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### Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord?: The Psalms in Israel's Temple Worship In the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon

Author(s): LeGrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks

Published: Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2011

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**Abstract:** The Psalms were originally the text of the ancient Israelite temple services. Their poetry was woven into a magnificent eight day pageant-like temple drama that depicted the full eternal sweep of the Savior's mission and his Atonement. The principles taught in that drama were accurately preserved on the brass plates and taught by Nephite prophets throughout the Book of Mormon. Soon after Lehi and his family left Jerusalem, the city and its temple were destroyed and the Jews were taken captive into Babylon. While there, they modified their religion in order to fit their new situation. But in doing so, they lost much that was most important.

Even after their return from the Babylonian captivity, the Jews did not restore their original ancient temple worship. The order of the Psalms was rearranged so they no longer could be read from first to last to learn the story they once told. Consequently, in the Savior's time the temple at Jerusalem was not used in the same way as the Temple of Solomon. However, neither the story told in the ancient drama nor its teachings were entirely lost. Some of the people recognized them in the teachings of John the Baptist and the Savior, and the authors of the New Testament frequently quoted the Psalms to remind their readers that the ancient fathers once understood the Savior's mission and Atonement.

Now, using the New Testament, with the Book of Mormon and modern revelation as keys, Baker and Ricks have sought to reconstruct the original order of the Psalms and uncover the story they once told in the ancient Israelite temple drama.

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*Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord?*  
The Psalms in Israel's Temple Worship  
In the Old Testament  
and  
In the Book of Mormon

## **The Twenty-third Psalm**

### **A Microcosm of the Ancient Israelite Temple Drama in Three Acts**

#### **Act 1, The Premortal World**

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
He leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul:  
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness  
For his name's sake.

#### **Act 2, The Mortal World**

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil:  
For thou art with me;  
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.  
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:  
Thou anointest my head with oil;  
My cup runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

#### **Act 3, The Eternal World**

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever

***Who Shall Ascend into  
the Hill of the Lord?***

—

***The Psalms in Israel's Temple Worship  
In the Old Testament  
and  
In the Book of Mormon***

by

LeGrand L. Baker  
and  
Stephen D. Ricks

Eborn Books  
2011

The contents of this book are the opinions of the authors  
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of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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Second and Enlarged Edition, Eborn Books, 2011

Library of Congress Control Number: 2010937469

ISBN: 9781609195908

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Eborn Books  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
ebornbk@doitnow.com  
www.ebornbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

Cover Design by Jared Merrill

*memoriae*

*Hugh Nibley*

*discipuli magistri viri doctissimi  
magnifici sancti dierum ultimarum sacrum*

English translation:  
“dedicated to the memory of  
Hugh Nibley  
student, teacher, distinguished scholar,  
outstanding Latter-day Saint”

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## Acknowledgments

This book is heavily dependent upon the great scholars who have gone before us, and whom we gratefully acknowledge in citations throughout the work. It is ever true that if we see more than they saw, it is only because we can stand on their shoulders and therefore have a wider view than they had.

Hugh Nibley has exercised a very powerful, if not dominating, influence on my (Stephen Ricks's) life. When I was thirteen years old I was introduced to his book, *The World and the Prophets*, based on a series of Sunday evening lectures he gave on KSL Radio in 1954. In an eloquently simple, straightforward style, Nibley argues for the original primacy of apostles and prophets, who were removed through their death or departure from the scene, leaving the Christian church exposed to the claims of individuals without priesthood authority but who influenced those to follow them by the allurements of philosophy—or the quiet threat of excommunication or physical force. This book, as well as his other writings about the temple, set my mind on fire and inspired me to follow an academic career and to continue studying languages and pursuing research on ancient temples.

My (LeGrand Baker's) studies have been far less formal than Stephen's. Consequently, I must first acknowledge his expertise, kindness, friendship, and generosity. I have enormous respect for Stephen, and my gratitude is very great indeed.

Throughout my life, it has been my rich blessing to associate with hundreds of brilliant young men who truly love the Lord. We have spent untold hours together reading and enjoying the scriptures. There have been so many friends that I can not mention them all, but if I could speak to each one I would say this: "Thank you. As you read this book and recognize your own ideas here, please know that I also remember." These young men have enriched my life beyond measure. We have kept in contact through a private email exchange we call the Book of Mormon Project. As time passed others have joined us in that conversation. I express my love and thanks to each one.

However, there are some who must be mentioned by name, both as a personal acknowledgment and also as a symbolic thanks to all the others. The first must be Richard Dilworth Rust who was my friend in graduate school and who has generously read and edited this and each of my other manuscripts. Of the hundreds of young men whom I have met since I came to BYU, and whom I love because of their willingness to share their time and ideas with me, I can name only five: P. Ashley Buchanan, Joshua I. Campbell,

Benjamin H. Tingey, James M. Cutler, and Byron Q. Mackay. I also give my thanks to my dear friend and publisher Bret Eborn, whose support has been as consistent as it has been unbending. In addition to Hugh Nibley, there are other great men on whose shoulders we stand, most notably Hermann Gunkel, Sigmund Mowinckel, and Aubrey R. Johnson. No work of this magnitude can be accomplished without the help of many dear and trusted friends. Among those are Dan Hogan who edited the manuscript, Justin Parry who meticulously checked and corrected the footnotes and bibliography citations; Shirley S. Ricks who established the standard for the footnotes and bibliography; Jared Merrill who designed the dust cover. Among the many friends who have read all or part of the manuscript and made valuable suggestions are: Bryant Anderson, Beverly Campbell, Andrew Cannon, James and Ardith Cannon, Jonathan Cannon, Fred W. Chaney, Phyllis Gunderson, Shawn Morley, Chase Purles, Daniel Ries, Jeff Smith, Jared Smith, Cameron Stewart, John S. Thompson, James Wigginton, Brandon Lewis, and Adam McBride.

## **FOREWORD**

### ***Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord?***

#### **The 24<sup>th</sup> Psalm as an Invitation to come to the Temple Stephen D. Ricks**

Ancient Israelite religion breathes a different spirit from that observed by the remnant of the Israelites—the Jews who returned to Jerusalem and Judea after the Babylonian exile. The Psalms are a mirror of that earlier religion. The Psalms reflect an interest in 1) temple; 2) kingship (of God and man); 3) Messiah; 4) creation; and 5) priesthood. With somewhat different shades of emphasis, the Book of Mormon also shows an interest in the same things.

Psalm 24 provides in brief compass, a wonderful example of the themes of the Psalms: creation, the kingship of God, and temple. The Psalm (vs. 1-2) begins with God's creation of the earth, following the most venerable traditions of ancient cosmology (the earth is founded it “upon the seas,” established “upon the rivers”). Creation is central to the worship of ancient temples and other sacred places. “Ancient temples,” writes Hugh Nibley, “rehearsed the story of the creation, and the establishment of mankind and the royal government of God upon this earth.”<sup>1</sup>

The ancient Babylonian temple was the site of the Akitu Festival that “served to reestablish the proper pattern of nature, with order prevailing over chaos, and to reaffirm the gods, the king, and his subjects in their respective roles in the cosmic order”<sup>2</sup> during which a priest was instructed to read the *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian creation story that retold the combat between the gods and Apsu and Tiamat, the personalized powers of chaos and the victory of Marduk over them, followed by his creation of the world and a hymn extolling his kingship. In the later parts of the festival the victory of Marduk over Tiamat was ritually reenacted. While there is some uncertainty about the use of the Genesis creation text in the Jerusalem Temple before the exile, there is compelling

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh W. Nibley, “The Circle and the Square,” *Temple and Cosmos*, 149.

<sup>2</sup> Ricks, *Liturgy and Cosmogony, Temples of the Ancient World*, 119.

evidence for it. In the Mishnaic tractate Ta'anit (written down, with the rest of the Mishnah, by Rabbi Judah the Prince around A.D. 200, though it may represent much older traditions) instructions are given concerning the temple responsibilities of the twenty-four courses of laymen (Heb. *'anshe ma 'amad*), priests" and Levites (referred to in 1 Chronicles 24). The laymen are given responsibility for reading parts of the Genesis creation text while the priests and Levites performed the appropriate sacrifices. Those laymen currently serving in the temple who were unable to go to Jerusalem were given the task of reciting the creation account in their respective towns.<sup>3</sup> Like the ordinances of baptism and the sacrament, the recitation of the creation account at the temple involves a ritual recounting the beginnings of the earth and life here. Paul makes this connection clear when he says of the sacrament in 1 Corinthians 11 :26: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." Why is this important? These primal creative acts were seen by peoples of the ancient Near East as having a dynamic and not a static quality. "What happened in the beginning," observes the great historian of religions Raffaele Pettazzoni, "has an exemplary and defining value for what is happening in the future."<sup>4</sup>

Psalm 24:3-6 contains what Peter Craigie (following Hermann Gunkel) describes as an "entrance liturgy"<sup>5</sup>; what Donald W. Parry calls "temple entrance hymns"<sup>6</sup>; what Moshe Weinfeld calls "instructions for temple visitors"<sup>7</sup>; but which I call, somewhat less formally, ancient "temple worthiness" questions (which should be compared with Psalm 15 and Isaiah 33:14-17). Elements of each of these "worthiness" psalms or "temple entrance hymns" include the "two questions"<sup>8</sup>: in Psalm 24:3 the two questions asked are "who shall ascend to the mountain of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?" In Psalm

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<sup>3</sup> Ricks, *Liturgy and Cosmogony*, 120-2.

<sup>4</sup> R. Pettazzoni, *Essays on the History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1954), 256.

<sup>5</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *psalms 1-50* (Word Biblical Commentary 19) (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), 211.

<sup>6</sup> Donald W. Pay, "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., *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen* [Provo: FARMS, 2002], 729-42.

<sup>7</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, "Instructions for Temple Visitors in the Bible and in Ancient Egypt," *Egyptological Studies* (Scripta Hierosolymitana 28) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), 224-50.

<sup>8</sup> Parry 730-1.

### *The Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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15:1 the questions are “Lord, who shall dwell in thy tent? Who shall reside on thy holy mountain?” In Isaiah 33:14 they are “Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?” Following the “two questions” is the response: “He who hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully” (Psalm 24:4-5); Psalm 15:2-5 contains a lengthier response:

He who walks with integrity And works righteousness  
And speaks truth in his heart.  
Who has not tripped upon his tongue,  
Who has not done evil to his neighbor,  
And has not lifted up a reproach against his relative.  
The reprobate, in his eyes, is despicable, but those who fear the Lord, he will honor.  
He has sworn to do no evil,  
And he will not falter.  
His money he has not given at interest,  
Nor has he taken a bribe against the innocent” (cf. Isaiah 33: 16)

Finally, the “blessing” is invoked: “He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah” (Psalm 24:5-6; cf. Psalm 15:5 and Isaiah 33: 17).

The final four verses (24:7-10) are “of a kind associated with a procession of the ark” with a liturgical “form, having a question-response format”.<sup>9</sup> It begins with a statement by the ark-bearers (“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the king of glory shall come in” Psalm 24:7), a question by the gatekeepers (“Who is this king of glory?” Psalm 24:8a), a response by the ark-bearers “The lord stong and might, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in” Psalm 24:8b-9), a second question by the gatekeepers (“Who is this King of glory?” Psalm 24:10a), and a final response by the ark-bearers (“The Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory” Psalm 24:10b) . Strikingly, these verses are similar to lines in Ugaritic poetry: sh'u 'ilm r'ashtkm, “lift up your heads, O you gods.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Craigie 1-50.

<sup>10</sup> Craigie, Psalms 1-50, 214.



The *Hymns of the Pearl* presents, in elegant brevity and simplicity, man's search for salvation and joy. The rituals and beliefs of the pre-Exilic temple, as seen in the Psalms—covenant, temple, Messiah, and kingship—gives a mirror of the ancient Israelites quest for joy fulfilled.

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## **PREFACE**

### **LeGrand L. Baker**

*This softcover edition is essentially the same as the first edition except that we have made a few corrections to the text and the footnotes. Even though this edition has fewer pages than the hardcover one, none of the text has been removed. The primary differences are that the pagination and footnote numbers are not the same.*

This book is, as it must be, only an expression of our own opinions. It is only about the ancient Israelite temple drama and is *not* about modern LDS temples. This book is *not* a discussion of the official doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Its conclusions do not claim any source of authority except our own musings. Therefore, any perceived relationship between this book's contents and the LDS temple must originate in the thinking of the reader.

Yet, in my private musings, there is an echo of Hamlet's words, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy." And rippling within the motions of that echo is a very personal truth: Even much more than the two books I have already written about the Prophet Joseph Smith, this one is my own celebration of the divinity of his prophetic call, and of the truth that is the Book of Mormon. Deeper yet, as the bedrock beneath the echoing canyon from which the musings rise, are these words attributed to the Saviour.

When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty, and it is you who are that poverty."<sup>11</sup>

If the ideas in this book have value to others, as they have had to us, that value will not be because it sheds a new light on the meaning of the ancient Israelite temple drama, but because it illuminates, just a bit, the eternal being that is the reader's own Self—and one cannot know one's Self except in the light by which one knows the Saviour. The ancient Israelite temple ceremony sought to teach one to walk, see, hear, and understand

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<sup>11</sup> *Gospel of Thomas* in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1988), 126 #3.

in that light.

The most important worship service in Solomon's Temple was a pageant-like drama that was performed annually. Everyone in ancient Israel participated.

The world-view of that drama—and therefore, of necessity, the world-view of this book—is eternal in both directions. The theme of both the drama and the book is the Savior's Atonement and its power to preserve, enhance, then finally to perfect our eternal personalities.

The king and queen (or people representing them) were the main actors in the drama. The play opened with them playing the parts of themselves at the Council in Heaven. Then they were Adam and Eve in the Garden. When they left the Garden and came to this world, they played themselves again in mortality. Symbolically the actors represented each person in the audience.

The Psalms, in their original order, were the text of the ancient Israelite temple drama.

The Jews lost its message when they lost the Temple and could no longer perform the drama. They also lost its covenants and ordinances. To disguise the loss, the Psalms were rearranged so they can no longer be read from front to back to discover the story the drama once told. Suggestions of the teachings and rituals of this drama remain scattered throughout the Bible, but they are almost hidden to everyone except those who already know the story.

Even though the ancient Jews no longer performed the drama after Solomon's Temple was destroyed, the Nephites preserved it. The purpose of the drama was to teach each individual who he was, and why he is here—and do that in the context of the Savior's Atonement. Its principles and covenants are the theme of every sermon in the Book of Mormon.

Beginning almost a century ago, some of Europe's most eminent Bible scholars taught that the ancient Israelites at the time of Solomon's Temple celebrated a New Year's festival, the highlight of which was an eight-day covenant renewal temple drama in which all the people participated. These scholars believe that the Psalms in their original order had been the liturgy of that drama, and that their order was changed after the Temple was destroyed and the Jews were taken captive into Babylon, so it is no longer possible to read the Psalms from first to last and discover the story narrated in that temple drama.

Thereafter, these and other scholars worked to discover the original order of the Psalms and to reconstruct the ancient temple ceremony they represent. In the 1960's Hugh Nibley introduced this idea to LDS scholarship and pursued it in his own research and writing. Later, scholars from BYU and FARMS focused their studies on that same problem, uncovering many important insights to help explain the practices and meaning of

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the ancient Israelite temple ceremony as part of the Law of Moses. The Book of Mormon tells us the whole purpose of the Law of Moses and the drama was to teach about the Savior and his Atonement. A correct rearrangement of the Psalms would be the key to knowing the ancient temple drama and its teachings about the Savior.

Dr. Stephen D. Ricks who, almost from its beginning, has spearheaded considerable FARMS research and publications, and I have combined the work of our predecessors and colleagues with information from ancient and modern scriptures, and with other sources, to place many of the psalms in what was probably their original order. In doing so, we have fundamentally reconstructed the pattern of the original ancient Israelite temple drama.

The purposes of this book are to present a reconstruction of the ancient Israelite temple ceremony, to show that it was a cornerstone of the Nephite religion, and to show that its whole purpose was to bring people to Christ through an understanding of the Atonement.

**Part 1 of this book** details that reconstruction. As the Psalms show, the ancient Israelite temple drama was divided into three acts.

**Act 1** begins in the Council in Heaven where God instructs the members of the Council and foreordains the king. Then the drama takes us to the physical creation and an account of events in the Garden of Eden. The king and queen play the roles of Adam and Eve, but in doing so they also represent everyone in the congregation. After they eat the fruit that enables them to judge between good and evil, they lose their garments of light and are expelled from the Garden

**Act 2** takes place in the mortal world and follows the same chronology as the history of Israel. The king receives “the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek.” He is anointed to become king and receives the Abrahamic Covenant. He receives the authority of Moses and becomes custodian of the Law. He receives the kingship covenant of David.

After he is fully prepared, he is confronted with impossible opposition. The Israelites are symbolically attacked by their Canaanite neighbors. Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed and the king is killed. While the king awaits his rescue from the Underworld, the focus of the drama becomes an account or enactment of the Saviour’s life and atonement.

After three days, Jehovah himself descends into the Underworld, defeats the twin monsters of Death and Hell, and rescues the king.

On the morning of the seventh day, Jehovah (represented by the Ark of the Covenant), the king, and all the people join in a triumphal procession around Jerusalem,

measuring it with their steps and redefining it as sacred space—a New Jerusalem, with a new Temple, and they are now Zion.

The procession leads into the Temple where the king is washed, anointed, clothed, and given a new name. Through this coronation he has become an adopted son of God and sits on the throne to deliver a lecture about the Law and the commandments.

**Act 3** is the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the drama, and the last day of the festival. It is the time of the great feast and represents the millennial reign of the Savior. For the people it symbolizes their return to the Garden of Eden and the tree of life, the restoration of their garments of light—and their being again in the presence of God.

**Part 2** shows how the ancient Israelite temple drama was used by almost all of the Nephite prophets in their teachings and sermons throughout the entire Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is a temple text and it would require several volumes to fully examine the way the Savior and the Nephite prophets explained the principles, teachings, and sequence of the ancient Israelite temple drama. Therefore we have focused on only a few. Examples of those we have chosen to examine are:

- Nephi's review of the festival temple drama.
- King Benjamin about being a child of God.
- Abinadi about sacral kingship.
- Alma 5: the song of redeeming love.
- Alma 12: review of the drama.
- Alma 13: the law of one's own being.
- Alma's explanation of justice and mercy.

The high point of the book is a testimony of the Savior and his Atonement. It shows that the Savior's coming to America, as reported in 3 Nephi, matches perfectly the sequence of the ordinances of the coronation ceremony in the Old Testament temple drama, demonstrating that the Nephite religion and the pre-exilic Israelite religion were the same. Those chapters are:

- Third Nephi as an Actualization of the New Year's Festival Drama
- The Savior Comes to America
- The Savior's Coronation in America
- The Savior's Coronation Sermon
- The Beatitudes in the Book of Mormon
- 3 Nephi 20, A Review of the Israelite Temple Drama

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It concludes by repeating three times, the importance of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

We feel a profound reverence for way the Book of Mormon prophets treat their subject, and have tried to treat it the same way. This is not an exposé of the Nephite temple ceremony. It is just an attempt to point out the obvious—but only obvious to those who understand already.

# Introduction:

## The Modern Rediscovery of the Ancient Israelite Feast of Tabernacles Temple Drama

At the time of Solomon's Temple, a ceremony in the form of an operetta-like play<sup>12</sup> was performed annually<sup>13</sup> by the ancient Israelites as part of the celebration of their covenant-renewing New Year festival complex.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For discussions of the ancient temple drama, see John M. Lundquist, "What Is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology," *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 97-103; Hugh Nibley, "Abraham's Temple Drama," *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 1-42; Hugh Nibley, "On the Sacred and the Symbolic," *Temples of the Ancient World*, 535-621; Hugh Nibley, "Return to the Temple," Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 49-54; Hugh Nibley, "What Is a Temple?" Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, ed. Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 355-90; Stephen D. Ricks and John J. Sroka, "King, Coronation, and Temple: Enthronement Ceremonies in History," *Temples of the Ancient World*, 236-71; John A. Tvedtnes, "Baptism for the Dead in Early Christianity," *Temple in Time and Eternity*, 55-78.

In 1984, John M. Lundquist, wrote an article in which he synthesized all that scholars had written about the nature and purposes of an ancient temple. It is "The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East," *The Temple in Antiquity, Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1984), 53-76. He expanded the article in: "What is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology" in Parry, *Temples of the Ancient World*, 83-117.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the ancient Israelite festival calendar and the probable setting for the use of the Psalms, see Terrence L. Szink and John W. Welch, "King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals," *King Benjamin's Speech*, ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 147-223.

<sup>14</sup> In a chapter by Terence Szink and John W. Welch, "King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals," *King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom"* ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 147-223, they argue that the covenant renewal ceremony took place during the festival complex that included the New Year's festival (Rosh ha-Shanah), the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles, which began on the first of the Hebrew/Jewish month Tishri and

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The Psalms of our Bible<sup>15</sup> were originally used as the words of this ancient temple ceremony.<sup>16</sup> Book of Mormon and early Christian temple dramas were similar. Hugh Nibley explained: “Early Christian liturgies reveal a constant concern to reproduce physically something as near as possible to the temple rites of Jerusalem. The bulk of the liturgy is taken up with the Davidic Psalms, the old ritual texts of the temple.”<sup>17</sup>

Many outstanding Bible scholars of the last century have observed that the festival drama was absolutely central to the religion of the Israelites from at least the time of David and Solomon until 587 B.C., when Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and its inhabitants transported to Babylon. After the Jerusalem Temple was demolished by the Babylonians, the full drama was no longer performed by the Jews as part of the Law of Moses ordinances. The surest evidence of its loss is that, as a drama, it does not appear in the sacred Jewish texts, most of which were written or edited during or soon after the

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ended on 22 Tishri. .

<sup>15</sup> For identification of the psalms as the liturgy with the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, see Hermann Gunkel, “Psalm 24: an Interpretation,” *The Biblical World, New Series* 21 (Jan-June 1903): 366-370; Sigmund Mowinckel, trans. A. P. Thomas, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962). Mowinckel’s masterful two volume work is devoted to showing how and where the psalms were used as the liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama. Aubrey R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967), 60-136. Johnson’s study further suggests which psalms might have belonged to which parts of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama.

<sup>16</sup> For discussions on the meaning of the temple, see Beverly Campbell, “Mother Eve, Mentor for Today’s Woman: A Heritage of Honor,” *The Journal of Collegium Aesculapium* (Spring 1994): 37-49; also her *Eve and the Choice Made in Eden* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 2003) and *Eve and the Mortal Journey* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005); Richard O. Cowan, “Sacred Temples Ancient and Modern,” *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, 99-120; William J. Hamblin, “Temple Motifs in Jewish Mysticism,” *Temples of the Ancient World*, 440-76; David S. King, *Come to the House of the Lord* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers, 2000); N. B. Lundwall, *Temples of the Most High* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952), 250-65; Talmage, James E., *The House of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1912). Hugh Nibley, “A House of Glory,” *Temples of the Ancient World*, 29-47; Hugh Nibley, “Evangelium Quadraginta Dierum: The Forty-day Mission of Christ—The Forgotten Heritage,” *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 10-44; Nibley, “On the Sacred and the Symbolic,” 535- 621; Nibley, “Return to the Temple,” 42-90; Hugh Nibley, “The Meaning of the Temple,” *Temple and Cosmos*, 1-41; Nibley, “What Is a Temple?” 355-90.

<sup>17</sup> Nibley, “What Is a Temple?” 356-57.



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Babylonian exile.<sup>18</sup>

In earliest times, some adapted version of that same drama had been incorporated into non-Israelite religions throughout the ancient Near East. Nibley wrote:

The existence of this primordial temple drama has long been recognized. It is vividly set forth in the Memphite Theology, the oldest written record known—whether or not it began in Egypt; and the Shabako Stone makes it clear that the drama was already very old when it was performed to celebrate the dedication of the temple and the founding of the first dynasty of Egypt. It spread from there to Greece, where we have a collection of horrendous tragedies dealing with the subjects of good and evil, and in terms of power and gain. Not only Greece, however, but the rest of the world sooner or later adapted the same standard temple drama. It should be noted that this drama in its oldest and purest form was not meant to be a spectacle but an instructive demonstration. The theme is fully developed throughout the ancient world in all its detail, which can't be treated here, though it should be noted that the purpose of it is a participation of mankind in rites and in seeking the assurance of resurrection.<sup>19</sup>

He further explains, “All ancient temples rehearsed the story of the creation, and the establishment of mankind and the royal government of God upon this earth. Then they moved into the heavenly sphere and the theology associated with the worlds beyond.”<sup>20</sup>

It was Nibley who first introduced to Latter-day Saints the writings of the great Bible scholars who had rediscovered the ancient Israelite temple drama. He predicted that their work would have a significant bearing on our understanding of our own scriptures and religious practices. In *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, written as a Melchizedek Priesthood manual, Nibley began the chapter entitled “Old World Ritual in the New World” with this explanation:

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<sup>18</sup> The evidence for the discontinuance of the festival drama is discussed in the chapters called: “Ancient Jewish Apostasy,” 45-56, and “Evidences of the Ancient Jewish Apostasy,” 57-74.

<sup>19</sup> Nibley, “Return to the Temple,” 76-77.

<sup>20</sup> Nibley, “Circle and the Square,” *Temple and Cosmos*, 149.

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In this writer's opinion, the lesson presents the most convincing evidence yet brought forth for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Very likely the reader will be far from sharing this view, since the force of the evidence is cumulative and is based on extensive comparative studies which cannot be fully presented here. Still the evidence is so good, and can be so thoroughly tested, that we present it here for the benefit of the reader who wishes to pursue the subject further. Since Gressmann, Jeremias, Mowinckel, and many others began their studies at the start of the century, a vast literature on the subject of the Great Assembly at the New Year and the peculiar and complex rites performed on that occasion has been brought forth. Yet nowhere can one find a fuller description of that institution and its rites than in the Book of Mormon.<sup>21</sup>

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## **What was the New Year Festival?**

The ancient Israelites celebrated the New Year festival in the fall of each year, after their harvest and before the rainy season,<sup>22</sup> to celebrate the ingathering of the crops.<sup>23</sup> But it was much more than just a harvest festival—it was a time of covenant making and renewal.<sup>24</sup>

The festival is called by different names, depending on which scholar is writing about it. The “New Year festival” is the most common name, but it is sometimes called the “fall festival,” the “autumn festival,” or the “harvest festival.”<sup>25</sup> The festival was a continuum of

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<sup>21</sup> Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book & FARMS, 1988), 295.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed discussion of the possible time changes of the festivals, see Shemaryahu Talmon, *King, Cult and Calendar in Ancient Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), 113-140; Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1: 94.

<sup>23</sup> Leviticus 23:34; Deuteronomy 16:13. The feast is also mentioned in the New Testament, John 7:2.

<sup>24</sup> John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), 113.

<sup>25</sup> An excellent discussion of the New Year festival appears in John S. Thompson, “Isaiah 50-51, the Israelite Autumn Festivals, and the Covenant Speech of Jacob in 2 Nephi 6-10,” *Isaiah in the Book of*

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three sacred events that, together, represented a time of personal, communal, and (symbolically) eternal renewal—a time of creation and re-creation. As Mircea Eliade explains, “At each New Year the cosmogony is reiterated, the world re-created, and to do this is also to create time—that is, to regenerate it by beginning it anew.”<sup>26</sup> In another place he adds, “And so we see that the principal function of the cosmogonic myth is to serve as an exemplary model for the periodic regeneration of time. Each new year is a resumption of time from its beginning, that is to say, a repetition of the cosmogony.”<sup>27</sup>

Richard O. Cowan points out another explanation for the ultimate purpose of the Temple of Solomon, and, by inference, for the ultimate objective of the festival drama. He writes:

Modern revelation affirms that Moses's Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple were

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*Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 123-50.

For another discussion of the entire festival, see Theodor H. Gaster, *Festivals of the Jewish Year* (New York: William Sloane, 1955).

A few works that will be helpful in a study of the Israelite New Year festival are: Frederick H. Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History* (London: SCM, 1967); Stuart A. Cohen, “Kings, Priests, and Prophets, Patterns of Constitutional Discourse and Constitutional Conflict in Ancient Israel,” *The Quest for Utopia, Jewish Political Ideas and Institutions through the Ages*, ed. Zvi Gitelman, (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 17-40; Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 12-15, 17-18; Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948); Hermann Gunkel, trans. Michael D. Rutter, *The Folktale in the Old Testament* (Sheffield: England: Almond, 1987); James K. Hoffmeier, “Son of God: From Pharaoh to Israel's Kings To Jesus,” in *Bible Review* 13, 3, (June 1997): 47; Aubrey R. Johnson, “Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship,” *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*, ed. S. H. Hooke, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), 205-15; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*; Arvid S. Kapelrud, “Sigmund Mowinckel and Old Testament Study,” *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*, v. 5 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967); Todd R. Kerr, “Ancient Aspects of Nephite Kingship in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, 1, (1992): 93-98; Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*; Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*; Moshe Weinfeld, “The King as the Servant of the People: The Source of the Idea,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33, 1-2 (Spring-Autumn, 1982): 191-94; Geo Widengren, “King and Covenant” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 2, 1 (Jan., 1957): 1-32.

<sup>26</sup> Mircea Eliade, trans. Willard R. Trask, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 105.

<sup>27</sup> Mircea Eliade, “The Prestige of the Cosmogonic Myth,” *Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Myth*, ed. Robert A. Segal, 3 vols., (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 3:139.

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built in order that “those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before the world was” (D&C 124:38).<sup>28</sup> Hence, the Lord’s people in these Old Testament times had access to at least some temple ordinances. “One has only to read the scriptures carefully, particularly the modern scriptures,” reasons Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, “to discover that temples [or other holy sanctuaries] must have been built and used in great antiquity, even in the days of the antediluvian patriarchs.” He believed that the Lord’s requirements for exaltation, and therefore the need for temples, were the same then as they are now.

Although vicarious service for the dead was not inaugurated until New Testament times, ordinances for the living were available during earlier dispensations.<sup>29</sup>

The first of the sacred events of the pre-exilic festival was the celebration of New

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<sup>28</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 124 reads:

37 And again, verily I say unto you, how shall your washings be acceptable unto me, except ye perform them in a house which you have built to my name?

38 For, for this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise, that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before the world was.

39 Therefore, verily I say unto you, that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments, for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, honor, and endowment of all her municipals, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name.

40 And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people;

41 For I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times.

42 And I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house, and the priesthood thereof, and the place whereon it shall be built. (D&C 124:37-42)

For a discussion of the nature and purpose of a temple, see Nibley, “What is a Temple?” 355-90.

<sup>29</sup> Richard O. Cowan, “The Latter-day Significance of Ancient Temples,” *The Old Testament and the Latter-day Saints, Sperry Symposium, 1986* (Provo, Utah: Randall, 1986), 115. His Sidney B. Sperry quote is from “Some Thoughts Concerning Ancient Temples and their Functions,” *Improvement Era* 58, 11 (Nov. 1955): 814. Words in brackets are Cowan’s.

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Year's day, announced by blowing the Shofar.<sup>30</sup> The entire day was a time of sacrificing to the Lord, and of feasting and celebration. In some sacrifices, only the blood and fat were put on the fire; the rest of the animal was eaten. So a day of elaborate sacrificing was also a day of great feasting. A wonderful example of eating the sacrificial meal is the story of a conflict between the prophet Samuel and King Saul. The Israelites had just defeated an enemy in battle, but Samuel had instructed them that when they took the city they were to kill everything, including the animals that had been dedicated to the local god. However, when he arrived at the scene of the battle he found his instructions had not been followed:

13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord.

14 And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed (1 Samuel 15:13-16).

The simple fact was that the army had saved the best meat for themselves to eat. They intended to have a great feast at the expense of their defeated enemies. It was under those circumstances that the prophet made the statement that is so often quoted out of context:

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams (1 Samuel 15:22b).

New Year's day was like that, except the sacrifices were done under proper authority, and the feasting was an expression of thankfulness to the Lord. It was a time of promise, not at all unlike our own New Year's celebrations, except they took their resolutions much more seriously.

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<sup>30</sup> Mowinckel explained, "New year's day is the day for the 'sounding of horns', a rite characteristic of the festal enthronement procession of Yahweh (Psalms. 47.6; 98.6; cf. 8i .4)." See *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:122.

The shofar is a ram's horn. See Sol B. Finesinger, "The Shofar," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 8-9 (1931-1932): 193-228; Sol B. Finesinger, "Musical Instruments in OT," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 3 (1926): 21-75.

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Then followed eight days of solemn preparations for *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement was the only fast day required by the Law of Moses. It was celebrated on the tenth day of the first month, and was a time for repentance and cleansing. The Lord had instructed Moses that on that day Aaron was to take two young male goats, and by lot select one to be sacrificed as a sin offering. David Rosen gives us an excellent explanation of the Israelite concept of sin, and of the purpose of a sin offering. He wrote:

Just as the term sin is used in the Bible in terms of dereliction of duty toward others (see Judges 11:27; 1 Samuel 2:25; 2 Kings 18:14), so sin in the religious moral context is seen as the dereliction of the individual's duty toward God in terms of covenantal obligations (see Psalm 25:5-7; cf. 2 Samuel 12:13 and Jeremiah 14:20-21). It is, however, not seen as a tragic necessity but always as the fruit of will, and thus its guilt is always deserved. Because one can choose to do good, each individual is answerable for his or her wrongdoings. ...

The sin offering was accordingly seen not only as purification for the individual, but above all as a means of obtaining God's forgiveness by serving as a "ransom:" or *kafer*, for the sinner, which thus granted "Atonement:" or *kapparah*. *Kofer* was the legal term for the ransom or gift that was both to compensate and appease; in the case of manslaughter, restitution could be made by a gift to the victim's family of an ox (see Exodus 21:30), while such *kofer nefesh*, "ransom for a life," was not permissible in the case of murder (see Numbers 35:31-32).

Every such sacrifice may be considered as a ransom, or *kofer*, in the original sense of making a propitiatory gift for the purpose of Atonement (see Leviticus 17:11). This idea of Atonement is rooted in the perception of sin as causing a rift with and a distance from God and thus of the need to reconcile the soul of the sinner with God. In order to overcome this sense of estrangement from God, the sinner offers expiatory sacrifices not simply to appease God, but to place the sinner's soul in a different relation to him.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> David Rosen, "Salvation and Redemption in the Judaic Tradition," *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), 586-87.

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The second goat that had been selected to be a part of the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement became the scapegoat. Its purpose was explained in Leviticus:

21 And Aaron shall “lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

22 And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness (Leviticus 16:21-22).

Tradition has it that the scapegoat was driven over a cliff to make sure it would never return again to bring those transferred sins back to the people.<sup>32</sup> The symbolism that all of the sins of the entire nation could be vicariously borne by just one sacrificial animal, was a representation of the far-reaching power of the Savior's Atonement. Isaiah explained that, when he prophesied:

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:3-5).

A modern scholar who correctly understands much of the symbolism of the Day of Atonement is Margaret Barker.<sup>33</sup> She sees in that day's celebration a foreshadowing of the

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<sup>32</sup> Lester L. Grabbe, “The Scapegoat Tradition: A Study in Early Jewish Interpretation,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 18, 2 (Dec. 1987): 152-67.

<sup>33</sup> Margaret Barker has developed an approach to Biblical studies called “Temple Theology.” She asserts that there was a cultural revolution in Israel during the time of King Josiah, and that refugees from its purges settled in Egypt and Arabia. (Coincidentally, it was at that same time that Lehi, Ishmael, and their families left Jerusalem, traveled through Arabia to the ocean, and from there came to America.) Barker also believes that the theology of first generation Christians was rooted in the teachings of the descendants of those

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Savior's Atonement. She writes:

The greatest act of Atonement was the self-offering of the royal high priest. How this was done in the first temple is still a mystery, but the two goats in the latter Day of Atonement ritual were clearly substitutes, the one for Azazel, who was banished bearing sin, and the other for the Lord, the high priest whose blood served to cleanse and hallow the holy place. In other words, they restored the eternal covenant and renewed the creation. Israel was brought back within the bond of the covenant as the Lord himself, the sin bearer, carried away the iniquity that would otherwise have cut them off.<sup>34</sup>

In the same paper, she added:

The theme of high priesthood permeates the synoptic gospels too: the sin bearer who took our infirmities and bore our diseases (Matt 8.17); the three predictions of the Passion (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-4); and the words at the last supper: "My blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the putting away of sins" (Matt. 26:28). ...

The high priest had to offer himself as the Atonement sacrifice, hence the logic of Hebrews 9:12: "Christ entered once for all into the holy place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood."

In short, the origin of Christianity is to be sought within the temple traditions, not those of the second temple, but those of the first, when the king

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refugees, and that Christianity, therefore, traces its origins to the theology of Solomon's Temple. She delivered an address at BYU about the Savior in 2003. "The Great High Priest," *BYU Studies* 42, 3&4 (2003): 65-80. She delivered a paper at the bicentennial conference on Joseph Smith held at the Library of Congress. "Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion," *The Worlds of Joseph Smith*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2006), 69-82. She has published important books and papers that show the connection between the Old Testament First Temple period and New Testament Christian teachings.

<sup>34</sup> Margaret Barker, "The High Priest and the Worship of Jesus," *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, ed. Carey C. Newman, *et al.* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 106.



## *Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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became divine and was worshiped by his people as the Lord in their midst.<sup>35</sup>

The ceremonial cleansing of the nation that took place on the Day of Atonement was a necessary prerequisite to the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama that would follow. Now that the people had become clean, they could symbolically enter into God's celestial temple to participate in the re-enactment of the premortal events portrayed during the first scenes of the drama. But first, there were other preparations that needed to be made.

After *Yom Kippur*, the eleventh through fourteenth days were used for preparing for the Feast of Tabernacles. During those four days, the people constructed "tabernacles" or booths—actually temporary huts—made of wood, with tree branches and leaves as a covering. The tabernacles were built near the city, and were the homes of individual families during the remaining eight days of the celebration.<sup>36</sup> The Feast of Tabernacles and its temple drama began on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the festival, and continued through the 22<sup>nd</sup> day, when the festival concluded.

At Jerusalem, large portions of the drama were probably staged something like our modern-day pageants. Some parts of the performances took place within the city, and others outside of its walls. Some occurred in the Temple itself. All the nation participated in the drama,<sup>37</sup> either on the stage, in the choirs, or as part of the audience. The subject of the play covered the full panoramic scope of cosmic history—from the Council in Heaven before the foundation of the world, through linear time, and concluding with Jehovah's ultimate triumph over evil, and his reign on a glorified paradisiacal earth.<sup>38</sup>

The drama was performed (except when apostate kings prevented it) each year during

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<sup>35</sup> Barker, "High Priest and the Worship," 109-11. Her comment about the divinity of the king is a reference to his being adopted as a "son" of God, so he could rule the people as God's legitimate representative will be discussed hereafter.

<sup>36</sup> As will be discussed below, one can get a good sense of how this worked by reading the story of King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon. There the people used tents rather than simple huts, possibly because of the differences in climate and weather.

<sup>37</sup> "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty." (Deuteronomy 16:16)

<sup>38</sup> The purpose of this book is to follow the sequence of the drama through the full scope of this eternal history.

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the approximately 400 years between David and Solomon's reigns and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in the time of Zedekiah, which was also about the time Lehi left Jerusalem.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The evidence that the ancient Israelite temple drama was discontinued at or about the time Lehi left Jerusalem will be discussed below.

It seems appropriate to place Lehi's story into this historical context. The dates we are using come from the chronology given in the LDS Bible dictionary.

After Isaiah's friend, King Hezekiah died, his son Manasseh ruled for the next 45 years (687-642 B.C.). Manasseh worshiped Baal, and killed Isaiah when the prophet refused to do the same. *The Martyrdom of Isaiah*, in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, ed. R. H. Charles, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 2:155-62. The Jews never fully recovered from the apostasy Manasseh imposed upon them. When he died (only about 60 years before Lehi left Jerusalem) he was succeeded by his son who was soon assassinated, and by his grandson Josiah, who was proclaimed king when he was eight years old. During Josiah's minority, the regents and real rulers of Judah were the temple priests. During Josiah's reign the priests reformed the worship of Jehovah; he and his priests closed the small local temples and sanctuaries and centralized the collecting of tithes and offerings under the control of the priestly bureaucracy at the Jerusalem Temple.

Josiah ruled for 31 years, until 609 B.C.—Ezekiel and Jeremiah lived most of their early adult lives during his reign. Their attitude toward the decreasing righteousness of the Jewish people is probably a very good gauge by which to judge the changes that were being made in the state religion.

Lehi was also a contemporary of Josiah, and was probably about his same age. It is rather easy to calculate Lehi's age at the time he left Jerusalem. In Jewish tradition, the ages when boys did important things was pretty well established by custom. At age 8 days a boy is circumcised. At age 13 years he undergoes his bar mitzvah. At age 18 to 20 years he marries. At age 31 he becomes a "young man" and can sit in the ruling councils of the synagogue or the Sanhedrin. (So the "rich young man" who went away sorrowing when the Saviour told him to sell everything, was about Jesus' own age.)

Laman, Lehi's oldest son, was not yet married, so Laman was probably not yet 20.

If there had been about 2 years between the births of the sons, Lemuel would not have been older than about 18, Sam was about 16.

Nephi was about 14. (He describes himself as being "exceedingly young," 1 Nephi 2:16). Lehi and Sariah also had at least one daughter, but we do not know when she was born.

If Lehi was married by about age 18 or 20, and Laman had been the oldest child, that would make Lehi in his late 30's or early 40's when he left Jerusalem. (It is possible, however, that this was Lehi's second marriage.)

If those calculations are correct, then all of Lehi's four oldest sons had been born during king Josiah's reign.

Josiah died as a result of battle wounds in 609.

His son, Jehoahaz was on the throne only three months when Necho, king of Egypt, deposed him and installed Jehoikim, another of Josiah's sons, as king of Judah.

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However, Jewish celebration of the festival temple drama may have been discontinued even before Lehi left. The ceremonies may also have been performed in places other than Jerusalem. Until the reign of Josiah, whose “reforms” closed them down and transferred their wealth to the main Temple in Jerusalem, there had been small temples scattered throughout the country.<sup>40</sup> It is possible, even though there is no surviving evidence that it

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In wars that followed, Nebuchadnezzar soundly defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish in 605. Late in 598 Jehoiakim died, and his 18-year-old son Jehoiachin came to the throne. After he had been king for only three months and 10 days, in the spring of 597, Jehoiachin surrendered Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar. The Jewish king and most of the aristocracy (including the prophet Ezekiel) were then transported to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar installed Jehoiachin's 21 year old uncle Mattaniah on the throne of Judah. He gave the young king the new/covenant regnal name of Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:17-19).

Nephi began his father's history “in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah.” If this chronology is correct, that would have been in 597 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and installed Zedekiah as king. It was apparently during that year that Lehi received a commission from the Lord to warn the people of Jerusalem of their impending doom. Lehi and his family left sometime after that, but not so late that they did not have time to return twice before Nebuchadnezzar's final and fatal attack.

Zedekiah reigned only ten years, 597-587, and was destined to be Judah's last king. He vacillated between keeping his agreements with Nebuchadnezzar and allying himself with Necho, until 589. Then, hanging his hopes on Egyptian promises, Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had toyed with the Jewish kings too long, and this time when he came to Jerusalem with an army to remove Zedekiah from his throne, he would leave the city broken and uninhabitable. The city's walls were breached in July, 587.

After his first successful invasion, Nebuchadnezzar had taken golden vessels and other treasure from the Jerusalem Temple, but otherwise had not damaged the building. After his second invasion, however, his attitude completely changed. The city and its Temple were plundered, then the Temple was burned along with most of the rest of the city.

Zedekiah and his family tried to escape, but were captured and taken before the king of Babylon. There Zedekiah's sons were killed before his eyes, then he was blinded so their deaths would be the last thing he ever saw. As a blind slave, he was bound in chains and forced to walk across the desert to Babylon. There he spent the rest of his life climbing the endless stairs of a treadmill—lifting water from a canal into an irrigation ditch. The prophecies of Lehi, Ezekiel (12:13), and Jeremiah (34:2-5) had all been fulfilled.

<sup>40</sup> For further information on additional Israelite temples, see “Temples,” in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 4:560-68; Beth Alpert Nakhai, “What's a Bamah? How Sacred Space Functioned in Ancient Israel,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 20, 3 (May/June, 1994):18-29, 77-78. On page 26 there are two photographs of the remains of a small Israelite temple that was probably destroyed as part of Josiah's crusade against the small temples.

Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into Biblical Cult*

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was so, that local communities celebrated their own versions of the Feast of Tabernacles drama at their own temples.

Biblical scholars call the time of Solomon's Temple "the First Temple Period," as Freedman and Frey explain:

The First Temple period, that of Solomon, lasted somewhat less than four hundred years (if we date its construction to about 967-960 B.C.E. and its destruction by the Babylonians to 587-586 B.C.E., the total is about 375 years). The Second Temple was longer lived, from its construction by Zerubbabel in about 521-515 B.C.E. until it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E.<sup>5</sup> In fact, both temples were repaired, restored, and even more extensively renovated over time. The Second Temple was completely remodeled and replaced by the temple of Herod the Great, but it was and is customary not to consider such peaceful alterations alongside the violent destructions that typically mark the end of one temple period and the start of another.<sup>41</sup>

After the destruction of Solomon's Temple, the Jews discontinued the drama, and edited the books of Moses to reflect those changes in the Law. At about the same time those editorial changes were being made—apparently after the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity—most of the historical books of the Old Testament were written.<sup>42</sup>

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*Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978; reprinted with corrections: Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1985). On page 39, he asserts: "In addition to the twelve or thirteen temples listed so far, ancient Israel may have known some other temples which have left no trace whatsoever in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, it is a reasonable assumption that any addition to this list (which would have to be based on new, extra-biblical evidence) would be insignificant, and that the total number of Israelite temples can not have been much greater than that which emerges from the biblical records."

<sup>41</sup> David N. Freedman and Rebecca L. Frey, "The Dome of the Rock," *Revelation, Reason, and Faith*, 636-37.

<sup>42</sup> For a discussion of the difficulty in trying to assign dates of composition by using themes, or even individual words within a text, see Jacob Milgrom, *The Anchor Bible, Leviticus 23-27* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 2001), 63-65; Milgrom, "Rationales Are Theology in the Holiness Code," *Revelation, Reason, and Faith*, 723-27.

Most Bible scholars believe that the work of a whole series of writers, editors, and re-editors resulted

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These writings and histories also reflected the new beliefs and practices of the post-exilic Jews.<sup>43</sup> They are perplexing to some historians like Margaret Barker, who observes:

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in the current text being a composite of many historical beliefs, religious philosophies, and accommodating doctrines. Usually they group these writers and editors in the following categories:

*Yahwist* (called “J”) These are the oldest, and “it is now generally ascribed to the tenth century B.C., either the time of Solomon (962-922) or just after.” It is also believed that this editor (or these editors) gathered, edited, and arranged older (sometimes unrelated) stories to create the narrative of Genesis (see *Supplementary Volume*: 971-75).

*Elohists*, called “E,” just a bit later, but still during the First Temple Period, the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century (see *Supplementary Volume*, 259-63).

*The Deuteronomistic historians*, called “D,” are usually dated from about the time of Josiah to during or after the Babylonian captivity. They assert that Moses did not write the books of Moses, that Deuteronomy was probably composed just before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, and that the other book of the Law was probably not composed until after that.

*Priestly writers*, called “P,” about whom some scholars believe, “It is clear that all the texts assigned to P were not composed in the same period,” some as late as the Persian period (see *Supplementary Volume*, 683-87).

See further, J. Maxwell Miller, *The Old Testament and the Historian* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); Norman Habel, *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); Gene M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); Walter E. Rast, *Tradition History and the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972); Ralph W. Klein, *Textual Criticism of the Old Testament: The Septuagint after Qumran* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); David Robertson, *The Old Testament and the Literary Critic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

An example of the way modern scholars analyze the interplay of the levels of authors and editors, is Milgrom’s analysis of Leviticus chapter 23. He asserts, “Thus it can be seen that this extraordinary expansion of its [Leviticus’s] summation of Numbers 29:7-11 is a refinement of and supplementation to [Leviticus] 16:29-31.” He calls this re-editing a “ballooning” of the earlier work done by P, and continues, “The ballooning of P is clearly due to the threefold repetition of the command to fast and abstain from work. Why was it necessary? The answer lies in H’s premise that sins pollute not only the sanctuary (P’s thesis), but also the sinners themselves, and simultaneously with the purgation of the sanctuary, they must purge themselves. P’s theology of sin, it will be recalled (vol. 1.254-61), postulates that the sinner is unpolluted by his sin, but he pollutes the sanctuary. H disagrees with P and shifts the emphasis on the Day of Purgation from Israel’s sanctuary to Israel itself: the quintessence of this day is self-purgation” (Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2021).

<sup>43</sup> See Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest, The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003). These apostate writers and editors are called, by many Bible Scholars, the Deuteronomistic historians. Barker discusses their work on pages 9, 58, 115, 116, 134, 135, 148-9, 204, and 308. Albrektson

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Any questions raised by Deuteronomy cannot be answered solely from materials which it has shaped and influenced. Thus the Deuteronomic histories can only be used to show how these people wrote, or rather rewrote, their people's history. They do not tell us how things actually happened. What we should like to know is why they wanted to rewrite everything, why they argued from a pattern in history, and not from a pattern within the cult [their religious ceremonies].<sup>44</sup>

Because the drama was removed from the canon, Old Testament scholars did not know it had ever been there—until about a hundred years after the publication of the Book of Mormon. Then it was rediscovered.

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## **The Archaeological Discovery that Helped Uncover the Festival Drama**

The modern rediscovery of the ancient temple drama had been preceded, as so often happens, by a chance find that led to a major archaeological excavation.

Bible scholars were already aware of the ancient Egyptian Sed Festival that commemorated and renewed the Pharaoh's kingship; and of the Babylonian Akitu, the New Year creation-renewal festival that retold the story of the origin of their gods, the foundations of the earth, and the creation of mankind.<sup>45</sup> However, there was not enough

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says the present biblical text also shows Greek influence. See Bertil Albrektson, "Reflections on the Emergence of a Standard Text of the Hebrew Bible," *Congress Volume* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 49-65.

Brichto accused them of changing the meaning of sacrifices. Herbert Chanan Brichto, "On Slaughter and Sacrifice, Blood and Atonement," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 47 (1976): 19-55. See also John Day, "Pre-Deuteronomic Allusions to the Covenant in Hosea and Psalm LXXVIII," *Vetus Testamentum* 36, 1 (1986): 1-12.

<sup>44</sup> Margaret Barker, *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1987), 143.

<sup>45</sup> On New Year's Day in ancient and archaic societies—Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, the ancient Jews, the early Christians, ancient India, the Maya, and American Indians—see the slender but very useful volume by Samuel H. Hooke, *New Year's Day: The Story of the Calendar* (London: Howe, 1927). See also Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, chapters 1 and 2. S. H. Hooke "The Babylonian New Year Festival,"

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information available about the Canaanite religion to know whether they also had practiced a similar ritualistic drama. If they did, that would be important for Bible scholars to know because the Canaanites were the most immediate neighbors to the Israelites. It would shed a great light on the culture of Old Testament times to know what the Canaanites believed. It might also shed some much wanted light on the Israelite religion as well. There were tantalizing hints in the Old Testament that the Israelites may have practiced similar temple rites, but the evidence was sketchy and inconclusive.

In the spring of 1928, a Syrian peasant was plowing his field when he struck an unusual stone. He reported it to government authorities, and the next year, the French (who were then in control of that area) authorized archaeologists to begin digging. They soon turned their attention to the nearby tell Ras Shamra,<sup>46</sup> where they found the remains of Ugarit, a Phoenician city that had been sacked and burned in the late thirteenth century B.C. It was probably destroyed by the “sea people” who ravaged the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, then settled there. Their descendants became the Philistines of the Old Testament.

In its prime, Ugarit had been an important seaport city that supported two large temples. Not far from the temples, archaeologists found a priest's house and a complete religious library of hundreds of clay tablets. Later they found a library of government records in the royal palace. The Ugaritic language was unknown to scholars, but it was not terribly difficult for them to decipher because it was Semitic, used only about thirty characters so they knew it was alphabetical, and the words were separated by a vertical stroke. The first texts were published in a French archaeological journal in 1930. Within a short time, the clay tablets of Ras Shamra were having as profound an impact on Bible scholarship as the Dead Sea Scrolls would have a few decades later.

The reason that knowing about an Israelite festival was so important to Bible scholars was because there is almost nothing in the historical books of the Bible to show what part

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*Journal of the Manchester Egyptian and Oriental Society* 13 (1927): 29-38; G. W. Anderson, “Hebrew Religion,” in *The Old Testament and Modern Study: A Generation of Discovery and Research*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), 283-310; Svend Pallis, *The Babylonian akitu Festival* (Copenhagen: Host, 1926); B. Pongratz-Leisten, “Neujahr(sfest). B. Nach akkadischen Quellen,” in D. O. Edzard, ed., *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1999), 9: 294-98.

<sup>46</sup> A “tell” or “tel” is an archaeological site, a hill where the remains of an ancient city are buried. Additional details about Ras Shamra and Ugarit can be found in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* or the *Interpreter's Dictionary*, which contain basic information and good bibliographies.

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Solomon's Temple played in the ancient Israelite religion and worship services. The scholars had the book of Genesis that told about the creation of the earth and of Adam and Eve in the Garden. In the story, God was the major player, but Genesis does not tell much about who God is, or what purpose he had in creating mankind. In the other books of Moses and the historical books of the Old Testament, there is a great deal about God's being a jealous God, and being really upset if the people worshiped other gods; and there is a lot about how God will protect his people if they trust in him and worship him, but there is not a great deal about what all that meant. In short, there was not enough information in the Old Testament, and especially about the period when Solomon's Temple was in use, for one to know just what Israelite theology was, or what the people believed about their personal relationship with God.

Some of their theology could be gleaned from the psalms, but the individual psalms seemed to carry only their own poetic message. The Psalms are beautiful hymns sung by both Jews and Christians, but in their present, post-exilic arrangement<sup>47</sup> they are not a coherent treatise on theology. They seem not to address the most basic "why" questions about man's relationship with God. The psalms are poems, and poetry is, by definition, deeply symbolic, but without a key, there was no way of deciphering the symbolism.

