motif of significant "movement" of transgressors. In examining these three accounts, I will freely mix insights from ancient, medieval, and modern commentaries and expansions. In the realization that we live on the near side of a great divide that separates us from the religious, cultural, and philosophical perspectives of those who recorded ancient scripture,¹⁸ the value of premodern interpretations of scripture should not be underestimated.¹⁹

Happily, the Prophet Joseph Smith was far closer to this lost world than we are — not only because of his personal involvement with the recovery and revelatory expansion of primeval religion, but also because in his time many archaic traditions were still embedded in the language and daily experience of the surrounding culture.²⁰ For this reason, there will be great value in exploring as a next step his revelatory insights from the Doctrine and Covenants are of great value.

To understand the significance of these admonitions from Joseph Smith's revelations on standing in holy places and not being moved in the last days, the theme of measurement will be introduced. The modern day implications of New Testament passages relating to the measurement

of Jesus's disciples individually and collectively, with reference to the dimensions and layout of the temple, will be outlined and discussed. Finally, I will share some personal and practical observations on the subject of standing and falling. A separate appendix examines the topic of the "abomination of desolation."

Old Testament Patriarchs, Priests, and Prophets "Standing in Holy Places" and "Not Being Moved"

Standing in Holy Places. An implicit reference to standing in a holy place goes back to premortal scenes, when God "*stood in the midst*" of choice spirits, including Abraham and another "one among them that was like unto God,"²¹ "and he saw that they were good."²² In such contexts, the "midst" (center) is typically depicted as the *most* holy place, and the degree of holiness decreases in proportion to the distance from that point.²³ Later, the patriarch Enoch "stood upon *the place*" as he "cried unto the Lord."²⁴ Draper, Brown, and Rhodes point out that the term "the place" often "points to a special, even sacred locale."²⁵ Enoch recounts: "as I stood upon the mount, I beheld the heavens open, and I was clothed upon with glory; And I saw the Lord; and he stood before my face, and he talked with me, even as a man talketh one with another, face to face."²⁶ Later, in vision, Enoch sees the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, "and the saints arose, and were crowned at the right hand of the Son of Man."²⁷ Many of the spirits in prison also "came forth, and *stood on the right hand of God*."²⁸

Moses demonstrated his personal fitness to stand in the presence of the Lord at the beginning of his ministry when he received his commission on Mount Horeb, significantly called "the mountain of God."²⁹ His vision of the burning bush brings together three prominent symbols of sacred space — the bush (or tree), the mountain, and the Lord Himself.³⁰ Indeed, in Exodus 3 we explicitly encounter the concept of standing in sacred space for the first time in the Bible.³¹ As he approached the Lord, Moses was told to remove his sandals, "for the place whereon thou *standest is holy ground*."³² Moses's experience on Horeb was later paralleled by Joshua who, in meeting the "captain of the host of the Lord ... fell on his face to the earth and did worship."³³ Though it is not said explicitly whether Joshua was subsequently told to stand,³⁴ we read this instruction in the next verse: "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou *standest is holy*."³⁵ The practice of removing footwear in holy places is consistent with the practice of later generations of temple priests who officiated barefoot in the sanctuary.³⁶

Sometime after the vision on Horeb³⁷ but prior to his return to Egypt to rescue the children of Israel,³⁸ “the glory of the Lord was upon Moses, so that Moses *stood* in the *presence of God*, and talked with him face to face.”³⁹ In Exodus 33:21-23, the Lord commands Moses to “*stand* upon a rock” where the Lord will allow His “back parts” to be seen, while protecting him from the danger of seeing His face.

Later, in describing the appointment of seventy men to serve as elders and officers of the people, Moses was told to “bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may *stand there* with thee.”⁴⁰ In reprimanding to Korah and other rebels who were seeking priestly offices, Moses described their service as being: “to bring you near to himself [i.e., the God of Israel] to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them.”⁴¹ This is similar to the language of Deuteronomy 10:8,⁴² where the duties of the Levites were described as being “to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister unto him,⁴³ and to bless in his name.”⁴⁴ According to Jacob Milgrom, the Hebrew term *‘amad lifnei* (stand before) “is language of subordination.”⁴⁵ In other words, their office was to stand and *serve* — and not to *be* served. An explicit reference to standing in the holy place is found in 2 Chronicles, in conjunction with Josiah’s keeping of the Passover. The Levites were instructed to “*stand in the holy place* according to the divisions of the families of your brethren the people, and after the division of the families of the Levites.”⁴⁶

Among the prophets, Elijah and Elisha are notable for their self-description as part of their solemn declarations: “As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand.”⁴⁷ In an echo of the experience of Enoch, Elijah was commanded to “*stand* upon the mount *before the Lord*”⁴⁸ as he awaited the Lord’s manifestation in the form of a “still small voice.”⁴⁹

Each of these references helps establish the scriptural precedent for the idea of standing in a holy place, and implicitly we understand that it is only those who are qualified by their righteousness that are able to do so. Psalm 24:3-4 addresses these qualifications directly: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall *stand* in his *holy place*? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.” Elsewhere in the Psalms, we encounter negative examples: “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark *iniquities*, O Lord, who shall *stand*?”⁵⁰ Similarly, Ezra lamented: “O Lord God of Israel . . . behold, we are before thee in our *trespasses*: for *we cannot stand before thee* because of this.”⁵¹

Not Being Moved. The idea of settling on a single Hebrew equivalent to the compound concept of disciples who “stand in holy places” and are “not . . . moved”⁵² as found in the Doctrine and Covenants is problematic because there are several Hebrew and Greek terms that are translated “moved” in the KJV. However, one particularly fitting Hebrew term is *mot*⁵³ (totter, shake, slip⁵⁴). It is used frequently and consistently in the Psalms — considerably more frequently than any other book of the Bible — to convey the unshakability of the righteous, sometimes in contrast to the wicked and sometimes specifically mentioning the feet. For example:

- Psalm 15:5: He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall *never be moved*.
- Psalm 16:8: I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall *not be moved*.
- Psalm 21:7: For the king trusteth in the Lord, and through the mercy of the most High he shall *not be moved*.
- Psalm 30:6: And in my prosperity I said, I shall *never be moved*.
- Psalm 46:4-6: There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall *not be moved*: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were *moved*: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.
- Psalm 55:22: Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be *moved*.
- Psalm 62:2: He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall *not be greatly moved*.
- Psalm 62:6: He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall *not be moved*.
- Psalm 66:9: Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth *not our feet to be moved*.
- Psalm 93:1: The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it *cannot be moved*.
- Psalm 96:10: Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall *not be moved*: he shall judge the people righteously.

- Psalm 99:1: The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be *moved*.
- Psalm 112:5-6: A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall *not be moved for ever*: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.
- Psalm 121:2-3: My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will *not suffer thy foot to be moved*: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

Being “moved” in the sense of shaking or trembling (or causing to shake or tremble) is a concept associated in scripture with the figure of Satan. Moses 1:21, for example, contains both elements: “Satan began to tremble, and the earth shook.” In this instance thunderous shaking of the ground echoes the emotional intensity of Satan’s rage in terrifying reverberations. Writes Nibley: “[Satan is] the *gaieokhon*, the earthshaker. It means ... both the earthshaker and the earthholder. If he holds it, he shakes it.”⁵⁵

Other scriptural references linking Satan and trembling include James 2:19 (“the devils also believe, and tremble”⁵⁶) and Isaiah 14:4, 7, 6 (“How hath the oppressor ceased! ... The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet ... Is this the man that made the earth to tremble,⁵⁷ that did shake⁵⁸ kingdoms”).⁵⁹ This latter verse is an interesting parallel to rabbinic commentary that also pictures Cain as someone who made the earth tremble.⁶⁰

Like the concept of standing in holy places, the concept of the righteous not being moved is not uncommon in scripture. However, the conjunction of these two concepts, as found in the Doctrine and Covenants, is not found in the Bible explicitly.

To further enrich the picture of the scriptural idea of standing in holy places and not being moved, I will now look at three biblical accounts that are of particular significance because they contain both positive and negative instances of the fitness of individuals to stand in holy places connected to the idea that transgressors, unlike the righteous, are “moved”:

1. Adam and Eve’s standing in Eden, including a comparison with Daniel’s account of Nebuchadnezzar’s abasement;
2. Israel’s failure to stand at Sinai; and
3. The fall of the temple guards at Jesus’s arrest

1. Adam and Eve's Standing in Eden

After the Fall, Adam and Eve were driven from the lush garden to live in the relative wilderness of the mortal world. The fall of the king of Tyre, in the lamentation of Ezekiel 28, is frequently interpreted as having been typed on Adam.⁶¹ The king is described as a “seal of perfection,”⁶² in essence Yahweh’s signet ring, faithfully bearing in every detail “the likeness of Yahweh” and the righteous exercise of “divine authority in the world.”⁶³ The use of this term may also witness his perfection in the keeping of the covenant to which he is bound to his sovereign Lord.⁶⁴ Previously, the king had dwelled “upon the holy mountain of God,”⁶⁵ walking “up and down in the midst of stones of fire.”⁶⁶ Verse 13 explicitly identifies this mountain as Eden.⁶⁷ “Eden, as a luxuriant cosmic mountain becomes an archetype or symbol for the earthly temple,”⁶⁸ a place from which the protagonist is to be “cast ... out”⁶⁹ because of the “multitude of [his] iniquities.”⁷⁰ Significantly, God says that he is not only to be cast out, but also that he is to be “cast ... to the ground.”⁷¹ The Hebrew term *eres* (ground) has a double sense: “[o]n the one hand, it evokes an iconoclastic picture of an idol being hurled down and lying in ruins on the ground (*eres*)”⁷² rather than standing in the holy place of the sanctuary. On the other hand, it evokes the imagery of Adam being thrown out of Eden to live on the earth (*eres*).⁷³

Adam and Eve’s expulsion is described twice in Genesis, with different terms used in each case.⁷⁴ The Hebrew word *shillah* (“send him forth”) in 3:23 is followed by the harsher term *geresh* (“drove out”), used in 3:24. Significantly, the same two terms are used in the same order in the book of Exodus to describe how Pharaoh would drive Israel away from their familiar comforts in Egypt — their erstwhile “Eden” — into the wilderness.⁷⁵ This deliberate parallel suggests that we are not meant to read Adam and Eve’s exit from Eden as depicting a unique event but rather as demonstrating a repeated type of mankind’s difficulty, in its fallen state, to “stand in holy places” and not be “moved.”⁷⁶ The importance of this recurring theme to the entire story of Adam and Eve will become clearer as we now begin to examine it in more detail.

The motif of standing in the holy place goes back to the moment of Adam’s creation. Of significance to our subject is the commentary on Genesis 2:7 by the revered Jewish exegete Rashi that connects the themes of creation and atonement to the idea of standing in God’s presence:

God took [Adam’s] dust from the place of [the temple altar, signifying His] wish that [Adam might] gain atonement, and that *he may be able to stand*.⁷⁸



Figure 2: Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455): *Creation of Adam*, from *Gates of Paradise*, 1425-1452



Figure 3: *The Harrowing of Hell* from the Exultet Roll: *Codex Barberini Latinus 592*. (f. 4) , ca. 1087

In contrast to cattle, which Rashi said “do not stand to be judged”⁷⁹ (in other words, are not held accountable for their actions⁸⁰), Jewish accounts of Adam’s creation specifically highlight his first experience after being filled with the breath of life:⁸¹ namely, the moment when God “stood him on his legs”⁸² (Figure 2). According to Zornberg,⁸³ it is in the ability to stand in the presence of God that one specifically demonstrates the attainment of full “majesty and strength.”

Medieval artistic convention makes it clear that Christ was imagined as raising the dead to eternal life by the same gesture that was used to create Adam and stand him on his feet⁸⁴ (Figure 3). Likewise, we note the Old Testament literary formula that nearly always follows descriptions of miraculous revivals of the dead with the observation that they “stood up upon their feet.”⁸⁵

More generally, in Christian iconography this gesture is used in scenes representing a transition from one state or place to another. For example, a depiction at the Church of San Marco in Venice shows God taking Adam by the wrist to bring him through the door of Paradise and to introduce him into the Garden of Eden.⁸⁶ Another Christian scene shows God taking Adam by the wrist as he and Eve receive the commandment not to partake of the Tree of Knowledge.⁸⁷ Likewise, scripture and pseudepigrapha describe how prophets such as Enoch,⁸⁸ Abraham,⁸⁹ Daniel,⁹⁰ and John⁹¹ are grasped by the hand of an angel and raised to a standing position in key moments of their heavenly visions.⁹²

It is by being raised by the hand to the upright position that we are made ready to hear the word of the Lord. It is no mere coincidence that before heavenly messengers can perform their errands to Ezekiel,⁹³ Daniel,⁹⁴ Paul,⁹⁵ Alma the Younger,⁹⁶ and Nephi⁹⁷ they must first command these seers to stand on their feet.⁹⁸ As biblical scholar Robert Hayward has said: “You stand in the temple,⁹⁹ you stand before the Lord,¹⁰⁰ you pray standing up¹⁰¹ — you can’t approach God on all fours like an animal. If you can stand, you can serve God in His temple.”¹⁰² If you are stained with sin, you cannot stand in His presence.¹⁰³

Jewish writings tell of how Adam lost the divine ability to stand through his taking of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. For example, in an account that plays on the nuances of Hebrew terms for standing, we read:

Before the sin, Adam could “hear God speaking and *stand on his legs* ... he could *withstand* it.”¹⁰⁴ ... In another midrash, God says, “Woe Adam! Could you not *stand in your commandment* for even one hour?”

After the Fall, Adam and Eve sorrowed over the loss of the fruit trees of Eden as the source of mankind’s food (whether meant literally or figuratively) — leaving them nothing besides “the herb of the field” to eat. In connecting the king of Tyre to Adam, Ezekiel also alludes to the book of Daniel, explicitly calling him “wiser than Daniel”¹⁰⁵ and implicitly evoking “the theme of estrangement from one’s own essential human identity”



Figure 4: William Blake, 1757-1827: *Nebuchadnezzar*, 1795

in that book's depiction of the arrogance and subsequent abasement of Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁰⁶ Building on these scriptural associations, Rabbinical and early Christian writings saw Adam and Eve's loss of their paradisiacal food as part of a humiliating penance, to a degree in the likeness of Nebuchadnezzar's transformation to a beastlike state.¹⁰⁷

Regarding Nebuchadnezzar, we read in Daniel 4:31-33:

O king Nebuchadnezzar, ... The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: ... until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

Nebuchadnezzar's madness and self-exclusion from society ended only when he satisfactorily completed the process of penance.¹⁰⁸

In presenting Adam and Eve as being temporarily reduced to eating the herb of the field like the animals,¹⁰⁹ the Jewish scholar Rashi played on the double meaning of the Hebrew term *veirdu* in Genesis 1:28. He commented that instead of man's "having dominion" over the beasts as God originally intended, he now would "fall down" below and be

with them.¹¹⁰ The *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* says that after hearing the consequences of his transgression, Adam pled that he might be spared:

I beseech by the mercy before you, O Lord, let me not be reckoned before you as cattle, that I should eat the grass of the surface of the field. I will arise [literally, “*I will stand up*”] and labor ... and I will eat the food of the earth; and thus let there be a distinction before you between the children of men and the offspring of cattle.¹¹¹

Tradition records that God eventually answered Adam’s prayer by showing him how to grow wheat for bread, making it clear that this curse was not meant as an arbitrary “punishment” but rather as a temporary ascetic “discipline for spiritual renewal.”¹¹² Although to be banished from the Garden of Eden “is to lose a particular standing ground,”¹¹³ it was always God’s intention to restore Adam and Eve and their posterity to their former glory,¹¹⁴ enabling their “confidence” to again “wax strong”¹¹⁵ in His presence.¹¹⁶

The humiliation of the serpent is an important part of this story as well. Significantly, it is not only banished from holy places but also is reminded that it will never be able to stand at all: “upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.”¹¹⁷ Note that the Mosaic law will declare that what goes along on its belly is an abomination to Israel.¹¹⁸ The metaphor of eating dust occurs several times in scripture in connection with the fate of conquered foes.¹¹⁹

In contrast to the temporary nature of Adam and Eve’s estrangement from God, the book of *Jubilees* reports that the serpent “was not and never will be afforded any chance at repentance”¹²⁰ because of its role in the Fall. As a symbol of this consequence, we are told that the serpent permanently lost its legs¹²¹ and, with that loss, the ability to stand.¹²² “The loss of limbs and organs guarantees that the rebel will never rise anew in his full powers, which he will never possess again,”¹²³ being consigned to crawl on its belly and eat of the dust forever.¹²⁴

2. Israel’s Failure to Stand at Sinai

I have already mentioned the deliberate parallel between Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Eden and Israel’s exodus from Egypt to their wilderness probation. As the path of exaltation was revealed through five covenants given to Adam and Eve after the Fall,¹²⁵ so Israel’s salvation was also understood in rabbinical teaching to have been made contingent on its acceptance of the five parts of God’s Law.¹²⁶

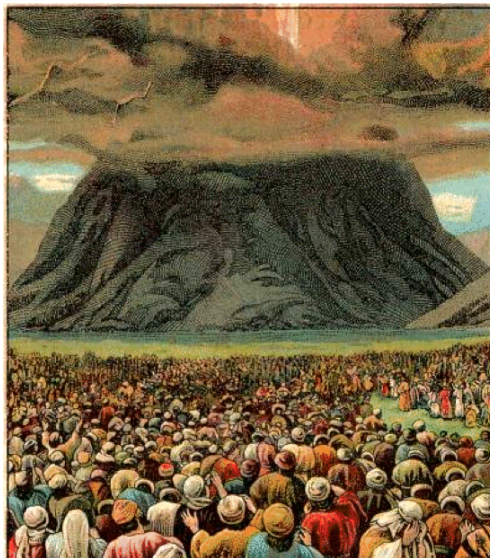


Figure 5: *The Children of Israel at Mount Sinai*

In contrast to Moses, Israel proved themselves unready to accept the fulness of God's law at Sinai.¹²⁷ They preferred that Moses go alone to ascend the holy mountain, while they stayed at its foot¹²⁸ (Figure 5). Painting a vivid word picture of how the Israelites were unable to stand in the divine presence, Rashi explains that when they heard the sound of the voice of God emanate from Sinai "they moved backwards and stood at a distance: they were repelled to the rear a distance of twelve miles — that is the whole length of the camp. Then the angels came and helped them forward again." Zornberg reasons: "If this happened at each of the Ten Commandments, the people are imagined as traveling 240 miles in order to stand in place!"¹²⁹ Though this imagery is, of course, figurative, it is highly instructive.

We see this same movement away from God and toward the regions of death at the incident of the Golden Calf.¹³¹ Before their sin, the Israelites looked without fear upon the divine flames of God's presence at the top of the mountain, but as soon as they had sinned, they could not bear to see even the face of Moses, God's intermediary.¹³² By way of contrast to the Israelites, Moses, like Jesus at the Transfiguration,¹³³ was covered by a glorious cloud¹³⁴ as he communed face-to-face with the Lord, having been made like God Himself.¹³⁵ Moses then stood to Israel as God stood to him and, having received the power of an eternal life, he became known in the Samaritan literature as "the Standing One."¹³⁶

Comparing the sin of the Israelites to the transgression of Adam, midrash has God reproaching them:

Like Adam, the people were destined to live forever, but “when they [made the golden calf and] said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel!’ death came upon them. God said, ‘You have followed the system of Adam, who *did not stand*¹³⁷ the pressure of his testing for three hours. . . .” I said, “You are gods. . . .” But you went in the ways of Adam,’ so ‘indeed like Adam you shall die. And like one of the princes you shall fall¹³⁸ — you have brought yourself low.’¹³⁹

The midrash uses the imagery of the Fall with a perfect consistency. The sin [of taking the forbidden fruit], as such, is not mentioned. Instead, what Adam, and again the Israelites, represents is a kind of spinelessness, a vapidness. The word that is used in *Sanhedrin* 38b to describe the sin is *sarah*, which implies exactly this aesthetic offensiveness: it holds nuances of evaporation, loss of substance, and the offensive odor of mortification. “O my offense is rank, it smells to heaven.”¹⁴⁰ It signifies a failure to stand in the presence of God, to maintain the posture of eternal life. “You have brought yourselves low”: man, the midrash boldly implies, does not really want full and eternal being. He chooses death, lessened being. What looks like defiance is an abandonment of a difficult posture.

3. The Fall of the Temple Guards at Jesus’s Arrest

Matthew, Mark, and Luke’s accounts highlight the perfidy of Judas as the one who identified his Master to the temple guards; the gospel of John emphasizes Christ’s mastery of the situation. The kiss of Judas does not appear in John’s narrative — in the words of Ridderbos, “Judas’ task of identifying Jesus had been taken out of his hands.”¹⁴² Instead, at that moment, Jesus is shown in full control of the arresting party by His startling *self*-identification:¹⁴³

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am *he* . . .

As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward, and fell to the ground.



Figure 6: J. James Tissot, 1836-1902: *The Guards Falling Backwards*, 1886-1894

The King James translation of the Greek phrase *ego eimi* as “I am *he*” obscures an essential detail. In reality, Jesus has not said, “I am *he*,” but rather “I AM,” using a divine name that directly identifies Him as being Jehovah.¹⁴⁵ Thus, asserts Raymond E. Brown, it is clear that the fall of the temple guards is no mere slapstick scene that might be “explained away or trivialized. To know or use the divine name, as Jesus does [in replying with ‘I AM’], is an exercise of awesome power.”¹⁴⁶

This event is nothing more nor less than a replay of the scene of the children of Israel at Sinai discussed earlier.¹⁴⁷ In effect, in the gospel of John, the narrative takes the form of an eyewitness report¹⁴⁸ of a solemn revelation to the band of arresting Jewish temple guards¹⁴⁹ that they were standing, as it were, in a “Holy of Holies” made sacred by the presence of the embodied Jehovah, and that they, with full comprehension of the irony of their pernicious intent, were about to do harm to the very Master of the Lord’s House, whose precincts they had been sworn to protect. As with the Israelites at Sinai who were unworthy and thus unable to stand in the holy place, “those of the dark world fell back, repelled by the presence of the Light of the world.”¹⁵⁰

To delve further into the symbolism of the scene, note that the Jews were generally prohibited from pronouncing the divine name, Jehovah.¹⁵¹ As an exception, that Name was solemnly pronounced by the High Priest

standing in the most holy place of the temple once a year, on the Day of Atonement. Upon the hearing of that Name, according to the *Mishnah*, all the people were to fall on their faces.¹⁵² Was it any coincidence, then, that Jesus Christ, the great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek,¹⁵³ boldly proclaimed His identity as the great “I AM” at the very place and on the very night He atoned for the sins of the world? Ironically, the temple guards who failed to fall on their faces at the sound of the divine Name were instead thrown on their backs in awestruck impotence.



Figure 7: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, ca. 1525-1569:
The Triumph of Death, 1562

Standing in Holy Places in the Last Days

Figure 7 depicts the landscape of hell. Sadly, it is also the landscape of much of the world we live in today, foreseen nearly a century ago by the poet William Butler Yeats:¹⁵⁴

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity ...
 And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
 Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Though there are many references in modern scripture to the general idea of standing in righteousness, each of the three instances of specific instructions for the faithful to stand in holy places appear in apocalyptic descriptions of the latter-day gathering and the destruction that will precede the Savior's Second Coming.¹⁵⁵

First, in Doctrine and Covenants 45, an overt expansion on the instructions and prophecies given to the apostles on the Mount of Olives, we are told:¹⁵⁶

And there shall be men standing in that generation [i.e., in the last days], that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land.

But my disciples shall *stand in holy places and shall not be moved*; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die. . . .

And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore *we cannot stand*. . . .

For when the Lord shall appear he shall be terrible unto them, that fear may seize upon them, and they shall *stand afar off and tremble*.

Note that modern scripture is perfectly consistent with the subtle imagery of the biblical examples cited earlier. A contrast is drawn between the disciples, who “stand in holy places” and are “not moved,” and the wicked, who “stand afar off and tremble.”¹⁵⁷ Another Doctrine and Covenants reference tells us that the earth itself will also tremble, and “men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand.”¹⁵⁸

The second Doctrine and Covenants reference to standing in holy places is found in section 87, as part of the revelation and prophecy on the wars and disasters that will eventually “make a full end of all nations.”¹⁵⁹ Here, the Saints are told:¹⁶⁰

Wherefore, *stand ye in holy places, and be not moved*, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, saith the Lord. Amen.

The final specific mention of this phrase is in section 101, in a revelation responding to the Saints being driven from their homes in Jackson County, Missouri. The following verses assure the Saints that, despite their forcible ejection from the place where they had begun to

build the city of New Jerusalem, it will not be moved, but rather will continue as the central gathering place from which Zion will eventually extend herself to fill the earth.¹⁶¹

Zion shall *not be moved* out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered ...

And behold, there is none other place appointed ... for the work of the gathering of my saints —

Until ... there is found no more room for them; and then I have other places which I will appoint unto them, and they shall be called stakes, for the curtains or the strength of Zion.

Behold it is my will, that all they who call on my name ... should gather together, and *stand in holy places*;

And prepare for the revelation ... when ... all flesh shall see me together.

The Saints in Joseph Smith's time would have understood the term "holy places" in section 101 as the current and future stakes to which they were being gathered both spiritually and physically. Each one of these stakes was originally intended to feature its own temple as a focal point for the community. Borrowing vivid word pictures from the book of Isaiah,¹⁶² the Doctrine and Covenants describes the kingdom of God as a tent whose expanse increases continually outward from its "center place"¹⁶³ through the establishment of "stakes, for the curtains or strength of Zion."¹⁶⁴

At the time section 101 was received, the "center place" of the tent would have been understood as Jackson County, Missouri, the intended location of the New Jerusalem, and the ever expanding curtains of the tent would have represented the growing number of outlying stakes¹⁶⁵ that were eventually destined to span the whole earth — and, ultimately, to unite in perfect reflection with their counterparts in heaven. The revelations make it clear that it is "in Zion, and in her stakes, and in Jerusalem" that are to be found "those places which [God has] appointed for refuge."¹⁶⁶ God's whole purpose is to draw the people of the world to such places of safety, the express purpose of the Church being "for the gathering of his saints to *stand* upon Mount Zion."¹⁶⁷

Having considered what it means to "stand in holy places" in the last days with respect to the *New Jerusalem*, we return to Jesus's prophecies about *old Jerusalem*. In addition to the first "abomination

of desolation” that was to occur within the lifetime of the apostles, the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 24 predicts a *second* “abomination of desolation”:¹⁶⁸

And *again, in the last days*, the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, will be fulfilled.

To understand the events associated with this verse, we must examine the theme of measurement — in this case the measurement of the disciple individually and collectively with reference to the dimensions and layout of the temple.

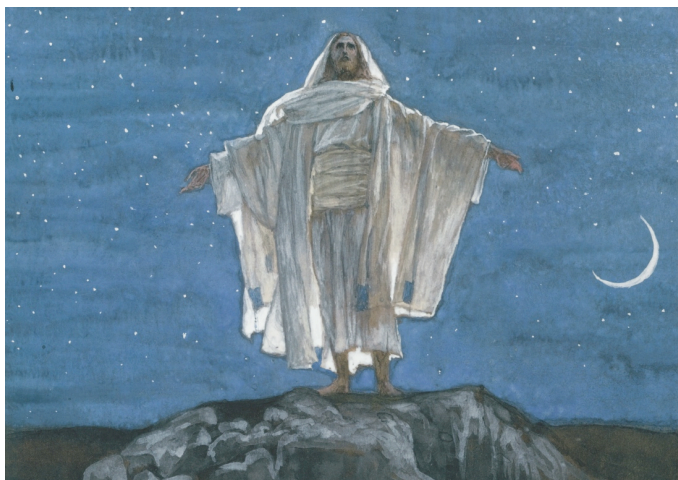


Figure 8: J. James Tissot, 1836-1902: *Jesus Goes Up Alone unto a Mountain to Pray* (detail), 1886-1894

“The Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ”

Connecting the idea of an individual disciple standing in the holy place to the size of the temple are scriptural references to the requirement of exact conformance of the disciple to the moral dimensions defined by divinity. Only those who are of a perfect spiritual stature are qualified to stand in the presence of God. In describing the essential qualities the youthful Jesus acquired as he grew to manhood, Luke states that He “increased in wisdom and *stature*.”¹⁷⁰ In their strivings to become like their Lord, Paul instructed his readers to attain such “a knowledge of the Son of God” that would enable them also to become as the “perfect man,”¹⁷¹ thus attaining “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”¹⁷² This supreme objective, of course, could not be accomplished without divine

help, for “[w]hich of you by taking thought,” Jesus rhetorically asked in the Sermon the Mount, “can add one cubit unto his stature?”¹⁷³

The idea of the disciples adding cubit to cubit until they measured up to the perfection of Christ in stature would have been recognized by early Christians as an analogy to the process of temple building.¹⁷⁵ The temple, like the disciple, was required to conform to the exact measures revealed by God.¹⁷⁶ Recall, for example, how the dimensions of each aspect of the Israelite Tabernacle were described in minute detail to Moses;¹⁷⁷ and how Ezekiel¹⁷⁹ witnessed the careful measurement of his visionary temple. A similar motif of measurement of the temple precincts occurs in the book of Revelation,¹⁷⁸ as we will see below.



**Figure 9: Investiture scene from the
Ur-Nammu Stela, ca. 2100 BCE**

Ronan James Head and I have made a study of the Investiture Panel at Mari,¹⁸¹ where one is also struck by the significant role played by measurement in the planning and construction of temples and palaces. As emblems that symbolically conjoin the acts of measurement in laying the foundations of sacred buildings and the processes of cosmic creation, one sees the Mesopotamian rod and ring, shown here in the right hand of Ur-Nammu. These two instruments of the rod and ring functioned essentially as a “yardstick” and a “tape measure,”¹⁸² and can be profitably compared to the “measuring reed” and “line of flax” of Ezekiel,¹⁸³ as well as to the analogous cosmic surveying instruments of the square and the compass.¹⁸⁴ Consistent with the general biblical symbolism, the

Mesopotamian measuring devices also served as visual metaphors for the personal righteousness of those who were made kings.¹⁸⁵ These kings, like the early Christians addressed by Jesus and Paul, were expected to “measure up” to their high and holy callings.

We return to Jesus’s question: “[w]hich of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”¹⁸⁶ “No one,” writes John W. Welch, “would be presumptuous enough to add a single cubit to any part of the temple.”¹⁸⁷ Neither, I would add, would individuals aspiring to conform to “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”¹⁸⁸ presume to improve upon the dimensions of His perfection.

Let us turn now to the idea of temple measurement as it relates to the community of disciples collectively.

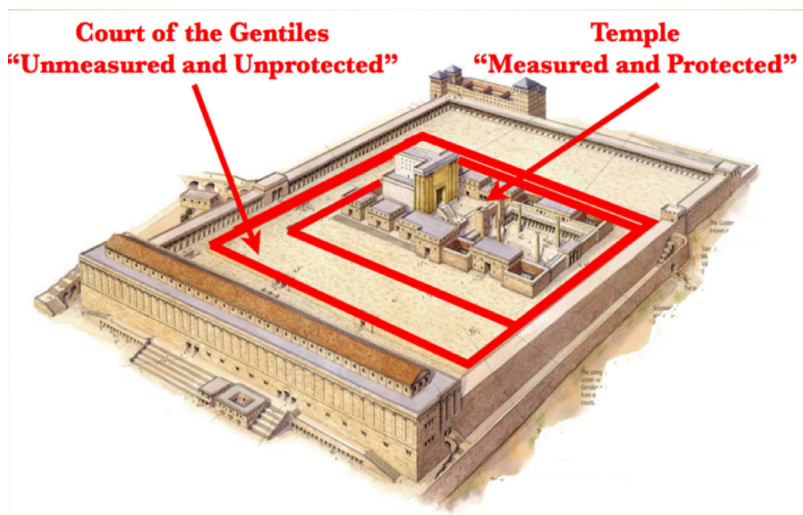


Figure 10: According to the 11th chapter of Revelation, those standing within the temple complex are measured and protected

The 11th chapter of Revelation opens with the angel’s instruction to John to “measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.”¹⁸⁹ By way of contrast, John is told *not* to measure the areas lying outside the temple complex proper — in other words, the outer courtyard. In the context of the rest of the chapter, the meaning of the angel’s instructions is clear: only those who are standing *within* the scope of John’s measure — in other words, within the temple — will receive God’s protection¹⁹⁰ (Figure 10).

Of course, we are not speaking here of the measurement of a literal physical structure, but rather of measuring or judging the community of

disciples who have been called to form the living temple of God,¹⁹¹ each individual in his or her differing degree of righteousness.¹⁹² Spiritually speaking, the worshippers standing in the holy place are those who have kept their covenants.¹⁹³ These are they who, according to Revelation 14:1, will stand with the Lamb “on ... mount Sion.”

By way of contrast, all individuals standing in the outer courtyard, being unmeasured and unprotected, will be, in the words of the book of Revelation, “given unto the Gentiles” to be “tread under foot”¹⁹⁴ with the rest of the wicked in Jerusalem.

Ultimately, we read in section 101, “every corruptible thing ... that dwells upon all the face of the earth ... shall be consumed.”¹⁹⁵ By “every corruptible thing” the verse means every being that is of a *telectual* nature. Only those who can withstand dwelling in at least a *terrestrial* glory will remain on the earth during the millennial reign of Christ. In that day, only those who remain unmoved in the holy place will be able to “stand still, with the utmost assurance to see the salvation of God.”¹⁹⁶

In summary, where are the “holy places” in which we are to stand? In light of everything discussed in this chapter, the frequently heard suggestion that such “holy places” include temples, stakes, chapels, and homes seems wholly appropriate.¹⁹⁷ However, it should be remembered that what makes these places holy — and secure — are the covenants kept by those standing within. According to midrash, Sodom itself could have been a place of safety had there been a circle of as few as ten righteous individuals in the city to “pray on behalf of all of them.”¹⁹⁸

We have completed our selective survey of passages in biblical books from Genesis to Revelation, showing how the idea of “standing in holy places” in modern scripture reverberates throughout ancient religious thought. Now, in conclusion, a few personal observations.

Personal and Practical Observations on Standing and Falling

Many years ago, when I learned how to ski, I was taught that the first thing I needed to know was how to fall. In skiing, as in life, falling is an unavoidable if unpleasant prologue to eventual mastery of the slopes. Zornberg insightfully summarizes this lesson from Jewish tradition:

The *Talmud* makes an extraordinary observation about the paradoxes of “standing”: “No man stands on [i.e., can rightly understand] the words of *Torah*, unless he has stumbled over them.”²⁰⁰ To discover firm standing ground, it is necessary to explore, to stumble, even to fall ...¹⁹⁹



**Figure 11: Yahoel Lifts the Fallen Abraham,
Codex Sylvester, 14th century**

In our repeated falls, we should be reassured in the knowledge that, like the Israelites at Sinai, we can receive help from “angels” appointed to assist our journey from the foothills of the sacred mountain and back into God’s presence at the summit.²⁰⁰ Such a scene is depicted above, where the fallen Abraham gratefully testified that the Angel Yahoel “took [him] by [his] right hand and stood [him] on [his] feet.”²⁰² Through the ordinances of the priesthood, each of us may be given the knowledge and power to rise from our falls and stand in safety in the holy place.

The continual challenges endemic in the life of a disciple should teach us something about the nature of “standing” itself: namely, that what might appear to the naïve as a “static position” will, with experience, eventually be better understood as “a point of equilibrium in the eye of a storm.”²⁰⁴ Lest anyone think that living a life of continual standing in the presence of God is a “heavy, humdrum, and safe” affair, I close with the words of G. K. Chesterton, who understood that the essence of discipleship is to maintain:

... the equilibrium of a man behind madly rushing horses, seeming to stoop this way and to sway that, yet in every attitude having the grace of statuary and the accuracy of arithmetic ... It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands.²⁰⁵

Appendix: The Abomination of Desolation²⁰⁷

Though the Joseph Smith Translation and the Authorized Version differ about who or what will or should stand in the holy place, all scriptural accounts cite Daniel as the source for the prophecy about the “abomination of desolation.”²⁰⁷ This term is sometimes rendered more precisely in modern translations as the “desolating sacrilege” or the “abomination that brings desolation.”²⁰⁸

While differing on the timeframe involved, most commentators agree that the “abomination of desolation” prophesied by Jesus, following the pattern of a presumed earlier fulfillment of the same prophecy by Daniel at the time of the Maccabees,²⁰⁹ has something to do with the desecration of the Jerusalem temple.²¹⁰ For example, the key event is seen by some as when the Roman general Titus entered the most holy place in AD 70. The setting up of the Roman standards in the temple, or a comparable occurrence at a different time, has frequently been cited as the historical event corresponding to Matthew’s prediction that the “abomination of desolation” would “stand in the holy place.”²¹¹

In the body of the chapter, I have already discussed the fact that the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 24 replaces the plain sense of the Greek New Testament text predicting that an *evil thing* would desecrate the holy place, thereby *profaning* it, with the idea that the *righteous* would stand in the holy place and would thereby be *saved*. Throughout the chapter, I give examples of how the idea of the righteous standing in holy places in modern scripture finds a home in ancient religious thought. The previous analysis, however, leaves an important question unanswered: If the “abomination of desolation” is not some evil thing standing in the temple, what is it? In this appendix, I summarize and expand upon the view of New Testament scholar Peter G. Bolt whose interpretation provides one possible answer to this question.

By way of preface, it should be observed that scholars have found problems with the generally received view that the “abomination of desolation” referred to by Jesus involved the desecration of the Jerusalem temple. Note that the difficulty in interpretation is not about the desolation that was to come upon the Holy City — everyone agrees that this desolation refers to the Roman siege that ended in AD 70 — but rather about the nature of the “abomination” that was to be the proximal cause of this destruction. New Testament scholar R. T. France summarizes and critiques “the three main proposals of historical events which might have been recognized ... by those who had heard of Jesus’s prediction”²¹² of this “abomination”:

1. In AD 40 the emperor Gaius gave orders for a statue of himself to be set up in the temple at Jerusalem; fortunately the order had still not been carried out when Gaius was assassinated in AD 41, thus averting what would have been a bloody uprising.
2. Probably during the winter of AD 67-68 the Zealots took over the temple as their headquarters, and Josephus speaks with horror of the way they “invaded the sanctuary with polluted feet” and mocked the temple ritual, while the sanctuary was defiled with blood as factional fighting broke out.²¹³
3. When the Roman troops eventually broke into the temple, the presence of their (idolatrous) standards in the sacred precincts would inevitably remind Jews of Antiochus; Josephus even mentions Roman soldiers offering sacrifices to their standards in the temple courts.²¹⁴ Luke’s parallel to this verse²¹⁵ apparently understands the [“abomination of desolation”] in this sense.

However, France concludes that:

None of these three events quite fits what this verse says: the Gaius event was too early (and in fact never happened) and the Roman presence in the sanctuary too late to provide a signal for escape before the end came, while the Zealot occupation, which took place at the right time, was perhaps not quite the type of pagan defilement envisaged by Daniel.

In light of such difficulties in trying to make prophecy fit history, Peter Bolt has argued that Jesus’s words about the “abomination of desolation” did not concern the desecration of the temple in Jerusalem, but rather referred to the violent and ultimately fatal profanation of the temple of Jesus’s body — which the Savior Himself previously had said could be destroyed and raised up in three days.²¹⁷ Bolt asserts that in quoting the prophet Daniel, the Savior was using “apocalyptic language preparing the disciples for [His own] coming death. This fits with the rest of [the] story, for [there could be no] greater act of sacrilege than the destruction of God’s Son in such a horrendous way.”²¹⁸ Had not Jesus once referred to Himself as “one *greater than* the temple”?²¹⁹ Also of significance to the meaning of the prophecy is the fact that Daniel 9:26, in the words of New Testament scholar Craig Keener, “associates the [“abomination of desolation”] with the cutting off of an anointed ruler, close to the time of Jesus.”²²⁰

With respect to the scriptural association of the “abomination of desolation” with the theme of Gentile domination, Bolt explains:²²²

Israel’s leadership will welcome their long-awaited Messiah by handing Him over to the Gentiles; that is, by handing him over to the wrath of God. And if that were not sacrilegious enough, Pilate, the representative of the Gentiles, will receive the Messiah from Israel, and condemn Him to death by crucifixion ... If the destruction of the temple of God by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC, or the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 169 BC, was an abomination committed by the Gentiles, how much more is the “temple of his body” desecrated when the Gentiles destroy the Son of God on their cross?



Figure 12: J. James Tissot, 1836-1902:
The Apostles' Hiding Place, 1886-1894

What of Jesus’s instructions to His disciples: “let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains”?²²⁴ According to the early church historian Eusebius, Jewish Christians knew of and heeded this warning by Jesus and, when the armies began to surround Jerusalem in AD 68-70, they fled beyond Jordan, congregating mostly at Pella. Thus, asserted Eusebius, “not one Christian perished in the awful siege.”²²⁵

However, Keener²²⁶ points out at least one unsolved problem, namely that “Pella is not in the Judean mountains but in foothills and reached from the Jordan valley.”²²⁷

Alternatively, in Bolt's view,²²⁹ the flight of the apostles shortly after Christ's death rather than the flight of Jewish Christians following the siege of Jerusalem is the primary reference of Jesus's instructions in Matthew 24:16-20. Once Jesus is arrested by the Romans, the disciples are being told to flee urgently, which they later do in the Garden of Gethsemane.²³⁰



**Figure 13: J. James Tissot, 1836-1902:
The First Nail, 1886-1894**

Concerning the period of great tribulation that is also associated with the prophecy, Bolt explains:²³¹

The great distress [mentioned in the Olivet discourse] is also a phrase drawn from Daniel. In the final chapter, Daniel learns that, just before the future day of resurrection,²³² there will be [a] time of terrible suffering.²³³ Daniel promises that in that time of distress God's people will be delivered.

Jesus informs his disciples that this suffering will be “such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be ... ”²³⁴ By pushing it back to creation itself, Jesus encompasses the entire period of human existence in order to indicate that this coming distress will exceed any suffering that has ever been experienced ... Jesus adds a statement that broadens the scope of His comparison into the future. There “never will be” ... such suffering again. The suffering He has in view will be worse than any that has been experienced before, and will be worse than anything else to follow.

There is nothing trivial about the suffering of Christ [during His Atonement. It] was the greatest suffering this world has ever known — or will ever know.

“Which suffering,” the Lord Himself says in D&C 19:18, “caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit — and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink — ”

The Latter-day Saint view, based on an unambiguous statement in the JST, is that a second “abomination of desolation” will occur “in the last days.”²³⁵ If one were to accept Bolt’s arguments that the first “abomination of desolation” had to do with the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, could an analogous event corresponding to a latter-day fulfillment of this prophecy be found?



Figure 14: J. James Tissot, 1836-1902:
*Zacharias Killed Between the Temple and
the Altar, 1886-1894*

some ancient traditions, was erroneously believed to have atoned for the sins of others.²⁴³ In the same verse, Jesus also mentioned the “blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar,” as shown in Figure 14.

In the scriptures, there is a latter-day analogue to the shedding of the innocent blood of Jesus Christ. It is, of course, found in the ministry and martyrdom of the two witnesses described in chapter 11 of the book of

Further probing the expected nature of the abomination, it should first be observed that, according to Keener,²³⁷ the “Jewish people recognized that shedding innocent blood in the sanctuary would profane it,²³⁸ and some even saw this defilement as a desolation.²³⁹ Josephus indicated that the shedding of priestly blood in the sanctuary²⁴⁰ was the desecration or ‘abomination,’ that invited the ultimate desolation of AD 70.”²⁴¹ Note also that, in the chapter of Matthew just prior to the discourse on the Mount of Olives,²⁴² Jesus Himself had alluded to the “blood of the righteous Abel” whose death, in

Revelation.²⁴⁴ Using temple language, they are described as “the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.”²⁴⁵ Though no explicit location is given for their death,²⁴⁶ their ministry, like that of the Savior, is described as corresponding to the prophet Daniel’s apocalyptic period of 1,260 days. Having carefully scrutinized the evidence, New Testament scholar Gregory Beale, concludes that these “two witnesses are identified with *the Witness*”:²⁴⁷

The pattern of the narrative of the witnesses’ career in 11:2-12 is intended as a replica of Christ’s career: proclamation and signs result in satanic opposition, persecution,²⁴⁸ and violent death in the city where Christ was crucified, the world looks on its victim²⁴⁹ and rejoices;²⁵⁰ then the witnesses are raised and vindicated by ascension in a cloud.

In summary, these two events — the crucifixion of the Savior and the martyrdom of the two latter-day witnesses — provide a model for the “abomination of desolation” that is not dependent on the desecration of the Jerusalem temple as the cause of the ensuing desolation of the Holy City. Though Bolt’s hypothesis does not, of course, exhaust the possibilities for alternative explanations, it may provide a starting point for an interpretation of the past and future occurrences of the “abomination of desolation” that is consistent with the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 24:15.

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Notes

1. From J. F. Dolkart, *James Tissot*, p. 195.
2. Joseph Smith — Matthew 1:4.
3. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, Excursus 53, p. 675.
4. Matthew 24:15.
5. Matthew 24:15.
6. Mark 13:14.
7. Luke 21:20.
8. Matthew 24:15.
9. Joseph Smith — Matthew 1:12-13.
10. The only significant mention of this change that I have found is by Richard Lloyd Anderson (Joseph Smith's Insights, p. 61 n. 37):

The first word of the King James phrase, “stand in the holy place,” translates a Greek participle dependent on “abomination,” which is thus “standing in the holy place.” With historical meaning as a concept, the sentence was recast with “stand” as an imperative verb: at the coming of the abomination of desolation, “then you shall stand in the holy place” (Joseph Smith — Matthew 1:12). Incidentally, this adaptation also gave new meaning to “holy place.”

11. H. Bloom, *American Religion*, pp. 98, 99, 101.
12. J. L. Kugel, *How to Read*, pp. 674, 676; cf. M. Barker, *Christmas*, pp. 29-30.
13. See, e.g., J. Nolland, *Matthew*, pp. 968-972; S. T. Lachs, *Rabbinic Commentary*, pp. 382-383; R. T. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 911-913. C. S. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 573-578 provides the most thorough discussion of the meaning of this prophecy in a temple context.
14. J. E. Faulconer, *Incarnation*, p. 44, emphasis added. See also J. M. Bradshaw et al., *God's Image 2*, pp. 8-12. My views on this topic draw heavily on the insightful perspectives of Faulconer.
15. See D&C 45:32.
16. A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, p. 21.
17. I will not survey the many instances in scripture where standing is associated with ordinary prayer and praise, e.g., 1 Chronicles 23:30. For a classic source on the posture of prayer, see D. R. Ap-Thomas, *Notes*, especially pp. 225-230.
18. C. S. Lewis, *Descriptione*; G. d. Santillana et al., *Hamlet's Mill*, p. 10.

Specifically regarding the ancient view of the temple, Mark Smith writes: “The idea of divine presence barely resonates in our culture. We stand at such a massive distance from the ancient traditions of the Jerusalem temple ... As the decades pass, our culture seems increasingly removed from the Christian and Jewish religious traditions that drew upon the experience of temple” (M. S. Smith, *Priestly Vision*, p. 36).

19. Benjamin McGuire offers a useful compendium of the pitfalls of the comparative approach, along with helpful guidelines (B. A. McGuire, *Finding Parallels 1*; B. A. McGuire, *Finding Parallels 2*). While I have not attempted to apply McGuire’s methodology rigorously to the comparisons made across the wide variety of scriptural passages and commentaries used in this article, I have tried to be sensitive to the relevant issues. In particular we have tried to avoid placing stress on mere language similarities in translations of texts and have tried to focus more on themes, especially where these themes are recognized by relevant scholarship. Though some revelatory passages in the Joseph Smith’s translations and revelations seem to have remarkable congruencies with ancient texts, we think it is fruitless to rely on them as a means for uncovering biblical *Urtexts*. Likewise, when we present similarities between ancient sources and the modern scripture, the intent is not to show that they share identity in some way, but rather to engage the older sources to help us interpret modern revelation.
20. A. H. King, *Joseph*, pp. 287-288.
21. Abraham 3:24.
22. Abraham 3:23.
23. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Tree of Knowledge*, pp. 50-52.
24. Moses 7:2.
25. R. D. Draper et al., *Commentary*, p. 112, citing G. J. Botterweck et al., *TDOT*, 8:532-544 and G. Kittel et al., *Dictionary*, 8:195-199, 204-207. As an example, they cite the use of this term for Gethsemane in Luke 22:40 and John 18:2.
26. Moses 7:3-4.
27. Moses 7:56.
28. Moses 7:57.
29. Exodus 3:1.
30. Directly tying this symbolism to the Jerusalem Temple, Nicolas Wyatt concludes, “The Menorah is probably what Moses is understood to have seen as the burning bush in Exodus 3” (N. Wyatt, *Space*, 169). Thus we might see Jehovah as being represented to Moses as one who

dwells on the holy mountain of the Lord in the midst of the burning glory of the Tree of Life.

Some might question this symbolism because the Menorah did not stand in the sacred center of the second temple. However, Margaret Barker argues that “there is reason to believe that the Menorah ... originally stood [in the Holy of Holies], and not in the great hall of the temple” (Barker, Margaret. *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*. London, England: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), 2007, 6). For more on the topic of the sacred center of the temple and its relationship to the placement of the two special trees in the Garden of Eden, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Tree of Knowledge*.

31. N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 15.
32. Exodus 3:5.
33. Joshua 5:14.
34. See below for scriptural instances where prophets were explicitly told to stand on their feet prior to receiving a divine message, or were raised to their feet by the handclasp of a messenger.
35. Joshua 5:15.
36. “No footwear is mentioned in the prescriptions for priestly attire in Exodus 28, 39, and Leviticus 8; cf. H. Freedman et al., *Midrash*, Exodus, 2:13, p. 57” (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 240 n. 16).
37. Moses 1:17.
38. Moses 1:25-26.
39. Moses 1:31. For a discussion of the meaning and significance of this face-to-face encounter between God and Moses after his passing through the heavenly veil, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, pp. 29-48.
40. Numbers 11:16.
41. Numbers 16:9.
42. Cf. Deuteronomy 18:5: “For the Lord thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons for ever.” Rashi concluded from this verse “that there is no ministering but while standing” (Rashi, *Deuteronomy Commentary*, Deuteronomy 18:5, p. 196).
43. Tigay translates this phrase as “to stand in attendance upon the Lord,” i.e., “[t]o offer sacrifices” (J. H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, p. 106). See Deuteronomy 21:5; 2 Chronicles 29:11; Ezekiel 44:15.
44. Rashi took this as referring to the Priestly Blessing (Leviticus 9:22; Numbers 6:22-27; Deuteronomy 21:5): “It is a reference to ‘raising of

- palms” (Rashi, *Deuteronomy Commentary*, 10:8, p. 101).
45. J. Milgrom, *Numbers*, Numbers 16:9, p. 132. Cf. Numbers 3:6; 1 Samuel 16:22; 1 Kings 1:2.
 46. 2 Chronicles 35:5.
 47. 1 Kings 17:1. See also 1 Kings 18:15; 2 Kings 3:14, 5:16. Cf. Jeremiah 15:1, 19.
 48. 1 Kings 19:11.
 49. 1 Kings 19:12.
 50. Psalm 130:3-4.
 51. Ezra 9:15.
 52. D&C 45:32. See also D&C 87:8, 124:45. Cf. references to Zion not being moved in D&C 97:19, 101:17.
 53. The term as used in Psalm 16:8 is translated with the Greek verb *saleuō* in the *Septuagint* and in Acts 2:25. The Greek verb *kineō* is used in Revelation 6:14 (“And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were *moved out of their places*”).
 54. F. Brown et al., *Lexicon*, p. 556.
 55. H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, 17, pp. 212-213.
 56. Greek *phrisso* = shudder or shiver. Cf. Matthew 8:29 where the trembling can be viewed as “indicating a cognizance of their appointed doom” (W. E. Vine et al., *Dictionary* (1996), s.v. shudder, p. 573). See also Genesis 27:33 (Isaac) and Alma 11:46 (Zeezrom). Cf. Jacob 4:18, 7:5.
 57. Hebrew *ragaz* = to be agitated, angry, to quiver or quake (F. Brown et al., *Lexicon*, p. 919b).
 58. Hebrew *rash* = quake, shake (ibid., p. 950b).
 59. Cf. Moses 7:13, S. C. Malan, *Adam and Eve*, 1:48, p. 53; G. W. E. Nickelsburg et al., *1 Enoch*, 88:2, p. 364.
 60. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, Commentary 5:41-b, p. 388.
 61. See, e.g., M. Odell, *Ezekiel*, pp. 357-360.
 62. M. Odell, *Ezekiel*, pp. 361-363.
 63. M. Odell, *Ezekiel*, p. 363.
 64. Calabro convincingly describes the imagery of a sealed contract or covenant associated with both cylinder seals and signet rings in northwest Semitic languages (D. Calabro, *Rolling Out*, especially pp. 68-72).
 65. Note that the king sits “in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas,” the latter reference recalling the imagery of Eden as the source of the waters of the earth (Genesis 2:10).

66. Ezekiel 28:14. The “stones of fire” may be an allusion to the coals on the altar of the temple (P. M. Joyce, *Ezekiel*, p. 180).
67. Some readers object to the idea of Eden being located on a cosmic mountain, since this aspect is not mentioned explicitly in Genesis 2–3. See G. A. Anderson, *Cosmic Mountain*, 192-199 for careful readings that argue for just such a setting.
68. *Ibid.*, 199.
69. Ezekiel 28:16, Hebrew *waʾabbedka*. The longer phrase containing this verb can be read one of two ways: 1. “The guardian cherub drove you out” (P. M. Joyce, *Ezekiel*, p. 180; cf. W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p. 86, highlighting the parallel with Adam; cf. Genesis 3:24); or 2. “I drove you out, the guardian cherub” (P. M. Joyce, *Ezekiel*, p. 180; cf. W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p. 94, identifying the king as the cherub). The use of the verb *hillēl* (to profane) in the description of banishment in the first verb of the verse (*wāʿehallelēkā*, “I banished you”) alludes to the desecration of the holy place through the actions of the king (D. I. Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p. 116).
70. Ezekiel 28:18.
71. Ezekiel 28:17.
72. D. I. Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p. 117. Cf. Lamentationss 2:1; Ezekiel 19:12.
73. Ezekiel 26:19-20 also uses *eres* in reference to the netherworld, perhaps in this context as a variant of *šahat*, “pit,” in verse 8 (D. I. Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p. 117).
74. Scholars have long puzzled over the significance of the double reference to Adam and Eve’s expulsion in vv. 23-24. Some ancient traditions see the couple’s exit from the Garden of Eden as having occurred in two stages. For example, the Qur’an explicitly records that Adam and Eve were twice told to go down (Qur’an, 2:36, 38), explaining that they “were removed first from the Garden to its courtyard and then from the courtyard to the earth” (A. a.-S. M. H. at-Tabataba’i, *Al-Mizan*, 1:209). An idea consistent with Ephrem the Syrian’s idea of the Fall as an attempted intrusion in the holiest regions of the Garden is that Adam and Eve were first removed from the border of the celestial region to the terrestrial paradise, and then, in the second stage, were expelled from the terrestrial paradise to the telestial earth (Ephrem the Syrian, *Paradise*, 3:5, p. 92, 3:13-15, pp. 95-96).
75. Exodus 6:1. See N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 30.
76. See D&C 45:32.
77. Thanks to Matthew B. Brown for pointing me to this image.

78. Zornberg's translation of Rashi, Genesis 2:7, in A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, p. 16. Compare Rashi, *Genesis Commentary*, 2:7, p. 23; J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah 1*, 14:8:1, p. 156.
79. Zornberg's translation of Rashi, Genesis 2:7, in A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, p. 16. Compare Rashi, *Genesis Commentary*, 2:7, p. 23.
80. A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, p. 16.
81. A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, p. 22.
82. E.g., M.-A. Ouaknin et al., *Rabbi Éliézer*, 11, p. 78; J. Goldin, *Fathers*, 1, p. 11.
83. A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, p. 23.
84. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 471-473, 681-686; J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, pp. 38-39.
85. Ezekiel 37:10. Cf. 2 Kings 13:21. Alma the Younger experienced a fall and a figurative death when he and his companions were visited by an angel, and a rebirth three days later when his mouth was opened and he was again able to stand on his feet: "I fell to the earth; and it was for the space of three days and three nights that I could not open my mouth, neither had I the use of my limbs ... But behold my limbs did receive their strength again, and I stood upon my feet, and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God" (Alma 36:10, 23; cf. King Lamoni and his people in Alma 18:42-43, 19:1-34). Falling in weakness after a vision of God is a common motif in scripture. Daniel reported that he "fainted, and was sick certain days," and of a second occasion he wrote: "I was left alone ... and there remained no strength in me ... and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground" (Daniel 8:26; 10:8-9). Saul "fell to the earth" during his vision and remained blind until healed by Ananias (Acts 9:4, 17-18). Lehi "cast himself on his bed, being overcome with the Spirit" (1 Nephi 1:7). Of his weakness following the First Vision, Joseph Smith wrote: "When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven. When the light had departed, I had no strength ..." (JS-H 1:20). See also discussion of A. Kulik, *Retroverting Apocalypse of Abraham* 10:1-4, p. 17 below.
86. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, p. 683 figure 53-11.
87. J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, p. 228 figure 4-10.
88. G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 1 Enoch 14:24, p. 267: "And one of the holy ones came to me and raised me up and stood me [on my feet]"; G. W. E. Nickelsburg et al., *1 Enoch*, 71:3, p. 93: "And the angel Michael ... took me by my right hand and raised me up"; P.

- Alexander, 3 Enoch, 1:5, p. 256: “He grasped me with his hand before their eyes and said to me, ‘Come in peace into the presence of the high and exalted King’”; P. Alexander, 3 Enoch, 48A:2, p. 300: “I went with him, and, taking me by his hand, he bore me up on his wings.”
89. J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, p. 684 figure 53-13.
 90. Daniel 8:18: “he touched me, and set me upright”; Daniel 10:9-10: “then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees.”
 91. Revelation 1:17: “I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me.”
 92. In Alma 19:29-30, the raising of two individuals who have fallen in rapturous vision is performed by mortal women.
 93. Ezekiel 2:1-2: “And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.”
 94. Daniel 10:11: “O Daniel, ... understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent.”
 95. Acts 26:16: “But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness.”
 96. Alma 36:7-8. 22: “7 And behold, he spake unto us, as it were the voice of thunder, and the whole earth did tremble beneath our feet; and we all fell to the earth, for the fear of the Lord came upon us. 8 But behold, the voice said unto me: Arise. And I arose and stood up, and beheld the angel.”
 97. 3 Nephi 11:19-20: “And Nephi arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet. And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood before him.”
 98. Nickelsburg explains (G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 14:24-15:1, p. 270): “The seer must be rehabilitated and accepted into the divine presence before he can receive his commission. Restoration by an angel becomes a typical feature in visions, where, however, it is the angel whose appearance causes the collapse.”

See also Joshua 7:6, 10-13:

6 ¶ And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads . . .

10 ¶ And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?

11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.

12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.

13 Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.

99. E.g., Deuteronomy 10:8, 18:7; 2 Chronicles 29:11.

100. E.g., Luke 1:19.

101. See, e.g., Luke 18:13.

102. Notes taken by David J. Larsen on an unpublished talk by Robert Hayward (R. Hayward, Aramaic Paradise).

103. E.g., 1 Esdras 8:89-90.

104. Zornberg's translation. Compare H. Freedman et al., *Midrash*, Numbers 1, 11:3, 5:419.

105. Ezekiel 28:3.

106. For a more complete discussion, see M. Odell, Ezekiel, pp. 361-362.

107. See Daniel 4. The *Gospel of Philip* says: "There are two trees growing in Paradise. The one bears [animals], the other bears men. Adam [ate] from the tree which bore animals. [He] became an animal" (W. W. Isenberg, *Philip*, 71:21-72:4, p. 152). *Philip* uses, as Barker points out, "the usual apocalyptists' code of mortal = animal and angel = man. The text is broken, but the sense is clear enough" (M. Barker, June 11 2007. See M. Barker, *Hidden*, pp. 45-47; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Glory*, p. 33).

Ephrem the Syrian reasoned that since Adam "went astray through [an animal] he became like the [animals]: He ate, together with them as a result of the curse, grass and roots" (Ephrem the Syrian, *Paradise*, 13:5, p. 170). Nibley connects the story of Nebuchadnezzar's "fall" to the Egyptian story of Osiris who, like Adam, was said to have been freed from a split tree (H. W. Nibley, *Message* 2005, p. 289): "In the book of Daniel, the tree that was

split was the king himself (Daniel 4:13-15, 22); however the stump was not destroyed but preserved for a seven-year period (Daniel 4:23), during which time the king was ritually humiliated ... (Daniel 4:33; cf. *Apis-bull* and *Horus-hawk*), only to resume his throne with all his glory greatly enhanced at the end of the seven-year period (Daniel 4:25, 31-34). This is the Egyptian seven-year throne period of the king ... The splitting of the tree is plainly the substitute sacrifice, while its preservation against the time when the king shall be restored recalls the important role of the *ished-tree* in the coronation.”

Although nothing like this episode can be associated directly with the historic King Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BCE), both Neo-Babylonian inscriptions and the *Prayer of Nabonidus* (4Q242) fragment of the *Dead Sea Scrolls* provide evidence of a pre-Danielic tradition associating a similar story with Nabonidus, the last ruler of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (556-539 BCE) and father of Belsharuzur (biblical “King Belshazzar” — see Daniel 5:22, 7:1, 8:1; F. G. Martinez, *DSS Translated*, p. 289; L. T. Stuckenbruck, *Daniel*, pp. 104-106; J. A. Tvedtnes, *Nebuchadnezzar*; G. Vermes, *Complete*, p. 614; M. Wise et al., *DSS*, pp. 340-342). In his prayer, the king tells of his suffering with an “evil skin disease” for a period of seven years by the decree of God, and at least one scholar has proposed that a lacuna in the text “originally described Nabunay’s state as comparable to that of a beast (see Daniel 4:25b), or that he was ‘set apart from human beings’” (L. T. Stuckenbruck, *Daniel*, p. 105. See Daniel 4:25a). After appealing to gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, stone, and clay, his sins were forgiven by a Jewish healer after he finally prayed to the Most High God. A similar healing blessing performed by Abraham with the laying of hands upon the head is described in F. G. Martinez, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 20:28-29, p. 234.

108. To the scriptural example of Nebuchadnezzar, Doob (P. B. R. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar’s Children*) compares the Arthurian knights Yvain, Lancelot, and Tristan, who were driven mad by disappointments in love. See, e.g., C. de Troyes, *Yvain*, p. 189, where Yvain “dwelt in the forest like a madman or a savage.” Thanks to BYU Professor Jesse Hurlbut for this reference.
109. G. A. Anderson et al., *Synopsis*, 4:2, p. 5E; G. A. Anderson, *Penitence*, pp. 13-19; G. A. Anderson, *Perfection*, pp. 141-147.
110. S. L. Della Torre, *Anxiety*, p. 7.

111. M. Maher, *Pseudo-Jonathan*, 3:18, p. 28. According to the *Targum*, God answers Adam's prayer as follows (ibid., 3:19, pp. 28-29): "By the *labor of your hand* you shall eat *food* until you return to the *dust* from which you were *created*, because dust you are, and to dust you will return; *but from the dust you are destined to arise* [literally "stand up"] *to render an account and a reckoning of all you have done, on the day of great judgment.*"
112. G. A. Anderson, *Original Form*, p. 229. As part of this reading of Moses 4:24-25, the phrase "By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" was seen by some early interpreters as God's promise to provide a less humiliating form of sustenance once Adam's penance was complete. At its conclusion, "God rescinds [His] initial decree and offers [him] seed-bearing grain from which he can make bread ... [thus fulfilling] a prophecy made at the end of the sixth day of creation" (G. A. Anderson, *Penitence*, p. 19; see Moses 2:29).

A Coptic Christian tradition specifically mentions wheat (along with instructions for sowing and reaping) as having been divinely provided in answer to Adam's cries of hunger: "If Thou art moved with compassion for the man whom We have created, and who has rejected My commandment, go Thou and give him Thine own flesh and let him eat thereof, for it is Thou Who has made Thyself his advocate.' Then our Lord took a little piece of the flesh of His divine side, and rubbed it down into small pieces, and showed them to His Father. When God saw them He said to His Son, 'Wait and I will give Thee some of My own flesh, which is invisible.' Then God took a portion of His own body, and made it into a grain of wheat, and He sealed the grain in the middle with the seal wherewith He sealed the worlds of light, and then gave it to our Lord and told Him to give it to Michael, the archangel, who was to give it to Adam and teach him how to sow and reap it. Michael found Adam by the Jordan, who as he had eaten nothing for eight days was crying to God for food, and as soon as Adam received the grain of wheat, he ceased to cry out, and became strong, and his descendants have lived on wheat ever since. Water, wheat and the throne of God are the equals of the Son of God." (E. A. W. Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha*, cited in E. A. W. Budge, *Cave*, pp. 18-19 n. 1. See also M. i. A. A. al-Kisa'i, *Tales*, pp. 68-70; al-Tabari, *Creation*, 1:127-130, pp. 298-300; S. C. Malan, *Adam and Eve*, 1:66-68, pp. 78-83; D&C 89:17). An Ethiopian source asserts that the Tree of Life "is the Body of Christ which none of the Seraphim touch

without reverent awe” (B. Mikael, *Mysteries*, p. 26). Note that the Egyptian Osiris was thought to have introduced wheat and the vine to mankind, and also saw wheat grains as having been formed from his body. The notion of wheat being divinely provided for Adam is also found in Islamic sources (G. Weil, *Legends*, pp. 31, 45. See also M. Ibn Ishaq ibn Yasar, *Making*, pp. 34, 37; cf. A. I. A. I. M. I. I. al-Tha’labi, *Lives*, pp. 63-65; B. M. Wheeler, *Prophets*, pp. 27-28). In addition, the Sumerian text *Ewe and Wheat* recounts how wool and wheat were divinely provided in primeval times: “The people in those distant days, They knew not bread to eat; They knew not cloth to wear; They went about with naked limbs in the Land, And like sheep they ate grass with their mouth ... Then Enki spoke to Enlil: ‘Father Enlil, Ewe and Wheat ... Let us now send them down from the Holy Hill” (R. J. Clifford, *Ewe, 20-24, 37-38, 40*, pp. 45-46). Linking the situations of Adam and Nebuchadnezzar to that of each penitent Christian, Ephrem the Syrian wrote that “only when [Nebuchadnezzar] repented did he return to his former abode and kingship. Blessed is He who has thus taught us to repent so that we too may return to Paradise” (Ephrem the Syrian, *Paradise*, 13:6, p. 171). The bread promised to Adam on conditions of repentance and baptism by water can be seen as a type of Christ, the “bread of life” (John 6:35). Christ’s advent was, of course, preceded by John, dressed in the rough clothes of a penitent, eating what he could find in the wild, and baptizing “unto repentance” (Matthew 3:11. See T. G. Madsen, *Sacrament*, p. 85).

113. A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, p. 21.
114. “For these are those selected by God for an everlasting covenant and to them shall belong the glory of Adam.” (Rule of the Community 4:22-23 in F. G. Martinez, *DSS Translated*, p. 7; H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. 467).
115. D&C 121:45.
116. Succinctly expressing the hopelessness of Adam’s predicament in the absence of God’s “remedy” (M. Maher, *Pseudo-Jonathan*, 3:15, pp. 27-28. Cf. W. Shakespeare, *Measure*, 2:2:75, p. 560), midrash states: “If it were not for Your mercy, Adam would have had *no standing (amidah)*” (following Zornberg’s literal translation — others read in terms of Adam’s capacity to “exist” or “survive” [see, e.g., J. T. Townsend, *Tanhuma*, 10 (Mase’):8, Numbers 35:9ff, Part 1, 3:264; A. Davis et al., *The Metsudah Midrash Tanchuma*, Bamidbar 2, Masei, 11, p. 354; cf. H. Freedman et al., *Midrash*, Numbers 23:13,

- 6:877]). Zornberg explains: “The simplest reading of ‘standing’ would be ‘survival.’ But, implicitly, both Adam and the world are in need of some Archimedian point of stability, in a situation in which disintegration threatens” (A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, p. 25).
117. Moses 4:20.
118. Leviticus 11:42.
119. See U. Cassuto, *Adam to Noah*, p. 160. Cf., e.g., Psalm 72:9; Isaiah 49:23, 65:25; Micah 7:17.
120. G. A. Anderson, *Perfection*, p. 138. Cf. *Jubilees*: “the Lord cursed the serpent and he was angry with it forever” (O. S. Wintermute, *Jubilees*, 3:23, p. 60).
121. In the art of the ancient Near East, the serpent is often shown as originally walking erect, sometimes with legs (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 27). Moreover, Islamic, Jewish, and early Christian texts often speak of the serpent’s magnificent “camel-like” appearance before its cursing (e.g., al-Tabari, *Creation*, 1:104-110, pp. 275-281; S. C. Malan, *Adam and Eve*, p. 214 n. 20, p. 217, nn. 27-29).

In the *Tschemmin Book of the Dead* (also known as *Joseph Smith Papyrus V*) from third- or second-century BCE Egypt, a legged serpent appears in illustrated form, facing the staff-wielding initiate (M. D. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, *Tschemmin Book of the Dead* 74, Column X+3, p. 84; H. L. Andrus, *God*, p. 371; H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. 318 figure 98; J. M. Todd, Fragment, p. 40E. Cf. the vignette of spell 87 in the *Papyrus of Ani*, which contains instructions for being transformed into a serpent who is capable of endless cycles of rebirth (R. O. Faulkner et al., *Book of the Dead 1994*, plate 27. See J. H. Taylor, *Spells*, p. 65)). Rhodes cites Mosher’s conjecture that this vignette, not directly mentioned in the text of the chapter itself but perhaps related to its mention of “hurrying the feet and going forth [on the earth],” is a representation of the “desire of the deceased to come forth from the earth (tomb) and walk the earth” (M. D. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, *Tschemmin Book of the Dead* 74, p. 43). Nibley, on the other hand, interprets the legged serpent in light of its punishment “for attempting to frustrate the progress of the god on his journey or the initiate on his way” (H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. 315). Apparently, the opposing serpent is here identified with the funerary god Sokar (“It is against me that you do the things you do, O Sokar, Sokar who is in his cave, my opponent in the god’s domain ... upon the shores of him who would seize their utterance in the god’s domain” [M. D. Rhodes,

Books of the Dead, Tschemmin Book of the Dead 74, p. 43]). According to the *Amduat*, within the cavern “filled with flames of fire from the mouth of Isis” and surrounded by sandy shores of the lake of fire-water (“fiery pain for the enemies of Re but cool water for the blessed souls”), Sokar (the name given to the dead corpse of Osiris, from at least the time of the Old Kingdom, after he was murdered by his brother Seth [G. Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology*, p. 203] and based on a play on the words of his cry of mortal distress [J. P. Allen, *Pyramid Texts of Pepi I*, 480, p. 165, p. 205 n. 129]) and Re (the Sungod, who appears in the cavern in the form of a multi-headed serpent shaped like a barque) unite the opposites of death and life (T. Abt et al., *Knowledge*, pp. 71-72; cf. A. Schweizer, *Sungod’s Journey*, pp. 91-99), enabling, after the ultimate defeat of the evil serpent Apophis by the gods (E. Hornung, *Triumph of Magic*), the eventual regeneration and rebirth of the initiate.

In the next chapter, *Tschemmin Book of the Dead* 75, the staff-wielding candidate must face yet another test before entering the Holy Place. The opposing entity in the accompanying vignette is accurately but benignly described by Rhodes as “the hieroglyphic sign for Heliopolis” (M. D. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, p. 44). Nibley, however, explains that the sign originally represented the “sword and flame” that were instrumental in the defeat of the serpent (H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. 318 caption to figure 98, see also pp. 319-320). According to Nibley, the symbol was known as:

... the spear of Horus of Heliopolis with which he overcame the Adversary, the Serpent, when he took the rule ... As to the two columns flanking the spear, the Jews, according to W. Kornfeld, were quite aware that the two famous pillars, Boaz and Jachin and strength and capital righteousness, that stood at the entrance to the Temple of Solomon (2 Chronicles 3:17), “belonged to the solar cult of On” — referring to the biblical name for Heliopolis.

While the “keepers of the pylons, standing with swords in their hands before a gate from which flames shoot forth” admit the Sun God Re, they prevent any possibility of the evil serpent entering the realm of the blessed (H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. 320). Within the temple at Heliopolis, Egyptian priests reenacted the defeat of Apophis by ritually trampling images of the evil serpent underfoot (cf. Genesis 3:15; J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, Moses 4:21d, pp.

- 266-267). Only after Adam and Eve “have been *first* purified by the hand of the cherubim” may they also enter within (H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. 320; cf. J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, Moses 4:31e, p. 282).
122. “Having arrogantly aggrandized itself in a challenge to God, it is now permanently doomed to a posture of abject humiliation” (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 27).
123. H. W. Nibley, *Abraham 1981*, p. 180; H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, pp. 317. Taylor asserts that the serpent’s human legs “indicated the power of swift movement” (J. H. Taylor, *Spells*, p. 65), while Nibley sees the loss of its limbs as representing the fact that it “may never more progress, being ‘bound by Aker, deprived of arms and legs, bound in one place’ — as Re ‘inflicts the blows decreed for him’” (H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. 317).
124. Genesis 3:14. In the story of the contest between Moses with Pharaoh’s magicians (cf. Genesis 41:1-7), the upright staff of authoritative rulership is in deliberate contrast to the prostrate posture of a serpent. After the magicians succeeded in transforming their rods into serpents as Aaron had done, the author of Exodus pointedly tells us that it was “Aaron’s *rod* [that] swallowed up their *rods*” (Exodus 7:12), not Aaron’s *serpent* that swallowed up their *serpents*. “The rod in ancient Egypt was a symbol of royal authority and power, while the snake, the uraeus, represented the patron cobra-goddess of Lower Egypt. Worn over the forehead on the headdress of the pharaohs, it was emblematic of divinely-protected sovereignty, and it served as a menacing symbol of death dealt to enemies of the crown” (N. M. Sarna, *Exodus*, 4:3, p. 20, see also 7:12-13, p. 37).

Also highlighting the fact that question of authority to rule rather than magical prowess was the issue at hand is the deliberate choice of the Hebrew term *tannin* (“large reptile,” e.g., crocodile, sea monster, leviathan) rather than *nachash* (“snake,” as in Exodus 4:3-4, 7:15) for the transformed staff (Exodus 7:9-10). *Tannin* was often “used metaphorically as a symbol of national empires and power” (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Exodus*, p. 347 n. 9. See Deuteronomy 32:33, Psalm 74:13, Ezekiel 29:3).

Incidentally, “[t]he use of magic in Egypt is well-documented in [Talc 2 of the] Westcar Papyrus (M.-J. Nederhof, Papyrus Westcar) where magicians are credited with changing wax crocodiles into real ones only to be turned back to wax again after seizing their

tails. Montet ... also refers to several Egyptian scarabs that depict a snake charmer holding a serpent made stiff as a staff up in the air before some observing deities (cf. J. B. Pritchard, *Charms Against Snakes*; J. P. Allen, *Pyramid Texts of Unis*, 3, p. 17, with a spell on a 'spotted' knife [representing a snake?] that 'goes forth against its like' and devours it)" (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Exodus*, 7:10-13, p. 347). See also L. Shalit, *How Moses*.

125. J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 338-350.

126. In the case of the rabbis, this was understood to be the five books of Moses, the *Torah*. Concerning the sixth day of Creation, Rashi commented: "*The sixth day*": the definite article [*heh*] is added here to teach that God had made a condition with all the works of the beginning, depending on Israel's acceptance of the Five [the numerical value of *heh*] Books of the *Torah*. (Zornberg's translation in A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, p. 27). Compare Rashi, *Genesis Commentary*, 1:31, p. 19.

The idea of five sacred things is encountered in other forms of Jewish tradition. For example, Jewish authorities held that five things were lost when Solomon's temple was destroyed. Both Margaret Barker and Hugh Nibley specifically connect these "five things" to lost ordinances of the High Priesthood (see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 658-660).

127. D&C 84:23-27; JST Exodus 34:1-2.

128. Exodus 20:18.

129. A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, pp. 32-33. Zornberg's comment is based on a midrash of Rashi on Exodus 20:15-16 (= KJV Exodus 20:18): "And all the people could see the sounds and the flames, the sound of the shofar and the smoking mountain; the people saw and they moved and they stood from afar. They said to Moses, 'You speak to us and we shall hear; let God not speak to us lest we die'" (Rashi, *Exodus Commentary*, pp. 240-241). The "sounds" are read as coming from the "mouth of the Almighty." The movement is one of trembling, not to be understood as the same one that led them to be standing "from afar." Rashi says that the people "drew back twelve miles, the length of their camp, and the ministering angels would come and assist them to return, as it says 'The kings of legions move about' (Psalm 68:13)" (ibid., p. 241). "The *Talmud* reads the word 'kings' as 'angels,' and the intransitive verb 'move about' as the transitive verb 'move others' (see *Mechilta; Shabbos* 88a)" (Editor's note in Rashi, *Exodus Commentary*, p. 241).

130. <http://dwellingintheword.wordpress.com/category/bible/uncategorized/page/6/>
131. A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, pp. 23-24.
132. “R. Simeon b. Yohai observed: As long as a man refrains from sin he is an object of awe and fear. The moment he sins he is himself subject to awe and fear. Before Adam sinned he used to hear the voice of the divine communication while standing on his feet and without flinching. As soon as he sinned, he heard the voice of the divine communication and hid ... (Genesis 3:8). R. Abin said: Before Adam sinned, the Voice sounded to him gentle; after he had sinned it sounded to him harsh. Before Israel had sinned, *The appearance of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount* (Exodus 24:17). R. Abba b. Kahana observed: Seven partitions of fire were consuming one another and Israel looked on undaunted and undismayed. As soon as they had sinned, however, they could not even look at the face of the intermediary [i.e., Moses] (Exodus 34:30)” (H. Freedman et al., *Midrash*, Numbers (Naso), 11:3, p. 419).
133. Mark 9:2-13.
134. Exodus 24:18, 33:7-11.
135. C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Reflections*, pp. 299-301. I am indebted to David Larsen for pointing me to this article.
136. *Ibid.*, p. 303. Fletcher-Louis cites the following from Philo:
 “Here I *stand* there before you, on the rock in Horeb” (Exodus 17:6), which means, “this I, the manifest, Who am here, am there also, am everywhere, for I have filled all things. I *stand* ever the same immutable, before you or anything that exists came into being, established on the topmost and most ancient source of power, whence showers forth the birth of all that is. ...” And Moses too gives his testimony to the unchangeableness of the deity when he says “they saw the place where the God of Israel stood” (Exodus 24:10), for by the *standing* or establishment he indicates his immutability. But indeed so vast in its excess is the stability of the Deity that He imparts to chosen natures a share of His steadfastness to be their richest possession. For instance, He says of His covenant filled with His bounties, the highest law and principle, that is, which rules existent things, that this god-like image shall be firmly planted with the righteous soul as its pedestal ... And it is the earnest desire of all the God-beloved to fly from the stormy waters of engrossing business

with its perpetual turmoil of surge and billow, and anchor in the calm safe shelter of virtue's roadsteads. See what is said of wise Abraham, how he was "*standing* in front of God" (Genesis 18:22), for when should we expect a mind to *stand* and no longer sway as on the balance save when it is opposite God, seeing and being seen? ... To Moses, too, this divine command was given: "Stand here with me" (Deuteronomy 5:31), and this brings out both the points suggested above, namely the unswerving quality of the man of worth, and the absolute stability of Him that IS. (modified by Fletcher-Louis from Philo, *Dreams*, 2:32, 221-2:33, 227, pp. 543, 545).

Fletcher-Louis comments on parallels between Philo, 4Q377 from Qumran, and the Pentateuch:

Like Philo, 4Q377 is working with Deuteronomy 5:5, the giving of the Torah, and perhaps Exodus 17:6. Both texts think standing is a posture indicative of a transcendent identity in which the righteous can participate and of which Moses is the pre-eminent example. With the stability of standing is contrasted the corruptibility of motion, turmoil and storms, which is perhaps reflected in the tension between Israel's "standing" (lines 4 and 10) and her "trembling" (line 9) before the Glory of God in the Qumran text. Whether this and other similar passages in Philo (cf. esp. *Sacr.* 8-10; *Post.* 27-29) are genetically related to 4Q377 is not certain, but remains a possibility. (C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Reflections*, p. 304)

137. Obviously a different sense of "stand" is used here.
138. Psalm 82:6-7.
139. Zornberg's translation. Freedman's translation is: "You have followed the course of Adam who did not withstand his trials for more than three hours, and at nine hours death was decreed upon him (H. Freedman et al., *Midrash*, Genesis, 18:6, p. 146). [Nine hours would be about three in the afternoon, the day being counted from 6 am to 6 pm]" (H. Freedman et al., *Midrash*, Exodus (Mishpatim), 32:1, p. 404).
140. W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3:3:36, p. 1166.
141. From J. F. Dolkart, *James Tissot*, p. 234.
142. H. N. Ridderbos, *John*, p. 576.
143. John 18:4-6.
144. From J. F. Dolkart, *James Tissot*, p. 215.
145. As Beale and Carson explain: Jesus's self-identification in 18:5,

“I am,” probably has connotations of deity ... This is strongly suggested by the soldiers’ falling to the ground in 18:6, a common reaction to divine revelation (see Ezekiel 1:28, 44:4; Daniel 2:46, 8:18, 10:9; Acts 9:4, 22:7, 26:14; Revelation 1:17, 19:10, 22:8). This falling of the soldiers is reminiscent of certain passages in Psalms (see Psalms 27:2, 35:4; cf. 56:9; see also Elijah’s experience in 2 Kings 1:9-14). Jewish literature recounts the similar story of the attempted arrest of Simeon (Genesis Rabbah 91:6). The reaction also highlights Jesus’s messianic authority in keeping with texts such as Isaiah 11:4 (cf. 2 Esdras 13:3-4). (G. K. Beale *et al.*, *NT Use of the OT*, John 18-19, p. 499)

146. R. E. Brown, *Death*, 1:261. The entire passage from Raymond Brown is instructive (*Death*, 1:261-262):

OT antecedents for this reaction have been proposed, e.g., Psalm 56:10(9): “My enemies will be turned back ... in the day when I shall call upon you”; Psalm 27:2: “When evildoers come at me ... my foes and my enemies themselves stumble and fall ...”; Psalm 35:4: “Let those be turned back ... and confounded who plot evil against me.” Falling down (*piptein*) as a reaction to divine revelation is attested in Daniel 2:46, 8:18; Revelation 1:17; and that is how John would have the reader understand the reaction to Jesus’s pronouncement. *Piptein chamai* is combined with the verb “to worship” in Job 1:20. No matter what one thinks of the historicity of this scene, it should not be explained away or trivialized. To know or use the divine name, as Jesus does, is an exercise of awesome power. In Acts 3:6 Peter heals a lame man “in the name of Jesus of Nazareth,” i.e., by the power of the name that Jesus has been given by God; and “there is no other name under heaven among human beings by which we must be saved.” Eusebius (*Praeparatio Evangelica* 9:27:24-26 in J. H. Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 2:901; GCS 43.522) attributes to Artapanus, who lived before the 1st century BC, the legend that when Moses uttered before Pharaoh the secret name of God, Pharaoh fell speechless to the ground (R. D. Bury, *ExpTim* 24 (1912-13), 233). That legend may or may not have been known when John wrote, but it illustrates an outlook that makes John’s account of the arrest intelligible. This same Jesus will say to Pilate, “You have no power over me at all except what was given to you from above” (John

19:11). Here he shows how powerless before him are the troops of the Roman cohort and the police attendants from the chief priests — the representatives of the two groups who will soon interrogate him and send him to the cross. Indeed, an even wider extension of Jesus's power may be intended. Why does John suddenly, in the midst of this dramatic interchange, mention the otiose presence of Judas, “now standing there with them was also Judas, the one who was giving him over” (John 18:5)? John 17:12 calls Judas “the son of perdition,” a phrase used in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 to describe the antichrist who exalts himself to the level of God. Is the idea that the representative of the power of evil must also fall powerless before Jesus? I have already pointed out a close Johannine parallel to the Mark/Matthew saying about the coming near of the one who gives Jesus over, namely, John 14:30: “For the Prince of this world is coming.” In John 12:31, in the context of proclaiming the coming of the hour (John 12:23) and of praying about that hour (John 12:27), Jesus exclaims, “Now will the Prince of this world be driven out” (or “cast down,” a textual variant; see also 16:11).

Keener (*John*, p. 1082; p. 1082 n. 124) offers additional precedents for the “involuntary prostration” of Jesus's enemies:

Other ancient texts report falling backward in terror — for instance, fearing that one has dishonored God (*Sipra Sh. M.D.* 99:5:12; cf. perhaps 1 Samuel 4:18)

Talbert, *John*, 233, adds later traditions in which priests fell on their faces when hearing the divine name (*b. Qidd.* 71a; *Eccl. Rab.* 3:11, S3).

Matthew Brown points out further parallels to Mount Sinai and the temple during the culminating scenes of the Atonement on the Mount of Olives (M. B. Brown, *Gate*, p. 176):

Shortly before his crucifixion, the Savior took the twelve apostles, and perhaps others, with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane, which is located on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. When they had entered into the garden

area, the Lord instructed the majority of His disciples to wait for Him while He took Peter, James, and John further into the Garden. Then, at some unspecified location, Christ told Peter, James, and John to stay where they were while He “went a little further” into Gethsemane by Himself (see Matthew 26:30-39; Mark 14:26-36). It was in this third area of the Garden that the Savior was visited and strengthened by an angel and where He shed His sacrificial blood (see JST Luke 22:43-44). This pattern is intriguing because it seems to match the tripartite division of the people during the Mount Sinai episode (Ground Level — Israelites, Half-Way — Seventy Elders, Top — Moses) and the tripartite division in the temple complex (Courtyard — Israelites, Holy Place — Priests, Holy of Holies — High Priest). It was, of course, in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement that the final rite was performed to purge the sins of the Israelites with sacrificial blood (see Leviticus 16:15).

147. See C. S. Keener, *John*, pp. 40-47 for an assessment of the evidence that John’s tradition was rooted in pre-70 Jewish Palestine. Among others, Keener cites James Charlesworth, who “suggests that today nearly all John scholars ‘have concluded that John may contain some of the oldest traditions in ... the Gospels’” (C. S. Keener, *John*, p. 47).
148. In viewing this detachment as composed of the temple guards, rather than a Roman cohort, I am following Ridderbos: “As in the Septuagint and Josephus, this guard is, like its captain (the ‘*chiliarch*’ in v. 12), given Roman military names. John calls these temple police ‘*the [speira]*’, that is, the only qualified armed group, under the circumstances, at the Sanhedrin’s disposal, along with the Sanhedrin’s own court officers” (H. N. Ridderbos, *John*, p. 575). For a more extensive discussion that reaches the same conclusion, see C. S. Keener, *John*, pp. 1078-1080.
149. S. K. Brown, *Arrest*, p. 201. See, e.g., D&C 88:49.
150. W. J. Hamblin, *John 17:6, Name*, pp. 4-5.
151. “And the priests and people standing in the courtyard [on the Day of Atonement], when they would hear the Expressed Name [of the Lord] come out of the mouth of the high priest, would kneel and bow down and fall upon on their faces” (J. Neusner, *Mishnah*, Yoma 6:2d, p. 275; cf. *Ibid.*, Yoma 3:8, p. 269, 4:2, pp. 270-271).
152. See Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 7.

153. W. B. Yeats, *Second Coming*, pp. 158-159.
154. D. A. Bednar, *Stand*. See also citations such as the following: “For I will reveal myself from heaven with power and great glory ... and the wicked shall not *stand*” (D&C 29:11); Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand; and who can abide the day of his coming, and who can *stand* when he appeareth?” (D&C 128:24; cf. Malachi 3:2, 3 Nephi 24:2).
155. D&C 45:31-32, 70, 74.
156. Cf. Genesis 27:33, Alma 11:46.
157. D&C 88:89; cf. Alma 36:7. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 57-58 n. 1:21a, p. 388 n. 5:41b.
158. D&C 87:6.
159. D&C 87:8.
160. D&C 101:17, 20-23.
161. Isaiah 33:20, 54:2.
162. D&C 57:3. For a broader discussion of this topic, see S. L. Olsen, *Mormon Ideology*, pp. 19-41.
163. D&C 101:21.
164. See D&C 133:9.
165. D&C 124:36; cf. D&C 45:66, 115:6. Explicitly mentioning these two places of safety in a close parallel to the text of Matthew 24:15, D&C 133:12-13 reads:

Let them, therefore, who are among the Gentiles flee unto Zion.

And let them who be of Judah flee unto Jerusalem, unto the mountains of the Lord’s house.

166. D&C 84:2, emphasis added; cf. Revelation 14:1.
167. From J. F. Dolkart, *James Tissot*, p. 204.
168. Joseph Smith-Matthew 1:32. Commenting on this verse, Ogden and Skinner write: “That is, as in the first century after Christ (v. 12), so in the last century before his second coming: Jerusalem will be besieged and suffer much destruction” (D. K. Ogden et al., *Gospels*, p. 518).