That was also true about the Five Books of Moses. There, scholars could discover what the priests and Levites should do to build and look after the Tabernacle. They told when and how various sacrifices should be performed, but there is very little about what the people—the ordinary people—did during those times of sacrifice, or what the sacrifices meant, or how performing the sacrifices taught the people about who Jehovah is. In Egypt<sup>48</sup> and Mesopotamia those questions were addressed during their performance of the festival dramas, so if Bible scholars could find evidence that the Israelites had a New Year creation-renewal festival drama that was something like those celebrated in Egypt and Babylon, that would at least give them a place to begin looking for answers about ancient Israelite theology.

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<sup>47</sup> Many scholars believe the present arrangement was established and headings written after the Babylonian captivity. For instance, Bland concludes, "The meanings of the superscriptions of many of the psalms are uncertain and most are probably later additions" Dave Bland, "Exegesis of Psalm 62," *Restoration Quarterly* 23 (1980): 83.

<sup>48</sup> For an early discussion of Egyptian answers to those questions, see LeGrand L. Baker, "A Partial Comparison of Egyptian Theology and the Gospel of Jesus Christ," *Papers of the Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1963), 28-36.



## Pioneering Work of Old Testament Scholars

Hermann Gunkel, a professor of Old Testament in Berlin, was among the first who argued that the pre-exilic Israelites<sup>49</sup> may also have celebrated a temple-oriented New Year festival.<sup>50</sup> Then, when he began studying the Ugaritic writings, he discovered that they not only revealed that the Canaanites had an annual New Year festival similar in nature to those in Egypt and Mesopotamia, but he also found that the clay tablets contained details of their festival ceremonies. Even more important, some of the tablets contained poetry that had been the liturgy of the festival drama.<sup>51</sup>

Gunkel captivated the world of biblical scholarship when he demonstrated that some

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<sup>49</sup> In the Old Testament, history is divided into two sections. The time before the Babylonian exile is called pre-exilic, and the time after the Jews returned to Jerusalem is called post-exilic. Two other terms that also divide the history at the same juncture are the 400 years when Solomon's Temple was in use, called the First Temple period, and the times of the temples of both Zerubbabel and Herod, which together are called the Second Temple period.

<sup>50</sup> Professor Gunkel, who lived from 1862 to 1932, was a devout Christian. His first work, in 1888, was about the importance of the Holy Ghost in New Testament Christianity: *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes*. It was translated by Roy A. Harrisville and Philip A. Quanbeck II as *The Influence of the Holy Spirit: The Popular View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979). Gunkel's groundbreaking work in Old Testament studies is "Psalm 24: an Interpretation." Other of Gunkel's works that are available in translation are: Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, trans. J. D. Nogalski, *An Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998). The German edition was first published in 1933; *The Folktale in the Old Testament*, trans. Michael D. Rutter (Sheffield: Almond, 1987); *The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History*, trans. W. H. Carruth (New York: Schocken, 1964); *The Psalms, A Form-Critical Introduction*, trans. Thomas M. Horner, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967); *Water For a Thirsty Land: Israelite Literature and Religion*, ed. K. C. Hanson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001); *What Remains of the Old Testament and other Essays*, trans. A. K. Dallas (New York: Macmillan, 1928).

<sup>51</sup> For examples of ancient non-Israelite hymns and their connections with Israelite psalms, see Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 299-301. Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Worship in Israel, A Cultic History of the Old Testament* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox, 1966). For a brief overview, see Clyde Kluckhohn, "Myths and Rituals: A General Theory," in *Myth and Ritual Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Robert A. Segal (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 45-79; Raphael Patai, *Man and Temple in Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1947).

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Ugaritic poetry had the same themes as the Hebrew psalms.<sup>52</sup> Now he could convincingly argue that pre-exilic Hebrew temple services had included a similar New Year festival drama and that the psalms should be read as the liturgy of their most sacred ancient ceremony.<sup>53</sup> That academic revelation opened a new and thrilling chapter of Bible scholarship, during which the greatest minds of Old Testament studies began to discover and probe such questions as the relationship of God to the heavenly council, the origin and purpose of the creation and of human life on the earth, and the ultimate relationship between God and his children.

Gunkel's work was important because he filled in many of the gaps the post-exilic editors of the Bible had left in their version of the five books of Moses. He showed that everyone—not just the priests—participated in the entire festival. He explained what ceremonies were performed during those events by the king and all the rest of the people. His method was a bit circular, but very effective. He examined the festival dramas that were practiced elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Then he found themes in the psalms that could best be explained if they were understood to be referring to events of a similar festival drama. Then he used those similarities to show that they were evidence that the

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<sup>52</sup> For a discussion of Ugaritic myth, see Richard J. Clifford, "The Temple in the Ugaritic Myth of Baal," *Symposia Celebrating the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, ed. Frank Moore Cross (Cambridge, Ma.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1979), 137-45.

<sup>53</sup> Not all of the psalms predate the destruction of Solomon's Temple. For example, the first line in Psalm 137 argues for a post-exilic origin: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." (Psalm 137:1)

In the psalms of the Dead Sea scrolls, there were other psalms in addition to those found in our Bible. For information about them, see the following by James A. Sanders: "The Scroll of Psalms (11QPss) from Cave 11: a Preliminary Report," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, n. 165 (Feb. 1962): 11-15; "PS. 151 in 11QPSS," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 75 (1963): 73-85; "Two Non-Canonical Psalms in 11QPs," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 76 (1964): 57-75; "Variorum in the Psalms Scroll (11QPs)," *Harvard Theological Review* 59, 1 (Jan. 1966): 83-94; *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967); "A Multivalent Text: Psalm 151:3-4 Revisited," *Hebrew Annual Review* 8 (1984): 167-84.

For other discussions see D. N. Wigtill, "The Sequence of the Translations of Apocryphal Psalm 151," *Revue de Qumran* 43, 11 (Dec. 1983): 401-7; Peter W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); William Hugh Brownlee, "The 11 Q Counterpart to Psalm 151, 1-5," *Revue de Qumran* 4, 15 (Oct. 1963): 379-87; Ben Zion Wacholder, "David's Eschatological Psalter 11Q Psalms," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 59 (1988): 23-72.

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Israelites really did have such a festival drama, and that the psalms were the liturgy of the drama. For example, one of Gunkel's earliest and most convincing evidences was his interpretation of the 24<sup>th</sup> Psalm.

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### **Gunkel's Explanation of Psalm 24**

During the festivals of Canaan, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, there had been a royal procession that concluded with the king's entering a temple, where his relationships with the people and the gods were affirmed by reenacting his original coronation rites.<sup>54</sup> Gunkel showed that the most reasonable way to interpret Psalm 24 was to see it as having been sung during such a procession, when the Israelite people walked around their city—measuring it with their steps and re-defining it as sacred space—creating a New Jerusalem, a new Temple, and ultimately entering the city as a new Zion community. The King James translation of Psalm 24 reads:

- 1 The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;  
the world, and they that dwell therein.
- 2 For he hath founded it upon the seas,  
and established it upon the floods.
- 3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?  
or who shall stand in his holy place?
- 4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;  
who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,  
nor sworn deceitfully.
- 5 He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,  
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.
- 6 This is the generation of them that seek him,  
that seek thy face, O Jacob.
- 7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;  
and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;  
and the King of glory shall come in.

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<sup>54</sup> For a discussion of the procession, see the chapter called, "Act 2, Scene 8: Triumph and Procession."

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8 Who is this King of glory?

The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;

even lift them up, ye everlasting doors;

and the King of glory shall come in.

10 Who is this King of glory?

The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory (Psalm 24:1-10).

Gunkel divided the psalm into four sections, with each section reflecting a different portion of the procession.<sup>55</sup>

Section one: In the Israelite ceremonies the procession came near the conclusion of the festival and was a celebration of Jehovah's ultimate triumph over evil, and of his creation of a new and wonderful world of peace and harmony. Gunkel writes that these first lines "are the expression of a mind that shows true astonishment at the wonders of the universe (and astonishment is the beginning of all science); of a mind that conceives the wondrous things which fill the world as a visible manifestation of a supreme wisdom which governs all." The first two verses he understood to be a celebration of the regenerative powers of Jehovah, and of the glories of his newly re-created world. His translation of those verses reads:

To Yahweh belongs the world and all it contains,

The earth and all who dwell in it;

He it was who founded it upon the sea,

And established it upon the floods.

Section two: The next stanzas define the necessary requirements for one to enter the house of God. Gunkel suggested these lines were sung by alternate voices.<sup>56</sup> "The layman appears at the entrance of the sanctuary and asks the priest the question: 'Who is worthy of entering the holy place?' The priest answers by enumerating God's demands, and then

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<sup>55</sup> Gunkel's translation of Psalm 24 is found in "Psalm 24: An Interpretation," 366-70. The quotes inserted into my explanatory comments come from other parts Gunkel's same paper.

<sup>56</sup> For another example of a psalm with multiple voices, see C. Brekelmans, "Psalm 132: Unity and Structure," *Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor Filosofie en Theologie* 44 (1983): 262-65.

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concludes with a benediction according to the privilege of the priest.” Gunkel’s translation reads:

Who may ascend into the hill of Yahweh?  
Who may stand in his holy place?  
He who has clean hands and a pure heart;<sup>57</sup>  
Who sets not his soul on evil,  
And who takes no false oath,  
He shall receive blessing from Yahweh  
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

In the third section, Gunkel suggested that the people had gathered at the gates of the city<sup>58</sup> and then at the temple. “The entering choir approaches God, while here it is assumed that God is among them: Yahweh is to enter his sanctuary.” In connection with this part of the 24th Psalm, Aubrey Johnson, a professor at the University of Wales,<sup>59</sup> who supported Gunkel’s thesis, also observed:

Yahweh’s Kingship is here represented as something more than a sovereignty over the realm of nature. It also includes His sovereign power over what we should call the moral realm; He is, as we shall have further occasion to see vitally concerned with the way in which men behave. In other words, the divine King is

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<sup>57</sup> Clean hands suggests ritual purity. A pure heart suggests moral and eternal purity. Luz writes, “‘Pure in heart’ or a ‘pure heart’ is a Jewish expression which comes from Old Testament psalm piety. This means undivided obedience toward God without sin. ‘Heart’ designates in Jewish usage not an internal area of the human being but the center of human wanting, thinking, and feeling.” (Ulrich Luz, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* [Minneapolis, Augsburg Fortress, 1989], 238-39).

<sup>58</sup> For a more recent study showing that the gates of a city were used for the ceremonial entrance of the gods, see Richard D. Barnett, “Bringing the God into the Temple,” *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times* (Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1981), 10-20.

<sup>59</sup> Aubrey R. Johnson’s most important works are: *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964); *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel; The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1962); “The Psalms,” *The Old Testament and Modern Study: A Generation of Discovery and Research*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), 162-209; and “Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship” in Hooke, ed. *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*, 205-15.

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not only worshipped as the Creator; He is also revered as a Judge, who demands that those who would rely upon Him must be able to plead their innocence in both thought and deed and their freedom from all taint of insincerity.<sup>60</sup>

Gunkel's translation of those verses reads:

This is the company of those who seek him,  
Who seek thy Redeemer, O Jacob,  
Lift up, ye gates, your heads,  
Be ye lifted up, ye primeval doors,  
That the glorious King may come in!  
Who is the glorious King?  
Yahweh, the strong and mighty one,  
Yahweh, the mighty in battle.

Finally, in the fourth section, Gunkel suggests that the commands were addressed to the gates of the earthly temple and to their heavenly counterpart—to the doors of the cosmic temple<sup>61</sup>—for the entrance of the triumphant victor who had conquered death and hell. He writes, “God will not disdain to dwell hereafter among men at this place. The primeval doors—thus they sing—are to be lifted up, in order to receive the High and Sublime One, the glorious King”:

Lift up, ye gates, your heads,  
Be ye lifted up, ye primeval doors,  
That the glorious King may come in!  
Who is the glorious King?  
Yahweh Sabaoth, he is the glorious King!

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<sup>60</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 74.

<sup>61</sup> For a discussion of the cosmic temple, see David Noel Freedman, “Temple Without Hands,” *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times* (March, 1977): 21-30.

See David Noel Freedman and C. Franke Hyland, “Psalm 29: A Structural Analysis,” *Harvard Theological Review* 66, 2 (1973): 237-56. Page 244 reads: “‘The holy place,’ i.e., the heavenly temple of Yahweh, as well as its earthly counterpart in the central sanctuary.” The heavenly temple is discussed more fully below in conjunction with Psalm 96.

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Gunkel's analysis of the 24<sup>th</sup> Psalm was so convincing that a whole generation of scholars accepted it.<sup>62</sup>

Then they began to discover many more evidences of the Israelite festival in other rich biblical and non-canonical Israelite texts.<sup>63</sup>

Aubrey Johnson explains why Gunkel's idea was such a new and important concept. He points out that the present difficulty with the biblical account of the ancient temple drama is that almost all references to the festival that may have originally been in the Five Books of Moses, are now reduced to only a few verses. He writes:

Unfortunately the Old Testament offers little direct evidence as to the ritual and mythology of this great autumnal festival in any of its forms; and even the little that is available is post-exilic in date. In short, there is the well-known practice of dwelling in 'booths' throughout the seven days of the festival, and there are the regulations concerning the special sacrifices which are to be offered on each successive day; but none of this takes us very far, and it seems extraordinary that so important a festival should have left so little trace.<sup>64</sup>

The discovery, by twentieth century Bible scholars, of pre-exilic Israel's temple rites presents an interesting challenge to the Book of Mormon. If the Book of Mormon is an

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<sup>62</sup> For a historical overview of how the psalms were interpreted, including the place of Gunkel and Mowinckel, and with an excellent bibliography, see Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-critical and Theological Study* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).

Scholars date the psalms very differently, some say they are as early as King David, and others insist they were written sometime after the Babylonian captivity. Some of their methods are completely inconsistent with what modern scriptures teach us.

An example is Walter C. Bouzard, Jr. who writes that the term "Holy Spirit" was invented after the Jews returned to Jerusalem, so he insists that anything that contains that phrase is a post-exilic writing. (*We Have Heard with Our Ears, O God* [Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars, 1997], 120-21).

<sup>63</sup> See William Bascom, "The Myth-Ritual Theory," *The Myth and Ritual Theory, an Anthology*, vol. 5, ed. Robert A. Segal (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 103-14. See also S. G. F. Brandon, "The Myth and Ritual Position Critically Considered," *Myth and Ritual Theory*, 13-43; Joseph Fontenrose, *The Ritual Theory of Myth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

<sup>64</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 58, shows evidence of how the temple priests and 'professional prophets' who challenged the true prophets, eventually dominated and changed the temple services.

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ancient text with pre-exilic Israelite roots, then it must show that the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama was an important part of Nephite religious practice and theology—something that was only beginning to be discovered by Bible scholars almost exactly 100 years after the Book of Mormon was published, and consequently, something that was entirely unknown, not only to Joseph Smith, but also to the most learned scholars of his day.

In fact, the Book of Mormon does exactly that.<sup>65</sup>

A compelling evidence for the antiquity of the Book of Mormon text is the fact that the most important messages of the ancient Israelite temple drama—and more especially of its concluding coronation ceremony—were also the most important messages taught by the Savior in America, and by Nephite prophets throughout the entire Book of Mormon history. That evidence is the subject of the second section of this book.

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# **The Ancient Jewish Apostasy that Rearranged the Order of the Psalms and Changed the Festival Drama**

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<sup>65</sup> The LDS scholar who first introduced the idea that the New Year Festival might be found in the Book of Mormon was Nibley, “Old World Ritual in the New World,” in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 295-310. Subsequent LDS scholars who have discussed the festival and its drama include: Kerr, “Ancient Aspects of Nephite Kingship,” 93-98; John M. Lundquist, “The Legitimizing Role of the Temple in the Origin of the State,” *Temples of the Ancient World*, 179-235; Nibley, “Abraham’s Temple Drama,” 1-42; Blake T. Ostler, “The Covenant Tradition in the Book of Mormon,” *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 230-40; Stephen D. Ricks, “Kingship, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1-6,” *King Benjamin’s Speech*, 233-76; Ricks and Sroka, “King, Coronation, and Temple,” 260-63; Szink and Welch, “King Benjamin’s Speech,” 147-223; Gordon C. Thomasson, “Togetherness Is Sharing an Umbrella: Divine Kingship, the Gnosis, and Religious Syncretism,” *By Study and Also By Faith*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 1:523-61; Thompson, “Isaiah 50-51,” 123-50; John A. Tvedtnes, “King Benjamin and the Feast of Tabernacles,” *By Study and Also By Faith*, 2:220-21; Thomas R. Valletta, “Conflicting Orders: Alma and Amulek in Ammonihah,” *Temple in Time and Eternity*, 183-231.



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Of those who followed Gunkel's lead, the most successful, and by far the most renowned, was his student Sigmund Mowinckel.<sup>66</sup> Mowinckel taught Old Testament at the University of Oslo, and became one of the most influential Bible scholars of his time.<sup>67</sup> He spent his life trying to reconstruct the festival by discovering which of the Psalms belonged to which parts of the festival drama.<sup>68</sup> He explains:

The events through which God for the first time revealed himself and his power to his people were dramatically performed. They were so repeated and became again effective in reality. As it had happened the first time, so the power of God streamed into the people and again gave it life and happiness. This representation of events past was a re-creation of them for those who took part in the feast [of Tabernacles], so that they experienced here a reality which was above them and lifted them up.<sup>69</sup>

There is a cycle in almost every academic discipline, where ideas are challenged, rethought, challenged again, then again reconsidered. So it was in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a group of scholars rejected the concept that the Jews ever celebrated a New

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<sup>66</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel's most important works that are translated into English are: trans. Reidar B. Bjornard, *The Old Testament as Word of God* (New York, Abingdon, 1959). *Psalms in Israel's Worship; He that Cometh*.

For a tribute to Mowinckel's work, see Kapelrud, "Sigmund Mowinckel."

<sup>67</sup> Among other scholars who followed his lead were Aubrey Johnson, S. H. Hooke, E. O. James, and T. H. Robinson, and many others. Excellent discussions of their ideas are in a collection of essays edited by S. H. Hooke, *The Labyrinth, Further Studies in the Relation between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1935).

<sup>68</sup> Mowinckel did not pretend that he had gotten it all right. He once wrote, "Now there are many psalms which belonged to the complex of the harvest festival, in which such a procession is taken for granted. We *may* be dealing with different parts of one and the same procession; but there may also be references to several processions on different days of the festival. Therefore it will always be a doubtful undertaking to try to reconstruct the picture of Yahweh's royal entry on the basis of these psalms" (Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship* 1:170).

<sup>69</sup> Many of Mowinckel's early works were published in Norwegian and are not available in English. This synopsis is found in Kapelrud, "Sigmund Mowinckel," 6.

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Year festival,<sup>70</sup> using much the same rationale as the “minimalist” archaeologists,<sup>71</sup> who reject the notion that there had ever been a Moses, David, or Solomon. These scholars asserted that the whole thing was just a fabricated story. Their claim was that because the Old Testament does not actually describe a New Year festival, and does not specifically say the psalms were the text of its rituals, this lack of positive evidence is evidence in the negative, and shows there was no such festival in pre-exilic Israel. Their conclusions have no foundation if one applies the fundamental principle of logic that a “proof” that is sustained by only a lack of evidence to the contrary is no proof at all. Margaret Barker has rightly complained, “So little is known of the cult and myths of pre-exilic Jerusalem that we have been heavily dependent for our reconstructions upon finding parallels in other cultures. Such a process can be dangerous. Attempts to establish the inner nature of Israel’s religion by reference to the gods of Canaan, for example, can often cast a shadow over the very texts they seek to illuminate.”<sup>72</sup>

Now, some Bible scholars, like Barker, have revisited and accepted the evidence presented by Mowinckel and his colleagues, and have examined other evidences that the festival drama was a fundamental part of early Israelite religious practices. They have shown that the fact the post-exilic Jewish authors and editors chose to ignore those earlier practices, and left the rituals out of the Old Testament, is sure evidence there had been a post-exilic apostasy during which the Jews discontinued their original temple rites, and removed almost all traces of them from their canon.<sup>73</sup> Barker observes:

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<sup>70</sup> For a review of the arguments, see D. J. A. Clines, “The Evidence for an Autumnal New Year in Pre-exilic Israel Reconsidered,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93, 1 (March 1974): 22-40.

<sup>71</sup> William G. Dever, “The Western Cultural Tradition is at Risk,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32, 2 (March/April 2006): 26, 76. He writes, “But today there is a deepening “historiographical crisis” in both archaeology and Biblical studies in Israel, Europe and America—a creeping skepticism and a loss of confidence in our ability to confirm *anything*. The Hebrew Bible is only a ‘social construct,’ a figment of the tortured imagination of later Judaism in an identity crisis of the Hellenistic era (the fiction naively adopted, of course, by Christians). The result, says Baruch Halpern, is to ‘erase Israel from history.’ And it is not only the European Biblical ‘revisionists’—the most extreme of the minimalists—who appear to be the culprits, but also many Israeli and American archaeologists” (p. 26).

<sup>72</sup> Barker, *Older Testament*, 125.

<sup>73</sup> See Barker, *Great High Priest*, 9, 58, 115, 116, 134, 135, 148, 204, and 308. In her book *Older Testament* she maintains that there is very little left in the Old Testament of the original Hebrew theology.

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23 When the tabernacle was completed, the Glory of the Lord *came* to fill the tabernacle (Exod. 40.34), as it also *came* to fill the newly built temple (1 Kgs 8.11). Ezekiel later saw the Glory leaving the polluted temple (Ezek. 11.23).<sup>74</sup>

Almost all Bible scholars do agree that the history books of the Old Testament were written or edited after the Babylonian captivity, and therefore reflect a post-exilic Jewish religion that was substantially different from the one that had been believed and practiced while Solomon's Temple was standing and in use. Mary Douglas put it very succinctly when she concluded: "We have now outlined the major problems of interpretation: not just that the Bible is foreign, not just that it is also antique, but that (to put it harshly) the priestly books were handed down to the next generation by teachers who did not understand them."<sup>75</sup>

Many Bible scholars believe that the authors of the Old Testament histories were also the authors of the books of Moses.<sup>76</sup> That is because the fingerprints of the post-exilic editors are all over the five books of Moses, both in terms of what they say and what they do not say. Scholars call the work of these early post-exilic editors and historians the Deuteronomistic histories (abbreviated to "D" in many biblical commentaries). A critical but accurate appraisal of their work was written by Margaret Barker:

In addition, it is necessary to take into consideration the historical process by which the Hebrew Scriptures, as we know them, came into being. The Deuteronomistic histories, which have so often been read as histories, are remarkable for the way they systematically condemn almost everything in the nation's history. The kings are judged by the criteria of Deuteronomistic orthodoxy, and then condemned and dismissed one by one. Whoever wrote these texts was

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She says the best surviving example of pre-exilic religious beliefs are in the books of Enoch.

<sup>74</sup> Barker, *Great High Priest*, 80.

<sup>75</sup> Mary Douglas, *Jacob's Tears: The Priestly Work of Reconciliation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 132. Douglas is a celebrated British anthropologist. In her book, she shows that Leviticus is a microcosm of Moses' Tabernacle, which is in turn a microcosm of Mount Sinai.

<sup>76</sup> We know from the Book of Mormon that is not true, because the original version of the books of Moses was on the Brass plates.

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clearly setting out to discredit what had existed in Jerusalem in the time of the first temple: it was the voice of a new regime. Their description of the temple does not include items such as the veil and the chariot throne, which appear in the Chronicler's account and were important elements in priestly theology.<sup>77</sup>

Apparently, it was those same editors who rearranged the order of the psalms, and also added the headings that gave rationale for their new groupings. The result was that one cannot read the psalms in the order they are now found in the Bible and discover the original sequence of the story they once told in the drama. Brueggemann describes the psalms we have as "the central residue" of the drama's liturgy.<sup>78</sup> Elieser Slomovic explains, "Most biblical scholars believe that the historical headings found in certain Psalms were not initially an integral part of them. They view the headings as a product of midrashic activity stemming from the age of the Scribes. At that time, this view maintains, the titles were affixed to the Psalms and in that period the Book of Psalms acquired its present form."<sup>79</sup>

Slomovic's observation that through the work of the post-exilic scribes, the "Book of Psalms acquired its present form" accounts for why one can no longer read the psalms in their present order to find the storyline of the drama, but it also helps explain why the Old Testament contains so little evidence about how the psalms were used. Michael Goulder concurred. He writes in his three volume series, *Studies in the Psalter*:

Our earliest commentary on the psalms is their arrangement by anonymous Israelite tridents: in groups with differing names in the heading, *for the Sons of Korah, for David, for Asaph* and so on; even the 'historical' notes, associating a

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<sup>77</sup> Barker, *Great High Priest*, 308.

<sup>78</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Israel's Praise* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 91.

<sup>79</sup> Elieser Slomovic, "Toward an Understanding of the Formation of Historical Titles in the Book of Psalms," *Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 91 (1979): 350.

For a discussion of the history of the study of the arrangement of the psalms, see Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1996), 11- 16. Aubrey Johnson writes that the "Psalter, which is the Hymnal of the Second Temple ...contains compositions from the pre-exilic period," but that our present Book of Psalms is arranged differently from the original. ("The Role of the King in the Jerusalem Cultus," *The Labyrinth*, 87).

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psalm with an episode in David's life. Not all of these features will be guides to the original sense of the psalms. ...The Asaph psalms contain, as no other body of psalms does, the elements of a continuous outline of Israelite history, beginning from the oppression in Egypt, and going on at least as far as the Davidic-Solomonic empire. Furthermore, the detail of these historical traditions is often markedly at variance with that which we have in the Pentateuch. It seemed therefore that I had in the Asaph psalms an outline of the *earliest* form of the history of Israel.<sup>80</sup>

Examples of the new arrangements are Psalm 45 and 82. Both take place in the throne room of the Temple of Heaven where Elohim himself presides. They belong together in the part of the drama that depicts the Council in Heaven, but they are now far from the beginning of the Book of Psalms. Another is Psalm 2. It was part of the ceremony that took place on the next to last day of the festival, yet it is at the very front of the present Book of Psalms.<sup>81</sup>

Another evidence of the changes in the post-exilic Jewish religion was the changes in the dates and seasons when the holy days were celebrated. Those shifts transplanted the old traditions to new soil, where changes in the ways the festivals were performed could take place more readily. Chyutin explains:

Sectarianism, which began in Judaism with the separation of the kingdoms of Israel and Judea, increased in the period of the Second Temple, as a consequence of the Exile and the direct encounter with the cultures of the great empires—Egypt, Babylon and Greece. One of the prominent expressions of the differences among the sects was the institution of a different religious calendar by each sect. There can be no greater barrier and separation than that produced by a different calculation of the Holy Days, appointed times and public assemblies that determine the rhythms of everyday worship.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Michael D. Goulder, *The Psalms of Asaph and the Pentateuch, Studies in the Psalter* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 9-10.

<sup>81</sup> These three psalms and their placement in the drama will be discussed below.

<sup>82</sup> Michael Chyutin, "The Redaction of the Qumranic and Traditional Book of Psalms as Calendar," *Revue de Qumran* 16 (Dec. 1994): 367-68.

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Several scholars place the changes in the reign of King Josiah. He closed down the local temples and transferred all of their wealth to the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>83</sup> “Almost all that Josiah swept away can be matched to elements in the older religion, not in the cults of Canaan, but in the religion of the patriarchs and the prophets.”<sup>84</sup> He also ordered that the Ark should no more be carried outside the Temple (2 Chronicles 35:3). That meant the ceremonies conducted annually outside the Temple—probably including most or all of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama—were abandoned. If they did not take the Ark from the temple, then they did not perform the concluding ceremonies of the drama.<sup>85</sup>

Mowinckel claims that:

If we examine the references in the Mishnah to the cultic use of the Psalms in the last days of the temple it is striking how little this use is in conformity with the original meaning of the Psalm in question. Right and wrong interpretations are here mixed. The canonizing of the Psalter must at some time have made an end to the composing of new cult psalms. Instead the cult leaders preferred to choose any of the canonical Psalms that seemed to fit in with the new feasts and cultic events which increased steadily in the course of time.<sup>86</sup>

The changes brought about by the ancient Jewish apostasy were so obvious to

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<sup>83</sup> W. Eugene Claburn, “The Fiscal Basis of Josiah’s Reforms,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92, 1 (March 1973): 11-22. For a discussion of other Israelite temples, see Haran, *Temples and Temple-service*, especially chapter 2, “The Israelite Temples,” and chapter 7, “The Centralizations of the Cult”; Zeev Herzog, “Israelite Sanctuaries at Arad and Beer-Sheba,” *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times*, 120-22.

<sup>84</sup> See Margaret Barker, *Great High Priest, The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 149.

<sup>85</sup> For further discussion, see Alberktson, “Reflections on the Emergence of a Standard Text”; G. W. Ahlstrom, *Joel and the Temple Cult of Jerusalem* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971) 77-78, fn. 3; Klaus Baltzer, “Considerations Regarding the Office and Calling of the Prophet,” *Harvard Theological Review* 61, 4 (1968): 567-82; George A. Barton, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1961), 158-64.

<sup>86</sup> Many of Mowinckel’s early works were published in Norwegian and are not available in English. This quote is found in Kapelrud, “Sigmund Mowinckel,” 8.

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scholars that Gunkel even wrote an essay called “What Remains of the Old Testament,”<sup>87</sup> in order to show that, notwithstanding the relatively recent origin of the historical books, their authors had used many good sources from much older times. He also showed that there is much evidence that the changes included both a reinterpretation of the Law of Moses, and also the way the festivals of the Law of Moses were celebrated.

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<sup>87</sup> Gunkel, *What Remains of the Old Testament*.

Johnson's *The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel* is an important history of the conflict between the prophets of the Old Testament and the priests who came to be in control of the temple by the time of the Babylonian captivity, and who apparently changed both the rituals and the sequence of the written psalms.

## **Evidences of Ancient Jewish Apostasy**

How thorough those changes were is indicated by the Jewish scholar, Hayyim Schauss, who writes, “The old festivals were altered and re-created; a new spiritual content was poured into them and they became new institutions.”<sup>88</sup>

Though we may not know the original order of the psalms, knowing that changes had occurred is important, because if we know what not to trust, then that increases our awareness of what we can trust.

There are four important evidences that the post-exilic Jewish leaders and editors actually did make major changes in their theology, the way they interpreted the Law of Moses, and the way they celebrated the festivals.

The first evidence is that they changed their concept of the Godhead. Initially, the Israelites believed that Elohim was the Father and King of all the gods, and presided at their councils. The pre-exilic Jews also recognized that there was an important counsel of lesser gods. Jehovah was the Son and Heir of Elohim. He conducted the affairs of the Council in Heaven and made assignments to its members. He was also the Eternal King of Israel.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Hayyim Schauss, trans. Samuel Jaffe, *The Jewish Festivals: From their Beginnings to Our Own Day*, (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1938), 119. See Gösta W. Ahlström, “Administration of the State in Canaan and Ancient Israel,” *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 4 vols, ed. Jack M. Sasson (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1995), 1: 587-603. He uses elements of the drama to describe enthronement rites.

<sup>89</sup> For discussions of the Council in Heaven, see E. Theodore Mullen Jr., *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, California: Scholars, 1980); H. Wheeler Robinson, *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946), 167-70; H. Wheeler Robinson, “The Council of Yahweh,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 45 (1944): 151-57; Frank M. Cross, Jr., “The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 12 (January-October, 1953): 274-77; David Noel Freedman, “Twenty-Third Psalm,” *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Studies in Early Hebrew Poetry*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 275-302; John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 20-25; Christopher R. Seitz, “The Divine Council: Temporal Transition and New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109, 2 (Summer 1990): 229-47; Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox, 1995), 223-26; Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 364-67; Gerald Cooke, “The Sons of (the) God(s),” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 76 (1964): 22-47.



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However, after the Babylonian captivity, the post-exilic Jews did the same sort of thing to the Godhead that the Christians would do 700 or 800 years later. The earliest Christians had worshiped the Father and the Son as separate individuals, and the Holy Ghost, the comforter and communicator. Later Christians merged the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost into one undefinable God whom they called “Jesus,” but who was very unlike the Jesus the earliest Christians had known and worshiped.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, the post-exilic Jews merged Elohim and Jehovah into one equally undefinable God, and abandoned the Council in Heaven altogether, apparently replacing them with “angels” whom they completely discredited.<sup>91</sup> They called their God “Jehovah,” but he was very unlike the earlier God whom their forefathers had worshiped by that name, as is evinced by the frequency with which the Old Testament authors and editors credited their One God with an unkind and irascible personality.<sup>92</sup> The Christian change from polytheism to monotheism is easily documented. It began with the assumption that the scriptures which speak of Christ as the

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<sup>90</sup> On the corporeality of God, see David L. Paulsen, “Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses,” *Harvard Theological Review* 83/2 (1990): 105-16; Carl W. Griffin and David L. Paulsen, “Augustine and the Corporeality of God,” *Harvard Theological Review* 95/1 (2002): 97-118; David L. Paulsen, “The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judaeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives,” *BYU Studies* 35/4 (1995-96): 6-94. An alternate Jewish view also holds that God is corporeal, see Jacob Neusner, “Conversation in Nauvoo about the Corporeality of God,” *BYU Studies* 36/1 (1996-97): 7-30; see also Ernst W. Benz, “Imago Dei: Man in the Image of God,” *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaeo-Christian Parallels* ed. Truman G. Madsen, (Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978), 201-21. Indications of anthropomorphisms in Muhammad’s initial call as a prophet are given in Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, “The Throne Theophany/ Prophetic Call of Muhammad,” *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, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 323-37.

<sup>91</sup> See Margaret Barker, *Great High Priest*, 149.

<sup>92</sup> Contrast that concept with this one from a sermon by President Heber C. Kimball delivered in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, February 8, 1857. “I am perfectly satisfied that my God is a cheerful, pleasant, lively, and good-natured Being. Why? Because I am cheerful, pleasant, lively, and good-natured when I have His Spirit. That is one reason why I know; and another is—the Lord said, through Joseph Smith, ‘I delight in a glad heart and a cheerful countenance.’ That arises from the perfection of His attributes; He is a jovial, lively person, and a beautiful man” (*Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1857], 4: 222)

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“Son of God” could not be taken literally;<sup>93</sup> was formalized by the Nicene Creed;<sup>94</sup> and justified by Thomas Aquinas.<sup>95</sup> But there is no such information available about when or how the Jews evolved their beliefs. Geo Widengren, a professor at Uppsala University and friend of Mowinckel, explains:

Enough has been said to show that the oft-repeated saying that the [post-exilic] monotheistic spirit of Yahwistic religion did not tolerate any mythology certainly needs some qualification. In older times Israelite religion was a rather complex entity, embracing also—as we have seen—the idea of God surrounded by His divine assembly and council, and accompanied by His bodyguards. In this polytheistic trend there was a tendency to express more fully all the richness of divine essence and to get it more concretely visualized.<sup>96</sup>

The second evidence is in the history of the writing itself. All one has to do is look at the table of contents of the Bible to discover the story. First there are the five Books of Moses. We know from the Book of Mormon that they were written by Moses, but the version in the Bible was so severely edited by the post-exilic Jews that many scholars believe the Books of Moses were actually written by several authors, and that only a few hundred years B.C.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> See Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); Robert M. Grant, *The Early Christian Doctrine of God* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1966).

<sup>94</sup> See J. J. Lias, *The Nicene Creed: A Manual for the Use of Candidates for Holy Orders* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1897); Emilianos Timiadis, *The Nicene Creed, Our Common Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *God and Creation*, trans. William P. Baumgarth and Richard J. Regan (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1993).

<sup>96</sup> Geo Widengren, “Early Hebrew Myths and their Interpretation,” 164. See also: Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

<sup>97</sup> An example of this approach is in an article by Friedman in which he lauds the scholarship of James L. Kugel. Friedman writes: “The special thing here is that Kugel is an orthodox Jew, and in this book he publicly accepts critical scholarship. He recognizes the strength of the Documentary Hypothesis (which holds that the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses, was composed by several authors)—meaning Moses did not

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Following the Books of Moses in the Old Testament, we have Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, with Ruth apparently inserted to show David's genealogy.<sup>98</sup> These books all appear to have been written as a single unit<sup>99</sup> (except for Chronicles, which tells the same story as Kings, but from the priest's point of view). We can find an approximate date of the composition of the historical books by simply observing what were the last historical events they recorded. The books of Kings end when the Jews were taken captive into Babylon, and Chronicles carries the history all the way to the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia.

That, by the way, provides another interesting test of the Book of Mormon. Since the historical books of the Old Testament were written or edited after Lehi left Jerusalem, if Joseph Smith had been the author of the Book of Mormon, and if he had included a quote from even one of those books (like quoting from the story of Sampson, for example), that would have been sufficient evidence Joseph's claims were not true. But the Book of Mormon only quotes or paraphrases from those parts of our Old Testament that were written before Lehi left Jerusalem: the Books of Moses, Job, the Psalms, and Isaiah.

By the time of Jesus, the Jewish celebration of the feasts and holy days had been greatly altered. The standard authority about the way the Law was practiced 600 years after the First Temple was destroyed is the works of Alfred Edersheim. He inadvertently shows that by then the temple drama associated with the Feast of Tabernacles had passed into obscurity, for he does not mention an enthronement festival.<sup>100</sup> A more recent

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write the first five books of the Bible. Kugel also recognizes the validity of archaeological discoveries that challenge the Bible's account of history. Where past orthodox Jewish scholars have called critical Bible scholarship names and ridiculed it, Kugel calls it 'an extraordinary intellectual achievement;' 'little short of dazzling.' He writes that the scholars who made these discoveries compare to Einstein, Freud and Darwin." (Richard Elliott Friedman, "Ancient Biblical Interpreters vs. Archaeology & Modern Scholars, *Biblical Archaeology Review* 34, 1 [Jan/Feb 2008]: 62)

<sup>98</sup> For a discussion of David's possible ancestry, see G. W. Ahlstrom, "Was David a Jebusite Subject?" *Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 92 (1980): 285-87.

<sup>99</sup> For a discussion of the books of Kings as a post-exilic history, see Steven L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings, The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991).

<sup>100</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: its ministry and services as they were at the time of Jesus Christ* (New York: F. H. Revell, 1874. For his discussion of the Feast of Tabernacles see a more recent reprint: Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1994), 226-28. For a much earlier study of the temple services, see

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authority is Jacob Milgrom, who simply does not believe there ever was one.<sup>101</sup>

The third evidence is the one we are dealing with. That is, there is so little about the original rites of the temple festival left in the Old Testament—demonstrating the festival was changed by the time the historical books were written. A modern witness of how completely those changes have been accepted, is in the work of Rabbi Isaac N. Fabricant, a Jewish scholar who completely divorced the parts of the New Year festival from each other. He writes that notwithstanding the close proximity in time of the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles, “there is no connection between Yom Kippur [Day of Atonement ] and Succoth. [Feast of Tabernacles].”<sup>102</sup>

The fourth evidence is that the nature of the doctrinal changes they made in at least the book of Genesis can be readily demonstrated.

It is easy to discover the editorial policy of the post-exilic editors. All one has to do is compare Genesis with the Book of Moses to see that they systematically removed all references to the gospel, the Atonement, and the priesthood, and they also changed the personality of God.

The story of Noah and the Ark is a good example. In the following table, the first column quotes Genesis chapter 6. The second column shows the similarities with Moses chapter 8. The third column shows the parts of Moses that are not even suggested in Genesis. If one reads only that last column one will find that the Prophet Joseph did not just add filler and fluff to the story. On the contrary, everything Joseph added was about the gospel, priesthood or the Atonement. What that teaches us about the Old Testament post-exilic apostate editors is that the things they took out of the record were neither arbitrary nor haphazard. Rather, what they deleted had to do with the gospel, the Atonement, and the priesthood.

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John Lightfoote, *The Temple, Especially as it Stood in the Days of Our Savior* (London: R. C. for Andrew Crook, 1650 [reprinted by Jordan River Reprints, 2008]).

<sup>101</sup> Milgrom gives evidence for that by discussing the various dates of the festival that have been proposed by scholars (*Leviticus, 23-27, 2012-2018*), and dismissing the work of Mowinckel and his colleagues as “unsubstantiated” (2017). But he admits that their “close proximity ...give ample reason to reflect that perhaps originally they were one festival whose manifold rites were directed toward the purpose of supplicating God for adequate rain” (2045-46).

<sup>102</sup> Rabbi Isaac N. Fabricant, *A Guide to Succoth* (London: Jewish Chronicle Publications, 1958), 2-3. *Yom Kippur* is the Hebrew name for the Day of Atonement and *Succoth* for the Feast of Tabernacles.

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<p><b>Genesis 6:1-13.</b></p> <p>3 And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also <i>is</i> flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.</p> <p>4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare <i>children</i> to them, the same <i>became</i> mighty men which <i>were</i> of old, men of renown.</p> <p>5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man <i>was</i> great in the earth, and <i>that</i> every imagination of the thoughts of his heart <i>was</i> only evil continually.</p> <p>6 And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.</p> <p>7 And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.</p> <p>8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.</p> <p>9 These <i>are</i> the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man <i>and</i> perfect in his generations, <i>and</i> Noah walked with God.</p> <p>10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.</p> <p>11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.</p>	<p><b>Moses 8:17-30, included in Genesis.</b></p> <p><b><i>Here we discover two different personalities for God. In the Bible it is God who repented that he created man, in Moses it is Noah.</i></b></p> <p>17a And the Lord said unto Noah: My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he shall know that all flesh shall die; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years;.</p> <p>18a And in those days there were giants on the earth,</p> <p>20 And it came to pass that Noah called upon the children of men that they should repent; but they hearkened not unto his words;</p> <p>21 And also, after that they had heard him, they came up before him, saying: Behold, we are the sons of God; have we not taken unto ourselves the daughters of men? And are we not eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage? And our wives bear unto us children, and the same are mighty men, which are like unto men of old, men of great renown. And they hearkened not unto the words of Noah.</p> <p>25 And it repented Noah, and his heart was pained that the Lord had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at the heart.</p> <p>26 And the Lord said: I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth.</p>	<p><b>Moses 8:17- 24. Not in Genesis.</b></p> <p>17b and if men do not repent, I will send in the floods upon them</p> <p>18b and they sought Noah to take away his life; but the Lord was with Noah, and the power of the Lord was upon him.</p> <p>19 And the Lord ordained Noah after his own order, and commanded him that he should go forth and declare his Gospel unto the children of men, even as it was given unto Enoch.</p> <p>23 And it came to pass that Noah continued his preaching unto the people, saying: Hearken, and give heed unto my words;</p> <p>24 Believe and repent of your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, even as our fathers, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost, that ye may have all things made manifest; and if ye do not this, the floods will come in upon you; nevertheless they hearkened not.</p>
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<p><b><i>Genesis 6:1-13.</i></b> (continued)</p> <p>12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.</p> <p>13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.</p>	<p><b><i>Moses 8:17-30, included in Genesis.</i></b> (continued)</p> <p>Noah that I have created them, and that I have made them; and he hath called upon me; for they have sought his life.</p> <p>27 And thus Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; for Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and he walked with God, as did also his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.</p> <p>28 The earth was corrupt before God, and it was filled with violence.</p> <p>29 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth.</p> <p>30 And God said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence, and behold I will destroy all flesh from off the earth.</p>	<p><b><i>Moses 8:17- 24.</i></b> (continued)</p>
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In the second column is another evidence. That is, post-exilic writers and editors represented God as having a caustic personality. Throughout the Old Testament, God is accused of doing all sorts of things that do not sound very nice. Borsch observes the evidence of these changes in the nature of the Jewish Godhead, and explains:

We noted earlier that the conception of god was bound to have pervasive effects upon all aspects of belief and practice. Obviously in Jerusalem, where, out of a situation of great tension, Yahweh came to be understood as the God in whom attributes of the older tribal deity and of both the high-god and his son the king-god had to be fused, this was true. Soon, for instance, it must have become impossible to think of him as a dying and rising god. While yearly celebrations of

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his kingship continued, it seems that these were no longer preceded by his death and resurrection.<sup>103</sup>

It is apparent that after the post-exilic apostasy, the writers and editors simply expunged the things they could no longer understand, perform, or account for.

An important example is that there only two post-exilic accounts of the Jews keeping the Feast of Tabernacles, and neither make any reference to the temple drama that was central to its preexilic ceremonies. The first was on their arrival to Jerusalem from Babylon. It shows they limited their activities to “daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required” (Ezra 3:4). The second was also in the days of Ezra. It shows that soon after they returned to Jerusalem, they replaced the temple drama with only a reading from the Law of Moses.

18 Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he [Ezra] read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner (Nehemiah 8:18).

Saperstein gives us a brief history of the apostasy, showing how those changes were made and by whom:

The institution of the rabbinate is a uniquely Jewish contribution to the sociology of religion. The allocation of spiritual authority in biblical times is indicated in the verse from Jeremiah, “Instruction shall not fail from the priest, nor counsel from the wise nor oracle from the prophet.” The priest was the divinely ordained intermediary between God and Israel. He was the supervisor of the cult, the custodian and teacher of the law, and the judge who was the authorized interpreter of that law. The prophet was the charismatic and inspired spokesman for God. He proclaimed the ethical and spiritual ideal under the rubric “Thus saith the Lord.” Although sometimes in conflict, the authority each claimed was rooted in the divine will.

During the Second Commonwealth the Torah was canonized. Prophecy was deemed to have ceased as a source of authority. During this period the priestly party, the Sadducees, became dominant, and the nation became in a sense a

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<sup>103</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 108.

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theocracy. This assumption of exclusive authority, however, did not remain unchallenged. As the prophet had challenged the priestly function on the basis of its ritualistic emphasis, the new challenge came from scholars on the basis of its inflexibility. The new party was called the Pharisees. They were perhaps the descendants of the sages of biblical times. During the last half of the Second Commonwealth, priest and scholar functioned simultaneously, sometimes cooperating, sometimes conflicting. The destruction of the Temple marked the end of the priesthood as an authoritative institution. The Sadducees drop out of the picture; the Pharisees take over. It is in this setting that the rabbi emerges.

The new claim to authority was still rooted in God and in His revealed word, the Torah, viewed as the supreme source for the guidance of life in its totality. But the Torah needed expansion and adaptation to changing circumstances. For this, the concept of the oral law was developed. It permitted such adaptation without loss of the conviction of theistic origin.<sup>104</sup>

There were apparently two reasons the post-exilic editors made those changes—and those same reasons probably account for why the details of the Feast of Tabernacles drama are not found in the historical books of the Old Testament. One was that many of the basic tenets of the Israelite religion had already been changed by the time of the Babylonian captivity. (That Jewish apostasy was what Lehi and the other prophets were campaigning against, and that, in turn, was why Lehi and his family left the country.)

The other reason for the changes was that after the Jews returned from Babylon, for them to have performed the festival drama that celebrated the coronation of a king would have been very dangerous. When the Jews returned to Jerusalem, they were part of the Persian empire and were never given authority to have their own king.<sup>105</sup> If they had

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<sup>104</sup> Harold I. Saperstein, "The Origin and Authority of the Rabbi," *Rabbinic Authority* 90, 2 (1982): 15. For a more detailed history, see Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971).

<sup>105</sup> The only kings acknowledged in Ezra and Nehemiah were Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes—all kings of Persia. One of the leading Jews who returned to Jerusalem was Zerubbabel (whose Persian name was Sheshbazzar). Zerubbabel was a grandson of Jehoiachin. He was appointed by Cyrus to be governor at Jerusalem, and he was given permission to rebuild the temple there (Ezra 1:8, 5:14-17). But Zerubbabel was never king. Indeed, when the enemies of the Jews tried to show that the Jews were in rebellion, they accused them of having a king—which accusation was vigorously denied by the Jews (Nehemiah 6:1-8).



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performed a religious ceremony where even a theoretical king had been crowned, then their political commitment to the Persian empire would have been very suspect. Consequently, we find Ezra celebrating part of the Feast of Tabernacles, without mention of its temple drama or the king (Ezra 3:4-6).

For these and other reasons, Solomon's Temple drama was ignored by the post-exilic Jews, and nearly eliminated from the record by the post-exilic authors and editors of the Old Testament—and the foundation of their religion—the Messianic symbolisms of its rites, ordinances, and covenants—were largely forgotten. Consequently, until as late as only a hundred years ago, very little was known by Old Testament scholars about the pre-exilic theology—and even less about its central temple drama. Hurowitz complained:

Reconstructing the cult practiced in the pre-exilic temple of Jerusalem is one of the more elusive tasks confronting the historian of ancient Israelite religion. Although the Bible abounds with cultic material, critical examination of the sources finds them to be in some respects anachronistic, programmatic, or of undetermined chronological and geographical background.<sup>106</sup> Most of the evidence does not relate directly to the cult of the first temple and permits only an approximate and probably distorted view of what was actually performed within its confines. Whatever contemporary, non-idealizing information exists is

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<sup>106</sup> Hurowitz's footnote reads: "The Pentateuchal Priestly source (P), which is the Bible's richest and most coherent repository of cultic information, is still widely dated to the exilic or post-exilic age, although recently M. Haran has proposed a Hezekian date for its original composition. See M. Haran, *Temples and Temple Services in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Biblical Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1985), esp. 132-48. Most scholars regard the Jerusalem temple as the ultimate reality around which P modeled its image of the tabernacle, but other candidates such as Shiloh or Bethel have been suggested. The book of Chronicles is the second largest source of information about the cult of Jerusalem. Nonetheless, Chronicles is obviously of very late date, and its portrait of the temple cult has been colored by the author's own ideology, by a desire to have the Jerusalem temple conform to Pentateuchal legislation and perhaps by cultic practices of the early Second Temple Period." (Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "Solomon's Golden Vessels (1 Kings 7:48-50) and the Cult of the First Temple," *Pomegranates and Golden Bells Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. David P. Wright, et al. [Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1995], 151-52).

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very scanty.<sup>107</sup>

However, now, because of the work of Hermann Gunkel, Sigmund Mowinckel, Aubrey Johnson, and other great Bible scholars of the last century, it is possible for us to begin to reconstruct much of the outline of the ancient festival drama.

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## **Scholars Who Believed in Christ**

It should be noted that one of the qualities that make Gunkel, Mowinckel, Johnson, and their closest associates remarkable by today's standards is that they understood the Bible to be a testimony of the Savior. They actually believed in God and they used their academic search for truth as a powerful strengthening underpinning for their belief (as one might expect, their statements of belief have tended to disqualify the validity of their scholarship in the eyes of some more modern academicians).

Notwithstanding their desires to know, Mowinckel and the others did not have the advantage of the restored gospel, so they could not understand how to incorporate the psalms that discuss the plan of salvation and the life and Atonement of Jesus into the events of the festival drama. Nevertheless, they were devout Christians. For example, Mowinckel believed that even ordinary people could have profound spiritual experiences. He wrote:

And now that I *know* [ the word "know" is in italics] that even completely ordinary people can receive guidance, "thoughts," "words," from God, and that this, by and in itself, is just as mysterious and just as "natural" as thought, as the psyche, life itself, I am no longer primarily interested in unraveling the processes of the prophets' spiritual experiences. ...What does primarily interest me as a scientific theologian is to see and grasp from the testimonies (the documents) the suggestion and the *fact* [ the word "fact" is also in italics] that the prophets had similar relations with God to those I know to be "normal" for such as surrender themselves and are willing and obedient. ...Both to understand the prophets and

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<sup>107</sup> Hurowitz, "Solomon's Golden Vessels," 151-52. For an LDS scholar's reconstruction of the festival, see Tvedtnes, "King Benjamin and the Feast of Tabernacles," 2:220-21.

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to have them speak to oneself one must know by experience God's speaking to one man. As a corollary of this one must share in the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit," and so, further, Jesus Christ must have begun "to be formed" in one. But it often happens that God is at work in this way long before one becomes conscious of it oneself.<sup>108</sup>

In another place, Mowinckel added:

In the Old Testament, too, inspired poetry is a means of revelation, a link in the history of revelation. We have only to recall *the Psalms*. They are conceived, created, and sung as words of men in distress or as thanksgiving and worship. But as the mind is turned toward God and the combined emotion, thought, and will seek him with all the ability that the person in question has at his command at that time, and with the will to surrender conditioned by his disposition and life, the ideas and words of the prayer become guided thoughts and words that open our minds to a deeper insight into the being, will, and plan of God. God is near to them who seek him, and in his Spirit he is always present with those who pray honestly.<sup>109</sup>

Aubrey Johnson believed the psalms were written during the First Temple period, and that their antiquity stands as evidence that the Israelites who composed them believed in, and anticipated the coming Christ. While reviewing the work of his associates on this matter, Johnson wrote:

I now hold that from the first they [the Biblical Psalms] were not only cultic [temple related] in origin but also, like the associated royal psalms, eschatological in their orientation. If I am right, this means that the theory of royal psalms does not preclude their sometimes being 'Messianic' in what is now the established eschatological sense of this term; and in that case the Messianic Hope, in its association with the House of David, is much earlier than is now commonly

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<sup>108</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, "A Postscript to the Paper 'The Spirit and the Word in the Pre-exilic Reform-Prophets,'" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 56 (1937): 261-65.

<sup>109</sup> Mowinckel, *Old Testament as Word of God*, 87.

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thought.<sup>110</sup>

Their greatest academic problem—the one they could not overcome without access to the future contributions made by the Prophet Joseph Smith—was this: They did not understand that the Old Testament’s Jehovah, and the New Testament’s Jesus, were the same eternal person.<sup>111</sup> Consequently, these scholars saw the psalms and the pre-exilic temple drama as a reflection of ancient Israelite beliefs, rather than as an explanation of the Savior’s eternal role in the plan of salvation.

Margaret Barker is a recent exception. She understands Jesus is the Son of God. Speaking of the Savior, she writes:

He was not the incarnation of the High God who became the First Person of the Christian Trinity. The Lord was the son of the High God El Elyon, he was the Firstborn of the sons of God and the patron angel of Israel (Deut 32:8-9). The Lord who appears in the Hebrew Scriptures was the Second Person of the Trinity, as the earliest Christian commentators knew. Paul, who distinguished such a position from polytheism, wrote: “For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (I Cor 8:6).

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<sup>110</sup> Johnson, “Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship,” 234-35.