Without the benefit of the light shed by Joseph Smith — Matthew, non-LDS scholars have sometimes concurred with the idea that the event is fulfilled twice: once shortly after Jesus’s death and again in the last days (e.g., J. B. Payne, *Imminent Appearing*, p. 152; L. T. Dennis et al., *ESV, Matthew 24:15n.*, p. 1873). C. S. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 577-578, while seeing “the whole

interim between the Temple's demise [in AD 70] and [Christ's] return as an extended tribulation period," also realizes that the tribulation of AD 66-70 is blended, in Matthew 24, "with the final one, which it prefigures":

Early Jewish texts also telescope the generations of history with the final generation (O. S. Wintermute, *Jubilees*, 23:11-32, pp. 100-102). As in Mark, the tribulation of 66-70 remains somehow connected with the future *parousia*, if only as a final prerequisite. Further, the context may suggest that Jesus employs his description eschatologically, as in some Jewish end-time texts; in this case, the disasters of 66-73 could not have exhausted the point of his words.

169. From J. F. Dolkart, *James Tissot*, p. 150.
170. Luke 2:52, emphasis mine. Cf. 1 Samuel 2:21, 26, where a similar description is given of the child Samuel. The Hebrew term *gadol* in v. 26 has to do with becoming great in size, maturity, or ability, not just growing older (see, e.g., F. Brown et al., *Lexicon*, 152d).
171. A. E. Harvey sees the first part of this phrase, which he translates with a definite article as "*the* perfect man," as "perhaps referring to ... the second Adam, who is Christ" (A. E. Harvey, *Companion 2004*, p. 620 n. 7).
172. Ephesians 4:13. The idea that the verse is referring to bodily stature seems fitting, since there is an explicit reference to the "body of Christ" in v. 12 and the metaphorical "body" of the Church in v. 16.
173. Matthew 6:27. I.e., "Who grows by worrying about one's height" (F. W. Danker et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 436). The use of the English word "stature" connects with the growth of the flowers in the next verse and "with the height of growth of the crops [in the previous one] ... In the LXX and the Sym. of Ezekiel 13:18, *helikia* is the translation of the Hebrew *qomah*, and perhaps there is a confusion between *qomah*, 'stature' or 'height,' and *quamah*, meaning 'standing corn' and the meaning that no one could, without God, add to the height of his crops" (S. T. Lachs, *Rabbinic Commentary*, p. 132 n. 27). The Book of Mormon follows the KJV in rendering the key term as "stature" (3 Nephi 13:27).

The operative word for measurement is the Greek *pēchus* (forearm), hence the translation of "cubit" in the KJV. Nevertheless, some well-respected scholars take *pēchus* figuratively as "span" and translate the contextually sensitive Greek term *hēlikia* in terms of adding to the length of one's life rather than to one's height (e.g.,

C. S. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 237; R. T. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 268-269; H. D. Betz et al., *Sermon*, p. 476). See also F. W. Danker et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 435-436 who describe “age” as a first meaning of the term, but then admit that some scholars hold Matthew 6:27 and Luke 12:25 as referring to bodily stature (as in some non-biblical sources), noting also that “many would prefer ‘stature’ [in this sense] for Luke 2:52; Ephesians 4:13.”

In any case, whether we take age or height as the metaphor, the theme in all these verses is “maturity, as opposed to remaining children (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; 13:11; 14:20; Philemon 3:15; Colossians 1:28)” (A.-J. Levine et al., *Jewish Annotated*, p. 350 n. 13-14). After examining the alternatives, J. Nolland, *Matthew*, p. 311 also highlights the “obvious links with the idea of maturity” in Matthew 6:27. “Standing alone it can refer to the requisite age(-range) for some activity or state of affairs (to be physically mature, be of age to take responsibility, etc.). The physical sense ‘stature’ is also derived from the idea of growing up and thus becoming bigger over time.”

174. From J. F. Dolkart, *James Tissot*, p. 202.
175. Cf. Ephesians 4:16.
176. On the role of revelation in providing the specifications for temple building, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 561-563.
177. Exodus chapters 25-31.
178. Ezekiel chapters 40-48.
179. Revelation 11:1-2. See also Zechariah chapter 2.
180. Image from J. V. Canby, *Ur-Nammu*, Plate 33.
181. J. M. Bradshaw et al., Investiture Panel.
182. Thorkild Jacobsen, cited in K. E. Slanski, Rod and Ring, p. 45.
183. Ezekiel 40:3. See D. I. Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, pp. 512, 515. Thanks to Matthew B. Brown for this reference.
184. H. W. Nibley, Circle. See also, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, passim.
185. K. E. Slanski, Rod and Ring, p. 51. Black agrees with Slanski's interpretation, stating that the “rod and ring” are “thought to depict a pair of measuring instruments, a rule and a tape, taken as symbolic of divine justice” (J. A. Black et al., *Gods*, p. 156).
186. Matthew 6:27.
187. J. W. Welch, *Light*, p. 160.
188. Ephesians 4:13.
189. Revelation 11:1; cf. Ezekiel 40-42, Zechariah 1:16. Jay and Donald

- Parry, citing Kenneth Strand, note that these three elements of the temple — temple, altar, and worshippers — are the same three entities that are to be purified on the Day of Atonement, as recorded in Leviticus 16 (J. A. Parry et al., *Book of Revelation*, p. 135. See vv. 6, 11, 16-18).
190. “In the Old Testament generally, ‘measuring’ was metaphorical for a decree of protection” (G. K. Beale, *Temple*, p. 314). See 2 Samuel 8:2; Isaiah 28:16-17; Jeremiah 31:38-40; Zechariah 1:16. For ‘measuring’ as judgment, see 2 Samuel 8:2; 2 Kings 21:13; Lamentations 2:8; Amos 7:7-9.
 191. See 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5. This is also, for example, the view of Metzger (B. M. Metzger, *Breaking*, pp. 68-69).
 192. See D&C 88:28-31.
 193. Psalm 24:3-4.
 194. Revelation 11:2.
 195. D&C 101:24.
 196. D&C 123:17, emphasis added. Compare Exodus 14:13.
 197. E. T. Benson, *Teachings* 1988, p. 106.
 198. M. Zlotowitz et al., *Bereishis*, 18:32, 1:673. Note that a *minyán*, the Jewish prayer circle, requires a minimum of ten men. Tvedtnes also notes: “The angels of the presence ‘stand’ in God’s presence (e.g., Luke 1:19 and numerous pseudepigrapha). In Judaism, the *amidah* (standing prayer) brings one into God’s presence. In the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*, the first couple stand inside the cave of treasures to pray. After being cast out of the garden, this was their only way of approaching the presence of God” (J. A. Tvedtnes, 8 March 2010; see J. A. Tvedtnes, *Temple Prayer*, p. 80).
 199. B. Gittin 43a, as cited in A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, p. 385 n. 83.
 200. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
 201. Rashi, *Exodus Commentary*, p. 241.
 202. A. Kulik, *Retroverting Apocalypse of Abraham* 10:1-4, p. 17. The translation of the caption to this image reads: “I heard a voice saying, Here Oilu, sanctify this man and strengthen (him) from his trembling and the angel took me by the right hand and stood me on my feet and said to me, stand up, o friend of God who has loved you.” Kulik’s translation of the corresponding text in the *Apocalypse* reads: “And when I was still face down on the earth, I heard the voice of the Holy One, saying, ‘Go, Yahoel, the namesake of the mediation of my ineffable name, sanctify this man and strengthen

- him from his trembling!’ And the angel whom he sent to me in the likeness of a man came, and he took me by my right hand and stood me on my feet. And he said to me, ‘Stand up, <Abraham>, the friend of God who has loved you, let human trembling not enfold you. For behold I am sent to you to strengthen you and to bless you in the name of God.’ (ibid., 10:3-6, pp. 17-18). Compare Daniel 8:17-18; 10:9-11. For parallels between this ancient text and the book of Moses, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 694-696.
203. From J. F. Dolkart, *James Tissot*, p. 342.
204. A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis*, p. 32.
205. G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, pp. 102-103.
206. <http://www.edmundcamacho.com/2009/07/shivah-asar-btammuz.html>.
207. Hebrew (transliterated): *šiqqūš šômēm*; Greek: βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρήμωσις.
208. Daniel 9:27, 11:31, 12:11.
209. R. T. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 911 takes the primary reference of the prophecy of Daniel to be “the events of 167 BC, when Antiochus Epiphanes conquered Jerusalem and prohibited Jewish sacrificial worship, setting up an altar for pagan sacrifices (including the slaughter of pigs) on top of the altar of burnt offering (F. Josephus, *The Antiquities (New)*, 12:5:253, p. 404); it stood in the temple for three years until Judas Maccabeus regained control of Jerusalem, purified the temple, and restored its true worship.”
210. J. N. Sparks et al., *Orthodox Study Bible*, Matthew 24:15n., p. 1315. Beale elaborates:

The “desolating sacrilege” in 24:15 clearly alludes to the horror prophesied in Daniel 9:27 and repeated in 11:31; and 12:11, with Jesus explicitly mentioning the prophet’s name. In the OT it occurs first in the context of Daniel’s famous but notoriously difficult prophecy about seventy “weeks of years” (i.e., 490 years [9:24-27]). Seven times seven times ten almost certainly represents a symbolic number for a perfect period of time, and the abomination of desolation is related to something “set up on a wing,” presumably of the temple, since Jerusalem and its sanctuary are said to be destroyed (Daniel 9:26 ...). First Maccabees 1:54 understood this prophecy to have been fulfilled in the desecration of the temple sanctuary by Antiochus Epiphanes, the Seleucid ruler who sacrificed swine on the Jewish altar and ransacked

the capital city, leading to the Maccabean revolt of 167-164 BC [see also 2 Maccabees 8:17]. Jesus is envisioning a similarly horrifying event accompanying the destruction of the temple in the first century ... The disciples comment on the temple that they can see from the Mount of Olives. Jesus then predicts *its* destruction. Luke explicitly takes it this way. Nothing in the context supports the notion that a temple rebuilt centuries later, only to be destroyed again, is in view ... Foretelling the destruction of the temple, of course, places Jesus in a long line of prophets (cf. Micah 3:2; Jeremiah 7:8-15; 9:10-11; 26:6, 18 ...) (G. K. Beale et al., *NT Use of the OT*, Matthew 24:1-31, p. 86).

211. Matthew 24:15.
212. R. T. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 913; cf. P. G. Bolt, *Cross*, pp. 100-101 n. 36.
213. F. Josephus, *Wars (New)*, 4:3:6-8 (150-157), pp. 812-813, 4:3:12 (196-207), p. 815.
214. *Ibid.*, 6:6:1 (316), p. 900.
215. Luke 21:20: "Jerusalem surrounded by armies."
216. From J. F. Dolkart, *James Tissot*, p. 248.
217. See Matthew 26:61; Mark 14:58; John 2:19.
218. P. G. Bolt, *Cross*, p. 101.
219. Matthew 12:6.
220. C. S. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 575, referring to Daniel 9:26. Writes Payne (J. B. Payne, *Imminent Appearing*, pp. 147-148):

The subject of [Daniel 9:25-26] is stated to be the Messiah ... ; and the purpose of the action described is six-fold: "to restrain transgression, and to seal up sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy" (v. 24). The applicability of the first four to Christ is clear (Hebrews 9:26). The "sealing of vision," then, seems to refer to the termination of that anticipatory mode of prophetic revelation which reached its climax in John the Baptist (Matthew 11:13), and not, as sometimes asserted, to the fulfilling of all prophecies. Finally, the anointing of the "most holy," in the light of the messianic prophecy that follows, can refer to none other than Christ's anointing by the Holy Spirit (John 3:34).

He then accomplishes this mission by causing a covenant (the newer testament; Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 8:6-9, 22) to prevail with many (Daniel 9:27). That is, He makes the testament efficacious with His elect (cf. Isaiah 53:11). Such testamentary action brings to an end the anticipatory sacrificial system of the older testament (Daniel 9:27), a termination that was demonstrated historically when the veil of the temple was symbolically rent in twain at Christ's crucifixion (Matthew 27:51; cf. Hebrews 9:8). But it meant too that the ultimate death would have to take place: Messiah Himself would be cut off (Daniel 9:26). "For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth" (Hebrews 9:17)."

On the timing for the fulfillment of the prophecy, Payne writes (*Imminent Appearing*, pp. 148-149):

The most noteworthy feature of Daniel's prophecy is the inspired prophetic calendar that accompanies it. Daniel predicted a lapse of "seventy weeks [of years]," or 490 years, for the accomplishing of the redemptive work (Daniel 9:24). The beginning point would be indicated by the commandment to restore Jerusalem (v. 25), an event that was accomplished, a century after Daniel, in the reign of the Persian, Artaxerxes I (465-424 BC), under Nehemiah (444 BC). But there had been an earlier attempt, in the same reign, to restore the city's walls, which had been thwarted by the Samaritans (Ezra 4:11-12, 23). This attempt seems to have been made under Ezra (458 BC; cf. 9:9), on the basis of the extended powers granted him in Artaxerxes' decree (7:18, 25, even though nothing explicit is said about his restoring Jerusalem). Daniel then went on to predict that from this commandment, to the Messiah, would be "seven weeks, and three score and two weeks" (9:25), or 69 weeks of years, equaling 483 years. From 458 BC this brings one to AD 26, the very time which many would accept for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus Christ and the commencement of His incarnate ministry. Verses 26 and 27 then describe how, in the midst of the final week (that is, of the last seven year period, and therefore in the spring of AD 30), He would

bring to an end the Old Testament economy by His death. There could hardly have been a more miraculously accurate prediction than was this! The 490 years then conclude with the three and a half years that remained, during which period the testament was to be confirmed to Israel (cf. Acts 2:38).

221. From J. F. Dolkart, *James Tissot*, p. 249.
222. P. G. Bolt, *Cross*, p. 101.
223. From J. F. Dolkart, *James Tissot*, p. 217.
224. Matthew 24:16.
225. J. E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 545 n. 1; cf. Eusebius, *History*, 3:5, p. 68. Josephus, on the other hand, reports that false prophets had told Jerusalemites that they would be delivered if they stood firm (F. Josephus, *Wars (New)*, 6:5:2 (285-286), p. 898).
226. C. S. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 579.
227. On the other hand, Keener observes (*Gospel of Matthew*, p. 579):
- Palestine's central mountain range provided a natural place to flee (e.g., 1 Samuel 23:14; Ezekiel 7:15-16; F. Josephus, *Wars (New)*, 2:18:9 (504), p. 764; cf. Pseudo-Philo, *Biblical Antiquities*, 6:11, 18, pp. 92-93, 94, 27:11, p. 161), as mountainous areas with caves often did (Diod. Sic. 34/35.2.22; Dion. Hal. 7:10:3; Appian C. W. 4:17:130; Arrian Ales. 4:24:2). Although the exhortation is too general to be sure, the language might even allude to the familiar 1 Maccabees 2:28.
228. From J. F. Dolkart, *James Tissot*, p. 226.
229. P. G. Bolt, *Cross*, pp. 101-102.
230. Mark 14:50.
231. P. G. Bolt, *Cross*, pp. 102-103.
232. Daniel 12:2.
233. Daniel 12:1.
234. Mark 13:19 NRSV. Here, as in Matthew, the context implies that this suffering will be experienced by those in Jerusalem. To apply this prophecy to the sufferings of Christ during His Atonement would require the conjecture that the evangelists — or later editors — had misunderstood the overall meaning of the statement of Jesus in this verse, as they apparently misunderstood His earlier statement about “stand[ing] in the holy place.”
235. Joseph Smith — Matthew 1:32.

236. From J. F. Dolkart, *James Tissot*, p. 162.
237. C. S. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 576.
238. 1 Maccabees 1:37; F. Josephus, *The Antiquities (New)*, 9:7:3 (152), p. 321; cf. 2 Chronicles 23:14; cf. perhaps 1 Chronicles 22:8; 28:3.
239. 1 Maccabees 1:39, 2:12.
240. F. Josephus, *Wars (New)*, 4:3:6-12 (147-201), pp. 812-815, 4:5:4 (343), p. 823, 5:1:3 (17-18), p. 844, cf. 2:17:5 (424), p. 759.
241. F. Josephus, *Wars (New)*, 5:1:3 (17-19), p. 844.
242. Matthew 23:35.
243. JST Genesis 17:7. For more on this topic, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, Excursus 37, pp. 617-621.
244. According to D&C 77:15, these witnesses “are two prophets that are to be raised up to the Jewish nation in the last days, at the time of the restoration, and to prophesy to the Jews after they are gathered and have built the city of Jerusalem in the land of their fathers.”
245. Revelation 11:4. Cf. Zechariah 4:11-14.
246. It is written only that, after they are killed, “their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, Revelation 11:8 where also our Lord was crucified” — i.e., Jerusalem (Revelation 11:8). It is possible that the sanctuary imagery also should be read “spiritually” as encompassing all or some part of Jerusalem.
247. G. K. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, p. 567, emphasis added. With respect to the prior identification of Christ as a true and faithful witness, see Revelation 1:5, 3:14.
248. John 15:20.
249. Revelation 1:7.
250. Cf. John 16:20.

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UNDERSTANDING RITUAL HAND GESTURES OF THE ANCIENT WORLD: SOME BASIC TOOLS

David Calabro

Introduction

The ritual use of hand gestures in ancient times is a topic of peculiar interest to Latter-day Saints. A book by Alonzo Gaskill on the meaning of gospel ordinances includes several sections devoted to ritual hand gestures.¹ Gaskill explores the meaning of these gestures in ancient times in order to illuminate the meaning of these gestures for modern Latter-day Saints. In his discussion of ritual gestures used in covenant-making, he writes, “The meaning of such oath-making rituals is sometimes defined, and at other times left for the participant to discover. But each is clearly laden with symbolic meaning and, consequently, with a divine offering to the inquisitive participant who seeks understanding.”² According to Victor Ludlow, the ordinances of the temple tune our minds to the significance of the hands as used in worship.³

From 2008 to the present, I have been conducting research on the use of ritual hand gestures in the ancient Near East. Much of this research was gathered in my 2014 doctoral dissertation on Northwest Semitic hand-lifting gestures and handclasps.⁴ Occasionally, in conversations with fellow Latter-day Saints, I am asked to summarize the findings of my research. Those who ask me this usually wish to gain insights about the ordinances of the Church, particularly temple ordinances, through understanding the ritual gestures of the ancient societies. The possibility of such comparisons is also of interest to me. Indeed, the deeper I delve into the ritual practices of ancient societies, the more I find these practices and those of the Latter-day Saint temple to be mutually instructive.

Nevertheless, like many people who have written a doctoral dissertation, the request to summarize my findings usually leaves me tongue-tied. One reason for this is that research in the humanities involves discovering questions as well as answering them; describing the answers is thus difficult without laying the groundwork of the questions that were asked. This is particularly true with ritual gestures, a topic whose complexity few realize. Discussion of sacred priesthood ordinances

is subject to bounds of place and manner, which means that many members of the Church, even though they have reflected extensively on the meaning of ritual gestures, have not considered questions that arise from dialogue with those who hold alternate interpretations. In short, members of the Church readily recognize that ancient ritual gestures are relevant to their own, but they lack the tools to evaluate the ancient gestures in an appropriate way.

In this essay, I intend to provide some tools that can help interested Latter-day Saints to evaluate ancient gestures. Unlike most essays, this one does not aim to answer a research question. Instead, it aims to suggest questions, with the intent of preparing interested readers to discuss possible answers while having a clear view of the issues involved. Based on my interactions with many Latter-day Saints, even including those with academic training, I am convinced that many of the questions I will suggest are novel. The presentation of these questions as an organized scheme is also a new contribution. The overarching assumption of this essay is that Latter-day Saints, who belong to a tradition saturated with ritual gestures, a tradition which also lays claim to ancient origins, should be among those who are most educated on ancient ritual gestures.

Sources and the Question of Gesture Reconstruction

Ancient sources relevant to the study of ritual gestures can be divided into two basic kinds. First, there are textual sources. The books of the Old and New Testaments are examples of ancient textual sources that include information about ritual gestures. For example, in Genesis 14:22, Abram says, “I have raised my hand to Yahweh El Elyon.”⁵ The raising of the hand described here is a ritual gesture, in this case one of covenant-making.⁶ Other relevant textual sources can be found in a variety of ancient languages and genres, from Homer’s *Iliad* to hieroglyphic texts on stelae from ancient Egypt. Many of these sources can be found in published collections in libraries.

Textual sources are especially useful for reconstructing the larger sequence of events in which ritual gestures were situated. For example, Abram’s reference to the gesture in Genesis 14:22 is followed by an oath, which helps to identify this as a covenant-making gesture. However, textual sources also carry some inherent ambiguities. The text does not tell us, for instance, whether Abram raises his hand with the palm inward, outward, sideways, or with some special finger articulation. Neither does it tell us how high Abram raised his hand or for how long. These questions can only be decided by comparison with other sources. Only rarely does

an ancient text go into detail about the form of a gesture, and even the rare detailed descriptions are never enough to reconstruct a gesture with full accuracy.

The second kind of source is visual representations, often called “iconographic sources.” These include sculptures, cast figures, engravings, paintings, and other art forms. These sources are extremely abundant in the ancient world — as far as my own research area goes, the iconographic sources far outnumber the textual sources. As one example, a number of carved ivories from the Assyrian fortress of Nimrud show a male figure wearing a crown, kneeling and raising both hands with the palms outward.⁷

Iconographic depictions are of great value for understanding the forms of ritual gestures. However, there are limitations to this. Ancient visual representations do not depict movement, so it is impossible to know whether what is represented is one moment in a motion sequence or simply a static gesture. Ancient iconography is also prone to sacrifice accuracy for the sake of visually pleasing composition. For example, an image of two figures facing each other and performing the same gesture in mirror image may be suspected of having switched the right and left hands of one figure in order to preserve symmetry.

The key issue to bear in mind with textual and iconographic sources is that these sources provide evidence for gestures, but they do not include actual gestures. For example, the Hebrew phrase used to describe the gesture in Genesis 14:22 is *herim yad*, “raise the hand.” Even though some scholars are accustomed to using locutions like “the gesture *herim yad*,” and some even go so far as to assume that there is a one-to-one correspondence between phrase and gesture, this is inaccurate and potentially misleading.⁸ Just as we might describe a given gesture in English as “he raised his hand” or “he put up his hand,” ancient textual sources also use different phrases to describe what is really the same gesture; they also occasionally use the same basic phrase to describe different gestures. Likewise, with iconographic sources, one has to make adjustments to account for the inherent ambiguities of the ancient artistic style.

Therefore, understanding ancient ritual gestures always involves reconstructing these gestures in the imagination, based on clues found in the ancient sources. The two main aspects that have to be reconstructed are the gesture’s form and its context. Given the ambiguities inherent in the sources, one should consider multiple possibilities. One should ask questions like the following: What might this gesture have looked like?

What kind of setting was it performed in? In asking these questions, both scholars and laypeople can learn much from contemporary artists, playwrights, and moviemakers, who are accustomed to thinking about these issues. Considering the possibilities of form and context is critical, since these aspects establish the basis for comparison across sources, as well as comparison with ritual gestures that can be observed in modern religious practice.

Gestures as a System

Most studies of ancient gestures focus on one particular gesture, marshalling textual and iconographic evidence to illuminate the gesture's form or its meaning in context. However, it is important to keep in mind that ritual gestures usually exist as part of a system of nonverbal signs in a culture. Their meaning derives as much from similarities and contrasts with other gestures as from aspects of context. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for example, in ordinances involving the laying on of hands, each officiator typically uses two hands. But when there is a large number of Priesthood holders officiating in the circle, each uses only the right hand, while the left hand is placed on the shoulder of the person to the left. When an infant is being blessed, hands are placed under the infant rather than on the head. A full account of the gesture of the laying on of hands should account for all of these variations, which are part of the same system.⁹

One important consideration in dealing with ancient ritual gestures is the overall complexity of the system. This consideration is related to the characterization of the system as a whole, including the origins of gestures and how they have developed from those origins. In Hinduism and Buddhism, there exists a large body of gestures known as *mudra*, which appear in ritual and especially in religious dance. The *mudra* are also described in mythology and depicted in iconography. There are many dozens of *mudra*, each having a very specific form and meaning. The large number of signs in the system allows each sign to function almost like a word in spoken language; gestures can be strung together to form sequences of meanings, such as to tell a story in dance. We know a great deal about *mudra* because Hindu and Buddhist scholars wrote treatises in which the gestures are described in detail.¹⁰ Unfortunately, most ancient societies have not bequeathed to modern times a treatise on ritual gestures. Evidence of the total number of gestures in ancient Near Eastern ritual is relatively scant. But it makes a great deal of difference whether we assume on the one hand that the available evidence

represents the total system, or whether we assume on the other hand that this represents only the tip of the iceberg. If the latter is true, then each gesture may have a very specific meaning.

At the beginning of the 20th century, some scholars suggested that ancient Near Eastern gestures were originally part of an extensive system like the *mudra* (other models included Masonic ritual and the nonverbal signs of Chinese secret societies). According to this point of view, gestures that originally functioned as part of an extensive system in temple rites have gradually been reduced in number and used in less sacred contexts.¹¹ More recent scholarship on Near Eastern gestures has taken a nearly opposite view: the ritual gestures are thought to be few in number and to have derived their meanings from mundane contexts. For example, raising both hands with the palms upward was thought to have begun as a simple begging gesture and to have become a prayer gesture when transferred to a temple context.¹²

Given the limited extent of available evidence, it is unlikely that any one of these views can be conclusively proven. Considering both viewpoints opens up a number of interesting questions, such as the following: Is the ancient system of ritual gestures explainable in terms of another form of behavior, such as dance, spoken language, drama, or mundane human interactions? If not, might there be vestiges of an earlier system that is explainable in these terms? In light of modern gestures that are analogous to the ancient ones and that may be historically related, could there be a development in the overall nature of the system from ancient to modern times?

Do Ancient Ritual Gestures Have Correct and Incorrect Interpretations?

One of the most interesting things I have found in my research is the great diversity of interpretations that have been suggested for ritual gestures. As one example, for the gesture of raising one hand with the palm outward (as found in Genesis 14:22 and elsewhere in textual and iconographic sources), at least 12 distinct interpretations are found in the literature. Several scholars regard it as a gesture of “adoration” or “worship,” others call it a “gesture of greeting or blessing,” some describe it as an apotropaic sign (a sign whose purpose is to ward away evil), one views it as a symbol of a deity, one suggests that it is a sign of non-treachery or purity, and the list goes on.¹³ Is there any way to say that one interpretation is correct and that another is incorrect? There are some criteria that can be applied. One of these is the form of the gesture. The

interpretation that the gesture signifies either a lack of treachery or the purity of the one making the gesture, for example, is less viable if the palm of the hand is turned inward, and it is likewise less viable if the gesture involves making a fist and raising it high above the head as if to smite. As it turns out, based on comparison with iconographic sources, the gesture likely involved raising the hand in front with the palm facing toward the addressee, so this interpretation (which was made by David Seely) is among the more likely ones.¹⁴ Another criterion is the ritual context of the gesture. The fact that Abram takes an oath after making reference to the gesture, using standard Hebrew oath formulae, means that an interpretation that fits with the idea of oath-taking is more likely than one that involves, say, destroying enemies. Nevertheless, we should be careful not to assume that the idea of oath-taking is identical with the meaning of the gesture, since the gesture may impart its own distinctive meaning within the oath-taking context.

Even after applying the criteria of form and context, the number of possible interpretations of any given gesture is rather high. All of the interpretations mentioned above are still viable in terms of these two criteria, despite the fact that some who have suggested these interpretations have argued as if their interpretation is valid to the exclusion of others. In rare cases, the range of interpretation of a gesture may be narrowed if the gesture has an obvious relationship to something whose interpretation is indisputable. For example, it is thought that the ancient Mesopotamian oath gesture of “touching the throat” involved a motion signifying that the consequence of breaking the oath would be the cutting of the oath-breaker’s throat.¹⁵ Here the gesture’s visual similarity to cutting the throat would guarantee the interpretation of the gesture. Moreover, ritual gestures may change their form over time, and a gesture that once bore a strong resemblance to another action may develop into a less obvious sign. In such cases, one could possibly say that the historical origin of the gesture suggests the correctness of a certain interpretation. However, people do not always know the origins of the ritual gestures they perform, and it is questionable whether an interpretation based on historical development is more correct than one that applies directly to the current gesture as experienced by those who perform it.

Can one appeal to factors external to the gesture itself to decide if one interpretation is uniquely correct? Often, scholars who study ritual gestures appeal to ideas found in ancient sources, claiming that because an interpretation matches that of a particular source, it must be representative of the ancient culture in a way that other interpretations are

not. For example, Johan Lust cites a host of ancient sources to prove that the core meaning of the raised-hand gesture has nothing to do with oath-taking but rather signifies entering into action to the addressee's favor or detriment.¹⁶ The main problem with this kind of approach is that the ancient sources can be used to prove a great number of interpretations, and these interpretations may all be indicative of the ancient culture. It is useful to think of this in general terms, as if the gesture were practiced in our own time. Latter-day Saints are especially suited to think in these terms, since ritual gestures are an important part of our own living religious tradition. (In fact, Abram's oath gesture of raising the hand appears analogous to the act of raising the right hand to sustain leaders and to administer the ordinance of baptism, both of which are connected with covenant-making.) As long as an interpretation is plausible in terms of the gesture's form and context, what is there to exclude it? If a dozen people participating in a ritual interpret the same gesture, each in a different way, who is to say that one participant is correct and the others are not? If our own religious practice is taken as a model, it would seem likely that the interpretation of gestures was a matter of private introspection and inspiration; ideas may have been shared in certain settings, but there would be no penalty for having a divergent interpretation or indeed for having no interpretation at all. This means that citing an ancient source for an interpretation does not prove that the interpretation is exclusively correct, and claims of exclusive correctness probably get us further from the ancient state of affairs rather than closer to it.

It is possible to imagine the interpretation of a gesture in the ancient society being rendered consistent by convention, either with the intervention of an authoritative institution or simply by popular consensus. A study by Desmond Morris on ritual gestures in Europe included a survey of large numbers of people to determine how people in different locales interpreted various gesture forms used in daily life.¹⁷ When a majority of the members of a community agree on the interpretation of a gesture, this lends correctness to the interpretation, just as the correct meaning of words in a language is based on consensus in the community of those who speak the language. However, interpretations of ritual gestures often are not subject to convention. According to the anthropologist Roy Rappaport, one of the main characteristics of ritual is that it is "not encoded by the performers."¹⁸ This means that ritual gestures are viewed as deriving from a world outside that of human interaction. When asked what ritual gestures mean, informants often reply that they do not know, that they are performing the gestures simply because that

is what they have always done.¹⁹ If the meaning of ritual gestures is not rendered consistent by repetition among members of the community, and if interpretations are not censored by a higher authority, then there is nothing to stop people from developing a diversity of interpretations. The question of correctness may then be essentially moot. An interpretation found in an ancient source would be speculative to the same degree as that of a modern scholar (provided that the scholar is knowledgeable about the ancient culture and has a workable reconstruction of the ritual).

The statement that ritual is “not encoded by the performers” suggests the possibility that the interpretation of a ritual gesture may be regarded as a mystery whose correctness is based not on convention but on divine ratification. This idea is implicit in the concept, familiar to Latter-day Saints, of “ordinances” — that is, rites that are prescribed by God through revelation. If God is the author of a gesture, then God is the ultimate determiner of its interpretation. In some cases, a revelation having to do with the interpretation of a gesture may be included as part of the ritual itself or in a text associated with the ritual’s origins. This is seen, for example, in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. One of the texts describing the inauguration of this ordinance includes an interpretation of passing the bread and pouring the wine: “This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me ... This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:19-20, KJV). The sacrament prayers used in the Church today (which are based on passages in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants) mention eating and drinking in remembrance of the Son. However, it is almost impossible for explanations such as these to exhaust the meaning of a gesture. The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper can be interpreted beyond the words of the ritual and its inaugural texts, and these interpretations are not necessarily invalid just because they are not explicit in the texts.²⁰ Thus divine revelation as encoded in the ritual can be cited as a standard of correctness, but it does not exclude other interpretations.

While it is usually impossible to narrow the interpretations of a gesture down to a single correct one, it is usually possible to find an interpretation that is more fundamental to the inherent properties of the gesture than others. Arriving at this fundamental kind of interpretation involves, once again, paying close attention to the form of the gesture and its context as reconstructed from the available evidence. It also involves paying more attention to what the gesture *does* than to what it *resembles* or *signifies*. If we take as an example the hand-lifting gesture in Genesis 14:22, we can see that the form of the gesture as revealed in

iconography, with the palm of the hand facing toward an addressee and with the fingers pointing upward, has important implications for the way the ritual as a whole is organized. The gesture designates not only an agent (the one making the gesture) but also a single addressee who is roughly on the same level as the agent. It also has the potential to call attention to a participant in the ritual who is located above the agent and addressee (such as a heavenly witness), since the fingers point upward. We can thus say that the gesture sets up a ritual interaction in which there is one agent, one addressee, and sometimes a heavenly participant. All of the interpretations of this gesture mentioned above presuppose this kind of interaction format. Further, if we assemble all of the evidence for the contexts in which this gesture is performed, we find that the function that best describes what this gesture does in all cases is that of marking a performative act — that is, the gesture signals a ritual action that brings about a new state of affairs, such as putting the agent or the addressee under an obligation.²¹

In summary, some questions that can be used to evaluate the extent of an interpretation's "correctness" are the following: Does this interpretation accord with the form of the gesture? Does it accord with the context? Does the interpretation exclude other interpretations, and if so, on what basis? Finally, is the interpretation fundamentally related to how the gesture functions in context, or is the gesture viewed in terms of a similarity or symbolic relationship to other concepts?

How Many Interpretations Can Ancient Ritual Gestures Have?

Since a ritual gesture can have multiple correct interpretations — some having to do with the gesture's basic functions and others having to do with its more abstract significance — the proper task of those interested in the meanings of gestures is not to identify a single correct interpretation but rather to identify the possible interpretations in an organized way. The number of possible interpretations is infinite, of course. However, a finite number of universal categories can be used to classify all the possible interpretations. These categories have been defined in the disciplines of semiotics (the study of signs) and linguistic anthropology. The ten sets of questions outlined below can facilitate understanding of hand gestures in ancient sources by helping the interested person to identify possible interpretations and to place these interpretations in proper perspective.

Most interpretations of ritual gestures focus on what a particular aspect of the gesture resembles or signifies. For example, Zeev Falk focuses on the upward motion of the hand-lifting gesture in Genesis 14:22,

stating that this signifies affirmation (based on a perceived likeness to clasping the hand of a judge in court).²² We may call these interpretations *referential*, since they concern things that the gesture refers to through likeness or symbolism.

Referential interpretations can be classified by the aspect of the gesture that forms the basis of the interpretation. Hand gestures can be broken down into seven aspects, which include the components of the gesture itself and the larger aspects of which the gesture forms a part. First, there are the *body parts* used to perform the gesture: the arm, the hand, and the fingers. Second, these body parts are formed into a certain *shape*. For example, in one gesture depicted on Egyptian reliefs of battle scenes, the hand is formed into the shape of a bull's head, with the thumb and little finger extended and the other fingers bent forward.²³ In the raised-hand oath gesture discussed above, the hand shape is basically flat, with the fingers extended and close together, and the elbow bent approximately to the square. A third component is the *position* of the shaped hand: whether it is held high, low, to the front, to the side, etc. Fourth, in many cases, the gesture involves a certain *motion* of the hand, such as moving it repeatedly from a high to a low position or changing its shape from an open hand to a closed fist. Fifth, the gesture may involve holding or manipulating an *object* (or pretending to do so). As for the larger aspects of which the gesture forms a part, we can mention the *body* of the agent performing the gesture and the overall *setting* of the ritual. We can outline these seven aspects as follows:

Aspects of Ritual Hand Gestures

Components of the gesture itself:

1. Body parts (arm, hand, fingers)
2. Shape
3. Position
4. Motion
5. Object

Larger Aspects:

6. Body
7. Setting

Each of these aspects can be made the basis of a referential interpretation. For example, Wolff suggests that the hand in ancient Hebrew society was a symbol of one's power. Thus raising the hand would be equivalent to exalting or vaunting one's own power, and "giving the hand" (2 Kings 10:15) would signify offering one's power in helping the

addressee.²⁴ This is an example of a referential interpretation based on the body part used to perform the gesture, namely the hand. In the cases of the larger aspects of which the gesture forms a part, the meaning of the gesture fits within a referential interpretation of the agent's body or the larger setting. For example, Falk's interpretation of the raised-hand gesture as one of affirmation fits within an interpretation of the ritual setting as a legal one, akin to a courtroom presided over by a judge.

The following questions can help one to identify possible referential interpretations:

1. What might the arm, hand, and fingers symbolize? Given this symbolism, what would it mean to shape, position, and move these body parts as done in the gesture? If the gesture involves use of an object, does this relate to the symbolism of the body parts?
2. Does the hand shape (including any special finger articulation) or the shape of the arm resemble anything in the observed world? Might the shape stand symbolically for a personage or an abstract idea?
3. Is the position of the gesture high or low, and is the hand positioned toward or away from an addressee? Might this position contrast with that of another gesture? If so, might this contrast have significance in the ancient society?
4. Is there an indication that the gesture involves motion? If so, does the motion resemble any kind of movement commonly observed elsewhere? Might the features of the motion (such as its speed, its repetition, or the overall amount of movement) carry cultural significance?
5. Is there an object, real or imagined, associated with the gesture? What is the significance of this object, and why would it be used in this gesture?
6. Might the person performing the gesture represent another personage? Aside from the hand gesture in question, do the performer's ritual actions resemble actions commonly observed elsewhere? How does the gesture in question fit with the role or overall actions of the performer?
7. Is the ritual setting analogous to a setting known elsewhere in the observed world or in mythology? If so, is the gesture similar to an action associated with this other setting?

In addition to referential interpretations, there are interpretations that focus on the fundamental function of the gesture, including both

what the gesture does to the context and how it is affected by the context. An example of this is the interpretation of the hand-lifting gesture that I suggested above, including the shaping of the context into a two- or three-part interaction and the function of marking a performative act. This kind of interpretation is known in semiotics as *indexical*; when a gesture either affects or is affected by an aspect of context, the gesture is said to *index* that aspect of its context.

Indexical interpretations can be classified by the aspect of context that is singled out as affecting or being affected by the gesture. A gesture's context can be analyzed in many ways. Three main aspects, however, are especially important with regard to the indexical functioning of gestures. The first aspect is the participants defined by the gesture. Some gestures are directed inward or lack a specific addressee, in which cases the format consists only of the agent of the gesture. The gestures I have studied, however, usually have a specific outward directionality and designate at least one addressee.²⁵ The gesture may be affected by the participant format, such as when one salutes an officer of higher rank in a military ceremony. The gesture may also impact the relative status of participants, their roles (such as when a person is ordained), or their physical states. Second, ritual gestures index the surrounding space. For instance, they may be directed toward one of the cardinal directions. They may also be performed close-up or at a distance, defining the breadth of the ritual space. Third, gestures index the ritual sequence as it progresses through time. The beginning of the gesture and the return of the hands to a resting position mark off the ritual act as such. Further, the gesture may function as a key allowing the agent to progress to a new stage of the ritual.

Questions to ask in order to identify indexical interpretations include the following:

1. Who does the gesture to whom? What are the relative statuses of the agent and addressee of the gesture? Does this status change during the course of the ritual? Does one of the participants take on a new role or an obligation through the performance of the ritual? How does it feel to perform the gesture and to be its addressee? Is there evidence that the gesture was thought to bring about supernatural changes in the physical world?
2. Where are the participants located, and what is the distance between them? Do those who perform the gesture form a distinct group, so that the gesture effectively creates a boundary between participants?
3. What parts of the ritual precede and follow the gesture? How

might the gesture recall, anticipate, or lead into other parts of the ritual?

In identifying indexical interpretations, one must pay attention to speech that accompanies the gesture, since the function of the ritual may be shared between gesture and speech. For instance, the oath and the gesture in Genesis 14:22-23 work in tandem to carry forward the function of obligating Abram.

Conclusion

Ritual hand gestures are a complex topic with great promise for future research. Among the most important tools for understanding the multifaceted meanings of gestures are questions that force one to probe into the gestures, their sources, and their interpretations. I have provided several sets of questions which, I hope, will be of service to those who wish to undertake this process.

Answers to these questions can be found in the sources cited. But answers are relatively easy to come by; what is more difficult is knowing how to evaluate these answers and place them in a larger perspective. I have focused on describing the issues and suggesting relevant questions, with the aim that interested people will be better prepared to obtain their own lasting insights.

Questioning the meanings of gestures is something that can be done by scholars and laymen alike. To be sure, answers to some questions are more easily accessible to scholars trained in the particulars of the society in question. Nevertheless, Latter-day Saints have an advantage in hailing from a tradition that encourages us to think deeply about the meanings of ritual gestures. When we regard the gestures of the ancients, we can feel not only fascination but also kinship.

Notes

1. Alonzo L. Gaskill, *Sacred Symbols: Finding Meaning in Rites, Rituals, and Ordinances* (Springville, Utah: CFI, 2011), 75-78 (with notes on pp. 86-89), 186-97 (with notes on pp. 199-213), 219-23 (with notes on pp. 243-47), 259-61 (with notes on pp. 267-68).
2. Gaskill, *Sacred Symbols*, 186.
3. Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1982), 473.
4. David Calabro, *Ritual Gestures of Lifting, Extending, and Claspings the Hand(s) in Northwest Semitic Literature and Iconography*

- (unpublished University of Chicago dissertation, 2014).
5. The translations from ancient languages herein are my own unless otherwise indicated.
 6. Calabro, *Ritual Gestures*, 63-66.
 7. See David Calabro, "Gestures of Praise: Lifting and Spreading the Hands in Biblical Prayer," in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament*, ed. David R. Seely, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, and Matthew J. Grey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013), 113.
 8. As just one example of this tendency, compare the extremely influential book by Mayer Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 25-44. On these pages Gruber discusses the "gestures" *paraś kappayim* "spread the palms" and *naśa' yadayim* "lift the hands." According to him, these expressions represent two gestures with different meanings. For a critique of this approach, see Calabro, "Gestures of Praise," 105-21.
 9. For discussion of gestures as a system in the Old Testament, see David Calabro, "'When You Spread Your Palms, I Will Hide My Eyes': The Symbolism of Body Gestures in Isaiah," *Studia Antiqua* 9 (2011): 16-32.
 10. See Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya, *The Mirror of Gesture: Being the Abhinaya Darpana of Nandikesvara* (New York: E. Weyhe, 1936); Ernest Dale Saunders, *Mudrā: A Study of Symbolic Gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960).
 11. See especially J. S. M. Ward, *The Sign Language of the Mysteries* (2 vols.; London: Baskerville Press, 1928).
 12. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 25-44.
 13. For discussion and references, see Calabro, *Ritual Gestures*, 636-51.
 14. David Rolph Seely, "The Raised Hand of God as an Oath Gesture," in *Fortunate the Eyes that See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Astrid B. Beck et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 417, no. 3.
 15. Paul Sanders, "So May God Do to Me!" *Biblica* 85/1 (2004): 91-98; Gaskill, *Sacred Symbols*, 186-88.
 16. Johan Lust, "For I Lift up my Hand to Heaven and Swear: Deut 32:40," in *Studies in Deuteronomy in Honour of C. J. Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. F. Garcia Martinez et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 155-64; Johan Lust, "The Raised Hand of the

Lord in Deuteronomy 32:40 according to MT, 4QDeut-q, and LXX,” in *Textus: Studies of the Hebrew University Bible Project, Volume XVIII*, ed. Alexander Rofé (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995), 33-45. Lust goes so far as to deny that this gesture belongs in an oath-taking context, which can be shown to be incorrect. However, for the sake of argument, we can adjust Lust’s suggestion by applying it only to the symbolic meaning of the gesture.

17. Desmond Morris et al., *Gestures: Their Origins and Distribution* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979).
18. Roy Rappaport, “The Obvious Aspects of Ritual,” in *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion* (Richmond, California: North Atlantic Books, 1979), 175, 179.
19. Frits Staal, “The Meaninglessness of Ritual,” *Numen* 26/1 (1979): 2-22.
20. For instance, some hymns and discourses refer to renewing baptismal covenants through partaking of the sacrament, a notion that is not found in the inaugural texts.
21. Calabro, *Ritual Gestures*, 648-51.
22. Zeev Falk, “Gestures Expressing Affirmation,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 4/3 (1959): 268-69.
23. G. A. Wainwright, “The Earliest Use of the Mano Cornuta,” *Folklore* 72 (1961): 492-95.
24. Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 67.
25. Gestures can also designate third parties, such as by pointing out something or someone in a direction that is not the one in which the agent is facing. In some cases, the creation of a participant format may extend to nonhumans, such as when Moses and Aaron raised their hands in a ritual gesture toward various parts of Egypt, bringing about the plagues in Exodus 7-14. In a sense, the nonhuman addressees are personified through the gesture.