<sup>111</sup> An example is a paper by J. Philip Hyatt, “Was Yahweh Originally a Creator Deity?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86, 4 (Dec. 1967): 369-77.

Cook is another example of one who does not believe in the connection between Jehovah and Jesus. He writes, “In the opinion of the present writer, Ps 2 and 110 are Royal Psalms which were intended to refer to the earthly king during the monarchy. Any messianic interpretation in the fully eschatological sense espoused by Battenwieser and de Fraine must be rejected.” (Gerald Cooke, “The Israelite King as Son of God,” *Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 73 (1961): 205).

Bentzen goes even further and writes that the prophet Isaiah did not understand Christ’s mission. He writes, “But the prophet who conceived Isa. 53 did not comprehend the meaning of the divinity of the dying Savior” (Aage Bentzen, *King and Messiah* [London: Lutterworth, 1955], 29, endnote on p. 94).

## **Overriding Importance of the Feast of Tabernacles Temple Drama**

It was essential to the preservation of their individual and national memories, that the early Israelites ritually reenact the story of their origins and purposes with a drama that included a remaking of their earlier ordinances and covenants.<sup>112</sup> To first experience the ordinances and the covenants is to discover their purposes and powers, but to re-experience them is to bring the impact of one's own past into the reality of one's present. Mowinckel explained, "The power inherent in the act [ordinances] is also concentrated in the word [covenants]; the holy word is effective and creative. Word and act co-operate in the creation of reality."<sup>113</sup> Borsch writes that the universal location of the drama's expansive reality was on earth and in heaven; that during the performance of the drama, "The stage was cosmic; distinctions between earth and heaven were temporarily suspended."<sup>114</sup> The drama was a ritual actualization of the most sacred Israelite myths.

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<sup>112</sup> See Lundquist, "Common Temple Ideology," 53-76, and "What is a Temple? 83-117.

<sup>113</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:20.

<sup>114</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 93.

## **The Royal Psalms**

During the presentation of the drama, the king played the main part.<sup>115</sup> His was a complex and multifaceted role. First of all, he played himself. The story was his personal story, from his role in the Council in Heaven until the establishment of the Savior's millennial reign. It was also the Savior's story because every scene of the play was about Jehovah's relationship with the king. In the final scenes, one might say that the king was also playing the role of Jehovah, because the king's coronation was also representative of the Savior's final triumph.<sup>116</sup> The king's role in the drama also symbolically represented the sorrows and ultimate triumph—the life journey—of Everyman in the congregation. Mowinckel explained that the congregation participated in the events of the drama through the actions of the king:

But both in Psalm cxxxii and in other cultic contexts, Israel's king generally appears as the representative of the congregation before Yahweh, not as the representative of Yahweh before the congregation. He dances and sings and plays 'before Yahweh', and leads the festal procession (2 Sam. vi, 5, 14ff.; cf. Psalm xlii, 5). In the cultic drama he represents David: Yahweh is represented by His holy ark, by the 'footstool' before the throne on which He [God] is invisibly

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<sup>115</sup> That may be why the Nephites did not insist on having a king until they also had a temple. When the temple was built, if they were going to do the ceremonies the same way they had been done in Jerusalem, then they needed a king and queen to play the central roles in the drama. So it was in conjunction with their building a temple that they requested Nephi to be their king, and it was then that Nephi consented.

There were times, as in the King Benjamin story, when the king played the role of the priest and his acted in the stead of the king. One finds that idea in Ezekiel, where "the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering," and on another occasion, "shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock for a sin offering" (Ezekiel 45:18-22).

Engnell wrote that during the Assyrian New Year festival, the heir apparent took the role of the king while his father, the real king, took priestly role of the god. See Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, 17. See also Peter Machinist, "The Transfer of Kingship: A Divine Turning," *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, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 105-20.

<sup>116</sup> As will be discussed near the conclusion of this book, the Savior's appearance in America, as recorded in Third Nephi, carefully follows the Feast of Tabernacles pattern of the coronation of a king.

## *Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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seated. ...It is the king who receives Yahweh's promises, His blessings, and His power; and he transmits them to the community which he represents.<sup>117</sup>

Scholars refer to the psalms that speak specifically of the king as "royal psalms." (They are called "Messianic Psalms" in head notes of the LDS Bible.) Paul cited several of them in the first few verses of Hebrews to show that Jesus was heir of his Father's kingdom, and is thereby the eternal King of Israel:<sup>118</sup>

The Hebrew word translated "Messiah" means the same as the Greek word translated "Christ"—personified in the New Testament as "the Anointed One." Messianic psalms, such as Psalm 22, are specific prophecies of the Savior's life and Atonement.<sup>119</sup> However, some of the other royal psalms that speak of the "messiah" also refer to the reigning king who was anointed during his coronation ceremony at the conclusion of the festival.<sup>120</sup>

Even as late as New Testament times, the meaning of the ancient temple drama had not been entirely lost by the faithful Jews. The authors of the gospels understood that the king in the temple drama symbolically represented the Eternal King who came into the world as Jesus of Nazareth. They quoted those psalms in their gospels, just as other New Testament authors quoted them in their letters, evincing that they all understood the psalms as they were originally used in the drama of Solomon's Temple, and also as prophecies about the Savior. That implies that they either learned about the ancient drama from the Savior as he re-taught its principles to his disciples, or else that, even though the

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<sup>117</sup> Mowinckel, *He that Cometh.*, 84. As examples, Mowinckel's footnote gives Psalms 132:11ff; 82; cf. 20:8f; 21:10; and Isaiah 55:3.

<sup>118</sup> In Hebrews 1:5-13, Paul quotes or paraphrases Psalms 2:7; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalms 45:6-8, 104:4; Job 7:17; Psalms 8:4-6, 144:3, 2:11-13; 2 Samuel 22:3; Psalms 22:22; and Isaiah 8:18. Then further on in the letter, he quotes other psalms in the same way.

<sup>119</sup> Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 84. As examples Mowinckel's footnote gives, "Psalms 132:11ff; 72; cf. 20:8f; 21:10; and Isaiah 55:3."

<sup>120</sup> For a discussion of both the title, "messiah," and its significance to Israel's kings, see Gene L. Davenport, "The 'Anointed of the Lord' in Psalms of Solomon 17," *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, ed. John J. Collins and George W.E. Nickelsburg (Chico, California: Scholars, 1980), 67-92. Davenport shows that the idea of a Davidic messiah persisted long after the Babylonian exile, and that the continued belief in a Davidic messiah was "important primarily as testimony to the dependability of God" (85).

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drama was no longer performed, there were still people among the Jews who understood how the psalms had been used in the days of pre-exilic Israel. The story of the Savior's triumphal entry into Jerusalem is strong evidence of their remembering—and of their longing for a return to former times (Matthew 21, Mark 11, John 12).<sup>121</sup> The Savior's conversation with Nicodemus shows that this learned scholar also understood the ancient ceremonies.<sup>122</sup>

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## **The Law and the Atonement**

The ancient festival temple drama, with its dynamic, dramatic representation of the full eternal sweep of the powers of the Savior's Atonement, was originally the focal point of the Law of Moses.<sup>123</sup> One gets hints of their ancient understanding of those principles through such surviving statements as in Psalm 32.

- 1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.
- 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth  
not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile (Psalm 32:1-2).

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<sup>121</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, "The Oracle of Judah and the Messianic Entry," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (1961): 55-64; Paul Brooks Duff, "The March of the Divine Warrior and the Advent of the Greco-Roman King: Mark's Account of Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, 1 (1992): 55-71; Edwin D. Freed, "The Entry into Jerusalem in the Gospel of John," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (1961): 329-38; P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., "The Ritual Dedication of the City of David in 2 Samuel 6," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 273-78.

<sup>122</sup> For fascinating evidence of early Christian ceremonial rooms, see the photos in Vassilios Tzaferis, "Inscribed 'To God Jesus Christ'," *Biblical Archaeological Review* 33, 2 (March/April 2007): 38-49.

<sup>123</sup> Nephi testified, "Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him (2 Nephi 11:4)." He reiterates that in 2 Nephi 25:24. The best evidence found in the Book of Mormon, as will be discussed in the final chapters of this book, is the concluding ceremonies of the festival drama. pages 925-96.



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That blessing is followed by the Lord's promise to help the repentant sinner, and with the promise comes a powerful declaration of the doctrine of free agency.

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go:  
I will guide thee with mine eye.  
9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule,  
which have no understanding:  
whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,  
lest they come near unto thee (Psalm 32:8-9).

Another example is Psalm 49, where we read,

6 They that trust in their wealth,  
and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;  
7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother,  
nor give to God a ransom for him:  
8 (For the redemption of their soul is precious,  
and it ceaseth for ever:)<sup>124</sup>  
9 That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. ...  
15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave:  
for he shall receive me (Psalm 49:6-9, 15).

The last half of Isaiah is an important key to understanding and reconstructing the drama. Beginning with the retelling of events in the Council in Heaven in chapter 40 (where we find John the Baptist's premortal assignment to be a forerunner to the Savior<sup>125</sup>), and continuing through the drama until the Millennial Reign in the last

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<sup>124</sup> The JST version reverses the order of the verses and reads:  
8 Nor give to God a ransom for him that he should still live forever, that it ceaseth not forever to see corruption.  
9 For the redemption of their souls is through God, and precious.

<sup>125</sup> Isaiah reads, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3). That is quoted as the identification of John the Baptist in each of the gospels: Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4, and John 1:23.

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chapter,<sup>126</sup> Isaiah's words are a commentary on the drama itself. Thus, Isaiah not only gives additional evidence of the drama's reality, but he also teaches us a great deal about its content.<sup>127</sup>

The prophets of the Book of Mormon repeatedly assure us that Moses and every other true prophet testified of the coming of the Savior.<sup>128</sup> They taught that the Law of Moses "and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man," teach and testify of the Savior (2 Nephi 11:4).<sup>129</sup> Jacob wrote that "for this intent we keep the Law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him" (Jacob 4:5). Abinadi taught the same concept when he described the Law as "a shadow of those things which are to come" (Mosiah 16:14). Nephite prophets taught, and the Savior himself explained, that the Law of Moses was not to be done away, but rather it was to be "fulfilled." To fulfill does not mean to finish and make obsolete; it means to put into effect, to bring to fruition, to satisfy, to convert to reality. The promise that the prophecies of the Law of Moses would be fulfilled by the Savior, meant that he would do, in reality, all of the things that the performances and ordinances of the Law symbolically predicted he would do—that promise included the actualization of all of the events symbolically represented in the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> The break in the drama story is the Cyrus chapters which were apparently added during the Babylonian captivity (see Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works: History of the Jews* 11:1,222-23). Cyrus is introduced in Isaiah 44:28 and continues through Isaiah 48. Part of the prophecy about him is written in past tense, and is the major reason scholars insist there was a "Second Isaiah" who wrote during or after the Babylonian captivity. A careful reading of 1 Nephi 20 (which is Isaiah 48) shows that those problems, including the "I did them" in verse 3, were not on the brass plates, so the editorial changes in "Second Isaiah" 48 were made after Isaiah's original writings were copied on the brass plates.

<sup>127</sup> That may account for why the Book of Mormon is so insistent that we learn to understand Isaiah. For discussions of the drama in Isaiah, see J. H. Eaton, *Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah* (London, SPCK, 1979); Klaus Baltzer, trans. Margaret Kohl, *Deutero-Isaiah: A commentary on Isaiah 40-55*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

<sup>128</sup> See examples: 1 Nephi 22:20-21, 3 Nephi 20:23, Helaman 8:14-16.

<sup>129</sup> See examples: 2 Nephi 25:24, 30; Alma 30:3, 34:13; 3 Nephi 9:15-20, 15:2-8.

<sup>130</sup> The second section of this book will show that Mormon's account of the Savior's coming to America was remarkably similar to the coronation ceremony enacted during the Feast of Tabernacles drama. The Savior actualized the coronation events the drama predicted.

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If one wishes to know details about the pre-exilic Israelite theology, one simply has to read the Book of Mormon to find them. There we see that the religion of ancient Israel, as taught by the Nephite prophets, was entirely focused on the mission of the Savior. The Book of Mormon shows that if we had a full and accurate account of all of the performances and ordinances of the Law of Moses, as they were originally given by the Lord, we would find that every ordinance of the Law focused on the mission of the Savior—including all of the ordinances and covenants of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama.<sup>131</sup>

Therefore, any attempted reconstruction of the sequence of events that were depicted in the ancient temple drama must emphasize the overarching importance of the Atonement and the psalms that discuss it. It must also incorporate the psalms that the New Testament writers identified as being prophecies about the Savior's life.

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## **Covenant Renewal**

The Feast of Tabernacles temple drama was both a representation and a renewal of the premortal covenants made between God and his children.<sup>132</sup> As such, it depicted the eternal biographies of Jehovah, and of the then-reigning king and queen of Israel, and also of every other man and woman who participated in its ceremonies. It was a re-enactment of events of the Council in Heaven, and the creation of the earth;<sup>133</sup> of what happened in the Garden of Eden, and of the subsequent foundation and establishment of the family and nation of Israel. Then it foretold the importance of the Savior's life and Atonement, and

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<sup>131</sup> Covenants were a fundamental part of the ceremonies, as J. L. Crenshaw observes, "'Swear by' and 'confess' are terms drawn from the cult (Isa 45:16; Jer 4:2, 12:16; Dtn 6: 18, 10:20; Ex 23:13; Ps 20:7)," "YHWH Sebaot Shemo: A Form-Critical Analysis," *Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 81 (1969): 157.

<sup>132</sup> For discussions of covenants, see Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 157-71; Stephen D. Ricks, "Oaths and Oath Taking in the Old Testament," *Temple in Time and Eternity*, 43-53.

<sup>133</sup> Stephen D. Ricks, "Liturgy and Cosmogony: The Ritual Use of Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East," *Temples of the Ancient World*, 118-25.

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promised a future time of millennial peace.

The drama established that the king was chosen in the Council, and that after the king had received the requisite powers and instructions necessary for his success, he would come to earth where he would be confronted with difficulties that would seem to preclude the possibility of his accomplishing his assignment. In the drama, the psalms affirm the certainty of the Savior's Atonement, promising that Jehovah himself will avert the king's difficulties—even to defeating the ultimate enemies, death and hell—to save the king and his people.

In this book, we shall present a reconstruction of the Feast of Tabernacles drama based on the findings of Gunkel, Mowinckel, Johnson, and other Bible scholars, augmenting their work by incorporating the message of the Atonement into the drama as it is taught throughout the Book of Mormon.

In Nephite history, only the presentation of the drama was changed when the Savior instructed the people to discontinue animal sacrifices. As will be shown below, it is evident that throughout the latter part of Nephite history, some form of the drama still remained an important part of their religious practices. The evidence is that the storyline of their drama remained the same, only rather than using animal sacrifices to anticipate the Savior's Atonement, the drama focused on the fact that the Savior had already fulfilled his covenants, and that the blessings were available to all people.

## **The Truth in Myth and Ritual**

In our present, everyday language, “myth” connotes a falsehood. However, as Bible scholars use the word, a “myth” is a sacred story which carries a message that is true. The Feast of Tabernacles temple drama is a perfect example. It was a re-enactment of the most sacred story of each participant in their personal and collective histories, and a re-commitment to their most sacred truths. The drama’s pattern reflected the great cosmic myth in which man interact with the gods in the divine world, as Hocart explains:

The word myth has unfortunately become synonymous in our language with fiction. That is merely because it has become associated with a certain set of traditions in which we do not believe. It is necessary to go back to the original meaning of a sacred story which purports to be true, and which research is ever more proving to be true in essentials, however much the details may get distorted. It is a true record of ritual.<sup>134</sup>

Mowinckel’s definition of “myth” puts the entire question into its proper perspective:

And now a few words about mythology in the Old Testament, in revelation. Myth likewise reflects a reality that is expressed in the pictorial language of primitive thinking and its view of reality. It differs from the legend, however, by concentrating upon the innermost, highest and deepest realities of life and existence, upon divine reality, upon that which is experienced as holy and divine. Genuine myth was originally connected with the cultus [temple ritual], with the creative experiences that the fellowship (the group, the tribe, the congregation) shares through the sacred group acts whose purpose was to actualize the connection between the divine and the human. ...Myth is concerned with realities that cannot otherwise be expressed. Narrative myth expresses the truth of cultic [temple] experiences in the pictorial language of childlike mentality, but often with a piercingly keen insight into innermost reality and with such deep thoughts that any age may recognize its deepest experiences and highest truths in them.

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<sup>134</sup> A. M. Hocart, “The Life-Giving Myth,” *The Labyrinth*, 278.

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...Myth thus is a way of saying truth.<sup>135</sup>

James Barr goes even further: he asserts that myth is a complete world-view. He writes:

*It is a totality first of all because mythological thinking is a striving for a total world-view, for an interpretation or meaning of all that is significant. Mythology is not a peripheral manifestation, not a luxury, but a serious attempt at integration of reality and experience. considerably more serious than what we loosely call today one's "philosophy of life." Its goal is a totality, of what is significant to man's needs, material, intellectual and religious. It has then its aspects which correspond to science, to logic, and to faith, and it would be wrong to see myth as a distorted substitute for only one of these.*<sup>136</sup>

Thus, a myth has two components. The first is the story that may or may not describe historical fact. The second is the truth that is evinced in the pattern and details of the story. The story is the wagon; the truth is its cargo. The ultimate truth is told in the cosmic myth—the universal story. It is the figurative account of everyone's personal odyssey through linear time. It tells of our struggles here as we seek to return to sacred time in sacred space. The cosmic myth is cosmic because it is universal—it is the story of Everyman.<sup>137</sup> That is why the details of the story are not important. In order for it to be your autobiography and mine, neither of us can hang too much weight on the specific events, for the events of our odysseys are different. An example is that all the stories of typical LDS missionaries are the same. They leave home, are given an assignment, sometimes they think it may be impossible, yet find great satisfaction in its accomplishment, and return home having been successful. The pattern (the wagon) is much the same for almost all missionaries no matter where they were asked to serve, but the details of their stories are always different. Nevertheless, the truths (the value of the

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<sup>135</sup> Mowinckel, *Old Testament as Word of God*, 99-100.

<sup>136</sup> James Barr, "The Meaning of 'Mythology' in Relation to the Old Testament," *Philosophy, Religious Studies and Myth*, 17.

<sup>137</sup> Two classic works on the universality of the cosmic myth are Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: MJF, 1949); and Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay on Myth and the Frame of Time* (Boston: Gambit, 1969).

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experience, the strengthening of their individual testimonies, and the love they have for the people) these are universally the same. The general outline of the stories is a myth because it is expressed with such broad sweeps of the brush that its image is most clearly seen from far off. But when its truths come into focus, they are the same for everyone, infinite and eternal. The myth may be called a mystery because, even though the story that carries the details may be understood by anyone, the powers of its truth are only apparent when the intricacy of the pattern is perceived by one who sees, hears, and understands—then both the story and its truths become a profound image of life, hope, and love.

Perhaps the greatest strength and universal appeal of the cosmic myth is that its historical validity is never an issue. That is true because the historicity of the details of the story simply do not matter, and therefore can be either enjoyed or ignored, but never taken too seriously. Thus the entire question of the myth's validity can focus on its universal truths and their individual appreciation. The truths it teaches are intended to be a kind of road map to direct one's successful return home to God.

## **The Cosmic Myth, and Sacred Time**

Mary Douglas explains why myth and rituals are so important. She writes, “Rituals organize space and time in conformity with established cosmic analogies, and in doing so, stabilize and reinforce volatile thoughts that would otherwise be quickly dispersed.”<sup>138</sup>

Truth is knowledge of reality in sacred time. Truth is not transient, neither is it a chameleon. It cannot change its color with time or in space, but is an eternal constant. That is, truth is knowledge as it is experienced in God’s time having neither past or future, but is known in an eternal present. Truth is described that way in the Doctrine and Covenants where it reads, “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24). If the Lord’s definition of truth is to know something—or someone—as an eternal reality, and if charity is loving others as they really are, then truth and charity are essentially the same thing—to love and comprehend another’s eternal worth—to know as one is known and see as one is seen—is to embrace that friend in sacred time.<sup>139</sup>

The cosmic myth is a story that tells truth as in sacred time. Whether the details of the story do or do not represent historical fact has no bearing on whether the story conveys principles of eternal truth. The pattern of the classic cosmic myth is familiar to each of us. It is the most popular theme of our literature. It is the storyline of *Hamlet*, *Star Wars*, *Tom Jones*, and *Princess Bride*, and is found frequently in the scriptures. The book of Job is one of the most beautiful examples. The reason these stories have a universal appeal is because we all share the innate sense that somehow they are a reflection of our own eternal autobiography.

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<sup>138</sup> Douglas, *Jacob’s Tears*, 135.

<sup>139</sup> Such truth and honesty are conditions of the celestial world, as the Lord explained to the Prophet Joseph:

92 And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things—where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever;

93 Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever.

94 They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and they see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fulness and of his grace;

95 And he makes them equal in power, and in might, and in dominion.

96 And the glory of the celestial is one, even as the glory of the sun is one (D&C 76:92-96).



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The cosmic myth is always in the pattern of a chiasmus.<sup>140</sup> It looks like this:

The hero is required to leave home.  
He is given a seemingly impossible task.  
He confronts overwhelming odds and certain failure  
He succeeds in accomplishing the task.  
He returns home, triumphant.

A way of writing that so it would be more meaningful to Latter-day Saints, is this:

The hero is required to leave his premortal home .  
Before leaving, he is given a difficult task.  
On earth he confronts daunting odds.  
Notwithstanding the difficulties, he succeeds.  
He returns triumphant to his/her celestial home.

A perfect ancient literary example of the symbolic cosmic myth is found near the conclusion of the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*. It is called "The Hymn of the Soul" in the following translation by Anthony Ashley Bevan.<sup>141</sup>

It is more commonly called *The Hymn of the Pearl*, or simply, *The Pearl*. It is among

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<sup>140</sup> See John W. Welch, ed. *Chiasmus in Antiquity* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1981).

<sup>141</sup> Anthony Ashley Bevan, *The Hymn of the Soul Contained in the Syriac Acts of St Thomas, Re-edited with an English translation* (Cambridge: University Press, 1897), 12-31.

The *Hymn of the Pearl* is found near the conclusion of the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*. James explained that this is "a most remarkable composition, originally Syriac, and certainly older than the Acts [of Thomas], with which it has no real connection. We have it in Greek in one manuscript, the Vallicellian, and in a paraphrase by Nicetas of Thessalonica, found and edited by Bonnet." (p. 411) All of the following translations listed below are from the Syriac, except the last one by Bentley Layton. That is from the Greek version. The translations cited are: Hennecke, Edgar, trans. R. McL. Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols., ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 498-504; Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: an Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 267-72; David R. Cartlidge and David L. Dungan, *Documents for the Study of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 46-50; Robert M. Grant, *Gnosticism* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1966), 116-22; Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 411-15; Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 371-75.

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the oldest and most beautiful of the non-canonical writings.

There is an innate sense in humankind that we walk the earth alone as strangers in a strange land, and in that sense there is a great desire to discover one's Self, and to return home with that sacred Self intact and triumphant. The apocrypha shows that Jesus frequently emphasized the importance of one's knowing one's Self. Some examples are:

Jesus said: He who knows the all but fails to know himself, misses everything.<sup>142</sup>

When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty, and it is you who are that poverty.<sup>143</sup>

Knowing one's Self presupposes knowing what is "given to him alone to do"

27 Matthew said, 'Lord, I wish to see that place of life, this place where there is no wickedness, but rather there is pure light!'

28 The Lord said, 'Brother Matthew, you will not be able to see it as long as you are wearing flesh.'

29 Matthew said, 'Lord, even if I shall not be able to see it, let me know it!'

30 The Lord said, 'Everyone who has known himself has seen it in everything given to him alone to do, and has come to resemble it in his goodness.'<sup>144</sup>

The *Hymn of the Pearl* teaches that in that quest we are not alone. Not only are we in touch with others like ourselves, but even the gods seek communion with us to teach us how to succeed.

*The Pearl* is the story of a young prince who is given a seemingly impossible task. He must leave home to find a priceless pearl and bring it back to his Father. When he arrives at his destination, he meets another like himself ("an anointed one") and they assist each

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<sup>142</sup> *The Coptic Gospel of Thomas* in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Schneemelcher, 2: 126-67.

<sup>143</sup> *Gospel of Thomas* in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1988), 126-3.

<sup>144</sup> *The Dialogue of the Saviour*, in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Schneemelcher, 2: 306-307, 27-30.

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other in preparing for the darkness to come. Though we do not hear about him again, the “anointed” friend is a central part of the story. It is true that the hero must fulfill his covenants alone, but it is also true that his loving Father will not let that aloneness be void of the help of treasured family and friends. Nevertheless, the hero forgets his assignment and sinks into the despair of insurmountable obstacles. Again his Father comes to his aid—not to fulfill the boy’s covenants for him—but simply to remind the hero who he is and what he had come to do. The hero recognizes and acknowledges his princely Self. He recalls, “I remembered that I was a son of kings, And my noble birth asserted itself.” Then, in an act of triumph, he discards the identifying uniform his assailants had given him; he snatches the pearl for which he had come, and turns to go home. As he leaves the alien country, he meets messengers who deliver to him the royal garments he had left behind in the home of his Father. The robe had become greatly enriched by the young man’s own triumphs and his seeming unhappy experiences—while the prince was wallowing in the muck of this world, the robe had grown so it would still fit him when he returned. His experiences were the source of this growth. As the robe is returned to him, he finds that the garment has become a perfect expression of his newly enhanced Self. The robe, the inner garment that Nibley calls his “garment of light”<sup>145</sup> had symbols embroidered on it that represented the prince’s having become like God. Thus he returns home, gloriously clothed—and triumphant.

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<sup>145</sup> Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 270 . For a discussion of that garment of light and its significance, see Stephen D. Ricks, “The Garment of Adam in Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Tradition,” *Temples of the Ancient World*, 705-39.

## *The Hymn of the Pearl*

The following is *The Hymn of the Soul Contained in the Syriac Acts of St. Thomas, Re-edited with an English translation by Anthony Ashley Bevan*. The footnotes show variant translations by other scholars. Those differences are important because they often amplify the meaning and broaden the scope and significance of the poem:

1 *When I was a little child,*  
    *And dwelling in my kingdom in my Father's house,*  
2 *And in the wealth and the glories*  
    *Of my nurturers had my pleasure,<sup>146</sup>*  
3 *From the East, our home,<sup>147</sup>*  
    *My parents, having equipped me, sent me forth.*  
4 *And of the wealth of our treasury*  
    *They had already tied up for me a load,*  
5 *Large it was, yet light,*  
    *So that I might bear it unaided-*  
6 *Gold of . . .<sup>148</sup>*  
    *And silver of Gazzak the great,*  
7 *And rubies of India,*  
    *And agates (?) from the land of Kushan (?),*  
8 *And they girded me with adamant [diamond<sup>149</sup> ]*  
    *Which can crush iron.*

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<sup>146</sup> Throughout the poem, our footnotes will give alternate translations by other scholars. They add considerable insights to the meaning of *The Pearl*. The first is from Nibley, whose version of the first two lines reads: “1-2. In my first primeval childhood I was nurtured in the royal house of my Father with loving care in the midst of abundance and glory” (Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 267).

<sup>147</sup> “3. our home in the East (the source of light),” (Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 268).

<sup>148</sup> A head note reads: “In the Translation, dots indicate that the Syriac text is corrupt or unintelligible.”

<sup>149</sup> Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 268.

### *Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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9 *And they took off from me the bright robe,  
Which in their love they had wrought for me,*<sup>150</sup>  
10 *And my purple toga,  
Which was measured (and) woven to my stature.*  
11 *And they made a compact with me,  
And wrote it in my heart that it should not  
be forgotten.*<sup>151</sup>  
12 *“If thou goest down into Egypt,  
And bringest the one pearl,  
13 Which is in the midst of the sea  
Hard by the loud-breathing serpent,  
[devouring serpent,<sup>152</sup> ]*  
14 *(Then) shalt thou put on thy bright robe  
And thy toga, which is laid over it,*  
15 *And with thy Brother, our next in rank,  
Thou shalt be heir in our kingdom.”*  
16 *I quitted the East (and) went down,  
There being with me two messengers,  
17 For the way was dangerous and difficult,  
And I was very young to tread it.*  
18 *I passed the borders of Maishin,*

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<sup>150</sup> “9. They removed from me the garment of light,  
which they had made for me in love”  
(Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 268).

<sup>151</sup> “11 And they made with me a covenant  
And wrote it in my heart, that I might not forget”  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2: 499).  
Covenant is also in:  
Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 268; James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 411.

<sup>152</sup> James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 412.

## *Introduction*

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*The meeting-place of the merchants of the East,*<sup>153</sup>  
19 *And I reached the land of Babel.*  
*And entered the walls of ... [Sarbug<sup>154</sup> ]*  
20 *I went down into Egypt,*  
*And my companions parted from me.*  
21 *I betook me straight to the serpent,*  
*Hard by his dwelling I abode,*  
21 *(Waiting) till he should slumber and sleep,*  
*And I could take my pearl from him.*  
23 *And when I was single and alone,*  
*A stranger to those with whom I dwelt,*  
24 *One of my race, a free-born man,*  
*From among the Easterns, I beheld there-*  
25 *A youth fair and well favored ....*  
26 *... and he came and attached himself to me.*  
27 *And I made him my intimate,*  
*A comrade with whom I shared my merchandise.*  
28 *I warned him against the Egyptians*  
*And against consorting with the unclean;*<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> “They arrive at Maishan, where the merchants of the East gather”  
(Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 268).

<sup>154</sup> Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:499.

<sup>155</sup> In lines 24-28, the prince meets a young nobleman from his own country with whom he shares full confidence. They warn each other against the temptations and the defilements of Egypt. Each of the translators have treated this somewhat differently. The differences are important, so each is quoted here.

23 *And when I was single and alone,*  
*A stranger to those with whom I dwelt,*  
24 *One of my race, a free-born man,*  
*From among the Easterns, I beheld there-*  
25 *A youth fair and well favoured,*  
*[a son of great rulers.]*  
26 *...and he came and attached himself to me.*  
27 *And I made him my intimate,*

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---

29 *And I put on a garb like theirs,  
Lest they should insult (?) me*

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A comrade with whom I shared my merchandise.  
28 I warned him against the Egyptians  
And against consorting with the unclean (Grant, *Gnosticism*, 118).

24 But there I saw a Cousin\* of mine from the East—a free person,  
25 Gracious, handsome, and young, a child of members of court:  
26 Who came and kept me company,  
27 And whom I made my friend and partner in my travels: had as a constant companion:  
28 And exhorted to guard against the Egyptians and against intercourse with their impurities (Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 372). \* Layton's footnote reads: "Probably not an indication of close blood relationship, but rather an Eastern title bestowed at royal court as a mark of honor." note "d," (372).

23 And forasmuch as I was alone I made mine aspect strange, and appeared as an alien to my people.  
24 And there I saw my kinsman from the East, the free-born  
25 a lad of grace and beauty, a son of princes (or an anointed one).  
26 He came unto me and dwelt with me,  
27 and I had him for a companion, and made him my friend and partaker in my journey (OT merchandise).  
28 And I charged him to beware of the Egyptians, and of partaking of those unclean things (James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 412).

23 And since I was all alone I was a stranger to my companions of my hostelry.  
24 But one of my race I saw there, A nobleman out of the East,  
25 A youth fair and lovable,  
26 An anointed one, And he came and attached himself to me  
27 And I made him my intimate friend, My companion to whom I communicated my business.  
28 I (He ?) warned him (me ?) against the Egyptians  
And against consorting with the unclean (Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:499).

As I was alone, [I was a stranger to my hosts who were my companions].  
But there I saw one of my fellow countrymen from the East, a free man,  
a youth gracious and favored, a son of the mighty.  
He came and joined me, and I made him my bosom companion, my friend, to whom I communicated.  
I warned him to watch the Egyptians  
and their unclean companionship (Cartlidge and Dungan, *Documents for the Study*, 47-48.).

## *Introduction*

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*because I had come from afar,<sup>156</sup>*  
30 *To take away the pearl,*  
*And (lest) they should arouse the serpent against me,*  
31 *But in some way or other*  
*They perceived that I was not their countryman;*  
32 *So they dealt with me treacherously,*  
*Moreover they gave me their food to eat.<sup>157</sup>*  
33 *I forgot that I was a son of kings.*  
*And I served their king;*  
34 *And I forgot the pearl,*  
*For which my parents had sent me,*

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<sup>156</sup> “29 But I clothed myself in garments like theirs,  
That they might not suspect that I was come from without”  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:499).

<sup>157</sup> I forgot that I was the son of a king,  
and I served their king,  
[and I forgot the pearl  
for which my parents had sent me].  
And from the heaviness of their food,  
I fell into a deep sleep.  
While I suffered all this,  
my parents were aware of it and suffered for me.  
A proclamation was announced in our kingdom  
that all should come to our gate  
(Cartlidge and Dungan, *Documents for the Study*, 48).

32 They gave me a mixture of cunning and treachery,  
and I tasted their food,  
33 I did not (any longer) recognize that I was a child of  
the (Great) King, but rather acted as servant to their king.  
34 And I even came to the pearl for which my parents had sent  
me on the mission  
35 But sank into deep sleep under the heaviness of their food  
(Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 372).



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35 *And by reason of the burden of their... [food<sup>158</sup>]*  
    *I lay in a deep sleep,*  
36 *But all these things that befell me*  
    *My parents perceived and were grieved for me;*  
37 *And a proclamation was made in our kingdom,*  
    *That all should speed to our gate,<sup>159</sup>*  
38 *Kings and princes of Parthia*  
    *And all the nobles of the East*  
39 *So they wove a plan on my behalf,*  
    *That I might not be left in Egypt,*  
40 *And they wrote to me a letter,*  
    *And every noble signed his name thereto:*  
41 *“From thy Father, the King of kings,*  
    *And thy Mother, the mistress of the East,*  
42 *And from thy Brother, our next in rank,*  
    *To thee our son, who art in Egypt, greeting!*  
43 *Up and arise from thy sleep,*  
    *And listen to the words of our letter*  
44 *Call to mind that thou art a son of kings!*  
    *See the slavery-whom thou servest!<sup>160</sup>*

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<sup>158</sup> Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:500.

<sup>159</sup> 36. Meanwhile the heavenly parents, aware of what has happened,  
37. call a family council  
38. of all the great and noble relatives,  
39. who decide it is time to act  
(Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 269).

36 But when this befell me, my fathers also were aware of it,  
and grieved for me,  
37 and a proclamation was published in our kingdom that all  
should meet at our doors  
(James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 412).

<sup>160</sup> 43 Awake and rise up from thy sleep,  
And hearken to the words of our letter.

## *Introduction*

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45 *Remember the pearl*  
    *For which thou didst speed to Egypt!*  
46 *Think of thy bright robe,*  
    *And remember thy glorious toga,*  
47 *Which thou shalt put on as thine adornment.*  
    *When thy name hath been read out*  
        *in the list of the valiant,*  
48 *And with thy Brother, our. ..*  
    *Thou shalt be ...in our kingdom.”<sup>161</sup>*  
49 *And my letter (was) a letter*  
    *Which the King sealed with his right hand,*  
50 *(To keep it) from the wicked ones,*  
    *the children of Babel,*  
    *And from the savage demons of ... [Sarburg<sup>162</sup>]*  
51 *It flew in the likeness of an eagle,*  
    *The king of all birds;*  
51 *It flew and alighted beside me,*  
    *And became all speech.*  
53 *At its voice and the sound of its rustling,*

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44 Remember that thou art a son of kings.  
    See the slavery—Him whom thou dost serve!  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:500).

45 Remember the pearl for the which thou wast sent into Egypt  
46 Remember thy garment spangled with gold,  
47 and the glorious mantle which thou shouldest wear  
    and wherewith thou shouldest deck thyself.  
    Thy name is named in the book of life,  
48 and with thy brother whom thou hast received (thou shalt  
be) in our kingdom (James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 413).

<sup>161</sup> 48 And thou with thy brother, our crown prince,  
Be heir in our kingdom”  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:501).

<sup>162</sup> Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:501.

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*I started and arose from my sleep.*<sup>163</sup>  
*54 I took it up and kissed it,*  
*And loosed its seal (?), (and) read;*<sup>164</sup>  
*55 And according to what was traced on my heart*  
*Were the words of my letter written.*<sup>165</sup>  
*56 I remembered that I was a son of kings,*

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<sup>163</sup> 53 At its voice and the sound of its rustling  
I awoke and stood up from my sleep,  
54 I took it and kissed it,  
Broke its seal and read.  
55 And even as it was engraven in my heart  
Were the words of my letter written  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:501).

<sup>164</sup> 54 He kisses the letter, breaks the seal, and reads,  
55 Lo, it is the same letter as that which he brought  
with him from on high written in his heart.  
56 He remembers that he is a King son,  
and his royal nature asserts itself  
(Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 270).

54 I took it up and kissed it,  
And loosed its seal [?], [and] read:  
55 And according to what was traced on my heart.  
Were the words of my letter written.  
56 I remembered that I was a son of kings,  
And my freedom longed for its own nature.  
57 I remembered the pearl,  
For which I had been sent to Egypt  
(Grant, *Gnosticism*, 119-20. Brackets in the original).

<sup>165</sup> 55 But what was written there concerned that which was  
engraved in my heart.  
56 And on the spot I remembered that I was a child of kings  
and that my people demanded my freedom (?).  
57 I also remembered the pearl for which I had been sent on the  
mission to Egypt, (Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 373).

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*And my free soul longed for its natural state.*<sup>166</sup>  
57 *I remembered the pearl,*  
*For which I had been sent to Egypt,*  
58 *And I began to charm him,*  
*The terrible loud-breathing serpent.*<sup>167</sup>  
59 *I hurried him to sleep and lulled him into slumber,*  
*For my Father's name I named over him,*  
60 *And the name of our next in rank,*  
*And of my Mother, the queen of the East;*  
61 *And I snatched away the pearl,*  
*And turned to go back to my Father's house.*  
62 *And their filthy and unclean garb*  
*I stripped off, and left it in their country,*<sup>168</sup>  
63 *And I took my way straight to come*

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<sup>166</sup> 56 I remembered that I was a son of kings  
And my noble birth asserted itself.  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:501).

<sup>167</sup> 58 And I began to cast a spell  
On the terrible loud-breathing serpent.  
59 I brought him to slumber and sleep  
By naming my father's name over him,  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:501.)

I began to cast a spell on the fearful serpent.  
I subdued him by naming my father's name.  
And the name of our next in rank,  
and of my mother, the Queen of the East.  
And I snatched the pearl,  
and I turned to go to my father's house.  
I stripped off their dirty robe  
and left it in their country  
(Cartlidge and Dungan, *Documents for the Study*, 48).

<sup>168</sup> 62 And I stripped off the filthy garment and left it in their land,  
63 and directed my way forthwith to the light of my fatherland  
in the East (James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 413).

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*To the light of our home, the East.*  
64 *And my letter, my awakener,*  
    *I found before me on the road,*  
65 *And as with its voice it had awakened me.*  
    *(So) too with its light it was leading me*<sup>169</sup>  
66 *... Shone before me with its form,*<sup>170</sup>  
67 *And with its voice and its guidance*  
    *It also encouraged me to speed,*  
68 *... And with his love was drawing me on.*<sup>171</sup>  
69 *I went forth, passed by ...*  
    *I left Babel on my left hand,*  
70 *And reached Maishin the great,*  
    *The haven of the merchants,*  
71 *That sitteth on the shore of the sea ...*  
72 *And my bright robe, which I had stripped off,*  
    *And the toga wherein it was wrapped,*<sup>172</sup>  
73 *From the heights of Hyrcania (?)*

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<sup>169</sup> 65 And as with its voice it had awakened me  
    [So] too with its light it was leading me  
66 For the royal garment of silk  
    Shone before me with its form,  
67 And with its voice and its guidance  
    It also encouraged me to speed,  
68 And with its love was drawing me on. (Grant, *Gnosticism*, 120).

<sup>170</sup> 66 For at times the royal garment of silk (shone) before mine eyes,  
67 (and with its voice and its guidance it also encouraged me  
    to speed,) (James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 414).

<sup>171</sup> 68 And drawing me with its love.  
69 I went forth, passed through Sarburg,  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:502).

<sup>172</sup> 72 His garment of light and his outer robe were waiting for him here  
(Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 270. Nibley adds, "Note that raiment is put on not only at the beginning of the journey and at the end, but is also donned at intermediate stages.")

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*My parents sent thither,  
74 By the hand of their treasurers,  
    Who in their faithfulness could be trusted therewith.  
75 And because I remembered not its fashion-  
    For in my childhood I had left it in my Father's house  
76 On a sudden, as I faced it,  
    The garment seemed to me like a mirror of myself.<sup>173</sup>  
77 I saw it all in my whole self,  
    Moreover I faced my whole self in (facing) it,  
78 For we were two in distinction  
    And yet again one in one likeness.<sup>174</sup>  
79 And the treasurers also,  
    Who brought it to me, I saw in like manner,  
80 That they were twain (yet) one likeness,*

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<sup>173</sup> 76 but suddenly, [when] I saw the garment made like unto me as it had been in a mirror.  
77 And I beheld upon it all myself (or saw it wholly in myself), and I knew and saw myself through it,  
78 that we were divided asunder, being of one; and again were one in one shape.  
79 Yea, the treasurers also which brought me the garment  
80 I beheld, that they were two, yet one shape was upon both, one royal sign was set upon both of them  
(James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 414).

<sup>174</sup> 78 For we were two in distinction  
And yet again one in one likeness.  
79 And the treasurers also,  
Who brought it to me, I saw in like manner,  
80 That they were twain [yet] one likeness,  
For there was graven on them one sign of the King,  
81 Whose hands [they were] “which restored to me [?] My treasure and my wealth by means of them,  
82 My bright embroidered robe,  
which was decorated with glorious colours;  
(Grant, *Gnosticism*, 121).

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*For one kingly sign was graven on them,<sup>175</sup>  
81 Of his hand that restored to me (?)  
My treasure and my wealth by means of them,  
82 My bright embroidered robe,  
Which ...with glorious colours;<sup>176</sup>  
83 With gold and with beryls,  
And rubies and agates (?)  
84 And sardonyxes varied in color,  
It also was made ready in its home on high (?).  
85 And with stones of adamant  
All its seams were fastened;<sup>177</sup>  
86 And the image of the King of kings  
Was depicted in full allover it,<sup>178</sup>  
87 And like the sapphire-stone also  
Were its manifold hues.  
88 Again I saw that all over it*

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<sup>175</sup> 80 That they were two of a single form,  
For one sign of the king was impressed upon them,  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:502).

<sup>176</sup> 82 My splendid robe adorned  
Gleaming in glorious colours,  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:502).

<sup>177</sup> 85 "Fastened everywhere with diamond clasps." (Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 271 . Nibley adds this note: "All its seams were sewn with diamonds" [Adam]. This indicates that the garment, though the same one, is now enhanced, *gesteigert*, the same garment, but a better one, enriched by earthly merits and victory [Hoffmann, p. 286])."

<sup>178</sup> 86 And the likeness of the king of kings  
Was completely embroidered all over it  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:503).

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86 And the image of the King of Kings covered the whole thing. (Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 271. Nibley adds this note: "If the whole rest of the poem is applied to the garment only, it is full of strange anomalies, which become perfectly clear in terms of the well-known Veil of the Temple.")

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*The motions of knowledge were stirring,*  
89 *And as if to speak*  
    *I saw it also making itself ready.*<sup>179</sup>  
90 *I heard the sound of its tones,*  
    *Which it uttered to those who brought it down (?)*  
91 *Saying, "I ...*  
    *Whom they reared for him (?)*  
    *in the presence of my father,*<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> 89 And as if to speak  
    I saw it also making itself ready.  
90 I heard the sound of its tones,  
    Which it uttered to those who brought it down [?]  
91 Saying," I am he who is mighty in deeds  
    I whom they reared for him in the presence of my father,  
92 And I also perceived in myself (Grant, *Gnosticism*,121).

<sup>180</sup> 91 "I belong to the most valiant servant,  
    For whom they reared me before my father,  
92 And I perceived also in myself  
    That my stature grew according to his labours."  
93 And with its royal movements  
    It poured itself entirely toward me,  
94 And in the hands of its bringers  
    It hastened, that I might take it;  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:503).

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91 I am of him that is more valiant than all men,  
    for whose sake I was reared up with the Father himself.  
92 And I also perceived his stature  
(Greek reads, "I perceived in myself that my stature  
    grew in accordance with his working).  
93 And all Its royal motions rested upon me as it grew toward  
    the impulse of it (And with its kingly motions it was spreading itself toward me).  
94 And it hastened, reaching out from the hand of (him that  
    brought it) unto him that would receive it,  
95 and me also did yearning arouse to start forth and meet it  
    and receive it.  
96 And I stretched forth and received it, and adorned myself with



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92 *And I also perceived in myself  
That my stature was growing according to his labors.”*  
93 *And in its kingly motions  
It was spreading itself out towards me,*  
94 *And in the hands of its givers  
It hastened that I might take it.*  
95 *And me too, my love urged on  
That I should run to meet it and receive it,*  
96 *And I stretched forth and received it,  
With the beauty of its colors I adorned myself.<sup>181</sup>*  
97 *And my toga of brilliant colors  
I cast around me, in its whole breadth.*  
98 *I clothed myself therewith, and ascended  
To the gate of salutation and homage;*  
99 *I bowed my head, and did homage  
To the Majesty of my Father, who had sent it to me,*

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the beauty of the colours thereof,  
97 and in my royal robe excelling in beauty I arrayed myself wholly.  
98 And when I had put it on, I was lifted up unto the place of  
peace (salutation) and homage,  
99 and I bowed my head and worshipped the brightness of the  
Father which had sent it unto me,  
100 for I had performed his commandments, and he likewise  
that which he had promised,  
101 and at the doors of his palace which was from the beginning  
I mingled among (his nobles),  
102 and he rejoiced over me and received me with him into his palace,  
103 and all his servants do praise him with sweet voices.  
104 And he promised me that with him I shall be sent unto the  
gates of the king,  
105 that with my gifts and my pearl we may appear together  
before the king (James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 414-15).

<sup>181</sup> 96 And I stretched out and received it,  
adorned myself with the beauty of its colors  
97 and wrapped myself completely in my shining mantle  
(Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 271).

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100 *For I had done his commandments,  
And he too had done what he promised,*  
101 *And at the gate of his princes  
I mingled with his nobles;*  
102 *For he rejoiced in me and received me,  
And I was with him in his kingdom.*  
103 *And With the voice of ...  
All his servants glorify him.*<sup>182</sup>  
104 *And he promised that also to the gate  
Of the King of kings I should speed with him,*  
105 *And bringing my gift and my pearl  
I should appear with him before our King.*<sup>183</sup>

The *Hymn of the Pearl* may be the most perfect of all of the ancient renderings of the cosmic myth. As one will readily observe, Bevan's translation, though occasionally differing from the work of later translators, remains the basic English translation of the text.

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<sup>182</sup> All his subjects hymned with beautiful voices  
(Cartlidge and Dungan, *Documents for the Study*, 50).

<sup>183</sup> *Bevan, Hymn of the Soul*, 12-31.

## The Cosmic Myth and Sacred Space

The ancient Hebrew temple rituals were a dramatic presentation of the cosmic myth. In that presentation, the sense of aloneness and longing for home that we find in the *Hymn of the Pearl* is shown to be a consequence of the fall of Adam and Eve, when they were expelled from the Garden of Eden where they had walked and talked with God. They had unrestricted access to the fruit of the tree of life and to the waters of life. Jewish tradition holds that they had been clothed in a garment of light,<sup>184</sup> which Nibley suggests was the Shechinah.<sup>185</sup> The loss of all of these things—one's personal relationship with God, clothing that defined one as sacred space, food and drink that kept one's body forever young—the loss of those things left humankind naked, vulnerable, hungry, and increasingly feeble until only death could release them from their infirmities. Yearning to return home was the foundation principle of the ancient Israelite religion. It was an expression of hope that somehow they might regain access to the paradisiacal world, partake of the fruit, and participate in the society of the gods. (Essentially it was the hope whose fulfillment is described in the last three chapters of the Book of Revelation.) For mankind, the wish to return to the presence of God is the wish to return to sacred time in sacred space.<sup>186</sup> Hauglid observes that the ritualized myth of the ancient temple drama enabled people symbolically to do that. He writes:

Myth, like the temple, served as a means whereby man could go back to the sacred time in which all things were created and participate with the gods through rites and ceremonies depicting those creative acts. Thus, by being contemporary with these divine beings, archaic man learned and received regenerative powers to control or renew his environment to create order out of chaos. This power could be manifested over plants, animals, and even time itself.

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<sup>184</sup> For a discussion of that garment of light and its significance, see Ricks, "Garment of Adam," 705-39.

<sup>185</sup> Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981, 2000), 373; Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, in CWHN 14:373. See "Shechinah" in LDS Bible dictionary.

<sup>186</sup> For discussions of sacred space, see Lundquist, "Common Temple Ideology," 57; Lundquist, "What Is a Temple?" 89-91; Donald W. Parry, "Demarcation between Sacred Space and Profane Space: the Temple of Herod Model," *Temples of the Ancient World*, 413-39.

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Hence, the re-enactment of ancient myths was a significant setting for the return to sacred time, whereby man could become more like the gods and secure divine powers.<sup>187</sup>

The ultimate sacred space is God's temple in Kolob, where God's throne is, and where the Council of Heaven took place.<sup>188</sup> However, in this world, sacred space is where God and his children can come to meet together. It is the mountain top to which man must ascend, and to which God may descend.<sup>189</sup> It is separate and apart from the profane world. It is the pinnacle of the earth. Perhaps the greatest gift that Hugh Nibley gave to Latter-day Saints was that he taught us that the poetry of the Psalms and Isaiah are not just vaguely symbolic, but are carefully encoded—and Nibley has taught us much of the code—"mountain" frequently means "temple,"<sup>190</sup> as, for example, in the following:

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the

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<sup>187</sup> Brian M. Hauglid, "Sacred Time and the Temple," *Temples of the Ancient World*, 639-40.

<sup>188</sup> Joseph Smith identified Kolob as the place where the Council met. "A Vision," *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, Illinois: February 1, 1843.).

<sup>189</sup> For discussions of the temple as a mountain, see Richard J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972); Richard J. Clifford, "The Temple and the Holy Mountain," *Temple in Antiquity*, 107-24; J. A. Emerton, "The 'Mountain of God' in Psalm 68:16," *History and Traditions of Early Israel*, ed. Andre Lemaire and Benedikt Otzen (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 24-37; Lundquist, "What Is a Temple?" 84-86; Lundquist, "Common Temple Ideology," 60-69; John M. Lundquist, "Temple, Covenant, and Law in the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament," *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration*, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988), 293-305; Nibley, "On the Sacred and the Symbolic," 545-47; Donald W. Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary," *Temples of the Ancient World*, 137-38; Ricks and Sroka, "King, Coronation, and Temple," 236-71; M. Catherine Thomas, "Hebrews: To Ascend the Holy Mount," *Temples of the Ancient World* 479-91; Hamblin, "Temple Motifs," 440-76; Lundquist, "What Is a Temple?" 83-117; Nibley, "Circle and the Square," 139-73; Nibley, "What Is a Temple?" 357-61; Jay A. Parry and Donald W. Parry, "The Temple in Heaven: Its Description and Significance," *Temples of the Ancient World*, 515-32.

<sup>190</sup> Hugh Nibley, "The Mountain of the Lord's House," *Ancient Documents and the Pearl of Great Price*, ed. Robert Smith and Robert Smythe [n.p., n.d.]; For examples, see Psalms 43:3-4, 68:16; Isaiah 2:3.

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hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.<sup>191</sup>

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths (Isaiah 2:2-3).

In Jewish tradition, the first temple was the hill that rose from the chaotic waters to become the Garden of Eden.<sup>192</sup> The next temple was the ark that carried Noah and his family above those chaotic waters.<sup>193</sup> Then Mount Sinai where Moses talked with God. While there, God instructed Moses to build a Tabernacle to replicate the symbolism of the holy mountain. Later, God authorized David and Solomon to build the Temple on Mount Moriah in the city of Jerusalem. It would be a place of meeting—a designated sacred

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<sup>191</sup> On ziggurats (temple platforms) as artificial mountains, see Theodor Dombart, *Zikkurat und Pyramide* (Munich: Beck, 1915); idem, *Der Sakralturm* (Munich, Beck, 1920); idem, *Der Turm zu Babel* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1930).

<sup>192</sup> For discussions of the hillock that was the Garden of Eden, see Lundquist, "Common Temple Ideology," 60-66; Lundquist, "What Is a Temple?" 86-88; Parry, "Garden of Eden," 126-51.

<sup>193</sup> One way of defining sacred space is by its dimensions. Anciently, the most sacred geometric shape was the Golden Rectangle, whose dimensions were always the same proportions as 3x5, 5x8, and so forth. For example, The Lord instructed Noah:

And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits (Genesis 6:15).

So looking at Noah's ark from the front it would have been 30 cubits high and 50 cubits wide.

The Lord instructed Moses:

And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half [5 halves] shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half [3 halves] the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof (Exodus 25:10).

That, of course, was the same dimensions as the mercy seat:

And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof (Exodus 25:1-40).

And it was also the same proportions as the altar.

And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits (Exodus 27:1-21).

From the Golden Rectangle can be made another sacred geometric design, the Golden Spiral. For a discussions of both, see Gyorgy Doczi, *The Power of Limits: Proportional Harmonies in Nature, Art, and Architecture* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1981).

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space where God and his children could converse together. Solomon's Temple was twice the size of the Tabernacle in every direction, so was symbolically a reproduction of the Tabernacle, and therefore of the sacred mountain.<sup>194</sup> Mount Moriah is the outcropping in Jerusalem where the Dome of the Rock now sits.<sup>195</sup> It was the place Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac. Because the Temple and the Tabernacle were symbolically the same, Mary Douglas's observations about the Tabernacle are equally applicable to Solomon's Temple. She writes:

If they were in imagination to be laid one on top of each other, the three parts of the tabernacle of unequal, diminishing, size, would correspond also to an image of Mount Sinai, the largest slopes first, narrowing towards the summit. There is an age-old association between the tabernacle and the holy mountain, which the book of Exodus also divides into three parts of unequal size. The lower slopes of the mountain were the area for the lay congregation, on the middle slopes a banquet is prepared by God for Moses, Aaron, and seventy elders. On the summit, the smallest part of all, only God is found, and God called Moses to come up to him (Exodus 24).<sup>196</sup>

Another way of describing sacred space as understood by the ancient Israelites is as a series of concentric circles, each identified by a wall or veil, and with the smaller, inner

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<sup>194</sup> For discussions on God's instructions to build temples, see Lundquist, "Common Temple Ideology," 58; Marion D. Hanks, "Christ Manifested to His People," *Temples of the Ancient World*, 7-11; Lundquist, "What Is a Temple?" 94; Carol L. Meyers, "Jachin and Boaz in Religious and Political Perspective," *Temple in Antiquity*, 143-45; Stephen D. Ricks and Michael A. Carter, "Temple-Building Motifs: Mesopotamia, Ancient Israel, Ugarit, and Kirtland," *Temples of the Ancient World*, 152-76.

God told Noah the dimensions of the ark (Genesis 6:14); he told Moses the dimensions of the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:10), and of the tabernacle (Exodus 26-27), and described the clothes the High Priest should wear (Exodus 28). He gave Solomon the pattern for his Temple (2 Chronicles 3). He gave Joseph Smith the measurements of the Kirtland Temple (D&C 94). He is equally explicit about future temples. Ezekiel gives us precise measurements of a temple yet to be built (Ezekiel 40-43), and John gives us the measurements of a temple in the celestial world (Revelation 21)

<sup>195</sup> Freedman and Frey, "The Dome of the Rock," 635-49.

<sup>196</sup> Douglas, *Jacob's Tears*. She shows that the book of Leviticus was also patterned after the temple, 149-52.

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ones always being more sacred than the larger ones. In their view, the whole earth was God's footstool and therefore sacred. On the earth, the most sacred space was Jerusalem; and within Jerusalem it was the temple precinct. Within the walls of the temple grounds stood the Temple itself; and within the Temple was the Holy Place where there was an incense altar, the shewbread table,<sup>197</sup> and the Menorah, whose arms (extending as in prayer) represented the branches of the tree of life. At its back wall was a beautiful veil covered with embroidered cherubim. The veil represented the Shechinah, the veil of light that separates man from God.<sup>198</sup> Behind that veil, even deeper within the Temple, was the Holy of Holies in which sat the Ark of the Covenant and God's golden throne that stood against the back wall of the Holy of Holies.

Mount Moriah is the Rock designated as God's "holy hill" in Psalm 2. It was understood by the ancient Israelites to be the connecting place between heaven and earth, the umbilical cord that brought God's life and light to the earth so that the world and its people could be succored by him, and remain alive.

In the Holy of Holies the Ark of the Covenant was not located *on* the Rock, but

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<sup>197</sup> Margaret Barker observes, "The Bread of the Presence in the temple had been moulded in a special way before it was baked, and the devotees of the Queen of Heaven had made special bread to depict her" (*Great High Priest*, 102).

It has been suggested that the twelve breads represented the members of a family, and the bread molded like a woman represented the wife. Or perhaps the bread represented a wedding feast, and the woman was a bride.

<sup>198</sup> The Shechinah is the first thing one sees, and sometimes the only thing the prophets mention, when they are brought into the presence of God. It is described many ways, but always as a bright light—sometimes a fire, sometimes a cloud. Examples are Lehi's report that "there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him" (1 Nephi 1:6); Moses's experience when "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." (Exodus 3:2); The story in Ether where, "the Lord came down and talked with the brother of Jared; and he was in a cloud, and the brother of Jared saw him not" (Ether 2:4); and the Prophet Joseph's "I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me" (Joseph Smith-History:16).

Joseph's making a point of describing the Shechinah in connection with his account of the First Vision is another evidence that he was telling the truth. For additional information about the Shechinah see that word in the dictionary at the back of the LDS Bible.

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rather *in* it. A brilliant Jewish archaeologist, Leen Ritmeyer, has identified the place.<sup>199</sup> There is a man-made indentation in the surface of the Rock that has the same dimensions as the Bible's description of the Ark of the Covenant. Ritmeyer believes that the Ark sat in that indentation. If he is correct, the Ark became an extension of the Rock itself. So the Ark was now the connecting place between heaven and earth. Harrelson describes the key to understanding that relationship. He writes:

Yahweh is Lord of the universe, but the seat of His rule is Zion, the holy hill. The poets of Israel have also drawn upon ancient Near Eastern mythology in their description of Zion and of Yahweh's rule there. In Psalm 46, Zion is the mountain-city from which the waters flow out to water the earth (see Genesis 2:10-14; Ezekiel 28). Psalm 48 is an even more mythological hymn, representing Zion to be the meeting place of heaven and earth. The nations sought to storm the city but Yahweh scattered them in His wrath. ...For these psalmists, Zion is already the center of the universe, the fount of blessing for both Israel and the foreign nations.<sup>200</sup>

Psalm 46 celebrates Jerusalem as God's own sacred space:

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,  
and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
- 3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,  
though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.
- 4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,  
the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

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<sup>199</sup> Ritmeyer is an authority on the archaeology of the Temple Mount. He describes the depression into which the Ark fit in two publications. The first was written with his wife Kathleen. It is *Secrets of Jerusalem's Temple Mount* (Washington, D. C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1998). A more recent, detailed account is in Ritmeyer's *The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Carta and the Lamb Foundation, 2006), especially chapter six, "The Location of the Temple."

<sup>200</sup> Walter J. Harrelson, *Interpreting the Old Testament* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 414.



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- 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:  
    God shall help her, and that right early.
- 6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved:  
    he uttered his voice, the earth melted.
- 7 The Lord of hosts is with us;  
    the God of Jacob is our refuge.
- 8 Come, behold the works of the Lord,  
    what desolations he hath made in the earth.
- 9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;  
    he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;  
    he burneth the chariot in the fire.
- 10 Be still, and know that I am God:  
    I will be exalted among the heathen,  
    I will be exalted in the earth.
- 11 The Lord of hosts is with us;  
    the God of Jacob is our refuge (Psalm 46:1-11).

When Solomon built his Temple with the great golden throne in the Holy of Holies, the Ark became an extension of that throne. It was the footstool, the way by which the king ascended to the throne of God.<sup>201</sup> We shall see the significance of that ceremony when, at the end of the Israelite temple drama, the king was anointed and adopted as a son of God. Then he could—and did—legitimately sit upon that throne with his feet securely placed upon the Ark. Thus the king became the extension of the Ark and the Rock. He was the personification of God's authority, and the legitimate connecting place between heaven and earth. Not only the Holy of Holies in which he sat, but the king himself, was sacred space.<sup>202</sup> Isaiah celebrated that event with these words:

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<sup>201</sup> For a discussion of the Ark of the Covenant as a footstool, see Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus, The Origins of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1986), 210-11.

<sup>202</sup> As we will discuss in detail below, the purpose of the temple drama was to symbolically bring all the participants into the Holy of Holies, and to make them all and make them all priests and sacral kings, so all would be sacred space—temples, just as Paul told the early Christians:

16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

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7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

9 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God (Isaiah 52:7-10).<sup>203</sup>

That was the scripture with which King Noah's priests challenged Abinadi, expecting the prophet to respond that Isaiah meant that the king himself was God's legal representative on the earth.<sup>204</sup>

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## **Sacred Time in Sacred Space**

Mircea Eliade clarified the meanings of sacred and profane space, when he explained that the totality of space is divided into three major parts: the Underworld, the world we live in, and the world inhabited by the Gods. He wrote:

From all that has been said, it follows that the true [physical] world is always in the middle, at the Center, for it is here that there is a break in plane and hence communication among the three cosmic zones. Whatever the extent of the territory involved, the cosmos that it represents is always perfect. An entire country (e.g., Palestine), a city (Jerusalem), a sanctuary (the Temple in Jerusalem), all equally well present an *imago mundi*. Treating of the symbolism

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<sup>203</sup> The passage from Isaiah is one of the most beautiful and most frequently re-quoted in the scriptures of all the other scriptures. The first verse is quoted or paraphrased in Nahum 1:15, Romans 10:15, 1 Nephi 13:37, Mosiah 12:17-21, 3 Nephi 20:40, D&C 128:19, and is probably alluded to in Ephesians 6:1, D&C 27:16, and others.

<sup>204</sup> The implications of the priests' challenge and of Abinadi's response are discussed in the chapter called, "Abinadi: The Drama's Sacral Kingship is about Being a Child of God."

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of the Temple, Flavius Josephus wrote that the court represented the sea (i.e., the lower regions), the Holy Place represented earth, and the Holy of Holies heaven. It is clear, then, that both the *imago mundi* and the Center are repeated in the inhabited world. Palestine, Jerusalem, and the Temple severally and concurrently represent the image of the universe and the Center of the World. This multiplicity of centers and this reiteration of the image of the world on smaller and smaller scales constitute one of the specific characteristics of traditional societies.<sup>205</sup>

When people begin to create sacred space (as they did before they begin the construction of an ancient temple), their first step was to define the place by measuring the area so it could be enclosed by a wall or a veil, for sacred space was always defined by setting it apart from profane space. That was the most fundamental criteria for man-made sacred space—it must be measured, defined, and set apart. Hudson explains:

Using these general categories, sacred space is comprised of three fundamental elements: it is space that is set apart from other spaces, it is space that is closely connected to Deity, and it is space that evokes response from humankind. In summary then, sacred space is divinely disconnected space that provokes worship in humankind and provides relational connection in a world replete with profane, chaotic space.<sup>206</sup>

Sacred time is the time one experiences in sacred space. It is important for us to know that before the fall, Adam and Eve were not in profane, linear time.<sup>207</sup> If they had been,

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<sup>205</sup> Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 42-43.

<sup>206</sup> Don Michael Hudson, "From Chaos to Cosmos: Sacred Space in Genesis," *Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 108 (1996): 87-97.

<sup>207</sup> The Lord explains:

12 And the Gods commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat,  
13 But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the time that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Now I, Abraham, saw that it was after the Lord's time, which was after the time of Kolob; for as yet the Gods had not appointed unto Adam his reckoning.

14 And the Gods said: Let us make an help meet for the man, for it is not good that the man should be alone, therefore we will form an help meet for him (Abraham 5:12-14).

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then Eden could not have been a temple, and God could not have walked there, for sacred time and space are each part of the other. One experiences sacred time in sacred space, and sacred space in sacred time.

When Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden they not only entered profane space, they also entered linear time.<sup>208</sup> Linear time only exists in the instant—the moment of the present. It is perceived to move in only one direction, always toward the future, never toward the past. But it can never reach into the future, just as it can not go back to the past. It is always and only in the present, looking toward inevitable entropy. As Eliade observes, “Definitively desacralized, time presents itself as a precarious and evanescent duration, leading irremediably to death.”<sup>209</sup>

In contrast, God’s time imposes no limitations. In our physical world, we have the ability to move back and forth in space, but not in time. In God’s world, he can move from past to present or future as though there were neither past nor future, only an eternal *Now*. One of the best examples of that in the scriptures is in the interview between God and Moses:

27 And it came to pass, as the voice was still speaking, Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it; and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the spirit of God.

28 And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not; and he discerned them by the Spirit of God; and their numbers were great, even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore.

29 And he beheld many lands; and each land was called earth, and there were inhabitants on the face thereof (Moses 1:27-29).

Again, we turn to Eliade for an explanation:

One essential difference between these two qualities of time strikes us

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<sup>208</sup> About the nature of our time, Neal A. Maxwell observes, “We also live in the dimension of time which, by its very nature, creates vexing suspense for us. Life is so designed that we use our moral agency by choosing for ourselves daily. This steady stream of our responses forms a cumulative record out of which we will later be judged. This same plan, a framework for life, ensures that we are to overcome by faith, not by perfect knowledge” (Neal A. Maxwell, *Lord Increase Our Faith* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994], 42).

<sup>209</sup> Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 113.

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immediately: by its very nature sacred time is reversible in the sense that, properly speaking, it is a primordial mythical time made present. Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past “in the beginning.” Religious participation in a festival implies emerging from ordinary temporal duration and reintegration of the mythical time reactualized by the festival itself. Hence sacred time is indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable. From one point of view it could be said that it does not “pass,” that it does not constitute an irreversible duration.<sup>210</sup>

Most relevant to each of us, personally, is that true love and eternal friendships originate and continue in sacred space and sacred time.

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<sup>210</sup> Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 68-69.

## The Value of a Temple

Because the ancient Jerusalem Temple was an island set apart from profane space and time, it could introduce people into the presence of the divine. Participation in the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama was equivalent to accepting an invitation to enter the Jerusalem Temple and experience sacred time. One of the reasons this could be so, as Eliade explained, was that the Tabernacle and Temple were patterned after Jehovah's own heavenly temple:

For the people of Israel, the models of the tabernacle, of all the sacred utensils, and of the temple itself had been created by Yahweh who revealed them to his chosen, to be reproduced on earth. Thus Yahweh says to Moses: "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Exodus, 25, 8-9). "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (ibid., 25, 40). When David gave his son Solomon the plans for the Temple buildings, the tabernacle, and all the utensils, he assured him that "all this ...the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me" (II Chronicles, 28, 19). He must, then, have seen the celestial model created by Yahweh from the beginning of time. This is what Solomon affirms: "Thou hast commanded me to build a temple upon thy holy mount, and an altar in the city wherein thou dwellest, a resemblance of the holy tabernacle which thou hast prepared from the beginning" (*Wisdom of Solomon*, 9.8).<sup>211</sup>

Ahlstrom concurred:

The temple was considered to mirror everything that happened in the heavens; it was a replica of the heavenly abode of the deity. The phenomenon can be expressed in the idea that the temple "was" the deity mountain. When a deity acts for his people, either culticly or in a prophet's vision, it is always according to the pattern of life that was believed to exist in heaven, yea, in the temple, cf. Psalm

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<sup>211</sup> Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 60.

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11:4, Isa. 6:1 fr., Hab. 2:20. "Heaven and earth reflect or image each other," says S. A. Cook. This is particularly true of the relationship between heaven and temple.<sup>212</sup>

Moses's Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple were constructed according to the Lord's instructions, after the pattern of the temple in Heaven. Nibley was even more specific. He wrote:

Where did the creation begin? The answer for the Jews was in the temple: "The first thing which emerged from the primordial waters was the temple," from which point creation spread in all directions, specifically this earthly creation, for the temple was actually transplanted from a preexistent world created long before. The ancient temple drama begins with the Council in Heaven when the creation is being planned.<sup>213</sup>

The ancient Israelites understood there was a heavenly temple where the scenes of the Council of Heaven took place.<sup>214</sup> That Temple contained God's heavenly throne ("the Lord's throne is in heaven"<sup>215</sup>) And there was also an earthly Temple at Jerusalem which contained the throne where God "dwellest between the cherubims."<sup>216</sup>

The ancient Israelites also believed that the ceremonies performed in the Jerusalem Temple were a reflection or remembrance of the ceremonies performed in the celestial temple. Thus, Eliade described the ancient temple drama as a return to sacred time in sacred space:

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<sup>212</sup> Ahlstrom, *Joel and the Temple*, 73.

<sup>213</sup> Nibley, "Return to the Temple," 72.

<sup>214</sup> For example, Isaiah seems to be about the Council at the heavenly temple in Isaiah 6. See Parry and Parry, "Temple in Heaven, 515-32. For other comments about the Council of the gods, see Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:150-51.

<sup>215</sup> Psalm 11:4.

<sup>216</sup> Psalm 80:1 and 99:1. For a discussion of the cherubim and their symbolism, see Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 211-13.

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By examining the cosmological symbolism of the temples, we gain a better understanding of this close kinship between space and sacred time. ... The profound reason for all these symbols is clear: the temple is the image of the sanctified world. The holiness of the temple sanctifies both the cosmos and cosmic time. Therefore, the temple represents the original state of the world: the pure world that was not worn out by time or sullied by an invasion of the profane. This is the very image of the world as it was before history, at the very moment when it emerged from the hands of the Creator.<sup>217</sup>

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## **The Ancient Temple Drama as a Return to Sacred Space in Sacred Time**

The purpose of the ancient festival's temple drama was to invite each participant into sacred time where each could learn his or her own place in the universe, and see from afar the purposes of this physical space and linear time—to demonstrate that their being in this world was neither haphazard nor coincidental, but that each came here by design. Their purpose was defined by God's covenants with all of Israel as a nation, but more specifically by God's covenants with each individual member of the group through the ceremonial actions of the king.

In terms of the nation, the covenants had to do with God's promising to secure an environment of peace and prosperity in which the people would be free to keep their individual covenants—a promised land.

In terms of the individual, the drama taught each one his or her own place in the plan. The drama was important because the plan was most easily understood in the drama's actualizing—as an ever-new reality—the events described by the pattern of the great cosmic myth. Thus the scenes of the drama showed why it was necessary that they leave their celestial home to face the uncertainties of this life. It also showed that before they came here, they were, or were promised that they would be, equipped with all of the priesthood and kingship powers necessary to guarantee their success.<sup>218</sup> While the

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<sup>217</sup> Eliade, "Prestige of the Cosmogonic Myth," 140.

<sup>218</sup> As will be shown below, Psalm 22 extends that promise even to the dead.



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denotations of the covenants and instructions given in the festival drama were spoken generically (that is, given in such broad terms that they were equally applicable to everyone), the connotations could be focused on the single needs and responsibilities of every individual—for their meanings were left to the interpretation of each individual.

The availability of that richness of interpretation is made apparent in the poetry of the psalms. Poetry is, by its very nature, symbolic, so the symbolism embedded in the words of the psalms can simultaneously have universal application, and can touch the most intimate inner reaches of an individual human soul.

For example, Psalm 21 was part of one of the concluding ceremonies of the festival drama.<sup>219</sup> One can know that by its words. It was spoken about one who had been dressed in sacred robes; had asked for the blessings of eternal life; and had requested that he be accepted into Jehovah's presence.

As we shall discuss in detail below, the most likely scene in the drama where these requests would have been made was in the Jerusalem Temple after the coronation ceremony, and before the king entered the Holy of Holies. So the most obvious, ritualistic interpretation of the psalm is that it was a request to enter God's own sacred space. But that interpretation entirely begs the question of what that scene, and the words of the psalm, meant to the individuals in the audience who were symbolically experiencing in the same ordinances the king was enacting. When one makes those requests, one asks to enter the realm of the divine—in sacred space and sacred time. He had ascended the holy mountain and could turn and look back on the events of the drama that had brought him to the veil that now blocked his way into the Holy of Holies. Implicit in his requests was an assertion that he had fulfilled each aspect of his assignment and he had come honestly to the mountain's summit—he was worthy to be there.

The veil was made of fine linen. It was embroidered with threads of blue, purple and crimson with representations of cherubim—probably representing the angels and members of the Council who stood guard before the gates of heaven. It was these guards through whom the king and each of his subjects must pass in order to approach the throne of God in the Holy of Holies (2 Chronicles 3:14).<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> The ceremonial setting of Psalm 21 is described in the chapter called, "The King at the Veil of Solomon's Temple."

<sup>220</sup> Jewish tradition held that the cherubim guarded the throne. They appear in Isaiah chapter 6 to be both guardians and messengers of God.

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It was the king who stood there, representing all the members of the congregation, but the true meaning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Psalm must be sought within each human heart, as each symbolically stood before that splendid veil.<sup>221</sup>

It was then, in sacred time, at the ancient temple veil, that the whole drama became alive with meaning. The purpose of the drama was not just to reaffirm one's eternal identity and relationship with God. It had first been that when they were expelled from the Garden. But its primary purpose was to provide instruction—to teach each individual how to come to this sacred place in sacred time, and to show them how they might actualize the final chapter of the cosmic myth—to teach each one about the way to come home again. Mowinckel emphasized that concept when he wrote:

To the Hebrew, 'time' is not an empty formal notion, a concept or category in the Kantian sense, but is inseparable from its entire content. 'Time' is all that exists and happens in time. It is the sum of the content of the years. 'Father of Eternity' and 'Father of Years' are therefore identical conceptions. They indicate the one who produces, directs, and is Lord of the ever-changing years, who lets the years with all their content of events follow each other in constant succession, who thus produces and directs 'eternity,' the entire fullness of events and reality. It is evident that such a name really belongs to a god, and not just any god, but *the* god, 'the high god', 'the supreme god', 'the father of the gods.' That the Jews, too, knew and used this title is apparent from a number of passages.<sup>222</sup>

Ultimately, the power of the ancient temple drama lay, not in what happened and what was said, but in what did not happen and what was not said. That is, its richness lay in what the participants understood—just as is so with reading the scriptures. The new initiate to the ceremonies, and the seasoned participant, each heard the same words, but

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Barker writes, "The veil was the boundary between earth and heaven. Josephus and Philo agree that the four different colours from which it was woven represented the four elements from which the world was created: earth, air, fire and water. The scarlet thread represented fire, the blue was the air, the purple was the sea, i.e. water, and the white linen represented the earth in which the flax had grown (*War* 5.212-13)" (Barker, *Great High Priest*, 190).

<sup>221</sup> The setting and meaning of Psalm 21 are discussed below.

<sup>222</sup> Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 105-6.

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the words themselves were defined by the experience and understanding that each individual brought to bear on them.

The drama of the Feast of Tabernacles focused on the overriding power of Jehovah. The expanse of time represented in the drama began when Jehovah, the people of Israel, and their reigning king first made covenants in the premortal world. Then it shepherded them through the darkness of this earthly experience to the light beyond, into the far distant future when Jehovah himself would reign in a world of peace and security. Commenting on the reach of the culmination of the drama, Margaret Barker observes, “Texts which speak of what happened before the world was created, or what happened in eternity, are describing rituals in the holy of holies, presumably the secrets from beyond the curtain, which Jesus the great high priest is said to have taught.”<sup>223</sup>

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## **The Powers of Symbols**

These were the secrets that were hidden from the foundation of the world. They had always been hidden and they will always be hidden. For that reason they might not be spoken except in symbols and code. All the world might be able to see the symbols, but they may only be read and understood by those who already know the code—and the code can only be known in the context of sacred space and sacred time.<sup>224</sup> But it can be known. As is recorded in the apocrypha, “Jesus said, ‘Recognize what is before you, and what is hidden from you will be revealed to you; for there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.’”<sup>225</sup>

Ollenburger explains why symbols are a more powerful way of expressing religious ideas than are only the words expressed in spoken or written language:

1. First of all, it is important to recognize that when we speak of symbols we are actually referring to a symbolic relationship. This symbolic relationship consists of

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<sup>223</sup> Barker, *Great High Priest*, 81-82.

<sup>224</sup> For scriptures that talk about revealing things that are hidden from the foundation of the world, see 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ether 4:15; D&C 124:38, and 128:18.

<sup>225</sup> *The Coptic Gospel of Thomas* in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Schneemelcher, 2:118 5.

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what are sometimes called vehicle and tenor, that is, the object and what it symbolizes. The relationship between the symbol and its meaning(s), vehicle and tenor, is not possible to determine merely on the basis of the symbolic object itself. That is because symbolic relationships are conventional; they are cultural conventions which, while not merely arbitrary, are not merely 'natural' either. For that reason symbols have meaning within the cultural context, or symbolic processes, of which they are a part.

2. Second, symbols are multivalent, or multivocal. This means that a symbol may never be reduced to simply one meaning. ...

3. Third, and related to the first point, symbols have meaning within a set of symbolic relations, or within a symbol system means that symbols have to be interpreted within the 'symbolic design' in which they are located. Within such a symbolic design symbols function as part of a 'network of relationships', and this network is structured around a 'central symbol'. ...

4. This also means that we will need to devote some attention to the tradition out of which Zion symbolism developed, and to the ritual setting in which this symbolism played a primary role. For that reason we will spend some time trying to establish the relationship of Zion symbolism to the celebration of Yahweh as king in Jerusalem.

5. Finally, ...Symbols not only evoke memory within a traditional context, they impose obligations on those for whom they function as central symbols. This is especially true of religious symbols. They have the power to impose such obligations because they convey most concretely and with the most force the true nature of reality, the way the world really is.<sup>226</sup>

The symbolism of the Jerusalem Temple's most sacred time and space were concealed behind its embroidered veil, just as, in reality, the ultimate sacred time and space, and the beauties found within, are secreted behind the veil of light that separates us from God. The veil always separates the most sacred from the less sacred—the most sacred is always within the veil. For example, the Garden of Eden was the first temple, but within that

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<sup>226</sup> Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion, the City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 19-21.

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temple were two people clothed in garments of light.<sup>227</sup> Thus, by definition, the people were more sacred than the garden. When the people left the Garden they were given another garment that was to temporarily replace the one they had lost. Within that garment, they were still sacred space.<sup>228</sup> They were, by definition, temples!

In the storyline of the ancient temple drama, as in the *Hymn of the Pearl*, the person who leaves home still retains his sacredness, notwithstanding his struggle with the profane. In the *Pearl*, the story of Job, even the storyline of First Nephi, and all other versions of the cosmic myth whether they are historically true or not, it is the struggle that brings success and qualifies one to come home again.

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## **The Symbolism of the Book of Job**

In the Bible, the best example of the continued sacredness of the hero of the cosmic myth is the story of Job. It covers the whole reach of time and space, from the first scenes in the Council in Heaven, through Job's trials, to his final election and exaltation. Whether all the details of conversations as they are reported actually happened, or whether they did not, has nothing to do with the importance of the story or of the value of the truths it expresses. So, whether historically accurate or not, Job tells truth, and is therefore a perfect example of the cosmic myth, and a type of Feast of Tabernacles temple drama.

His story begins with a very abbreviated version of the struggle between good and evil in the Council in Heaven where Satan stands before God and claims the earth as his own. The devil has walked "to and fro" upon the earth, measuring it and defining it as his own sacred space. But God reminds him that Job was already there. "Hast thou considered my servant Job," the Lord asks." (Job 1:8) So Satan cannot have the earth because Job already has it. Satan persists in his claim, and the whole question of who will ultimately possess the earth was shifted onto the integrity of just one man. The story is

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<sup>227</sup> For a discussion of that garment of light and its significance, see Ricks, "Garment of Adam," 705-39.

<sup>228</sup> Thus, Paul writes that a woman's face should be veiled, separating her from the men—not in a demeaning way—but by acknowledging her person as the more sacred space.

For discussions of sacred space and time, see Parry, "Demarcation," 413-39; Hauglid, "Sacred Time and the Temple," 639-43.

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about Job, but as its message unfolds, its question of whether Job will “inherit the earth,” broadens, until it is a cosmic test that challenges every reader with the ultimate provocation: “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die” (Job 2:9).

Job was challenged with loss of family and wealth, with physical pain and academic snobbery, but his integrity remained intact. The great bulk of the book recounts his struggles, but in doing so, it always reminds its reader that Job’s innate princely nature was the underpinning of his enduring sense of Self. The story is an ever unfolding reaffirmation of the phrase found in the *Pearl*: “I remembered that I was a son of kings, And my noble birth asserted itself.” Job is a perfect example of the cosmic myth. Job *is* truth. It may also be historically true, but whether it is technically accurate in its historical detail is beside the point. Its value does not reside in its historicity, but rather in the truth it teaches—in the clarity of the story and the beauty of the words it employs to teach those truths. In chapters 38 and 39 God reviews the story of the creation. Only the questions in this conversation are given. The answers are usually “yes,” but that is only known to those who already know the meaning of the questions. In chapter 40 Job is brought to the veil. That is followed by a symbolic promise of invulnerability<sup>229</sup> where “behemoth, which I made with thee” represents ultimate strength, and leviathan represents ultimate power. In chapter 42 Job declares, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee” (V.5). After Job has been brought back into the presence of God, he is acknowledged as having legitimate authority from God, is given twice as much as he had before,<sup>230</sup> and dies in triumph. As a magnificent example of a cosmic myth, Job *is* truth. What is true of Job is equally true of many sacred texts and conversations. Even though written or spoken in apparently vague generalities, to the initiated the words ring with beautiful tones that resonate in eternal truth.

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<sup>229</sup> See the chapter entitled “The Promise of Invulnerability,” 285-93.

<sup>230</sup> A “double” portion represents the birthright blessings. In a priesthood setting it is the birthright blessings of Abraham. That is all of the birthright blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, as in Isaiah 40 and 61.

## The Vitality of Ritual

Ancient Israelite temple ritual was the enactment of a generic version of the cosmic myth. Myth and ritual combined are a description of eternal truths, transcending linear time and space, represented as in sacred space and sacred time. That is, the reality of the myth is found in one's perception of space and time as God experiences them.<sup>231</sup>

Nibley said it more clearly: "Myth and reality meet in *ritual*, a ritual that, while rehearsing something that is supposed to have happened far away and long ago, is nonetheless an overt act, an actual historical event in its own right."<sup>232</sup>

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## The Meaning of "Cult"

The term that Bible scholars use to describe this dual reality of myth and ritual where a dramatic re-enactment of the past becomes an actuality in the present, is "cult." But cult means more than just a dramatic representation. The Israelite "cult" included all the ordinances described in Leviticus—all the rituals associated with sacrifices and burnt offerings, the offering of incense, the lighting of the Menorah, and all the religious activity that surrounded the Jerusalem Temple and temple worship. All these were wrapped into a single cosmic moment of creation and re-creation. As Aage Bentzen pointed out, "The cult is a 'Creative Drama.'"<sup>233</sup> Borsch added that "The festival was seen as a re-creation of the world."<sup>234</sup>

Even though our culture uses the word "cult" differently from that, we must

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<sup>231</sup> Mircea Eliade, trans. Rosemary Sheed, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: New American Library, 1974). For his discussion of sacred space and sacred time, see pages 369-409; Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 68-113; Baruch M. Bokser, "Approaching Sacred Space," *Harvard Theological Review* 78, 3-4 (1985): 279-99; Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

<sup>232</sup> Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 224. Emphasis is in original.

<sup>233</sup> Aage Bentzen, "The Cultic Use of the Story of the Ark in Samuel," in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 67 (1948): 37.

<sup>234</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 92.

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understand it the way the Bible scholars use it, or we cannot understand what they are trying to say. For example, in the following, it is the ritualistic, liturgical dramatization of the myth that Mowinckel called ‘cult.’

The cult is not only originally a drama, it is always and everywhere a drama. In cult, a reality is acted, and through this action the same reality is produced. The actor is drawn into this reality, he does not only play it. In fundamental primitive ideas, one was what one plays. The content of the drama was formed by the acts, events and states, mythically or historically seen, on which the religious community built its faith, its hope and its life, in one word, its existence. Every time when cult was practiced the reality concerned was created anew. ...It was history that was actualized, and the oldest form of history was the myth. In primitive thinking myth was history and history myth. Myth and cult are very closely connected.<sup>235</sup>

Using that definition, almost any religious ceremony is “cultic.” That would include everything from the elaborate Catholic Mass to the simple baptismal ceremony of the Southern Baptists. Mowinckel believed that the purpose of cult was to recreate the times and events in human history when mankind actually did interact with God—that through what he called “cult,” humans may re-experience that relationship. He wrote, “It is the king who receives Yahweh’s promises, His blessings, and His power; and he transmits them to the community which he represents.”<sup>236</sup>

As “cult,” the majesty of the ancient temple drama lay in the fact that the actors represented, not just their characters, but also themselves and every man and woman in the audience. The drama portrayed the whole sweep of eternal truth, and at the same instant, the intimate details of each person’s odyssey through linear time. It was biography and autobiography, carrying each individual through the story of his own eternal progression by focusing on the events of the ordinances and covenants that would bring him to exaltation. Therefore, as Johnson explains, audience participation in the drama was an opportunity extended to every individual to renew their personal commitments to God:

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<sup>235</sup> Kapelrud, “Sigmund Mowinckel,” 11-12.

<sup>236</sup> Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 84. As examples, Mowinckel’s footnote gives Psalms 132:11ff; 72; cf. 20:8f; 21:10; and Isaiah 55:3.



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In other words, this ritual drama was a summons to convert into actual fact the social ideal which was here depicted in moving symbols culled from all the arts, and its purpose was to give Yahweh's followers the opportunity to renew their willingness and their power to co-operate for the common good, not only of Israel, but also of all mankind. Thus it was the lively hope of a new world which was brought before the king and his subjects with the coming of a new cycle of the year.<sup>237</sup>

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## **Audience Participation in the Ancient Temple Drama**

In the Israelite dramatization “the central figure was the king; he was both chief actor and priest. Not only did he function as the representative of the people and their intermediary with the divine, but he could assume for certain designated parts of the drama the role of the king-god.”<sup>238</sup>

The ancient temple drama was a dramatization of the cosmic myth—the universal story. Because the storyline of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama focused on the lives of the reigning king of ancient Israel, the drama actualized its events through a portrayal of their experiences and their relationships with God—and by extension, it also actualized similar experiences in the lives of each individual—as in the 67<sup>th</sup> psalm:<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 140.

<sup>238</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 92-93.

<sup>239</sup> Besides Mowinckel, other scholars who have pointed out that this was a participatory drama were: Widengren, “King and Covenant,” 21-22. Borsch, *Son of Man*, 184; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 7-8, 91; Grace I. Emerson, “Women in Ancient Israel,” *The World of Ancient Israel, Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives*, ed. R. E. Clements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 371-94; Robert Davidson, “Covenant Ideology in Ancient Israel,” *World of Ancient Israel*, 342-43; Geo Widengren, “Baptism and Enthronement in Some Jewish-Christian Gnostic Documents,” *The Savior God, Comparative Studies in the Concept of Salvation Presented to Edwin Oliver James*, ed. S. G. F. Brandon (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1963), 205-17; Johnson, “Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship,” 215-35.

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- 1 God be merciful unto us,  
and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us;
- 2 That thy way may be known upon earth,  
thy saving health among all nations.
- 3 Let the people praise thee,  
O God; let all the people praise thee.
- 4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy:  
for thou shalt judge the people righteously,  
and govern the nations upon earth.
- 5 Let the people praise thee, O God;  
let all the people praise thee.
- 6 Then shall the earth yield her increase;  
and God, even our own God, shall bless us.
- 7 God shall bless us;  
and all the ends of the earth shall fear him<sup>240</sup> (Psalm 67:1-7).

We do not know the extent of their participation, but we may surmise that parts or all of the audience sang many, if not most, of the Psalms as a part of the ceremonies.<sup>241</sup> Mowinckel explains:

There can be no doubt that the psalms were meant to be sung. They contain a number of allusions to singing, and they are often described in the titles as ‘songs’...rendered to music, or as ‘hymns’. ...The word ‘song’ (singing) and ‘sing’ occur 38 times in all in the Psalms. ...

In many languages the word for ‘song’ originally betokened the powerful ritual word.

In the psalms we constantly hear the poet, and through him the worshiped or

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<sup>240</sup> “Fear” was a feeling combining love and respect. See Bernard J. Bamberger, “Fear and Love of God in the Old Testament,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 6 (1929): 39-53.

For a careful analysis of the festival from an individual’s point of view, see Johnson, *Vitality of the Individual*; Steven J. L. Croft, *The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987).

<sup>241</sup> For a discussion of how and when some of the Psalms were used, see Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1:2-3. See Johnson, “Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship,” 215-35.

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the congregation, declaring their intention to 'sing' or 'praise' or 'sing and play' for Yahweh. ...

We know nothing about the tunes in Israel's temple cult. But if we are to judge from analogies in more recent oriental music, we may assume that they were quite simple. ...The psalms mention the tambourine, the cymbals, the horn, the trumpet, different kinds of lyre (R.V. harp and cithern), flute and castanets.<sup>242</sup>

Gunkel believed that the accompanying music was an integral part of the drama's ceremony. He wrote,

The hymns were sung to the accompaniment of instruments by or in the presence of the assembled congregation at a sacred festival. In order to appreciate poems of this kind, we must have a clear picture of such a celebration. From far and near the people gathered together at the sanctuary and are all in a celebrative mood. The grace of Yahweh has blessed the land and there was once more an abundance of bread.<sup>243</sup>

Thus we find in the pre-exilic Israelite religion a concept that was extraordinary for its time, and that is by no means universal in our own day. That concept is that individual persons have value in the eyes of God, and therefore must also have value in the eyes of government. (As one would expect, that concept was also a hallmark of the religion of the Nephites.) Cohen understood the sweeping consequences of that concept, and wrote:

Of the several political implications of this crucial concept, perhaps the most significant is that which is most straightforward. Through the process of covenant, God recognizes humans to be His partners in the perfection of His own creation. This is a breathtakingly radical notion, whose clear thrust is the declaration that all sovereignty—whatever its expression—must normatively be based upon the principle of reciprocity between rulers and ruled. Even when initiating (perhaps even imposing) His covenants with Israel, God acknowledges as much; indeed, He transcends His own covenantal stipulations when

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<sup>242</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship* 1: 8-9 and fn. 26.

<sup>243</sup> Gunkel, *Water For a Thirsty Land*, 136.

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undertaking to implement them with *hesed* (covenant love; i.e. the love relationship between parties whose actions express their mutual feelings and are not merely prescribed by the terms of their contract)? Human sovereigns, whose scope for unilateral action is in any case more confined, must necessarily follow that example.<sup>244</sup>

Widengren observed that the burden of the ceremony was that “a covenant was made between Yahweh and the king and his people, as well as between the king and his people.” He pointed out that the story of David is one of the best examples. When David was anointed king of all Israel, the people made a covenant with the king, thus, “the king’s enthronement is coupled with the making of a covenant between him and his people. But David’s election by Yahweh to be king also implies a covenant between Yahweh and David.” So the whole foundation of the Kingdom as well as the relationship between God, the king, and the people was based on the principle of obedience to the terms of the covenant.<sup>245</sup>

Aubrey Johnson, during his discussion of Psalm 72, observed, “What is more, it is clear from the outset that the king is both dependent upon and responsible to Yahweh for the right exercise of his power; for his subjects, whatever their status in society, are one and all Yahweh’s people.”<sup>246</sup>

In that same study, Johnson commented that Psalm 149, “apparently introduces the worshipers as themselves sharing in this ritual performance. ...What is more, we have to note that they are summoned to sing a ‘new song’; and this, one need hardly say, is a thought which is particularly appropriate to our festival with its exultant anticipation of a new era of universal dominion and national prosperity.”<sup>247</sup>

The religious implication that ordinary people who watched the Israelite temple coronation rituals were symbolically participating in the ordinances and covenants went far

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<sup>244</sup> Cohen, “Kings, Priests, and Prophets,” 21. For a detailed analysis of the government and constitution of ancient Israel, see Baruch Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel* (Chico, California: Scholars, 1981).

<sup>245</sup> Widengren, “King and Covenant,” 21-22.

<sup>246</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 7-8.

<sup>247</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 91.

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beyond the notion of a vaguely democratic religion. At the conclusion of the drama the king of Israel was acknowledged as the adopted “son” and heir of God. So, also, was each individual who participated. Each had been symbolically anointed king and priest, son and heir. However, in their roles they were to go quietly about the business of being upright persons and of keeping their own personal covenants. This is an important concept for, as the Savior is reported to have taught his followers, “The perfect man not only cannot be restrained, but also cannot be seen. For if he is seen he will be put under restraint.”<sup>248</sup> Personal anonymity shields us within God’s promise of invulnerability, and opens opportunities to for us achieve our purposes and keep our eternal covenants. Frederick H. Borsch, after reviewing the symbolism of Adam’s role in the ancient New Year’s enthronement drama, asked:

Who, then, is the Perfect Man imaged from the one above, who yet must himself be saved by passing through the gate and being born again? Of course, in one sense it is this Adam below, but the implications are also fairly strong that this is not *really* the Primal Man on earth (for there is a way in which the true Man, or at least his counterpart, always seems to remain above). Rather is it the believer, the individual who himself would be saved by following in the way of the First Perfect Man.<sup>249</sup>

Borsch’s description of the Perfect Man works well for the reigning priest and king, but it is also appropriate as a description of sacral kings who only symbolically sit on the throne between the cherubim in the Temple.

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<sup>248</sup> *Gospel of Philip* in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, 2:201–106.

<sup>249</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 184.

## **Women in the Drama**<sup>250</sup>

The scriptures focus on the role men played in the ceremonies, but in her study of “Women in Ancient Israel,” Grace Emmerson insisted that women also played a vital role. She wrote:

It is commonplace to remark that male members only of the community were required to attend the three major annual festivals (Exod. 23.17; Deut. 16.16). But difference of obligation does not necessarily imply inequality, and in this case probably arose from practical considerations attendant on the birth and care of children. Certainly Deuteronomy makes it clear that women were present at the festivals, sharing in the rejoicing (Deut. 12.12), and participating in the sacrifices (Deut. 12.1’8). The feasts of weeks and booths are specifically mentioned (Deut. 16.10f., 13f.). This may well represent an advance on earlier law in the direction of equality, a feature which seems to be characteristic of Deuteronomy. This book presents women as participants in the covenant ceremony (Deut. 29.10-13), and consequently under full obligation to observe Yahweh’s law (Deut. 31.12). Equally with men they could be held guilty of transgressing the covenant, for which the penalty was death (Deut. 17.2-5). The evidence suggests that it was deuteronomic law which first explicitly brought them within the covenant. The view that women are fully accountable before Yahweh continues in the post-exilic period (2 Chron. 15f.; Neh. 8.2). ...

Though the examples are few, there are several instances in the Old Testament of women in encounter with God.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> For further discussion of women in the ceremony, see the chapter called, “Act 1, Scene 2: The Royal Wedding in Psalm 45”; and the discussion of Psalm 34 in the chapter called, “Act 2, Scene 7, Jehovah Conquers Death and Hell.”

<sup>251</sup> Emmerson, “Women in Ancient Israel,” 371-94. This is an exceptionally insightful article which deals with many facets of the woman’s position in ancient Israel. The above quotes are taken from pages 378-79. On page 382 she writes, “Still more significantly, the imagery of marriage is considered appropriate to describe both Yahweh’s love relationship with Israel (Hos. 1-3; Jer. 2.2), and Israel’s joy when redeemed by the Lord (Isa. 62.4f.). Here is the Israelite ideal of marriage, from which in practice many no doubt fell short. The crude idea of ownership is entirely inappropriate here, as it is also in Jer. 31.32. To suggest that a wife was little better than a slave is certainly incorrect.”

## *Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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Robert Davidson did not mention women apart from men, but implies the same thing:

In Isa. 55.3 there seems to be an attempt to democratize this everlasting Davidic covenant and to transfer its privileges and responsibilities to the community as a whole and thus to ensure that its continuing validity was not permanently tied to the continuance of the Davidic dynasty. ...Unless we are prepared to see nationalism and particularism as the key to second Isaiah's thinking, the description of the purpose of this covenant in Isa. 55.4-5 may be interpreted in a universalistic sense. This is also the case with the occurrence of covenant in Isa. 42.6 where Servant-Israel is summoned to be 'a covenant of the people, and a light to the nations'. Yet this promise of a Davidic covenant could also find a new and rich future within the hope of a Davidic king still to come, who would renew the old royal covenant temporarily annulled by events.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Davidson, "Covenant Ideology," 342-43.

Milgrom explained that the entire household participated in the festival. He wrote:

It should be noted that the wife is not excluded, but is subsumed under '*atta* You'. The same holds for '*atta* in the sabbath commandment of the Decalogue (Exod 20:10b; Deut 5:14b); surely, the wife is not permitted to work! And H goes even further in allowing *leka* 'for you' (25:6) to include the entire family (see its NOTE).

On the matter of family participation at the sanctuary during the Festival of Booths, the priestly texts (P and H) are silent. But since this festival lasts for seven days *at the sanctuary* (*laYHWH, lipne* YHWH, w. 34, 36, 39, 40, 41; Num 29:12), the entire family's presence is taken for granted. The (chattel) slave would naturally be included, and to judge from v. 22, so would the Levite, the alien, and the other underprivileged (Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2028).

## **Myth and Ritual as a Personal Odyssey**

Aubrey Johnson understood that the cosmic myth enacted during the drama represented the majesty and triumph of the goodness of Jehovah over chaos. He wrote:

Thus at the point in time represented by any one of these recurrent festal days, the worshiper's gaze is directed first, in retrospect, to the beginning of time or the creation of the natural order; in the second place, to Yahweh's control of the natural world and His active concern with the behaviour of mankind on the plane of history; and, in the third place, to the prospect of the consummation of both creation and history in a universal moral order, i.e. the coming of the great 'Day' which will usher in a new era of world-wide righteousness and peace.<sup>253</sup>

In the psalms, we hear personal prayers of both praise and supplication, such as this very beautiful beginning of Psalm 54:

- 1 Save me, O God, by thy name,  
and judge me by thy strength.
- 2 Hear my prayer, O God;  
give ear to the words of my mouth.
- 3 For strangers are risen up against me,  
and oppressors seek after my soul:  
they have not set God before them.
- 4 Behold, God is mine helper:  
the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. (Psalm 54:1-4)

We may discover much of the drama, and some of its meaning, from the words of the psalms. But even the psalms have a hidden text that cannot be read by one who did not actually participate. That meaning cannot be discovered by reading the psalms because the code is hidden in the words rather than revealed by them. Therefore, an exploration of the words does not expose all that is taught in the ancient temple drama's version of the cosmic myth. Eliade explains why that must be so:

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<sup>253</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 143.



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A myth relates a sacred story, that is to say, it recounts a primordial event that occurred at the beginning of time. But to tell a sacred story is equivalent to revealing a mystery, because the characters in a myth are not human beings. They are either gods or civilizing heroes, and therefore their geste constitute mysteries: man would not know these tales if they were not revealed to him. Consequently, a myth is a story of what happened—what the gods and supernatural beings did—at the beginning of time. “To re-count” a myth is to proclaim what occurred then. Once “told,” in other words, once revealed, the myth becomes the apodictic truth: it establishes truth...The myth proclaims the advent of a new cosmic situation or narrates a primordial event, and so it is always the story of a “creation”; it tells how something has been effectuated, has begun to be.<sup>254</sup>

Ultimately, for those who participated in the drama, one recognized one's Self as an eternal Truth in sacred time. The creation that was envisioned was a recurring re-creation of that Self through a series of experiences: first as an intelligence, then a spirit person, and a mortal human. Its conclusion betokened the projection of one's shining Self to a more glorious eternal fulfillment. The drama began, as Paul observes, at the Council with “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,” and it will conclude—just as it began—“according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Ephesians 1:3-4).<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Eliade, “Prestige of the Cosmogonic Myth,” 129.

<sup>255</sup> See Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1963), 50-51.

# **Part 1: The Temple Drama of the Ancient Israelite Feast of Tabernacles In the Old Testament**

## **Roles of Characters and the Theme of Play**

While the underlying theme of the drama was the eternal Kingship of Jehovah, its purpose was to show his nurturing Lordship over Israel—as one psalm puts it, “Shew thy marvelous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them” (Psalm 17:7).

The reigning king played a double role throughout the drama. He was both the main character and the star actor. For example, as the main character, when he was in scenes that recreated events in the Council in Heaven, he played himself, participating with the gods, as in Psalm 45.<sup>256</sup> Simultaneously, as main actor, he played the role on the stage that represented each person in the audience, and sometimes, as we will discuss as we approach the conclusion of the drama, his role represented both himself and Jehovah.<sup>257</sup>

The reigning queen played a similar double role. Beginning with scenes that portrayed her in the Council in Heaven (Psalm 45), she represented both herself and also each woman in the congregation. This is important when we consider how few of the scriptures focus on women. The drama clearly showed that men and women were together before

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<sup>256</sup> See the chapter called “Act 1, Scene 2: The Royal Wedding in Psalm 45.”

<sup>257</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 92-93. See Engnell, *Divine Kingship*, 201-03.

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they were created and placed in the Garden of Eden.<sup>258</sup>

Because the king and queen could appropriately represent both themselves and all the people, God's covenants with, and his blessings to, the royal couple were easily understood to apply to them personally, and also to apply to the nation as a whole, as well as to each individual in the congregation. Similarly, the fact that the drama focused on the king simply indicates that in those instances the covenants he made were often the same as those made by both men and women. In that regard it may be said that in his role the king represented the women as well as the men.

The drama, as a representation of the cosmic myth, had a set pattern that could not change—that is, the details might change as they did in different cultures, but the pattern did not. For that reason, we find the same pattern of the cosmic myth in virtually every ancient culture, and for that same reason we can, with certitude, know the basic pattern of the ancient Israelite New Year festival temple drama. Knowing the pattern, all we have to do is add the appropriate details. A brief overview of the pattern, as played out in the Israelite drama, would be as follows:

The drama began in the heavenly court, where Elohim presided and Jehovah conducted the affairs of the Council of the gods. It showed that the king had a prominent place in that Council. In conjunction with that, it included an account of the creation. The story of the creation was an indispensable part of the drama because it identified Jehovah as the Creator God and Lord of the Universe.<sup>259</sup> Then followed the events in the Garden of Eden. It was essential because it established the eternal relationships between Elohim, Jehovah, the premortal gods, and the mortals who inhabit this world. It was that relationship that was the divine pivotal truth of the Israelite cosmic myth.

The story—the one told by the ritual and the songs of the ancient Israelite temple drama, as well as in Third Nephi by the prophet Mormon—was about the relationship between the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth. It was expressed through the sanctity and powers of priesthood and kingship that were extended by God, to the kings, the

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<sup>258</sup> See the discussion of Psalm 45 in the chapter by that name.

<sup>259</sup> Van Hale, "The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse," *Brigham Young University Studies* 18, 2 (Winter 1978): 215-16.

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priests, the prophets, and all the people. That was a very broad concept.<sup>260</sup> It included the Priesthood and Kingship of Jehovah, of the temporal kings who were the nations's rulers, and of the sacral kings who were not ruling monarchs. The latter were the members of the audience—ordinary citizens—who were “kings” by virtue of their symbolic coronation during their participation in the rituals of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama. In other words, there were three kinds of kings: Jehovah, who is in a category by himself; political kings who ruled; and sacral kings who had been symbolically anointed in the Jerusalem Temple. There are also four kinds of princes: Jehovah, the Crown Prince who was heir apparent to Elohim; the earthly prince who was heir apparent to the reigning king; many tribal chiefs and other political leaders;<sup>261</sup> and there were also sacral princes who had been symbolically anointed to become kings.

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### **Meaning of “Sacral Kingship”**

The word “sacral” is from the same root as sacrifice and sacrament. The words denote that which is sacred—that which has been set apart and distinguished from the profane. “Sacral kingship” refers to two different concepts. The first is that the ruling kings of Israel were sacred because they had been chosen by Jehovah to be his representatives on the earth.<sup>262</sup>

The second concept is that “ordinary” participants in the drama were designated as priests and sacral kings even though there was no intent that they would be actual rulers in

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<sup>260</sup> For a nearly exhaustive examination of the nature, authority, and responsibilities of Israelite kingship, see Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1976).

<sup>261</sup> For example, It is not clear who Hezekiah's “princes” were. They may have been his counselors, or heads of clans, or both. In 2 Chronicles 30:1-6, 32:1-3 they are shown to be involved in making both religious and military decisions.

<sup>262</sup> See “Sacral Kingship” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5: 864. For a discussion of the meaning of the Latin root “sacr-“ see E. O. James, *Sacrifice and Sacrament* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1962)

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the nation. At the conclusion of the festival drama, each participant was symbolically anointed, and reminded of his or her eternal covenants—and each was given a clear understanding of the expectations of his or her ultimate recompense for keeping the covenants.

*In this book, the phrase “sacral kings,” refers to those persons who were symbolically anointed during the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama to be priests and kings.*

It must be remembered that the connotation of the words “king” and “son of man” meant to refer to all those who would inherit a sacral throne,<sup>263</sup> and “Adam” meant “human being.”<sup>264</sup> The meaning of Adam’s story in the Garden is as universal as is the application of his name.<sup>265</sup> That may account for why the drama’s psalms seem to pay so little attention to women. The ancient scriptures were written by people whose culture rarely focused on stories showing the power wielded by the queen, but it is significant that whenever the books of Kings in the Old Testament mention that a new king came to the throne, his mother’s name is almost always given.<sup>266</sup>

In the Garden scenes, the king and queen played the roles of Adam and Eve who were the first royal couple to come to and preside over the earth, as Bentzen explains, “The king, then, is *Primeval Man*. The first man of Genesis 1:26-28 is described as the first ruler of the world. In the first Creation Story, the “gospel” of the New Year, we hear the blessing spoken by God at the enthronement of the first Royal Couple of the world. Man

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<sup>263</sup> J. A. Emerton, “The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery,” *Journal of Theological Studies, New Series* 9 (1958): 225-42. David Hill, “‘Son of Man’ in Psalm 80 v. 17,” *Novum Testamentum* 15 (1973): 261-69.

<sup>264</sup> Mowinckel explains, “*Adam* alone indicates ‘man’ in the collective sense, the species mankind. To express the idea of an individual man, we must say *ben adam* [that is, “son of man.” He continued by explaining that often “son of man” should] really be translated simply ‘a man’, or, in the definite form, ‘the man’; and it can be applied to any single individual of the species of man” (*He that Cometh*, 346).

<sup>265</sup> Mowinckel, *Old Testament as the Word*, 93.

<sup>266</sup> Examples are: 1 Kings 11:26, 14:21, 14:31, 15:2, 15:10, 8:26; 2 Kings 12:1, 14:2, 15:2, 18:2, 21:1, 21:19, 22:1, 23:31, 23:36, 24:8.

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is to “rule” over all living creatures.”<sup>267</sup>

In these scenes, the reigning king and queen were also themselves, acting out their own stories of coming to the earth to fulfill their individual missions—affirming their own places in the eternal drama. The dual roles they played were not a contradiction, for they were simultaneously both the first royal couple, and the present-reigning king and queen. As the first royal couple and as themselves, the reigning king and queen illustrated their own roles throughout the whole eternal sweep in the drama’s presentation, and, by doing so, they also represented the lives, struggles and successes, of every person in the congregation.

In some ancient cultures the king was considered to be a god, but not in Israel. The Israelite king was Jehovah’s representative on earth. Nevertheless, because the drama showed that the king had been present in the heavenly Council, he was also understood to be one of the premortal gods who had now become a man.<sup>268</sup> As a human, he retained some of his godlike qualities when he came to earth.<sup>269</sup> One can discover from the psalms that much of the drama was designed to help him reenforce his premortal commitments to his earlier qualities of godliness, such as love, mercy, justice, rectitude, and equity. It was understood that even though the king might seek to perfect these attributes, he was still human, having not yet ascended back to the realm and society of the gods.<sup>270</sup>

There were also other actors on stage, and the members of the audience participated by following the lead of their king and queen, either symbolically or ritually. An Old Testament example of congregational or audience participation that many scholars cite is 2

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<sup>267</sup> Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, 17.