David Calabro received a PhD in ancient Near Eastern studies from the University of Chicago in 2014. His research focuses on the ritual use of hand gestures in the ancient Levant and Egypt. He lives in Provo, Utah, with his wife, Ruth, and their six children.

THE SACRED EMBRACE AND THE SACRED HANDCLASP IN ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN RELIGIONS

Stephen D. Ricks

The Sacred Embrace in Ancient Egypt: Introduction

A number of years ago, while planning to travel to Egypt to visit our son who was studying Arabic there, my wife and I were encouraged to visit the White Chapel of Senusret I at the Temple of Karnak in Luxor, Egypt. There, we were told, we would see a number of scenes of “sacred ritual embrace,” in which the king is depicted being embraced by one of the gods before being received into heaven (the “Fields of Bliss”). We were also told that there were several other scenes of sacred embrace in the temple complex at Karnak. We went expecting to see a few at Karnak and elsewhere but were nearly overwhelmed with the embarrassment of ritual riches we saw there at that time and on a subsequent visit: many scores of scenes of embrace (at least 150) at the temples at Karnak, at the ancient Egyptian Ptolemaic temple at Philae near modern Aswan, Egypt, as well as at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Here we will focus on examples of the sacred embrace in the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms of ancient Egypt.



Figure 1: The Divine Horus (with a falcon head) embraces the Royal Horus on the Qa Hedjet Stela

The Sacred Embrace in Ancient Egyptian Iconography

One of the earliest scenes of sacred embrace may be seen on the (Hor) Qa Hedjet stela (Figure 1), dating from the Third Dynasty of the Old Kingdom around the middle of the 27th century BC.¹ The stela itself is made of polished limestone and shows the divine Horus (depicted with a falcon head) embracing the royal Horus with foot by foot, knee facing knee, hand to back, and mouth to nose so that the divine Horus might “inspire” (i.e., breathe life) into the royal Horus.

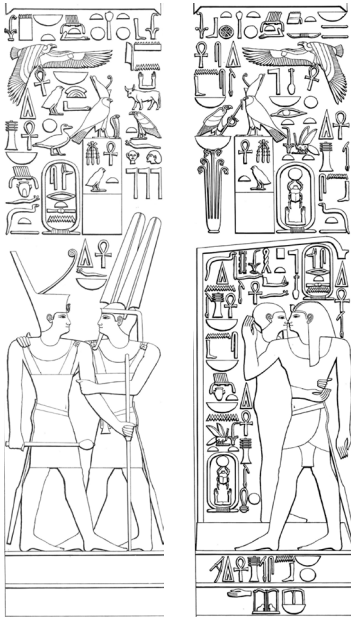


Figure 2: Left: The pharaoh Senusret faces the god Amon, who embraces him. Right: Senusret is embraced by Ptah, who faces him from the left

An eleven-foot pillar from the Middle Kingdom (Figure 2) celebrates the *sed* (royal jubilee) festival of the Egyptian King Senusret (reigned 1971–1925 BC) in about 1940 BC. Two sides of this four-sided pillar group are illustrated. In the first scene Senusret stands opposite the god Amon, who faces him foot by foot, knee to knee, and hand on back. In the fourth panel Senusret faces the god Ptah from the right; both hands grasp his back, and he stands face to face in order to breathe life into him.

The final scene (Figure 3) is from a New Kingdom relief from the tomb of Tutankhamun who died as a very young king in his teens in the 14th century BC. The discovery of his tomb by the British archaeologist Howard Carter in 1923 created an international sensation. Tutankhamun — known popularly as “King Tut” — ruled Egypt after the death of Akhenaten, the king of Egypt who introduced the monotheistic belief in the solar disk Aten in the 15th century BC. This sacred embrace scene illustrated below is part of a larger “Opening of the Mouth” scene in which Tutankhamun is being prepared to enter the Fields of Bliss. In the final, culminating scene, Tutankhamun, accompanied by his *ka*, embraces Osiris, who is depicted as a man in a sarcophagus. In this scene the deceased king faces Osiris with foot facing foot, knee facing knee, the king’s hand behind the head of Osiris, with his arm around the deity’s waist. Osiris, in turn, touches the king’s chest. As Tutankhamun embraces Osiris he is described as “given life for all time and eternity.”² The rite, according to Svein Bjerke, “transfers vital power [his *ka*³] from the god to the king.”⁴ What is recorded in a ritual for Amenophis I (18th dynasty, 16th to 15th centuries BC) may also be understood for Tutankhamun:

You go forth from embracing your father Osiris
 You revive through him, you are made whole through him.⁵

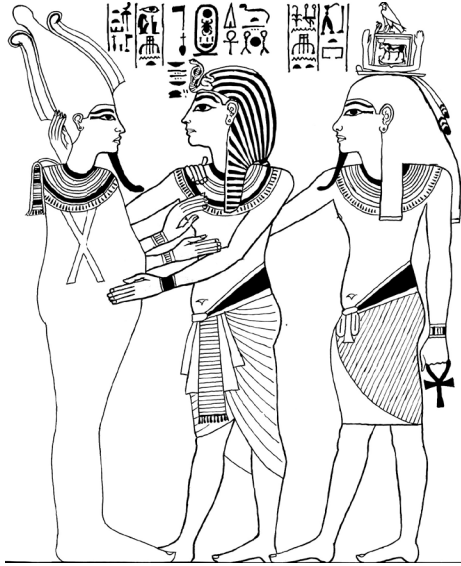


Figure 3: Tutankhanum (middle), accompanied by his *ka* (right), embraces Osiris (left), from the tomb of Tutankhamun, ca. 1320 BC

The Sacred Embrace by Mother Deities in the Religious Literature of Ancient Egypt

The scenes illustrated above are of male deities embracing kings. But the sacred embrace by mothers, or mother deities, was also a concept that was current in the sacred literature of ancient Egypt. “The embrace of the individual entering the afterlife by his mother,” observes the distinguished Egyptologist Jan Assmann, “is an idea that has its origins in the cult of the dead. The dead king as Osiris embraces his mother Nut and revives in her arms.”⁶ This embrace by the goddess can be understood “in connection with the entrance of the deceased into the afterlife as overcoming the separation of mother and child at birth.”⁷ Thus, for example, in the 11th hour ritual of the “Ritual of the Hours” from Edfu we read: “Your mother, who embraces you, has purified your bones, she causes you to be healthy and full of life ... Your father embraces you [lit., ‘wraps his arm around you.’] You lead millions on the western horizon.”⁸ On the Pyramidion Leiden K 1 from the reign of Amenophis III (18th Dynasty, 14th century BC), Isis is substituted for Hathor, the mother of the sun god:

You go forth, as you are well,
From the embrace of your mother Isis.⁹

The Purpose of the Sacred Embrace

Scenes in which a god or goddess embraces a king “often appear,” observes the Egyptologist Horst Beinlich, “since the embrace by a deity appears to have been a privilege of the king Such scenes of embrace on pillars may have to do with a god’s greeting the king.”¹⁰ Beinlich further notes that “through close contact with the body of the deity . . . the king is (in the role of a child) newly enlivened, transfigured, and receives the power of the *ka*.” The sacred embrace is thus part of an initiatory ceremony in which the king is made priest as well: “Before becoming a king, he must first become a priest, and for that also he must be purified with divine water, receive a garment, be crowned, and be led into the sanctuary to receive” the god’s embrace.¹¹ “The embracing (*Eg. shm*) of the king by the god”¹² is the definitive consecration of the king, “who at that moment becomes fully consecrated, crowned, and sanctified.”¹³ The embrace represented on the walls of the inner sancta of Egyptian temples — forbidden or inaccessible to others — may be either the preparatory embrace by a priest representing a god at his coronation when he is “consecrated, crowned and sanctified” or also the confirmatory embrace by the god at the time of the king’s passing beyond the halls of judgment to the Fields of Bliss.

By way of conclusion, we may note that (1) in scenes of sacred embrace, the deity faces the king foot by foot, knee to knee, hand to back, and mouth to nose to “inspire” (breathe life or vital force — his *ka*) into him; (2) scenes of sacred embrace in ancient Egyptian religion occur in the Holy of Holies — the most sacred and (to the unauthorized) inaccessible precincts of the temple (the center of the temple, the rear of the temple, the side chapel); (3) scenes of sacred embrace are found throughout ancient Egypt (from the Delta to Philae) and throughout Egyptian history (from the Old Kingdom on); (4) the sacred embrace is preparation for entrance into the presence of the gods; and, finally, (5) although the scenes depict only royalty being embraced by the gods and entering into their presence, in ancient Egypt everyone — men, women, and children — of whatever social status and era, were candidates for entrance into a blessed afterlife.¹⁴

The Sacred Handclasp in Ancient Mediterranean Religions

On a gravestone dating to the end of the fifth century BC from Attica in Greece, the husband Philoxenos (whose name, as well as that of his wife, is carved in the register above his head) is seen grasping the right hand of his wife Philoumene in a solemn and ceremonial handclasp (Figure 4). This handclasp, the description informs us, “was a symbolic and popular gesture on gravestones of the Classical period,” which could represent “a simple farewell, a reunion in the afterlife, or a continuing connection between the deceased and the living.”¹⁵ The handclasp, known in Greek as *dexiosis* and in Latin as *dextrarum*

iunctio, means “giving, joining of right hands” and is to be found in classical Greek art on grave stelai but especially in Roman art, where it is to be seen on coins and sarcophagi reliefs as well as in Christian art in mosaics and on sarcophagi reliefs.

Why were early Christians in the Roman world also depicted performing the *dextrarum iunctio*? They did so in part because they agreed with the non-Christian Romans that “fidelity and harmony are demanded in the longest-lasting and most intimate human relationship, marriage.”¹⁶ But they also did so because they accepted, perhaps, the ancient Israelite view that marriage was a sacred covenant¹⁷ and further because they understood “marriage,” in the words of the Protestant scholar Philip Schaff, “as a spiritual union of two souls for time and eternity.”¹⁸ For the ancient Christians, the sacred handclasp — the *dextrarum iunctio* — was a fitting symbol for the most sacred act and moment in human life.



Figure 4: Late fifth-century BC Greek gravestone showing Philoxenos grasping the hand of his wife Philoumene

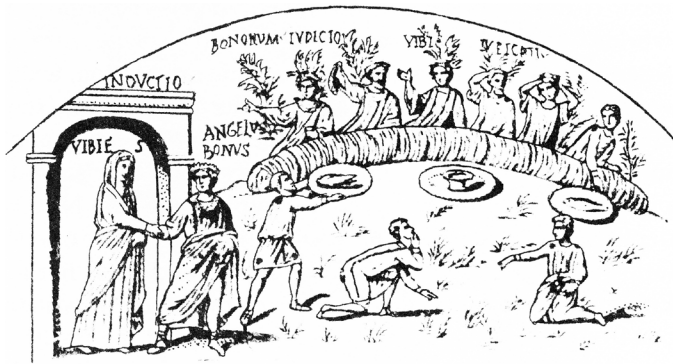


Figure 5: The “good angel” (Lating *bonus angelus*) grasps the hand of Vibia to lead her to the banquet of the blessed, from a Sabazian tomb near Rome

The Sacred Handclasp in Scenes of Introduction to the Heavenly Realms in the Classical and Early Christian World

The *dexiosis/dextrarum iunctio* is used as a symbol of union, harmony, equality, and fidelity in marriage. But the right hand is also given in scenes of introduction into the realm of the blessed in ancient Mediterranean religions. The first scene (Figure 5) is from a series of illustrations from the tomb complex of the Sabazian priest Vincentius near Rome, dating from the second century.¹⁹ One depicts the “good angel” (labeled in the scene as *bonus angelus*)²⁰ grasping Vibia, the deceased wife of Vincentius, by the right hand in a *dextrarum iunctio* and leading her into a place where the blessed (some of whom are identified by name) are enjoying a celestial banquet.

The hand is held out to introduce individuals into the celestial realms. Two other scenes are mosaic illustrations from Christian churches built in the sixth century AD in Ravenna, Italy, one from the Basilica of San Vitale (Figure 6), the other from the Basilica of Sant Apollinare in Classe (Figure 7). Each of the scenes shows the altar on which Melchizedek is making an offering to the Lord. In the mosaic in St. Apollinare in Classe, Melchizedek, clad in a purple cloak and offering bread and wine at the altar, is flanked to the viewer’s left by Abel, who holds a sacrificial lamb toward the altar, and, to the viewer’s right, by Abraham with his young son Isaac, whom he gently pushes to the altar²¹ (in the scene in San Vitale, Melchizedek is at the viewer’s right, opposite Abel holding the lamb). In front of the altar is the so-called “Seal of Melchizedek,” two golden interlocking squares.²²

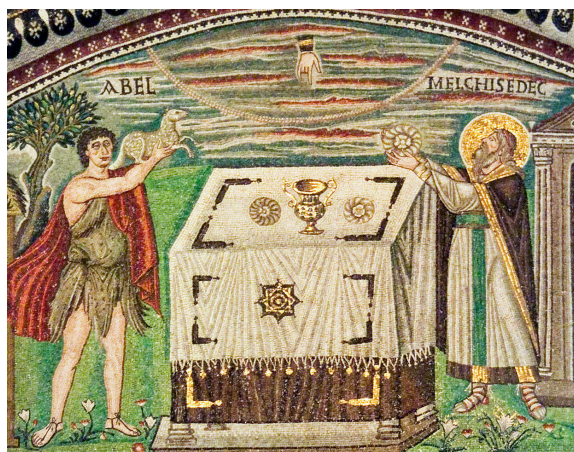


Figure 6: Abel and Melchizedek making an offering, with the hand reaching from behind the veil, Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy



Figure 7: Abel, Melchizedek, Isaac, and Abraham surround the altar, with the hand reaching from behind the veil, Basilica of St. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, Italy.

Behind the figures (in St. Apollinare, to the right of Melchizedek; in San Vitale, above the altar) there is a right hand stretching out from behind the veil, inviting the figures (and, by implication, the viewer) to grasp it in the *dextrarum iunctio* in order to be introduced into the heavenly realms behind the veil.

In both actions depicted in these scenes — the sacred embrace and the sacred handclasp — there is an invitation and promise of entrance into the celestial realms. The sacred embrace may well have been a preparation, the sacred handclasp the culminating act of entrance into the divine presence.

Figure Credits

Figures 1-3 appear courtesy of Brigham Young University's Neal A Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. Figure 4 is courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA. Our thanks to the Maxwell Institute for Figure 5, which was redrawn from an image found in Johannes Leipoldt, *Die Umwelt des Urchristentums* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1967), 3:fig. 60. Figures 6 and 7 are used with the kind permission of Val Brinkerhoff.

Notes

1. The name Qor Hedjet may also be an archaizing "representation of Thutmose III" a New Kingdom ruler from the eighteenth dynasty, who reigned in the fifteenth century BC, cf. Jean-Pierre Pätznick, "L'Horus Qahedjet: souverain de la 3eme dynastie," in ed. Jean-Claude Goyon and Christine Cardin, *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of Egyptologists/ Actes du neuvième Congrès international des égyptologues* (Leuven/Dudley MA: Peeters, 2007), 145. I have been greatly benefitted in the preparation of this paper by reading sections in Hugh W. Nibley's *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2005), dealing with ritual sacred embraces.
2. Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2005), 433.
3. The *ka* is the vital power (conceived of as a doppelganger) or spirit that departs from the body at the time of death, in Peter Kaplony, "Ka," in ed. Wolfgang Helck and Eberhard Otto, *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1980), 3:275-76; Liselotte Greven, *Der Ka in Theologie und Königskult. Ägyptologische Abhandlungen* 17 (Glückstadt: Augustin, 1952), 27; Ursula Schweitzer, *Das Wesen des Ka im Diesseits und Jenseits der alten Ägypter. Ägyptologische Abhandlungen* 19 (Glückstadt: Augustin, 1956), 13-19.
4. Svein Bjerke, "Remarks on the Egyptian Ritual of 'Opening the Mouth' and Its Interpretation," *Numen* 12 (1965): 215. As an additional note, Jacob, before his return to Canaan, met a "man" (in fact, a heavenly being) who "struggled" with him: "And Jacob was left alone;

and there wrestled [Heb. *ye'aveq*] a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there" (Genesis 32: 24–29).

Given that this episode includes the giving of a new name to Jacob (symbolizing Jacob's entering a new, higher stage in his life), the angel's hesitance to disclose his name, may we not also understand the Hebrew *ye'aveq* ("wrestle") in an additional sense of "embrace."

5. "Libation Utterance for Re," from the "Ritual for Amenophis I" = Papyrus Chester Beatty IX recto 5:13–6:3 cited in Jan Assmann, *Liturgische Lieder an den Sonnengott* (Berlin: Hessling, 1969), 57.
6. Assmann, *Liturgische Lieder*, 56.
7. Horst Beinlich, "Umarmung," in ed. Wolfgang Helck and Eberhard Otto, *Lexicon der Ägyptologie* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1985), 6:844.
8. Émile Chassinat and Marquis de Rochmonteix, *Le Temple d'Edfou* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1984) 3:226–27, cited in Assmann, *Liturgische Lieder*, 56.
9. Pyramidion Leiden K 1, cited in Assmann, *Liturgische Lieder*, 58.
10. Beinlich, "Umarmung," 6:844–45.
11. Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2005), 433.
12. Alexandre Moret, *Du caractère religieux de la royauté pharaonique*. Annales du Musée Guimet. Bibliothèque d'études, vol. 14 (Paris: Leroux, 1902), 101.
13. Nibley, *Message*, 433, citing Alexandre Moret, *Rituel du culte divin journalier en Égypte*. Annales du Musée Guimet. Bibliothèque d'études, vol. 14 (Paris: Leroux, 1902), 100–101, n. 4.
14. I wish to thank my former student, now colleague, Egyptologist John

- Thompson, for this insight.
15. *J. Paul Getty Museum Handbook of the Antiquities Collection* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002), 22.
 16. “Fides und Concordia sind im besonderen Masse gefordert bei der intimsten menschlichen Dauer-verbinding, der Ehe.” Kötting, “Dextrarum iunctio,” in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, ed. Theodor Klauser (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1957), 3:883.
 17. Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law and Ethics Governing Marriage, Developed from the Perspective of Malachi* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), has argued persuasively that marriage was a covenant, using sources ranging throughout the entire Hebrew Bible.
 18. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 5th ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 2:367. Further, see John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, 2nd ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 196–97, who observes that “as a sacrament, or *mysterion*, marriage reflects the union between Christ and the Church, between Yahweh and Israel, and as such can be only one — an eternal bond, which death itself does not destroy. In its sacramental nature, marriage transfigures and transcends both fleshly union and contractual legal association: human love is being projected into the eternal Kingdom of God.” Later (pp. 198–99) Meyendorff notes that “the most striking difference between the Byzantine theology of marriage and its medieval Latin counterpart is that the Byzantines strongly emphasized the unicity of Christian marriage and the eternity of the marriage bond; ... the West seemed to ignore the idea that marriage, if it is a sacrament, has to be projected as an eternal bond into the Kingdom of God.”
 19. On the illustrations of the tomb of the Sabazian priest Vincentius, see Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, 13 vols. (New York: Bollingen/Pantheon, 1953–58), 3: figs. 839, 842, 2:45–50; Franz Cumont, *Recherches sur la symbolisme funéraire des Romains* (Paris: Geuthner, 1942), 418, n. 1.
 20. In the view of Henri Leclercq, “Sabazios,” in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* (Paris: Librairie Letouzey, 1924–53), 15:213, the “good angel,” whose identification may have been influenced by Judaism or Christianity in Asia Minor, was the god Sabazios himself.

21. Hugh W. Nibley, "Sacred Vestments," in ed. Don E. Norton,, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992), 109.
22. On the "seal of Melchizedek," see Alan Rex Mitchell's informative study *Melchizedek's Seal and Scroll* (n.c.: Greenjacket Books, 2012).

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ASCENDING INTO THE HILL OF THE LORD: WHAT THE PSALMS CAN TELL US ABOUT THE RITUALS OF THE FIRST TEMPLE

David J. Larsen

In her monograph on the Temple in Jerusalem, Old Testament scholar Margaret Barker remarked: “The easiest way to enter into the world of the ancient temple is to read the Psalms and try to imagine the setting for which they were written.”¹ The world of the First Temple is considered largely inaccessible, as there are very few texts from the pre-exilic period that are available to us. This is a frustrating situation for those who long for insights into the Golden Age of the Israelite monarchy and the mysteries of Solomon’s original temple. In this chapter I will attempt to shed some light on practices alluded to in the Psalms that may have formed part of the ritual system and theology of that First Temple.

The specific focus of this study comes largely from my reading of an article by Dr. Silviu Bunta, published in the recent *festschrift* for Rachel Elior, *With Letters of Light*.² I offer a brief summary of Dr. Bunta’s argument:

- He argues that 1 Enoch should not, as per the common view, be seen as the first example of an ascent to heaven in Jewish literature.
- He notes that Paul Joyce of Oxford University sees Ezekiel’s temple vision (starting in Ezekiel 40) as a heavenly ascent narrative and then argues that the vision of God’s *Kavod* in Ezekiel 1 should likewise be seen as an ascent to heaven because it is also a vision of the heavenly temple.
- In support of this conclusion, he asserts that the ancient Near East understanding did not differentiate between the “earthly” and “heavenly” temple — the earthly temple was the heavenly temple. The dwelling-place of the gods is often associated with the tops of mountains. That the early Israelites shared a similar conceptual view, he argues, is implied by many biblical references, most notably in the Psalms (see, e.g., Psalms 43:3; 46:4-5; 48:9; 50:2; 76:2; 132:13-140), to God dwelling on the holy mountain.

- He asserts that 1 Enoch 14 and Aramaic Levi seem to refer to the top of Mt. Hermon as the place to which they ascend during their visions.³
- Associated with this view is the idea that the sanctuary was to be equated with the holy mountain and thus with heaven. “When one enters a temple on earth,” says Bunta, “one reaches the top of the sacred mountain and is described as ‘entering heaven.’”⁴ Worshipers in the earthly temple were thought to be in heaven, standing before God.⁵
- Finally, he sees the temple vision of God on his throne in Isaiah 6 (cf. 1 Kings 22) as evidence supporting his claim.⁶ In essence, Isaiah ascending Mount Zion to the temple would be equivalent to his ascending into heaven (see 1 Enoch 93).

In light of this and other evidence, I believe Bunta is correct in suggesting that visions taking place in the Jerusalem Temple should be seen as essentially equivalent to visions of the heavenly temple and that the heavenly ascent motif occurred in settings such as Ezekiel 1 that were long prior to 1 Enoch.

Working from Bunta’s general conclusions, I will take the next logical step: moving the origins of the heavenly ascent motif further back beyond Ezekiel into the pre-exilic cult of the Jerusalem Temple. I will argue that this type of theophanic experience — an ascent to heaven to see God — was a principal focus of the temple liturgy in monarchic times as depicted in some of the Psalms.

Later heavenly ascent narratives include, among others features, the following: a) the visionary being taken or led on a journey upwards through the various levels of heaven, b) passing through a series of gates guarded by angelic beings who require adherence to moral laws and answers to questions or passwords (e.g., the names of angels or the Godhead), c) standing before the Throne of God or seeing His Divine Face, and d) the initiation of the visionary into the heavenly order, including anointing, clothing, coronation, and enthronement.

The ritual system of the Jerusalem Temple in pre-exilic times paralleled the features of these later texts in important ways, which can be outlined as follows:

- Pilgrims travel to the Jerusalem Temple at least three times a year during the major pilgrimage festivals. The pilgrimage culminated in an ascent of the temple mount to the temple precincts. It seems that

sometimes these processions were led by the king and accompanied by the Ark of the Covenant.

- The procession was subjected to questioning by the keepers of the temple gates, who required a test of moral worthiness for admission.
- The purpose of the pilgrimage was to experience the “epiphany” or “theophany” of Yahweh, to stand in the Lord’s presence and to see His face.
- The king would have participated in further rituals, including washing, anointing, clothing, and enthronement.

We will now discuss details of each of these aspects of the ritual system — pilgrimage, questioning at the gates, epiphany, and royal rites — in turn.

At the three major pilgrimage festivals (*Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Succot*), the Israelites were directed to “go up” to “appear before the Lord.” In Exodus 34:23-24, we read:

Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. (see also Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:16; Isaiah 1:11-13).

While the earliest references may not have necessarily envisioned a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, they seem to imagine an ascent to an elevated sacred site. In later references, however, we do have pilgrims (and not just the men, see Deuteronomy 16:11, 14; 31:10–13) coming from all around the region to worship the Lord at the Temple in Jerusalem. In the time of the prophet Zechariah, Israel (and, in fact, all nations) were expected to observe this temple pilgrimage, or they would receive no rain (Zechariah 14:16-19).

Isaiah 30:29 seems to allude to the same type of festal temple pilgrimage:

You shall have a song as in the night when a holy festival is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel (NRSV).

A number of Psalms have a similar tone, and we can imagine that they could have been composed for or sung during the pilgrimage. Perhaps some of these were the type of song that Isaiah had in mind. Psalm 84, for example, describes a travelling group who is longing to be at the courts of the temple.

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God ... Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion (NRSV, cf. Psalm 65:1-4).

The LXX (Psalm 83:6; English 84:5) sees this procession as an ascension (using the verb *anabaino*). We should note that this pilgrimage party, singing “as they go through the valley of Baca,” has the objective of reaching the temple and seeing the God of gods in Zion (NRSV translation, based on the LXX reading). The Psalm goes on to mention (in vv. 8-9) that the Lord’s anointed, a reference to the king, is with this group, and they ask God for a blessing upon him.

Psalm 122 is another clear example:

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD!” Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem — built as a city that is bound firmly together. To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David (NRSV).

Psalm 122 is one of a body of psalms (Psalms 120-134) that are designated in their superscriptions as being *shir ha-mma’alot*, or a “song of ascents.” These are also frequently designated as “pilgrim songs.” Holladay explains that these should be seen as “a song sung when ascending (as a pilgrim) to Jerusalem”, and that this group of psalms should be seen as a “songbook for pilgrimage.”⁷ While we don’t know when all of the psalms in this set were composed, Holladay sees at least Psalm 122 (as well as Psalm 132) as pre-exilic.⁸

As the pilgrims reached Jerusalem, perhaps coming along what Isaiah calls the Way of Holiness (Isaiah 35:8; cf. Isaiah 62:10; Psalm 84:5),⁹ they would have had to “ascend” to Jerusalem’s mountainous perch and then climb the temple mount itself to get to the sanctuary. Psalm 24 asks: “Who shall ascend (*mi-ya’aleh*) the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?”

The Hebrew word *ālā* appears to be used often as a paradisaical term¹⁰ in the Hebrew Bible for ascending in procession to sacred places,

including going up to the promised land of Israel (i.e., from out of Egypt, e.g. Exodus 3:8, 17) and ascending the holy mountain (e.g., Exodus 19:20). The directive for the thrice-yearly pilgrimage commanded the Israelites to “go up” (*ālā*) to the cultic site (Exodus 34:24, etc.).

Psalm 118:27 appears to depict a festal procession that has come up to the great altar of the temple as part of a ritual ceremony. Psalm 68 presents very clearly a liturgical procession that is going into the temple, delineating the order in which the tribes were to proceed, which is reminiscent of Psalm 122’s pilgrimage procession.

Psalm 68:24-27 reads:

24 Your solemn processions are seen, O God, the processions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary —

25 the singers in front, the musicians last, between them girls playing tambourines:

26 “Bless God in the great congregation, the LORD, O you who are of Israel’s fountain!”

27 There is Benjamin, the least of them, in the lead, the princes of Judah in a body, the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali (NRSV).

The vivid depictions of the great power of Yahweh that is celebrated on this occasion convey the idea that these processions were meant to be imagined as a commemoration of Yahweh’s victory and were somehow imagined to be led by Yahweh himself. Verses 17-18 of this psalm further elucidate this picture:

17 With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands, the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place.

18 You ascended the high mount, leading captives in your train and receiving gifts from people, even from those who rebel against the LORD God’s abiding there (NRSV).

Psalm 47, a song full of ritual allusions, depicts the people clapping, shouting, and singing because “God has gone up (*ālā*) with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet” (Psalm 47:5). It may be hard for us to imagine how God could have been seen as joining a festal procession, but the idea was common in the ancient Near East, where in the great festival processions of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, statues representing the gods were carried along the festal highways into the gods’ respective temples.¹¹

This recalls in the Hebrew Bible the imagery of the Ark of the Covenant, representing the Presence of the Lord, being carried ahead of the camp of Israel during the Exodus (Numbers 4:5-6; 10:33-36; etc.), into battle against Israel's enemies (1 Samuel 4; 14:8), in procession around the city of Jericho (Joshua 6:4-20), and being taken in procession up to Jerusalem by King David (2 Samuel 6).

We read in Numbers 10:35-36 that:

Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, "Arise, O LORD, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you." And whenever it came to rest, he would say, "Return, O LORD of the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

Interestingly, Psalm 68 begins the way the Numbers passage begins, with: "Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered; let those who hate him flee before him" (Psalm 68:1). The "ten thousand thousands of Israel" is reminiscent of the similar number of chariots that Psalm 68 describes as ascending with Yahweh up the high mountain and into the temple. It would appear that Psalm 68 describes or is meant to accompany a procession of the Ark up to the temple, using the imagery of the victorious march of Yahweh leading the host of Israel at the time of the Exodus.

Another "song of ascents," or "pilgrim song," is the pre-exilic royal Psalm 132, which has long been understood to have been composed to commemorate King David's finding of the Ark and its transfer to Jerusalem (see vv. 6-8; cf. 1 Samuel 6:13; 2 Samuel 6).¹² The procession that David led included "all of the house of Israel" following King David and the Ark up to the place of the sanctuary (compare the singing, dancing, shouting, and trumpet blasts of 2 Samuel 6:12-15 with the previously mentioned description of similar activities during the procession of Psalm 47).

A similar procession was performed at Solomon's dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:1), which took place at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles (1 Kings 8:2). The fact that the Chronicler (2 Chronicles 6:41) has Solomon quoting part of Psalm 132 in this context may indicate that he knew of a temple tradition in which Psalm 132 was sung to accompany a re-enactment of the procession of the Ark into the temple.

Whether the pilgrim processions were accompanied by the Ark or not, there seems to be abundant evidence in the Psalms that the festival participants imagined themselves as joining Yahweh in his victorious march up to his holy dwelling-place on Mount Zion. As discussed previously, because the Israelites equated the top of the mountain and more specifically the temple with heaven, the climb up the temple mount

would have been imagined as an ascent to heaven.

We can conclude from this that a liturgical heavenly ascent was one of the principal features of the ritual system of the First Temple. Further details from the Psalms help confirm that this ritual ascent bore many more similarities to the literary accounts of heavenly ascent found in later texts.

Psalms 118 makes reference to passing through “the gates of righteousness” (v. 19), apparently in the context of a festal procession (*hag*, v. 27). The speaker pleads:

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.

20 This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.

The prophet Ezekiel, as part of his vision of the future ideal temple, gives in Ezekiel 44:1-3, a description of the king entering through the vestibule of the same gate (the eastern gate) that Yahweh himself had gone through. Chapter 46:1-12 describes the king leading pilgrims through the temple gates on festal days. While these events are described for the future temple, they should likely be understood to represent previous traditions with which the prophet was familiar.¹³

I read Psalm 24 in light of the preceding considerations. The psalm starts out with a doxology praising the Lord for his Creation. This hymn parallels the similar one (which actually quotes Psalm 96) that the Chronicler tells us was sung at the occasion of the David’s ark procession (1 Chronicles 16:23-33). Psalm 24:3-4 describes someone who desires to go up to the temple, and verse 6 can be seen to indicate that this is a group of people (NRSV has “company” and Donald W. Parry reads “circle”) who are going up to the temple. Taking the situations presented in Psalms 118, 132, and the vision of Ezekiel into consideration, the life setting we can imagine here for Psalm 24 is a procession of pilgrims led by an individual (likely the king) who are accompanying Yahweh (perhaps represented by the Ark) up to the temple. We can picture the procession proceeding up the holy mountain until they reach the temple gates, where they are required to stop.

In verse 3, we hear the questions: “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?” At the gates, there were likely priests (see, e.g., 2 Kings 25:18; later, they were Levites, see, e.g., Ezekiel 44:11; 1 Chronicles 9:17-27) that were stationed there as gatekeepers.¹⁴ There appears to be a question and answer dialogue that takes place, plausibly between the processional party and the gatekeepers.¹⁵

In verses 3-5, the qualifications for entry to the temple precincts are established.¹⁶ As Craig Broyles notes, the “qualifications are ethical, not sacral in nature.”¹⁷ We see in Psalm 118 that it is only “the righteous” who are permitted to pass through the gate (Psalm 118:20). While Psalm 24 appears to have an abbreviated list of requirements, Psalm 15 gives ten qualifications — reminiscent of the Decalogue given at Sinai — which can be similarly viewed as moral requirements for beginning an ascension of the holy mountain to stand in Yahweh’s presence.

Entrance to the temple precincts involved the revelation of moral requirements in the form of covenants from God, the acceptance of these on the part of the worshippers, and confirmation to the gatekeepers that these requirements were being met. Verse 5 seems to be spoken by the gatekeepers or accompanying priest(s), declaring the blessings promised to those who fulfill the requirements. V. 6 appears to be an indication from the pilgrims that they do, indeed, comply with the requirements.

After having confirmed that the pilgrims are living the covenantal requirements, there is a call for the gates to be opened so that “the King of Glory may come in” (Psalm 24:7-9; cf. Psalm 118:19). It is interesting to note that Broyles interprets the use of the name Yahweh in response to the questions of Psalm 24:8 and 10 to signify that “the name of God [is] used as a ‘password’ through the gates.”¹⁸ Furthermore, he argues that the name “King of glory” is used here as a “new name” — he assumes this because the respondents in verses 8 and 10 appear to not know the name.¹⁹

If we take it to represent a similar context, Psalm 118 seems to indicate that the procession has been allowed to go through the gates, has received a blessing from the Lord, and now makes its way to the altar of the temple. Mowinckel saw the festal procession as indicated in verse 27 as approaching and perhaps circling, the altar.²⁰ As noted previously, Parry sees Psalm 24:6 as describing the processional group as a circle (reading *dur* instead of *dôr*). He notes that this could be a reference to a religious prayer circle in which the participants inquire of or pray to the Lord in hopes to see his face (Psalm 24:6, “seek to see the face of the God of Jacob,” based on the LXX: *zetounon to prosopon tou theou Iakob*).²¹

The Psalms depict the purpose of the pilgrimage to the temple not simply to “appear before the Lord”, but, as previously mentioned, Psalm 84:7 (as in RSV/NRSV, based on the LXX reading: *ophthesetai ho theos*) declares that the expectation is to be able to see the Lord. Some scholars have argued that the injunction in Exodus 34:24 (etc.) to appear in the presence of the Lord may have originally read: “to see the face of the

Lord.” While the Masoretic Text has the *Niph'al* imperfect of the verb *ra'ah* (“to see”), meaning “you will be seen” or “you will appear,” some argue that the original reading would have had a *Qal* imperfect, “you will see.”²² Holladay suggests that the text may have been “changed for theological reasons.”²³

The idea of going to the holy place to see the Lord, or that the Lord would make an appearance at a cultic site, is certainly not foreign to the Hebrew Bible. I have already mentioned the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah. There are many others worthy of mention. King Solomon, in 1 Kings 3, goes up to the high place of Gibeon to offer sacrifice, and the Lord appears to him in a dream. In 1 Samuel 3:21, we read: “The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh....” The prophet Malachi (Malachi 3), in language reminiscent of some of the Psalms, envisioned that “the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple” and asked: “But who can abide the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appeareth?”

The priestly instructions for sacrifice recorded in Leviticus 9:3-6 declare:

3 And say to the people of Israel, “Take a male goat for a sin offering; a calf and a lamb, yearlings without blemish, for a burnt offering ... For today the LORD will appear to you.” (cf. Exodus 20:24).

In the story of the children of Israel at Sinai, while most of the people of Israel are required (Exodus 19:12-13; cf. Psalm 24) to remain at a distance from the foot of the holy mountain, a number of individuals are chosen to ascend up the mountain together with Moses and Aaron.

We read in Exodus 24:9-11:

9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up (*wayya'al*),

10 and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.

11 God did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; also they beheld God, and they ate and drank.

As an important aside, I would mention that James Tabor, among others, has noted that Exodus 24 bears a number of similarities to the heavenly ascent genre. He explains:

...Moses (or alternatively Moses, Aaron and the seventy elders), ascend[s] the mountain, enter[s] the presence of God, the realm of the divine. He is given revelation in the form of heavenly tablets, then descends back to the mortal realm ... [H]e becomes a semi-divine figure, eating and drinking in the divine presence and returning from the mountain with his face transformed like an immortal (Exodus 24:11; 34:29-30).²⁴

We may also note that the Exodus and Sinai experiences are an important theme in the Psalter, as can be seen, for example, in Psalms 68, 81, 95, 99, 114, and others. Mowinckel and others saw the festal procession to the temple mount as a reliving of the journey through the wilderness to experience the theophany at Mount Sinai (compare, for example, Exodus 15 and Psalm 68).²⁵

The principal paradigm of these texts is that God would appear in the described cultic situations. Klaus Seybold sees theophany as one of the key recurring features of the Psalms and explains that the theophany must have been a cultic event and that the relevant psalms reveal a “tradition of an event experienced and passed on in worship...” He argues that the “oldest of these texts (Psalm 18; 68; 97) record the pre-exilic existence of such liturgical traditions, as do the references [outside] the Psalter (such as Isaiah 6; Judges 5; Deuteronomy 33, etc.)”²⁶

To cite just a few further examples of this theme, we can read in Psalm 17:15: “As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your form (*t^emunateka*).” Psalm 11:7 has: “For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.”

Psalm 27:4 puts the vision of the Lord explicitly in the context of the temple: “One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.”

Seybold sees in Psalm 63, as in Psalm 18, evidence of an advent celebration in which the appearance of Yahweh was dramatically represented. “I have seen you in the sanctuary, and beheld your power and glory” (v. 2).²⁷ This psalm seems to place the king in the setting of the Holy of Holies of the temple, experiencing a Theophany of Yahweh.²⁸

The language of so many of the Psalms, especially if we attempt to view them in a cultic setting, combined with the numerous other biblical expressions of the expectation of Theophany in connection with cultic ritual lead us to the conclusion that the principal goal of one or more of the pilgrimage festivals in pre-exilic times was to ascend to the temple so

that one could experience the Theophany and “see the face of the Lord,” however this was imagined or ultimately realized.

Another key feature of many later heavenly ascent narratives is that after the visionary has beheld the Deity on his throne, the visionary himself is enthroned either on the throne of God or on a similar throne beside God’s. To cite a relevant example, later Jewish traditions understood Moses when he ascended Mount Sinai as having seen God on his throne and then having been himself enthroned in heaven and set to rule as God’s vice-regent on Earth.²⁹

In *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian, starting in line 67, Moses is made to say:

I had a vision of a great throne on the top of Mount Sinai and it reached till the folds of heaven. A noble man was sitting on it, with a crown and a large scepter in his left hand. He beckoned to me with his right hand, so I approached and stood before the throne. He gave me the scepter and instructed me to sit on the great throne. Then he gave me a royal crown and got up from the throne. I beheld the whole earth all around and saw beneath the earth and above the heavens.

This sequence was also arguably a part of the pre-exilic temple ritual. We read in 1 Chronicles 29: 23:

Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.

The idea that when the king was enthroned, he was being seated on the cherubim throne of Yahweh seems to be an early, pre-exilic concept. With that in mind, we can then get a broader perspective of the pre-exilic coronation rituals by looking at the relevant psalms

Psalm 2:6-7 reads:

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

We can interpret this passage to refer to God having taken the king up to the top of the temple mount, which would be equivalent to an ascent into heaven and having enthroned him there. The Lord gives a decree to the king, announcing him to be the son of God.

Psalm 110:1 has the Lord directing the king to sit at his right hand. Psalm 2:2 indicates that the king has previously been anointed. Just as the

visionary in the ascent narratives is described as being washed, anointed, clothed, and invested with royal regalia as part of his heavenly experience, we learn from the Bible that the coronation of kings followed a similar pattern. The king was washed and purified, likely at the spring of Gihon (1 Kings 1:34). He was anointed on the head with a perfumed olive oil that was kept in a horn in the sanctuary (1 Kings 1:39; Psalm 89:20; Psalm 23:5). He was clothed in robes and also wore a priestly apron (ephod, see 1 Chronicles 15:27), sash (Isaiah 22:21; “girdle” in *κῆν*), and diadem/headress (see Ezekiel 21:26). Finally, the king was consecrated a priest “after the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4).

Just as Moses was understood in later Jewish writings to have been deified by his experience on Mt. Sinai, this may very well have been ritually true for the Israelite kings as well.

Margaret Barker describes a Second Temple Ritual in which the high priest, Simon, emerges from the temple and is treated as if he were Yahweh. She notes, citing ben Sira 50:17:

When he emerged from the Holy of Holies he was like the morning star, like the sun shining on the temple; his very presence made the court of the temple glorious. When he had poured the libation, the trumpet sounded and “all the people together ... fell to the ground upon their faces to worship (*proskunein*) their LORD ...” (ben Sira 50:17). The most natural way to read this is that they were worshipping the high priest, or rather, Yahweh whom he represented.³⁰

This Second Temple Ritual expression involving the high priest as the representative of Yahweh should likely be understood to be an example of post-exilic borrowing of pre-exilic royal rites — attributing, in the absence of the monarchy, to the high priest functions previously attached to the figure of the king. Turning again to the narrative of Solomon’s coronation in 1 Chronicles 29, verse 20:

And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king.

If the “throne of the Lord” that Solomon was enthroned on refers to the cherubim-throne in the Holy of Holies, then a situation very much like that described for Simon, where he emerged from the temple with the early morning light causing his glorious raiment to gleam brilliantly,

likely ensued.³¹ Zechariah 12:8 informs us that, ideally, the monarchs of the house of David were to be like the Angel of the Lord, representing God before the people. This is likely what was believed to have been the king's status after he was set on God's holy hill, enthroned at his right hand, and declared to be the Son of God. Ritually, he had ascended into heaven to stand before the throne of God and was enthroned there. After this experience, the king would have been seen as having been transformed into an angelic messenger, the representative of Yahweh.

Conclusion

To summarize my findings, we can see that:

1. The origin of the heavenly ascent motif should be sought even earlier than Bunta supposed, namely in the context of the pre-exilic temple cult.
2. The pilgrims were required to go up to the temple at ordained festal times.
3. The pilgrimage culminated in a climb to the pinnacle of the holy mountain of God. Because the peak of the temple mount and temple structure represented heaven, the upward journey likely would have been imagined as a heavenly ascent.
4. The procession to the temple would have involved passing through gates and being confronted by guardians who required adherence to moral laws and answers to questions or passwords.
5. A key purpose for arriving at the temple was to experience the Divine Theophany, thus "appearing before the Lord" or perhaps even "seeing the face of the Lord."
6. The king, who likely had led the procession up to the temple, was enthroned on or beside the Lord's own throne, was transformed or "reborn" as a Son of God, and appeared before the people in glorious fashion as the representative of Yahweh.

In light of these findings, it is my conclusion that the earliest roots of the Israelite tradition of heavenly ascent should not be sought in the book of 1 Enoch, as is commonly argued, nor even in the earlier book of Ezekiel, as Silviu Bunta suggests, but rather in the Psalms and in other early pre-exilic biblical texts. The ascent to heaven was not merely a literary invention based on a creative interpretation of prophetic texts but was a cultic drama made real for worshippers through the temple liturgy. I believe that the ascent to heaven to stand before the Throne of God and to see his Face was a key feature of early Israelite religion and one of the major paradigms of the pre-exilic royal cult of the First Temple.