<sup>268</sup> In Abraham 4 and 5, the members of the Council who participated in the creation are called “gods,” just as they are called “gods” in Psalm 82.

<sup>269</sup> For example, one Bible passage has a woman comparing David’s wisdom to “the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth” (2 Samuel 14:20).

<sup>270</sup> For a discussion of the king’s sonship that says the title did not make him a god in the same sense that the Egyptian Pharaoh was a god, see Cooke, “Israelite King as Son,” 202-25.

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Kings 23:1-3.<sup>271</sup> There, King Josiah assembled the people of Judah to take part in a ceremonial covenant renewal ceremony:

1 And the king [Josiah] sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.

2 And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord.

3 And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord,<sup>272</sup> to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant (2 Kings 23:1-3).<sup>273</sup>

There the king and the people stood to make the covenants.

The psalms suggest other kinds of audience participation when the people played music, sang, and danced. Examples are:

1 Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous:

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<sup>271</sup> Widengren, "King and Covenant," 1-4.

There are two indications that this may have happened in conjunction with a New Year festival. One is the temple had been restored, and if it were also rededicated that would have happened during the New Year festival. Second, it was the king who gave the lecture (read the document) and led in the covenant making ceremony, which strongly suggests this had happened in conjunction with the conclusion of the festival.

<sup>272</sup> Geo Widengren observes, "We should note in this description, first of all, the fact that it is the king who plays the central role in this act of covenant making. Not only is it he who convokes the assembly, but it is he also who reads out to it the words of the book of the law, which is the basis of the covenant. Further, it is expressly stated that it was Josiah who made the covenant before Yahweh. Thus the king appears before us here fully exercising his duties as the real High Priest" ("King and Covenant," 3).

<sup>273</sup> For a discussion of the Temple and its pillars see Meyers, "Jachin and Boaz."

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- for praise is comely for the upright.
- 2 Praise the Lord with harp:  
sing unto him with the psaltery  
and an instrument of ten strings.
- 3 Sing unto him a new song;  
play skilfully with a loud noise.
- 4 For the word of the Lord is right;  
and all his works are done in truth (Psalm 33:1-4).
- 1 Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:  
2 Sing forth the honour of his name:  
make his praise glorious.
- 3 Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works!  
through the greatness of thy power  
shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.
- 4 All the earth shall worship thee,  
and shall sing unto thee;  
they shall sing to thy name (Psalm 66:2-4).
- 1 Sing aloud unto God our strength:  
make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.
- 2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel,  
the pleasant harp with the psaltery.
- 3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon,  
in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.
- 4 For this was a statute for Israel,  
and a law of the God of Jacob (Psalm 81:1-4).
- 1 Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song,  
and his praise in the congregation of saints.
- 2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him:  
let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.



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3 Let them praise his name in the dance:  
let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp  
(Psalm 149:1-3).

There were also people who sang and played solo, as is suggested in this psalm:

I will sing a new song unto thee, O God:  
upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings  
will I sing praises unto thee (Psalm 144:9).

It was vital that the members of the audience participate throughout the presentation of the drama, because each one understood that it was implicitly only about himself or herself, and about their personal covenants with Jehovah. That is, because each person made the reaffirming covenants, and accepted the empowering ordinances, the drama was intimate and personal. It was always and only about *me*, and was always and only about *you*, but it was never about *us*—yet, however individualistic the covenants might have been, their result was a communal unity that the psalms call Zion.

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## **Covenant of Election**

To Mowinckel's mind, the entire Feast of Tabernacles drama was a visual affirmation that Jehovah had "elected" the children of Israel to be his people: the "covenant" of the drama was the expression and ratification of that election. Thus, the election, the covenant, and the ritual of the ancient temple drama, were each an integral part of the definition of the others. He wrote,

But election is bound up with the making of the *covenant*, which is maybe the most important innovation on the basis of the historical orientation of Yahwism. ...To Israel after the time of Moses, 'covenant' means the historical covenant

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which Yahweh in his goodness ‘granted’ to his elected people<sup>274</sup>

Geo Widengren understood the bond between Jehovah and Israel in the same way. He asserted, “Election and covenant go side by side, the making of the covenant being nothing but the expression of the election.”<sup>275</sup>

Mowinckel further believed that the election was initiated in a foreordination that took place during the premortal Council,<sup>276</sup> and was later actualized by the earthly covenants that reenacted that foreordination. He wrote,

It is...significant that in every place where God’s ‘intervention’ is felt to be revolutionizing life, there the idea of ‘election’ or ‘predestination’ presents itself at once. This is true also in the situation of the individual. In this thought Jeremiah finds the solution to his life (1:5), and here Paul sees the innermost secret in the divine decision concerning his destiny. Thus it is through the election that the ‘intervention’ is realized which denotes the special revelation through Israel.<sup>277</sup>

The binding power of Israel’s covenant with God was often expressed in the same language as the covenant of a marriage. An example is the way the union, even the culmination of those heavenly and earthly blessings, are expressed in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Psalm:

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<sup>274</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1: 155.

<sup>275</sup> Widengren, “King and Covenant,” 24.

<sup>276</sup> 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1: 2-5).

<sup>277</sup> Mowinckel, *Old Testament as Word of God*, 60.

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- 22 So foolish was I, and ignorant:  
I was as a beast before thee.
- 23 Nevertheless I am continually with thee:  
thou hast holden me by my right hand.
- 24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,  
and afterward receive me to glory.
- 25 Whom have I in heaven but thee?  
and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.
- 26 My flesh and my heart faileth:  
but God is the strength of my heart,  
and my portion for ever.
- 27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish:  
thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.
- 28 But it is good for me to draw near to God:  
I have put my trust in the Lord God,  
that I may declare all thy works (Psalm 73:22-28).

## ***Sode* Experience—Returning to the Council in Heaven**

Some of the psalms show that during the festival there were scenes enacted on a ceremonial stage that depicted how God had elected and instructed his kings and prophets—and by extension, how he elected and instructed all of his children.<sup>278</sup> The teachings of those psalms are consistent with accounts we have of the activities of the members of the Council as told by various prophets in their descriptions of their own *sode* experiences.<sup>279</sup>

*Sode* is a Hebrew word that means the secret deliberations and decisions of a council. In the Old Testament it is frequently translated as “secret.” The Greek equivalent, *mysterion*, is translated as “mystery” in the New Testament.<sup>280</sup> Bible scholars understand many references to the *sode* as being references to the activities of the Council in Heaven.<sup>281</sup>

A “*sode* experience” is a vision in which the prophet is returned to the Council and taught afresh what assignment he was given, and under what circumstances he is to fulfill

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<sup>278</sup> See especially, the discussion of Psalm 45 in the chapter by that name.

<sup>279</sup> For a discussion of *sode* and *mysterion* see the footnote # 734. The phrase “the heavens opened” sometimes indicate a *sode* experience. The promise is made in D&C 45:1-6. Examples are: 1 Nephi 1:8-11, 11:14, 12:6; Helaman 5:44-50; 3 Nephi 17:24; Ezekiel 1:1; Matthew 3:13-17; 3 Nephi 28:13-15; D&C 93:12-18.

<sup>280</sup> A discussion of the meaning of *sode* is found in Raymond E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term “Mystery” in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 2-6. See also his earlier “The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of ‘Mystery’,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 20 (1958): 417-443.

<sup>281</sup> Daniel C. Peterson discusses the *sode* in “‘Ye are Gods’: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind,” *The Disciple as Scholar, Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, et al. (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 506-8.

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it while in mortality.<sup>282</sup> In his explanation of the significance of the Council, H. Wheeler Robinson gave several examples of Old Testament references to *sode*, which he spells *sodh*:

We get other glimpses of the heavenly assembly as in Psalm lxxxix. 7 (8):

A God very terrible in the council of the holy ones,

And to be feared above all them that are round about him.

So Eliphaz the Temanite sarcastically remarks to Job: Hast thou listened in the council of God,

And dost thou monopolize wisdom to thyself? (Job xv. 8)

The mysterious plural of the first chapter of Genesis becomes intelligible when we refer it to a divine utterance in the heavenly assembly:

‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,’ (i. 26) where the initial reference may well be to the heavenly bodies of the sons of God (cr. vi. 2). We have also, in direct relation to the prophetic mission, the words which Isaiah hears from out of the cloud that veils Yahweh from his sight, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ It is not fanciful to distinguish here the supreme control exercised by Yahweh who alone can ‘send’, and the corporately representative character of the person sent on behalf of the heavenly assembly, ‘who will go for us?’ Isaiah, whose purged lips now enable him to speak even in that august circle, volunteers and is accepted; henceforth he can speak as the representative of Yahweh and as a fully qualified member of His assembly. Amos, again using the word *sodh* of the decision which issues from such deliberation, says: ‘Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his counsel unto his servants the prophets.’ [Amos 3:7]<sup>283</sup>

What Amos was saying is that the Lord will do nothing in this world unless he first

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<sup>282</sup> It is significant, as Edwin C. Kingsbury observes, that “These experiences are held in common by many of the pre-exilic prophets as well as by deuterio-Isaiah, but are lacking in the experiences of the post-exilic prophets.” (“The Prophets and the Council of Yahweh,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83 [1964]: 279).

<sup>283</sup> Robinson, *Inspiration and Revelation*, 168-69.

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calls his human prophets back to the Council in a vision where they renew their covenants and review conditions of where and how, in human history, they are to fulfil those covenants. Thus a true prophet knows his own place in the past, present, and future; and he can speak of them with certitude and authority.

For the people of ancient Israel, a *sode* experience was a necessary criterion for a prophet's legitimacy. Jeremiah writes that a false prophet was one who claimed to speak for God but who had not had a *sode* experience, and so could only pretend to know God's will.<sup>284</sup> God spoke to Jeremiah saying:

18 For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it?

19 Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.

20 The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

21 I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

22 But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings (Jeremiah 23:18-22).<sup>285</sup>

Conversely then, to the ancient Israelites, a true prophet was one who had stood in God's Council and had heard his counsel; knew the decisions of the Council, and could act, teach, and prophesy accordingly. That criterion was equally applicable to the apostles

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<sup>284</sup> Here, *sode* is translated to mean the counsel that they did not hear because they did not attend God's Council.

<sup>285</sup> So when Nephi assures us that he has "a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God," he is telling us, in a way that is most understandable to himself and his contemporaries, that he is a true prophet. On the next page, when he describes Lehi's *sode* experience, he is telling us that his father was also a true prophet.

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of the New Testament, as Morray-Jones observes, “The visionary ascent to heaven of which Paul is driven to boast seems, then, to be of crucial importance to his claim to apostolic authority and power.”<sup>286</sup>

The most detailed example of a prophet’s *sode* experience in the Bible is Isaiah chapter 6, where that prophet, in vision, returned to the Council to re-receive the assignment he had volunteered to fulfill before he came to this world.<sup>287</sup>

The four necessary elements of a *sode* experiences are: (1) that the prophet returns, in vision, to see his own part in the Council in Heaven, and (2) therefore, he mentions that he sees other members of the Council who were present.<sup>288</sup> (3) He sees God sitting on his throne presiding at the Council, and (4) he sees Jehovah who conducts the affairs of the Council and makes the assignments.<sup>289</sup>

There are many accounts of prophets who seem to have had a *sode* experience, but

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<sup>286</sup> C. R. A. Morray-Jones, “Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1-12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul’s Apostolate Part 2: Paul’s Heavenly Ascent and its Significance,” *Harvard Theological Review* 86, 3 (1993): 265-92. He says that the “seventh heaven” is a later tradition, but it represents essentially the same idea. For discussions on the heavenly ascent, see Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 57-58. Richard D. Draper, and Donald W. Parry, “Seven Promises to Those Who Overcome: Aspects of Genesis 2-3 in the Seven Letters,” *Temple in Time and Eternity*. 121-41. Hamblin, “Temple Motifs,” 441-50. Thomas, “Hebrews: To Ascend,” 479-91.

<sup>287</sup> Isaiah 6 is widely recognized as the most complete account of a *sode* experience that can be found in the scriptures; however, it has some problems. All of those problems are cleared up in the brass plates version that is found in 2 Nephi 16.

The best non-canonical description of a *sode* experience is Enoch’s in *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, from *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2 vols., ed. R. H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 2:431-69. It is quoted below. Early Christians included at least some of Enoch in their canon. Jude 1:14-16 is 1 Enoch 1:9.

For discussions of the Council, see Stephen D. Ricks, “Heavenly Visions and Prophetic Calls in Isaiah 6 (2 Nephi 16), the Book of Mormon, and the Revelation of John,” *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 171-90.

<sup>288</sup> These are called “angels” by Nephi (1 Nephi 1:8).

<sup>289</sup> Nephi’s account of his father’s *sode* experience in 1 Nephi 1:6-10 also contains all four elements. It is discussed in the chapter called, “Nephi’s Introduction as a Review of the Festival Temple Drama.”

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not all of them report all four parts of what constitutes a full account. However, all say they saw a vision, and all say they received an assignment from God.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> AMONG THOSE VISIONS ARE THE FOLLOWING:

Enoch's, recorded in Moses 7:2-4.

7:5-67 are about the call (note v. 63-4).

Abraham's, recorded in Abraham 3:22-28.

Chapters 4 and 5 continue the story.

Moses's, recorded in Exodus 3:1-15.

3:29 to 4:17 the Lord and Moses discuss the call.

Moses chapter 1.

The rest of the book of Moses continues the story (note Moses 4:2-3).

Isaiah's, recorded in Isaiah 6:1-13.

Jeremiah's, recorded in Jeremiah 1:4-6.

1:7 through chapter 19 the Lord and Jeremiah discuss the call, then there is a short break and the dialogue continues.

Lehi's, recorded in 1 Nephi 1:3-16,19.

See also 2 Nephi 1:15.

Ezekiel's, recorded in Ezekiel 1:3-28, 3:12-14.

2:1 to 3:11 the Lord explains the call (note v. 7-10).

Alma's, recorded in Alma 36:11-23.

Note v. 14 & 22.

Moroni's, recorded in Ether 12:22-23.

Verses 23-37, the Lord and Moroni discuss the call.

The Savior's, recorded in many places. Some are: John 1: 1-5 2 Peter 1:16-19, and Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:1-19, 29-33; John 3:11-13; D&C 93:1-21; Luke 1:69-75; and Isaiah chapter 61.

John the Baptist's is suggested in Luke 1:76-79, and in John 1:33 ("He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me.").

Joseph Smith's, recorded in J.S. History 2:15-20 and Dean C. Jessee "The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," *BYU Studies* 9, 3 (Spring 1969): 275-94.

Abinadi's is very concise but interesting. He says to King Noah, "Touch me not, for God [Elohim] shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord [Jehovah] sent me to deliver; neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell; therefore, God [Elohim] will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time" (Mosiah 13:3) Abinadi affirms that he is acting under Elohim's protection, but fulfilling the assignment that was given to him by Jehovah.



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The most complete description of a sode experience found in the non-canonical works is in one of the books of Enoch. It reads:

22:1 On the tenth Heaven, Aravoth, I saw the appearance of the Lord's face, like iron made to glow in fire, and brought out, emitting sparks, and it burns. Thus I saw the Lord's face, but the Lord's face is ineffable, marvellous and very awful, and very, very terrible.

2 And who am I to tell of the Lord's unspeakable being, and of his very wonderful face? and I cannot tell the quantity of his many instructions, and various voices, the Lord's throne very great and not made with hands, nor the quantity of those standing round him, troops of cherubim and

3 seraphim, nor their incessant singing, nor his immutable beauty and who shall tell of the ineffable greatness of his glory?

4 And I fell prone and bowed down to the Lord,

5 and the Lord with his lips said to me: 'Have courage, Enoch, do not fear, arise and stand before my face into eternity.'

6 And the archistratege Michael lifted me up, and led me to before the Lord's face.

And the Lord said to his servants tempting them: 'Let Enoch stand before my face into

7 eternity,' and the glorious ones bowed down to the Lord, and said: 'Let Enoch go according to Thy word.'

8 And the Lord said to Michael: 'Go and take Enoch from out his earthly garments, and anoint him with my sweet ointment, [ footnote says ointment is "oil" ] and put him into the garments of My glory.'

9 And Michael did thus, as the Lord told him. He anointed me, and dressed me, and the appearance of that ointment is more than the great light, and his ointment is like sweet dew, and its'

10 smell mild, shining like the sun's ray, and I looked at myself, and was like one of his glorious ones.

11 And the Lord summoned one of his archangels by name Pravuil, whose knowledge was quicker in wisdom than the other archangels, who wrote all the

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deeds of the Lord; and the

12 Lord said to Pravuil: 'Bring out the books from my store-houses, and a reed of quick-writing, and give to Enoch, and deliver to him the choice and comforting books out of thy hand.'

23: 1 And he was telling me all the works of heaven, earth and sea, and all the elements, their passages and goings, and the thunderings of the thunders, the sun and moon, the goings and changes of the stars, the seasons, years, days, and hours, the risings of the wind, the numbers of the angels,

2 and the formation of their songs, and all human things, the tongue of every human song and life, the commandments, instructions, and sweet voiced singings, and all things that it is fitting to learn. And Pravuil told me: 'All the things

[3-]4 that I have told thee, we have written. Sit and write all the souls of mankind, however many of them are born, and the places prepared for them

5 to eternity ; for all souls are prepared to eternity, before the formation of the world.' And all

6 double thirty days and thirty nights, and I wrote out all things exactly, and wrote three hundred and sixty-six books.

24:1 And the Lord summoned me, and said to me: Enoch, sit down on my left with Gabriel.' And I bowed down to the Lord, and the Lord spoke

2 to me: Enoch, beloved, all thou seest, all things that are standing finished I tell to thee even before the very beginning, all that I created from non-being, and visible things from invisible.

3 Hear, Enoch, and take in these my words, for not to My angels have I told my secret, and I have not told them their rise, nor my endless realm, nor have they understood my creating,

4 which I tell thee to-day. For before all things were visible, I alone used to go about in the invisible things, like the sun from east to west, and west to from west to east. But even the sun has peace in itself, while I found no peace, because I was creating all things, and I conceived the thought of placing foundations, and of creating visible creation.

25:1 I commanded in the very lowest parts, that visible things should come down from invisible, and Adoil [the footnote reads Adoil. is from Hebrew roots

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that mean 'the hand of God.' ] came down very great, and I beheld  
2 him, and lo! he had a belly of great light. And I said to him: 'Become undone,  
Adoil, and let  
3 the visible come out of thee.' And he came undone, and a great light came out.  
And I was in the midst of the great light, and as there is born light from light,  
there came forth a great age, and showed all creation, which I had thought to  
4 create. And I saw that it was good. And I placed for myself a throne, and took  
my seat on it, and said to the light: 'Go thou up higher and fix thyself high above  
the throne, and be  
5 a foundation to the highest things.' And above the light there is nothing else,  
and then I bent up and looked up from my throne.  
26:1 And I summoned the very lowest a second time, and said: Let Archas come  
forth hard, and he came forth hard from the invisible.  
2 And Archas came forth, hard, heavy, and very red.  
3 And I said: Be opened, Archas, and let there be born from you, and he came  
undone, an age came forth, very great and very dark, bearing the creation of all  
lower things, and I saw that it was good and said to him:  
4 Go thence down below, and make yourself firm, and be a foundation for the  
lower things, and it happened and he went down and fixed himself, and became  
the foundation for the lower things, and below the darkness there is nothing  
else.<sup>291</sup>

In this vision, Enoch<sup>292</sup> reports that God had created a perfect balance between good

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<sup>291</sup> *Secrets of Enoch*, Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 2:442-45. Compare Revelation 12:1-9; 1 Nephi 1:8-15.

<sup>292</sup> Early Jews and Christians considered the books of Enoch as an important part of their most sacred literature. For example, compare Jude 1:14-16 with 1 Enoch 1:9.

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken

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and evil, providing the full spectrum of options for each of his children. In the vision, God is represented as sitting on his throne below the light and above the darkness—that is, in the center—where he and his temple always are.<sup>293</sup>

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against him.

16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage (Jude 1:14-16).

And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones  
To execute judgement upon all,  
And to destroy all the ungodly:  
And to convict all flesh  
Of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed,  
And of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him (1 Enoch 1:9).

(*The Book of Enoch*, tras. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 2: 189.)

<sup>293</sup> When the Prophet Joseph wrote a poetic version of his vision, he made its meaning even more clear.

I'll surely reveal all my myst'ries to them—  
The great hidden myst'ries in my kingdom stor'd;  
From the council in Kolob, to time on the earth,  
(Joseph Smith, "A Vision," in *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1843).

Abraham 3:3-4 reads:

3 And the Lord said unto me: These are the governing ones; and the name of the great one is Kolob, because it is near unto me, for I am the Lord thy God: I have set this one to govern all those which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest.

4 And the Lord said unto me, by the Urim and Thummim, that Kolob was after the manner of the Lord, according to its times and seasons in the revolutions thereof; that one revolution was a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest. This is the reckoning of the Lord's time, according to the reckoning of Kolob.

## Overview of the Ancient Temple Drama

Notwithstanding the premortal importance of the activities of the members of the Council in Heaven, throughout the Bible and the Book of Mormon the most significant role of the members of the Council was not so much what they did in their premortal lives, but what they did on the earth after they returned from visiting the Council, having re-affirmed the covenants they had originally made there. The ancient temple drama was a kind of generic version of that *sode* experience. It taught each individual that the significance of the premortal covenants each had made before he came to this earth was as relevant to one's present earthly responsibilities—and to one's ultimate salvation—as the covenants God made with the prophets at the Council are relevant to their earthly responsibilities and ultimate salvation.

In the *sode* experience the prophet reviews his assignments for his earth-life. From there it seems strikingly like the story of the hero in the cosmic myth. There, the hero understands why and what his assignment is, and the difficulties he will encounter in seeking to accomplish it. He is promised that he will be able to succeed and that he will return home triumphant. As that is the same story told in the ancient temple drama, one might describe the drama as a this-world generic version of a *sode* experience. The writers of the psalms understood that relationship.

In some of the psalms, the Temple of Solomon was the place where one went to find the *sode*—referring to the *sode*-like drama that people experienced in conjunction with the Temple of Solomon. Psalm 111 clearly shows that the congregation was regarded as representing the members of the Council. It begins, “Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly [The Hebrew word used here is *sode*.] of the upright, and in the congregation” (v. 1).

Because the Feast of Tabernacles drama followed essentially the same pattern, and conveyed essentially the same information that the prophets learned during their *sode* experiences, the play might also be understood to be a representation of the eternal biographies of its participants; that is, of the Savior, the king and queen, and the people. It might be understood as representing the promises given in a *sode* experience, for the participants were symbolically returned to the Council, were shown the events and

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circumstances of earth life, renewed the covenants they received in conjunction with their own assignments—and were promised that they will have the power to succeed and return triumphantly to be with Jehovah again. To say that the psalms contained a *sode* experience may not be technically true,<sup>294</sup> but to say that the psalms taught a *sode* experience is correct. The drama of the psalms was a generic version of a *sode* experience that was administered by human beings, rather than by God.

The drama lasted eight days and was divided into three major segments, like three acts of a play with multiple scenes. The three acts were the premortal experience, this world, and promises of the world to come.

The cosmic myth enacted during the ritual of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama taught a story that explained the origin and purpose of life. In the first act, it told of the events of the Council in Heaven, and reiterated the assignments and covenants made among the gods in that premortal Council, including the extended story of some of the heroes who participated there. There are a number of psalms that deal with battles in which Jehovah intercedes to assure victory. However, since the psalms are no longer in their original order, it is impossible to know which of those psalms dealt with the war in heaven,<sup>295</sup> and which dealt with earthly battles. The drama also depicted the creation of the

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<sup>294</sup> Psalm 25:14 is one place in the psalms where the *sode* is the central subject of the psalm. That entire psalm is about the meek. It defines the meek as those who keep their eternal covenants, and promises the covenants made at the Council will be revealed to them. The word translated “secret” is from the Hebrew *sode*.

Psalm 23 is a synopsis of the entire drama, so it might be considered as a representation of the *sode* experience. Both psalms are discussed below.

<sup>295</sup> For a discussion of the Israelite understanding of the war in heaven, see Mullen, *Divine Council*, 186-99.

Relative to a portion of the contents of the Dead Sea scroll, 11QMelchizedek, James R. Davila observes, “The following eight verses describe the apocalyptic battle waged by God himself. It is generally agreed that the messenger whose hands are filled (i.e., who receives priestly ordination) is Michael. So here we have a reflex of the myth of the war in heaven leading to the defeat of personalized cosmic evil that begins with a priestly ordination of the angelic protagonist. Such, I propose, was the structure of song five of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. It described the ordination of the angelic beings in the heavenly temple, presumably including Melchizedek, then narrated the war in heaven that results in eschatological judgment.

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earth<sup>296</sup> by members of that Counsel under the authority of Jehovah.

The second act began with the story of Adam, the first king and priest, and of Eve his priestess-queen. After they left the Garden, the reigning human king played the roles of Abraham, Moses, and David, reaffirming the covenants Jehovah had made with those prophets. The king, then, in his role of himself as a young prince, was anointed to become king.<sup>297</sup> Then the drama confronted all of its participants with the dreadful reality of the “valley of the shadow of death.” Symbolically, during a terrible war, the city and its Temple were destroyed, and the hero-king was killed.

In the drama, Jehovah rescues the king and they return to the world of the living, the people met them and in a grand procession they walked around the city—measuring it and re-defining it as sacred space—symbolically creating a New Jerusalem with a new Temple, by a people who had been restored by Jehovah and who had then become Zion. After entering the city and its Temple, the king was crowned and then (while sitting on the throne of Jehovah in the Holy of Holies), he took his rightful, foreordained place as God’s authorized earthly representative.

The next day, the last day of the festival, the king provided a great feast that represented the beginning of a new age that would extend into the eternities. The conclusion of the second act and full representation of the third act were told by the same story (just as they are the same in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm’s “I shall dwell in the house of the house of the Lord forever.”)—the ultimate salvation of Israel—for God had kept all his promises and instituted a time of eternal peace.

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(“Melchizedek, Michael, and War in Heaven,” *Society of Biblical Literature, 1996 Seminar Papers* [n. p., n. d.], 259-72).

<sup>296</sup> Ricks, “Liturgy and Cosmogony,” 118-25.

<sup>297</sup> Each of these scenes in the drama will be discussed below, along with the psalms that represent that portion of the play.

## **The Drama**

### **Act 1: The Premortal Realm**

#### **The Importance of the Council in Heaven**

Inasmuch as the king's odyssey through the drama represented the experiences of all the people, the drama provided for each one, a kind of generic version of a vision of their own eternal and earth-life experiences. It began by showing how this life is a meaningful and necessary extension, and an amplification of the promises made at the Council in Heaven. Throughout the drama, the people—individually, but acting in unison as part of the group—reaffirmed their relationship with Jehovah. For it was shown in the drama, as in a real *sode* experience, that while each personal mission would be filled with difficulty, each received the overriding promise that in the final outcome, the righteous would return again to be with God. Mowinckel had a personal conviction that the symbolic promise that one could return to God would be fulfilled in eternal reality. He wrote, “In the form of legend, the God-inspired truth about man is asserted about the first man as well as the last, about me and about you.”<sup>298</sup>

Just as a major theme of the ancient temple drama was the sanctity of legitimate priesthood and sacral kingship, so its purpose was to help each person understand his and her eternal Self in the context of its myth and ritual. Its implication was that one could never know one's Self—the eternal law of one's own being—except in the context of this universal panorama.

To achieve its end, the drama began, as all universal stories must, by recounting the circumstances of the beginning when the heroes and heroines were required to leave their security in order to perform seemingly impossible tasks.

A fundamental theme of almost all ancient religions related the decisions and the activities of the primeval gods with the affairs of human life. The pre-exilic Hebrew

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<sup>298</sup> Mowinckel, *Old Testament as the Word*, 93.



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religion taught that it was the responsibility of people in this world to effectuate the covenants they made, and assignments they received in the Council of the gods. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the same thing, promising, on God's behalf:

I'll surely reveal all my myst'ries to them—  
The great hidden myst'ries in my kingdom stor'd;  
From the council in Kolob, to time on the earth,  
And for ages to come unto them I will show  
My pleasure and will, what the kingdom will do  
Eternity's wonders they truly shall know.<sup>299</sup>

In the scriptures, the members of the Council are often called “stars” or “the heavens.”<sup>300</sup> An example is Lord's question to Job:

4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.  
5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?  
6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;

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<sup>299</sup> Joseph Smith, “A Vision,” in *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1843. The poem is quoted more fully below.

<sup>300</sup> *Stars* and *heavens* are frequently used to represent the members of Council in Heaven. In some scriptures the word “heavens” refers to the place where God and the Council reside. Examples are: Genesis 2:1, 22:17; Exodus 32:11-15; Job 38:1-14; Psalms 8:1-3, 19:1-4, 33:6-9, 50:1-8, 57:2-11, 89:1-6, 96:1-13, 103:2-22, 104:1-35, 115:1-7; Isaiah 1:1-2, 14:1-16 (compare Jude 1:12-13), 40:20-25, 44:21-25, 45:11-19, 48:11-15, 49:13; Mark 1:10-11; Acts 7:54-60; 2 Peter 3:1-18; Revelation 1:1-20, 12:1-14.

1 Nephi 1:9-10, 20:13-17 (different from Bible's Isaiah), 21:13 (not in Bible's Isaiah); 2 Nephi 2:14, 24:12-17, 29:5-7; Alma 18:26-30; 3 Nephi 9:15; Ether 3:1-2, 4:7-9; Moroni 7:27-28, 9:25-26.

D&C 14:9, 45:1, 49:5-7, 60:4, 67:2, 76:1, 84:42, 104:14, 107:17-19, 110:10-12, 128:23; 132:29-33, 137:1-4.

Moses 1:36-39, 6:41-45, 7:1-4; Abraham 3:21, 4:1-6, 5:1-4.

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7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?  
(Job 38:1-7)

When Nephi described his father's *sode* experience, he wrote:

9 And it came to pass that he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven,  
and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day.

10 And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed  
that of the stars in the firmament (1 Nephi 1:9-10).

We find a similar usage in the Book of Mormon version of Isaiah 48 where they are  
called to a heavenly assembly:<sup>301</sup>

13 Mine hand hath also laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath  
spanned [measured] the heavens [Council members]. I call unto them and they  
stand up together. [Anciently, people stood to make a covenant (2 Kings 23:1-  
3).]

14 All ye [Council members], assemble yourselves, and hear; who among them  
hath declared these things<sup>302</sup> unto them? The Lord hath loved him [the one  
assigned to make the speech. In the next chapter it is confirmed that this is the  
Prophet Joseph]; yea, and he will fulfil his word which he hath declared by them;  
and he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall come upon the  
Chaldeans (1 Nephi 20:13-14).

Psalm 89 speaks of the role of Jehovah in the Council:

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<sup>301</sup> In the Bible version the stars are not persons, and the assembly is removed from the account.

<sup>302</sup> Throughout the Book of Mormon, in this kind of context where the subject seems to be all or part  
of the ancient temple ceremony or instructions, the phrase "these things" seems to be a kind of short hand  
code representing that ceremony or instructions.

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- 5 And the heavens [Council] shall praise thy wonders, O Lord:  
thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.
- 6 For who in the heaven [the members of the Council]  
can be compared unto the Lord?  
who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?
- 7 God is greatly to be feared [revered] in the assembly of the saints,  
and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him (Psalm 89:5-7).

The ancient Jews recognized the importance of (but did not worship) this heavenly Council of gods. Its members were those who had been chosen to become kings, priests, prophets, and sacral kings in the mortal world. That was important, because their having been chosen at the Council legitimized both their mission and their authority on the earth. However, if one had not received a given assignment in the Council, yet tried to assume its authority in this world, he was a usurper.<sup>303</sup> What was true for the political and religious leaders, was equally true for all of the people—each had been given an assignment, and each was expected to do his or her own part. So the drama, with its ordinances and covenants, became a kind of roadmap and standard by which one could judge the rectitude of one's own actions. Mowinckel described the importance of the festival's temple drama's impact in the course of one's life, when he wrote:

But every cultic festival reflects many sides of life; in it the basic fact of 'salvation' in all its complexity becomes experienced reality. The enthronement festival was the chief festival of the year, *the* feast of Yahweh at his personal 'coming' in the hour of deepest danger and need, and with all the 'salvation' and bliss which this coming includes, so that all the fundamental experiences, emotions and ideas of religion must have met together here.<sup>304</sup>

Jehovah's role in the premortal Council was understood as a necessary part of the

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<sup>303</sup> For the definition of a false prophet, see Jeremiah 23:18-23.

<sup>304</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:141.

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definition of who he is. An example of that is Psalm 135 that carries his history from the Council (v. 5: “our Lord is above all gods”), through the conquest of the Holy Land (v.10: “Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings”), until the reign of David (v.21: “Blessed be the Lord out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem). The psalm is important because it roots all of these events at the Council. It reads in full:

- 1 Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the name of the Lord;  
    praise him, O ye servants of the Lord.
- 2 Ye that stand in the house of the Lord,  
    in the courts of the house of our God,
- 3 Praise the Lord; for the Lord is good:  
    sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.
- 4 For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself,  
    and Israel for his peculiar treasure.
- 5 For I know that the Lord is great,  
    and that our Lord is above all gods.
- 6 Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven,  
    and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.
- 7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth;  
    he maketh lightnings for the rain;  
    he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.
- 8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt,  
    both of man and beast.
- 9 Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee,  
    O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.
- 10 Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings;
- 11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan,  
    and all the kingdoms of Canaan:
- 12 And gave their land for an heritage,  
    an heritage unto Israel his people.
- 13 Thy name, O Lord, endureth for ever;  
    and thy memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations.

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- 14 For the Lord will judge his people,  
and he will repent himself concerning his servants.
- 15 The idols of the heathen are silver and gold,  
the work of men's hands.
- 16 They have mouths, but they speak not;  
eyes have they, but they see not;
- 17 They have ears, but they hear not;  
neither is there any breath in their mouths.
- 18 They that make them are like unto them:  
so is every one that trusteth in them.
- 19 Bless the Lord, O house of Israel:  
bless the Lord, O house of Aaron:
- 20 Bless the Lord, O house of Levi:  
ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord.
- 21 Blessed be the Lord out of Zion,  
which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord (Psalm 135:1-21).

Psalm 136 follows the same pattern, beginning at the Council and continuing through Israelite history. The remarkable contribution of this psalm is that it gives glory to both Elohim and Jehovah at the Council (v. 2&3). The first few verses of the psalm read:

- 1 O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good:  
for his mercy endureth for ever.
- 2 O give thanks unto the God of gods:  
for his mercy endureth for ever.
- 3 O give thanks to the Lord of Lords:  
for his mercy endureth for ever.
- 4 To him who alone doeth great wonders:  
for his mercy endureth for ever.
- 5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens:  
for his mercy endureth for ever.
- 6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters:

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- for his mercy endureth for ever.  
7 To him that made great lights:  
for his mercy endureth for ever:  
8 The sun to rule by day:  
for his mercy endureth for ever:  
9 The moon and stars to rule by night:  
for his mercy endureth for ever.  
10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn:  
for his mercy endureth for ever:  
11 And brought out Israel from among them:  
for his mercy endureth for ever (Psalm 136:1-11).
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## **The Premortal Council in the Israelite Temple Drama**

In the ancient Israelite temple drama, Act One depicted the activities, decisions, assignments, and covenants made by the members of the Council. In these scenes, as in the rest of the drama, the then-reigning king and queen played the major roles.

The importance of the Council in Heaven in the theologies of the ancient world is widely recognized by Bible scholars,<sup>305</sup> as Mullen observes, “The concept of the divine council, or the assembly of the gods, was a common religious motif in the cultures of

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<sup>305</sup> For information about the makeup and functions of the Council, see D&C 138:55-56, Abraham 3, Alma 13. Joseph Smith, “A Vision”, *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1843; Stan Larson, “The King Follett Discourse: a Newly Amalgamated Text,” *BYU Studies* 18, 2 (Winter 1978): 193-208. The most thorough and carefully thought-out discussion of our premortal existence, from an LDS point of view, is B. H. Roberts [priesthood manual], *The Seventy’s Course in Theology, Second Year* (Salt Lake City: Skelton Publishing Co., 1908), 2:7-32. A large section is quoted below. See Mullen, *Divine Council*, 167-70; Robinson, “The Council of Yahweh,” 151-57; Cross, “Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah,” 274-77. Freedman, “Twenty-Third Psalm,” 275-302; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 20-25; Seitz, “Divine Council,” 229-47; Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, 223-26; Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 364-67. Cooke, “Sons of (the) God(s),” 22-47.

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Egypt, Mesopotamia, Canaan, Phoenicia, and Israel.”<sup>306</sup>

Throughout the ancient Near East, it was understood that human destiny was, to a large degree, the fulfillment of the deliberations and decisions of the premortal Council. In Babylon, for example, it was believed that the god Marduk controlled human lives because he had stolen the tablets of destiny on which everyone's foreordination was recorded. This gave him enormous power to either facilitate or frustrate the purposes of the other gods.<sup>307</sup>

Jewish understanding of the significance of the Council in Heaven faded with their post-exilic apostasy. For that reason, as Mullen observes, “Our major evidence for the council motif in the Old Testament is found primarily in Israel's pre-exilic literature, especially in the Psalms and other poetic writings [such as Job and Isaiah].”<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Mullen, *Divine Council*, 113.

<sup>307</sup> For discussions of the tablets of destiny, see Budge, E. A. Wallis, *Babylonian Life and History* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1925), 80-83. Geo Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1950), 25-27; Lundquist, “What Is a Temple?” 105-7; Hauglid, “Sacred Time and the Temple,” 636-45.

The concept that an evil person who was expelled from the Council still remembers what assignments were accepted by righteous persons, is not foreign to LDS theology.

<sup>308</sup> Mullen, *Divine Council*, 116.

## **Act 1, Scene 1: The Council in Heaven**

There was apparently a threefold purpose for including the premortal scenes in the ancient temple drama. The first was to show that Jehovah is the Creator-God, and that he has chosen Israel for his special protection. The second was to affirm that the then-present ruling king was chosen by God by covenant, and that because the king kept those covenants God continued to sustain him. The third was to give to the masses a sense of their own belonging—that is, to demonstrate that not just the king, and not just the nation as a generic whole, but that each individual was chosen by Jehovah, and that the same covenants that applied to the nation generally, and to the ruling monarchs specifically, also applied to each man and woman in the congregation.

We cannot turn to the non-LDS scholars to answer the questions about who we are, and how we came to be. To do that we refer to one of the greatest latter-day thinkers of the Church, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr. He writes:

Now, if we are going to know life at its best, we ought to know, or to appreciate, or have in view, not only what life is, but what is the purpose of life, why are we here. And in that connection I thought I might call your attention to some passages that will take us rather far back and give us some idea of what this spirit, this life and soul of ours, is—its antiquity.

I am reading first from the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 93:

And now, verily I say unto you [this is the Lord speaking], I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn.

That which I have just read is the 21st verse; now, dropping to the 23rd verse:

Ye were also in the beginning with the Father [speaking to Joseph and others]: that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth.

And now the 29th verse:

Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.

Now I want to read from Abraham:



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I dwell in the midst of them all [said God, speaking of the intelligences]. I now, therefore, have come down unto thee to deliver unto thee the works which my hands have made [he is speaking to Abraham], wherein my wisdom excelleth them all, for I rule in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, in all wisdom and prudence, over all the intelligences thine eyes have seen from the beginning; I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen. Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born (Abraham 3:21-23).

Now, there seems to be a difference between the spirit of intelligence, the spiritual body, and the mortal body, and that is well to have in mind.<sup>309</sup>

In his mild, unassuming way, President Clark made an extremely important observation: “Now, there seems to be a difference between the spirit of intelligence, the spiritual body, and the mortal body.” There, he identifies the first three phases of our existence: intelligence, the spiritual body, and the mortal body, then adds the knowing words, “and that is well to have in mind.”

When discussing the organization of the people in the premortal spirit world, President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

It is reasonable to believe that there was a Church organization there. The

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<sup>309</sup> J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *Immortality and Eternal Life: A Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1969-1970): 2:154-55. All the brackets within the quotes are President Clark's.

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heavenly beings were living in a perfectly arranged society. Every person knew his place. Priesthood, without any question, had been conferred and the leaders were chosen to officiate. Ordinances pertaining to that pre-existence were required and the love of God prevailed. Under such conditions it was natural for our Father to discern and choose those who were most worthy and evaluate the talents of each individual. He knew not only what each of us *could* do, but also what each of us *would* do when put to the test and when responsibility was given us to accomplish our respective missions. Paul writes to the Ephesian Saints:

Blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly places* in Christ:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

(Ephesians 1:3-4).<sup>310</sup>

Mowinckel made another important observation about the activities of the members of the Council. He wrote, “As we have seen, the idea of a council (assembly) of gods belongs to the festival of new year and enthronement. It was in such an assembly of ‘sons of gods’ and ‘saints’, i.e. divine beings, that Yahweh once portioned out amongst the ‘sons of gods’ whom he made governors over them.”<sup>311</sup> The Prophet Joseph Smith understood the same principle. He said, “Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council.”<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Smith, *Way to Perfection*, 50-51.

<sup>311</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:150.

<sup>312</sup> Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 365.

## **Psalm 82, The Father's Instructions to the Council**

Psalm 82 helps show how that was done. It is one of the most studied, and variably interpreted, of the Psalms.<sup>313</sup> While scholars (who have no personal belief in a premortal existence)

rarely agree about what it all means, most agree that the psalm describes a dialogue between God and the members of the Council.

In order for us to understand what was happening, it is important that we know who was present at the Council, and, therefore, to whom Elohim was speaking at the meeting represented by this psalm. If we know who was present, the words will convey a more intimate meaning to us. President Joseph F. Smith, in his vision of the redemption of the dead, gave us a number of names of those who were in attendance at a similar meeting, and identified them as "the noble and great ones." An abridgement of his statement might read:

In this vast congregation of the righteous were Father Adam, Mother Eve, with many of her faithful daughters, Seth, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Elias, Malachi, Elijah, the prophets who dwelt among the Nephites and testified of the coming of the Son of God, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and other choice spirits who were reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work. I observed that they were also among the noble and great ones [That is, those who are identified in Abraham 3:22-23 as

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<sup>313</sup> A study by an LDS scholar is Peterson, "Ye are Gods," 471-594. After a short introduction, he begins by quoting Julian Morgenstern, "Although its text [Psalm 82] is in almost perfect condition, and better far than the text of the vast majority of the Psalms, scarcely any psalm seems to have troubled interpreters more or to have experienced a wider range of interpretation and a more disturbing uncertainty and lack of finality therein than Psalm 82" (476). Peterson gives a good review of the Council in Heaven and a *sode* experience, and shows that Psalm 82 took place at the Council in Heaven, and relates the Savior's statement in John 10 to the LDS doctrine of premortal existence. He concludes: "consequently, it would seem that the latter-day Saints are in a uniquely strong position to reconcile the original sense of Psalm 82, with the Savior's use of it in John 10" (555-56).

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members of the Council] who were chosen in the beginning to be rulers in the Church of God. Even before they were born, they, with many others, received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men (summary of D&C 138:38-56).

Psalm 82 represents the generic instructions that the members of the Council received from their Father in Heaven before they came to this world. Each of them was to come here to be servants—to bless, to teach, and to sustain each other—and most would be destined to die just like everyone else. In Abraham 4-5, the members of the Council are also identified as “the gods” who, under the direction of the Savior, created the heavens and the earth. It is vital that we understand their premortal place, but our understanding raises an even more important question: “Why would the gods who attended the Council condescend to come to a world as unfriendly and dangerous as this one?” B. H. Roberts suggested an answer by enlarging the question:

Do these higher intelligences of the stellar universe and planetary systems have so developed in themselves the quality of love that makes it possible to think of them as being willing to sacrifice themselves—to empty themselves in sacrifice to bring to pass the welfare of others whom they may esteem to be the undeveloped intelligences of the universe? And may they not be capable of giving the last full measure of sacrifice to bring to pass the higher development of the “lowly” when no other means of uplift can be serviceable? Is the great truth operative among these untold millions of intelligences that greater love hath no intelligence for another than this, that he would give his life in the service of kindred intelligences when no other means of helpfulness is possible?<sup>314</sup>

Psalm 82 was apparently written to be performed on a stage. That is evinced by the inference that the scene takes place in Elohim’s throne room, which is the Holy of Holies

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<sup>314</sup> B. H. Roberts, *The Truth, The Way, The Life*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1994), 98.

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in the cosmic temple.<sup>315</sup> The Israelites could readily visualize that scene because their own temple was understood to be an earthly replica of God's heavenly temple, and God's throne in the earthly Holy of Holies was like his celestial throne. Solomon's Temple was also understood to be a symbolic representation of the structure of the whole universe, with the Holy of Holies (Kolob-like) in the center.<sup>316</sup> Baines explains:

The texts only indirectly exploit the pervasive symbolic identification of temple and cosmos, focusing their aspirations on the king's name rather than directly on the temple. They describe how the temple is embedded in the wider cosmos of earth, sky, and celestial phenomena. Because temple and cosmos are separated, the latter's stability can enhance the former's, while the symbolism of temple design can draw these ideas into the architecture without their being explicit in texts.<sup>317</sup>

Like Psalm 24, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Psalm can be divided into sections, identified by change of voice, so one can read it as the scene of a play. However, it is almost completely without stage directions— that is, there are none we can understand. *Selah*, at the end of verse 3, may have been some kind of instruction to the performers, or to the chorus or audience, but its meaning is entirely lost, and now scholars have no idea what that word was trying to say.<sup>318</sup> Consequently, modern readers have to use only the dialogue itself to know what

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<sup>315</sup> In Solomon's Temple, the Holy of Holies was the room that contained God's throne. Since the earthly Temple was a replica of the Heavenly Temple, we can assume that the temple in Kolob had a Holy of Holies, and that it contained God's throne. Ahlstrom assures us, "The temple [at Jerusalem] was considered to mirror everything that happened in the heavens; it was a replica of the heavenly abode of the deity" (Ahlstrom, *Joel and the Temple*, 73).

<sup>316</sup> See Barker, "Great High Priest," 65-80.

<sup>317</sup> John Baines, "King, Temple, and Cosmos," *Aspekte Spatagyptischer Kultur*, ed. Martina Minas, *et al.* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1994), 23-33.  
See Parry and Parry, "Temple in Heaven, 515-32.

<sup>318</sup> Because it has no certain meaning, I leave *selah* out when I quote the psalms.

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was happening. That task is not as difficult as it may seem. One can often tell from the changes in voice who is saying what, and to whom.<sup>319</sup>

For convenience, stage directions have been inserted in italics. The bolded text of the Psalm is followed by a commentary explaining the significance of each element within the scene.

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## **Psalm 82: Instruction and Covenant**

*A narrator introduces the scene*

### **1. God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.**

These words are clearly spoken by a narrator, or a chorus as in a Greek play, explaining what is happening on the stage.

Here, and in the next verses, to “judge” means the same thing in Hebrew as it does in

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<sup>319</sup> Scholars have various ways of assigning dates and events to the psalms. An example of a variant interpretation is Matitiah Tsevat's. He maintains that Psalm 82 is a report of a kind of *sode* experience where the person receiving the vision is made privy to a court trial where the chief God condemns insubordinate gods to death. He interprets the last verse as being an interruption to the proceedings by the person who sees the vision, whom he calls the “bystander.” He says this person becomes over excited and shouts out that the execution must be performed immediately. (Matitiah Tsevat, “God and the Gods in Assembly, An Interpretation of Psalm 82,” in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 40-41 (1969-1970): 123-37).

In contrast, and as an example of how some scholars try to date the psalms, Morton Smith claims that no Hebrew literature that predated Nehemiah showed any concern for the poor, therefore, he reasons, all Hebrew literature that shows any such a concern must have been written after the Babylonian captivity. He identifies those writings as the five books of Moses, Chronicles, and the Psalms (Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics*, 166-77).

However, modern scriptures teach us that prophets have always written about the Holy Spirit, so the Saints in every dispensation have sought not only to look after the poor but to eliminate poverty altogether. Professor Smith would not have made that error if he had access to the Pearl of Great Price and the Book of Mormon, which are pristine sources for understanding the pre-exilic religion of the Israelites.

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English. When pronouncing judgment, a judge may condemn or exonerate; or a judge is also one who selects, chooses, or assigns. In an ancient court of law, a judge would sit as an evidence of his superior status. In this psalm he was standing, as one did when making a covenant.<sup>320</sup> Thus, a more explicit translation might be: “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he chooses among the gods.” During ceremonies like the one depicted in Psalm 82, the congregation also stood to make covenants, and in doing so they spoke in unison, as with one voice.<sup>321</sup>

The gods among whom Elohim was choosing were the members of the Council in Heaven. That situation immediately calls one's attention to Abraham 3:22-23, where “God saw these souls [the noble and great ones] that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers.” There he was standing and judging or choosing. These appear to be two versions of the same story:

*Elohim speaks to the members of the Council.*

### **2. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked?**

The Hebrew reads simply “the wicked.” The Tanakh, which is the official Jewish translation of the Old Testament, renders this verse as “How long will you judge

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<sup>320</sup> An Old Testament example of standing to make a covenant is 2 Kings 23:1-3. “The king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord ... And all the people stood to the covenant.”

<sup>321</sup> An Old Testament example of the people speaking in unison to make a covenant is Exodus 24:3. “And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.”

An example in the Book of Mormon is Mosiah 5:1-5. “And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, he sent among them, desiring to know of his people if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them. And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us. ...And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will.”

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perversely, showing favor to the wicked?”<sup>322</sup> That is the pivotal question upon which everyone’s salvation ultimately turns. It is about prejudice, bigotry, and intolerance. As soon as we arrive in this world, no matter what human culture we arrive in, that culture teaches us that some people are better than others, so favor should be shown to those with political prestige, money, education, expensive toys, “correct” cultural preferences, and “appropriate” lifestyle. It does not matter whether they are better because they have ten cows rather than just two, or whether they have a huge house rather than a simple one. The principle is the same—and that idea that some people are better than others—says God in these instructions to his children, is the misconception they must first correct in themselves, and then reject altogether. One does not judge people by their appearances or by their prestige. In the festival temple drama, that message was relevant far beyond its presentation on the stage. Its purpose was to remind the people in the audience about the covenants they had made before they came to this world, and to give them the opportunity to re-make those same covenants in this world, and to receive instructions about how those covenants should be fulfilled. There could have been no question about the implications of that command. The Law was explicit:

5 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Deuteronomy 6:5).

18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord (Leviticus 19:18).

At the Council, the Father’s first instructions to his children was that when they come to this earth, they must obey what James called the “royal law:”

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy

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<sup>322</sup> Tanakh, *The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985), 1206; Lowell K. Handy’s translation is similar. He renders it: “How long will you rule unjustly? And honor the wicked?” (“Sounds, Words and Meanings in Psalm 82,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 47 [1990]: 51-66.)



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neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors (James 2:8-9).

*The Father gives instructions about what one must do while in this temporal world:* These instructions sound remarkably like the “the Law of Consecration.” Could it be that the covenants we made at the Council are the same as the instructions we receive here?

### **3. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.**

“Defend” and “do justice” suggest the power, authority, and responsibilities of kingship to defend those who have no political or military power,<sup>323</sup> or who are impoverished.<sup>324</sup>

### **4. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.**

“Deliver” from “the wicked” seems to represent the power, authority, and responsibilities of priesthood. The denotation of the word translated “poor” is weak or feeble, but the connotation seems to have spiritual rather than physical overtones.<sup>325</sup> The

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<sup>323</sup> On the duty of the king to protect and provide for the needs of widows, orphans, and other powerless individuals, see Charles Fensham, “Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 21, 2 (April 1962): 129-39.

<sup>324</sup> For a discussion of the origins of the kingship covenant in ancient Israel, see Zafira Ben-Barak, “The Mizpah Covenant (1 Sam 10:25)– The Source of the Israelite Monarchic Covenant,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 91 (1979): 30-43.

<sup>325</sup> “The poor” in the Beatitudes does not mean impoverished; rather it means pious, writes Gary T. Meadors in, “The ‘Poor’ in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6, 2 (1985): 305-14. For another explanation of the meaning of “poor,” see the discussion of the Beatitude, “Blessed are

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wicked are those who are morally wrong, who neither know nor wish to know the truth. Thus, these instructions pertain to the way every man in the congregation must execute the duties of priesthood and sacral kingship.

In relation to one's kingship duties, the poor and the needy are impoverished as to things of this world. With regard to priesthood duties, they are, as in the Beatitudes those who make the sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit, as also in Psalm 86.

- 1 Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me:  
for I am poor and needy.
- 2 Preserve my soul; for I am holy:  
O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.
- 3 Be merciful unto me,  
O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.
- 4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee,  
O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
- 5 For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive;  
and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee (Psalm 86:1-5).

In that psalm, being poor and needy has nothing to do with worldly impoverishment; rather, it has to do with being holy and completely dependent upon the Lord. That same interpretation is probably equally valid in Psalm 82, in regard to these instructions received by the members of the Council about how they were to perform their earthly priesthood duties. In noting that, one also identifies an almost invisible line dividing the responsibilities of those to whom God was speaking. They were reasonable to protect, defend, and support the physically impoverished as well as the spiritually pure:

**5. They know not, neither will they understand;  
they walk on in darkness:  
all the foundations of the earth are out of course.**

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the poor..." in the Book of Mormon section of this book.

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“They” of verse 5 appear to be those who are called “wicked,” yet, their wickedness seems to be a consequence of a widespread chaos, rather than of their individual rebelliousness. If that is correct, then “they,” as well as the poor and needy, are those whom the members of the Council were sent to the earth to serve. These verses describe a situation in which chaos reigns supreme—lack of knowledge, walking in darkness, the earth out of course. It is the same imagery we find in the “valley of the shadow of death” in Psalm 23,<sup>326</sup> and in the dark and dreary waste at the beginning of Lehi’s tree of life vision. It represents the condition of mortality where all persons must experience disorder, and choose from among its myriads of possibilities. The instructions were imperatives in which the members of the Council were commanded to work to overcome the darkness. The assignment that the Father gave to the members of the Council was that they go to the earth and help others walk in the light of truth—to help them transcend and overcome the chaos. However, the Father warned, it would not be all that easy. “They”—the people who most need the help—will not understand, and many, perhaps most, will reject the message. The Father further warns:

**6 I have said, Ye are gods;  
and all of you are children of the Most High.<sup>327</sup>**  
**7 But ye shall die like men,  
and fall like one of the princes.**

With those words, God outlined the consequences of mortality for the members of the Council. An equally valid meaning of the word translated “but” is “surely,” which would

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<sup>326</sup> The Tanakh translates “the valley of the shadow of death” more vividly and accurately as “the valley of the deepest darkness” (Psalm 23:4). (Tanakh *The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*).