Notes

1. Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 146.
2. Silviu Bunta, "In Heaven or on Earth: A Misplaced Temple Question About Ezekiel's Visions," in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Elijor*, ed. Daphna V. Arbel and Andrei A. Orlov, *Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages 2* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 28-44.
3. Bunta, "In Heaven or on Earth," 31-33.
4. Bunta, "In Heaven or on Earth," 33.
5. Bunta, "In Heaven or on Earth," 34.
6. Bunta, "In Heaven or on Earth," 34-35.
7. William Lee Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 72.
8. Holladay, *The Psalms*, 44.
9. J. H. Eaton, *Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1979), 15.
10. Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. 2 vols. *The Biblical Resource Series*, ed. Astrid B. Beck and David Noel Freedman. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), Vol. 1, 172.
11. See e.g., Hans Ulrich Steymans, "Traces of Liturgies in the Psalter: The Communal Laments, Psalms 79, 80, 83, 89 in Context," in *Psalms and Liturgy*, eds. Dirk J. Human and Cas J. A. Vos (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 168-234. Steymans discusses the processions of various gods, represented by their cultic statues, into their temples as part of the New Year Feasts of Asshur and Babylon. He makes comparisons between the sequence of hymns used for these events and what he sees as a similar series of Psalms (Pss. 79, 80, 83, 89) in the Hebrew Psalter. He concludes that these five last psalms of the Asaph collection "represent a liturgical sequence of prayers for one single day of the New Year Festival in Jerusalem" (p. 226). For the idea that in Egypt similar processions of the statues of the gods, including the solar barque, were performed, see generally Georges Posener, *De la divinité du Pharaon* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale; Cahiers de la Société Asiatique XV, 1960), 47-48, 55, 59-61, 69, 71, 81-82; Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt, *Vie et mort d'un pharaon: Tutankhamon* (Paris: Hachette, 1963), 185-190; Serge Sauneron, *The Priests of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 90-93; Henri

- Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 79-88.
12. See, e.g., J. H. Eaton, *Psalms* (London: S. C. M. Press, 1967), 291. Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years*, 34. Mowinckel, *The Psalms*, Vol. 1, 129.
 13. Compare also the procession described in Nehemiah 12:30-43 that goes through gates as it ascends up to the temple.
 14. Mowinckel argues that the gatekeepers were priests that belonged to the “higher clergy,” and that at least in pre-exilic times they ranked next to the chief priest (2 Kgs 25:18). Mowinckel, *The Psalms*, Vol. 1, 177.
 15. Broyles, “Liturgies of Temple Entry,” 252.
 16. Compare with moral requirements delineated for “those who can go down to the vision of the Merkabah” in *Hekhalot Rabbati* 20:1; 13. See William J. Hamblin, “Temple Motifs in Jewish Mysticism” in *Temples of the Ancient World*. Donald W. Parry, ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. and Provo, Ut.: FARMS, 1994), 448.
 17. Broyles, “Liturgies of Temple Entry,” 250.
 18. Broyles, “Liturgies of Temple Entry,” 252.
 19. Broyles, “Liturgies of Temple Entry,” 252.
 20. Mowinckel, *The Psalms*, Vol. 1, 181.
 21. Donald W. Parry, “Temple Worship and a Possible Reference to a Prayer Circle in Psalm 24.” He notes that “On other occasions in the psalms the word *dor* is translated as circle: “for God is in the circle of the righteous” (Psalm 14:5); “I will make thy name to be remembered in all circles”(Psalm 45:17); and “the circle of the upright” (Psalm 112:2). Such passages may refer to a social circle, a wedding circle, or a ceremonial circle.” From Clarke’s Commentary: That seek thy face, O Jacob - It is most certain that “Elohey, O God” has been lost out of the Hebrew text in most MSS., but it is preserved in two of Kennicott’s MSS., and also in the Syriac, Vulgate, Septuagint, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Anglo-Saxon. “Who seek thy face, O God of Jacob.”
 22. William Lee Holladay and Ludwig Köhler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Based Upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 328. See argument in Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 146.
 23. Holladay and Köhler, *A Concise H.A.L.O.T.*, 328.
 24. James D. Tabor, “Ascent to Heaven in Antiquity,” accessed online at

- <http://religiousstudies.uncc.edu/people/jtabor/heavenlyascent.html>.
25. See, e.g., Mowinckel, *The Psalms*, Vol. 1, 173-74; Eaton, *Festal Drama*, 14.
 26. Klaus Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1990), 133.
 27. Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms*, 134.
 28. See Craig C. Broyles, "The Psalms and Cult Symbolism: The Case of the Cherubim-Ark," in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David Firth and Philip S. Johnston (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005). Commenting on Psalm 63, Broyles notes: "It is possible to read the phrase 'in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy' (v. 7b) as simply an imaginative metaphor for Yahweh's protection. But the earlier claim, 'so I have looked upon you in the sanctuary [...]', locates the speaker in the temple. To interpret this remarkable claim of seeing God appropriately we must remember our context is not that of prophets and their visions but that of liturgies and temple symbolism. In poetic parallelism the second colon often specifies the first. In the parallel phrase the objects of 'beholding' are two terms that are clearly associated with and sometimes even denote the cherubim-ark (cf. 78:61). Thus, it is possible that this psalm was to be recited in direct vision of the cherubim-ark" (Broyles, "The Psalms and Cult Symbolism," 152-53).
 29. This is the most likely interpretation of Moses' vision described in *The Exagoge of Ezekiel the Tragedian*.
 30. See Philo, *De vita Mosis* 2.290-91; *De virt.* 73-75; Ezekiel the Tragedian, *Exagoge*, 668-82, as referenced in James Tabor, "Ascent to Heaven in Antiquity," accessed online at <http://religiousstudies.uncc.edu/people/jtabor/heavenlyascent.html>. See also, e.g., Meeks, Wayne A. "Moses as God and King." In *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, edited by Jacob Neusner. *Religions in Antiquity, Studies in the History of Religions (Supplements to Numen* 14; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 354-71. My thanks to Jeff Bradshaw for this last reference.
 31. Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, 77. Josephus describes a very similar event to that of Simon the high priest that occurred during the reign of Herod Agrippa, in which, at the new theater in Caesarea, during the celebratory games he instituted, Agrippa entered the theater at dawn, dressed in glorious silver robes. As he took a seat on his elevated throne, the early morning sunlight made his shining robes gleam while members of the audience acclaimed

him as a god. Jules Morgenstern saw this event as happening at the time of a great festival and speculated that this must have been in imitation of the ancient royal rites. In light of this observation, Morgenstern reconstructs the ancient ritual involving the king at the Temple of Jerusalem:

The ceremony in question was performed, it is stated clearly, just at sunrise. The king entered the theater just as the day was dawning. Unquestionably he took the seat regularly reserved for him alone. It must have been located at the western side of the theater and was no doubt elevated somewhat above the remainder of the seats in the edifice in such manner and to such height that the first rays of the rising sun upon this particular day might fall unobstructedly upon the king's person and be reflected brilliantly from the robe of silvered cloth which he was wearing, undoubtedly for this very purpose. The elevated royal seat resembled in various essential respects, and was no doubt even regarded as, a throne, and that too a throne of the character which the Bible very appropriately terms a *kisse' kabod*, "a throne of radiance", 2) a throne bathed in fiery light, the throne of Yahweh Himself. And as the people, assembled at that very early hour primarily to observe and even to an extent to participate in this very ceremony, beheld the king, seated upon his elevated throne and brilliantly radiating light from his very person, as it seemed, the light of the first rays of the rising sun upon this solstitial day, they hailed him as a god. Julian Morgenstern, "The King-God among the Western Semites and the Meaning of Epiphanes," *Vetus Testamentum* 10, no. 2 (1960): 156ff.

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THE *SÔD* OF YHWH AND THE ENDOWMENT

William J. Hamblin

In its broader sense the Hebrew term *sôd* (סוד) means a confidential discussion, a secret or plan, a circle of confidants, or council.¹ Nearly all scholars now agree that *sôd*, when used in relationship to God, refers to the heavenly council/*sôd* of God, which humans may sometimes visit to learn divine mysteries or obtain a prophetic message to deliver to humankind.² The celestial members of this council are variously called the “host of heaven” (1 Kings 22:19), “gods” or “sons of God” (Psalms 82:1, 6), or “Holy Ones.” *Sôd* can refer to either the divine council itself or to the deliberative secret results of that council — that is the secret plans of the council — which a prophet is sometimes permitted to learn or to reveal to humankind. Only those who are part of the divine *sôd*/council know the *sôd*/secret plan, and only those who are given explicit permission may reveal that *sôd* to humankind.³ This concept is illustrated in a number of biblical passages:

In 1 Kings 22:19–23, the prophet Michaiah describes his vision of the *sôd* as follows:

19 I saw YHWH sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left; 20 and YHWH said, “Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?” And one said one thing, and another said another. 21 Then a spirit came forward and stood before YHWH, saying, “I will entice him.” 22 And YHWH said to him, “By what means?” And he said, “I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.” And he said, “You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.” 23 Now therefore behold, YHWH has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; YHWH has declared disaster for you.⁴

Notice here that Michaiah participated in the *sôd* of YHWH and therefore knows YHWH’s secret plan and therefore can accurately prophesy, whereas the other court prophets, with no knowledge of YHWH’s *sôd*, are deceived. Note, too, the important motif that God is sitting on his throne

surrounded by his *sôd*. (22:19). Biblical divine enthronement scenes and throne theophanies often imply a meeting of the *sôd*.⁵

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah enters the presence of Yhwh seated on his throne in the temple (6:1). There he meets with the divine council (6:2–3) and is invested with a mission to reveal the deliberations of the council to humankind (6:8–9). Note that in Isaiah the *sôd* of Yhwh meets in the celestial temple, where Yhwh sits enthroned just as in Michaiah's vision.

Jeremiah 23:16–18 describes Jeremiah's response to prophets who prophesy victory for Judah over Babylon. Jeremiah writes:

16 Thus says YHWH of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the [false] prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of YHWH. 17 They say continually to those who despise the word of YHWH, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.' 18 But who among them has stood in the *sôd* of YHWH to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened?"

Jeremiah 23:21–22 continues this theme, when YHWH himself speaks:

21 "I did not send the [false] prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. 22 But if they had stood in my *sôd*, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds."

The obvious implications of these two passages is that Jeremiah has "stood in the *sôd* of YHWH," just like Michaiah and Isaiah before him, and therefore knows YHWH's *sôd*/secret plan, which he can reveal to humankind through his prophecies. The distinction between a true prophet and a false one is that the true prophet has "stood in the *sôd* of YHWH," while the false prophet hasn't. This precisely parallels the description of Micaiah's vision of the *sôd*, while the false prophets don't know God's *sôd*/secret plan.

Psalms 82 offers a fascinating description of the "council of God":

1 God (אלהים *ēlohîm*) has taken his place in the council (עדת *'ădat*) of God (אל *'el*); in the midst of the gods (אלהים *ēlohîm*) he holds judgment. . . . 6 I [God] said, "You [of the divine council/

‘*ădat*] are gods (אלהים *ēlohîm*), sons of the Most High (בני עליון *benê ‘elyôn*), all of you.”

In this meeting of the “council of God,” God calls the members of his *sôd* “gods” and “sons of the Highest.”

Amos 3:7 — a passage often quoted by LDS — describes YHWH’s *sôd* as follows: “For the Lord YHWH doesn’t do anything (דבר *dābār*)⁶ without revealing his *sôd* to his servants the prophets.” Amos provides here a summary principle paralleling the explicit examples of Michaiah, Isaiah and Jeremiah given above. God reveals the *sôd* (secret plan) of his *sôd* (divine council) to his prophets.

Psalm 25:14 adds an interesting covenantal aspect to the *sôd*. “The *sôd* of YHWH is for those who honor him; he reveals his covenant (*berît*) to them.” In this verse knowledge of the *sôd* of YHWH is directly linked with the revelation of his covenant.

Finally, **Job** provides a description of God’s *sôd*, composed of the “sons of God,” meeting in council (Job 1:6, 2:1). In Job 15:8, Eliphaz insists that Job has not sat in the *sôd* and therefore cannot understand God’s will regarding Job.

All of this is, of course, familiar to many Latter-day Saints, since these texts have been compared to several passages in LDS scripture which also describe the *sôd* of YHWH (e.g., 1 Nephi 1:8–18; Abraham 3:22–23). I would like, however, to move one step further and suggest that we should understand the LDS Endowment as a ritual and dramatic participation in the *sôd*/divine council of God, through which God reveals to the covenanter his *sôd*/secret plan of salvation — the hidden meaning and purpose of creation and the cosmos. When we consider the Endowment drama in this way — remembering that in Isaiah the meeting place of the *sôd* of YHWH is in the temple (Isaiah 6:1) — the Endowment fits broadly in the biblical tradition of ritually observing or participating in “the council/*sôd* of YHWH” described in these biblical texts.

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Notes

1. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 745; J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975–2003), 10:171–77.
2. See *Bibliography*.
3. Part of this is reflected in the Bible, where prophets are often expressly “sent” from YHWH (Hebrew *Yahweh*, Anglicized as Jehovah) with a message — what it is that they are to reveal YHWH’s *sôd*. See Exodus 3:10, 15, 7:16; Deuteronomy 34:11; Joshua 24:5; 1 Samuel 15:1; 2 Samuel 12:1, 25; Isaiah 6:8–9; Jeremiah 1:7, 7:25, 19:14, Ezekiel 2:3–4; Micah 6:4; Haggai 1:12; Zechariah 2:12,13,15; Malachi 3:23; Psalms 105:26. See James Ross, “The Prophet as Yahweh’s Messenger,” in Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson, eds., *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 98–107.
4. Translations are generally modified by me from the English Standard Version (ESV), which is a modernized and corrected KJV.
5. On the significance of throne theophanies, see Timo Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).
6. The Hebrew *dābār* can mean “thing” or “word.”

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TEMPLES ALL THE WAY DOWN: SOME NOTES ON THE *MI'RAJ* OF MUHAMMAD

Daniel C. Peterson

The *mi'raj* of Muhammad is the famous “night journey” that the Prophet of Islam allegedly made from Arabia to Jerusalem (a part of the journey that is sometimes distinguished under its own title, as the *isra'*), and from Jerusalem through the heavens and into the presence of God.

The narrative of the *mi'raj* has long attracted the attention of Islamic miniaturists and illustrators (in, for example, the famous Turkish *Miraj Nameh* [“Book of the *Mi'raj*”] preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France). Moreover, it has served, in more or less allegorical form, as a model for many Sufi accounts of the mystical ascent to union with the divine and perhaps even for certain Neoplatonic cosmologies (e.g., those of al-Farabi, al-Kirmani, and Ibn Sina or Avicenna) in the Islamic tradition.

Allusions to the *mi'raj* in the Qur'an are, at best, sparse and rather obscure. There are, for example, two verses in the 17th chapter — known in Arabic as *Surat al-Isra'* (“the chapter of the *isra'*”) because of them — that seem to refer to the story. Here is one such passage:

Exalted be He who took His servant [*asra bi-'abdihi*] by night
from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa, whose
surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs.
Truly, He is the Hearer, the Knower.¹

This verse is typically taken to refer to a journey from Mecca to Jerusalem. The term *masjid* is the common Arabic equivalent of the English *mosque*, which ultimately derives from its pronunciation in the Egyptian dialect of Arabic (*masgid*). The Arabic *sajada* corresponds to the English verb *to bow* or *to prostrate oneself*, and a *masjid* (from the same three-consonant root, *s-j-d*) is a place where such prostration occurs. Thus, more broadly, it indicates a place of prayer and worship, or a shrine.

It is striking for my present purposes that Muhammad's journey is, thus, portrayed as having occurred between at least two shrines, sanctuaries, or places of worship.

Al-Masjid al-Haram (roughly, “the sacred mosque”) is the term still used to refer to the Grand Mosque at Mecca, centered on the famous Ka’ba. Although this shrine was, of course, much less spectacular than is today’s enormous architectural complex, it pre-dates Muhammad. By contrast, the phrase *Masjid al-Aqsa* cannot refer to the building on Jerusalem’s Temple Mount called the Al-Aqsa Mosque (and sometimes known — presumably by reason of its location, since it is, otherwise, a mosque essentially like any other — as *al-bayt al-muqaddas* or “the Holy House”), because that structure was built in AD 705 by the Umayyad caliph al-Walid, more than 70 years after Muhammad’s death.² Nonetheless, the phrase almost certainly pertains to Jerusalem or to some place within Jerusalem — and very likely to the Temple Mount.³

Only one other Qur’anic passage, a set of six verses in the 53rd chapter that I will discuss below, seems to relate in any very clear way to the story of the *mi’raj*. So the bulk of the tradition about Muhammad’s “night journey” comes from extra-Qur’anic sources, from the so-called *hadith* or “traditions” literature. (*Hadith* — the word is actually singular in Arabic, but, when used in English, often functions as a collective or a plural — are reports of the sayings or actions of the Prophet or his “Companions” that are used to flesh out, elucidate, and supplement the Qur’an as a source of Islamic history, doctrine, practice, and legal precedent.)

I will be drawing upon three major versions of the story. (There are others; this essay represents merely a preliminary summary of a solid but non-exhaustive sample of the relevant sources.) The first is that found in the standard biography of Muhammad compiled in the eighth century by Ibn Ishaq and edited by Ibn Hisham (d. AD 828 or 833).⁴ The second and third occur, quite separately, in the quasi-canonical collection of *hadith* reports assembled by al-Bukhari in the ninth century.⁵

There are variations in the story of the *mi’raj* as it occurs in the several sources. I will call attention to one or two of these. I will not, however, be paying any notice to the different tradents to whom we owe what we have of the account. That is not the focus of this article, though it is a worthy subject. Instead, I will be looking at the basic narrative, in something of a harmonized version.

I am also not concerned in this essay with the question of whether or not Muhammad really ascended through the seven heavens, nor even with whether he actually claimed to have done so. It is beyond dispute that, in either case, such an ascent — comparable to other ascension stories from around the world — was being ascribed to him by no later

than the eighth century — which is to say by, at the very most, a century or a century and a half after his death. (And those ascriptions claim to rest on the testimonies of Muhammad’s contemporaries and associates.) Whether true or not, the story becomes an indisputable window into concepts existing in Arabia and the newly established Islamic empire at a very early time.

The episode of the *mi’raj* typically commences in Muhammad’s home town of Mecca, or near it, and is usually dated to a time prior to his *hijra* or “emigration” from Mecca to Medina — the seminal event that serves as the beginning point of the Islamic religious calendar.⁶

“While I was at Mecca,” the Prophet is represented as saying,

the roof of my house was opened and Gabriel descended, opened my chest, and washed it with Zam-zam water. Then he brought a golden tray [*tist*; perhaps better, a “basin”] full of wisdom and faith and, having poured [*afragha*] its contents into my chest, he closed it. Then he took my hand and ascended with me [*‘araja bi*] to the nearest heaven.⁷

Another account says simply that the Prophet was “at the House [*‘inda al-bayt*] in a state between sleep and wakefulness.”⁸ The use of the definite article *the* or *al-* suggests that the “house” in question wasn’t Muhammad’s private dwelling but, rather, the immediate environs of *the* house, al-Masjid al-Haram. (The translator’s capitalization of the word *house* signals his judgment, too, that this is so.)

The motif of a washing followed by the application of something that is, at least metaphorically, liquid is striking here. It seems to represent something of an initiatory or preparatory ritual. It is also noteworthy that the water used for the washing comes from Zam-zam or Zamzam, a well that is located within the sacred precincts of al-Masjid al-Haram in Mecca.

The “nearest heaven,” to which the Prophet is first taken, is *al-sama’ al-dunya*. The word *dunya* is a feminine comparative adjective that means “nearer/closer” or “nearest/closest” but that also commonly functions in Arabic as a noun referring to this world, the ordinarily and literally mundane world, as opposed to the next world or afterlife (*al-akhira*, “the last”).⁹ So this nearest heaven represents the boundary or border that marks our world (*al-dunya*) off from the heavenly world.

But Muhammad seems not to have gone directly from the vicinity of Mecca into the heavens. (Certainly, that is so in other accounts.) First, he went to Jerusalem. “Then the apostle was carried by night from the

mosque at Mecca to the Masjid al-Aqsa, which is the temple [*al-bayt al-maqdis* or *al-bayt al-muqaddas*] of Aelia.”¹⁰ (But, as I’ve indicated, this cannot refer to the mosque of that name, which had not yet been built.)

The terms translated by A. Guillaume here as “the mosque at Mecca” and “the Masjid al-Aqsa” are, just as they are in the Qur’anic passage cited above, precisely parallel in the Arabic: respectively, *al-masjid al-haram* (“the sacred mosque”) and *al-masjid al-aqsa* (“the furthest mosque”). The places share in common the nature of what Rudi Paret calls a “Gebetsstätte” or “place of prayer.”¹¹

Aelia or, more fully, *Aelia Capitolina* was the Roman city built by the Emperor Hadrian in the early second century on the site of Jerusalem, which had been in ruins since AD 70, following the First Jewish Revolt. The name came from Hadrian’s *nomen gentilicum* or family name, *Aelius*, coupled with an indicator that the new city was dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus — to whom Hadrian erected a temple on the platform where the Jewish temple had previously stood. The construction of this temple and city contributed significantly to the Second Jewish Revolt (AD 132–136), led by Simeon Bar Kokhba.

The name *Aelia* persisted in medieval Arabic, which preferred it to any form of the word *Jerusalem* — just as, today, Arabs prefer *al-Quds* (literally, something like “the Holiness”) or even, much less commonly, *Bayt al-Maqdis* (“the Holy House”) over *Urushalima*, which is the standard term in modern Arabic Bibles but which is attested at least as far back as the early second millennium before Christ.

But how did Muhammad travel from Arabia to Palestine?

Buraq, the animal whose every stride carried it as far as the eye could reach, on which the prophets before him used to ride, was brought to the apostle and he was mounted on it. His companion (Gabriel) went with him to see the wonders between heaven and earth, until he came to Jerusalem’s temple [*bayt al-maqdis* or *bayt al-muqaddas*]. There he found Abraham the friend of God, Moses, and Jesus assembled with a company of the prophets, and he prayed with them.¹²

“He prayed with them” [*salla bihim*] could be more precisely rendered, because of its causative *bi-*, as “he led them in prayer.” However, the Prophet’s role is brought out even more clearly in another, distinct, account that appears a few lines further in the text:

The apostle and Gabriel went their way until they arrived at the temple of Jerusalem. There he found Abraham, Moses, and Jesus among a company of the prophets. The apostle acted as their imam in prayer [*fa-ammahum rasul Allah ... fa-salla bihim*; literally, “The messenger of God acted as their imam ... and led them in prayer”].¹³

The term *imam* is cognate with the Arabic preposition *amama* (“in front of”). During liturgical prayer (*salat*) in a mosque, the imam positions himself before the congregation, which is lined up in rows and segregated by gender, and carries out the various ritual actions required for worship. Members of the congregation follow him, so that all perform the actions (prostrations and other movements) more or less in unison.¹⁴ This is the role that Muhammad is said to have carried out, leading all of his prophet predecessors in the motions of prayer and worship in the temple precincts of Jerusalem.

Here is a separate account of the beginning of the *mi'raj*:

While I was sleeping in the Hijr Gabriel came and stirred me with his foot. I sat up but saw nothing and lay down again. He came a second time and stirred me with his foot. I sat up but saw nothing and lay down again. He came to me the third time and stirred me with his foot. I sat up and he took hold of my arm and I stood beside him and he brought me out to the door of the mosque and there was a white animal, half mule, half donkey, with wings on its sides with which it propelled its feet, putting down each forefoot at the limit of its sight, and he mounted me on it. Then he went out with me, keeping close to me.¹⁵

The threefold repetition in this story is noteworthy. It is directly comparable with the traditional story of Muhammad's prophetic call and with Joseph Smith's account of the visit of Moroni, both of which prominently involve threefold repetition.¹⁶

Umm Hani', the daughter of Muhammad's uncle Abu Talib whose given name was Hind, is reported as saying that:

The apostle went on no night journey except while he was in my house. He slept that night in my house. He prayed the final night prayer, then he slept and we slept. A little before dawn the apostle woke us, and when we had prayed the dawn prayer he said, “O Umm Hani', I prayed with you the last evening prayer in this valley, as you saw. Then I went to Jerusalem and prayed

there. Then I have just prayed the morning prayer with you as you see.”¹⁷

She advised him to say nothing publicly about this claim, because, she feared, the Meccans would regard him as a liar. He ignored her advice and, of course, they asked him for proof. He told them specific details about caravans over which he had passed during his journeys between Jerusalem and Arabia, and those details were soon confirmed.¹⁸ (He is also said to have provided descriptions of the three named prophets.)¹⁹

The Meccans are reported, plausibly enough, to have mocked Muhammad’s claim that he had been to Jerusalem and back overnight, and even some of the Muslims themselves are said to have lost their faith. But Abu Bakr, who had been to Jerusalem during his career as a caravan trader, confirmed the details of Muhammad’s description of the city.²⁰

But it isn’t absolutely clear, even if we assume that Muhammad really claimed to have experienced the *mi’raj*, that his journey was intended to be taken as a literal, physical one. At a minimum, the preserved accounts indicate that some Muslims sought to minimize the apparent outlandishness of the story by insisting that, physically speaking, he hadn’t traveled at all. For instance, his youngest wife, ‘Aisha, a major source of *hadith* reports altogether (some of which, at least, show a clear tendency toward anti-literalism), allegedly said that “The apostle’s body remained where it was but God removed his spirit by night.”²¹

The matter is reminiscent of the apostle Paul’s ambivalence about the nature of what may have been his own ascent into the heavens several centuries earlier:

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.²²

“After the completion of my business in Jerusalem,” Muhammad is reported to have recalled, “a ladder [*mi’raj*] was brought to me finer than any I have ever seen. It was that to which the dying man looks when death approaches.”²³

It is impossible here not to be reminded of the story of “Jacob’s ladder” (*sulam yaakov*) in Genesis 28:

And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder [*sulam*] set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.

And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God [*bayt Elohim*], and this is the gate of heaven [*shaar ha-shamayim*; literally, “gate of the heavens”].

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel [*bayt El*; “house of God”]: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.²⁴

The *sulam* or “ladder” of Jacob could just as easily be rendered in English as “staircase.” (In Arabic, a Semitic language cognate with Hebrew, *sullam* is the most common word for “stairs.”) A similar semantic range exists for the “ladder” or *mi'raj* that is brought to Muhammad. Although it has come over the centuries to refer to the story of his night journey from earth into the heavens, the basic, primary, sense of the Arabic term *mi'raj* is “means of ascent.” It can refer either to a ladder or to a staircase.²⁵

Jacob's dream ... revealed Bethel as a temple in embryo: the concepts of the day visualized a *stairway* (the rendering *ladder* seems less appropriate) linking a heavenly temple with the earthly temple where God (or gods, in pagan religion) deigned to meet His worshippers and receive their offerings. The *angels* go to and fro at His bidding in their tasks and ministrations (cf. John 1:51).²⁶

"The word 'place' (*maqom*)," says a Catholic commentary, "occurring five times in the passage, has a cultic significance here; Jacob came to a Canaanite sanctuary."²⁷ Says another, "*The* place' (three times with the article)," observes another, suggests "a holy place."²⁸ (Perhaps not coincidentally, at the front door of the Ka'ba, within the sanctuary of Mecca's al-Masjid al-Haram, is the *Maqam Ibrahim*, the "station" or "place" of Abraham.) But this scarcely exhausts Bethel's temple connections in Jacob's story. The ladder or staircase was "possibly occasioned by the staged towers of Babylonia (ziggurats), the summits of which represented the gods' true dwelling place."²⁹ Thus, Bethel becomes "the meeting place of heaven and earth, between God and man."³⁰

In the subsequent history of the Hebrews, Bethel became an important center of the cult for the northern Kingdom of Israel following the break-up of the united kingdom of David and his son Solomon. Jeroboam, the first of the northern kings, put golden calves both at Dan, on the northern border of his kingdom, and at Bethel, on its southern boundary. (He appointed non-Levitical priests to serve them, a harbinger of the kingdom's heretical ways to come.)³¹

"My companion mounted it with me," says the Prophet Muhammad of the *mi'raj*,

until we came to one of the gates of heaven called the Gate of the Watchers [*bab al-hafaza*]. An angel called Isma'il was in charge of it, and under his command were twelve thousand angels, each of them having twelve thousand angels under his command.³²

There is, in the narratives of the *mi'raj*, a caretaker or watchman assigned to each of the gates of heaven. (The term *bab al-hafaza* might better be rendered "gate of the guardians.") Permission must be sought in order to enter, and at least some sort of formulaic question-and-answer procedure, accompanied by a blessing of health or life, is required. According to the accounts preserved by al-Bukhari, the same questions, answers, and greeting occur at each of the seven heavens.³³

When Gabriel took him up to each of the heavens and asked permission to enter he had to say whom he had brought and whether he had received a mission and they would say “God grant him life, brother and friend!” until they reached the seventh heaven.³⁴

The verb translated “received a mission” is either *qad ba’atha* or, in a textual variant, *bu’itha ilayhi*.³⁵ The root *b-‘-th* is connected with being sent out or dispatched, and, here, presumably refers to Muhammad’s having been called as a prophet.

The notion that there are watchmen at the gates of the heavens whose permission must be obtained before Muhammad can pass, and that Muhammad’s ascension is linked with the transition from earth to heaven that, at least potentially, will be undergone by all mortal humans, suggests that every human may eventually need to ascend via *mi’raj*. It’s not a great leap from that idea to the thought that perhaps all will even need to undergo the same sort of testing that occurs when Muhammad and Gabriel seek admission to the various heavens during their ascent toward the presence of the Lord.

It is difficult, in this context, not to think of Brigham Young’s definition of the endowment given in the Latter-day Saint temple. “Your endowment,” he said,

is to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell.³⁶

President Young taught this concept on numerous occasions. I offer a sampling of his other comments on the topic. “Will you abide our counsel?” he asked:

I say again, my soul for any man’s, if they will abide our counsel, that they will go right into heaven. We have the signs and token to give to the porter at the door, and he will let us in.³⁷

President Young’s use of the term *porter* is of interest here. We commonly think of a porter as someone who carries things. (Think of related words such as *portable*, *transport*, and *teleportation*.) This is an entirely legitimate meaning of the word, which derives from the Anglo-Norman *portour* and the Old French *portior*. Both stem from the Latin

portare (“to carry”). But the Anglo-Norman word apparently represents a coalescence of two distinct Old French terms — not only *portior* but the very similar *portier*. And *portier* comes from the Late Latin *portarius* (“gatekeeper”), which is a derivative from *porta* (“gate”). Thus, most of the colleges at such medieval establishments as the universities of Oxford and Cambridge have “porters,” whose role is to control entrance to those colleges and to provide them with security. So too, in the Roman Catholic Church, a “porter” is a member of the lowest of the four minor priesthood orders. His responsibility was to guard the church, open and close its doors and those of its sacristy and baptistry, and, at some periods, to ensure that no unbaptized persons entered the church during Eucharistic services.

These other meanings for the term *porter* provide appropriate background for Brigham Young’s use of the word:

I and my brethren have received our endowments, keys, blessings — all the tokens, signs, and every preparatory ordinance, that can be given to man, for his entrance into the celestial gate.³⁸

When we talk of the celestial law which is revealed from heaven, that is, the Priesthood, we are talking about the principle of salvation, a perfect system of government, of laws and ordinances, by which we can be prepared to pass from one gate to another, and from one sentinel to another, until we go into the presence of our Father and God.³⁹

He has taught you how to purify yourselves, and become holy, and be prepared to enter into His kingdom, how you can advance from one degree to another, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, until you are prepared to enter the celestial kingdom; how to pass every sentinel, watchman, and gate keeper.⁴⁰

All the riches, wealth, glory and happiness that we shall ever possess in heaven will be possessed on and around this earth when it is brought up into the presence of God in a sanctified and glorified state; and the sanctified ones who enter through the gate and pass the sentinel into the New Jerusalem, and into the presence of the Father and the Son, are the ones who will inherit the new heavens and the new earth in the presence of God, for here is the eternity, the glory and the power.⁴¹

Those who are counted worthy to dwell with the Father and the Son have previously received an education fitting them for that society; they have been made fully acquainted with every password, token and sign which have enabled them to pass by the porters through the doors into the celestial kingdom.⁴²

It is absolutely necessary that the Saints should receive further ordinances of the house of God before this short existence shall come to a close, that they may be prepared and fully able to pass all the sentinels leading into the celestial kingdom and into the presence of God.⁴³

And Brigham Young wasn't alone in teaching this concept of the passage into the heavens. "Joseph always told us," said his first counselor in the First Presidency, Heber C. Kimball,

that we would have to pass by sentinels that are placed between us and our Father and God. Then, of course, we are conducted along from this probation to other probations, or from one dispensation to another, by those who conducted those dispensations.⁴⁴

When President Kimball refers to "those who conducted those dispensations," one is reminded of the various prior prophets who occupy the several heavens of Muhammad's *mi'raj*.

Orson Pratt, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, taught that:

We shall enjoy all that has been put upon our heads, and, through the Priesthood, and signs and tokens that have been revealed, come forth in the first resurrection, and pass by the sentinels and the Gods that stand to keep the way of eternal lives.⁴⁵

His fellow apostle Orson Hyde took a strikingly specific view of the matter, including the departed Prophet Joseph Smith himself among the guardians of the worlds to come:

I tell you, Joseph holds the keys, and none of us can get into the celestial kingdom without passing by him. We have not got rid of him, but he stands there as the sentinel, holding the keys of the kingdom of God; and there are many of them beside him. I tell you, if we get past those who have mingled with us, and

know us best, and have a right to know us best, probably we can pass all other sentinels as far as it is necessary, or as far as we may desire. But I tell you, the pinch will be with those that have mingled with us, stood next to us, weighed our spirits, tried us, and proven us: there will be a pinch, in my view, to get past them. The others, perhaps, will say, If brother Joseph is satisfied with you, you may pass. If it is all right with him, it is all right with me.⁴⁶

According to the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord indicated to Joseph Smith that those who enter into eternal or temple marriage, if they live up to the covenants they have taken upon themselves,

shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fullness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.⁴⁷

The divergences between the Mormon and Islamic worldviews are significant, of course, but so, it seems to me, are the parallels in these accounts of how one enters the presence of the Lord.

“When I reached the nearest heaven,” Muhammad is quoted as relating to his followers,

“Gabriel said to the gatekeeper of the heaven [*khazin al-sama*], ‘Open (the gate).’ The gatekeeper asked, ‘Who is it?’ Gabriel answered: ‘Gabriel.’ He asked, ‘Is there anyone with you?’ Gabriel replied, ‘Yes, Muhammad is with me.’ He asked, ‘Has he been called [*ursila ilayhi*]?’ Gabriel said, ‘Yes.’ So the gate was opened and we went over into the nearest heaven.”⁴⁸

Another account, very slightly different, describes Gabriel and Muhammad’s approach to the first heaven this way:

When I reached the nearest heaven, Gabriel said to the heavenly gate-keeper [*khazin al-sama*; literally, “treasure-keeper of the heaven”], “Open the gate.” The gate-keeper asked, “Who is it?” He said, “Gabriel.” The gate-keeper, “Who is accompanying you?” Gabriel said, “Muhammad.” The gate-keeper said, “Has he been called [*qad ursila ilayhi*]?” Gabriel said, “Yes.” Then it was said, “He is welcomed. What a wonderful visit his is!”⁴⁹

The term *khazin al-sama'* (translated here as “the gatekeeper of the heaven”) could perhaps more accurately be rendered “the treasure-guardian of the heaven.” A *khazna*, *khazana*, *khazina*, or *makhzan* is a “treasure house” or “vault” or “storehouse.”⁵⁰

“When Gabriel brought me in,” the Prophet relates, “Isma‘il asked who I was, and when he was told that I was Muhammad he asked if I had been given a mission, and on being assured of this he wished me well.”⁵¹

In the course of the *mi'raj*, responding to a request from Muhammad, Gabriel orders an angel named “Malik, the Keeper of Hell,” to show that place to Muhammad. “Thereupon he removed its covering and the flames blazed high into the air until I thought they would consume everything. So I asked Gabriel to order him to send them back to their place which he did.”⁵² At that or another point, Muhammad sees several graphic punishments, rather like those in Dante’s *Inferno*, for usurers, adulterers, those who devoured the wealth of orphans, and unfaithful wives.⁵³

In the lowest heaven, Muhammad sees a man whom Gabriel identifies as “your father Adam” where he sits “reviewing the spirits of his offspring” as they arrive from their sojourns in mortality.⁵⁴ “Then he ascended with me (*‘araja bi*) till he reached the second heaven and he (Gabriel) said to its gatekeeper [*khazinihi*], ‘Open (the gate).’ The gatekeeper said to him the same as the gatekeeper of the first heaven had said and he opened the gate.”⁵⁵ Jesus and his cousin John the Baptist are in the second heaven. Joseph of Egypt, the son of Jacob, is in the third heaven. “Then to the fourth heaven and there was a man called Idris. ‘And we have exalted him to a lofty place.’” Aaron is in the fifth heaven, and Moses is in the sixth.⁵⁶

The quotation about Idris, who is generally identified as Enoch, being “exalted ... to a lofty place” is from Qur’an 19:57, in which God, speaking in the first person plural, apparently refers to the translation of that biblical patriarch.⁵⁷

Muhammad has, by this point, reached the highest of the heavens. It’s noteworthy that his ascent has always been toward the presence of God, which seems pretty clearly to imply spatial location for the deity. (In Jacob’s vision of the ladder or staircase, “the Lord stood above it.”) It’s a very specific place. And, there, Muhammad sees a kind of celestial palace or, perhaps better, a celestial shrine or place of prayer — the heavenly prototype, presumably, of all earthly sanctuaries:

Then I was shown al-Bait al-Ma‘mur (i.e., Allah’s House) [*al-bayt al-ma‘mur*; literally, “The Inhabited House”]. I asked Gabriel about it and he said, “This is Al Bait ul-Ma‘mur [*al-*

bayt al-ma'mur] where 70,000 angels perform prayers daily, and when they leave they never return to it (but always a fresh batch comes into it daily).⁵⁸

“Then,” another account has it:

to the seventh heaven and there was a man sitting on a throne at the gate of the immortal mansion [*al-bayt al-ma'mur*; literally, “the inhabited house”]. Every day seventy thousand angels went in not to come back until the resurrection day This was my father Abraham.⁵⁹

Note, here, yet another “house” or *bayt*. Recall too, again, the ancient conceptual background to Jacob’s ladder:

Jacob’s dream ... revealed Bethel as a temple in embryo: the concepts of the day visualized a *stairway* (the rendering *ladder* seems less appropriate) linking a heavenly temple with the earthly temple where God (or gods, in pagan religion) deigned to meet His worshippers and receive their offerings. The *angels* go to and fro at His bidding in their tasks and ministrations (cf. John 1:51).⁶⁰

There follows a curious incident indicating the existence of something at least resembling marital relationships in the postmortal life:

Then he took me into Paradise [*al-janna*; literally, “the garden”] and there I saw a damsel with dark red lips [*la’sa*] and I asked her to whom she belonged, for she pleased me much when I saw her, and she told me “Zayd b. Haritha.” The apostle [i.e., Muhammad, upon his return] gave Zayd the good news about her.⁶¹

In the *hadith* collection of al-Bukhari, one of the accounts of the *mi’raj* of Muhammad that I’ve been using comes in a chapter entitled “The Book of Prayer.” We now come to the reason for that placement.

While Muhammad is in the highest heaven, “there the duty of fifty prayers a day was laid upon him.”⁶² But Muslims perform liturgical prayers only five times daily. What is the origin of that much lower number?

On his way back down from the highest heaven (and, plainly, away from the literal place where God is), Muhammad encounters Moses:

He asked me how many prayers had been laid upon me and when I told him fifty [each day] he said, “Prayer is a weighty matter and your people are weak, so go back to your Lord and ask him to reduce the number for you and your community”. I did so and He took off ten. Again I passed by Moses and he said the same again; and so it went on until only five prayers for the whole day and night were left. Moses again gave me the same advice. I replied that I had been back to my Lord and asked him to reduce the number until I was ashamed, and I would not do it again.⁶³

A variant account tells the story somewhat differently. But notice that, in both accounts, God is implicitly regarded as having specific spatial location, such that Muhammad is able to enter the divine presence, leave it, and return to it several times:

Then Allah enjoined fifty prayers on my followers. When I returned with this order of Allah, I passed by Moses who asked me, “What has Allah enjoined on your followers?” I replied, “He has enjoined fifty prayers on them.” Moses said, “Go back to your Lord (and appeal for reduction) for your followers will not be able to bear it.” (So I went back to Allah and requested for reduction) and He reduced it to half. When I passed by Moses again and informed him about it, he said, “Go back to your Lord as your followers will not be able to bear it.” So I returned to Allah and requested for further reduction and half of it was reduced. I again passed by Moses and he said to me: “Return to your Lord, for your followers will not be able to bear it.” So I returned to Allah and He said, “These are five prayers and they are all (equal to) fifty (in reward) for My Word does not change.” I returned to Moses and he told me to go back once again. I replied, “Now I feel shy of asking my Lord again.”⁶⁴

I conclude with an account of one of the most remarkable (and enigmatic) elements of the *mi'raj* story: “Then Gabriel took me till we reached [*intaha*] Sidrat al-Muntaha (lote tree of the utmost boundary) which was shrouded in colours, indescribable.”⁶⁵ It seems, as we shall see, that this occurs in Paradise: “Then I was admitted into Paradise [*al-janna*]; literally, “the garden”] where I found small (tents or) walls (made) of pearls [*haba'il al-lu'lu'*] and its earth [*turabuhu*; “its soil/dust”] was of musk.”⁶⁶

It needs to be remembered that the word *paradise* derives, ultimately, from the Avestan or Old Eastern Iranian root *pairi.daeza*, which referred to a “walled enclosure” (from *pairi* [“around”] and *diz* [“to build a wall”]). In classical Greek, it came to refer to a royal estate or a park for animals. It is a protected garden.

Muhammad’s experience with this paradisiacal tree seems to be alluded to in Qur’an 53:

And he certainly saw him/Him in another descent, at the Lote-Tree of the Boundary. Near it is the Garden of Refuge [*jannat al-ma’wa*], where there covered the Lote-Tree that which covered it. The sight [of the Prophet] did not swerve, nor did it transgress. He surely saw the greatest of his Lord’s signs.⁶⁷

One of the passages in al-Bukhari preserves this purported first-person account:

Then I was shown Sidrat al-Muntaha (i.e. a tree in the seventh heaven) ... and four rivers originated at its root, two of them were apparent and two were hidden. I asked Gabriel about those rivers and he said, “The two hidden rivers are in paradise, and the apparent ones are the Nile and the Euphrates.”⁶⁸

This episode is plainly reminiscent of the Garden of Eden:

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;

And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.

And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

Strikingly, as I have pointed out elsewhere, the Qur'anic version of the Garden of Eden narrative, which is very like that of the Bible, mentions not two trees, but only one: "the tree of eternity."⁶⁹ I conclude now as I concluded then:

Consistent with the principle that eschatology (or 'last things') often recapitulates protology (or 'first things'), I think we may, in the lotus tree of the boundary, be seeing the Edenic tree of life yet again. Muhammad ascended to the garden from which Adam and Eve fell. It is the same garden to which the righteous may aspire.⁷⁰

As T. S. Eliot expressed it in his *Four Quartets*:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.⁷¹

Notes

1. Qur'an 17:1 (my translation). The third-person masculine singular compound verb *asra bi-* is a finite form derived from the same triconsonantal root as *isra'*, which is its verbal noun or *masdar*. I will briefly allude to the other verse from this chapter in what follows below.
2. Owing to at least two earthquakes and several major renovations in medieval times, the current structure on the site is, on the whole, somewhat more recent still.
3. See Rudi Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1980), 295-296. Paret points in particular to the phrase that I've translated as "whose surroundings We have blessed," comparing it to Qur'an 7:137 and 21:71, 81, which definitely allude to the Holy Land, and to Qur'an 34:18, which probably does. On the latter passage, compare Rudi Paret, *Der Koran*, 3d ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1979), 300, where, in his translation of the verse, he includes the parenthetical comment "*damit ist wohl Palästina gemeint.*"

4. I will be using A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1967) [hereafter, "Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*"], along with the Arabic original text published by Mustafa al-Suqa, Ibrahim al-Abyari, and 'Abd al-Hafiz Shalabi, eds., *Al-sira al-nabawiyya li-ibn Hisham* (Cairo: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1955) [hereafter, "Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*"].
5. I will be using Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari, Arabic-English*, 3d rev. ed. (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1979) [hereafter, *Sahih al-Bukhari*]. As its title indicates, this is a bilingual edition containing the Arabic original as well as an English translation.
6. Accordingly, that dating system is known as the "hijri calendar." There are many biographies of the founder of Islam. Among them, Daniel C. Peterson, *Muhammad: Prophet of God* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007), is probably not the worst.
7. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:211; compare 4:287. The Arabic verb translated here as "ascended" is based on the same three-letter root as the term *mi'raj*.
8. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 4:287.
9. Thus, for example, in Egyptian colloquial Arabic pronunciation, one says *iddinya harr* ("it's hot"; literally, "the world is hot") and *iddinya bitmattar* ("it's raining"; literally, "the world is raining").
10. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 181; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 1:396.
11. Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz*, 296.
12. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad* 182; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 397. *Buraq* is cognate with the verb *baraqa* (= English "to flash," "to sparkle") and the noun *barq* ("lightning").
13. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 182; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 398.
14. For an excellent basic manual on Islamic ritual prayer, see Mustafa Umar, *How to Pray: A Step-by-Step Guide to Prayer in Islam* (Seattle: CreateSpace, 2011).
15. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 182. The Hijr is an area within the sacred precinct in Mecca (i.e., within al-Masjid al-Haram) that is directly adjacent to the Ka'ba. At *Sahih al-Bukhari* 4:287, *Buraq* is described as "a white animal, smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey."
16. Muhammad's prophetic call is discussed in Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, "The Throne Theophany/Prophetic Call of Muhammad," in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D.

- Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 323-337; Peterson, *Muhammad: Prophet of God*, 49-64.
17. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 184.
 18. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 184.
 19. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 183-184.
 20. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 182-183.
 21. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 183.
 22. 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. All biblical quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.
 23. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 184-185; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 403. Again, this clashes with the account already cited above, from *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:211, according to which it was while Muhammad was at home in Mecca that “Gabriel descended” and then “took my hand and ascended with me to the nearest heaven.” One possible way of looking at the *mi’raj* in this sense would be to compare it with the famous “tunnel” often described in accounts of near-death experiences. As Allan Kellehear, *Experiences near Death: Beyond Medicine and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), and others have shown, other items often play the same role as the tunnel, especially in reports from cultures where tunnels are rare or unknown.
 24. Genesis 28:10-19.
 25. The fact that the *mi’raj* is “brought to” Muhammad needn’t imply the portability of a ladder; the Arabic verb can equally mean “offered to” or “presented to.”
 26. H. L. Ellison and D. F. Payne, “Genesis,” in F. F. Bruce, ed., *The International Bible Commentary* (Basingstoke and Grand Rapids: Marshall Pickering/Zondervan, 1986), 133. See also James L. Mays, ed., *Harper’s Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 104. Reginald C. Fuller, ed., *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Nelson, 1975), 198, proposes not only “stair” but “ramp.”
 27. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 29.
 28. Fuller, *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 198.
 29. Brown, et al., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 29.
 30. Fuller, *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 198.
 31. See 1 Kings 12:25-33.
 32. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 185; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 403.

33. See *Sahih al-Bukhari* 4:287-289.
34. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 186; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 407.
35. See Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 407, note 6.
36. *Journal of Discourses* 2:31.
37. *History of the Church* 7:240.
38. *Journal of Discourses*, 1:278.
39. *Journal of Discourses*, 2:139.
40. *Journal of Discourses*, 2:315.
41. *Journal of Discourses*, 10:35.
42. *Journal of Discourses*, 10:172.
43. *Journal of Discourses*, 12:163-164.
44. *Journal of Discourses*, 6:63
45. *Journal of Discourses*, 8:106.
46. *Journal of Discourses*, 6:154-155.
47. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
48. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:211.
49. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 4:287. The passive verb *ursila* is derived from the same root (*rsl*) that is used to denote Muhammad as a “messenger” or “apostle,” and, in Arabic editions of the New Testament, to refer to Christ’s apostles.
50. The English word *magazine* derives from *makhzan*, probably by way of a “powder magazine.”
51. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 185.
52. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 185.
53. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 185-186. It has, in fact, been suggested by several scholars that the *mi’raj* stories had some influence on Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, which, of course, is itself a classic ascension story.
54. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 185. I have corrected Guillaume’s “our father Adam” according to the Arabic at Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira* 405. Compare *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:211-212; 4:287.
55. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:212.
56. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 186. Another account has *Abraham* in the sixth heaven. 1:212
57. See Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5; Doctrine and Covenants 107:48-49; Moses 7:68-69. The pseudepigraphic Enoch literature represents another rich vein of ascension materials.
58. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 4:289. The irregular transliterations are artifacts of the translation by Muhammad Muhsin Khan; there are no differences in the original Arabic.

59. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 186. In the Arabic original, at Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 407, Gabriel identifies him to Muhammad as “your brother Abraham.”
60. Ellison and Payne, “Genesis,” 133. See also Mays, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, 104. Fuller, *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 198.
61. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 186; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, 407. Zayd b. Haritha was an early convert to Islam, and ultimately one of its earliest martyrs, who was, for a time, considered Muhammad’s adopted son.
62. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 186.
63. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 186-187. For the sake of clarity, I’ve inserted “every day” from the Arabic of Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira* 407. Guillaume’s translation here is rather paraphrastic, but it alters nothing substantial.
64. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:213-214.
65. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:214.
66. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 1:214.
67. Qur’an 53:13-18 (my translation).
68. *Sahih al-Bukhari* 4:289.
69. Daniel C. Peterson, “The Qur’anic Tree of Life,” in John W. Welch and Donald W. Parry, eds., *The Tree of Life: From Eden to Eternity* (Provo: Maxwell Institute, 2011), 193-216.
70. Peterson, “The Qur’anic Tree of Life,” 215-216.
71. T. S. Eliot, “Little Gidding,” *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1943), 59.

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THE LADY AT THE HORIZON: EGYPTIAN TREE GODDESS ICONOGRAPHY AND SACRED TREES IN ISRAELITE SCRIPTURE AND TEMPLE THEOLOGY

John S. Thompson

In the last few decades, a flurry of scholarly debate pertaining to manifestations of female sacred tree motifs in the iconography and extra-biblical texts of ancient Israel and surrounding nations has raised many questions concerning how one should understand Israelite religion and Biblical passages such as Deuteronomy 16:21, 2 Kings 23:4-7, Proverbs 3:18, and Isaiah 17:8 among many others.¹ Daniel Peterson extended this debate to the Book of Mormon by pointing out the record's claim that Lehi and Nephi, father and son living in the Jerusalem culture of the late 7th century BCE, both saw visions of a divine tree whose fruit was white and "desirable to make one happy," and then Nephi, in response to know the meaning of the tree, saw a vision of a virgin who later held a child in her arms (1 Nephi 8:10-11; 11:8-20).² Nephi describes the appearance of both the tree and the virgin using the same terminology (both are "exceedingly" "fair," or "beautiful," and "white"),³ leaving the reader with the impression that the two are somehow related. Margaret Barker noted that the details in and surrounding the tree visions of Lehi and Nephi fit comfortably within the context of late seventh century BCE.⁴

Much of the debate has focused on the extent to which these connections between sacred trees and women reflect the actual theology and worship of ancient Israelite religion. While the biblical text appears to condemn the Israelites for worshipping any deity besides the god of Abraham, including female deities connected to tree-related iconography, both the Bible and the Book of Mormon depict sacred trees as female in a positive light as well.

These positive views of female sacred trees in scripture and extra-biblical texts as well as what appear to be tree goddess figures in the archeological record of Israel has caused some scholars, such as William Dever, to postulate that the Israelite religion had at one time, in its earlier periods, some polytheistic understandings, including a divine female, who continued in the later periods among the less centrally controlled "folk" religions of ancient Israel.⁵ Barker reasons that these earlier,

pre-exilic understandings of both male and female “hosts of heaven” were central to Israelite temple theology but appear to have been excised from or suppressed in the later centralized religion in Jerusalem through such movements as the Deuteronomist school and Josiah’s reforms.⁶ Scholars such as these are providing intriguing and well-developed reasons for the fragmentary persistence of female divine trees and goddess figurines in the texts and artifacts of ancient Israel, even though the later central religion and its official records appear to have developed polemics against such.

In contrast, Jeffrey Tigay’s monograph that surveys proper names in Hebrew inscriptions calls for caution among scholars who assume the Israelites had earlier practiced full-blown polytheistic worship, for the evidence shows that few of the theophoric names of the ancient Israelites mention other gods.⁷ Steven Wiggins effectively argues for the difficulties of drawing any real conclusions concerning Israelite worship, whether strictly monotheistic or polytheistic, based on the current evidence.⁸ The debate concerning the nature of Israelite religious history will likely continue for some time, and whether the ancient Israelites worshipped or at least acknowledged female deities in pre-exilic periods will be central to truly understanding their religious history and theology as well as the Christianity that grew out of it.

Because of the tree-centric nature of the divine feminine in the texts and images of the Israelite sources, most of the comparative studies have collected images and focused upon the simple fact that other cultures of the ancient Near East had goddesses appearing in connection with divine trees as well. This study will attempt to go a step further and explore the iconographic specifics surrounding these images, especially in Egypt, during the time-period of Israel’s kingdom and discuss any insights these specifics may provide concerning the use of female sacred trees in Israelite texts and temple theology.

Egyptian cultural influence in Israel was at one of its high points during the late seventh century BCE, a highly relevant era, scholars believe, for the formation of many Old Testament books.⁹ The Book of Mormon claims its origins in Jerusalem during that time-period as well and mentions some of this Egyptian influence.¹⁰ Additionally, recent research is demonstrating that the Old Testament temple tradition has much more in common with the Egyptian temple tradition scholars have assumed, even from a very early date.¹¹ Consequently, a comparative approach between these two cultures may be fruitful. Of course good scholarship requires that iconographic specifics be analyzed and understood within

the context of their own culture to correctly ascertain their meaning within that culture and cautions against “over-reaching” conclusions (e.g., assuming that parallel symbols in two different cultures have parallel meaning or assuming the direct influence of one culture on the other); however, swinging the pendulum too far the other way and ignoring the broader cultural milieu in which a society existed may limit one’s ability to fully understand the texts or images that society produced.

A careful analysis of the iconographic specifics related to female divine trees in ancient Egyptian scenes illuminates the following details:

1. They appear mostly in places of transition, such as at the western and eastern horizons or at courtyard entrances to temples and tombs;
2. They frequently appear as sources of water for drinking, in addition to sources of fruit for eating;
3. They often appear with labels designating them as mothers and may even appear nursing a child; and
4. They can also appear in connection with concepts of cleansing or purifying.

These same four details appear in Israelite sources concerning sacred trees as well, providing additional facets to consider when seeking to understand the meaning of female sacred trees in Israelite texts and temple theology. Particularly, the comparative material suggests that the divine trees in the Israelite sources may have more than one meaning and appear in more than one location in the temple or cosmic landscape.

Four Specifics in the Iconography of Egyptian Tree Goddesses

From the early Old Kingdom, Egyptian female deities were associated with trees. In the Old Kingdom cult centers at Memphis and at Kom el-Hisn, Hathor was referred to as the *nb.t nh.t rs.t* “lady of the southern sycamore,” a type of fig tree,¹² and *nb.t jmAw* “lady of the Date Palms;” and Saosis, the wife of Atum in some myths, was closely related to the acacia tree.¹³ Male gods also appear next to or under trees from the earliest texts,¹⁴ but Buhl points out that although “there may have been reliefs or statues of [male] deities with their sacred animals in the shelter of a sacred tree serving as a place of worship for the Egyptians, such gods were not regarded as tree deities.”¹⁵

Associations of sacred trees with female deities also appear in the New Kingdom and later — the time period in which the nation of Israel was formed and existed. During this period, artists depicted Egyptian

female deities either merged with a tree in some way, superimposed on a tree, emerging from a tree's branches, standing beside a tree, or having a tree-related headdress or other iconography.¹⁶ The following analyzes the four details that occur frequently in those scenes related to the tree goddesses in Egypt:

1. Egyptian Tree Goddesses Appear Mostly at Places of Transition

In the texts and iconography, Egyptian tree goddesses most often appear in relation to both the western and eastern horizons, where the sun sets and then rises respectively. They also appear in relation to the entrances of temples or tombs. This is not surprising since ancient Egyptian temples and tombs have a close association with the horizon.¹⁷ Indeed, the Great Pyramid's ancient name is Khufu's Horizon.

In Egyptian theology, one first encounters a tree goddess in the western horizon, at the beginning of the afterlife journey.¹⁸ One of the



Figure 1: Sennedjem and his wife meet a tree goddess pouring a libation in front of a tomb entrance

more common scenes of tree goddesses on the Theban tomb-walls of the New Kingdom era is an illustration of Book of the Dead 59, a text that typically occurs near the beginning or first hour of the netherworld journey. Such a scene appears in the tomb of Sennedjem, where he and his wife meet a tree goddess pouring a libation Figure 1.¹⁹

That such a meeting occurs near the beginning of the netherworld journey can be seen in the art, for the tree goddess seems to appear outside, near the entrance of the temple tomb that is below the couple and into which they will journey.



Figure 2: A tree goddess pouring water at the horizon mountain from which Hathor, as a cow, emerges to greet him

Figure 2 appears to personify the west as a tree goddess (denoted by the hieroglyph for the west above her head) pouring water at the horizon mountain from which Hathor, as a cow, emerges to greet him. All of this takes place in front of what appears to be a tomb chapel entrance depicted in the lower left.²⁰

Sometimes artists will depict the tree coming out of an object that looks like the standard hieroglyph for a horizon mountain (see Figure 3,



Figure 3: Hathor as tree-goddess in an object shaped as the hieroglyph for mountain, suggesting the horizon

Figure 6, and Figure 9).²¹

Figure 4, from the tomb of Amenemope, has the tree goddess pouring water while growing from the waters of a pool.²² Nearby, the initiate is embraced by the goddess of the west at the horizon mountain and in front of the tomb chapel entrance.



Figure 4: The initiate embraced by the goddess of the west at the horizon mountain, in front of tomb chapel entrance

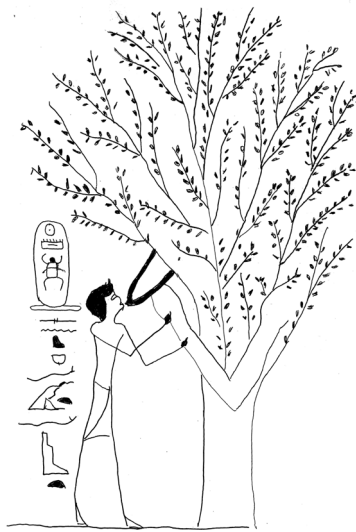


Figure 5: Thutmose III nursed by his mother, Isis as tree-goddess

On a pillar in the middle of a chamber belonging to Thutmose III, surrounded by the twelve hours of the underworld journey depicted on the walls, a tree nurses a child (Figure 5).²³ That the king is portrayed as a young child and the tree is placed in the center of the room may suggest that this scene was understood as representing the beginning of the netherworld journey prior to passing through the twelve hours of the night in the surrounding depictions.

The Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts of Pepy I may prefigure these scenes. When the deceased king comes to his mother-goddess in the netherworld journey, she says to her son “accept my breast and suck from it ... that you may live.” “Though you are small ... you shall go forth to the sky as falcons. ...” The text continues, “This Pepi will go to the sky ... to the high mounds and to yonder high sycamore in the east of the sky, the bustling one atop which the gods sits.”²⁴ This text indicates that the movement for the deceased, newly born in the netherworld, is to leave from nursing upon his mother in the west (i.e., the western tree goddesses) and journey to the eastern sycamore. The gods, as well as the deceased in other sources, sit in the top of this eastern tree like birds.²⁵ Book of the Dead 64 has the deceased exclaiming about this eastern sycamore, “I have embraced the sycamore and the sycamore has protected me.”

Figure 6, from the Temple of Dendera, depicts Hathor’s face between

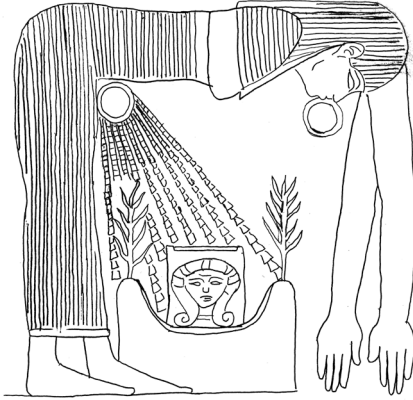


Figure 6: Hathor's face at the mountain of the eastern horizon, with the newly born sun's rays shining down

the mountains of a horizon glyph. Tree motifs appear in connection with the mountains and the newly born sun's rays shining down, suggesting this is the eastern horizon.²⁶

2. Sacred Trees as Sources of Water

A frequent detail occurring in the female divine tree scenes is the pouring out of liquid for the recipient(s) who approaches the tree. Again, Figure 1 appears in the nineteenth dynasty tomb of Sennedjem in Deir el-Medineh, originally a vignette for Book of the Dead 59, and portrays the goddess Nut, with her lower torso merging with a tree trunk, not only presenting a tray of fruit and other goods but also pouring water from a *hes*-jar into the hands of the deceased.

That the water is for drinking and not merely caught in the hand is

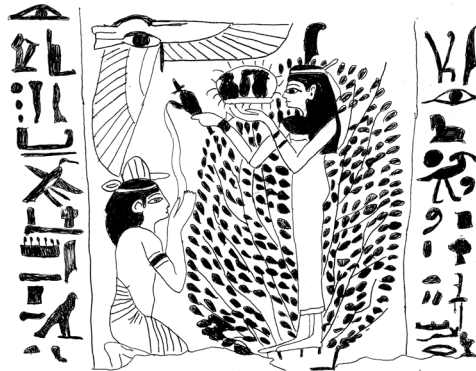


Figure 7: Ma'at as tree goddess pours water into the hands of the deceased for drinking

made clear from images such as Figure 7 where the tree goddess, in this case Ma'at, offers a tray of goods and pours water into the hand of the recipient which is held up to the mouth.²⁷ Figure 2 clearly has the water flowing across the hands and into the mouth of the recipient.²⁸

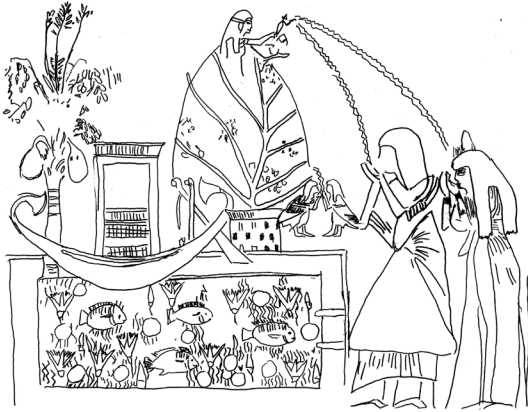


Figure 8: A tree goddess pours water as she emerges from a tree growing near a pool



Figure 9: Both the vase of the tree goddess and the associated pools of water as sources for drinking

an earlier period (Figure 10).³¹ Not only does the scene depict branches emerging from the goddess' body, but traces of a plant emerging from the vessel are preserved as well.

In addition to flowing vases, tree goddesses are often depicted in relation to pools of water as seen in Figure 8 wherein the goddess emerges from a tree pouring water that grows near a pool complete with fishes, lotus plants, and a boat shrine.²⁹ Figure 9 and others demonstrate that not only the tree goddess' vase but also the closely associated pools of water can be sources for drinking.³⁰

Tree goddesses with flowing vessels are also attested in other Near Eastern art such as this seal impression from Mesopotamia of

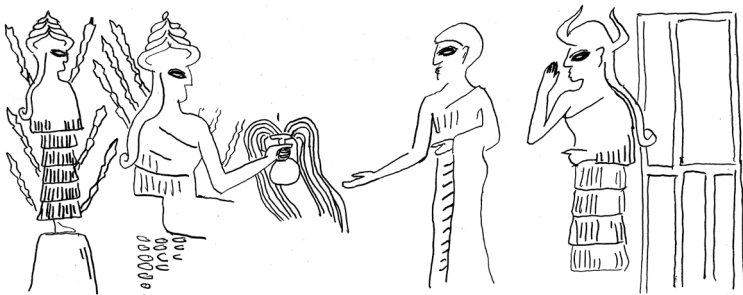


Figure 10: Mesopotamian cylinder seal depicting a flowing vase and plants emerging from the body of the goddess



Figure 11: Nut, described as the mother of the gods, offers figs and water



Figure 12: A female nursing a child among tree branches



Figure 13: Streams of water are not only for drinking, but fall in front of and behind the individual, suggesting purification

3. Sacred Trees as Mothers

In Figure 11, Nut is shown standing in the midst of a tree, offering a tray of figs and water from a *hes*-jar and is described as the one who gave birth to or is “the mother of the great gods.”³² Labels declaring the motherhood of these tree goddesses are common.

Figure 5, mentioned earlier, depicts the king suckling at the breast of an anthropomorphized tree, the text indicates that the tree is “his mother, Isis.” A fragmentary image depicting a female nursing among tree branches may relate (Figure 12).³³

4. Sacred Trees That Cleanse or Purify

Some scenes from Egypt portray the goddess not only pouring a libation of water for drinking, but the streams also appear to fall in front of and behind the individual as in Figure 13 from the tomb of Pashedu in the Valley of the Kings.³⁴

Figure 14 portrays the streams poured over the top of the head from behind which, in the Egyptian canons of iconography, is a representation of purification.³⁵

That the goddesses are typically shown pouring water from a *hes*-jar in all the examples



Figure 14: Streams poured over the top of the head of the individual, suggesting his purification

is also significant for such jars are typically used for ritual purification throughout Egyptian history.

A common placement of the scenes of tree goddesses in the New Kingdom tombs is next to offering tables. For example, in the Tomb of Nakht, the goddess, with a sycamore emblem on her head, appears twice, flanking both sides of an offering table.³⁶ In later periods, the goddess appears directly on offering tables with libation areas and Book of the Dead 59 carved thereon as well.³⁷ Libation is the first rite of the royal and non-royal offering lists from the earliest of times and is made for the purpose of purifying the deceased.

Likewise, in Mesopotamia, Figure 15 from Mari portrays goddesses with vases from which plants and flowing water emerge in a preparatory purification area below where the recipient, who is shown in the above, more sacred, chamber, was first cleansed.³⁸

The Four Specifics in the Israelite Sources

1. Sacred Trees as Sources of Water

Like the Egyptian tree goddesses, divine trees in Israelite sources are also closely associated with sources of water. Genesis 2:8-9 indicates a tree of life came “out of the ground ... in the midst of the garden” but then immediately indicates that a river also “went out of Eden to water the garden.” The text indicates that the river parted “from thence” (i.e., from the garden) into four heads, likely a representation of the waters flowing into the cardinal directions.



Figure 15: Investiture Panel from Mari portraying goddesses in a purification area holding vases with flowing water and plants

It is unclear from the sources whether the river should be understood as flowing out of the garden in a single stream before it parts into four heads or parting near its source within the garden and then flowing out in multiple streams. The garden of Eden imagery of Ezekiel 47 seems to have a single river flowing east out of the temple; however, the garden of Eden imagery in chapter 31 has a deep spring coming up into rivers (plural) around the mighty tree and flowing out in multiple streams to the other “trees of Eden, that were in the garden” (Ezekiel 31:3-9). Ben Sira also speaks of streams flowing within the garden. Genesis Rabbah XV indicates that the waters “branched out in streams under the tree of life,” suggesting many rivers within the garden as well.

If the river of Genesis 2 parts into the four cardinal directions prior to leaving the garden, then the garden would be understood as the high place since the water flows downhill in each direction. Further, if the water parts and leaves the garden in the cardinal directions, then the declaration that the river *first* went “out of Eden to water the garden” must be understood as a spring or fountain. Ezekiel 31:4, 47:1, and Revelation 22:1 certainly portray it as such, coming up as a spring from the deep, from under the threshold of the temple, or from beneath the throne and tree.

While both a tree and fountain/river exist in the garden of Eden of Genesis, the relationship between the two, while explicit in the Egyptian images, is not readily apparent in the Genesis account. Other Israelite sources do specify some relationship between these two. In Ezekiel 31, the fountain or spring from the deep causes the great tree to grow mightier than all the other “trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God.” Genesis Rabbah XV 6 mentions that the waters branched out “under” the tree. Likewise, the tree in Revelation 22 can be understood as having its roots in and around the river.

Closer to the Egyptian examples, which combine the tree and flowing water in the image of the goddess, the text in Ben Sira has the tree speaking as if she is both a source of fruit and water: “Come to me ... and eat your fill of my fruit, those who eat of me will hunger for more, and those who drink me will thirst for more.” Likewise, the Book of Mormon tracks closer to the Egyptian examples and blurs the distinction between tree and fountain. Nephi indicates that the rod of iron led to the “fountain of living waters,” and then immediately adds “or to the tree of life,” both, he explains, represent the same thing, even God’s love (1 Nephi 11:25).³⁹ Alma’s tree of life grows up from a seed “planted in the heart” (Alma 32:28) and appears to be a fountain also. It not only satisfies hunger, but it quenches thirst: “and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst” (Alma 32:42).

The Egyptian examples explicitly show those who approach the tree goddess are drinking the water she pours out. The biblical examples do not appear to focus on one approaching a divine tree to drink. However, both the aforementioned examples, i.e., Ben Sira and Alma 32 in the Book of Mormon, explicitly mention drinking as a purpose for coming to the tree. Additionally, Alma 5:34 has God saying: “Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely.”

2. Sacred Trees As Mothers

Much of the tree goddess examples attested in the ancient Near East emphasizes their sexual nature as consorts to male deities; however, the Egyptian examples emphasize their roles as mothers, rather than sexual consorts. The only Old Testament reference that directly equates trees with motherhood is in Ezekiel 19:10-11 wherein the “mother,” as a vine, is “planted by the waters” and is “fruitful.” Her rods are described as “strong” and are “for scepters of them that bear rule.” The early Christian

reflection of this idea in Revelation 12 speaks of the lady, clothed in the sun, who is a mother giving birth to a royal child who rules with a rod of iron.⁴⁰

Interestingly, the vision of Nephi in the Book of Mormon not only equates the tree of life to a virgin mother who gives birth to a child, but upon closer reading, the child of Nephi's vision, like the child in Ezekiel 19 and Revelation 12, appears as a king ruling with a rod of iron. When Nephi desires to know the meaning of the tree that his father Lehi saw, he was shown a vision of a virgin who is described as the "mother of the son of god ... bearing a child in her arms" (1 Nephi 11:18-20). This vision immediately gives way to another vision of this "Son of God going forth among the children of men; and I saw many fall down at this feet and worship him" (1 Nephi 11:24). That people fall down and worship at the Son of God's feet suggests royalty, causing Nephi to exclaim "I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life" (1 Nephi 11:25). Nephi's child is the son of both God and of the virgin tree, and the rod of iron is the son's scepter.

Elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, Nephi's brother, Jacob, quotes an ancient prophecy by a figure named Zenos, who refers to a great central olive tree in a vineyard as the "mother tree" (Jacob 5:54-60). Other trees are formed from her branches, and the resulting branches of the other trees are eventually grafted back into the mother tree.

3. Sacred Trees at Places of Transition

One encounters the Egyptian tree goddess who pours water at the western horizon — near the entrance to the netherworld — prior to an ascent to the tree goddess in the eastern horizon. Likewise tree and water motifs appear in connection with Israelite sacrificial altars and courtyards, outside the entrance of temples, prior to one entering or ascending to the full tree of life in the Holy of Holies or in the heavenly city (Revelation 22:2).

Abraham builds an altar (a built altar suggests a sacrificial altar) at the oak of Moreh where God had appeared unto him in Genesis 12:6 and later plants a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba where he calls upon the name of God in Genesis 21:33. Deuteronomy explicitly forbids an *asherah*, a tree-like motif, from being erected near the altar (Deut. 16:21-22), indicating that some are want to put one there. Joshua set up a covenant stela under

a tree near the temple (Joshua 24:26). Psalms 92:12-14 (cf. 52:8) likens the righteous to trees planted and flourishing in the courts of the temple. These examples suggest the possibility that tree motifs were erected in the Israelite temple courtyards in connection with the altar and before the door of the temple. Indeed, Ezekiel's fountain of water comes up not in the Holy of Holies but from beneath the threshold of the temple's door and flows to the trees of life outside the temple (Ezekiel 47:1, 7, 12).

A combination tree and water motif is built into the courtyard design of Solomon's temple. The brazen sea was not just a large bowl of water, but a bowl with gourd-shaped knobs all around and shaped like a lily blossom (1 Kings 7:23-26). Further, the pillars on the porch, flanking the door of the temple, had capitals that were also lily-shaped, with pomegranates hanging from them (1 Kings 7:18-22). Could these objects represent some sort of initial interaction with a divine tree motif preparatory for entering the temple, in likeness of the western tree goddess in Egyptian culture? Indeed, Book of the Dead 59, the text that most often accompanies the western tree goddess vignettes, alludes to the Hermopolitian myth concerning the birth of the sun. Versions of this myth portray the sun rising from a lotus blossom that itself was the first to rise out of the primordial waters, again connecting waters of new birth, a beginning, with a tree motif.

The tree/fountain of life in Lehi and Nephi's visions, at first glance, appears to be at the end of a journey, at the end of the path. However, the fact that some of the numberless people from the field representing "a world" (1 Nephi 8:20-21) arrive at the tree, partake, and then leave due to the mocking of those in the great and spacious building suggests that not all trees of life are at the full end of one's eternal journey. Likewise, one can partake but then forsake the "the fountain of Wisdom" in the Book of Baruch 3.10-13. These examples suggest an initial interaction with a tree of life that likely represents or foreshadows, but is actually different from, the tree of life at the full end of one's journey.

4. Sacred Trees Relative to Cleansing or Purification

Not only do the waters of the Egyptian tree goddesses give life and refreshment to the netherworld traveler, but they also appear to purify as the streams fall around the individual. Likewise, the Israelite priests washed in the water of the lily-shaped laver near the tree-shaped pillars in the temple courtyard prior to their service within (see Exodus 30:19-21; 40:30-32).

An Abrahamic narrative outlines a custom that may echo the ritual act of washing at the door of the temple. Not only does Abraham call upon and encounter God in relation to trees as noted above, in Genesis 18 Abraham, dwelling among the oaks of Mamre and sitting in the doorway of his tent, welcomes three holy men by stating, “Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree” (Genesis 18:4). While this can be understood simply as an act of desert community hospitality, the act of washing and resting under a tree at the door of a house as part of a journey certainly reflects the ritual material as well.⁴¹

That initial rituals, prior to entering temples, can be associated with divine trees/fountains is more clearly seen in the Gnostic *Trimorphic Protennoia* that declares baptism occurs in the fountain of living waters: “the baptizers ... immersed him in the spring of the water of life.”⁴² Indeed, Alma connects partaking of the tree of life with baptism explicitly: “... unto those who do not belong to the church I speak by way of invitation, saying: Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life” (Alma 5:62). It is difficult here to ascertain if Alma is saying that baptism precedes partaking of the tree of life or that baptism is the equivalent to partaking of the tree of life. In light of the broader cultural parallels, the latter is a strong possibility.

Conclusions

The Egyptians viewed their ascent into heaven as a journey or progression that begins at the western horizon. This horizon corresponds with mortal death (the setting of the sun) but was also viewed as a birth into a new life in the hereafter — the horizon was a place of transition. At this initial transition point, the deceased encounters the Lady of the West. Because the deceased is being reborn into a new life, the goddess, depicted as a tree pouring water and growing near garden pools, is labeled as a mother figure and even nurses her child.⁴³ Since the sun and the world, as the ancient Egyptians portrayed it, came out of the primordial waters of Nun, just as a baby comes from a watery womb, the mother-goddess is closely associated with waters of life.

As a baby who comes forth from the waters of the womb is considered pure, so the deceased is pure when born into the hereafter as symbolized in the streams of water the tree goddess pours that surround the individual. The deceased also drinks from the water she pours or

from the milk of her breast in order to live and have power to make the coming journey as PT 470 and BD 59 state.

A netherworld birth, nourishing/nursing, and purity would explain the appearance of a woman as a mother who nurses or pours water and purifies at horizon-mountains or at entrances to tombs. Her equation to trees and fountains may be natural in the context of a desert community where the very symbols of life are the oasis of trees that indicate life-giving water and shade from the heat of day. However, this initial birth is not the final destination. There is an ascension, “as falcons,” to the eastern horizon where the “high sycamore” tree goddess is met and embraced, suggesting another transition or birth, even a resurrection, where the deceased is illuminated as the dawning rays and can rise with the sun-god, Re.

The symbolism of this journey or ascension into the sky becomes intertwined with the main offering ritual sequence of the temples and tombs in ancient Egypt, forming their temple theology. The western tree goddesses, in the New Kingdom tombs and later, appear in connection with the tomb chapel offering tables having libation vessels and food depicted thereon and thus relate her to the sequence of rites performed therein. The initial part of this sequence includes a libation of water, an opening of the mouth, eyes, ears, and nose by means of a natron-washing, followed by a small meal offering. Indeed, the ancient Egyptians viewed these initial rituals as a birth, so the presence of a mother figure would be expected.⁴⁴

In the Israelite temple theology, there appears to be a similar pattern. The sources above indicate that the courtyard of the temple may be one location that a divine tree motif in ancient Israel once appeared. Trees seem to appear in connection with sacrificial altars in the Abraham material, in Deuteronomy, and other Old Testament sources, just as they appear in connection with offering tables in the Egyptian theology.

Being in the courtyard of the Israelite temple, the tree motif would be closely associated with the waters of the laver that appeared there as well, a place where priests were purified prior to their ascension into the temple, just as the tree goddesses in Egypt poured water and purified the deceased prior to entering the horizon or tomb. Indeed, the laver in the courtyard of Solomon’s temple had plant-like décor tying the two symbols of water and vegetation together as in the Egyptian material.

The courtyard tree motif stands in contrast to the tree or trees inside the temple.⁴⁵ Similar to the Egyptian worldview, the Israelite temple has a tree near the beginning as well as near the end of the spiritual

progression. Judging by the greater Near Eastern background, a tree/fountain motif indicates a place or time of transition as part of the general ascent. Consequently, a tree/fountain motif in the courtyard as well as inside the Israelite temple might represent differing levels of ascent or transition. The trees are feminine in both the Israelite and greater Near Eastern tradition because they are viewed as mothers that facilitate these transitions from a lower to a higher order, as a birth from one life to another as one ascends to God.

The Early Christian church certainly seems to view the courtyard as a place of rebirth. Matthew's Jesus interprets the two messengers in Malachi 3:1 as John the Baptist and himself (Matthew 11:10; cf. Matthew 3:1-11). John is the Aaronic messenger in the courtyard, who prepares the way, while Jesus is the Melchizedek priest and messenger of the covenant who will "come to his temple." John prepared the way to the temple by teaching repentance and baptism, a ritual that Jesus declares is one of being "born of water" (John 3:5). In contrast, Jesus administers the blessings of the covenant inside the temple, which John declared would include an additional baptism of the Holy Ghost, which Jesus also called being "born of ... the spirit" (John 1:33; cf. John 3:5). Like the Egyptian theology of at least two births, one of water in the western horizon and the other in the east with the blaze of the sunrise, the Christian temple theology also promises at least two births — one in the courtyard of water and the other of fire in the temple. Such an understanding may provide reasons for finding cultic reflections of a mother tree of water in the courtyard followed by a mother tree of oil in the temple.

Although Israelite culture and texts recognized that the cultural trees of life and fountains of water were women. Jesus does declare that he is the ultimate tree and fountain, and that we, by association, are to be children born of him. For example, Jesus declares in John 15:1-2 that he is the true vine and we are to be his fruit-bearing branches. Likewise, Nephi speaks of Jesus as the "true vine" and "olive tree" just before discussing with his brothers the meaning of the tree of life in 1 Nephi 15:15-21. In John 4:7-26, Jesus says "Give me to drink" when approached by a woman at the well of Jacob in Samaria. She is the life-giver, the pourer of water, in this opening moment of the narrative. However, as the dialogue progresses, Jesus reverses the roles and places himself as the water-giver. "If thou knew the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." This water is equated by Jesus with the waters of everlasting life that forever quench thirst, making a strong

connection to the tree of life motif which quenches thirst in like manner as noted before: “Whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” The point here is that Jesus has reversed the roles and usurped the symbols of the tree/fountain of life that are culturally associated with womanhood.

But this makes perfect sense to Christianity, for Jesus declares that birth is a central symbol of the atonement and his redeeming power whereby he becomes a symbolic mother to all who are “born again” of him (see John 3:1-3; Moses 6:59; Mosiah 5:7). The difficulty some might have in believing that Jesus would adopt symbols that were culturally associated with womanhood due to gender differences should remember that Jesus also likens himself to a mother hen who gathers her chicks under her wing to nourish them in Matthew 23:37; 3 Nephi 10:4-6; D&C 10:65; cf. Psalms 91:4. Consequently, baptism and the closely related ordinance of the sacrament can be viewed as a tree of life to those who partake, for these rituals represent at once a watery purification, spiritual nourishment, rebirth, the beginning of a journey, and preparatory for entering the temple, even though they also contain within their meaning the idea of “having arrived” at eternal life, resurrection, the sabbath rest, etc. This is possible, because in these initial moments and rituals, the symbols are affirming the promise that “if ye entered by the way ye would receive” (2 Nephi 31:18). In other words, we get to partake of the tree of life at the beginning of new spiritual life, for it anticipates and affirms God’s promise that we shall partake of it fully in the heavenly city at the end of our journey.

In spite of Jesus’s usurpation of the Lady’s symbols, there is still deep acknowledgement in John’s gospel of woman’s original connection to these divine motifs. In the transition of Jesus from mortality to resurrected Lord, John constantly portrays women overseeing this grandest of events. It is a woman, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who anoints Jesus with costly oil. An act that Jesus declares was related to his burial (John 12:1-7). At the moment of his death, John portrays Jesus calling attention to his mother — “Woman, behold thy son!” and to his disciple “Behold, thy mother!” (John 19:25-27). The very next moment John records Jesus saying, “I thirst” (John 19:28). Could John have understood in this moment the irony of Jesus’ mother, the supreme mortal personification of the tree of life and living water, standing helpless while her royal son — he who wields the proverbial rod of iron

(Revelation 2:27) — dies on a man-made tree of torture and received vinegar instead of cool, living water?

John's description of the actual burial and resurrection can also be read as a birth scene, for Jesus' body was placed in a garden of trees, in a virginal tomb "wherein was never man yet laid" (John 19:41), and Jesus presumably comes forth naked, indicated by his linens left neatly folded behind as if to call attention to that very point.

Finally, it is a woman who is the first to see the newly "born" Son of God (John 20:11-18). True to the Near Eastern background, a woman is present at the moments of cosmic transition, whether real or in ritual.

If, as in the Egyptian culture, there are symbolic encounters with two trees of life in the course of the Israelite temple theology, one in the courtyard in relation to purification preceding the arrival at the full tree of life inside the temple. Then the possibility that there are two paths leading to each tree, an initial path outside the temple and a second one inside, needs exploring as well. Indeed, the Egyptians have a concept of the Two Ways or Paths that lead to eternal life. Could it be that the path of Lehi's vision is a representation of the path taken by those people of the world who are seeking to make their first initial contact with the promise of eternal life, whereas 2 Nephi 31 speaks of another path on which one must press forward, after baptism, in order to make that promise sure? Exploring these paths will have to await a future time.

Notes

- 1 See, for examples, John Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105, no. 3 (1986); Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990); William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research, Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990); Richard J. Pettey, *Asherah: Goddess of Israel, American University Studies. Series 7, Theology and Religion* v. 74 (New York: P. Lang, 1990); Othmar Keel, *Das Recht Der Bilder Gesehen Zu Werden: Drei Fallstudien Zur Methode Der Interpretation Altorientalischer Bilder, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 122 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1992); Steve A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of 'Asherah': A Study According to the Textual Sources of the First Two Millennia BCE, Alter Orient Und Altes Testament* Bd. 235 (Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon & Bercker, 1993); Christian Frevel, *Aschera Und Der Ausschliesslichkeitsanspruch Yhwhs : Beiträge*

- Zu Literarischen, Religionsgeschichtlichen Und Ikonographischen Aspekten Der Ascheradiskussion*, Bonner Biblische Beiträge (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995); Othmar Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998); Judith M. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess*, *University of Cambridge Oriental Publications* 57 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed., *The Biblical Resource Series* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2002); John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Izak Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess: The Iconography of the Syro-Palestinian Goddesses Anat, Astarte, Qedeshet, and Asherah c. 1500-1000 BCE*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 204 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004); William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?: Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2005); Steve A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of Asherah with Further Considerations of the Goddess*, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007).
- 2 Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8-23," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo: FARMS, 1998), 191-243; "A Divine Mother in the Book of Mormon?" (paper presented at the Academy of Temple Studies conference on *Mormonism and the Temple: Examining an Ancient Religious Tradition*, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 2012).
 - 3 "White" here may be a reference to luminosity or brightness as opposed to color. For example, Hebrew *tsach* means white, dazzling, glowing, clear, bright. Likewise, the Greek *leukos* means white, light, bright, brilliant.
 - 4 Margaret Barker, "Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion," *Brigham Young University Studies* 44:4 (2005): 69-82.
 - 5 Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?: Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*.

- 6 Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), Chapter 1.
- 7 Jeffrey H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions*, Harvard Semitic Studies (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1986).
- 8 Steve A. Wiggins, "Of Asherahs and Trees: Some Methodological Questions," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 1:1 (2001): 158-87. Ironically, the field of Egyptology grappled with this same issue in the early twentieth century: "Monotheism or polytheism? This has been the great issue in Egyptology since the discovery of the first Egyptian texts. The survey I have given here shows that both answers have their justification; it also shows that the proponents of both use these concepts like slogans, yet neither concept can characterize the true individuality of Egyptian religion." Karl Beth, „El Und Neter,“ *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 36 (1916): 183. Translated by John Baines in the classic monograph concerning this issue Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982).
- 9 For evidence concerning Egypt's influence in the Syria-Palestine area see Gregory D. Mumford, "International Relations between Egypt, Sinai, and Syria-Palestine During the Late Bronze Age to Early Persian Periods (Dynasties 18-26: ca. 1550-525 BCE): A Spatial and Temporal Analysis of the Distribution and Proportions of Egyptian(-izing) Artifacts and Pottery in Sinai and Selected Sites in Syria-Palestine" (Toronto, Ontario, 1998).
- 10 John S. Thompson, "Lehi and Egypt," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2004), 259-76. Certainly the many centuries that follow the time-period of Lehi in the Book of Mormon would have given ample opportunity for changes to be introduced into their culture and thus call into question any comparison of Near Eastern culture in Lehi's day to later periods in the Book of Mormon; however, one should not underestimate the ability of the written word to preserve much of the teachings, theological concepts, symbols, and religious culture from Lehi's day down to Moroni either, especially among those who remained close to the teachings preserved in the Brass Plates as well as their own records. See, for example, Daniel L. Belnap, "'Even as Our Father Saw': Lehi's

- Dream as Nephite Cultural Narrative,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo and Salt Lake City, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2011), 214-39.
- 11 For a recent study on similarities between the earliest ritual sequence in ancient Egypt with the Old Testament temple tradition see John S. Thompson, “The context of Old Testament temple worship: Early ancient Egyptian rites.” In *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament*, edited by David Rolph Seely, Jeffrey R. Chadwick and Matthew J. Grey. *The 42nd Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (26 October, 2013) (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2013), 156-83.
 - 12 That a fig tree can be viewed as divine may inform the meaning of the fig leaf aprons mentioned in the Genesis account of Adam and Eve. Putting on the leaves of a divine tree while in transgression, being the symbolic equivalent of being saved in sin, would be offensive to God. Likewise, God places cherubim and a flaming sword to prevent Adam and Eve from partaking of the tree of life while in their sins, because obtaining eternal life while in sin would make God’s law and righteousness void or meaningless (see Alma 12:23; 42:5, 13). Jesus’ cursing of a fig tree to die for wearing leaves (i.e., divinity) without fruit provides a New Testament echo of Adam and Eve, who put on fig leaves while in transgression (i.e., fruitless) and were also cursed to die.
 - 13 Marie-Louise Buhl, “The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6:2 (1947): 86.
 - 14 For examples, see PT 254, 294, 347. See particularly PT §436a-b and PT §994b-d.
 - 15 Buhl, “The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult,” 87. The cultural practice of worshipping under sycamore trees in Egypt may inform Jesus’ vision of Nathaniel sitting under a fig tree as a sign of his guilelessness (John 1:48). Nathaniel appears to have been seen by Jesus doing something private yet godly (praying, reading scripture, etc.) under the tree that revealed his true character as one without hypocrisy.
 - 16 See typologies in Orly Goldwasser, *From Icon to Metaphor: Studies in the Semiotics of the Hieroglyphs, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 142 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 1995); Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New*

- Moon and Yahweh: Ancient near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible*, 36-37.
- 17 Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 60-62.
 - 18 Similarly, a tree of life in later Greek Orphism is also encountered upon one's initial entrance into the netherworld prior to further journeying. For a discussion of Orphism and its possible cultural connections with the Book of Mormon, see C. Wilfred Griggs, "The Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book," in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1982), 75-102.
 - 19 Based on wall painting in Tomb of Sennedjem (TT1), Deir el-Medina, Thebes.
 - 20 Based on drawing in Keel, *Das Recht Der Bilder Gesehen Zu Werden: Drei Fallstudien Zur Methode Der Interpretation Altorientalischer Bilder*, abb. 94.
 - 21 Based on drawing in *ibid.*, abb. 85.
 - 22 Based on drawing in *ibid.*, abb. 54.
 - 23 Based on wall painting in the Tomb of Tuthmosis III, Valley of the Kings, Thebes.
 - 24 PT 470
 - 25 Perhaps giving greater meaning to the fowl that lodge in the branches of Ezekiel's tree and Jesus' mustard seed plant (see Ezekiel 31:6, Mark 4:32).
 - 26 Based on drawing in W. Westendorf, „Altägyptische Darstellungen Des Sonnenlaufes Auf Der Abschüssigen Himmelsbahn,“ *MÄS* 10 (1966): Abb. 51.
 - 27 Based on drawing in Keel, *Das Recht Der Bilder Gesehen Zu Werden: Drei Fallstudien Zur Methode Der Interpretation Altorientalischer Bilder*, abb. 95.
 - 28 Based on drawing in *ibid.*, abb. 94.
 - 29 Based on drawing in *ibid.*, abb. 53.
 - 30 Based on drawing in *ibid.*, abb. 68, cf. abb. 49, 57, 58, 66a for other examples of drinking from a pool.
 - 31 Based on drawing in *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible*, fig. 6.
 - 32 Based on drawing in *Das Recht Der Bilder Gesehen Zu Werden: Drei Fallstudien Zur Methode Der Interpretation Altorientalischer Bilder*, abb. 91.