<sup>327</sup> In John 10:34-36, Jesus quoted Psalm 82 as evidence that it was not blasphemy to say one was a son of God. See James S. Ackerman, “The Rabbinic Interpretation of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John: John 10:34,” *Harvard Theological Review* 59, 2 (April, 1966): 186-91; J. A. Emerton, “The interpretation of Psalm lxxxii.6 in John x,” *Journal of Theological Studies, New Series* 11 (1960): 329-36; See Peterson, “‘Ye Are Gods’: Psalm 82 and John 10,” 471-594.

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simply be the assurance that death was a natural part of the assignment they were undertaking. In that case the verse would read, “and all of you are children of the Most High, surely you will die like men, and fall [as a hero in battle] like one of the princes.”

The warning was that when the members of the Council come to the earth they would no longer be identifiable as “the gods.” They would simply be ordinary humans like everybody else. They would feel sorrow and pain, until death would eventually consume their earthly bodies. Some would use up their lives in God’s service, while others would fall like princes in battle, sealing their testimonies with their own blood—like Abinadi and Joseph Smith, or like the “ordinary” men and women who would be killed during the Roman persecutions, or at the hands of a Missouri mob, or who would expire while trudging in the mountainous snow pulling a handcart toward Zion.

*Having given those instructions, the Father invites the congregation to rise and make a covenant that they will obey his words:*

**8 Arise, O God [or, “O gods”], judge the earth:  
for thou shalt inherit all the Nations (Psalm 82:1-8).**

Verse 8 is commonly understood to be an adoration of Elohim offered by the members of the Council who invite him to rise. The problem with that interpretation is that in verse one, God was already standing, and it doesn’t make a great deal of sense to have the members of the Council ask God to stand up. The word ‘God’ is translated from the Hebrew word “*Elohim*.” *Elohim* is the plural for “gods”—“the gods” in the ordinary sense.<sup>328</sup> It is also the name of the Father of the gods.<sup>329</sup> This is clearly shown in verse one that is translated, “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.” Both the first and the last words in that verse are “*elohim*.” So we have, “*Elohim*

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<sup>328</sup> See Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 43.

<sup>329</sup> It appears that “Adam” and “Eve” may be similar kinds of name-titles. “Adam” means “many” in Moses 1:34, and “Eve” means “many” in Moses 4:26.

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standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the *elohim*.” Similarly, verse 8 begins, “Arise, O *elohim*.” The translators of the King James Version chose to have it read, “Arise, O God.” However, an equally valid translation would be “Arise, O gods,” making that last verse read as the conclusion of the Father’s instructions, and his invitation to them to stand and make a covenant. While this translation seems more internally consistent to the psalm, there is a grammatical problem. The verb is singular so *elohim* must also be singular. Therefore, if the verse is the conclusion of God’s instructions to the Council, it must be understood that he was addressing each of them individually, and inviting each one to stand and covenant with him. With that covenant comes God’s guarantee of their success: “for thou shalt inherit all the nations”—a promise of eternal life and of their ultimate restoration to their former status.

During the performance of this psalm, the members of the Israelite audience probably understand themselves to represent the members of the Council in Heaven. If that were so, then it was they who stood to the covenant. Their watching the play was an opportunity for them to review the covenants they had made in the premortal world, and their participation in the drama became a new covenant-making reality. As they spoke the words in unison, each individual covenanted to fulfill his own assignment in order that the Father’s purposes might be accomplished. If those assumptions are correct, then, as in the story of King Benjamin, even though the words were spoken in unison, making of the covenant was the personal act of each individual in the congregation.

Because the congregation’s participation in the drama was, for each of them, a present and personal act, the words of the psalm and the enactment of the story were, as Mowinckel and Nibley suggested,<sup>330</sup> not just a remembering of the myth and a re-enactment of the ritual, but a new actualization of the event and a new covenant. For each member of the congregation who participated in the drama, their making the covenant anew was a reaffirmation of an everlasting covenant, but it was also a new covenant, affirming one’s present relationship with God.

The original scene depicted by Psalm 82 can more readily be understood by inserting it into the account recorded in Abraham 3, where it fits so perfectly that it does not even

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<sup>330</sup> These were quoted earlier. The sources are: Mowinckel, *Old Testament as Word of God*, 99-100; Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 224.

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break the cadence of the story. Please note, by putting the two scriptures together in this way, we do not wish to imply that they were ever written as a single unit. Rather, they are combined to illustrate an interesting—perhaps insightful—picture of how things might have been in the Council in Heaven, and how they might have been portrayed on the stage:

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them. God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods. [He asked,] How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course. I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Arise, O *gods*, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations. [After the covenant, God said,] These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born (Abraham 3:22-23 & Psalm 82).

Comparisons between the scriptures can help us comprehend something of the panoramic sweep of the festival temple drama. There is a psalm that sounds very much like it might have been used at this juncture in the drama to express their joy and determination to keep their Father's instructions:

- 1 Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul.
- 2 While I live will I praise the Lord:  
    I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.
- 3 Put not your trust in princes,  
    nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.
- 4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth;

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- in that very day his thoughts perish.
- 5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help,  
whose hope is in the Lord his God:
- 6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea,  
and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever:
- 7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry.  
The Lord looseth the prisoners:
- 8 The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind:  
the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous:
- 9 The Lord preserveth the strangers;  
he relieveth the fatherless and widow:  
but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.
- 10 The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.  
Praise ye the Lord (Psalm 146:1-10).

The message of the portion of the play that dealt with the Council in Heaven was the importance of national and personal stability in this world. Therefore the focus was on the person of the king and the nature of his priesthood and kingship. That was laid out in Psalms 82 and 45. In the latter, the king and queen were given extraordinary blessings by Elohim, the Father of the gods.

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## **The King as Judge and Prophet**

In ancient Israel, to be “king” was to be chief executive, the legislature, and the commander-in-chief, on the one hand, and High Priest and chief judge on the other. As such, it was expected that, “A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment” (Proverbs 16:10). It was also his duty to be the national expert in and teacher of the Law. (King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon is probably our best example.)

As “king” he was the administrator, defender and protector of his people. That meant he must secure peace and prosperity at home by making just and equitable laws, and

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through the judicial use of police powers. In international affairs, he must represent his people to leaders of other nations, and, if negotiation failed, he must be the commanding general of their armies.

As “priest,” he was the ecclesiastical head of the kingdom, and its chief judge. (In LDS terms it might be useful to think of “judge” as a bishop in pioneer Utah. In those days the bishop not only presided over the church as “the common judge in Israel,” but he was also frequently called on to settle civil disputes among his neighbors.) As “priest,” the king was responsible for making sure the people understood the Law of Moses and the religion behind it, so he was also the nation’s teacher. It is significant that when the Lord promised Nephi he would be established as the father of a new dynasty among his people, the Lord did not say he would “be a king and a priest,” but rather, the words he used were “thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren” (1 Nephi 2:22). Mowinckel also understood that principle. In his discussion of the responsibilities of kingship, he wrote, “Thus the king is the savior to whom the people look for salvation, both in the negative sense of deliverance from enemies, danger, and need, and in the widest positive sense of good fortune and well-being.”<sup>331</sup>

There was no place in the theory of Israelite kingship for a tyrant, as Mowinckel further observes, “The king did not receive his office in order to exalt himself, to act arrogantly, to emulate the grandeur of great despots, or to oppress his fellow-countrymen (his ‘neighbors’), but in order to prove by his actions that he ‘knew Yahweh’.”<sup>332</sup>

The king’s position as judge and religious leader was not just theoretical. In the Old Testament, as in the Book of Mormon, there was only a fine, sometimes invisible, line between his role as king and his role as prophet. Saul apparently understood this and assumed, as religious leader, that he could preside over the army’s performing sacrifices to the Lord, contrary to Samuel’s instructions.<sup>333</sup> Van Dam shows that David used the Urim

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<sup>331</sup> Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 69; Weinfeld, “King as the Servant,” 191-94.

<sup>332</sup> Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 92.

<sup>333</sup> 1 Samuel 12:1-35.



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and Thummim to receive revelations from God.<sup>334</sup> The “wisdom” Solomon sought from the Lord was to know how to judge his people in righteousness. At least two Old Testament kings, Solomon and Hezekiah, were prophets who saw the Savior (2 Chron. 1:7-12, Isaiah 38.<sup>335</sup>). In the Book of Mormon, Nephi, Benjamin, and Mosiah each fit perfectly the ideal Old Testament pattern of kingship.<sup>336</sup> However, there was a place for

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<sup>334</sup> For a discussion of the use of the Urim and Thummim by kings and prophets of the Old Testament see Cornelis Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim, A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 187-88, 247-50, 266-69.

<sup>335</sup> The Old Testament does not actually say Hezekiah saw Jehovah. There is a first-person account purportedly written by the king himself, in which he says that when he was ill, and expected to die. “I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living.” He did not want to die at that time, and the reason seems to be that he wanted to see the Savior before his death. The Lord heard his prayer and Isaiah promised him that he could live another 15 years. After that Hezekiah wrote, “What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it ...for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.” (Isaiah 38:11, 15, 17) That last statement is the kind of assertion that is often associated with a *sode* experience.

<sup>336</sup> This is an interesting and perplexing problem. The Doctrine and Covenants says that Moses and the Melchizedek Priesthood were taken from Israel but that the lesser priesthood continued until the time of John. (see D&C 84:25-27) However, there is abundant evidence that during part of that time (from David to Lehi) there was a significant number of people who had the Melchizedek Priesthood. The New Year festival endowment/enthronement ceremonies suggest that there may have been a window of time when a majority of the people had those temple blessings. If Solomon and Hezekiah saw God, then they must have had the Melchizedek priesthood (D&C 84:19-22). Hezekiah was a friend of Isaiah, who also saw God – so there are at least two contemporaries who had the Melchizedek Priesthood.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “all the prophets had the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by God himself.” Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 181.

Joseph Fielding Smith took the Prophet’s statement to mean that the reason God ordained them was that there was no living human who had the authority to do so. *Answers to Gospel Questions.*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 4:159-60.

If temples were used in ancient times, to perform Melchizedek Priesthood ordinances, then the statement in D&C 124, which says Solomon’s Temple was used for such ordinances, seems to imply that those who had access to the Temple also had the Melchizedek Priesthood. Those verses read:

37 And again, verily I say unto you, how shall your washings be acceptable unto me, except ye perform

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both king and prophet. For when Hezekiah was king, it was Isaiah the prophet who wrote with the tongue of the angels.

The Temple at Jerusalem was adjacent to the king's palace, and some scholars have suggested the Temple may have been his royal chapel. An evidence of that, or of the proposition that the king was the presiding High Priest, is that when Hezekiah received a letter from the Assyrian king threatening to invade Israel, Hezekiah walked into the Temple, took the letter into the Holy of Holies, "spread it before the Lord," and essentially said, "Read that and tell me what I am supposed to do about it."<sup>337</sup> But, notwithstanding his "ecclesiastical" powers, it is evident that the king was somehow subordinate to the prophets. In that regard, it is important to note that when Hezekiah was so sick he thought he was going to die, he prayed to the Lord, but it was through Isaiah that the Lord answered the king's prayer. That is an important story because it shows that while we know many things about the Old Testament religion, there are many things we do not know about the relationship between the king and the prophet, and we know almost

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them in a house which you have built to my name?

38 For, for this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise, that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before the world was.

39 Therefore, verily I say unto you, that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments, for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, honor, and endowment of all her municipalities, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name. (D&C 124:37-39)

For continued discussion of this question, see "Act 2, Scene 1: The Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek."

<sup>337</sup> 2 Kings 19:14-19. This paraphrase is a far cry from being an actual quote!

Seven hundred years later, in Jesus' time, tradition says that only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies. But by then there was no Jewish king, and the High Priests had assumed much of the authority of the pre-exilic kings.

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nothing about how the Old Testament “church” was organized.<sup>338</sup>

One thing we do know is that the king’s paramount religious duty was to preside over his nation as its righteous teacher and judge. Solomon was a prime example of this:

7 In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.

8 And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead.

9 Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.

10 Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?

11 And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king:

12 Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like (2 Chronicles 1:7-12).

A judge upholds his society and helps it function peacefully. To do that the judge has four primary responsibilities: 1) He may exonerate or justify those who are wrongfully accused. When one is found “not guilty,” that judgment removes both the accusation and the stigma of the supposed crime. 2) He may find one to be guilty, and condemn and punish those who do wrong. 3) He acknowledges, commends, and sometimes rewards, those who do right. 4) He is an arbitrator; he chooses among options and sometimes decides what actions others will perform. His authority is the umbrella under which the

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<sup>338</sup> Except for a number of references to a group of people who are called “the prophets,” there is no evidence of an organized church in the Old Testament. However, Nephi’s comment when he was pretending to be Laban, that Zoram “supposing that I spake of the brethren of the church” (1 Nephi 4:26), supports the proposition that there was such an organization, at least at the end of the First Temple period.

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society functions. With that authority he both reinstates and sustains the innocent who have been accused,; and with his authority he provides the environment which protects those who do right. A righteous—or even an honorable society—can only exist if its judiciary is independent and free of bribes and corruption. In the United States, for example, the independent and powerful judicial system, more than any other of our institutions, has been responsible for preserving our freedom. In the ancient world where the king was the supreme court, the functional integrity of the whole society rested upon the personal integrity of the king.

That two-fold nature of his kingship—to be king/protector and priest/teacher/judge—was as true of the Eternal King Jehovah as it was true of the earthly king. Jehovah had covenant name-titles that represented his multiple responsibilities. For example, as commanding general he was “Lord of Hosts”; that simply meant “commander of the armies.” As High Priest, he had a number of name-titles including El Elyon (the Most High God), the God of Abraham, the Eternal Judge, the Savior, the Redeemer, the advocate with the Father. As the deliverer and protector of Israel and teacher of Moses, he was I AM—the One who is sufficient unto himself. In that name-title he is both King and Priest.

In the end of time, when all the enemies of good are defeated, it seems likely that Jehovah’s role as commanding general will become inoperative, but his roles as High Priest and Judge—upholder of righteousness—will remain forever. Similarly, even though the earthly military duties of the king might be temporarily central to his responsibilities for the preservation of his nation, they were only relevant in times of war. But his duties as judge and prophet/teacher remained constant. Abinadi made a great point of that. He told King Noah that when he is brought before Jehovah to be judged, the criterion would be how he performed his responsibilities as a judge and religious leader. And in that, Noah and his priests would be found wanting.

In terms of the ultimate meaning of this life for all of the citizens of Israel, being a righteous judge may be the most fundamental duty of all. One finds that taught in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Psalm where it is explained as the reason the members of the Council were to be sent to the earth; in the Beatitudes where it is called “mercy”; in Moroni 7 where it is called “charity”; in the Doctrine and Covenants, and elsewhere, where it is called “the Law of Consecration”; and in section 76 where it is described as being “just” within a context that

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describes the primary characteristic of Celestial beings:

These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect Atonement through the shedding of his own blood (D&C 76:69).

A good way to understand the responsibilities of priesthood and kingship is to liken it to living the Law of Consecration. It is not about giving or receiving, just as mercy is not about patting someone on the head, or letting them off the hook “this time.” In their simplest forms, both are only a functional acknowledgment of truth—of reality. In each, there is a giver and a receiver, but neither is about giving or receiving, because they cannot be about subservience, superiority, or indebtedness. They are about acknowledging and filling honest needs. The need may cost the giver his substance or his time, but what it costs is never determined by the generosity of the giver. It is always—and only—determined by the needs of the recipient. The widow may accept the neighbor’s offer to mow her lawn, then she may sit beside a child in the park and just listen, because the child’s soul hurts and he needs to weep. In the Law of Consecration all give and all receive—and no one keeps track. A perfect Zion society is like that, but as human society is not perfect, it was the function of the king to bring his kingdom as nearly to that standard as possible. That was not true of the priests and sacral kings who were not responsible for nations, war, and police power. Sacral kings who were symbolically anointed during the ancient temple services created their own Zion. Their realm was their family, their friends, and the concentric circles of people they influenced by their unfeigned goodness. A major purpose of the festival temple drama was to create a perfect pattern for the nation’s kingdom as a model for smaller, sacral kingdoms.

The beginning of the drama, the part that dealt with the premortal existence, created the foundation on which national and sacral kingdoms must be built. Therefore, in the drama, the scene that followed the 82<sup>nd</sup> Psalm would likely have been a further confirmation of the covenant, focusing on the assignment and blessing of the king, queen, and family. If so, then that scene would most likely have been an enactment of the 45<sup>th</sup> Psalm.

## **The Royal Wedding in Psalm 45**

### **Act 1, Scene 2: The Royal Wedding**

#### **—a play within the play**

Like Psalm 82, the 45<sup>th</sup> Psalm depicts events that happened at the Council in Heaven.

The 45<sup>th</sup> Psalm reads like three scenes of a short play—again without any stage directions. There the audience watched the investiture of both the king and queen, concluding with a marriage scene that emphasized the covenant relationship of eternal family. The characters on the stage during these three scenes were: (1) first the narrator; (2) then Elohim, the Father of the gods. (3) He gives a blessing to the earthly king of Israel who plays himself as the prince who received the blessing—making this a re-enactment of his own foreordination;<sup>339</sup> (4) Jehovah who had just been anointed the eternal King of Israel; (5) the Mother-Queen; (6) and her princess-daughter who was played by the then-reigning queen, for this was also a re-enactment of her premortal blessing; (7) and an unspecified number of her ladies in waiting. (8) No other members of the Council are mentioned. However, the people in the audience were symbolically participating as though the drama were their personal story, so it is probable that they were considered to be the members of the premortal Council.

To understand the ceremony, it is helpful to picture the stage as divided into two halves. One side was represented as being the throne room of Elohim (perhaps the same stage setting we saw during the enactment of Psalm 82). On the other side of the stage was the equivalent room belonging to the Mother-Queen. The first scene takes place in Elohim's throne room. The second scene is in the women's quarters. The third scene begins as the narrator describes how the ladies go from their side of the stage and move across to Elohim's throne room.

Since the text does not identify the speakers in the play, let us give you a quick overview, demonstrating how one may know who the speakers were. There are no other

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<sup>339</sup> Evidence for this and other assumptions made here are given as we progress through the play.

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explanations given now. They are served until we examine the play in greater detail. The following is from the King James Version.

### **Psalm 45, Scene 1.**

*The narrator speaks, directing our attention to the men's side of the stage:*

- 1 My heart is inditing a good matter:  
    I speak of the things which I have made touching the king [the earthly king]:  
    my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.
- 2 Thou art fairer than the children of men:  
    grace is poured into thy lips:  
    therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

*We then hear the blessing that Elohim gives to the prince:*

- 3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty,  
    with thy glory and thy majesty.
- 4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously  
    because of truth and meekness and righteousness;  
    and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.
- 5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies;  
    whereby the people fall under thee.

*The prince addresses Elohim:*

- 6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:  
    the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.

*The prince addresses Jehovah:*

- 7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness:

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therefore God, thy God,  
hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.  
8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia,  
out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

### **Psalm 45, Scene 2: Blessing to the Daughter**

*The narrator calls our attention to the other side of the stage where the women are.:*

9 The king's daughters were among thy honourable women:  
upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

*The blessing given by the Mother to her daughter:*

10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;  
forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;  
11 So shall the king [earthly king. her husband] greatly desire thy beauty:  
for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.  
12 And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift;  
even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.

### **Psalm 45, Scene 3.**

*The narrator tells us the women are crossing the stage to Elohim's throne room:*

13 The king's daughter is all glorious within:  
her clothing is of wrought gold.  
14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework:  
the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.  
15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought:  
they shall enter into the king's palace.



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*Elohim's blessing to the premortal king and queen:*

- 16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,  
whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.
- 17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations:  
therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

## **Examining the Play in the 45<sup>th</sup> Psalm**

The narrator had two functions. First, he told what was happening on the stage—in this, his role was the same as the chorus in a Greek play. Second, he was the official recorder of the proceedings of the Council. He described himself that way in the first verse.

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### **Palm 45, Act 1**

*The narrator addresses the audience:*

**1 My heart is inditing a good matter:  
I speak of the things which I have made touching the king:  
my tongue is the pen of a ready writer (Psalm 45:1).**

The narrator identified himself as the spokesman, official witness, and scribe who keeps the record of these events. Even in the drama, there had to be a record kept, for this was a legal matter of the utmost importance.

*The narrator then addresses the prince—the Israelite king who is playing the part of himself as a member of the Council:*

**2 Thou art fairer than the children of men:  
grace is poured into thy lips:  
therefore God hath blessed thee for ever (Psalm 45:2).**

An ordinance seems to have just been performed which may have included the king's drinking something. This ordinance may have involved only the king, or the entire audience may have participated—there are no stage directions that tell us. However, it is

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apparent that just prior to the prince's blessing, Jehovah had been anointed Eternal King of Israel (evidence of that is given in the next few verses), so it is possible that their drinking something was a covenant-related ordinance by which all of the members of the Council (that would be both the king and the members of the audience) acknowledged Jehovah as King and Messiah. That is one interpretation, but there may be a better one.

There is also the possibility that the words, "grace is poured into thy lips," did not refer to drinking at all. It may have been an ordinance of a different kind.

There was an ordinance performed at the Council, whereby the servants of God were given the words which they were to speak when they represented God on the earth. That ordinance was described in several different ways by prophets who wrote about their *sode* experiences. John's is the most instructive. He writes:

1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open. ...

9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey (Revelation 10:1, 9).

The reason it is the most instructive is because it was explained by the Prophet Joseph:

Q. What are we to understand by the little book which was eaten by John, as mentioned in the 10th chapter of Revelation?

A. We are to understand that it was a mission, and an ordinance, for him to gather the tribes of Israel (D&C 77:14a).

John's receiving the words of the book was the ordinance. His mission was to teach those words to the people. It is apparent that the person who gave the little book to John was the Savior, just as it is apparent that the Savior gave a similar book to Lehi:

The first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read. And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with

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the Spirit of the Lord (1 Nephi 1:11b-12).

Like John the Beloved, Ezekiel was shown a book which he ate.

And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll [scroll], and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll (Ezekiel 2:9-3:2).

Jeremiah gave a different account of the ordinance. He wrote:

Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth” (Jeremiah 1:9).

Isaiah also writes of his lips being touched, but he represents it as a spot of light:

Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me (Isaiah 6:6-8).

It is apparent that members of the Council were given explicit assignments that included instructions about what they were to teach the people. Since the king was to be the interpreter of God’s Law, it is likely that the phrase in Psalm 45, “grace is poured into thy lips,” was a reference to “a mission, and an ordinance,” giving the king both the words he was to teach and the authority to teach them, in fulfilling his assignment to be God’s spokesman on the earth. If the audience received the same ordinances, then (in generic terms) each person was given an assignment to teach the gospel while on the earth.

The narrator had observed, “therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.” The next

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words in the psalm are the Father's blessing. We find in those next three verses one of the most amazing blessings ever recorded. It is an almost definitive statement of the qualities of priesthood and kingship:

**3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.**

**4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.**

**5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee (Psalm 45:3-5).**

That blessing incorporates into its few words every important concept of priesthood and sacral kingship—except one—the blessing of a righteous posterity. That was reserved until the end of the psalm when the prince and the princess were together in Elohim's throne room. This blessing begins by calling attention to his kingly duties to be the protector of the homeland against international threats.

*Elohim blesses the prince:*

**3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty,  
with thy glory and thy majesty (Psalm 45:3).**

The most immediately apparent meaning of “sword” is a military weapon, and that is, no doubt, one correct interpretation. It was an obvious reference to his role as a martial leader, and to his vigilance in the preparation for war. The king's earthly wars were considered to be holy wars where the struggles between Israel and non-Israel on earth were lesser versions of simultaneous struggles between good and evil—cosmos and chaos. The king's role as military leader was, from a practical point of view, necessary to the survival of the nation, and many of the Psalms speak of it.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> For discussions of the king's duties as a military leader see Johnson, “Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship,” 205; Kerr, “Ancient Aspects of Nephite Kingship,” 87-90; Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, “Fighting

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But the verse is about much more than military prowess, and here “sword” may have both a real and a symbolic meaning. Frequently in the scriptures, “sword” represents the word of God and the spoken power of the priesthood,<sup>341</sup> so this command, “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh” may have been be a symbolic reference to priesthood power as well.

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### **The Royal Garments of Priesthood and Kingship**

To understand the power of that symbolic representation, it would help to ask: “In the sentence, ‘Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty,’ what does ‘with thy glory’ mean? and what was ‘thy majesty’?”

“Glory” and “majesty” appear to be the names of two sets of clothing, “majesty” being his robes of kingship; “glory” being garments of the priesthood.<sup>342</sup>

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the Powers of Chaos and Hell—Towards the Biblical Portrait of God,” in *Studia Theologica* 39, 1 (1985): 21-38.

<sup>341</sup> Examples are:

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:17-19).

2 Behold, I am God; give heed unto my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore give heed unto my words (D&C 6:2).

<sup>342</sup> One finds similar references to such double sets of clothing in Job 40:10-14 and Psalm 21:5. In Exodus 28, Moses is instructed to make two sets of clothing for Aaron, and two psalms report that Jehovah is similarly dressed: 93:1-2 and 104:1-2.

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The next verse also uses the word “majesty.” It begins, “In thy majesty ride prosperously.” Both verses seem to suggest that “majesty” does not mean the dignity of his office, but rather that the word refers to something the king was actually wearing. That idea would be consistent with others in the Old Testament, where the word “majesty” sometimes refers to sacred kingly clothing .

A discussion of the king's royal robes deserves a great deal of attention, but this is not the place. That discussion is reserved for the place below where we describe the ceremonies of the king's coronation.<sup>343</sup>

Because the words in Psalm 45:3 are consistent with the pattern found elsewhere in the scriptures, we may assert that in this blessing “glory and majesty” referred to the royal, sacred clothing that represented his priesthood and kingship.

The next verse in Psalm 45 condenses into six simple ideas all that ever has to be said about the priestly functions of a sacral king. The verse reads:

**4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously  
because of truth and meekness and righteousness;  
and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things** (Psalm 45:4).

The first idea, “in thy majesty,” appears to be a reference to his royal, sacred clothing. That was important. It symbolized the garment of light worn by Jehovah and once worn by Adam, who was the first king. As a king or priest cannot now wear a real garment of light, then he must wear one that promises the eventual restoration of that garment.

As the verse is written, the king's riding prosperously was the consequence of his already having (“because of”) truth, meekness and righteousness. Thus, the criteria for one's riding prosperously are truth, meekness, and righteousness; and the consequence would be “thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.” The *Tanakh*, uses the word “awesome” rather than “terrible.”

The words that constitute that blessing overflow with meaning—so much so that it will require a major diversion to adequately discuss each one of the ideas separately.

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<sup>343</sup> See the discussion of the royal clothing, see the chapter called: “Act 2, Scene 9, The Coronation Ceremony in Isaiah 61.”

## Meaning of “Prosper”

The Hebrew word translated “prosperously” has the connotation of success rather than of wealth.<sup>344</sup> The words in the LDS scriptures are keyed to mean the same thing as those same words in the Bible, so we can move from the Bible to the Book of Mormon and back again, and know the words in each have the same meaning. That would not have been true if Joseph had translated the Book of Mormon into 19<sup>th</sup> century New England backcountry English, but it is true because he used Bible words and phrases as they are used in the King James Bible. Consequently, just as we can use Bible meanings to decode the subtext of the Book of Mormon, so we can use the Book of Mormon to decode the subtext of the Bible. The word “prosperously” is a splendid example.

“Prosper” is an important code word in the Book of Mormon. We first encounter it when the Lord promises Nephi all of the blessings of priesthood and kingship:

19 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart.

20 And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.

21 And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.

22 And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren (1 Nephi 2:19-22).

There, as in the Hebrew, prosper had to do with success rather than wealth.<sup>345</sup> The

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<sup>344</sup> In the dictionary at the back of James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1884). 6743.

<sup>345</sup> However, there are also promises of economic prosperity. For discussions of that, see Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 58; Nibley, “On the Sacred and the Symbolic,” 562-66; Parry, “Garden of



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opposite of prosperity was not a bad potato crop, rather it was to be cut off from the presence of the Lord.<sup>346</sup> That is an often repeated part of Book of Mormon theology. Lehi reminds his children:

Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence (2 Nephi 1:20).

So we may deduce that “prosper” was code for being brought into, or remaining in the presence of the Lord.<sup>347</sup> If our psalm carries the same connotation, then the rest of the verse comes alive with meaning:

And in thy majesty [sacred garments of kingship] ride prosperously [successfully—in the presence of the Lord] because of *truth* and *meekness* and *righteousness*; and thy *right hand* shall teach thee *awesome* things.<sup>348</sup>

In this simple verse we have one of the most profound blessings found anywhere in the scriptures. Those few words in the Father’s blessing cover the full scope of every earthly and eternal condition of priesthood and kingship.

Because that combination of words virtually carries the full definition of the requisites

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Eden,” 126-51; Proverbs 3:5-10. The last verses essentially say, “pay your tithes.”

<sup>346</sup> See Haran on standing or officiating “before God” (*lipne ha-clohin*), i.e., at or near the tabernacle or temple in *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel*, 49-50.

<sup>347</sup> One finds that use of “prosper” throughout the Book of Mormon. 2 Nephi 4:4; Alma 9:13, 36:30, 37:15, 38:1, 50:20. There is also this interesting statement in the autobiography of Zeniff:

5 And I did cause that the women should spin, and toil, and work, and work all manner of fine linen, yea, and cloth of every kind, that we might clothe our nakedness; and thus we did prosper in the land—thus we did have continual peace in the land for the space of twenty and two years. (Mosiah 10:5)

<sup>348</sup> The Hebrew *nora*’ has the sense of awesome rather than “terrible.”

of salvation, each of the three words deserves a careful analysis to discover the height and breadth of its intent.

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## **Defining sacral kingship in terms of the blessing given to the king in Psalm 45:4 Meaning of “Truth”**

“Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24). That is, truth is knowledge of reality in sacred time. Truth never changes, therefore reality never changes. It was the same in the Council as it is in the present, and as it will be in the eternities beyond. The key to knowing reality is (in its beginnings and in its conclusion) having a correct understanding of the truth about God.<sup>349</sup>

Truth is not “things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.” Rather truth is *one’s knowledge of* such things. So truth is defined, not as all reality, but as that portion of reality which one knows. In that context, the definition of the Savior’s godhood is that he “received a fulness of truth, yea, even of all truth” (D&C 93:26b). The concept that truth is the part of reality that one knows is incredibly simple, yet absolutely profound. One can have a great deal of what this world calls knowledge without having much truth at all. Indeed, most of what one learns in this world is not truth. Science is the study of pragmatic theory. It can teach us what works, but very little about how it works. History is the study of snippets of the past that happened to survive, as they are filtered and rearranged in the mind of an historian who may or may not admit his biases. At worst history is a covert distortion of the past in order to make a point about the present; at best history can only approximate the way things were. Literature and art are the study of how words, or form and color may be used to convey ideas and emotions. Arithmetic and mathematics seem to come nearer truth, but numbers can be juggled to misrepresent

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<sup>349</sup> See Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, originally published as an appendix to the Doctrine and Covenants, and more recently as a single volume: (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985).

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reality as easily as words can. Knowing things like science, history, and literature can be very useful for making one's life easier, richer, and more enjoyable, but the realities of this world are so tentative, ephemeral, and culturally oriented that people's perception of their relative truth changes with every generation—or even more frequently than that. It is increasingly so in our well educated society that we are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7).

We are so accustomed to living in a world of approximations that even the notion that one might somehow be able to grasp an absolute, non-relative, unchanging bit of reality is awesome to contemplate. Yet, that is how the Lord defined “truth”—truth is a knowledge of reality in sacred time—in past, present, and future. It is a knowledge of reality as God knows reality.

From the statement, “All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself. ...” one may gather that not *all* truth is available in *all* spheres of existence, but in each sphere where some truth is available it is independent of all external disregard or disbelief.<sup>350</sup> For example, in our world the laws of physics and chemistry work whether humans have any understanding of them or not. The same holds with moral and religious truths: some things bring happiness, others bring sorrow. Social norms or cultural morality may seek to invalidate moral or religious truths, but cannot change them or their consequences. The truths are there, whether or not an individual or an entire human culture neglects, or denies them. Truth is independent—it is an eternal constant. Humans may conform to, or violate its principles, but whether for good or evil, they cannot change it.

Philosophically, one may question whether it is ever possible to have a knowledge of

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<sup>350</sup> There seems to be a difference between the meaning of “truth” in verse 24 (“And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come”) and in verse 30 (“All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself”). In the first, truth is information (information does not “act for itself”). In the second, truth is independent and can act (D&C 93:24-30). It seems possible that the second usage may be a name-title of entities who assimilate and act according to truth. In that same way “intelligence” is both a characteristic and the name-title of those who have that characteristic. They assimilate truth and emit light. Therefore, they are the “light of truth. If that is so, then the real meanings of “truth” in Section 93 is quite different from the one that we suggest in the body of this text.

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absolute reality. Certainly our minds cannot reach that far now—but with the help of the Spirit, it is possible to latch onto some portion of absolute reality, and knowledge of even a portion of such “truth” is the foundation Rock on which one can build one’s entire life. Ultimately, the Savior is that Rock. He explained himself to Joseph Smith by saying:

26 The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth, and John bore record of me, saying: He received a fulness of truth, yea, even of all truth;

27 And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments.

28 He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things (D&C 93:26-28).

One’s knowing the Savior is knowing one has eternal life. Lehi expressed that truth:

But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love (2 Nephi 1:15).

In that instance sure knowledge is truth, because the truth is in the knowing.

## **A Meaning of “Meekness,” Keeping Eternal Covenants**

*(This is one of those awkward situations where the same thing belongs in two places in the same book. Because a thorough discussion of meekness as it is defined in the psalms would be too great a diversion from our purpose here, which is to discuss Psalm 45, that discussion will be presented later. You will find it in the chapters below called, “Meaning of ‘Meekness,’ Keeping One’s Eternal Covenants” and “The Meek in Psalm 25.”)*

“Meekness” in the scriptures is meekness before God. It is keeping the covenants one made at the Council—first keeping them in the spirit world and now in this world, that the Father may keep his part and bless his children according to the covenant.

In the Beatitudes the Savior quoted the 37<sup>th</sup> Psalm and paraphrased the 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm, when he said, “And blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (3 Nephi 12:5). Psalm 37 reads in part:

- 10 For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be:  
    yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.  
11 But the meek shall inherit the earth;  
    and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.  
12 The wicked plotteth against the just,  
    and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.  
13 The Lord shall laugh at him:  
    for he seeth that his day is coming (Psalm 37:10-13).

The psalm not only promises that the meek will inherit the earth, it also promises that they will find personal peace in this miscreant and violent world. Psalm 25 identifies the meek as those who know and keep the covenants they made at the council (*sode* in v. 14). It reads:

- 9 The meek will he guide in judgment:

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- and the meek will he teach his way.  
10 All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth  
unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.  
11 For thy name's sake, O Lord,  
pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.  
12 What man is he that feareth the Lord?  
him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.  
13 His soul shall dwell at ease;  
and his seed shall inherit the earth.  
14 The secret [*sode*] of the Lord is with them that fear him;  
and he will shew them his covenant (Psalm 25:9-14).

In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph, the Lord identified the “poor and the meek of the earth” as those who merit a final celestial glory. He said:

- 17 it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it.  
18 Therefore, it [the earth] must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness,  
that it may be prepared for the celestial glory (D&C 88:17b-18).

In the context of the Beatitudes,<sup>351</sup> the poor are not impoverished, and the meek are not unassertive. A stunning example of true meekness in the scriptures is Abinadi's defiant “Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver” (Mosiah 13:3).

The 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm defines the meek as those who keep their eternal covenants—the covenants they made in the Council and fulfill while in this world. Because it is probable that the 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm was a prayer uttered by the king after his coronation, at the time he approached the great embroidered veil of the Jerusalem Temple, it is examined in two chapters following that relate to the coronation ceremony.

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<sup>351</sup> For a more complete discussion of the poor and the meek see chapters called, “Meaning of ‘Meek,’” and “Meek in Psalm 25.”

## **Meaning of “Righteousness” —*zedek* and Zadok— “Priesthood and Temple Correctness”**

“Righteousness” is a key word. In English, its root means to be right, square, literally to bring something to the square. It is the same concept as just, plumb, and correct. But it is stronger than those, for it also has the same connotation as rectitude—to do the right thing for the right reason, and in the right way.<sup>352</sup> In the scriptures “righteousness” most frequently identifies correctness in the performance of ancient temple and priesthood ordinances and covenants, and also in the way one keeps those covenants.

The word translated as “righteousness” in the Old Testament is from the Hebrew word *zedek*. It meant being altogether just, justified, true, square. But it also had singular and very important ancient temple and priesthood connotations because it meant “just” in a legal and moral sense. The legal code in Old Testament Israel was the Law of Moses, which included not only matters of civil and criminal law, but also all of the ancient temple rites and sacrificial duties of the priesthood. *Zedek* was a path that did not bend, a principle of action that was in strict conformity with the laws of rectitude, priesthood propriety, and truth. In the legal and moral system it was upright, virtuous, and correct—it was also justice tempered by mercy.

The same word (spelled a little differently) is sometimes used as a noun. The High Priest in the days of David and Solomon was called Zadok (whether that was a personal name, a covenant name, or a title, one cannot be sure). Zadok had supported David during his lifetime, and he presided over the affairs of the Temple in Solomon’s day. Thereafter, Zadok’s descendants were High Priests at the Jerusalem Temple until about 160 B.C.

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<sup>352</sup> Thomas Jefferson used rectitude with absolute correctness when he wrote at the conclusion of the Declaration of Independence, “We, therefore, the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in General Congress, Assembled, *appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the Rectitude of our Intentions*, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly Publish and Declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, Free and Independent States; [emphasis added].”

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when the Maccabees made the office a political appointment.<sup>353</sup> Tradition holds that every legitimate High Priest had been a descendant of Zadok.<sup>354</sup>

Both words, *zedek* and Zadok, are related to the Israelite temple.<sup>355</sup> Their translations, “righteous” and “righteousness,” have to do with High Priestly authority, rectitude, and propriety. The words assert that one has and will continue to do the right things, with the right authority, in the right place, at the right time, using the right words, and dressed the right way. One may be described as a “follower of righteousness” if one followed the correct procedures in performing or receiving priesthood and ancient temple ordinances and covenants. One might “obtain righteousness” in consequence of the rectitude of another’s actions. And, most importantly, one might be a further “follower of righteousness” by living according to one’s ordinances and covenants, and then claiming the blessings promised therein.

Righteousness—*zedek*, propriety and rectitude in the performances of ancient temple and priesthood ordinances and covenants—was not only the thing one sought for, it was also the name of the people who presided over the way to get it. An example is in the

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<sup>353</sup> The Zadok family then went to Egypt, where there was a Jewish temple near Alexandria. Consequently, in the Savior’s time, there were at least two Jewish temples: one in Jerusalem, where there was the legitimate geography; the other in Egypt where there was the legitimate priesthood.

<sup>354</sup> Two statements, where the Lord speaks of the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, affirm that John the Baptist was the legitimate heir of Aaron and therefore the legitimate High Priest in the days of the Savior. They are:

17 For the firstborn holds the right of the presidency over this priesthood, and the keys or authority of the same.

18 No man has a legal right to this office, to hold the keys of this priesthood, except he be a literal descendant *and the firstborn* of Aaron (D&C 68:1-35).

27 Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments, which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John, whom God raised up, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb (D&C 84:27).

<sup>355</sup> For a discussion of the Dead Sea Scrolls’ “sons of righteousness” also translated as “sons of Zadok,” see Robert H. Eisenman and Michael Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 1992), 19.



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name Melchizedek. *Melchi* is king or prince, so the name *Melchi-zedek*, means “king of righteousness” or as having a possessive ending meaning “my king is righteousness (*zedek*).”<sup>356</sup> The name denotes both his kinship and his priesthood/temple authority.<sup>357</sup>

President Marion G. Romney said:

The fullness of eternal life is not attainable in mortality, but the peace which is its harbinger and which comes as a result of making one's calling and election sure is attainable in this life. The Lord has promised that “...he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23).<sup>358</sup>

Given what the scriptures and the prophets have said, *zedek*—righteousness—was understood to denote the correctness in performing the ancient priesthood functions in the ancient temple—either to administer its blessings, or to receive them, or both. Thus when the ancients were described as acting “in righteousness,” it meant one was acting—either in or out of the Temple—in accordance with the ordinances, covenants, and ceremonies of the priesthood. Therefore, “righteousness” might simply be defined as “temple and priesthood correctness.”

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<sup>356</sup> See LDS Bible Dictionary.

<sup>357</sup> Josephus tells us that Melchizedek built the first temple in Jerusalem. He writes, “Thus Jerusaem was taken in the second year of Vespasian's reign, on the eighth of Gorpiaeus. It had been captured five times before, and was now for the second time destroyed. Shishak, king of Egypt, Antiochus, Pompey, and then Sossius with Herod had taken the city but preserved it. Before then it had been laid waste by the king of Babylon, 1,486 years and six months from its foundation. Its original founder was a prince of Canaan, called Melchizedek, or “Righteous King,” for such, indeed, he was. He was the first priest of God, and the first to build the temple; he named the city Jerusalem, which was previously called Solyma.” (*Josephus, the Essential Writings*, translated by Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Kregel, 1988), 367).

<sup>358</sup> Marion G. Romney, LDS Conference Report, October 1965, 20. Some of President Romney's talks and writings about making one's calling and election sure are found in LDS Conference Reports, April 1954, 131-35; April 1967, 79-82; *Ensign* 11, 11 (November 1981): 14-15.

## **The Promise of Invulnerability**

In his blessing to the king, the Father promised that when all these conditions are met (And in thy majesty [sacred garments] ride prosperously [in the presence of the Lord] because of *truth* and *meekness* and *righteousness*) thy *right hand* shall teach thee *awesome things*.<sup>359</sup>

Elohim concluded his blessings of priesthood and kingship to the future king with this final promise:

5. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee (Psalm 45:5).

Many of the psalms that contain blessings, conclude with similar promises of military invulnerability.<sup>360</sup> There were two kinds of enemies in their world. One challenged the earthly concerns of kingship's responsibility for personal and national peace and security. The other (a holdover from the previous world) challenges the powers of one's righteousness and priesthood. The contexts of the seeming military blessings in this and other psalms suggest that the intent of the blessing was to give the assurance that the Lord guaranteed that no power on earth or in hell could prevent one from keeping one's premortal covenants, and from enjoying the blessings derived therefrom. It was a promise that even though the king (who was dressed in sacred clothing; empowered by truth, meekness and righteousness) might find himself surrounded by enemies whose intent was

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<sup>359</sup> The Hebrew *nora*' has the sense of awesome rather than "terrible." It is translated that way in the Tanakh. For a discussion of one's hand, see "Introduction to Part 2."

<sup>360</sup> Some important examples that we will discuss below are Psalms 2, 21, 110. Psalm 21 is the king standing before the veil of the temple. It concludes with a promise of invulnerability, and is discussed below. Not all "war psalms" are that kind of concluding blessing. Eaton identifies several psalms "that reflect warfare: 7; 11; 17; 27; 31; 35; 40; 42-3; 44; 54; 55; 56; 59; 60; 62; 63; 66; 69; 70; 108; 109; 140; 141; in several others the military aspect is not brought out but can reasonably be assumed: 5; 16; 28; 142; 143." (Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 130.)

## *Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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to destroy him, he would remain invincible to their ultimate power until his covenants were fulfilled and his mission accomplished.

These promises of invulnerability are usually found in those psalms that speak of the king's approaching God.<sup>361</sup> They are a reminder of the promise received in the Council that God is the guarantor that one will have the power to fulfill one's eternal covenants. That promise of invulnerability is important because, as is always so in the cosmic myth, the assignment is impossible and only the intercession of the heavens can make a path through the obstacles that would prevent its fulfillment. The obstacles and the impossibility of the task are ever-present but then so is the guarantee that the Father will fulfill his part of the covenant.<sup>362</sup>

It is the same guarantee as the prayer that concludes the first chapter of Ephesians, after Paul reminded his readers of their premortal relationship with their Father in Heaven, and of the covenants and instructions they received before they left home.<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> A splendid example of the covenant of invulnerability is found in the code that describes the animals in the veil ceremony of Job 40:1–42:5.

<sup>362</sup> The covenant of Abraham is first given in what appears to be a kind of veil ceremony in Abraham 1:16-19. The promises made to Abraham and his descendants include: 1) the promise of land (Abraham 2:6; Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 15:9-14); 2) the promise of posterity (Abraham 2:9; Genesis 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:2; 18:18; 22:17); 3) the promise of priesthood blessings (Abraham 1:3-4; 1:18; 2:11); and 4) the promise of salvation (Abraham 2:10). See Stephen D. Ricks, "The Early Ministry of Abraham (Abraham 1 and 2)," in Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson, eds., *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1985), 219-20.

<sup>363</sup> At the conclusion of Paul's discussion of the covenants we made with God in the premortal world (Ephesians 1:1-14), Paul prays that his readers may know three things:

First, "what is the hope of his calling." Calling is a verb, thus it is God's calling—his premortal assignment—to the Saints.

Second, "and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." That is, what great blessings await those who keep their covenants.

Third, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." (v. 18-20 and on to v. 23)

In other words, Paul's prayer concludes with the hope that we will know that the Father has also

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Nowhere is the promise of invulnerability more beautifully expressed than in the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm:

- 1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High  
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress:  
my God; in him will I trust.
- 3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,  
and from the noisome pestilence.
- 4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust:  
his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.
- 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night;  
nor for the arrow that flieth by day;
- 6 Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness;  
nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.
- 7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand;  
but it shall not come nigh thee.
- 8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold  
and see the reward of the wicked.
- 9 Because thou hast made the LORD,  
which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;
- 10 There shall no evil befall thee,  
neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.
- 11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee,  
to keep thee in all thy ways.
- 12 They shall bear thee up in their hands,  
lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.
- 13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder:  
the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

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promised us that he will enable us to fulfill our covenants if we are faithful to the instructions of the Holy Ghost.

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- 14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him:  
    I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.  
15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him:  
    I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.  
16 With long life will I satisfy him,  
    and shew him my salvation (Psalms 91:1-16).
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## **Returning to Psalm 45**

With those definitions in mind, consider the impact of Elohim's blessing to the king as a single, coherent promise:

- 3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty,  
    with thy glory and thy majesty**  
**4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously  
    because of truth and meekness and righteousness;  
    and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.**  
**5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies;  
    whereby the people fall under thee (Psalm 45:4-5).**

Elohim's blessing to the king was a comprehensive covenant, embracing all of the powers and authorities of priesthood and sacral kingship—there was nothing left to be added except a promise about his posterity, and that was reserved for the conclusion of the psalm.

Two statements in the Doctrine and Covenants suggest that the powers of a king, as described in Psalm 45, closely parallel the powers of the Melchizedek priesthood. These passages are not the same as the statement in the psalm, but the messages seem to be the same. They emphasize the powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood in terms that sound very much like "truth, meekness, and righteousness." The first one reads:

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19 And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries [“Mysteries” would probably be the same as *sode* in the Old Testament] of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God [knowing the truth].

20 Therefore, in the ordinances thereof [In Isaiah, the word “ordinances” would probably appear as the code words “way” or “path”], the power of godliness is manifest.

21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

22 For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live [a *sode* experience].

23 Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God (D&C 84:19-23).

The second reads:

18 The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—

19 To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven [truth], to have the heavens opened unto them [*sode* experience], to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn [Council in Heaven], and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant (D&C 107:18-19).<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Even though Psalm 45 is only part of the script of stage play, it represents virtually every important aspect of priesthood and sacral kingship. To see how valid the ideas in the psalm are, it is instructive to compare its ideas with the characteristics of the resurrected gods in the Celestial kingdom, as described in D&C 76.

52 That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

53 And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

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*The prince does obeisance to Elohim:*

**6. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:  
the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre (Psalm 45:6).**

After the blessing from Elohim, the next voice in the play that was the 45<sup>th</sup> Psalm is that of the earthly king in the role of himself as the prince who had just been blessed. He does exactly what one would expect he would do. Following protocol perfectly, he expresses homage to the Father who had just given him authority, and who was his ultimate superior.

One might envision the scene on the stage this way: Jehovah had stood beside Elohim while the blessing was given. When their hands were removed from his head, the prince knelt and did obeisance to both of his superiors—Elohim and Jehovah. That was the way it should be: the servant-king bowing before the Master-Kings, and swearing allegiance to them. On the stage, we hear the prince first speak to Elohim who had given him the blessing.

The word translated “God” is the Hebrew word *elohim*, so there is no question who the prince was addressing. The word “right” means justice, equity.<sup>365</sup> That is interesting, because here the scepter of the Father was not represented as a symbol of military might,

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54 They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.

55 They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

56 They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

57 And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.

58 Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—

59 Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

60 And they shall overcome all things.

61 Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.

62 These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever (D&C 76:52-62).

<sup>365</sup> In the dictionary at the back of Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 4334.

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but of his being the personification of righteous judgments (“mercy” in the Beatitudes, “charity” in Moroni 7). The reference to his throne is also significant. In the accounts of prophets’ *sode* experiences, when they visit the Council, it is the Father who presides and who is seen sitting on the throne, as in 1 Nephi 1:8.

Then, in the play, the prince does exactly what protocol would require him to do next. He turns to Jehovah, his most immediate superior, and does obeisance to him.

*The prince does obeisance to Jehovah:*

**7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness:  
therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee  
with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.**

**8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia,  
out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad (Psalm 45:7-8).**

The chain of command was Elohim at the top, then Jehovah, then the king. So our prince (who on the earth will be king) first paid homage to Elohim, then to Jehovah.<sup>366</sup> It is apparent from the words that in an earlier part of this scene, the Father had already anointed Jehovah to be the Eternal King and Protector of Israel. Even though the psalm that tells that story is no longer in the canon (or if it is, it cannot be identified), we can know that Jehovah had just been anointed because his garments were still fragrant with sacred scented anointing oil. We know the king was addressing Jehovah in these verses because of the words, “thy God [Elohim], hath anointed thee [Jehovah].”

The reference to his fragrant smell is very important. Even though the Old Testament editors and writers do not describe the oil with which the kings of Israel were anointed, the record does show an explicit recipe for perfuming the oil with which the High Priests were anointed. The formula is given along with the command that this sacred oil may be used for no other purpose (Exodus ch. 30 & 40).

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<sup>366</sup> For a discussion of relationships between major and minor kings, see F. Charles Fensham, “Father and Son as Terminology for Treaty and Covenant,” *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedlcke (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins, 1970). 121-35.



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We see a similar situation in verse 8 of Psalm 45, for the prince acknowledges that Jehovah's garments still smell of the fragrant perfumes of the anointing oil. In doing so, he also gives us the formula by which the sacred oil was perfumed: "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." This was a very meaningful formula. The oil was, of course, olive oil, the product of the fruit of the olive tree, which in ancient Israel represented the Tree of Life. Myrrh is a perfume made from the sap of a bush or small tree. Aloes is a perfume made from the heartwood of another tree, and cassia is a perfume made from the bark of still a different tree.<sup>367</sup> So on the stage, one representing Jehovah had just been anointed with a sacred oil whose fragrance were a composite of all the parts of a tree—either an acknowledgment or a declaration that Jehovah is the Tree of Life.

Up to this point, virtually everything in Psalm 45 had taken place on the side of the stage that represented Elohim's throne room, and had been almost exclusively about the king's role when he was chosen at the Council in Heaven. We have heard a declaration of his worthiness, heard the blessing given to him by Elohim, and seen him express his subservience to both Elohim and Jehovah. All of those acts were necessarily witnessed by his people so they could acknowledge that he was foreordained to come to the earth as a legitimate vassal and representative of the God in Israel. Now the scene changes, and the next portion of the psalm focuses on the woman who will be the prince's bride. Her part, no doubt, was played by the reigning queen.

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## **Psalm 45, Act 2.**

*The narrator now directs our attention to the women's side of the stage:*

At this juncture in the 45<sup>th</sup> psalm the narrator calls our attention to the other side of the stage, where we see the women's quarters, and are introduced into a room that was probably the Queen's equivalent to the throne room of the King. The narrator says:

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<sup>367</sup> For discussions of these trees and their perfumes, see the articles about myrrh, aloes, and cassia in *The Interpreters' Dictionary of the Bible*.

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**9 Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women:  
upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir (Psalm 45:9).**

The statement, “thy honorable women” is intriguing. The narrator was clearly addressing someone who was not on the woman’s side of the stage. If this psalm represents the foreordination of the earthly king and queen, immediately after Jehovah’s anointing, then the other members of the Heavenly Council must also have been represented as being there. Yet there is no evidence that any other male members of the Council were on the stage. That asks, “Is it possible that the persons in the audience, who were watching the play, were actually participating in it as the Council, and is it also possible that as they watched what was happening to the king and queen, they were seeing it as a representation of what had once happened to themselves as well?” If the answer to that question is, “Yes,” then this psalm in the drama represented a kind of *sode* experience where the king and queen were re-experiencing their own callings at the Council, and it also represented a symbolic *sode* experience for each of the members of the audience.