- 33 Based on drawing in *ibid.*, abb. 41.
- 34 Based on wall painting in the Tomb of Pashedu (TT3), Valley of the Kings, Thebes.
- 35 Keel, *Das Recht Der Bilder Gesehen Zu Werden: Drei Fallstudien Zur Methode Der Interpretation Altorientalischer Bilder*, abb. 60. Cf. Alan Henderson Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute Ashmolean Museum, 1957), Sign list, A6.
- 36 Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Nakht at Thebes* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1917), Pl. X.
- 37 Buhl, “The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult,” 92-93.
- 38 Based on drawing in Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible*, fig. 8. For a more complete discussion of this image see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Ronan James Head, “The Investiture Panel at Mari and Rituals of Divine Kingship in the ancient Near East,” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 4 (2012): 1-42.
- 39 Nephi later explains to his brothers that the tree their father saw was “a representation of *the* tree of life” (1 Nephi 15:22. Emphasis added), likely connecting his father’s dream/vision to the tree in the Garden of Eden. Both the Genesis and 1 Nephi narratives have fruit trees and fountains of life, both have paths that lead to the tree (“the way” (Genesis 3:24) and “the straight and narrow path” (1 Nephi 8:20), both have symbols of god’s word or justice in relation to the path (a rod and sword — arguably both are “flaming” — compare Genesis 3:24 with 1 Nephi 15:23-24, 30). Both narratives also have equivalent symbols opposing the tree/fountain of life (i.e., the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the great and spacious building/fountain of filthy water — all which relate to the “Fall,” death, and hell – Genesis 2:17, 1 Nephi 11:36; 12:16), both have forbidden paths (the flaming sword turned “every way” to keep “the way” in Genesis 3:24 compares with 1 Nephi 8:28, 32), and both have symbols of temptation in opposition to the sword and rod (the serpent and the mists of darkness).
- 40 See Psalms 2, 110 for other Old Testament imagery of the royal son wielding a rod. See also Margaret Barker, “The Woman Clothed with the Sun in the Book of Revelation,” paper given at the 2013 conference of the Academy for Temple Studies entitled *The Lady of the Temple*. October 23, 2013 in Logan, Utah. Online version

found at <http://www.templestudies.org/home/2013-the-lady-of-the-temple-conference/papers/>. Last accessed Saturday, September 27, 2014.

- 41 The miracle of Jesus at Cana may reflect this idea as well, for the water he turns to wine was water traditionally kept near the doorway for the “the purifying of the Jews” (John 2:6).
- 42 *Trimorphic Protennoia* CG XIII. 1 45, 48.
- 43 A common motif portrayed under the lid of coffins or sarcophagi in ancient Egypt is the goddess Nut, whose body, when the lid is placed on the coffin or sarcophagus, stretches out over the deceased. The deceased’s burial, then, was viewed by the ancient Egyptians as being in her embrace or in her womb from which he or she is born into the netherworld.
- 44 See Ann M. Roth, “The Peseshkef and the ‘Opening of the Mouth’ Ceremony: A Ritual Birth and Rebirth,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 78 (1992): 113-47.
- 45 For a discussion of tree motifs in the Holy Place versus the Holy of Holies, see Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, 2, 253.

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NEPHITE DAYKEEPERS:
RITUAL SPECIALISTS IN MESOAMERICA
AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

Mark Alan Wright

Contrary to popular belief, the Maya civilization did not mysteriously disappear in the distant past. In actuality, there are millions of Maya people alive and well today who reside in southern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize. There are 31 distinct living Mayan languages that continue to be spoken, and the people still maintain many of their ancient traditions. It is true that the Classic period Maya civilization collapsed around the tenth century AD, but rather than annihilation, that simply means that the top-heavy elite culture that commissioned monumental architecture and demanded heavy tribute from the lower classes was overthrown. It was at the time of collapse that the large civic centers were abandoned, and the people returned to farming their land without the burden of heavy tribute; the meek inherited the earth, as it were. Although the political system was overthrown, their fundamental religious ideology remained largely intact. Fortunately, thanks to elaborately carved stone monuments and intricately painted ceramics and murals, there is demonstrable and remarkable continuity in many of their religious beliefs and practices, some of which are evidenced as early as the Formative period — over 1,000 years before Christ — and continue among contemporary Maya cultures today. For 3,000 years they have maintained a core set of beliefs and practices.

An integral part of Maya religious practice was (and is) their reliance on ritual specialists, individuals who claim a special relationship with the divine realm and who are responsible for the physical and spiritual health of the people in their community. Mesoamerican anthropologists and archaeologists broadly refer to these ritual specialists as “shamans.” The Maya have indigenous terms for their ritual specialists, which vary according to which specific roles they play and which particular Maya group is under discussion.

A common type of ritual specialist among contemporary Maya groups is called a “daykeeper”; *aj k'in* in the Yucatan or *aj q'ij* among the highland Quiche. One of the primary roles of the daykeepers is to keep track of the count of days; they are “calendar priests.” But “daykeepers”

have also been described as “mediums,” “shaman-priests,” “priest-shamans,” “shaman-healers” or simply “healers.”¹ Regardless of their specific title, they offer a wide range of beneficial services to the people of their town.

Although there is a variety of ritual specialists found in Maya groups that are separated by language and great geographic distance, they share much in common, which indicates such roles have great time depth. Unfortunately, because of limitations in the archaeological record we only get glimpses into the roles that religious specialists played anciently in the Maya area, but hints remain from their art, writing, and even burial goods that indicate continuity in many of these practices from the earliest days until the present.

In the Mesoamerican worldview, there are countless different spirit beings that might influence their daily lives. Some of these beings are believed to be allies or helpers, but others prove to be enemies or pranksters; there are givers of life as well as dealers of death.² The shaman’s job is to help his fellow villagers stay in the good graces of the benevolent spirits and overcome the malevolent ones.

A wide variety of ritual specialists is also known from the Book of Mormon. Among the righteous there are teachers, priests, high priests, prophets, seers, and revelators, and even the Twelve Disciples, who qualify as their own unique class of religious specialists. However, not all ritual specialists are necessarily the “good guys.” Among the Maya there are *brujos*, or witches and sorcerers, who perform black magic and intentionally send illness and bad fortune to their enemies or the enemies of their clients. In the Book of Mormon, we are explicitly told that in times of wickedness there are those who create and worship idols as well as witches and soothsayers (3 Nephi 21:16) and sorcerers and magicians (Mormon 1:19). We are not given many details about these apostate ritual specialists, but their titles alone are telling.

Zatzun and the Urim and Thummim

In modern-day Yucatan, the most common title for shaman or ritual specialists is *aj-meen*, which literally means “practitioner” or “one who knows and does.”³ The *aj-men* use crystals, clear rocks, or even fragments of broken glass bottles as a medium through which they receive revelation. They hold them up to a light source and wait for three flashes of light to shine through, which indicates the revelation is about to begin. They interpret these three flashes as representing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which scholars attribute to the heavy influence of Catholicism

among the modern Maya. They call these stones *zajtun*, which literally means “clear stone” or “stone of light.”⁴ They are considered extremely sacred objects, and the ritual specialist who owns them does not allow the stones to be casually handled by others. But not all clear stones are necessarily considered *zajtuno’ob* (plural of *zajtun*). Anthropologist Bruce Love recounted meeting a shaman who keeps a jar full of glass marbles on his table and says they are mere toys that are used as “practice” *zajtuno’ob* for his apprentices.⁵

Maya shamans believe that true *zajtuno’ob* are gifts from the gods that have been intentionally placed along their paths for them to find. If the stone they are meant to find is not along a well-traveled path but is out in the uncultivated forest, they receive some type of spiritual guidance to lead them to where they will find it, sometimes even given vivid dreams or visions of where it is located. One ritual specialist named Don Cosimo was led out to the forest and found his *zajtun* embedded in the fork of a tree.⁶ The finding of these stones is a sign that they have been called and chosen to be a diviner and a healer. *Zajtuno’ob* are not only gifts from the divine realm, but they provide the means of communicating with the Otherworld and enable the ritual specialist to tap into divine powers.

An *aj-meen* named Don Jose once held his *zajtuno’ob* to the sky and when they flashed he said:

“Look! You can see the angels.” *Ti’aan te ka’an ’elo*, “They are in the sky. This is how they speak to me. They are near. Their words come down. The spirit makes a blessing, makes salvation. The holy ones make a sign and then READY!”⁷

There is evidence that such divination stones were used anciently as well. For example, a burial from Copan dating to the Middle Classic period contained “five peculiar quartz stones, with ferromagnesium inclusions, probably used in divination rituals.”⁸ This burial was likely that of a royal priest or shaman rather than of a ruler, as these stones were found along with other paraphernalia common to ritual specialists.⁹

Now, what does all this have to do with the Book of Mormon? I suggest there are conceptual and functional similarities between the *zajtun*, which literally translates as “light stone” or “clear stone” in Mayan, and the Urim and Thummim, which means “Lights and Perfections” in Hebrew. In Ether 3:1 we read that the stones the brother of Jared made upon the mount Shelem were “white and clear, even as transparent glass.” Interestingly, the brother of Jared went up the mount with sixteen stones, but he came down with eighteen; the two extra stones were the interpreters

that were given to him by the Lord. Just as Maya ritual specialists believe their clear stones are gifts directly from their gods, the brother of Jared was given his *zajtuno'ob* by the Lord himself.

We know that Mosiah I interpreted the engravings on a “large stone” that was brought to Zarahemla that told of the demise of the Jaredites, but we are not told exactly how he translated them other than that it was done “by the gift and power of God” (Omni 1:20). It is not until the days of Mosiah II, grandson of Mosiah I, that the Jaredite plates are discovered along with the interpreters that were given to the brother of Jared. We may presume that Mosiah I used an interpreter of some kind to translate the large stone, as that was the *modus operandi* among the Nephites. If Mosiah I did have an interpreter, it is unclear where he got it; we might speculate that it was a “found object” like unto the *zajtuno'ob* of Maya shamans (or Joseph Smith’s seer-stone, for a more recent analogy).¹⁰

Although the name *Urim and Thummim* never appears in the text of the Book of Mormon, in Doctrine and Covenants 17:1 the Lord explicitly refers to the interpreters given to the brother of Jared (and subsequently to Joseph Smith) as the Urim and Thummim. The interpreters are explicitly associated with light within the text of the Book of Mormon. The stones the brother of Jared made were for the express purpose of providing light in the darkness of their barges (Ether 3:4), and the implication is that the additional stones that the Lord gave him did likewise. The interpreters are also associated with light when Alma passed them to his son Helaman along with the records. In Alma 37:23, he informs Helaman that the Lord proclaimed, “I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, *a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light,*” and in the next verse Alma explains that the interpreters had fulfilled the words of the Lord. He states, “These interpreters were prepared that the word of God might be fulfilled, which he spake, saying: *I will bring forth out of darkness unto light* all their secret works and their abominations” (italics added).

Similarly, Ammon explained to King Limhi the role of a seer; he said, “A seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to *light*, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known” (Mosiah 8:17, italics added). The interpreters, therefore, were for much more than simply translating languages; they were for receiving the light of revelation as well.

Rituals of Healing

There is a modern ethnographic account of a Yucatecan man who was working in his field one day with his brother when suddenly he was overtaken by a strong force that knocked him to the earth. That night they sought out an *aj-meen*, a healer, and he consulted his *zajtun* and other sacred objects to determine the cause of his ailment. After three days of prayers, offerings, and cleansing rituals, the man was restored to health and his “spiritual balance returned.”¹¹

This, of course, calls to mind the account of Alma the Younger, who was stricken upon being rebuked by an angel. Alma the Elder called upon his ritual specialists to bring healing to his son. In Mosiah 27:22-23 we read, “He caused that the priests should assemble themselves together; and they began to fast, and to pray to the Lord their God that he would open the mouth of Alma, that he might speak, and also that his limbs might receive their strength ... And it came to pass after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength.”

There are several other significant points to be made about Alma’s conversion narrative, which we will return to later in the chapter.

An important aspect of healing practices among Mesoamerican ritual specialists is their use of herbal remedies to treat the infirm. They believe medicinal plants were provided by the gods for the purpose of healing. Fray Diego de Landa, a Catholic Bishop in the sixteenth century informs us, “Certain priests were regarded as doctors who cured with herbs and many superstitious rites.”¹² Modern Maya ritual specialists use their *zajtun* to “see” the causes of afflictions and discern whether or not the person can be cured. Sometimes, *zajtuno’ob* are used as tools to receive specific knowledge through dreams about how to use specific herbs. One *aj-meen*, a healer called Papa Loh, said:

The first night after finding the *zajtun* I dreamt that two old men sat down by my hammock. They came with herbs in their hands; each one brought a certain herb and they began to show me medicine. “Papa Loh, this is medicine for such and such affliction. This medicine cures such and such illness and this is how much is needed.” The other old man spoke up. He said: “This cures such and such ailment, this is how much you use, but take good care of us! Don’t let us die, don’t let us waste away.”

Similarly, in Alma 46:40 we read that in certain seasons the Nephites were afflicted with fevers and other ailments, “but not so much with fevers, because of the excellent qualities of the many plants and roots *which God had prepared* to remove the cause of diseases, to which men were subject by the nature of the climate” (italics added). Note that God did not simply *provide* the plants and roots, he *prepared* them, which I suggest may indicate they received knowledge from Him about how to use them.

Among the Maya, many infirmities are believed to be caused by bad or evil winds (called *kakás iik'* in Yucatec Mayan), which are sometimes sent as a punishment from the gods for failing to make appropriate offerings or for engaging in impious behavior.¹³ This is perhaps reflected in the Book of Mormon when Abinadi preaches that the “east wind” was sent to punish the wicked (see Mosiah 7:31 and 12:6).¹⁴ *Aj-meen* can cure individuals afflicted by evil winds through prayers or ritual washing.¹⁵ Likewise, those afflicted by the punishing winds spoken of by Abinadi could only be delivered by turning to their ultimate high priest, Jesus Christ (Mosiah 7:31-33; 12:6-8; see Alma 13:9).

A more complicated form of healing is known as *k'ex*, which literally translates as “exchange” or “transference.” When someone is sick or afflicted, either physically or spiritually, the shaman ritually transfers the ailments to an animal, and then the animal is sacrificed to the gods. In the Book of Mormon they continued to obey the Law of Moses, the authors emphasizing their observance of animal sacrifice (ex. 1 Nephi 5:7; Mosiah 2:3). These offerings served to transfer the sins of the penitent onto the animal, reminiscent of the purposes of Maya *k'ex* rituals. The greatest of all *k'ex* offerings of course, is the Atonement (see Jacob 4:5), wherein the Savior took upon him the sins of us all.

Becoming a Ritual Specialist¹⁶

Ethnographic work among traditional societies has shown that holy men of various types — broadly referred to as shamans — commonly receive their calling through near-death experiences. As anthropologist Frank J. Lipp states in reference to modern Mesoamerican shaman-priests called *curanderos* (curers or healers), “Divine election occurs within a context of some physical or emotional crisis” such as “a severe, chronic, or life-threatening sickness.”¹⁷ While in this state they have a vivid dream where “the individual is informed by a spirit being,” such as an angel, that “she

or he will receive the divine gift to cure illnesses.”¹⁸ The healing process is often aided by the prayers and ritual actions of another *curandero* on behalf of the critically ill individuals. Once recovered, the newly called shamans possess a power and authority that is recognized by the members of their community due to their shared “cultural language.” According to Lipp, “During the initiatory dream vision the individual may experience temporary insanity or unconsciousness” and it is through this near-death experience that “he or she is reborn as a person with shamanic power and knowledge.”¹⁹

The Book of Mormon similarly describes individuals who fall to the earth as if dead and then recover and become healers. Beyond the examples where physical infirmities are removed, the Book of Mormon also provides numerous examples of individuals who are spiritually healed. It would be a mistake to place physical and spiritual healing in separate categories; the two concepts are equated in scripture and in the ancient mind. For example, during the Savior’s visit to the Nephites in the land Bountiful, beyond the healing he provided to the “lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner” (3 Nephi 17:7), he taught his disciples that they must minister to the unworthy with the hope that “they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them” (3 Nephi 18:32). Centuries earlier, Abinadi quoted Isaiah’s comforting message that it is “with his stripes we are healed” (Mosiah 14:5) from our sins and our iniquities.

The first recorded instance in the Book of Mormon where someone falls to the earth as if dead in connection with a prophetic commission is that of Alma the Younger. As he was going about with the sons of Mosiah to destroy the Church, an angel came down to “stop [them] by the way” (Alma 36:6; compare Mosiah 27:10). Significantly, when the angel first spoke to them as with a voice of thunder, they “understood not the words which he spake unto them” (Mosiah 27:12). The angel “cried again,” and this time his words were plainly understood (Mosiah 27:13; compare 3 Nephi 11:3-6).

After being threatened with destruction, Alma fell to the earth and became so weak that he could neither speak nor move his hands (Mosiah 27:19). After Alma’s helpless body was carried back to his home by his friends (who had also fallen to the earth but were not the focus of the angel’s rebuke and therefore quickly recovered), Alma’s father rejoiced, acknowledging the Lord’s hand in what had transpired. What his father did next is significant: “He caused that the priests should assemble

themselves together; and they began to fast, and to pray to the Lord their God that he would open the mouth of Alma, that he might speak, and also that his limbs might receive their strength” (Mosiah 27:22). These priests were acting in their capacity as *curanderos*, or healers. Alma was healed, not just physically but spiritually as well. His exquisite and bitter pain was replaced by exquisite and sweet joy (Alma 36:21). He clearly linked his physical healing with his spiritual healing when he declared, “My limbs did receive their strength again, and I stood upon my feet, and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God” (Alma 36:23).

Because Alma had been healed, both body and soul, he then possessed a culturally recognized power to heal. This recognition would extend beyond just the believing Nephites who had a clear understanding of the priesthood which Alma held (see Alma 13). For example, Zeezrom was a contentious and apostate Nephite from Ammonihah who knew nothing concerning true points of doctrine (see Alma 12:8). After contending with Alma and Amulek, Zeezrom became convinced of his own guilt and endured a painful repentance process.

The language used to convey Zeezrom’s situation intentionally parallels that used to describe Alma’s experience. Alma 14:6 tells us that Zeezrom “knew concerning the blindness of the minds, which he had caused among the people by his lying words; and his soul began to be *harrowed up* under a consciousness of his own guilt; yea, he began to be encircled about by the *pains of hell*” after which he lay “sick, being very low with a burning fever; and his mind also was exceedingly sore because of his iniquities.” Just as Alma was snatched out of “an everlasting burning” (Mosiah 27:28), Zeezrom was “scorched with a burning heat” that was caused by “the great tribulations of his mind on account of his wickedness” (Alma 15:3) and his fear that Alma and Amulek “had been slain because of his own iniquity” (Alma 15:3), much as Alma was concerned that he “had murdered many of [God’s] children, or rather led them away unto destruction” (Alma 36:14).

Despite the parallels in their accounts, Zeezrom’s soul does not appear to have been carried away in vision, and his conversion and healing come at the hands of men rather than from some interaction he had with the Lord while in his near-death state. We instead read that Zeezrom besought healing from both Alma and Amulek. However, the only one to take Zeezrom by the hand was Alma, as he had become the culturally (and spiritually) recognized healer by virtue of his own near-death experience. Alma turned Zeezrom’s focus back to the Lord when he asked, “Believest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation?” and

then assured him that “If thou believest in the redemption of Christ thou canst be healed.” Alma wanted to be clear that healing came through Christ and not through any of his own power, so he cried, “O Lord our God, have mercy on this man, and heal him according to his faith which is in Christ.” His plea was heard, and Zeezrom “leaped upon his feet, and began to walk” (Alma 15:6-11).

At the same time Alma was preaching to reclaim apostate Nephites within the greater lands of Zarahemla, Ammon was in the land of Nephi trying to win new converts in Lamanite territory. Through his acts of humility and dedicated service, he gained audience with Lamoni, king over the land of Ishmael (Alma 17:21). Ammon’s preaching opened the spiritual eyes of King Lamoni, and for the first time he saw his need for a Redeemer. The king humbled himself and cried unto the Lord for mercy, at which point he fell as if he were dead (Alma 18:42). Lamoni was seemingly on his deathbed for three days and was even believed to be dead by many of his people (Alma 19:5). Ammon understood that this was not the case, as he had previously witnessed Alma’s equivalent experience. The similarity between Lamoni’s and Alma’s experiences demonstrates the larger cultural language that was shared by Nephites and Lamanites in their ancient Mesoamerican setting.

The New Testament account of Saul’s conversion experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3–9) may bear superficial similarities to Alma’s experience in the Book of Mormon, but there is a significant difference. We have no record that Saul had a near-death experience in the sense that his soul embarked on a spirit journey while his body lay suffering (as did Alma and Lamoni), which is a defining factor in Mesoamerican shamanic calls.

While Lamoni was lying as if dead, his wife was truly concerned for his well-being. Acting on faith in Ammon’s word alone, she stayed by Lamoni’s side all that night and anxiously waited for him to emerge from his deep sleep. When he arose, he testified, “I have seen my Redeemer,” and he prophesied that “he shall come forth, and be born of a woman, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name.” Lamoni then sinks to the earth again, being overcome by the Spirit (Alma 19:13). The queen was likewise filled with the Spirit and also fell to the earth, followed by Ammon; finally even the servants of the king were overwhelmed by the Spirit. At the apex of the narrative, Ammon, the king, the queen, and their servants were all prostrate upon the earth, “and they all lay there as though they were dead” (Alma 19:18). When the queen was raised from the ground by her faithful handmaid Abish, she testified that she had

interacted with the Lord by proclaiming “O blessed Jesus, who has saved me from an awful hell!” (Alma 19:29). Even the king’s servants who had fallen united their testimony with Ammon’s to declare “they had seen angels and conversed with them” (Alma 19:34). King Lamoni, his wife, Ammon, and the king’s servants all “administered” unto the gathered crowd (Alma 19:33), which often carries connotations of healing in the Book of Mormon (Jacob 2:19; Mosiah 4:26). While their bodies had lain motionless, their spirits were busy interacting with the Lord and increasing in culturally recognized spiritual potency.

Ammon appears to have fallen to the earth more than any other individual in the Book of Mormon. His initial converting experience occurred when the angel rebuked him and his brothers along with Alma (Mosiah 27:12). As discussed above, he fell to the earth again when king Lamoni and his wife were converted (Alma 19:14) and once more when he was overcome with joy as he and his brothers chanced upon Alma in the wilderness (Alma 27:17). In his Mesoamerican context, Ammon’s experiences — rather than being viewed as a sign of physical weakness or perhaps a case of spiritual hypersensitivity — would actually have imbued him with more spiritual potency as a holy man. Among the modern Tzotzil Maya of Chamula, for example, “the ability to cure illnesses of increasing severity is dependent upon the number of times the shaman has lost consciousness in a trance.”²⁰

Calendar Specialists

Another role of ritual specialists beyond that of healer is that of calendar priest. Modern daykeepers are concerned with keeping track of the solar calendar and knowing when to sow and when to reap, but more importantly, they keep track of the count of days relating to the 260-day sacred calendar and determining whether a particular day is auspicious or not. Knowing the omens of each day enables them to guide people as to when to perform particular rituals, when to bless their child, or knowing whether one’s day of birth was a good day or a bad day.²¹

It appears that there were calendar specialists in the Book of Mormon as well. In 3 Nephi 8:1-2 we read, “And now it came to pass that according to our record, and we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record—for he truly did many miracles in the name of Jesus; and there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus save he were cleansed every whit from his iniquity—And now it came to pass, *if there was no mistake made by this man in the reckoning of our time, the thirty and third year had passed*

away” (emphasis added). The implication is that there was one particular individual who was responsible for the “reckoning of [their] time,” and this man was also a healer and a record keeper. This complex of roles mirrors that of Maya “daykeepers.”

The Nephites kept track of hours, days, weeks, months, and years. Omni 1:21 informs us that the people of Zarahemla also maintained a lunar calendar. Nephite record keepers reckoned from at least three distinct starting points: the time Lehi left Jerusalem, the beginning of the reign of the judges, and the time the signs were given of Christ’s birth (see 3 Nephi 2:5-8). The ancient Maya daykeepers had a similarly complicated job. They kept track of single day names with associated numbers: periods of 7, 9, 13, 20, and 819 days; 584-day Venus cycles; periods of single “years” of 360 days called *tuns*; 20-year periods called *katuns*; and 400-year periods called *baktuns*, as well as lunar cycles. The majority of Classic period monuments begin with a “Long Count,” which begins with a count of *baktuns* (400 years) and *katuns* (20 years). Notably, the concluding chapter of the Book of Mormon likewise begins with a count of “four hundred and twenty years” (Moroni 10:1), perhaps an intentional allusion to the Maya Long Count. The twenty-year katun was subdivided into five-year periods called *hotuns*, which were often celebrated by royalty and commemorated in monumental inscriptions. Samuel the Lamanite may have been making a *hotun* prophecy when he stated that in “five years” signs would be given concerning the birth of Christ (Helaman 14:2). Maya monuments often record the “Lunar Series,” which, as mentioned above, appears to be attested in the Book of Omni.

Ritual Specialists and Astronomy

Along with the calendar, ancient Maya ritual specialists were also masters of astronomy. Royal astronomer priests would work in conjunction with rulers and their architects to precisely lay out their city plans to use heavenly bodies for the purposes of royal propaganda. Royal palaces or temple complexes would be aligned with the solar equinoxes and solstices, so on particular days the sun would be seen to rise directly over the abode of the ruler and his gods.²² They tracked the cycles of planets, had their own set of constellations, and were even able to predict eclipses.

Ritual specialists in the Book of Mormon likewise had a firm grasp of astronomy. Alma affirmed that “all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator” (Alma 30:44). In Helaman 14,

Samuel the Lamanite prophesied that wonders in heaven would be used as signs to signify the birth of Christ, including the appearance of a new star, and these were all fulfilled in 3 Nephi 1. Nephi, son of Helaman, even proclaimed a heliocentric model rather than a geocentric one (Helaman 12:15).

Rainmaking Ceremonies

One of the primary responsibilities of modern Maya shamans is performing rain-making ceremonies, which are called *ch'a chaak* ceremonies by the Yucatec Maya. They cover a sanctified table with food and drink offerings, which are fed first to the gods and then to the people. The ritual specialists then make other offerings and utter prayers to petition the gods for rain on behalf of the people.²³

In the Book of Helaman we read that Nephi was given power to seal the heavens, and he did so in hopes that it would compel his people to be humble and stop engaging in endless warfare. In Helaman 11:7-8 the people finally got the message: “And it came to pass that the people saw that they were about to perish by famine, and they began to remember the Lord their God; and they began to remember the words of Nephi. And the people began to plead with their chief judges and their leaders, that they would say unto Nephi: Behold, we know that thou art a man of God, and therefore cry unto the Lord our God that he turn away from us this famine, lest all the words which thou hast spoken concerning our destruction be fulfilled.”

Note that the people did not turn directly to God themselves, nor did they think their political leaders could help. They turned to Nephi, their ritual specialist, the one who had the power to intercede on their behalf with the divine realm on their behalf and bring the rains. We may shrink at the thought that Nephites, the people of the Lord, would behave in such a way, but the context of the chapters makes it clear that they were largely apostate at this point. Just a few chapters earlier in Helaman 6:31 we read, “Insomuch that they had become exceedingly wicked; yea, the more part of them had turned out of the way of righteousness, and did trample under their feet the commandments of God, and did turn unto their own ways, and did build up unto themselves idols of their gold and their silver.” In other words, they had turned away from their own religious traditions and adopted those of the native population.²⁴

Conclusion

Despite the many similarities between Nephite and traditional Maya ritual specialists mentioned above, it must be noted that many profound differences exist as well, as would be expected. The believing Nephites were annihilated before the end of the fourth century AD, and it stands to reason that their specific beliefs and practices perished with them. To be very clear, I am not suggesting that Maya ritual specialists were influenced by the Nephites; rather, Nephite religious practices may very well have been colored by the native cultures that surrounded them. Some may bristle at that suggestion, but as Latter-day Saints many of our common ritual practices are admittedly quite similar to those of other faiths and unquestionably influenced by them. For example, what we believe to be proper ritual attire — a white shirt and tie for men and a modest dress for women — did not originate with a revelation to Joseph Smith, nor did the sitting on pews in a chapel, the singing of opening and closing hymns, the offering of invocations and benedictions, the giving of sermons, or the administration of the emblems of Christ's body and blood.

Latter-day Saint worship services are likely far more similar to those of other modern churches than they would be to those of the ancient Nephites, and Nephite worship services would undoubtedly have been far more similar to those of their ancient Mesoamerica neighbors than to those of the modern Church. Jacob, among others, noted that it is not the specific ritual practice that matters, but the belief that underlies the practice. The Nephites performed the same rituals as the Jews in their observance of the Law of Moses, but Jacob asserted that the Jews looked beyond the mark and lost their understanding that the law pointed toward Christ (Jacob 4:14). The Nephites would have been at home among their Mesoamerican neighbors by offering sacrifices to take away spiritual afflictions, by fasting and praying over the sick, looking to a ritual specialist to make it rain, by using multiple complex calendars, and by receiving the light of revelation through clear stones. But the Nephites understood that the power to do all these things came from the God of Israel rather than the local pantheon.

Notes

- 1 Cecilia F. Klein, Eulogio Guzmán, Elisa C. Mandell, and Maya Stanfield-Mazzi. "The Role of Shamanism in Mesoamerican Art." *Current Anthropology* 43, no. 3 (2002): 393.

- 2 Bruce Love, *Maya Shamanism Today: Connecting with the Cosmos in Rural Yucatán* (Lancaster, CA: Labyrinthos, 2004), ix.
- 3 Love, *Maya Shamanism*, ix.
- 4 Linda A. Brown, "From Discard to Divination: Demarcating the Sacred Through the Collection and Curation of Discarded Objects." *Latin American Antiquity*, December 2000, 325.
- 5 Love, *Maya Shamanism*, 4.
- 6 Brown, "From Discard to Divination," 326.
- 7 Love, *Maya Shamanism*, 18.
- 8 William Fash, *Scribes, Warriors and Kings: The City of Copan and the Ancient Maya* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 92.
- 9 Marc Zender, *A Study of Classic Maya Priesthood*, Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Calgary, 2004, 65-66.
- 10 Richard L Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 48-49.
- 11 Love, *Maya Shamanism*, 1-3.
- 12 Alfred Marston Tozzer, ed. "Landa's Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatan: a Translation." Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 1941, 94.
- 13 Robert Redfield and Alfonso Villa Rojas. *Chan Kom: A Maya Village*, 1934, 167.
- 14 In Mesoamerica east winds tend to be beneficial and are typically a sign that the life-giving rains are soon to come (Spence, 139). However, destructive tropical storms and hurricanes typically develop in the eastern Gulf Coast and sweep across the Maya lowlands from the east or northeast, which devastate both field and forest (Bassie, 50-51). In these particular contexts (Mosiah 7:29-31; 12:6), Abinadi is directly quoting the Lord from an unknown source, but it is likely from the brass plates (as he is wont to do), which would as expected reflect the traditional biblical association of the east winds with punishment.
- 15 Redfield and Villa Rojas. *Chan Kom*, 167.
- 16 The bulk of this section was previously published by the author in "According to Their Language, Unto Their Understanding: The Cultural Context of Hierophanies and Theophanies in Latter-day Saint Canon" in *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity*, Vol. 3 (2011) under the subheading "Prophetic Commissions in the Old and New Worlds" (pp. 58-64). It appears here with only minor modification from the previous publication and with permission of the editor.
- 17 Frank Lipp, "A Comparative Analysis of Southern Mexican and Guatemalan Shamans," *Mesoamerican Healers*, 2001, 95-116.

- 18 Lipp, "Comparative Analysis," 103.
- 19 Lipp, "Comparative Analysis," 104.
- 20 Lipp, "Comparative Analysis," 104.
- 21 The belief in auspicious and inauspicious days may strike some as "primitive," but it should be noted that scholars estimate that businesses in the United States lose between \$800-900 million every Friday the 13th due to superstitious avoidance of perceived risky behavior such as driving or making large purchases (Travis Ng, Terence Chong, and Xin Du. "The value of superstitions." *Journal of Economic Psychology* 31, no. 3, 2010, 3).
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- 23 Love, *Maya Shamanism*.
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IS DECRYPTING THE GENETIC LEGACY OF AMERICA'S INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS KEY TO THE HISTORICITY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON?

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Background

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (i.e., Mormons or LDS) consider the Book of Mormon a volume of divine origin comparable in scriptural sacredness to the Bible (Article of Faith #8). They believe it to be an historical record originally engraved on golden plates, covering a period of approximately one thousand years (600 BC to 400 AD) and dealing with ancient people who lived in the American continent hundreds of years before the arrival of the Europeans. A small part of the Book of Mormon describes a different group of people of unknown Old World origin, called the Jaredites, disappearing (at least as a civilization) by the time the second group of migrants made their journey to the Western Hemisphere.

The main narrative of the Book of Mormon begins in Jerusalem with a family who escapes, by divine warning, the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians approximately six centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ. With a few others, they are eventually guided on a journey to a non-specified region of America's double continent.¹ The descendants of this small original group later divided into two opposing factions, called the Lamanites and the Nephites, and the rest of the volume focuses mainly on the spiritual and social dynamics between these two groups, including their warfare. The recurring theme of the Book of Mormon is the coming of the Savior Jesus Christ first to the Old World, as witnessed in the Bible, followed by a brief ministry after his resurrection to a group of disciples who received him in the Americas. The book itself does not claim to be a complete history of these people but rather an abridgment made by Mormon, one of the last prophets in charge of the records, after whom the whole volume was eventually named. Further, the explicit purpose of many of the contributors to the records compiled in the Book of Mormon was to focus on spiritual rather than historical matters regarding the doings of their people.

Honest seekers of truth are invited to receive a spiritual confirmation of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon within the scriptural text itself (Moroni 10:3-5). Still, at times some have wondered about the compatibility of the record put forth in the Book of Mormon with academic studies (archaeological, linguistic, anthropological, etc.) of the indigenous people and area of the Americas. There are some who promote strong criticism in this arena in an attempt to discredit the divine origin of the volume.

Recent attention has been paid to DNA data reported in scholarly papers written by scientists external to the Book of Mormon debate but interpreted by some as the ultimate proof against the book's historicity. Others are even making claims about specific genetic lineages found in the Americas as a confirmation that the record is true. Overall, the complexities and limitations of the discipline of population genetics cannot be dismissed when attempting to use these tools to reconstruct the history of past civilizations. The questions treated herein examine the historical origins of the people described in the records of the Book of Mormon from a genetic point of view, making use of key principles of population genetics that cannot be neglected when undertaking such a study.

Introduction

The arguments of some critics of the Book of Mormon suppose that the DNA characteristics of modern Native Americans should be compatible with "Israelite" rather than with Asian genetics, as reported in scientific data demonstrating a strong affinity with the latter. In response to such criticisms, others have jumped at reports of pre-Columbian genetic lineages found in the Americas that could be ascribed to a Near Eastern origin as physical evidence of the existence of Book of Mormon people.² A key point is that arguments in favor or against the Book of Mormon narrative rely on genetic data gathered by researchers uninvolved with the Book of Mormon historicity issue. These studies were designed to offer new perspectives on the prehistoric origin and migrations of Native Americans. Contrary to the claims of critics, they fail to address historical events pertaining to the Nephites' record.

The stated time frame of The Book of Mormon covers ca. 600 BC to 400 AD, and the text explicitly states itself to be a record of the religious dealings of the people rather than a purely historical document. Scholarly studies on the genetic origin of the ancestors of Native Americans have been concerned most with the first waves of migrations that took place

several thousands of years ago, toward the end of the Last Ice Age, across the exposed land-bridge called Beringia that once connected Siberia to Alaska. Thus the genetic data used by critics of the Book of Mormon address a time period many thousands of years before the time of the actual record. One may compare this case of “interpretive anachronism” to searching for news about the landing of man on the moon in ancient Egyptian papyri. However, it should be noted that if there were a large genetic contribution by a group of Middle Easterners, it would stand out in these sorts of analyses because they are analyzed in comparison to modern populations sampled from diverse geographical regions. Nevertheless, these analyses have not ruled out a comparatively small contribution of ancestry from Middle Eastern groups.

Another factor worth considering in this context is that many Native American samples have some amount of post-Columbian European mixture. This mixture could confound putative evidence in support of the Book of Mormon narrative for some analyses (researchers often ignore any non-Asian DNA as definitively post-Columbian). In addition, recent publication of preliminary data from the remains of an individual dated 24,000 years ago, found in south-central Siberia and showing a possible ancient connection between Native Americans and Central/West Eurasia, is further complicating the admixture issue.³ Nonetheless, the possibility of an arrival of a small group of migrants approximately 2,600 years ago to an already populated continent is not excluded by the reported genetic data.

Critics incorrectly insist that the LDS Church has taught for years that the American continent was uninhabited until the arrival of Book of Mormon people and that only recently, following the DNA debate, this position has changed. However, the LDS Church has not expressed an official opinion with regard to either Book of Mormon geography or population dynamics.⁴ This, of course, does not preclude LDS leaders and scholars from sharing their personal opinions one way or the other, including several instances in which the concept of an already inhabited continent was shared prior to bringing forth the so-called DNA evidence.⁵

The main argument seems to stem from the introduction added in 1981 at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, which read that “after thousands of years, all [people] were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the *principal* ancestors of the American Indians” (emphasis added). Although the term “principal” already presupposes the existence of other ancestors without specifying whether the idea of ancient or modern ancestral contribution was intended in this statement, this was

recently changed. The current edition of the Book of Mormon now reads "... all [people] were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are *among* the ancestors of the American Indians" (emphasis added).

Although this change does not drastically affect the concept of heritage and ancestry of modern Native Americans in relation to ancient Lamanites, of greater importance is to understand the meaning of the term *Lamanite* as used in the latter part of the Nephite history. In the book 4 Nephi, the writer explains that following the visitation of the Savior to the Americas, the formerly warring people became united, without genetic or ethnic distinction among them: "There were no robbers, nor murderers, *neither were there Lamanites*, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God" (4 Nephi 1:17, emphasis added).

The record continues by stating that eventually there "were a small part of the people who had revolted from the church and *taken upon them the name of Lamanites; therefore there began to be Lamanites* again in the land" (4 Nephi 1:20, emphasis added). It is very likely that this choice of designation was social or religious rather than genealogical in nature, based on the character of the Lamanites prior to Christ's visit. In fact, 4 Nephi 1:36-39 reports that in a similar fashion, others decided to use the term *Nephites* again to distinguish them as "true believers of Christ" and restating that those that "rejected the gospel were called Lamanites" and were "taught to hate the children of God, *even as the Lamanites were taught to hate the children of Nephi from the beginning*" (emphasis added).⁶ Here the use of the word "even" underscores the practice of choosing a name that had a specific social meaning in the past.

History is repeating itself, but the genetic distinction most likely no longer applies to the masses. Of note in this context are instances in the text of the Book of Mormon where Mormon himself twice declares his ancestry [as a genealogical descendant of Nephi (Mormon 1:5) and a "pure descendant" of Lehi (3 Nephi 5:20)], possibly supporting by inference the existence of outside populations contributing to the social dynamics of the people of the Book of Mormon.⁷ As the term *Lamanite* loses its genetic meaning in the latter part of the Book of Mormon narrative, attempts to define an original *Lamanite* genetic signature are highly suspect, as the modern remnant of this ancient population would have to include both true descendants of Lehi's original party as well as others already inhabiting the land.

Critics who conclude the Book of Mormon to be fictitious in nature due to genetic data which fails to show "Israelite DNA" in the Americas

must also consider logical and scientific reasons why such DNA could have existed in Native Americans at some point in history but may not be present or as easily detected in today's population. To rigorously examine the history of a people using genetics, all the tools of the discipline of population genetics must be embraced.

What some may refer to as the absence of genetic evidence does not preclude at all the real possibility that Lehi and his family were real people who actually left Jerusalem and established themselves on the American continent. In fact, as will be examined, it is very likely that either their DNA has disappeared over time, or it is present at such a low frequency (due to mixing with other peoples) that the genetic methods to date have not detected it. In the event such DNA is found, it will most likely only be possible to ascribe it to these migrant groups only speculatively. Regardless, a DNA approach does not decisively and definitively fill in our void of knowledge of the happenings on the American continent during the time frame of the Book of Mormon. Both critics and apologists utilize speculations and assumptions to support their views. However, both sides of this controversy fail either to support or reject the authenticity of the Book of Mormon on the basis of DNA.

Evidence or Proof?

Stating that DNA evidence stands as the conclusive proof that the Book of Mormon is a fabricated historical account is not a convincing argument. Scholarly studies indicate that the majority of DNA observed in Native Americans has a common origin or ancestry with Asian populations, thus suggesting an ancient split between Paleo-Indians and their Eurasian source population sometime before the Last Ice Age. These population studies do not consider, however, the possibility of other migrations that could have taken place between the first entries of the early ancestors of Native Americans and the more recent documented European colonization after 1492.

The concept of additional, small-scale contacts and migrations to the Americas throughout the millennia is not dismissed by scientists. In fact, in recent years, genetic data was successfully sequenced from hair belonging to a well-preserved, 4,000-year-old, Paleo-Eskimo individual belonging to the Saqqaq culture discovered in Greenland.⁸ This research has contributed greatly to the current understanding of events that led to the peopling of the Americas. The authors concluded that the genetic makeup of the ancient Saqqaq individual was very different from that of Inuit or other Native American populations. Instead, he was closely related

to Old World Arctic populations of the Siberian Far East, separated from them by approximately two hundred generations (roughly 5,500 years).

These data suggest a distinctive and more recent migration across Beringia by a group of people who were not related to the first ancestors of modern-day Amerindians. In an interview, one author emphasized that the lack of genetic continuity between the ancient Saqqaq individual and the modern population of the New World Arctic stands as a witness that other migrations could have taken place that left no contemporary genetic signals.⁹ In commenting about the findings of this project, population geneticist Marcus Feldman from Stanford University said that “the models that suggest a single one-time migration are generally regarded as idealized systems, like an idealized gas in physics. *But there may have been small amounts of migrations going on for millennia*” (emphasis added).

He went on to explain that “just because researchers put a date on when ancient humans crossed the Bering Bridge, that doesn’t mean it happened only once and then stopped.”¹⁰ This concept has also been included in the volume *The Origin of Native Americans* by Michael H. Crawford, molecular anthropologist at the University of Kansas. In his lengthy review of data supporting the ancient Asian origins of the Amerindians, he stated that “this *evidence* does not preclude the possibility of some small-scale cultural contacts between specific Amerindian societies and Asian or Oceanic seafarers” (emphasis added).¹¹

Lastly, in discussing the difference between “evidence” versus “proof” Professor Daniel C. Peterson wrote that,

The claims of Mormonism are, I think, ... [n]ot so obviously true as to coerce acceptance, and not so obviously false as to make acceptance illegitimate.

I can’t agree with my fellow believers who imagine that the evidence for Mormonism is so strong that only deliberate, willful blindness can explain failure to be persuaded. But I also reject the claim of detractors of Mormonism, that its falsehood is so transparently obvious that only naked dishonesty or ignorance can account for failure to recognize it.¹²

Dr. Peterson’s paradigm is easily adapted to the current discussion of “genetic evidence” vs. “genetic proof.” The lack of genetic evidence or absence of strong affinity for “Israelite” genetic markers in Native American populations in no way approaches the level of *ultimate proof* of falsehood of the Book of Mormon. The lack of genetic evidence as

examined in modern populations does not demonstrate proof of an absolute historical absence. This issue will be discussed in detail later in this essay.

Some critics propose a straw man construct superimposing an empty continent theory (i.e., the Americas were completely unpopulated prior to the arrival of the Book of Mormon people in 600 BC) as the basis of belief from which Mormonism stems regarding Book of Mormon populations and their origins. By such reasoning the lack of a pervasive Israelite genetic profile in pre-Columbian Native American populations must be viewed necessarily as the ultimate proof that the Book of Mormon is a product of nineteenth-century fiction. With this strategy, critics purposely engineer the background they want others to accept at the outset in order to have a strong case based on genetic evidence. Many fallacies arise from this approach that will be treated in detail herein. Suffice it to say, as with archaeological, linguistic, and anthropological evidence, DNA cannot be used to support or to discredit the true historical nature of Joseph Smith and his purported acquisition and translation of ancient gold plates.

Honest seekers of truth will be wary of dogmatic statements that proclaim absolute authority on a topic and call it closed. Often these statements are based on personal interpretation that can be shown to have logical lapses and are given without careful regard for the complexities of the topic at hand. At times it is helpful to understand something about the nature and motives characterizing those bringing forth such claims.

What Does Science Say About the DNA of Native Americans?

The early 1990s marked the beginning of the genomic era with regard to the study of human diversity and the elucidation of the relationships and origins of different world populations. With the best technologies available in those early days, scientists for the first time were able to analyze segments of the female-inherited mitochondrial genome and to identify small but important genetic markers uniquely linked to specific populations.

Subsequent to this novel use of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), new technologies ushered in the study of genetic markers found on the male-inherited Y chromosome and the autosomes, giving sometimes distinct insights into populations origins and migrations. With regard to mtDNA, the first samples analyzed came from Native American populations. The data showed that nearly all the mtDNAs could be clustered into one of four groups, which were initially labeled A, B, C, and D, and later groupings identified in other populations proceeded through the

subsequent alphabetical nomenclature.¹³

These earlier studies utilized a small section of the mitochondrial genome, often limited to just a few hundred DNA bases. Among others, three significant findings were published during the 1990s based on mtDNA diversity with some implications to our understanding of Native American origins:

1. The highest level of mtDNA variation was observed in sub-Saharan African groups, thus indicating that all humans shared a common female ancestor from Africa and that human colonization of the planet started from there;
2. Lineages A, B, C, and D were observed in the Americas as well as in modern Asian populations, thus supporting the theory that the ancient maternal ancestors of Native Americans were Paleo-Indians of Asian origins who survived the Last Ice Age on the continent-sized land-bridge called Beringia that once connected northeast Siberia to Alaska;¹⁴
3. A fifth lineage was observed in Native American populations from the Great Lakes area and in a few other North American groups. This new mtDNA was termed X, and differently from the previously known Native American mtDNA lineages, it was also observed in many modern European, African, and Middle Eastern populations¹⁵ as well as in a small region of Central Asia.¹⁶

These three points have strong implications with respect to the Book of Mormon debate, but the most emphasized in early disputes was point 2 — the common presence of lineages A, B, C, and D in both the Asian and American continents. Each of these three findings deserves its own treatment in detail.

The existence of a common maternal ancestor from Africa for all mtDNA lineages has many significant implications; of relevance for the current question is the fact that this woman was not the only female alive at that time, but merely lucky in perpetuating her genetic lineage through millennia to the present time. (This was due to several factors, including her own success and the happenstance successes of her descendants.) The phenomenon of chance transmissions will be addressed in detail when we introduce the population genetic principle of *genetic drift*. For the current discussion, it is sufficient to realize that the genetic variation present in modern populations does not give a complete picture of the variation that existed in the past.

The second relevant principle is the presence of mitochondrial DNA lineages labeled A, B, C, and D on both sides of the Bering Strait. As explained earlier, based on data from different disciplines, including genetics, archaeology, and linguistics, it has been postulated that anatomically modern humans were trapped in the landmass that once connected Siberia to Alaska during the Last Ice Age.¹⁷ These Paleo-Indians most likely came from other source populations in Asia during the spread of hunter-gatherers thousands of years ago. By following and hunting large mammals, they reached the continent-sized land-bridge Beringia but were eventually trapped there due to the worsening of climate conditions and the build-up of glaciers on either side.

During the following millennia, they probably survived in natural enclaves, living in a manner similar to modern-day Arctic natives. Population growth was probably halted because of scarcity of resources. They were physically separated from their source population, thus gradually developing their own unique linguistic, cultural, and genetic characteristics.¹⁸ Eventually, the climate began to improve again, and the large glaciers started to withdraw.

As sea-levels began to rise again, gradually submerging Beringia and most of the world's coastlines, at least one, perhaps two entryways became available to the ancestors of American natives moving eastward into a pristine and empty continent.¹⁹ Lack of competition for resources allowed a quick spread southward, reaching the tip of South America's southern cone (a distance greater than that from Portugal to Japan!) probably in as few as 1,000 years. Populations began to grow, and by the time the Europeans arrived after 1492, at least 20 million people lived in the Americas.²⁰ This summary reflects the knowledge based on genetics, archaeology, and other disciplines to the proposed understanding of the first and most significant expansions into the Western Hemisphere.

Although genetic diversity in Asia is much higher than that observed among the indigenous people of America — and also includes significantly different lineage frequencies — it is notable that those who survived the Beringia “imprisonment” were but a few compared to the larger Asian population of that time.

Once the two populations were separated, never to be reunited — first because of the deteriorating climate conditions and then by the Bering Strait — gene flow between the populations was interrupted, and their genetic histories diverged. Once populations become physically separated in this manner, powerful forces play a role in how the genetic dynamics of different populations develop over time. Even holding

geographical and climate conditions constant, events that influence the genetic shaping of a group play out in a distinct story for every population.

Genetic drift and perhaps to some degree natural selection with regard to DNA transmission, gender (based on the inheritance of Y chromosome or mitochondrial DNA), and variation in number of offspring, etc., give shape to the resulting genetic profiles of populations as they develop over time. Often, if the group of founding migrants is small, the effects of drift that persist into future generations are accentuated, as the loss of even a single individual from the small founding group, or a female bearing no children or children of just one gender, will cause the loss of genetic variability at an early stage of the colonization process. For example, when considering mtDNA passed on only by females to their children, if an original founding group is composed of four women, each carrying a different mtDNA lineage, and one of them bears only male children, 25% of the mtDNA variation in the founding population will be immediately lost from all subsequent generations.

Although the founding group of ancient Paleo-Indians trapped in Beringia for thousands of years would have included more than four women, this process can occur in subgroups of a population and could result in lost lineages that are still found among Asians but that are not currently found among Native Americans. Additionally, the separation of Paleo-Indians from their source population for such a long period resulted in the rise of novel mutations that were exclusively found in the ancestors of Amerindians.

From a strictly mitochondrial DNA point of view, a Native American mtDNA lineage is so distinct that it is easily distinguishable from those of any other world population. In fact, the level of discrimination allows clear discernment of Asian and Native American types that are relatively closely related but that have both amassed enough unique features since their divergence to give a strong degree of differentiation between the two. For example, if an mtDNA profile carrying the key mutations classified as Native American is found in Europe, one obvious argument is that early European colonists brought back indigenous women from the Americas to the Old World, whose descendants persist to the current day. These lineages are clearly not European, but neither are they Asian. They are Native American.

The opposite is also true. If mtDNA lineages are observed in the Americas, even in tribal groups considered deeply indigenous who belong to mtDNA groups known to be African, European, or even Asian, the argument most readily given is that they have been introduced more

recently, after the rediscovery of the New World by Europeans.

Therefore, going back to the question posed above, a Native American lineage is an mtDNA profile that has accumulated a unique set of mutations that, although showing evidence of common ancestry with Asian populations, is different enough to be ascribed exclusively to the Americas and not to Asia. In other words, Native American mtDNA lineages are, for the most part, nested within the large family of Asian mtDNAs, and are distantly related to them (or showing an affinity) but not identical.

An increased understanding of the dynamics that characterized the mtDNA origin of Native American populations was achieved during the past decade through the analysis of complete mtDNA genomes — the highest level of mtDNA molecular resolution attainable. The original A, B, C, and D mtDNA lineages observed in the Americas were eventually renamed A2, B2, C1, and D1 to distinguish them from their Asian “cousins.” Lineage X became X2a, and to this day it has been found only in North America, although there is still some uncertainty regarding its origin. These five lineages constitute the majority (approximately 95%) of all Native American lineages observed in the Americas, although in recent years, additional rare lineages also have been identified as Native American.²¹

At the present time, thanks to the complete sequencing of large numbers of mtDNA genomes, scientists performing research of worldwide populations are dissecting individual mtDNA lineages to discover important details missed in the past. This microgeographic approach is revealing a number of peculiar situations that, for the most part, are still not fully explained. For example, mtDNA lineage C1 has six known sublineages, called C1a-f. They all share a common maternal origin, but their geographic distribution is very specific: C1a is found exclusively in Asia, C1b, C1c, and C1d are found only in the American continent,²² and C1e and C1f are two new lineages found recently in a limited number of living individuals from Iceland²³ and in ancient remains retrieved in Western Russia,²⁴ respectively.

The natural question is, how did the four geographically distinct clusters end up in the locations where they were observed? A possibility is that they were all in Beringia at some point, and following the Last Ice Age, carriers of the C1a and C1f mtDNA returned to Asia,²⁵ whereas C1b-C1d and possibly C1e moved eastwards in the Americas. Eventually, either through an Atlantic crossing along the north ice cap or, more recently, through Viking voyages,²⁶ a Native American female (or females)

carrying the C1e lineage ended up in Iceland, where successful progeny have persisted into today's Icelandic population. However, any C1e left in the Americas either failed to perpetuate its lineage by chance due to lack of female posterity or became extinct following the massive population reduction caused by the arrival of Europeans.

Another possibility for its sole distribution in Iceland hinges on its extreme rarity as a mtDNA type, and therefore scientists have not encountered it yet on American soil.

In summary, the recent discovery of C1e in Iceland, its pre-Columbian mtDNA age, and its apparent absence among modern Amerindian groups poses some interesting questions that can be applied to the Book of Mormon debate. Would it ever have been known that an additional C1 lineage existed in America's past if it were not found in Iceland? This situation demonstrates a possible scenario in which a Beringian lineage of Asian origin could have become extinct in the Americas, and detection of the genetic type could have been accomplished only due to its having had more time to spread to outlying geographies, causing it to be external to competition with the abundant contemporary mtDNA Native American lineages.

Similarly, a more recently introduced mtDNA lineage from the Old World, as in the Book of Mormon scenario, would have been even more likely to disappear or escape detection when introduced to a large gene-pool. We will discuss this further in the section about genetic drift.

A far more puzzling story surrounds the origin of the fifth Native American lineage, called X2a. This group of mtDNAs is found exclusively in North America, with its highest modern-day concentration in the Great Lakes region.²⁷ While Native American mtDNAs A2, B2, C1, and D1 are clearly nested within Asian clades, lineage X2a has a hypothesized ancient Old World origin, probably in the Middle East.²⁸

Although a small number of X2 samples have also been observed in Central Asia,²⁹ they most likely represent a recent migratory event to that region. In an mtDNA tree, the Asian X (called X2e) contains more recent mutations than the Native American X2a, and therefore it is not ancestral to the latter. Although it cannot be completely excluded that ancestors of X2a once lived in Northeast Asia and then became extinct, at the present time the closest relatives of the Native American X2a lineage have been identified in a single sample from Iran³⁰ and in Bedouin groups from Egypt.³¹

The potential connection between New World and Middle Eastern mtDNA X types could be seen by some as a candidate for Book of Mormon DNA in the Americas. However, some data confounds this hypothesis, as the mtDNA molecular clock³² — the estimated average number of years before a mutation is expected to appear — dates X2a at about the same time as the arrival of all the other Asian-like lineages to the Americas (toward the end of the Last Ice Age). Data from ancient DNA studies on pre-Columbian specimens presumably belonging to lineage X are, for the most part, also inconclusive.³³

As an additional cautionary note, mtDNA dating is concerned most with the age of divergence between two lineages sharing a common ancestor and not necessarily the location of the shared ancestral sequence. In other words, the coalescence time of X2a,³⁴ or of any other mtDNA lineage for that matter, reveals only how far back in time the split from the ancestral node took place, not where the split occurred and does not account for the geographic locations of these lineages today.

As seen with the C1e example, there could have been closer relatives of X2a in other parts of the world, but either they became extinct or have not yet been found. The Egyptian and Iranian X2* samples share one of the three coding region mutations that define X2a in the Americas. Their existence indicates that potential “relatives” of the X2a lineage could be found elsewhere, assuming they still exist in contemporary individuals.

However, in this particular example, it is important to note that the Old World X2* haplotypes share additional mutations that would increase the genetic distance between the Amerindian and Middle Eastern branches of X2, even with the shared common conservative mutation. The story of X2a is a likely example of an mtDNA lineage found in the Americas that to this date cannot be completely ascribed to an Asian origin and is a subject worth further investigation.

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by scientists is to be able to assign clearly and unequivocally any European or African lineage found in the Americas to the pre-Columbian era. The generalized view among population geneticists is that after the initial arrival of Paleo-Indians toward the end of the Last Ice Age, no other migrations took place until the discovery of the double-continent by Europeans in 1492.

Together with a drastic indigenous population reduction (addressed in detail in the section dealing with the effect of *population bottleneck*), first the European and later the African gene-pool were introduced to the Americas, thus altering forever the original genetic landscape of the Western Hemisphere. Therefore, the common consensus, whenever any

DNA is found that does not fit with the classic Native America genetic types, is an automatic assignment of such DNA to the post-Columbian migration wave of European or African migrants.

Although this assignment may be accurate in most instances, few tools are available to test the assumptions underlying this assignment; this means that even in the unlikely scenario that a few genetic lineages survived to modern times from additional migrations that occurred in the pre-Columbian era, they would not be strongly differentiated from contemporary DNA profiles found in modern Europe and Africa.

This is a critical and often overlooked limitation in using DNA to try to isolate a migration by a small group to the Americas in the recent past. If we take mtDNA, for example, it is correct to say that more than 95% of lineages identified are of Asian origin for the simple reason that they are similar to — but at the same time sufficiently different from — Asian lineages due to the fact that they have been separated for enough time to develop their own set of unique mutational motifs. If a modern Asian lineage were to be found in the Americas, it would most likely be assigned to a post-Columbian arrival, just like any other non-indigenous mtDNA profile. The root of this issue lies with the so-called “molecular clock” used to determine the age of lineages.

Scientists have been able to calibrate the estimated time of entry of the first Paleo-Indians based on the number of mutations that separate the Native American lineages from those found in Asia today (using molecular clocks).

Dating of the genetic data supporting this first arrival coincided with the geological evidence from the improvement of climate conditions toward the end of the Last Ice Age, at about 15-18,000 years ago. This molecular clock is based on the number of mutations accumulated in each mtDNA lineage, and it is calibrated on the assumed common ancestor between modern humans and chimpanzee, a split from their common unknown ancestor (the “missing link”) that would have occurred approximately 6.5 million years ago.

The mutation rate of mtDNA is roughly 3,000-9,000 years per mutation, depending on the section of mtDNA analyzed and the molecular clock applied.³⁵ Therefore, with few exceptions, it is only possible to infer migrations and other events that occurred thousands of years ago and not more recent ones.

Moreover, scientists in general are extremely cautious to make statements based on the available data that unequivocally point to a single conclusion and leave no room for an alternative hypothesis. Nearly

all scientific papers published on population migration subjects offer new clues or revisit old ones, with the objective of furthering scholarly work by contribution of new perspectives and data that other researchers will utilize in their own work.

However, this is often not the case when the same information is then represented by the media or by others with a specific agenda, as they tend to sensationalize such discoveries in order to attract greater attention from the public. Unfortunately, as with any sub-specialized topic, a relatively small percentage of the population has the necessary background to fully grasp the original scientific work, and therefore they often have to rely on how this information is interpreted and propagated, and this includes all the involved biases.

In summary, it is an oversimplification to assert that all DNA in the Americas is provably Asian. The large majority shows Asian affinity simply because it is similar enough to demonstrate a more recent shared ancestry with Asian populations than other worldwide populations but has enough accumulated differences to be distinctively identifiable as Native American DNA. Based on scientific investigation, this main genetic component was introduced in the Americas at the end of the Last Ice Age thousands of years ago.

A particular lineage called mtDNA X does not appear to be of Asian origin: it is more closely related to ancient Near Eastern lineages, but there is not enough evidence to link it definitively to Book of Mormon people. Unless retrieved from ancient specimens, any other unusual DNA types found in the Americas are generally ascribed by scientists to later colonization events. However, as the following points will clearly show, the hypothesis that makes the fewest assumptions (*lex parsimoniae*) based on the principles of populations genetics is that any unusual DNA types that arrived in a recent small migration to the Americas would most likely not be detectable in our present time.

What Did Lehi's DNA Look Like?

A major limitation that prevents the identification of genetic signatures that could be tied to Book of Mormon people is the obvious fact that this genetic signature is not known in the first place, although based on modern and ancient DNA studies, it is possible to determine a genetic lineage that could approximate a "typical" Near Eastern type.

While this may be the case, it must still be acknowledged that virtually any individual DNA profile could be found in any population, although at different frequencies. For example, the male Y chromosome

type known as lineage J and the female mitochondrial DNA family U/K are found at high frequencies in the Middle East. However, these lineages are also found in smaller numbers in other countries, and conversely non-typical Middle Eastern lineages are also found in the Holy Land and surrounding countries, albeit in low frequency.

From a genetic viewpoint, there are a larger number of distinct mtDNA lineages observed in a single population than there are unique lineages in a particular population when comparing two or more groups. This means that anyone from any region of the Old World could have carried virtually any mtDNA lineage to the Americas.

As an example, one of the authors of this paper, Ugo Perego, is nearly 100% European based in his overall DNA makeup (autosomal),³⁶ but his paternal line belongs to the Y chromosome family C, which is typical of Asia, North America, and Oceania.

The frequency of this particular genetic lineage in the Mediterranean Basin approaches zero. It appears that the introduction of this DNA marked as Asian in Ugo's family is quite ancient and perhaps attributable to the invasion of barbaric groups to Europe between 400 and 600 AD.³⁷

There is no genealogical record to confirm this information, only speculation based on history and the available DNA in his particular family. If he were to relocate to Asia today, and someone were to find his skeleton and extract his DNA two thousand years from now, based on the Y chromosome data alone, they would believe that he was indigenous to Asia and not a migrant from Europe.

Additionally, this is also a helpful example that demonstrates the presence of an ancestor of Asian origins (through the Y chromosome) whose autosomal DNA failed to survive in Ugo's current genetic makeup. If a single individual or a relatively small number of people mixed with a large pool of Southern Europeans, their DNA would likely disappear over time, even though their genealogical ancestry would remain.³⁸

The problem with not knowing the DNA of Lehi and his group is a situation that in forensics would be categorized as the absence of specific information. First, it would be impossible to recognize their DNA even if it survived genetic drift and population bottleneck. It could be something similar to other Asian lineages, or it could be European or Middle Eastern. It could be nearly anything.

It is possible that the DNA of Lehi's group is one of the most prominent lineages in the American continent but that we do not recognize it as such due to lacking knowledge of their mtDNA profile. Second, any attempt to link DNA in the Americas that might look like a potential

candidate for Book of Mormon people (e.g. mtDNA lineage X found in northern North America) would likewise result in further speculation for the same reason. The small group that left Jerusalem to embark on a journey to a new land was not selected based on their genetic uniqueness, or because they represented the typical genetic signature found in their homeland.

These people were unaware of their genetic profile, and so are we. This fact alone would seriously compromise any effort to bring forth DNA as evidence that they never existed or that the Book of Mormon is not the religious and historical record it claims to be. One could ask, “What would Lehi’s DNA have looked like?” but no testable hypothesis answers this question.

Population genetic studies are based on statistical evidence, but they are weak when evaluating rare occurrences in the sampled population. If we were trying either to detect or measure the amount of genetic contribution from Book of Mormon people, the hypothesis to be tested would be not how much Middle Eastern DNA is observed in the pre-Columbian native population, but rather how much DNA from Lehi’s or other groups survived to our day. In other words, what is the frequency of rare lineages that could be confidently assigned to them? We can attempt to determine a Middle Eastern DNA contribution to the Americas (a population-based approach), but we don’t have the tools to determine the contribution of Lehi’s family DNA in the same area (a family/pedigree-based approach). Therefore, we have to be careful to avoid confusing the absence of confidently recognizable Old World DNA in the Americas with the assertion that Lehi’s party never existed.

No matter how large or small they eventually became as a people in the American continent, we are still talking about a very small initial group with extremely limited genetic variation that would not constitute a large enough sample of their native population to ensure that the genetics of the Middle East would be properly represented in the New World.

What is Genetic Drift?

While several genetic principles, limitations, and possibilities have been explored at length herein, possibly the single most influential factor that would prevent detection of Lehi’s DNA in both modern and ancient samples is the concept of genetic drift.

For the sake of modeling, assume that Lehi and the members of his family carried the most representative modern Middle Eastern genetic profiles, a paternal Y chromosome belonging to lineage J for the males, a

mtDNA K female lineage, and nuclear DNA packed with genes and markers typical of the Old World.

The only way these Middle Eastern markers would have survived past the first few generations in the American continent would be in the unlikely event that they were successful in being an isolated population with limited mixing with the hosting population.

The abridged history contained in the Book of Mormon gives only a few sporadic details about the whereabouts of its people with regard to potential interactions with any other groups.³⁹ If the hypothesis we are trying to test is whether the party from Jerusalem really existed, we must take into the account their group size and the estimated population count in the Americas at their arrival.

Exact information on both issues is unknown, but a fair guess about proportions can be attempted. Lehi, his family and the others who came along were probably no more than 30-40 individuals, representing two, perhaps three family nuclei:

1. Lehi, his wife Sariah, and their children Laman, Lemuel, Nephi, Sam, Jacob, Joseph, and some sisters;
2. Ishmael's widow and her children;
3. Zoram, the servant of Laban.

It is even more speculative to infer much about the genetics of surviving Jaredites (if any) and Mulek's group, since the Book of Mormon is silent about their population of origin.

Mulek is presented as one of the genealogical heirs to the Jerusalem throne, but nothing is recorded about the number and origins of those who eventually sailed with him to the Americas. Since many assumptions are already made about the group size and the genetics of the main characters of the Book of Mormon, the following considerations will be based exclusively on the hypothesis that these were real people and made it to the American continent.

What would have happened to their DNA after their arrival? A well-considered argument comes from Henry C. Harpending, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the University of Utah. When asked, "If a group of, say, fifty Phoenicians (men and women) arrived in the Americas some 2,600 years ago and intermarried with indigenous people, and assuming their descendants fared as well as the larger population through the vicissitudes of disease, famine, and war, would you expect to find genetic evidence of their Phoenician ancestors in the current Native American population? In addition, would their descendants be presumed to have an equal or unequal number of Middle Eastern as Native American haplotypes?"

Professor Harpending's reply was, "I doubt that we would pick up [evidence of the Phoenicians] today at all, but it does depend on how they intermixed once they were here. If they intermixed freely and widely, and if there were several millions of people here in the New World, then the only trace would be an occasional strange stray haplotype. Even if we found such a haplotype we would probably assume it was the result of post-Columbian admixture."⁴⁰

The natural process of DNA markers disappearing in populations over time is called *genetic drift*. The concept of genetic drift is partly based on the inheritance properties of DNA. With regard to markers received from one parent only (Y chromosome and mitochondrial DNA), inheritance is contingent on whether or not you have offspring of the "right" gender. If a couple has only girls, none of them (and therefore no posterity) will receive the father's Y chromosome. If a couple has only boys, they will all receive the mother's mitochondrial DNA, but none of the grandchildren will inherit it.

The situation is different for autosomal DNA, the twenty-two pairs of chromosomes, excluding the X and Y chromosomes. This part of the nuclear genome is subject to reshuffling at each generation, with the loss of substantial components of the parents' genetic make-up. In fact, when a man and a woman have a child, she will receive fifty percent of each of her parents' autosomal DNA. Consequently, the remaining part of her parents' DNA will be lost unless the couple has more children.

Over just a few generations, potentially all of a couple's genetic material will be diluted and lost, as they will represent an ever-smaller percentage of the ancestors contributing to the DNA of a single descendant. Simply stated, as with the previously-mentioned example of Ugo's autosomal DNA, there is a considerable difference between being genealogically related and having a genetic inheritance. In fact, it is estimated that at the tenth generation level, and given an equal chance to propagate their autosomal DNA, a person would carry only 12% of his or her 1,024 ancestors' DNA.⁴¹

This phenomenon can be observed in as few as a couple of generations at a family level, but the effects of genetic drift at the population level are even more drastic. Depending on the population size and the variety of DNA present in that population, over a time measured in generations, some of that variation will inevitably be lost due to chance.

Even when a hypothetical population made up of only two ancestral lines, lineage A and lineage B, are found with the same frequency in a given hypothetical population (therefore having the same initial probability of

perpetuating through future generations), over time one or the other may disappear completely. It is comparable to the probability of tossing a coin and knowing you have a fifty percent chance of obtaining heads or tails. The probability is based on the number of potential outcomes (either head or tail), but with one hundred actual tosses it would be unlikely that the final result would be exactly fifty heads and fifty tails.

With DNA, you start with a specific set of genetic markers at one generation, and through mating and random segregation of variants, generation 2 will have a somewhat different representation of the DNA markers than generation 1. Generation 2 will provide the only gene-pool available, which will be responsible for the variation of generation 3 and so on. If we could compare DNA variation of a starting gene-pool to one hundred marbles of two colors, fifty red representing lineage A and fifty blue representing lineage B, where marbles are drawn randomly, recorded, and placed back in their box with the purpose of determining the colors of a new box of marbles, chances are that the new box would have a different color composition than the one used to create it.

For example, during the first one hundred draws, sixty blue and forty red marbles may be obtained. To create a third box, we would repeat the exercise using the marbles of the second box. Drawing one hundred times from box 2 could very easily produce an even larger number of blues for box 3 than reds. As we continue this exercise, box after box, or generation after generation, it would not be an unusual outcome to end up with a box with all blue and no red marbles.⁴²

While the example of the marbles is a purely statistical approach to what could happen to a population made of only two different lineages having equal starting frequencies, when modeling the dynamics of questions of DNA and the Book of Mormon, we face even more confounding variables. In fact, it is estimated that at the time of its rediscovery, the American double-continent may have had a larger population than Europe. It is difficult to guess the population size of the Western Hemisphere at the time of Lehi's arrival, but it probably would have been in the order of a few millions, considering that humans have been here at least since after the Last Ice Age.

From a numerical point of view, the arrival of Lehi and his group would be comparable to a drop of ink in a swimming pool. However, in the swimming pool, although nearly impossible to detect, the actual drop of ink is present. The difficulty in recognizing the drop of ink is determined by the availability of instruments sufficiently sensitive to detect its minuscule presence within the much larger body of water.

This analogy does not extend perfectly to DNA and inheritance at the population level. Although the group of Old World migrants was small (a drop of ink), the DNA may have survived (or not) to the present time — due to the forces of genetic drift. If it disappeared, it would be as if someone removed the drop of ink from the swimming pool such that it seemed never to have been there in the first place. Of course, this would be heavily dependent on the level of isolation the Book of Mormon party experienced — something not clearly stated in the narrative.

In the case of almost immediate admixture with locals, returning to the model of the colored marbles, the earlier exercise would be repeated, drawing from a box with one million blue marbles and five red ones. As marbles are randomly selected to create the second generation, what is the likelihood that red marbles are selected by chance to perpetuate their color to future generations?

From a cultural or linguistic point of view, even a small group of migrants may play a significant and lasting impact on the host population, but genetic signatures are different. Even if we know the family lines several generations in the past, the DNA of a specific ancestor, depending on the markers studied, can readily disappear. This can happen even in a single generation.

For example, in just three generations, both the Y chromosome of the paternal grandfather and the mitochondrial DNA of the maternal grandmother could not be transmitted to their descendants. On average, twenty-five percent of the grandparents' autosomal DNA will be inherited by their grandchildren, with a range that would go from zero to fifty percent. Some traces of the autosomal DNA may persist over generations, but this will become more diluted over time and, depending on the roll of the dice with each new generation, may be nearly extinguished at some point.

In other words, genetic lineages were and are continually lost randomly in the world among all living species, even when there is no selective factor operating or the environment would not favor any specific lineage to be the likely surviving candidate in future generations. However, when dealing with a disproportionately larger hosting population, the odds are against the chances of genetic survival in the colonizing population. Depending on the size of the migrant group and the timing of admixture, the probability approaches zero. This of course also depends heavily on the level of intermixing between hosting and colonizing groups, which will be addressed when discussing the process of *natural selection*.

It is important to remember that genetic drift is a natural phenomenon that is central to study of the population genetics of all organisms. It is not exclusive to the Book of Mormon discussion. It affects all genetic markers: mtDNA, the Y chromosome, and autosomal DNA. A powerful example of the effect of genetic drift on a population was described in a classic study of the Icelandic people, where genealogical and historical records have been available for the past three centuries, providing opportunities for comparison to the genetic data observed in the modern population.⁴³ This study demonstrated that the majority of individuals living in the eighteenth century did not have any living posterity, whereas a small percentage of the population during the same time period is responsible for nearly all living Icelanders today. The findings gleaned in the Icelandic study can be extrapolated to any population around the world, including Native Americans, keeping in mind that genealogical and historical records are often not available elsewhere. The impact of the European conquest in the shaping of the genetic dynamics and demographics of the New World would have exponentially accentuated and aggravated the effects of genetic drift in the Americas.

The Effect of Population Bottleneck

By the time Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas in 1492, perhaps as many as one hundred million inhabitants could have populated the entire double-continent.⁴⁴ The clash with European settlers, followed by disease, slavery, and warfare, resulted in a population decline of tremendous proportions.

Molecular anthropologist Michael Crawford states in his volume *The Origin of Native Americans: Evidence from Anthropological Genetics* that “the conquest and its sequelae squeezed the entire Amerindian population through a genetic bottleneck. The reduction of Amerindian gene pools from 1/3 to 1/25 of their previous size implies a considerable loss of genetic variability.”

He also added that “it is highly unlikely that survivorship was genetically random.”⁴⁵ Eventually, starting in the eighteenth century, native groups began to increase in size again, even reaching some of the original numbers in certain areas. However, the variation previously seen in pre-Columbian genetic lineages would never be replicated again.

Simply stated, a population bottleneck is the decrease in number of individuals (or genetic lineages) in a population following migration, natural disasters, disease, or warfare. The small number of survivors will carry only a fraction of the genetic diversity from the original population.

Their posterity, no matter how large it could become in subsequent generations, will carry the DNA of only those living through the catastrophic event, thus not representing all the genetic variation once found in the whole population.

The arrival of Europeans to the Americas in the fifteenth century was orders of magnitude worse than the combined effect of the Black Plague and the Spanish Influenza on Europeans. The consequences of rapidly reduced population and displacement has forever altered the demographic landscape of pre-Columbian America such that scientists from many disciplines are considerably limited in their ability to draw conclusions about the history, including the genetic history, of the New World. To model such an event, suppose that after an epidemic of smallpox, a hypothetical village of a thousand individuals experienced a ninety percent reduction; the one hundred surviving subjects may or may not include at least one representative of all the original group genetic lineages. Although survival of many diseases also involves a genetic component,⁴⁶ Y chromosome and mitochondrial DNA variance have little known or no influence at all on the immunity of an individual affected by one of the several diseases Europeans brought to the New World.

With selection playing little or no recognizable role on specific ancestral lines, the drastic population reduction in the hypothetical village inevitably would have affected the number of surviving genetic lineages. Of course, the initial impact with Europeans was so severe that entire tribal groups, particularly on the Atlantic side of the Americas, were completely decimated, leaving no genetic trace of their existence. Native Y chromosomes were quickly replaced by those from the Old World, and mitochondrial DNA variation was greatly reduced.⁴⁷

In the unlikely scenario that the descendants of the few migrants described in the Book of Mormon were able to “survive” genetic drift and therefore transmit a modest genetic signal to future generations, the devastating conquest by Europeans in the 16th and 17th centuries has created a situation in which even the most experienced researchers admit the limited knowledge available to properly infer the complete history of the pre-Columbian era.

However, this would not be the only event affecting population bottleneck among the Nephites. In fact, the Book of Mormon itself describes at great length two additional major events that, presuming historical accuracy, would have had a tremendous impact on the survival of any genetic lineages carried to the Americas by any of its original

groups.

The first event took place after the biblical account of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. Only one of the Gospels of the New Testament briefly mentions the geological events experienced in the Holy Land following the death of Christ.⁴⁸ Concomitantly, in the Western Hemisphere, far greater destructive natural forces were witnessed as recorded in 3 Nephi chapter 8, with entire cities being destroyed and the geographical landscape becoming greatly changed. The extent of destruction over the whole American continent is not known, as the writer in the Book of Mormon was likely mostly limited to his immediate radius. However, since this debate concerns the genetics of Book of Mormon people, it is not unreasonable to think that such devastation and loss of life would also have had a great effect on the survival and transmission of any Old World genetic lineages to future generations.

Finally, in conjunction with the natural destruction described in the Book of Mormon at the time of the death of Jesus Christ in the Holy Land is the targeted elimination of people referred to as Nephites through massive warfare starting in the 4th century AD.

It is a difficult task to estimate the level of admixture experienced by the descendants of those that came from Jerusalem around 600 BC, but from the population growth described occasionally in the Book of Mormon, it could be that the Lamanites were more consistently absorbed with locals than the Nephites.⁴⁹

The Bible itself perhaps supports this assertion, as it is rich with examples of those who placed little importance on covenants with God and how they were more easily infiltrated and adopted practices, often mixing with the people surrounding them. This may allow suggestion that because of the religious character of the Nephite people as a whole, they may have had some success in maintaining a fraction of their ancestors' genetic integrity. The great war that resulted in their nearly complete annihilation would also have had a negative effect on the survival of their Old World DNA, if any at all persisted to the time of the end of the Book of Mormon narrative. Of course, at that time, as already discussed, the terms *Nephite* and *Lamanite* were mostly used as cultural rather than genetic terms.

Natural Selection

Although genetic drift and population bottlenecks are likely the two primary causes of why DNA from a purported Old World migration 2,600 years ago is not found in modern-day American natives, another

perspective should be considered, albeit probably not as influential as the previous two. Consider that early humans have migrated from place to place for thousands of years in a process that resulted in the colonization of the whole planet. The initial driving force to move was simply the need for survival. If a population nucleus outgrew the resources of a particular area, they would probably starve or become a few people left searching for new means of survival.

A gradual expansion into new unoccupied regions allowed the newcomers to adapt to different environments and master new survival skills. Naturally, some individuals would have characteristics better suited to adaptation than would others. In genetics, this is known as degree of fitness, or in other words, possessing the right genes for the right surroundings so that climate, food tolerance, etc. would allow some to live longer and become stronger, thus increasing their chances for reproduction and passing their “more-fit” genes to future generations.

However, as climate conditions changed, or a move was necessary, those more fit in the previous environment may have later become genetically disadvantaged. Through this process of gene selection, the best genetic make-up for a specific environmental background would end up as the predominant gene pool for a specific population. Less fit genes would tend to disappear over time.

Natural selection is a well-established population genetic principle which has been observed among many species and organisms, including humans. This natural process has recently been recognized as influential in the Black Death that was responsible for the death of one out of four Europeans in the 14th century. Recent genetic studies on remains from that period revealed that the bacteria that caused the bubonic plague are still in existence today.⁵⁰ However, together with other factors, the subsequent generations of humans since that time are not dying in such large numbers as in the past because those who survived the first devastating pandemics had a stronger genetic resistance to it, and they passed those successful genes to their progeny.

Likewise, after the publication of the complete sequence of the Neandertal genome, scientists reported that a small percentage of hominid DNA was found also in modern humans but not the other way around. The Neandertal genome is also relevant, as some have pointed out that since we are able to sequence ancient DNA samples dating tens of thousands of years ago and to observe admixture between two related species, in turn we should also be able through the same technology to detect Middle East DNA in the genome of indigenous individuals from

the Americas (and consequently, failure to find any should be a further proof that Book of Mormon migrants never existed).⁵¹ However, as explained by a researcher who helped produce the Neandertal genome, this is not always the case,

We detect gene flow from Neandertals into modern humans but no reciprocal gene flow from modern humans into Neandertals. Although gene flow between different populations need not be bidirectional, *it has been shown that when a colonizing population* (such as anatomically modern humans) *encounters a resident population* (such as Neandertals), *even a small number of breeding events along the wave front of expansion into new territory can result in substantial introduction of genes into the colonizing population* as introduced alleles can “surf” to high frequency as the population expands. *As a consequence, detectable gene flow is predicted to almost always be from the resident population into the colonizing population, even if gene flow also occurred in the other direction.*⁵²

The example of Neandertal and anatomically modern human gene flow can safely be applied to the Book of Mormon and New World scenario. The indigenous inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere had lived here for thousands of years prior to the arrival of the small group of migrants from the Old World. Environmental conditions were likely dramatically different from those of their homeland as they adjusted to their new conditions. Surely food supplies and other technologies available to them allowed for their initial survival while they adapted to the features of the new land. However, although many markers used in population studies do not contribute directly to cellular processes, it is plausible that the change in climate and food resources, among other factors, may have caused a selection against their genes over time, especially in the case of potential admixture with locals. Mitochondrial DNA in the population could have experienced the same effect, since the mitochondria are organelles responsible for the cell respiratory cycle and energy production, crucial to the health and proper function of the cells making up the human body.

It is possible that Lehi and his group may have fathered a genealogically large posterity that was eventually absorbed and became part of the current, or at least the pre-Columbian, native population. Additionally, based on a simple mathematical calculation, there are scenarios in which Lehi is potentially the genealogical ancestor of all living Amerindians,⁵³

contributing culturally to their contemporary indigenous neighbors, yet leaving no genetic trace of their presence in the present day.

A similar possible scenario can explain the absence of Viking DNA among modern Native Americans, although historical and archaeological evidence suggests Vikings had a significant presence which lasted a few centuries in northern North America and had regular exchanges and contacts with native groups.⁵⁴

Founder Effect

Another demonstrated principle that plays an important role in shaping the genetics of populations is the *founder effect*.⁵⁵ This phenomenon, which is a specific type of population bottleneck, is observed when a few members from a population source relocate to a different area, thus carrying with them a small sample of the genetic variation of the population of origin. Subsequent inbreeding and the effects of genetic drift may result in a large population displaying only the genetic lineages inherited from the founding ancestors, which may or may not resemble the frequency of the original population. An example comes from the blood types of Native Americans, which are almost exclusively group O, the least common in other world populations (where A, B, and AB are the prevalent types), including Siberia. The low blood group diversity observed in the Americas is probably attributable to a founder effect.⁵⁶

An overly simplistic view of the Book of Mormon is that the American continent was empty at the time of the arrival of Lehi and his family and, assuming that they carried the most typical genetic lineages from the Middle East, all Native Americans today should have maintained a similar genetic make-up as their Israelite forefathers. However, this is an extremely skewed take on the Book of Mormon issue because it would imply, among other things, the following:

1. The American continent was completely empty at the arrival of Lehi's party.
2. None of the Jaredites described in the Book of Mormon would have survived;
3. Lehi and his family would carry typical and known ancient Near Eastern genetic markers (particularly those found among Jews);
4. Mulek and his group, founders of the city Zarahemla, would meet the same genetic composition criteria;
5. Middle Eastern (and more specifically Jewish) genetic makers of today's populations would be the same ones and in the same

proportions as those found in the same geographic region (Jerusalem) 2,600 years ago.

Unfortunately, none of these conditions offers true testable hypotheses. For example, as already explained, neither the Book of Mormon nor the LDS Church openly teaches that the American continent was empty in 600 BC. The summary made by Mormon on the plates does not talk explicitly about others but does not say that no one else was in the Americas. Moreover, there are different opinions on whether or not the Jaredites — whose geographic origin and genetics are unknown — became completely extinct by the time the last recorded survivor is mentioned in Omni 1:21.⁵⁷ Any Jaredite dissenters who escaped the final battle could have contributed to the complexity of identifying founding lineages from Eurasia on the American soil.

Regarding Mulek and his party, very little is written about their whereabouts and how/who arrived in the Western Hemisphere. There are too many unpredictable variables to use DNA effectively as a tool to test conclusively for the existence of Book of Mormon people.

Conclusions

In commenting on a recent article published in the scientific journal *Nature* and dealing with the number of original migrations by Paleo-Indians,⁵⁸ Professor David Meltzer of Southern Methodist University said, “Archaeologists who study Native American history are glad to have the genetic data but also have reservations, given that several of the geneticists’ conclusions have changed over time. This is a really important step forward but not the last word.” On the same occasion, molecular anthropologist Michael H. Crawford added, “The paucity of samples from North America and from coastal regions made it hard to claim a complete picture of early migrations has been attained.”⁵⁹ These and other comments from experts in the field of ancient American history provide further evidence that DNA is a valid tool to study ancient and modern populations, but they also remind us to be careful about drawing absolute conclusions based on the genetic data. Can genetic testing and science honestly answer any of the following questions?

- What did the DNA of the Book of Mormon people look like?
- Was it the typical DNA found in the population of Jerusalem in 600 BC?
- Can their DNA be differentiated from that of Europeans arriving

after 1492?

- Is the current molecular clock adequate to discern pre- from post-Columbian genetic contributions to the New World within the last three thousand years?
- What degree of mixture did the Nephites and/or Lamanites experienced with local natives?
- How long were the Nephites and/or the Lamanites an isolated population after their arrival to the American continent?

Obtaining answers to these questions would enable the design of research that could contribute to our understanding of the Book of Mormon as a historical record from a scientific approach. Without such information, we risk forming conclusions based on personal interpretation and biased assumptions. As outlined in this paper, the problems and limitations with attempting such an investigative approach are significant and cannot be overlooked by those honestly seeking for answers about the Book of Mormon through DNA. Trying to reconstruct and identify the DNA of these Old World migrants in the Americas is not a task comparable to that of finding a needle in a haystack. With time and diligence, the needle eventually will be found. With the Nephite record, the needle was once there, and then through population demographic pressures, such as drift and perhaps some degree of natural selection, the needle may have been removed from the haystack — with some people convinced that it is still there and therefore should be found. Consequently, these critics, rather than accepting the fact that the needle was once there and now is lost, prefer to take the position that it was never there in the first place. These are two very distinctive conclusions based on the same observations. Stating that the DNA of Book of Mormon people has disappeared or not been detected through time, following very basic and widely accepted population genetics principles such as genetic drift and selection, is much different from claiming that Book of Mormon people never existed because we failed to recover their DNA in the American indigenous gene pool.

The advances with DNA technologies have provided never-before attainable knowledge in many fields, such as medicine, criminal justice, etc., including the history of humanity. However, much more still needs to be investigated, and some information might never be fully revealed with a molecular approach.

We need to be wary about any statement against or in favor of Book of Mormon historicity based on genetic evidence and take the time to understand the difference between scientific data and claims people

make about it. As with other religious texts and topics, science is often an inadequate tool to corroborate spiritual truths, morals, and ethics.

DNA is a powerful tool in reconstructing recent and ancient historical events. The large body of published work on the topic of Native American origins using genetic markers stands as witness that researchers are still tackling some fundamental questions surrounding the history of the Western Hemisphere and of humanity in general. New publications provide helpful insights into the past but often pose new questions in need of further investigation.

As extensively explained herein, there are specific limitations that cannot be ignored when using the available genetic data to infer conclusions regarding the DNA of Book of Mormon people. Such conclusions are not founded on solid science but are the interpretation of a few, as genetic data fails to produce conclusive proof weighing credibly in favor of or against the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

Notes

1. For a more detailed scholarly review and summary of the Book of Mormon, see Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
2. Rod L. Meldrum, *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon Remnant through DNA* (New York: Digital Legend Press, 2009).
3. Maanasa Raghavan and others, “Upper Palaeolithic Siberian genome reveals dual ancestry of Native Americans,” *Nature* 505 (2014), 87-91.
4. Carrie A. Moore, “Debate Renewed with Change in the Book of Mormon Introduction,” *Deseret Morning News* (available at <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,695226008,00.html> - accessed 2 December 2012).
5. *LDS Conference Report* (April 1929), 15-16. Also see as an example, John L. Sorenson “When Lehi’s Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1 (1992), 1-34; John L. Sorenson and Matthew Roper, ‘Before DNA,’ *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12 (2003); Neal Rappleye, <http://www.studioetquoquefide.com/2014/08/an-open-letter-2-to-jeremy-runnells.html> (accessed 20 August 2014).
6. 2 Nephi 5 is also very compelling, where Nephi in v. 6 spells out who goes with him, referring to others not on the boat, and in v. 6 and 9 he goes on to say that those who are called Nephites are those who “believe in the warnings and revelations of God” — a religious

designation.

7. Note that Mormon may have been distinguishing himself from the Mulekites vs. the descendants of Lehi. Of course, the presence of Mulekites and the lack of “— ite” designations for them at this time of the narrative already shows that there is an oversimplification of the genealogy/naming.
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9. Cassandra Brooks, “First Ancient Human Sequenced,” www.thescientist.com/blog/display/57140 (accessed 4 January, 2013).
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