That suggests the people in the audience were actually considered to be participating in the play as members of the cast, and when the narrator spoke of “thy honorable women” he was addressing the members of the audience. Thus, attending this play was a participatory experience. Members of the audience were not just watching—they were there—and the characters played by the king and queen also represented the parts each one of them had played at the Council—that is, the foreordination of each individual person in the audience was represented on the stage.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> The social and religious equality suggested—the king, the aristocracy, and the poor, all participating in the same ordinances—is difficult to show in the Old Testament. There, prophets were forever deriding the rich for not looking after the poor. Those statements by the prophets might be used as evidence that it was the norm that the poor did not have equal religious status, or else those same statements can be taken as evidence that their not being esteemed as equals was a violation of what should have been the norm. However, that kind of religious equality is easy to find in the Book of Mormon where King Benjamin and all the people make covenants together. Mormon’s description of Alma’s church also contains a wonderful description of that kind of equality. It does not say there were no poor, but it does say the poor were not looked down upon because they were poor:

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In the phrase, “upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir,” “thy” must have been a reference to the princess who was also about to receive a blessing. The Queen who stood beside her was dressed in the richest of clothing, with gold threads woven throughout the fabric. Today, no one knows where Ophir was, only that it was the legendary source of the finest gold in the ancient world.<sup>369</sup>

The next voice we hear in the Psalm 45 drama begins, “Harken, O daughter. ...” It was a blessing given to the princess, apparently by the Queen who was dressed in gold. The Queen’s blessing to her daughter was strikingly similar to, and yet quite different from, the blessing that Elohim had given to the prince. The Mother’s blessing reads:

*The Queen gives her daughter a blessing:*

**10 Harken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;  
forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house (Psalm 45:10).<sup>370</sup>**

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1 And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength (Alma 1:26).

The key to that equality is “the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers ... and thus they were all equal.” This situation did not last. Three chapters later, Mormon laments, “Yea, he saw great inequality among the people, some lifting themselves up with their pride, despising others, turning their backs upon the needy and the naked and those who were hungry, and those who were athirst, and those who were sick and afflicted” (Alma 4:12). This perspective on equality seen in Psalm 45 may be correct even if there were many times when the practice was very different from that.

<sup>369</sup> See “Ophir” in *Interpreters’ Dictionary*.

<sup>370</sup> Among the writings of modern prophets, there is probably none more relevant to our subject than an editorial called, “Origin, Object, and Destiny of Women.” It was written by Apostle (later President) John

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This was a mirror image of the same concept found in Genesis 2:23-24. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

**11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty;  
for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him** (Psalm 45:11).

Those words were both a promise and a blessing. They were a promise of not only her, but also her husband’s fidelity. The Queen’s blessing to her daughter was not just about the princess’ earthly relationship with her husband; it was also about her own role as priestess/queen, for the last verse of the blessing reads:

**12 And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift;  
even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour** (Psalm 45:12).

Tyre was the great seaport city on the east coast of the Mediterranean. If the daughter of its king were to bring a gift, it would not be a casual birthday present. Gifts from royalty to royalty were often a kind of tribute—so the blessing was that the princess

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Taylor when he was in New York to assist LDS immigrants coming from Europe. While there, for a short time just before the Civil War, he published a little newspaper called *The Mormon*. The following are only two paragraphs from that editorial. Original copies of the newspaper can be found in Wisconsin State Historical Society Library in Madison, Wisconsin, and in the Special Collections of the BYU library.

“Lady—whence comest thou? Thine origin? What art thou doing here? Whither art thou going, and what is thy destiny? Declare unto me if thou hast understanding? Knowest thou not, that thou art a spark of Deity, struck from the fire of his eternal blaze, and brought forth in the midst of eternal burning?

“Knowest thou not that; eternities ago, thy spirit, pure and holy, dwelt in thy Heavenly Father’s bosom, and in his presence, and with thy mother, one of the Queens of heaven, surrounded by thy brother and sister spirits in the spirit world, among the Gods” (John Taylor, editor, *The Mormon* N.Y. August 29, 1857).

For a other modern discussion of a woman’s foreordination, see John Taylor, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor A Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, [Melchizedek Priesthood manual] (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 211-12. It is quoted from John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 1-3.

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would not only reign in her own country, but that she would be a queen among queens. It was the same promise that the king received in Psalm 68:29, “Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.”<sup>371</sup> Like the blessing that had been given to the prince, those words represented an absolute assurance that the princess would have the power to make a difference in this world and to keep her eternal covenants—but unlike his, the promise carried with it no military connotation:

**12 ...even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour (Psalm 45:12).**

The Hebrew word, *hesed*, translated “favour,” has not only the meaning “favor, loving kindness,” but also “doing what one is expected to do.”<sup>372</sup> Thus, one of the most important functions anyone has on this earth—that of being a righteous judge—was saved for the conclusion of the Queen’s blessing to her daughter.

Fundamentally, the Queen’s blessing to the princess was the same as Elohim’s blessing to the prince. The two exceptions are that the Mother’s blessing included the idea of the sanctity of the marriage relationship, the Father’s did not; and the Mother’s blessing says nothing about being a protector in time of war. But the other functions of her being queen are essentially the same as his of being king. The differences are that she was secure under the umbrella of his protection, and he was to provide that umbrella. There was also a difference in the focus of the two blessings. The blessing to the prince emphasized the causes of his success (truth, meekness, and righteousness), while her blessing showed the nature of her success (queen among queens, and a wise counselor and judge). Her royal clothing, as described in the next verse, was also different from his.

*The Narrator directs our attention, as the women leave the Queen’s quarters and cross the stage to Elohim’s throne room. The narrator says:*

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<sup>371</sup> “The exchange of gifts between powers in the ancient Near East, whether between equals or between suzerain and vassal, was regarded as a sign of continued good relations.” Michael L. Barre, “A Cuneiform Parallel to PS 86:16-17 and MIC 7:16-17,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101, 2 (June 1982), 271.

<sup>372</sup> Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry* (Missoula, Montana; Scholars Press for the Harvard Semitic Museum, 1978).

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**13 The king's daughter is all glorious within:  
her clothing is of wrought gold.**

**14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework:  
the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.**

**15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought:  
they shall enter into the king's palace (Psalm 45:13-15).**

Once again, the narrator came on stage, and described to the audience what was happening. This time he directed them to follow with their eyes as the Queen, the princess, and their entourage (which symbolically probably included all the women in the audience), as they left the women's quarters, walked across the stage, and entered Elohim's throne room (the Holy of Holies of the celestial temple), where Elohim, Jehovah, the prince, and the members of the Council (the men in the audience) waited for the princess to arrive.

In the psalm, the last two verses were spoken to the prince and princess after she had come into the Holy of Holies, but as elsewhere in the psalm, the speaker is not identified. The words were a blessing—the continuation of the two blessings already given during the performance of the Psalm.

These verses are part of a marriage ceremony, or at least a blessing preparatory to such a ceremony. The verbs suggest that they were spoken to a man, but that was not unusual when both a man and a woman are addressed together. The blessings that were previously given to the prince and the princess included everything except the promise of posterity. Now, when they came together, the Father gave them that blessing.

## **Psalm 45, Act 3.**

*Elohim's blessing to the prince and his bride:*

**16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,  
whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.  
17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations:  
therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever (Psalm 45:16-17).<sup>373</sup>**

In each of the three scenes of Psalm 45, a blessing was given. The first was to the prince, who was given the powers and responsibilities of priesthood and kingship. The second was to the princess, whose blessing was similar except that it has no military connotations. In neither of those blessings was there any suggestion of children. Then in the third scene, when the women joined the men in Elohim's throne room, the prince and princess received a joint blessing that was only about the importance of their family. Their children would be princes—that is, they would inherit the same blessings as their parents. This was an eternal union, for the blessings reached to eternity: They would “be remembered in all generations ... for ever and ever.”

As in the rest of the ancient temple drama, this segment was not only about the reigning king and queen, but also about the members of the audience who had also been designated sacral kings and queens, reaffirming their responsibilities to the rest of mankind, and assuring that their families would also be together “for ever and ever.” The whole psalm—its blessings and covenants—was ultimately about eternal families.

Moving through the psalm, as we did, with so many interruptions, causes one to lose focus on the whole. To regain that perspective, here is the whole psalm with only inserted stage directions to interfere.

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<sup>373</sup> The universal validity of the message of this psalm may most conveniently be understood as a blessing given each woman and each man—not so much as projection about whom one will marry in this world, but more of an assurance that the union may be eternal.

## **Psalm 45, a review:**

### **Scene 1.**

*The narrator speaks, directing our attention to the men's side of the stage:*

1 My heart is inditing a good matter:

I speak of the things which I have made touching the king [the earthly king]:  
my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

2 Thou art fairer than the children of men:

grace is poured into thy lips:  
therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

*The blessing that Elohim gives to the prince:*

3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty,  
with thy glory and thy majesty.

4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously  
because of truth and meekness and righteousness;  
and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies;  
whereby the people fall under thee.

*The prince addresses Elohim:*

6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:  
the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.

*The prince addresses Jehovah:*

7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness:  
therefore God, thy God,  
hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia,  
out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

### **Scene 2.**

*The narrator calls attention to the other side of the stage where the Mother Queen, her*



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*daughter, and other women are:*

9 The king's daughters were among thy honourable women:  
upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

*The blessing given by a Mother to her daughter:*

10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;  
forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;  
11 So shall the king [earthly king] greatly desire thy beauty:  
for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.  
12 And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift;  
even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.

### **Scene 3.**

*The narrator tells us the women are crossing the stage to Elohim's throne room:*

13 The king's daughter is all glorious within:  
her clothing is of wrought gold.  
14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework:  
the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.  
15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought:  
they shall enter into the king's palace.

*Elohim's blessing to the king and his bride:*

16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,  
whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.  
17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations:  
therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever (Psalm 45:1-17).

## Act 1, Scene 3: The Creation

The premortal work of Jehovah and the other members of the Council in Heaven, that is most frequently discussed in the scriptures, was the creation of the heavens and the earth.<sup>374</sup> It was important that the account of creation be told and retold every year in the Jerusalem Temple drama, because, to the ancients, it explained who and what God is—Jehovah: the God of Salvation, of Creation, of Light, and of Rain.

To all ancient agrarian people, the most immediately relevant power of their local chief god was his ability to bring or to withhold rain.<sup>375</sup> The god's power to control the elements was most clearly shown by his ability to provide sufficient rain to insure a good harvest. That same belief was fundamental to the religion of the Israelites, who also depended on rain for their yearly food supply. Psalm 65 was a celebration of Jehovah's power over the elements. Whether it was sung at the beginning of the festival drama in conjunction with promises relating to the creation, or at the conclusion as a celebration of an abundant harvest, it acknowledged Jehovah's power to bless his people in the most

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<sup>374</sup> For a discussion of early accounts of the creation, see Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* (Washington D. C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994).

<sup>375</sup> The Canaanite god Baal was also supposed to be a storm god. So when Elijah challenged the reality of Baal, he did it by saying Jehovah would withhold rain for three years, and Baal could do nothing about it. The essence of the challenge was that if Baal could not override that decree, then that would prove that Jehovah is God, and Baal was only a fantasy.

For a discussion of Jehovah as a God of storms, see Paul E. Dion, "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god. The Double Legacy of Egypt and Canaan as Reflected in Psalm 104," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 103 (1991): 43-71.

Bible scholars do not know what to make of psalms like these. They assume these psalms show a kind of evolution that began when people worshiped the sun. For Latter-day Saints, these psalms are a simple affirmation that the ancients understood what the Prophet Joseph understood. when the Lord explains:

7 Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made.

8 As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made;

9 As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made (D&C 88:7-9).

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practical way possible. Mowinckel observes:

At Yahweh's festival of enthronement all this receives a more personal touch. The almighty creator is coming to his people, renewing the covenant and securing to them all the 'blessing' which belongs to 'life' and 'peace' and 'salvation'. All the gifts of the 'kingdom of God' may indeed be summed up in these words. In fact, to secure all this was the real intention of the festal cult. When Yahweh comes again to the feast from his primeval home in the far south he brings 'abundant rain' with him, and thus restores his suffering people (Ps. 68. 8-11).

Ps. 65, the thanksgiving psalm of the harvest feast, gives a magnificent picture of all the blessings promised and granted by the new victory over the powers of chaos, the new creation and the coming of the rainy season, in the following outburst of praise:

Who by his might raised up the mountains, being girded with power,  
Who stilled the roaring of the sea ..., the tumults of its waves,  
So that the dwellers at the ends of the earth were terrified by thy wonders;  
The gates of the morning and evening thou madest to shout with joy.<sup>376</sup>  
The psalms sung during the performance of the Jerusalem Temple drama affirm that Jehovah had created the world. They demonstrate that he is the light of the sun, and that it is he who controls the storms; establishing that he is—by definition—God of gods, Lord of Lords, and King of kings.

In the Bible, the origin of all physical things began with the words, "Let there be light." From the light, came all else. Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews* recalls:

The heavens were fashioned from the light of God's garment. ...The light created at the very beginning is not the same as the light emitted by the sun, the moon,

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<sup>376</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:162.

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and the stars, which appeared only on the fourth day. The light of the first day was of a sort that would have enabled man to see the world at a glance from one end to the other. Anticipating the wickedness of the sinful generations of the deluge and the Tower of Babel, who were unworthy to enjoy the blessing of such light, God concealed it, but in the world to come it will appear to the pious in all its pristine glory.<sup>377</sup>

The Israelites, like other people in the ancient Near East, had a tradition that this world was initially covered with chaotic waters; and that when God created the Garden of Eden, a hillock rose from beneath the waves to become an island paradise<sup>378</sup>—to become the earth's first temple.<sup>379</sup> It was beautiful beyond description. Enoch saw it in vision, in the third heaven, and wrote:

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<sup>377</sup> Louis Ginzberg, trans. Henrietta Szold, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1937), 1:8-9.

<sup>378</sup> We find a hint of that idea in Abraham 4:9, "And the Gods ordered, saying: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the earth come up dry; and it was so as they ordered."

For a discussion of the creation and Psalm 29, see Carola Kloos, *Yhwh's Combat with the Sea* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986).

Latter-day Saints have always understood that the Savior is the God of Creation. A remarkable evidence of that is found in a letter of W.W. Phelps to William Smith dated 25 Dec. 1844. It should be remembered that the letter was written during a time when it was believed the earth was only 6,000 years old. Phelps was apparently referring to the contents of a scroll called the book of Joseph, which has since been lost. He writes, "Well, now, Brother William, when the house of Israel begin to come into the glorious mysteries of the kingdom, and find that Jesus Christ, whose goings forth, as the prophets said, have been from old, from eternity: and that eternity, agreeably to the records found in the catacombs of Egypt, has been going on in this system, (not this world) almost two thousand five hundred and fifty five millions of years: and to know at the same time, that deists, geologists and others are trying to prove that matter must have existed hundreds of thousands of years;—it almost tempts the flesh to fly to God, or muster faith like Enoch to be translated and see and know as we are seen and known!" (*Times and Seasons* 5:1-24 [January 1, 1845] 758).

<sup>379</sup> Joshua Berman, *The Temple: Its Symbolism and Meaning Then and Now* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1995), chapter 2, "Temple as Garden of Eden," 21-34.

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And those men took me thence, and led me up on to the third heaven, and placed me there; and I looked downwards, and saw the produce of these places, such as has never been known for goodness. And I saw all the sweet-flowering trees and beheld their fruits, which were sweet-smelling, and all the foods borne by them bubbling with fragrant exhalation. And in the midst of the trees that of life, in that place whereon the Lord rests, when he goes up into paradise; and this tree is of ineffable goodness and fragrance, and adorned more than every existing thing; and on all sides it is in form gold-looking and vermilion and fire-like and covers all, and it has produce from all fruits. Its root is in the garden at the earth's end. And paradise is between corruptibility and incorruptibility.<sup>380</sup>

Bentzen observes that in this portion of the drama, “this historical presentation should be interpreted as an actualization of a situation known at the time of the Creation, when the Chaos was conquered by the saving acts of God and his Anointed.”<sup>381</sup>

The creation story was sometimes portrayed as a battle between Jehovah and those chaotic seas, because cosmos arose from the darkness of chaotic waters.<sup>382</sup> Genesis briefly reports:

9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:9-10).

In the creation accounts of the drama, the words of the psalms described Jehovah as the God who conquered the chaos of the untamed seas. However, there is a problem there. It is the same problem inherent in much of this attempt to reconstruct the ancient

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<sup>380</sup> *Secrets of Enoch*, 8:1-5, Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 2:433-34.

<sup>381</sup> Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, 17.

<sup>382</sup> In a somewhat similar way, Nephi made a point of describing the chaotic waters which they had to overcome in order to reach their new world.

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ceremony from the psalms. The problem is that we just do not have the full script of the play. While some psalms give sufficient internal evidence so we can be quite sure where they fit, most do not. The story of the physical creation is an excellent example. Creation is bringing order and organization and ultimately cosmos from chaos.

Chaos is confusion and disorder. It was represented in ancient writings as the dangerous and unpredictable movements of the raging of a dark and unyielding sea. In the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm it was the valley of the shadow of death. In Lehi's vision it was the mist of darkness through which he must find his way to the tree of life. In First Nephi it was the violent storm at sea that Nephi controlled by his faith. In the entire Book of Mormon it was the three days of darkness that preceded the coming of the Savior. Then, at the end of the book, it was the spiritual darkness into which the people sank. In the next life it is the "spirit prison"—including the disorganization of families waiting for their priesthood ordinances to be completed.

Cosmos is order that expresses beauty. It is the perfect structure of the stars in the heavens. It is the precise and predictable movement of the planets that foretell the seasons, show the time for planting, and demonstrate the unchanging power of God. It is the tree and the fruit in Lehi's vision. It is the Zion of Fourth Nephi. It is the promise of eternal family, found on the last page of the Book of Mormon.<sup>383</sup>

Creation is organization—arranging, classifying, separating, and restructuring until the result is cosmos—perfect symmetry, balanced proportion, and symphonic harmony. The object of the physical creation is to achieve that end.

The problem with trying to discover the creation story in the psalms is that chaos is represented in many forms throughout the drama—and usually as part of a war, or at least a battle. The stories of its defeat show a series of creations and re-creations. There was the

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<sup>383</sup> "...put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled" (Moroni 10:31).

Moroni is paraphrasing Isaiah 54:2. There the stakes belong to a tent that is a private home. It reads, "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes." A discussion of this verse as a promise of eternal family see the chapter, "Moroni's Farewell."

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war in heaven where Satan was expelled from the Council,<sup>384</sup> the physical creation where earth's harmony was brought from the chaotic waters; the reassertion of chaotic powers in the battle that ended with the king's defeat, then Jehovah's battle with the chaos monsters of death and hell, and finally his victory resulting in restoring the king to his throne as a re-creation of time and space. Any one of these might have been represented by the psalms that symbolically describe the defeat of the chaotic waters. But since there is no way of knowing for sure, we have placed those psalms together as the story of the earth's creation.

We can follow the creation story through five psalms. The first took place in the Council where the Lord was clothed in the sacred twin garments of majesty (kingship) and strength (priesthood), and appears to be preparing for the creation:<sup>385</sup>

- 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.
- 2 Thy throne is established of old:  
thou art from everlasting.
- 3 The floods have lifted up, O Lord,  
the floods have lifted up their voice;  
the floods lift up their waves.
- 4 The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters,  
yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.
- 5 Thy testimonies are very sure:  
holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever (Psalm 93:1-5).

The second describes creation as a battle with the waters of chaos wherein the Lord

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<sup>384</sup> The psalms that describe the war in heaven are not identifiable, or they may no longer be in our canon, or the war might simply have been represented symbolically by Satan's expulsion from the Garden.

<sup>385</sup> This is one of Gunkel's "enthronement psalms."

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conquers the sea and the monsters in it. This psalm was sung in a different context, and we shall refer to it again when we come to its place in the drama, but for our present purposes, we consider only the portion that recalls the creation:

- 12 For God is my King of old,  
    working salvation in the midst of the earth.  
13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength:  
    thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.  
14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces,  
    and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.  
15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood:  
    thou driedst up mighty rivers.  
16 The day is thine, the night also is thine:  
    thou hast prepared the light and the sun.  
17 Thou hast set all the borders of the earth:  
    thou hast made summer and winter (Psalm 74:12-17).

Borsch believed one of the reasons the psalms do not contain a Genesis-like account of the earth's physical creation was that Genesis was actually incorporated into the drama. He wrote that "during the days of the festival the creation story [in Genesis] was therefore either ritually enacted or, at the least, ceremonially read."<sup>386</sup>

The third is Psalm 104. It is an account of the creation of the inhabitable earth. It begins with the origin of light, then moves through the creation of plants, birds, wild animals, the seas, and their inhabitants. In doing so, this psalm is reminiscent of the creation story told in Job 38-39:

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great;  
    thou art clothed with honour and majesty.  
2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment:

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<sup>386</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 92. See also, E. O. James, *Creation and Cosmology: A Historical and Comparative Inquiry* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 29.



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- who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:  
3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters:  
    who maketh the clouds his chariot:  
    who walketh upon the wings of the wind:  
4 Who maketh his angels spirits;  
    his ministers a flaming fire:  
5 Who laid the foundations of the earth,  
    that it should not be removed for ever.  
6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment:  
    the waters stood above the mountains.  
7 At thy rebuke they fled;  
    at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.  
8 They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys  
    unto the place which thou hast founded for them.  
9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over;  
    that they turn not again to cover the earth.  
10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys,  
    which run among the hills.  
11 They give drink to every beast of the field:  
    the wild asses quench their thirst.  
12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation,  
    which sing among the branches.  
13 He watereth the hills from his chambers:  
    the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.  
14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man:  
    that he may bring forth food out of the earth;  
15 And wine that maketh glad the heart of man,  
    and oil to make his face to shine,  
    and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.  
16 The trees of the Lord are full of sap;  
    the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;  
17 Where the birds make their nests:

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- as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.
- 18 The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats;  
and the rocks for the conies.
- 19 He appointed the moon for seasons:  
the sun knoweth his going down.
- 20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night:  
wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.
- 21 The young lions roar after their prey,  
and seek their meat from God.
- 22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together,  
and lay them down in their dens.
- 23 Man goeth forth unto his work  
and to his labour until the evening.
- 24 O Lord, how manifold are thy works!  
in wisdom hast thou made them all:  
the earth is full of thy riches.
- 25 So is this great and wide sea,  
wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.
- 26 There go the ships: there is that leviathan,  
whom thou hast made to play therein.
- 27 These wait all upon thee;  
that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.
- 28 That thou givest them they gather:  
thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.
- 29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled:  
thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.
- 30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created:  
and thou renewest the face of the earth.
- 31 The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever:  
the Lord shall rejoice in his works.
- 32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth:  
he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.

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- 33 I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live:  
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
- 34 My meditation of him shall be sweet:  
I will be glad in the Lord.
- 35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth,  
and let the wicked be no more.  
Bless thou the Lord, O my soul.  
Praise ye the Lord (104:1-35).<sup>387</sup>

The fourth and fifth psalms appear to be hymns of celebration at the successful conclusion of the creation:

- 1 Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous:  
for praise is comely for the upright.
- 2 Praise the Lord with harp:  
sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.
- 3 Sing unto him a new song;  
play skilfully with a loud noise.
- 4 For the word of the Lord is right;  
and all his works are done in truth.
- 5 He loveth righteousness and judgment:  
the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.
- 6 By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;  
and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.
- 7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap:  
he layeth up the depth in storehouses.
- 8 Let all the earth fear the Lord:  
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

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<sup>387</sup> See Tho Booij, "Psalm 204, 13b: The Earth is Satisfied with the Fruit of Thy Works," in *Vetus Testamentum* 70, 3 (1989): 409-12; Richard J. Clifford, "A Note on Ps 104:5-9," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100, 1 (1981): 87-89.

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9 For he spake, and it was done;  
he commanded, and it stood fast (Psalm 33:1-9).

The fifth reads:

1 Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens:  
praise him in the heights.

2 Praise ye him, all his angels:  
praise ye him, all his hosts.

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon:  
praise him, all ye stars of light.

4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,  
and ye waters that be above the heavens.

5 Let them praise the name of the Lord:  
for he commanded, and they were created.

6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever:  
he hath made a decree which shall not pass (Psalm 148:1-6).

## **Act 1, Scene 4: The Garden, the Creation of Man and Woman**<sup>388</sup>

In the Garden, the reigning king and queen, who had played the parts of themselves in the Council, now played the roles of Adam and Eve on a stage that represented the scenes of Paradise.<sup>389</sup> Borsch reported:

Doubtless, however, the appearance of such features as sharing in the council of the gods (participating in divine secrets) and possessing an exclusive degree of wisdom could intimate an acquaintance with the general myth. The fact that the Man is born before the hills were made suggests that he may be thought of both as a type of the Primordial Man as well as the First Man to be on earth.<sup>390</sup>

Mowinckel understood that Adam had not lost his status when he came to the world. He observed, "There Adam is definitely a divine being, who came into existence before creation, as a cosmogonic principle (macrocosm), as the Primordial Soul, as the original type of the godly, righteous fulfiller of the Law."<sup>391</sup>

Hugh Nibley addressed the question of why one who had been in the Council would

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<sup>388</sup> Two official LDS statements are "Creation and Growth of Adam," *Improvement Era* 11, 10 (August 1908): 778; "Origin of Man," *Improvement Era* 13, 1 (November 1909): 75. For discussions of the Adam and Eve experience from an LDS woman's perspective, see Campbell, "Mother Eve," 37-49. Also her *Eve and the Choice*, and *Eve and the Mortal Journey*. Also see Rabbi Samuel S. Cohon, "The Origin of Death," *Journal of Jewish Lore and Philosophy* 1 (1969): 381-96; David H. Aaron, "Shedding Light on God's Body in Rabbinic Midrashim: Reflections on the Theory of a Luminous Adam," *Harvard Theological Review* 90, 3, (July 1997): 299-314.

<sup>389</sup> See D&C 27:11, 107:53-56, and 128:21.

<sup>390</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 113-14. Parenthesis are in the original.

<sup>391</sup> Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 426.

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condescend to come to the earth as a mere mortal. His is the only possibly correct answer:

But why leave one's heavenly home for a dismal earthly one? To that question, constantly reiterated in the Mandaean writings, the Gnostic answer was that we were forced to make the move as a punishment; but the "Treasure" doctrine was the very opposite—we are here as a reward, enjoying an opportunity to achieve yet greater things by being tried and tested, "that each one might be promoted, according to his intelligence and the perfections of his way, or be retarded according to his wrong-doings." This is the well-known doctrine of the Two Ways: "For this reason the world has existed through the ages," says the Clementine Recognitions," so that the spirits destined to come here might fulfill their number, and here make their choice between the upper and the lower worlds, both of which are represented here."

The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden is not well represented in the psalms. Yet, Adam, the first king, was the model for the reigning king of Israel, and royal birthright descent from Adam was a prerequisite for legitimate kingship. This has led some scholars to believe that, during the drama, the Genesis account was also used to describe the details of Adam and Eve's experiences in the Garden.<sup>392</sup>

Not only in the drama, but symbolically as well, the reigning king represented (perhaps personified) Adam, the first king, the father and ruler of the human family. Borsch, in his study of the Israelite king's symbolic relationship with Adam, writes:

If, then, Israelite beliefs have been affected by the idea that the king is a type of the first king and so a first of men, it is very likely that we should find the obverse of this thinking: that the first of men is regarded as a royal figure. And when we turn to the two accounts of the creation of Man in Genesis 2 we do indeed meet with language now familiar to us from the stories of other first men and kings. In Gen. 1.26 we hear that the prototype has been made according to the divine image and likeness. He is clearly to be conceived of as part human and part divine

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<sup>392</sup> Ricks, "Liturgy and Cosmogony," 118-25.

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and he rules over the new creation. ...

In the account of Gen. 2-3 it is yet more certain that we are dealing with a mythical royal First Man. Though made from the earth, he has the divine breath within him. He is given a consort and from their union issues the whole human race. He is thus father and ancestor to all men. This Adam rules over paradise.<sup>393</sup>

There is a psalm that reads very much like the account in Genesis 1:26-28. It fits with the themes of the early Genesis chapters; and sounds as though it were sung by a chorus of the Council in Heaven as they watched Adam and Eve descend to their new home in the Garden—sung as an exuberant celebration of the glory of human life, and of their own anticipated experiences in linear time. Psalm 8 exclaims:

- 1 O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!  
    who hast set thy glory above the heavens.
- 2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength  
    because of thine enemies,  
    that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.
- 3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,  
    the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
- 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him?  
    and the son of man,<sup>394</sup> that thou visitest him?
- 5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the *gods*,<sup>395</sup>  
    and hast crowned him with glory and honour.
- 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the work of thy hands;

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<sup>393</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 112-13.

<sup>394</sup> In addition to the Savior, Enoch, Ezekiel, and others have had the title, "son of man." For a discussion of the title "son of man," see Emerton, "The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery," 225-42.

<sup>395</sup> The King James Version reads "a little lower than the angels." However, the Hebrew word translated "angels" is *elohim*, the plural word for "gods," designating the Council of the gods. Thus, "a little lower than the gods."

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thou hast put all things under his feet:  
7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;  
8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.<sup>9</sup> O Lord our Lord,  
how excellent is thy name in all the earth! (Psalm 8:1-9)<sup>396</sup>

President John Taylor discussed that psalm, and the wondrous meaning behind its words:

“What is man, that thou are mindful of him?”

What is he? Let us look again and view him in another aspect. Why, he is an eternal being, and possesses within him a principle that is destined to exist “while life and thought and being last, or immortality endures.” What is he? He had his being in the eternal worlds; he existed before he came here. He is not only the son of man, but he is the son of God also. He is a God in embryo, and possesses within him a spark of that eternal flame which was struck from the blaze of God’s eternal fire in the eternal world, and is placed here upon the earth that he may possess true intelligence, true light, true knowledge,—that he may know himself—that he may know God—that he may know something about what he was before he came here—that he may know something about what he is destined to enjoy in the eternal worlds—that he may be fully acquainted with his origin, with his present existence, and with his future destiny—that he may know something about the strength and weakness of human nature—that he may understand the divine law, and learn to conquer his passions, and bring into subjection every principle that is at variance with the law of God—that he may understand his true relationship to God; and finally, that he may learn how to subdue, to conquer, subject all wrong, seek after, obtain, and possess every true, holy, virtuous, and heavenly principle; and, as he is only a sojourner, that he may fulfil the measure of his creation, help himself and family, be a benefit to the

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<sup>396</sup> For a brief discussion of the possible relationship between Genesis 1 and Psalm 8, see John van Seters, “The Creation of Man and the Creation of the King,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 101 (1989): 333-42.



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present and future generations, and go back to God, having accomplished the work he came here to perform.<sup>397</sup>

The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden was an essential part of the drama in much the same way that the story of events in the Council were necessary. The scenes in the drama about the Council defined the king, queen, and members of the audience in terms of their eternal covenants—a projection of the definition of their purposes for being on the earth. The scenes about Adam and Eve told about their receiving the empowering symbols of earthly priesthood and kingship so that they could fulfill their premortal covenants. The first consequence of that empowerment was the academic and spiritual experience they would receive as the result of their eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

Clines has shown that the 19<sup>th</sup> Psalm is a recounting of the story of the Garden and the Fall. The first part tells of the dangers of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and the second part is “the fall narrative” of Genesis chapters two and three.<sup>398</sup> The psalm reads:

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God;  
and the firmament sheweth his handywork.
- 2 Day unto day uttereth speech,  
and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
- 3 There is no speech nor language,  
where their voice is not heard.
- 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.  
In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
- 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,  
and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.
- 6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven,

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<sup>397</sup> John Taylor, *Journal of Discourses*, 8: 3-4.

<sup>398</sup> D. J. A. Clines, “The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh (Psalm XIX),” *Vetus Testamentum* 24, 1 (Jan. 1974): 13.

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- and his circuit unto the ends of it:  
and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.
- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul:  
the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
- 8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart:  
the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
- 9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever:  
the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold:  
sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
- 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned:  
and in keeping of them there is great reward.
- 12 Who can understand his errors?  
cleanse thou me from secret faults.
- 13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;  
let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright,  
and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.
- 14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart,  
be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord,  
my strength, and my redeemer (Psalm 19:1-14).

The fruit was of the tree of knowledge—not simply an accumulation of information—but of contrasting knowledge that gives one the power to choose—of good *from* evil. Satan had lied to Eve when he instructed her:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5).

The first part of what the Devil told Eve was true enough. Life on the earth would give her the wisdom of the gods, but the rest of what he told her was a carefully structured lie. His lie was this: the quality of godhood is not to know “good *and* evil,” but rather it is the ability to distinguish “good *from* evil,” and to have the wisdom and knowledge to

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choose the good. It is he, Satan, who knows good and evil, and has no compunction about using either to accomplish his purposes. He was telling Eve that she would become like him, but that was not true either. Alma explains:

6 Yea, and I know that good and evil have come before all men; he that knoweth not good from evil is blameless; but he that knoweth good and evil, to him it is given according to his desires, whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience (Alma 29:6).

Lehi was even more explicit when he spoke to his son Jacob:

3 Wherefore, thy soul shall be blessed, and thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother, Nephi; and thy days shall be spent in the service of thy God. Wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer; for thou hast beheld that in the fulness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men.

4 And thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory; wherefore, thou art blessed even as they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh; for the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free.

5 And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil. And the law is given unto men. And by the law no flesh is justified; or, by the law men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever. ...

18 And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.

19 And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth. ...

25 Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.

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26 And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given (2 Nephi 2:3-6, 18-19, 25-26).

If both Lehi and Alma were expressing information they had gained from the brass plates and from the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, then we can surmise that one of the major lessons the participants learned at the drama was that by eating the fruit, Adam and Eve had been empowered to experience and distinguish between good and evil. And, contrary to what Satan had told them, when they learned the difference, and chose only the good, then they would become again like the gods of the Council.

They had also been given the promise that when they chose to eat that fruit, they would die. That promise is the first covenant that God made with his earthly children. Death is one of the greatest blessings of the Atonement. It is the promise that if God's children chose to come to this earth, he would guarantee that there would be a way out again. Being here forever, living in this world's tensions between good and evil, would be perpetual hell. We needed the experience of knowing and choosing, but there also had to be a promise that we wouldn't have to be here forever. So Adam and Eve left the Garden with the knowledge that they could also leave this world, and that when that time came, the Atonement would make it possible that they take no baggage out with them, except the products of their own choices.

There are ancient Jewish and Christian traditions that when Adam and Eve came to the Garden they were clothed with garments of light.<sup>399</sup> When they ate the fruit, they lost the garment of light. They were naked and ashamed, and sought to replace the light with something made from the elements of this earth. Ricks quotes Erik Peterson that, "according to the early Christian tradition, 'Adam and Eve were stripped by the Fall, in such a way that they saw that they were naked. This means that formerly they were

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<sup>399</sup> For an excellent discussion of ancient traditions about Adam's garment, and especially about the garment of light, see Ricks, "Garment of Adam," 705-39.

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clothed.' Adam and Eve wore the 'robe of light' or the 'robe of sanctity' before their fall; thereafter, they assumed a "garment of humility."<sup>400</sup>

The Jewish tradition is that, initially, Satan had taught them to clothe themselves according to his standards, defining them by their uniforms as people of this world. When God found them devoid of their garments of light, he made temporary garments of skins for them (Genesis 3:21). These would protect both their modesty and their persons until the light was returned. God had re-defined his children again, by dressing them in clothing that represented his promise that they could regain their former glory.

Ancient tradition holds that even though he was no longer permitted to eat its fruit, Adam was permitted to take one of the branches of the tree of life with him when he left the Garden. The branch became his royal scepter, representing his sacral and political kingship.<sup>401</sup> Adam was the world's first king and its first high priest<sup>402</sup> and Eve was its first Priestess-Queen.

Tradition also holds that the branch of the tree of life that Adam took from the Garden was passed down through the generations until it became Moses's "rod of God" (Exodus 4:20,17:9), symbolizing Moses's authority as king as well as priest.<sup>403</sup> Moses gave the rod to his brother Aaron.<sup>404</sup> Thereafter, it was kept in the Ark of the Covenant, in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle. Later, after the Canaanites captured the Ark and then returned it, the rod had been removed. There is no evidence that it was ever recovered.

As one would expect, in other ancient cultures such as Babylon and Egypt, where the

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<sup>400</sup> Ricks, "Garment of Adam," 708.

<sup>401</sup> Geo Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion* (Uppsala: Universitets Arsskrift, 1951); Widengren, "King and Covenant."

<sup>402</sup> Widengren, *King and The Tree of Life*. 10-59.

<sup>403</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 99; Widengren, "King and Covenant," 12, 18; Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle*, 40-42, 46-47; Widengren, *King and the Tree of Life*, 38-39; Wayne A. Meeks, "Moses as God and King," *Religions in Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 354-71.

<sup>404</sup> Widengren, *King and the Tree of Life*, 38-41.

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king had no legitimate claim to priesthood or sacral kingship, those kings adopted the forms and shows of legitimacy. As Widengren has shown, the tradition of a branch of the tree of life as a source of power and authority was also found in Mesopotamia, Palestine, Greece, and elsewhere.<sup>405</sup>

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## **Act 2, The Mortal World**

The next scenes of the drama described the events following Adam and Eve's departure from the Garden, into linear time and mortality.<sup>406</sup>

Here the chronological events of Israel's history began to be emphasized. The whole central part of the drama was a vivid reminder of the Lord's past blessings, and his present promises to the reigning monarch and to the people.<sup>407</sup>

In the drama, after the reigning king, as Adam, left the Garden, we do not have sufficient evidence to know whether he continued to play the roles of his great predecessors, or whether he received their priesthood and covenants as himself. For example, when he received the priesthood and covenant of Abraham, was he acting the part of Abraham, or did he receive those blessings as the reigning king of Israel? We do not know. Similarly, we cannot discover whether he acted as Moses who received the Law, or as himself who became the guardian of the Law. The psalms make it clear that the drama included celebrations of these events, they just don't make it clear how the events

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<sup>405</sup> Rachel Hachlili, *The Menorah, the Ancient Seven-armed Candelabrum, Origin, Form and Significance* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 36-39; C. Wilfred Griggs, "The Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book," *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1982), 75-101.

<sup>406</sup> There is an ancient tradition about Satan's intention to frustrate God's plans by making men too busy to listen to the Spirit. It reports, "But they cast men into great distractions and pains in life, so that their men should be preoccupied with life, and not have time to attend on the Holy Spirit." *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, trans. Roger Aubrey Bullard, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1970), 29, lines 7-11.

<sup>407</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1: 155; Mowinckel, *Old Testament as Word of God*, 60.

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were celebrated.

In either case, the remainder of the drama was a renewal of the Lord's past blessings to the patriarchs, kings, and prophets, and of his present blessings to the reigning monarch and his people—these scenes of the drama were apparently also a renewing and confirming of their premortal covenants, concluding with the king's re-coronation to show that he had been approved and adopted by God, and that his earlier designated authority among men was still secure and intact.

But between the time he—as Adam—left the Garden, and the time that he—as himself—received his final coronation ordinances, there was much formal preparation that had to be done. That preparation was presented as a series of prerequisite steps to enable him to ascend to the throne.

## **Act 2, Scene 1: The Priesthood after the Order of Melchizedek**<sup>408</sup>

After their expulsion from the Garden, the king may have played various roles as the drama carried him through the history of Israel.

It was of the utmost importance that the drama show that the king (and through him, his subjects) received all the empowering ordinances that would enable him to fulfill his premortal covenants. Therefore we find in Psalm 110 that he was ordained to “the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek.”<sup>409</sup> That was necessary because legitimate

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<sup>408</sup> Through Abraham the covenant is traced to Adam, and ultimately back to the great Council in Heaven, the *sode*, where the covenant and duties of Adam and his successor priests and kings originated. See Borsch, *Son of Man*, 60-64, 70, 83-84, 89, 96-97, 102-11, 125, 133, 140-42, 149-50, 157- 60, 182-88, 197; Brown, *Semitic Background*, 3, 15, 18, 24; Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, 4, 16-17; Johnson, “Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship,” 224; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 66; Lundquist, “Legitimizing Role of the Temple,” 212; Widengren, “Early Hebrew Myths,” 160-162; Widengren, “King and Covenant,” 7; Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle*, 30-31, 40-42.

<sup>409</sup> In the *Legends of the Jews*, we read, “In spite of his great success, Abraham nevertheless was concerned about the issue of the war. He feared that the prohibition against shedding the blood of man had been transgressed, and he also dreaded the resentment of Shem, whose descendants had perished in the encounter. But God reassured him, and said: ‘Be not afraid! Thou hast but extirpated the thorns, and as to Shem, he will bless thee rather than curse thee.’ So it was. When Abraham returned from the war, Shem, or, as he is sometimes called, Melchizedek, the king of righteousness, priest of God Most High, and king of Jerusalem, came forth to meet him with bread and wine. And this high priest instructed Abraham in the laws of the priesthood and in the Torah, and to prove his friendship for him he blessed him, and called him the partner of God in the possession of the world, seeing that through him the Name of God had first been made known among men” (Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1:233).

Modern revelation suggests the same thing:

“Why the first is called the Melchizedek Priesthood is because Melchizedek was such a great high priest.” (D&C 107:2)

In another place it identifies Shem as “the great high priest.” (D&C 138:41)

The “Elias” who held the keys of the gospel of Abraham may also have been Melchizedek:



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kingship is a subset of legitimate priesthood. One can not be a king unless he is first a priest. That is, he can have priesthood without kingship, but not kingship without priesthood. The king's ordination enabled him to perform all of the rites, covenants, and sacrifices of Solomon's Temple services.<sup>410</sup>

In our ancient scriptures, there are only three places where we find references to the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. The first is Psalm 110 where the Lord confers that priesthood upon Israel's king. The second is the book of Hebrews, where Paul twice quotes Psalm 110 in references to the Savior's priesthood (5:6 & 7:17), then refers to it again several other times.<sup>411</sup> The third is Alma 13:15-18, where Alma teaches Zeezrom about priesthood legitimacy.

In the first verse of Psalm 110, the words, "sit thou at my right hand," was literally an invitation to the king to sit next to God, implicitly to sit upon the throne of God. The invitation was proffered here in conjunction with the ordination to the Melchizedek priesthood, but would not be realized until near the conclusion of the drama when the king would be crowned.

Psalm 110 begins by affirming the king's ordination to that priesthood:

- 1 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand,  
until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
- 2 The Lord shall send the rod [scepter] of thy strength out of Zion:  
rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.
- 3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,  
in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning:  
thou hast the dew of thy youth.

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12 After this, Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed (D&C 110:12).

<sup>410</sup> For a discussion of the royal family's claim to the priesthood see William Adler, "Exodus 6:23 and the High Priest from the Tribe of Judah," *Journal of Theological Studies, New Series* 48, 1 (April 1997): 24-47.

<sup>411</sup> They are Hebrews 5:10, 6:20, and 7:11.

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4 The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent,  
Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Then Psalm 110 concludes, as do many of the psalms that pronounce a blessing, with a promise of invulnerability—the promise that he will be empowered to fulfill the assignment he received at the Council—described in terms of military power:

5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings  
in the day of his wrath.

6 He shall judge among the heathen,  
he shall fill the places with the dead bodies;  
he shall wound the heads over many countries.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way:  
therefore shall he lift up the head (Psalm 110:1-7).

The phrase in Psalm 110, “thou hast the dew of thy youth” suggests that the king was ordained rather early on in the drama, when he was represented as being the prince, heir-apparent, rather than as a mature king. If that is so, then there may have been another ordinance associated with the prince’s receiving the priesthood of Melchizedek, and that would have been a preliminary anointing to become king.<sup>412</sup> That probability is substantiated by that fact that in Psalm 110 his kingship responsibilities are emphasized as much as his priesthood powers.<sup>413</sup> Mowinckel believed this ordination to the priesthood

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<sup>412</sup> For a discussion of that anointing, see the chapter called, “Act 2, Scene 2: Anointed to Become King.”

<sup>413</sup> The burden of Paul’s brilliant sermon to the Hebrews is the legitimacy of the Savior’s priesthood and kingship authority. To emphasize that, the first chapters of Hebrews contain references to almost all of the psalms that Gunkel and others have identified as kingship psalms. In chapter five, he quotes Psalms 2 and 110 to show that Jesus was both King and Priest.

5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. [Psalm 2]

6 As he saith also in another *place*, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec [Psalm 110]

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was very important for that reason. He wrote:

We ought probably to bear in mind these very real spiritual and material consequences when the oracle of installation in Psalm 110 promises to the king that he is to be 'a priest for ever after the order of (or, more correctly, 'on behalf of', or 'for the sake of') Melchizedek'. The king made a point of securing his divine right to the priesthood, based on his being the legitimate successor and heir of the ancient king of Jerusalem, Melchizedek.<sup>414</sup>

The implications of a priestly kingship imposed far ranging responsibilities. These were outlined in another psalm, as Mowinckel observes, "Almost every aspect of the demands, promises, and requirements associated with the king appears in Psalm 110, a psalm of intercession and blessing."<sup>415</sup>

Psalm 72 shows that the covenantal duties of the king were the same as the premortal assignments he received in Psalm 82. Psalm 72 reads in part:

- 1 Give the king thy judgments, O God,  
and thy righteousness unto the king's son.
- 2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness,  
and thy poor with judgment.
- 3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people,  
and the little hills, by righteousness.
- 4 He shall judge the poor of the people,

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(Hebrews 5:5-6).

For a discussion of Paul's use of Psalm 110, see David R. Anderson, *The King-Priest of Psalm 110 in Hebrews* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001). For a different opinion about the setting of this psalm in the festival, see John G. Gammie, "A New Setting for Psalm 110," *Anglican Theological Review* 51 (1969): 4-17.

<sup>414</sup> Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 72. See Borsch, *Son of Man*, 110, 163; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 53.

<sup>415</sup> Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 89.

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- he shall save the children of the needy,  
and shall break in pieces the oppressor.
- 5 They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure,  
throughout all generations.
- 6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass:  
as showers that water the earth.
- 7 In his days shall the righteous flourish;  
and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. ...
- 12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth;  
the poor also, and him that hath no helper.
- 13 He shall spare the poor and needy,  
and shall save the souls of the needy.
- 14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence:  
and precious shall their blood be in his sight. ...
- 17 His name shall endure for ever:  
his name shall be continued as long as the sun:  
and men shall be blessed in him:  
all nations shall call him blessed.
- 18 Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,  
who only doeth wondrous things.
- 19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever:  
and let the whole earth be filled with his glory;  
Amen, and Amen (Psalm 72:1-19).

The king's priesthood responsibilities are also described in Psalm 145. However, that psalm is one of those that reports no event, therefore cannot be placed with confidence within the sequence of the festival drama. It contains some striking allusions to priesthood power, such as "To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom," and "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." (In the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, the word "works" tends to be code for ordinances.) Indeed, there is such a strong ring of power associated with this psalm, that it is likely to have been sung in conjunction with his ordination to the

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priesthood. It reads:

- 1 I will extol thee, my God, O king;  
and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.
- 2 Every day will I bless thee;  
and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.
- 3 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;  
and his greatness is unsearchable.
- 4 One generation shall praise thy works to another,  
and shall declare thy mighty acts.
- 5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty,  
and of thy wondrous works.
- 6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts:  
and I will declare thy greatness.
- 7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness,  
and shall sing of thy righteousness. [*zedek*]
- 8 The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion;  
slow to anger, and of great mercy.
- 9 The Lord is good to all:  
and his tender mercies are over all his works.
- 10 All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord;  
and thy saints shall bless thee.
- 11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom,  
and talk of thy power;
- 12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts,  
and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.
- 13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.
- 14 The Lord upholdeth all that fall,  
and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.
- 15 The eyes of all wait upon thee;  
and thou givest them their meat in due season.

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- 16 Thou openest thine hand,  
and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.
- 17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways,  
and holy in all his works.
- 18 The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him,  
to all that call upon him in truth.
- 19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him:  
he also will hear their cry, and will save them.
- 20 The Lord preserveth all them that love him:  
but all the wicked will he destroy.
- 21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord:  
and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever (Psalm 145:1-21).

There are a number of instances in the Old Testament where the king acted as ecclesiastical head of the kingdom.<sup>416</sup> One of the earliest accounts of David's using priesthood authority was when he sought to receive a revelation from the Lord, received it, and followed its instructions:

- 6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.
- 7 And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David.
- 8 And David inquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.
- 9 So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him, and came to

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<sup>416</sup> By contrast, in the time of Jesus when there had not been a Davidic king in Judah for 600 years, the temple high priest was the only one who could officiate in the temple and enter the Holy of Holies. For the classic description of the administration of the Law at the time of Jesus, see Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*.

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the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed (1 Samuel 30:6-9).

In that story, David, as the Lord's anointed, seems to have had more ecclesiastical authority than the priest who kept the ephod. The ephod was part of the High Priest's clothing. It was a kind of apron whose shoulder straps held the Breastplate in place. The Breastplate, in turn, held the Urim and Thummim. (Exodus 28). David was probably asking for not only the ephod, but also the Urim and Thummim associated with it, through which he received his revelation. Another important example is the story of David's bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem:

2 And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims (2 Samuel 6:2).

The Ark had stayed at the house of Abinadab, and during the procession that brought the Ark to Jerusalem one of Abinadab's sons "drave the new cart":

6 And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.

7 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

8 And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day (2 Samuel 6:6-8).

After Uzzah's death, David was afraid to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, so he left it at the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, until he was sure it was safe:

12 And it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness.

13 And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six

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paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.

14 And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. ...

17 And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.

18 And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts.

19 And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house.

20 Then David returned to bless his household (2 Samuel 6:12-14, 17-20a).

Unless Abinadab and his sons were understood to be priests, there is no mention of priests at all in that account. The entire affair was conducted by the king. He brought the Ark to Jerusalem, offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, blessed the people, and furnished them with what was probably a sacral meal, for unlike sin offerings, the meat of the peace offerings were eaten by the people who participated.<sup>417</sup>

We see another example of the king's priesthood authority in the story of his obtaining the building site for the Jerusalem Temple. The prophet Gad instructed David to "Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite." David then went to Araunah to purchase the threshingfloor. Araunah offered to give it to David, saying, "Let my Lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him." David refused to accept it as a gift and "bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And David built there an altar unto the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings" (2 Samuel 24:18-25). The interesting part of that story is that there is no priest mentioned anywhere. A prophet told David to make an altar and offer sacrifices. David, the king, purchased the property which ultimately became the Temple site, built the altar "and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings." It is difficult to read that story and

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<sup>417</sup> Leviticus 3 gives instructions for making a peace offering. It lists the parts of the animals that are to be burned. The list does not include any of the most edible parts of the animal.



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not conclude that David was acting as his own high priest.

Another example is when King Solomon saw the Lord and received the promise from him that as king he would have both wisdom and riches. The King James Version implies that Solomon sinned by sacrificing at the high places, but the Jewish translation explains the situation quite differently:

The people, however, continued to offer sacrifices at the open shrines, because up to that time no house had been built for the name of the Lord. And Solomon, though he loved the Lord and followed the practices of his father David, also sacrificed and offered at the shrines.

The king went to Gideon to sacrifice there, for that was the largest shrine; on that altar Solomon presented a thousand burnt offerings. (Tanakh, 1 Kings 3:2-4)

Admitted, it is possible that the story may be incomplete, and the author may have just left out the part that the priests played in this royal sacrifice, but as the story is written, Solomon himself officiated at the altar. The King James translation affirms that: “a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.”(1 Kings 3:4)

In another instance of Solomon's exercising priesthood power, the account of the dedication of the Jerusalem Temple does contain a mention of the priests and the Levites, but no mention of the high priest. As this story is written, the king blessed the people, offered the dedicatory prayer, and performed the sacrifices. The account is found in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of First Kings. It reads:

1 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion.

2 And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month.

3 And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark.

4 And they brought up the ark of the Lord, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, even those did

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the priests and the Levites bring up.

5 And king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude (1 Kings 8:1-5).

Under the king's authority, the Ark of the Covenant was brought to its new home in the completed Temple:

6 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims.<sup>418</sup>

7 For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. ...

9 There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt (1 Kings 8:6-9).<sup>419</sup>

Solomon then officiated at the Temple's dedication. In every way he acted with priesthood authority as the nation's chief high priest:

10 And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord,

11 So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.

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<sup>418</sup> For a discussion of cherubim, see Elie Borowski, "Cherubim: God's Throne?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 21, 4 (July/August 1995): 36-41.

<sup>419</sup> The Ark had been captured by the Philistines just prior to David's reign. Apparently they looted it of everything except the stone tablets which were of no monetary value to them. So at that time, the Ark did not contain the staff of Aaron or the jar of manna as Paul later said it did (Hebrews 9:3-4), but it had contained them originally, and the lack did not alter the fact of the symbolism that its contents represented the law, the priesthood, and the fruit of the tree of life.

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12 Then spake Solomon, The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.

13 I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever.

14 And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel (and all the congregation of Israel stood;) (1 Kings 8:10-14).

The fact that they all stood up, implies that the blessing included a covenant, for an important part of Israelite ceremonies was that they “stood to the covenant” (2 Kings 23:1-3).

Solomon delivered a sermon in which he briefly recounted the history of the building of the Temple. The sermon is in verses 15-21. Then the king offered the dedicatory prayer with his hands raised toward heaven:

22 And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:

[Verses 23 through 53 are the dedicatory prayer.]

54 And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.

55 And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying, ...

[Verses 56 through 61 are the blessing]

62 And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the Lord.

63 And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the Lord, two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord.

64 The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that was before the

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house of the Lord: for there he offered burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings: because the brasen altar that was before the Lord was too little to receive the burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings.

65 And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation,[The feast lasted twice seven days] even fourteen days, [then,]

66 On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people (1 Kings 8:22-66).<sup>420</sup>

That story is very similar to the one that described David's bringing the Ark into Jerusalem. There are priests in this account; however, their activity was limited to placing the Ark in the Temple. As the narration reads, the entire dedication ceremony was performed under the direction of, and by the ecclesiastical authority of the king.<sup>421</sup>

The fact that the people left on the eighth day, indicates that the entire dedicatory ceremony had taken place at the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles. That will become more apparent as we analyze the remainder of the festival drama.

Even though the psalms say the kings held the Melchizedek priesthood, and the historical books in the Bible tell stories that presuppose he did so, the Old Testament historical books do not actually say the kings were also priests. To account for that, it

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<sup>420</sup> Here also, there is no mention of priests performing the sacrifices. That could be an oversight by the author, or it may not have been. It is possible that with the introduction of the priesthood temple rites, Israel had become a nation of priests and sacral kings. Perhaps each family head performed their own sacrifices, as did Lehi for his family some 400 years later.

For a recap and partial analysis of these events, see Widengren, "King and Covenant," 9-10.

<sup>421</sup> For a discussion of the king as High Priest and prophet see Borsch, *Son of Man*, 79-129; Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, 10-15, 62-63, 78-81, 104-5; Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 299-301, 340-44; Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," 207-32; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 13-18; Lundquist, "Legitimizing Role of the Temple," 212; Ricks and Sroka, "King, Coronation, and Temple," 260-63; H. H. Rowley, "Ritual and the Hebrew Prophets," *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*, 237; Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle*, 13-33; Widengren, "King and Covenant," 1-27; Widengren, *King and the Tree of Life*, 10-59.

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should be remembered that the pre-exilic histories were written by post-exilic writers, who included nothing that would contradict their then-contemporary doctrines and practices. Mowinckel explained, “In the post-exilic age the High-priests became in many respects the heirs of the kings.... In the post-exilic age it was established that the cult was the exclusive privilege of the priesthood; and the High-priest claimed kingly status through his anointing and the wearing of the diadem.”<sup>422</sup>

Other scholars also believe that after the Babylonian captivity, when there was no more Jewish king, the High Priest assumed the roles the king had played in some of the ceremonies and functions of Solomon's Temple—and that the books of Moses were edited to reflect the High Priest's new role. For example, kings like Solomon and Hezekiah obviously had full access to the Holy of Holies, but in the days of the Savior, when there was no legitimate Jewish king, no one but the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies.

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<sup>422</sup> Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 5.

## **Act 2, Scene 2: Anointed to Become King**

Psalm 110 suggests that the prince was ordained to the priesthood when he was relatively young. It projects his power into the future in the context of his present youth. The blessing reads:

3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,  
in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning:  
thou hast the dew of thy youth (Psalm 110:3).

It is likely that after this ordination, he was anointed to become king. For, as Nibley observes, “kings must be priests, and candidates to immortality must be both priests and kings.”<sup>423</sup>

There are several incidents in the Old Testament where a prince was first anointed to become king, and later, after he had proven himself, was anointed again—this time as actual king.

When David was only a boy, “Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward” (1 Samuel 16:13). Johnson referred to that story, and called the experience an “endowment of the Spirit”<sup>424</sup> whereby the king received extraordinary religious authority,

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<sup>423</sup> Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 198.

<sup>424</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 14-16.

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as well as wisdom<sup>425</sup> in government and military matters.<sup>426</sup> Mowinckel understood that the “Ideas about the fruits of this endowment with the spirit are, naturally, strongly influenced by older biblical conceptions of the gifts of the spirit in the Messiah.”<sup>427</sup>

Examples in the Old Testament of princes being anointed to become kings are: Saul who was anointed by Samuel to become king (1 Samuel 10:1), who later anointed Saul as king of Israel (1 Samuel 15:17). David was also anointed by Samuel to become king (1 Samuel 16:23). Thereafter David was anointed twice more. He was invited to be king of Judah, and was anointed as such (2 Samuel 2:4). Later he was invited to be king of all Israel and was anointed again (2 Samuel 5:3). When David was old, Zadok anointed Solomon to become king (1 Kings 1:39). Thereafter he anointed him king. “And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him unto the Lord to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest” (1 Chronicles 29:22).

Mowinckel assigned Psalm 110 to events immediately before the ceremonies associated with his being anointed as king. That is correct in his academic system because he does not suggest there was a preliminary anointing to become king. In either case what he wrote is applicable to Psalm 110's connection with an anointing ceremony:

Several of the traditional royal psalms have their place within the framework of the anointment ritual. This applies, e.g. to Psalm 110. It evidently belongs to the moment when the king is led forth to ascend his throne. The king's throne in the

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<sup>425</sup> For discussions on revelation and the temple see Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 59; Cowan, “Sacred Temples Ancient and Modern,” 100-5; Hamblin, “Temple Motifs,” 457-58; Hanks, “Christ Manifested to His People,” 11-13; Lundquist, “What Is a Temple?” 107-8; Lundquist, “Temple, Covenant, and Law,” 272-94; Nibley, “Prayer,” in “On the Sacred and the Symbolic” 568-69; Packer, *Holy Temple*, 37-47; Parry, “Garden of Eden,” 139-41.

<sup>426</sup> For discussions of the king's duties as a military leader see Johnson, “Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship,” 205; Kerr, “Ancient Aspects of Nephite Kingship,” 87-90; Mettinger, “Fighting the Powers,” 21-38.

<sup>427</sup> Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 374. See also, John A. Tvedtnes, “Olive Oil: Symbol of the Holy Ghost,” *The Allegory of the Olive Tree*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 427-59.

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East was looked upon as a symbol of the throne of the deity. It is on a throne flanked by winged lions (cherubs), like that of Solomon, that the deity himself sits in Syro-Canaanite pictures. Such a winged lion throne (empty!) stood in the Temple in Jerusalem also, and it was supposed that ‘Yahweh who sits upon the cherubim’ was seated on it invisibly. When the king as the ‘son of Yahweh’ seats himself on his throne, this is a symbolic expression of the fact that he, as Yahweh’s appointed governor, sits on the Lord’s own throne, i.e. wields sovereign power in the name of Yahweh. That is the background of the oracle in Psalm 110. There reference is made to the holy robe in which the king has been arrayed for the anointing, to the life-giving water from the holy spring—probably the waters of Gihon—with which he has been purified and strengthened, and to the procession from the brook to the king’s palace.<sup>428</sup>

The psalms indicate that a sequence of anointings (first to become king, then as king) was also a part of the festival drama. The best evidence is in Psalm 72,<sup>429</sup> but its evidence is somewhat circumstantial. The problem is that neither the word “oil” nor “anoint” is found there. What is found is a blessing to a prince, that, in part at least, confers upon him the same authorities and powers that were enjoyed by the reigning king. It seems reasonable to assert that Psalm 72 was sung during the festival drama in conjunction with the prince’s preliminary anointing to become king.<sup>430</sup> It reads in part:

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<sup>428</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1: 63-64.

<sup>429</sup> For Mowinckel’s analysis of the 72 Psalm, see Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1: 67-70.

<sup>430</sup> The interaction between King Benjamin and his son Mosiah suggests something like that may have been happening in that story. A quick review of those events would include:

King Benjamin instructs Mosiah to gather the people (Mosiah 1:10). Mosiah issues a proclamation that the people must gather (Mosiah 1:18, Mosiah 2:1). Benjamin declares, “this day, that my son Mosiah is a king and a ruler over you (Mosiah 2:30). At the end of his speech, he “consecrated his son Mosiah to be a ruler and a king over his people ...And Mosiah began to reign in his father’s stead ...And king Benjamin lived three years and he died (Mosiah 6:3-5).”



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- 1 Give the king thy judgments, O God,  
and thy righteousness unto the king's son.
- 2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness,  
and thy poor with judgment.
- 3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people,  
and the little hills, by righteousness.
- 4 He shall judge the poor of the people,  
he shall save the children of the needy,  
and shall break in pieces the oppressor.
- 5 They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure,  
throughout all generations.
- 6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass:  
as showers that water the earth.
- 7 In his days shall the righteous flourish;  
and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. ...
- 17 His name shall endure for ever:  
his name shall be continued as long as the sun:  
and men shall be blessed in him:  
all nations shall call him blessed.
- 18 Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,  
who only doeth wondrous things.
- 19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever:  
and let the whole earth be filled with his glory;  
Amen, and Amen (Psalm 72:1-7, 17-19).

There is enormous staying power in ceremonies that convey power and legitimize authority, especially when those traditions help assure the legality of the claims of a ruling monarch. The continuance of the practice of anointing the king's heir apparent has persisted for more than five thousand years. For example, Erickson gives this account of the infant baptism and anointing of the first Queen Elizabeth of England:

The christening could hardly have been more elaborate if the child had been the

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hoped-for prince. The chief nobles, the leading churchmen and the Lord mayor and aldermen stood by as the dowager duchess of Norfolk carried the baby to the church, with Thomas Boleyn behind her bearing the long train of the purple velvet christening mantle. Hangings of cloth of gold and bright tapestries draped the interior of the chapel, and soft thick carpets covered the floor. A heavy scent of incense and perfume filled the air, disguising the strong odor of coals burning in a brazier near the font; the brazier provided warmth for the baby while she was undressed behind a curtain, then handed to the bishop of London who immersed the back of her head and her heels in the holy water. Before her purple mantle was put on again she was anointed on back and breast with the holy oil sacred to royalty, and given her name.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Carolly Erickson, *The First Elizabeth* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), 20-21.

## **Act 2, Scene 3: The Abrahamic Covenant**

God's covenant with Abraham included a blessings of priesthood, posterity, land, and invulnerability ("And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee"). It was, therefore, the foundation upon which all else rested, as it is recorded in the Bible, the blessing is important but rather brief. There, God declares:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. ...

7 And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. ...

14 And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee (Genesis 12:2-3, 7; 13:14-17).

However, we have a much more complete account in the Book of Abraham:

18 Behold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee.

19 As it was with Noah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God. ...

6 But I, Abraham, and Lot, my brother's son, prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord appeared unto me, and said unto me: Arise, and take Lot with thee; for I have

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purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice.

7 For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains—Depart hence—and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly.

8 My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.

9 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

10 And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

11 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.

12 Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee (Abraham 1:18-19, 2:6-12).

The covenant was about priesthood responsibilities and blessings. It was that God would bless those whom Abraham blessed, and make him invulnerable to his enemies' designs. Above all else it was a blessing of family—eternal family—but first this world's family and a promise that they will be secure in the land the Lord had given to Abraham. The 47<sup>th</sup> Psalm rejoices in the fulfillment of that covenant:

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- 1 O clap your hands, all ye people;  
shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
- 2 For the Lord most high is terrible;  
he is a great King over all the earth.
- 3 He shall subdue the people under us,  
and the nations under our feet.
- 4 He shall choose our inheritance for us,  
the excellency of Jacob whom he loved.
- 5 God is gone up with a shout,  
the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.
- 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises:  
sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
- 7 For God is the King of all the earth:  
sing ye praises with understanding.
- 8 God reigneth over the heathen:  
God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.
- 9 The princes of the people are gathered together,  
even the people of the God of Abraham:  
for the shields of the earth belong unto God:  
he is greatly exalted (Psalm 47:1-9).

Muilenburg's translation of the psalm gives it a family connotation that reaches into the eternities. He writes, "We may render Psalm 47 somewhat literally as follows:"

All ye peoples, clap (your) hands,  
Shout to Elohim with jubilant cry  
For Yahweh Elyon is terrible,  
A great King over all the earth.  
He subdued peoples beneath us,  
And nations beneath our feet.  
He chose for us our inheritance  
The pride of Jacob whom he loved.

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Elohim is gone up with a shout,  
Yahweh with the blast of the shophar  
Sing ye to Elohim, O sing ye,  
Sing ye to our King, O sing ye,  
For a King 'over' all the earth is Elohim,  
Sing ye with a maskil.  
Elohim has become King over the nations,  
Elohim is seated on his holy throne,  
The princes of the peoples are gathered together,  
A people of the God of Abraham,  
For the shields of the earth belong to Elohim.  
He is greatly exalted.<sup>432</sup>

Psalm 105 and 106 reminds the people of the priesthood blessings of Abraham and praises the Lord for keeping his covenants. Psalm 105 reads in part:

6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant,  
ye children of Jacob his chosen.  
7 He is the Lord our God:  
his judgments are in all the earth.  
8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever,  
the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.  
9 Which covenant he made with Abraham,  
and his oath unto Isaac;  
10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law,  
and to Israel for an everlasting covenant (Psalm 105:6-10).

The psalm tells how the Lord kept the covenant by bringing the people from Egypt into the Promised Land, then continues:

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<sup>432</sup> James Muilenburg, "Psalm 47," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 63 (1944): 235-56.

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- 42 For he remembered his holy promise,  
and Abraham his servant.  
43 And he brought forth his people with joy,  
and his chosen with gladness:  
44 And gave them the lands of the heathen:  
and they inherited the labour of the people;  
45 That they might observe his statutes,  
and keep his laws. Praise ye the Lord (Psalm 105:42-45).<sup>433</sup>

The Lord's covenant with Abram, which he sealed by giving him the new name of Abraham, included the fulness of the gospel blessings of the Savior's atonement. They are priesthood and all of the ordinances and covenants that are associated with it, family and the blessings of earthly posterity, land with promise of security that it brings, and invulnerability in the assurance that Abraham would be able to fulfill his eternal covenants.

When those blessings are projected into the hereafter they remain the same: the new covenant name is a "son of God"; the bond of charity is the sealing power that is also the promise of eternal posterity; the land is the celestial world for the righteous who "shall inherit the earth"; priesthood and invulnerability map to the everlasting blessings of celestial glory and peace.

The following chart shows how the sacred mountain can be understood as a temple, and how the temple is a similitude of the mountain. Begin reading the chart from the bottom—the foot of the mountain and the entrance to the temple—and then ascend each step from there.

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<sup>433</sup> See Anthony R. Ceresko, "A Poetic Analysis of Ps 105, with Attention to Its Use of Irony," *Biblica* 64 (1983): 20-46.

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<i>Sacred Mountain</i>	<i>Solomon's Temple</i>
<p><b>Top of the Mountain</b>            where one sees God            (Exodus 24:17, Moses 1:1-2, Matthew 4:8, Mark 9:2, Revelation 21:10, 1 Nephi 11:1, Moses 1:1-2).</p>	<p><b>Holy of Holies</b>            where God's throne sits beneath the wings of the cherubim.</p>
<p><b>Cloud</b> (<i>shechinah</i>—veil of light)            through which one sees the finger of the Lord.            (Deuteronomy 9:10; Exodus 24:12-17; Ether 3:4-14, 12:21; Mark 9:7).</p>	<p><b>Veil of Solomon's Temple</b>            "come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift."            (Moroni 10:30. See 3 Nephi 12:3, Moroni 7:19-21, Hebrews 6:13-20).</p>
<p><b>Midway up the Mountain</b>            where Moses was crowned by God in the presence of witnesses.            After the coronation they shared the same temple feast as we find in 3 Nephi when the Savior also taught about prayer.            (Exodus 24:9-11, 3 Nephi 18:1-25).</p>	<p><b>Holy Place</b>            Central room of the Temple where the king was anointed.            It contained the Shewbread Table (an invitation to share a meal with God) and the Menorah (representing the tree of Life and a prayer to enter God's presence.)</p>
<p><b>Camp of Israel</b> at the foot of the mountain. Sacred space that separated the profane world from the more sacred space of the mountain's heights.</p>	<p><b>Vestibule</b>            Entrance place that separates the profane world from the temple interior.</p>

*Moses patterned the Tabernacle to represent the Holy Mountain. Later, Solomon built his Temple after the plan of the Tabernacle.*



## **Act 2, Scene 4: Moses and the Law**

As the storyline of the festival drama moved through the chronological order of Israelite history,<sup>434</sup> the next step after receiving the Abrahamic covenant would have been to demonstrate how the Lord's covenant with Abraham was, and would yet be, fulfilled. The most immediate and visible evidence of its fulfillment, as just mentioned, was found in the story of Moses and his leading the children of Israel into the promised land. Mowinckel observes:

The covenant of Sinai, according to later Jewish ways of thinking, is itself a renewal of the covenant with the first ancestors, which was fulfilled through the settlement in Canaan. The kingship of Yahweh rests on this coherent historical fact of salvation, and it is all brought to life again through his appearance and epiphany in the festival cult.

Even Yahweh's covenant with David was considered to be a repetition of the covenant of Sinai itself.<sup>435</sup>

Several of the Psalms celebrate Jehovah's covenant with Moses and his fulfilling that covenant by delivering the people from Egypt, leading them through the wilderness, giving them the Law, and enabling them to inherit the Promised Land.<sup>436</sup> No Psalm actually shows that the king played the part of Moses, or that, during the drama, he spoke to God

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<sup>434</sup> Many scholars assume the events of the drama were in the same chronological order as historical events and the events of one's own life. A suggested chronology of the drama is given in Borsch, *Son of Man*, 90-96. A much more detailed one is in Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, 24-34.

<sup>435</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:157.

<sup>436</sup> Psalms 77, 78, 80, 99, 103, 105, 106, 114, 136.

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in the burning bush.<sup>437</sup> However, the psalms recite the whole story of Jehovah's giving commands and making covenants with Moses.<sup>438</sup> A few examples will suffice.

- 18 The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven:  
    the lightnings lightened the world:  
    the earth trembled and shook.
- 19 Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters,  
    and thy footsteps are not known.
- 20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock  
    by the hand of Moses and Aaron (Psalm 77:18-20).
- 23 Israel also came into Egypt;  
    and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
- 24 And he increased his people greatly;  
    and made them stronger than their enemies.
- 25 He turned their heart to hate his people,  
    to deal subtilly with his servants.
- 26 He sent Moses his servant;  
    and Aaron whom he had chosen.
- 27 They shewed his signs among them,  
    and wonders in the land of Ham.
- 28 He sent darkness, and made it dark;  
    and they rebelled not against his word.

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<sup>437</sup> At this time, Moses already had the Melchizedek priesthood—probably in the drama, but certainly in reality. President Clark explains, “Then God came to Moses, first in the burning bush, afterwards in the glory of the appearance of Sinai (Ex. 3:4; ch. 19, 20; 24:1-11; 31:18), and Moses opened his dispensation endowed with the Melchizedek Priesthood (D & C 84:6), having talked with God ‘face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.’ (Ex. 33:11) Moses ‘sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; but they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence’” (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *Behold the Lamb of God* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991], 207-8.).

<sup>438</sup> See Berman, *Temple: Its Symbolism*, 35-56.

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29 He turned their waters into blood,  
and slew their fish (Psalm 105:23-29).

The psalms then rehearse the blessings to Israel and the ills that came upon the Egyptians:

9 He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up:  
so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.

10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them,  
and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

11 And the waters covered their enemies:  
there was not one of them left.

12 Then believed they his words;  
they sang his praise.

13 They soon forgot his works;  
they waited not for his counsel:

14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness,  
and tempted God in the desert.

15 And he gave them their request;  
but sent leanness into their soul.

16 They envied Moses also in the camp,  
and Aaron the saint of the Lord.

17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,  
and covered the company of Abiram.

18 And a fire was kindled in their company;  
the flame burned up the wicked.

19 They made a calf in Horeb,  
and worshipped the molten image.

20 Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of  
an ox that eateth grass.

21 They forgot God their Savior,  
which had done great things in Egypt;

22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham,

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and terrible things by the Red sea.  
23 Therefore he said that he would destroy them,  
    had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach,  
    to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.  
24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land,  
    they believed not his word:  
25 But murmured in their tents,  
    and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord (Psalm 106:9-25).

Some psalms focus on specific parts of the exodus experience. Psalm 114 describes how God controlled the mountains and the sea, while Psalm 95 recites the events at Sinai when the Lord invited the people to come up the mountain to see him, and the people sent Moses instead. In this story, the mountain was the temple, and became a kind of prototype for all other temples.<sup>439</sup>

1 O come, let us sing unto the Lord:  
    let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.  
2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,  
    and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.  
3 For the Lord is a great God,  
    and a great King above all gods.  
4 In his hand are the deep places of the earth:  
    the strength of the hills is his also.  
5 The sea is his, and he made it:  
    and his hands formed the dry land.  
6 O come, let us worship and bow down:  
    let us kneel before the Lord our maker.  
7 For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture,  
    and the sheep of his hand.  
    To day if ye will hear his voice,

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<sup>439</sup> See Clifford, "Temple and the Holy Mountain," 107-24; Emerton, "Mountain of God," 24-37.

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8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation,<sup>440</sup>  
and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:  
9 When your fathers tempted me,  
proved me, and saw my work.  
10 Forty years long was I grieved with this generation,  
and said, It is a people that do err in their heart,  
and they have not known my ways:  
11 Unto whom I swear in my wrath  
that they should not enter into my rest (Psalm 95:1-11).

In the Holy Place were an incense altar, the Menorah, and the Table of Shewbread. “Shew” is an Old English word for “show,” so it was called “Show Bread.” The bread shows or invites because it demonstrates that the table was already set. It, like the Menorah represented an invitation to come through the veil and enter God’s presence. Because the Table of Show Bread symbolized Jehovah’s invitation to come and sup with him, it was also a representation of Moses’s own coronation ceremony, which was performed (as one would expect) on Sinai in the presence of witnesses.<sup>441</sup> Moses’s formal enthronement is recorded in the 24th chapter of Exodus.

9 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:  
10 And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.  
11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand ... (Exodus 24:9-11).

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<sup>440</sup> This was the psalm with which Alma threatened Zeezrom at the end of Alma 12.

<sup>441</sup> Victor H. Matthews, “Theophanies Cultic and Cosmic: ‘Prepare to Meet Thy God!’” *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration*, 307-17.

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That does not say that he laid his hand upon Moses and ordained him, it only says he did not ordain the others. However the inference is clear. Even though the others also went to the mountain and saw God, their being there did not confer them with authority because God did not lay his hands upon them. Their office at that time seems to be that of witnesses to Moses's ordination:

... also they saw God, and did eat and drink (Exodus 24:11).

This pattern of partaking of a sacred meal in the presence of God would later be represented by the temple feasts in which the people participated. At the Temple in Jerusalem, after one's sacrifice had been offered, and the meat cooked, the man and his household would sit with the priests and Levites and eat of the sacrifice, symbolic of a meal eaten with the gods.<sup>442</sup>

The most impressive example of the temple feast was one that ended the Feast of Tabernacles. It occurred on the final day of the New Year festival temple drama, after both Jehovah and the earthly king had been re-enthroned:

12 And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.

[Moses had the law; indeed, he was the personification of the law:]

13 And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God.

14 And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.

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<sup>442</sup> For discussions of sacral meals see Lundquist, "Common Temple Ideology," 59; Draper and Parry, "Seven Promises," 131-33; Lundquist, "Temple, Covenant, and Law," 289; Lundquist, "What Is a Temple?" 104-5.

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15 And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.

16 And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days:

[That was the same number of days in the New Year's Festival before the king came into the Jerusalem Temple and taught the Law to the people:]

and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

[In the festival, on the seventh day, the king taught the people:]

17 And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

18 And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights (Exodus 24:9-18).

This account is an unmistakable foreshadowing of the final events of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama. We have pointed out the similarities without further explanation because the whole conclusion of the drama will provide that explanation. Later, in the Book of Mormon portion of this book, we will also show that the events of the Savior's coming to America followed the same pattern as Moses's coronation ceremony.

The entire festival temple drama focused on a single concept —legitimacy—the legitimacy of priesthood and kingship—of Jehovah, of the reigning king, and of the sacral kings who also participated. This was not so simple as it sounds for the height, depth, width, breadth of that concept embraced eternity and all creation. It showed how the Lord is Lord of Lords, how the king who has priesthood authority is king of kings, how every person in the congregation is a child and heir of God. And, for ancient Israel, its all-encompassing nature was epitomized in Moses, Israel's first king.

The first person to function as king in Israel was Moses, who "is elevated above the

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human sphere. He is pre-existent, as has been pointed out many times,<sup>443</sup> and who has a “golden throne.”<sup>444</sup> Moses received the rites and powers of priesthood from the Lord on Mount Sinai at first, then “at the time when Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain,<sup>445</sup> And he saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence.”<sup>446</sup> Three times in the course of the interview, the Lord addressed him as “Moses, my son.”<sup>447</sup> Thus Moses had fulfilled two of the most significant steps toward the final conformation of kingship—priesthood and receiving from God the Israelite royal king-name, “son.” We will discuss the significance of that new name when we discuss the actual coronation ceremony near the conclusion of the festival temple drama.

During the New Year festival, the king was shown to have been chosen and enthroned in the same way Moses was—and already we have an important, but unanswered question. Was the king ordained at that time as well as anointed? There is much evidence that an Israelite king was anointed as part of his ceremony, but none that he was also ordained. That is probably because he had already received the Melchizedek Priesthood as is shown in Psalm 110.

The importance of Moses’s story is more easily understood when we extend our understanding of the meaning of the ancient temples to Moses’s experiences on Mount Sinai. There, he and the Children of Israel were invited to hear the voice of the Lord as he spoke behind a veil of smoke, but when the people refused, Moses’s Tabernacle was built

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<sup>443</sup> Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle*, 41.

<sup>444</sup> Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 3:437. The throne is mentioned in connection with Moses’s preparing to announce that Joshua was to be his successor. At the same time he gave Joshua the throne, Moses also prepared his clothes which consisted of shoes, undergarment, cloak, turban, golden helmet, and crown of pearls.

<sup>445</sup> For a discussion of the “world mountain,” see Gunkel, *Folktale in the Old Testament*, 67-71.

<sup>446</sup> Moses 1:1-2.

<sup>447</sup> Moses 1:6-7, 40.



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as a continuation of that invitation. Sarna writes:

The Tabernacle was meant to be a living extension of Mount Sinai. The national experience with God that occurred there would be sustained and nourished through the presence of the sanctuary in the midst of the camp of Israel.<sup>448</sup>

Notwithstanding the people's rejection of the Lord at Sinai, he continued to bless them. Those blessings are celebrated in Psalm 103. In that psalm we find a sharp contrast between the lovingkindness of the pre-exilic God of Israel, and the unkind God of the historical books of the Old Testament that were written by post-exilic scholars and priests. It is that marked difference in the personality of God that constitutes one of the major evidences of the post-exilic apostasy. Psalm 103 describes the Lord's dealings with Moses and his people in terms of trust and endearment:

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul:  
and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
- 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits:
- 3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;  
who healeth all thy diseases;
- 4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;  
who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;
- 5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things;  
so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- 6 The Lord executeth righteousness  
and judgment for all that are oppressed.
- 7 He made known his ways unto Moses,  
his acts unto the children of Israel.
- 8 The Lord is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

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<sup>448</sup> Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 203.

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- 9 He will not always chide:  
    neither will he keep his anger for ever.
- 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins;  
    nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
- 11 For as the heaven is high above the earth,  
    so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west,  
    so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
- 13 Like as a father pitieth his children,  
    so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.
- 14 For he knoweth our frame;  
    he remembereth that we are dust.
- 15 As for man, his days are as grass:  
    as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
- 16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;  
    and the place thereof shall know it no more.
- 17 But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting  
    to everlasting upon them that fear him,  
    and his righteousness unto children's children;
- 18 To such as keep his covenant,  
    and to those that remember his commandments to do them.
- 19 The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens;  
    and his kingdom ruleth over all.
- 20 Bless the Lord, ye his angels,  
    that excel in strength, that do his commandments,  
    hearkening unto the voice of his word.
- 21 Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts;  
    ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.
- 22 Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion:  
    bless the Lord, O my soul (Psalm 103 :1-22).

It is quite possible the liturgy of the festival temple drama relied at least in part on

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Moses's great final lecture to his people that is recorded in our book of Deuteronomy. The whole thrust of Deuteronomy's last chapters is in the covenant formula that imposes upon the people the responsibility to love God, and to demonstrate that love by keeping his commandments. During the drama the king—and, by extension, the people also—accepted the burdens and the blessings of the Law of Moses. As Anderson observes:

When one looks at contemporary documents from the ancient Near East, one finds that the covenantal formulary provides an almost exact parallel to the Deuteronomic usage. These ancient Near Eastern covenantal charters contain a model for profane love that is strikingly similar to the love each Israelite is to show YHWH. The vassal, like the Israelite, was commanded to show love toward his suzerain, and the vassal was to actualize this love in loyalty and obedience.

Love in this covenantal setting finds its concrete expression in the maintenance of the stipulations of the covenantal charter.<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 10.

## **Act 2, Scene 5: The Davidic Covenant**

In the eyes of the Israelites both in his own time and for centuries thereafter, David's wars were holy wars where the struggles between armies of men on earth were lesser versions of simultaneous struggles between Jehovah and the gods of the Canaanites—between the good and evil, order and chaos. David's functions were to be military leader,<sup>450</sup> prophet, high priest,<sup>451</sup> and judge.<sup>452</sup> But his responsibility was singular: he must be the embodiment of righteousness—*zedek*. To do that, he must know and live the Law—and make sure his people also knew and obeyed the Law. His own hands must be clean and those of his nation must also be clean; otherwise, the conditions of his and his nation's covenant with Jehovah would be temporarily broken and the blessings promised would be withheld. Johnson, in describing the king's responsibilities, writes:

Thus the king is the supreme 'ruler' or 'judge', to whom one may go in any matter of dispute for a final 'ruling' or 'judgment' which, ideally at least, will also be an act of 'justice'. What is more, it is in Yahweh, the God of Israel, that these laws find their substantiation, for in the ultimate it is from Yahweh, as the 'Giver of Life', that the nation derives its vitality; and, this being the case, it is to Yahweh that the king is finally responsible and, indeed, upon Yahweh that he is ultimately dependent for the exercise of justice and the consequent right ordering

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<sup>450</sup> The other aspects of Israelite kingship will be discussed in this paper in some detail, but the king's duties as a military leader will not. For a discussion of that see Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," 205; Kerr, "Ancient Aspects of Nephite Kingship," 87-90; Mettinger, "Fighting the Powers," 21-38.

<sup>451</sup> For a discussion of David's use of the Urim and Thummim, both before and after his anointing as king, see Van Dam, *Urim and Thummim*, 187-88, 247-50.

<sup>452</sup> "Judge," here, implies something like a supreme court, rather than "judge" in the sense that Sampson or Deborah were judges. "Like Egyptian kings, Israel's kings served as the final arbiter in judicial matters (2 Samuel 14:4-20; 1 Kings 3:16-28; 2 Kings 6:26-29)." For a discussion of Israel's king as judge, see Hoffmeier "Son of God: From Pharaoh to Israel's Kings," 47; Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," 206-7.

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of society, i.e. its righteousness.<sup>453</sup>

The Israelite kings ruled over their nation as a father figure,<sup>454</sup> representing their people and themselves before Jehovah.<sup>455</sup> Jehovah's covenant with David was an "everlasting covenant."<sup>456</sup> If that phrase meant anything at all, it meant that it extended from the premortal world, to this one, and beyond. Indeed, the idea of eternal kingship can easily be found within the Davidic Covenant,<sup>457</sup> which was:

3 I have made a covenant with my chosen,  
I have sworn unto David my servant,  
4 Thy seed will I establish for ever,  
and build up thy throne to all generations (Psalm 89:3-4).<sup>458</sup>

While the covenant of David must be traced back to Jehovah's earlier covenants with

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<sup>453</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 4-7. See Kerr, "Ancient Aspects of Nephite Kingship," 93-98.

<sup>454</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:52-54, 60.

<sup>455</sup> For a discussion on the theoretical nature of an Israelite king see Gunkel, *Folktale in the Old Testament*, 152-58.

<sup>456</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 25. See Widengren, "King and Covenant," 21-26.

<sup>457</sup> For a discussion of the Davidic Covenant, see Avraham Gileadi, "The Davidic Covenant: A Theological Basis for Corporate Protection," *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration*, 157-63.

<sup>458</sup> Psalms 89:4. The covenant was that David's descendants would rule in Israel forever. In his last words, David referred to this as "an everlasting covenant." 2 Samuel 23:1-5. For a discussion of the importance of the covenant see Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," 207-16. Solomon apparently used the occasion of the dedication of the temple for the renewal of that covenant. Widengren, "King and Covenant," 8. See Terence E. Fretheim, "Divine Foreknowledge, Divine Constancy, and the Rejection of Saul's Kingship," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47, 4 (October 1985): 595-602; Gileadi, "Davidic Covenant," 157-63.

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Abraham, the Abrahamic covenant must also be traced forward through the Davidic covenant.<sup>459</sup> In his role, David was both king and priest. Eakin writes:

David clearly demonstrated the monarch's power to confirm priestly offices when he established Zadok in the Yahweh cultis in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 8:17). Furthermore, this earliest king in Israel caused the Ark of the Covenant to be brought to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:12-19; 24:25) and his son, Solomon (1 Kings 3:4; 9:25), officiated in the offering of sacrifices. It is also true that the idea of the everlasting covenant effected between Yahweh and the House of David constituted a continuing relationship between Yahweh and the reigning king which in essence did not exist even between Yahweh and the priest.<sup>460</sup>

Mowinckel understood it to go even beyond that. He posited, "This confident and warm, emotionally tuned relation of the worshiper(s) to Yahweh often finds its expression in the phrase 'our God', or 'my God' when a single person is speaking on behalf of the congregation or of himself."<sup>461</sup>

The king was to look after his people, defending them when they needed defending; sitting in judgment over their problems as though they were squabbling children; teaching<sup>462</sup> and enforcing both sacred and profane law:

For the law of the Lord is not merely statutes, arbitrary regulations, commandments which might have been otherwise: it is a revelation, full of grace, of that fundamental law of all existence which lies in the plan of creation, which

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<sup>459</sup> "The Abrahamic covenant tradition has clear links with the tradition of the covenant between God and the Davidic royal family (cf. E.g. 2 Sam. 7.8-16; Psalm 89)." Davidson, "Covenant Ideology," 338.

<sup>460</sup> Frank E. Eakin, Jr., *The Religion and Culture of Israel: An Introduction to Old Testament Thought* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon. 1971), 191.

<sup>461</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:103.

<sup>462</sup> Widengren, "King and Covenant," 16-17.

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must be followed if one is not to collide with the basic laws of life and perish; God's moral and religious law is—to use a modern term—as essentially 'biological' law as the 'natural' laws of physics and chemistry. Hence it is a special mercy that God has revealed this law of life to Israel—'which he has not done to any other people.'<sup>463</sup>

Through Abraham the covenant was traced back to Adam, and ultimately back to the great Council in Heaven, where the covenant and duties of Adam and his successor kings originated.<sup>464</sup>

Scholars have some fundamental questions about the nature of Israelite kingship before the time of David. For example, there is very little evidence in the Bible about the roles of the hereditary leaders of the twelve tribes during the time of the judges. Whether this is because the tribal elders provided little leadership or because the author of Judges was only interested in the special feats of local heroes, one cannot know. Some scholars believe that Saul's kingship was more of an extension of the office of a tribal chief than of a reigning king, and that the actual kingship began with David. The supposition is that David captured Jerusalem but rather than destroy either the city or its inhabitants, he arranged to have its king, Uriah, killed, so he could marry the queen, Bathsheba. It is supposed that thereby David acquired the prerogatives of priesthood and kingship which belonged to the Jebusite kings—including its enthronement ceremonies of the New Year festival and its ancient temple worship service. Aubrey Johnson asserts:

Now the fact that "David" is acknowledged as the first-born "Son" of the national deity gives force to the suggestion that it was only after the capture of

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<sup>463</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:91.

<sup>464</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 60-64, 70, 83-84, 89, 96-97, 102-11, 125, 133, 140-42, 149-50, 157-60, 182-88, 197. See Brown, *Semitic Background*, 3, 15, 18, 24; Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, 4, 16-17; Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," 224; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 66; Lundquist, "Legitimizing Role of the Temple," 212; Geo Widengren, "Early Hebrew Myths," 160-62; Widengren, "King and Covenant," 7; Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle*, 30-31, 40-42.

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Jerusalem that Saul's successor was known by what may be interpreted as a divine name, and that the Davidic kingship as known in Israel is based upon an earlier form of the Jerusalem Cultus which has been adopted to the figure of Jahweh and the person of the national leader. ...it will be recalled that according to a tradition which may well be true, there was a pre-Israelite deity in Jerusalem known as El Elyon, familiar to us in the English versions as "the most high God" or "God Most High." Thus we read that after Abram's victory over the confederacy of kings,

Malki-sedek, the king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, he being priest to El Elyon; and he blessed him, and said:

"Blessed is Abram of El Elyon,  
Possessor of Heaven and Earth  
Blessed is El Elyon,  
Who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand."<sup>465</sup>

Later, Johnson added:

In fact we may go further and suggest that after the capture of Jerusalem Saul's successor found in the Jebusite Cultus, with its High-god Elyon and its royal-priestly order of Malki-sedek, a valuable means of emphasizing the ideal unity of his kingdom; for as we turn to consider certain details in the ritual and mythology of the Jerusalem Cultus during the Israelite monarchical period, we shall find that Jahweh, as Elyon, and the Davidic king, as the "Priest after the order of Malki-sedek," unite to establish the SEDEK, the loyalty or right relation, of the people and so ensure the national well-being throughout another year.<sup>466</sup>

Johnson's speculations are interesting but not conclusive. It will be remembered,

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<sup>465</sup> Johnson, "Role of the King," 81-82.

<sup>466</sup> Johnson, "Role of the King," 84-85.



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however, that when Joshua invaded Canaan, the Jebusites were spared. Nephi may have given us the reason why they were spared when he leveled this indictment against those who were destroyed by the invading Israelite armies:

32 And after they had crossed the river Jordan he did make them mighty unto the driving out of the children of the land, yea, unto the scattering them to destruction.

33 And now, do ye suppose that the children of this land, who were in the land of promise, who were driven out by our fathers, do ye suppose that they were righteous? Behold, I say unto you, Nay.

34 Do ye suppose that our fathers would have been more choice than they if they had been righteous? I say unto you, Nay.

35 Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God. But behold, this people had rejected every word of God, and they were ripe in iniquity; and the fulness of the wrath of God was upon them; and the Lord did curse the land against them, and bless it unto our fathers; yea, he did curse it against them unto their destruction, and he did bless it unto our fathers unto their obtaining power over it.

36 Behold, the Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited; and he hath created his children that they should possess it (1 Nephi 17:32-36).

The Jebusites inhabited the ancient city of Salem. Their king in the days of Abraham was Melchizedek, who built the first sacred temple in that city.<sup>467</sup> One wonders if it was possible that these people were not destroyed by Joshua because they were not apostate like their neighbors, but still honored and exercised the Melchizedek priesthood, as did, for example, the Midianite prince and priest, Jethro, who ordained his son-in-law Moses to that same Melchizedek Priesthood.<sup>468</sup>

In addition to Moses's coronation on Mount Sinai, there is other circumstantial

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<sup>467</sup> *Josephus*, trans. Maier (1988), 367.

<sup>468</sup> D&C 84:6.

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evidence that the kingship rites and the New Year festival were older in Hebrew tradition than just the reigns of David and Solomon. One of those evidences lies in the method Jeroboam used to effect his rebellion when he led the ten tribes to abandon Rehoboam, Solomon's son and successor.

It was Jeroboam's pride and ambition which made him forsake his God. He knew that in the Sabbatical year the king is commanded to read the word of God to the people in the Temple (see Deut. 31.10), and as long as Israel should make pilgrimages to Jerusalem, Rehoboam would inevitably appear to the entire nation as the real king."<sup>469</sup>

So when Jeroboam and the other leaders of the Ten Tribes revolted against Rehoboam, Jeroboam built a sanctuary in his own territory of Ephraim at Beth-el in order to provide an alternative to both the Temple at Jerusalem, and its ritual, including, presumably, the rites of the New Year festival. Johnson observes:

We are expressly told, however, that in establishing this royal cultus at Beth-el as a rival to that in Jerusalem he followed the analogy of the southern kingdom to the extent of setting up a pilgrim-festival after the style of what we know as the Feast of Tabernacles. This is important; for it indicates that the festival in question was utilized both in the north and in the south to bind the people in loyalty to the national deity and the reigning house.<sup>470</sup>

The circumstantial evidence is that it is unlikely that Jeroboam would have felt the need to imitate the ceremonies of the Davidic king's New Year festival if the tradition of that ceremony reached back in Israelite history only two generations. If the enthronement ceremonies of the New Year festival had been an innovation by David and Solomon, then one would suppose it would have been expedient to reject that innovation, just as it was

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<sup>469</sup> Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 6:306-7.

<sup>470</sup> Johnson, "The Role of the King," 85.

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necessary to reject the legitimacy of the Davidic kings. If, on the other hand, those ceremonies reached back into the antiquity of Israelite religion and tradition, then it would be understandable why Jeroboam felt the need to continue them in order to stabilize and legitimize his own claim to the Israelite throne.

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### **Renewal of the Davidic Covenant**

In the festival drama, after the then-reigning king had received the priesthood and the blessings of Abraham and of Moses, the next step was for him to receive a renewal of the kingship covenants the Lord had made with David.<sup>471</sup> There are several psalms that show that all of the blessings that God bestowed on David were conferred upon the currently reigning king of Israel.<sup>472</sup>

Some psalms refer to the covenants the Lord made with King David, while others place God's covenant with David in the broader context of Israelite history.<sup>473</sup> For example, Psalm 78 concludes with this report of the Lord's choosing David:

- 69 And he built his sanctuary like high palaces,  
like the earth which he hath established for ever.  
70 He chose David also his servant,  
and took him from the sheepfolds:  
71 From following the ewes great with young  
he brought him to feed Jacob his people,  
and Israel his inheritance.  
72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart;  
and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands (Psalm 78:69-72).

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<sup>471</sup> For a discussion of the Davidic covenant, see Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 13-20, 106-13.

<sup>472</sup> For a discussion of the covenant as a contract, see Gileadi, "Davidic Covenant," 157-63.

<sup>473</sup> See for example, Psalms 18, 72, 144.

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Psalm 89 focused entirely on God's everlasting covenant with David,<sup>474</sup> and by extension with all of David's heirs.<sup>475</sup> It reviewed the promises and conditions of the covenant. It also includes explicit instructions about how the king was to perform those duties.

The structure of the psalm suggests at least two voices. One represented God, the other may have been sung by a chorus. In verse 26, God promises that David will ultimately call him "Father," and in 27 he promises, "I will make him my firstborn."<sup>476</sup> That is similar language to Psalm 2 which was sung near the end of the festival drama when the king was anointed as God's heir, and given the royal new name of "son." Psalm 89 reads:

### *chorus*

- 1 I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever:  
with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness  
to all generations.

### *God*

- 2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever:

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<sup>474</sup> Psalm 78 appears to have been written (or at least added to) after the break between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. It contains lines that read:

67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim:

68 But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.

<sup>475</sup> For a discussion of that covenant, see Davenport, "Anointed of the Lord," 67-92. (The eternal permanence of God's covenant with David stands in stark contrast to the "secret" revelation in Isaiah 44-48 that transfers the Davidic covenant to Cyrus, the non-Israelite Persian king. See Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XI, Chapter 1.)

<sup>476</sup> Because God speaks of David's anointing in v. 20, it would be reasonable to place this psalm in sequence after Psalm 2. We have three reasons for not doing so. First is the future tense of the promises mentioned here. Second is that the king has already received a first anointing when he was anointed to become king, so the reference might be to that one. Third is that the king has yet to experience his ultimate challenge when he is killed and goes to the Underworld. It seems that before he can be given that challenge, he must be fully prepared with all the blessings of heaven. That would include the blessings pronounced in this psalm.

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thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.  
3 I have made a covenant with my chosen,  
I have sworn unto David my servant,  
4 Thy seed will I establish for ever,  
and build up thy throne to all generations.

*chorus*

5 And the heavens shall praise thy wonders,  
O Lord: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.  
6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord?  
who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? ...  
15 Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk,  
O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.  
16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day:  
and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.  
17 For thou art the glory of their strength:  
and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.  
18 For the Lord is our defence;  
and the Holy One of Israel is our king.  
19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst,

*God*

I have laid help upon one that is mighty;  
I have exalted one chosen out of the people.  
20 I have found David my servant;  
with my holy oil have I anointed him:  
21 With whom my hand shall be established:  
mine arm also shall strengthen him. ...  
  
26 He shall cry unto me,  
Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.  
27 Also I will make him my firstborn,

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- higher than the kings of the earth.
- 28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore,  
and my covenant shall stand fast with him.
- 29 His seed also will I make to endure for ever,  
and his throne as the days of heaven. ...
- 34 My covenant will I not break,  
nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
- 35 Once have I sworn by my holiness  
that I will not lie unto David.
- 36 His seed shall endure for ever,  
and his throne as the sun before me.
- 37 It shall be established for ever as the moon,  
and as a faithful witness in heaven (Psalm 89:1-37).

By this point in the drama, the prince (having been anointed to become king) and the people (also having been anointed to become sacral kings) had renewed to themselves all the covenant blessings of Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, and David. Through the renewing of those ordinances and covenants, the prince of the drama had received the requisite powers of priesthood and kingship necessary for him to begin to fulfill his eternal covenants. and could reign with ecclesiastical and secular authority—and he was also equipped to meet the greatest and most conclusive challenge of his mortal existence.

Then, as always happens in the cosmic myth, after the king was empowered and prepared to fulfill his covenants, he was confronted with obstacles that made his success seemly impossible. Thereby, the story sets the stage to demonstrate the truthfulness and the fulfillment of the covenant of invulnerability.

## **Act 2, Scene 6: The Ritual Combat**

In the cosmic myth, the next step after the hero-prince had been given his assignment along with all the necessary preparations and powers to fulfill it—was that he must go on his quest alone. It would be dangerous, potentially deadly, and he would require all the help the supernatural powers could give him if he were to succeed. We are now at that same juncture in the festival temple drama. The king has been given all of the priesthood ordinances and kingly authorities requisite for his success, and now—alone—he must confront the great twin monsters of death and hell.

The Feast of Tabernacles drama was, above all else, a moralistic play that demonstrated the invincibility of the light of truth and righteousness when challenged by the darkness of evil. The ultimate power of darkness was chaos, personified by the twin monsters of death and hell. Our anointed prince must now confront them both in all their final fury.

These were not imaginary monsters, neither were they considered to be in the psalms. Later in the drama, after the king and his people have triumphantly met and, with the power of Jehovah, defeated their eternal enemies, the king will remember:

3 The sorrows of death compassed me,  
and the pains of hell gat hold upon me:  
I found trouble and sorrow (Psalm 116:3).

4 The sorrows of death compassed me,  
and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about:  
the snares of death prevented me (Psalm 18:4-5).

As we continue through the drama, the psalms will teach us that Jehovah himself descended into the Underworld to rescue the king from the monsters, and that other scriptures testify of the same. In the Book of Mormon, Jacob understood this concept and rejoiced:

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10 O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit.

11 And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave.

12 And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel (2 Nephi 9:10-12).

The Lord reminded Peter of the principle when he promised:

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

Gates “prevail” when they remain closed and there is none to unlock them, but the Savior had that authority, and the gates were opened to all who were dead. When the Savior introduced himself to John at the beginning of Revelation he declared:

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death (Revelation 1:18).

For the king, that promised success was not to be demonstrated until the conclusion of his sorrows, for he was now about to enter the valley of the shadow of death, and for the present, he, like Nephi, could only pray:

May the gates of hell be shut continually before me [not open to let me in], because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite! O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the



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low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road! (2 Nephi 4:32).

This is the place in the cosmic myth where the hero goes out into the dreary world, and is overcome by deadly obstacles that preclude even the possibility that he might succeed.

Some scholars believe that in the drama, the struggle was represented by a mock battle in which part of the actors represented an enemy who defeated the Israelites, humiliated and killed the king, and destroyed Jerusalem. Similar confrontations are found in myths and rituals throughout the ancient Near East. Johnson compared the death of the king of Israel with “the ritual of the Babylonian New Year Festival. When, on the fifth day, the chief priest divests the king of all his insignia of royalty, smites him on the cheek, pulls his ears, and finally makes him kneel before the statue of Marduk.”<sup>477</sup> A parallel debasement of the king was found in ancient Egypt, as John Thompson reports:

In the *sed-a* festival of ancient Egypt—the king (or his proxy) was sacrificed and then “buried,” ritually reenacting the mythical defeat and death of Osiris by his evil brother Seth. While the king was in his tomb, Anubis, the jackal-headed priest in conjunction with Isis and Nephtys, used magic to resuscitate the king while the priests and the people outside the tomb called to the king: “Awake! Arise and live!” Afterwards, the king, fully justified after having conquered his enemies, including death, assumed his position on the throne.<sup>478</sup>

Johnson writes that the ritualistic attack on Jerusalem was made by Israel’s neighbors, “the nations of the earth”:

The festival was indeed rooted in the pre-Davidic worship of ‘God Most High’, and that the Davidic king played a much more important part in it than either Mowinckel or Schmidt had realized. Here the argument is that in the ritual drama

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<sup>477</sup> Johnson, “Role of the King,” 103. See Borsch, *Son of Man*, 97-98.

<sup>478</sup> Thompson, “Isaiah 50-51,” 140.

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the kings or nations of the earth, representing the forces of darkness and death as opposed to those of light and life, unite in an attempt to destroy Yahweh's chosen people by attacking the Davidic king upon whom its vitality as a social body is peculiarly dependent. At first the king, who is referred to from time to time as the son, the servant, and the messiah<sup>479</sup> of Yahweh, suffers humiliation and defeat, and is nearly swallowed up by the chaos of waters which lead to the Underworld of Sheol; but ultimately, in virtue of his protestation of devotion and his claim to righteousness, he is delivered by Yahweh from this threat of death. Such a renewal of life on the part of the king, however is nothing less than a ritual re-birth; it is an indication that the suffering Servant and duly humble messiah has been adopted once more as the son of the Most High or, to express this mediatory role in different terms, that he has been renewed in office as priest 'after the order of Melchizedek.' In this way the life or well-being of the nation, for which the king is directly responsible, receives provisional guarantee for another year.<sup>480</sup>

Bentzen understood this battle as a continuation of the war in heaven:

At the centre stands the *ritual combat*. The victory of God and his Anointed over their antagonists, who attempt to prevent the good work of Creation; the preparations for battle; the battle itself; and combined with the battle the suffering of the king and the god under the heavy attacks of the enemies (which in the non-Israelite rites culminate in the death of the god); his salvation and return from the Underworld; his final seizing of power and his enthronement in the newly-built temple—these elements make up the main content of the festival.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>479</sup> The word "messiah" means the anointed one. Here Johnson is using that title to emphasize that the king has been anointed.

<sup>480</sup> Johnson "The Psalms," 196-97.

<sup>481</sup> Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, 24.

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In the drama, the challenge began with a symbolic attack by the Canaanites against everything Jehovah loved.<sup>482</sup> Jerusalem was destroyed, its Temple was burned, the people were massacred, and the king himself was killed in their defense. The battle is vividly described in the 74<sup>th</sup> Psalm, where we hear a fervent prayer by the people imploring God's assistance:

- 1 O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?  
    why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?
- 2 Remember thy congregation,  
    which thou hast purchased of old;  
    the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed;  
    this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.
- 3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations;  
    even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.
- 4 Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations;  
    they set up their ensigns for signs.
- 5 A man was famous according  
    as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees.
- 6 But now they break down the carved work thereof  
    at once with axes and hammers.
- 7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary,  
    they have defiled by casting down the dwelling place  
    of thy name to the ground.
- 8 They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together:  
    they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.
- 9 We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet:  
    neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.
- 10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach?  
    shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?
- 11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand?

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<sup>482</sup> Psalm 83 lists the kingdoms surrounding Israel and asks God to defend against them.

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pluck it out of thy bosom.  
12 For God is my King of old,  
working salvation in the midst of the earth (Psalm 74:1-12).

Psalm 44 is also a desperate plea for help. It concludes:

17 All this is come upon us;  
yet have we not forgotten thee,  
neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.  
18 Our heart is not turned back,  
neither have our steps declined from thy way;  
19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons,  
and covered us with the shadow of death.  
20 If we have forgotten the name of our God,  
or stretched out our hands to a strange god;  
21 Shall not God search this out?  
for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.  
22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long;  
we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.  
23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?  
arise, cast us not off for ever.  
24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,  
and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?  
25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust:  
our belly cleaveth unto the earth.  
26 Arise for our help,  
and redeem us for thy mercies' sake (Psalm 44:17-26).

Notwithstanding their prayers, the Israelites were defeated, as they bemoaned in the 79<sup>th</sup> Psalm:

1 O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance;

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- thy holy temple have they defiled;  
they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.  
2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be  
meat unto the fowls of the heaven,  
the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.  
3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem;  
and there was none to bury them (Psalm 79:1-3).

The Jerusalem Temple was destroyed and all seemed to be lost:

- 6 But now they break down the carved work thereof at  
once with axes and hammers.  
7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary,  
they have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground.  
8 They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together:  
they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.  
9 We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet:  
neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.  
10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach?  
shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?  
11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand?  
pluck it out of thy bosom (Psalm 74:6-11).

The final scene of the battle was represented by an enactment of the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm. It showed a titanic struggle between the symbolic forces of evil and the hero whom Engnell identifies as a “youthful god”:

Throughout the ancient Near East, which is characterized by a more or less homogeneous cultural level dominated by the institution and ideology of the sacral kingship, the unique characteristic of the New Year festivals above all is the central role which the king plays in them. He leads the fight against the power of chaos, is temporarily defeated, “dies,” and “descends into Sheol,” but “rises”

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again and brings home the victory, ascends the throne, celebrates his *hieros gamos*, and “determines the destinies”—creates fertility and blessing, prosperity and good years by certain symbolic rites; and he does all this in his capacity as the incarnate “youthful god.”<sup>483</sup>

Psalm 119 is the longest, and certainly one of the most moving of all the psalms. It is a soliloquy that rivals the soliloquies of Hamlet in its intensity and beauty—suggesting that the drama was performed with all the theatrical power and emotional pathos of a Shakespearian tragedy.

For the sake of brevity, only excerpts of the psalm are given here. These portions will help define its context and give a taste of its magnificent language.<sup>484</sup> The whole psalm is a prayer to God—spoken by the young king who is about to die in the heat of battle. We can know that he was not yet a seasoned monarch, but rather he was still in the vigor and purity of his youth, because we hear him ask:

9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?  
by taking heed thereto according to thy word.  
10 With my whole heart have I sought thee:  
O let me not wander from thy commandments (Psalm 119:9-10).<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Ivan Engnell, “New Year Festivals,” *Myth and Ritual Theory*, 138.

<sup>484</sup> Psalm 119 is difficult to read as it is printed in the King James Bible because each of its major sections begins with a different letter of the alphabet, and breaking it into sections like that causes one to lose the continuity of its message. Lindars expressed the approach of many scholars when he explained:

“The alphabetic psalms of the Psalter (xxv, xxxiv, xxxvii, cxi, cxii, cxix, cxlv) and elsewhere (Prov. xxxi 10-31; Lam. i, ii, iii, and iv; Sir. li 13-30) may be called scribal exercises, inasmuch as the pattern of letters has its own importance in addition to the meaning.” (Barnabas Lindars, “The Structure of Psalm CXLV,” *Vetus Testamentum* 23, 1 (1989): 23.) But notwithstanding the academic appeal of breaking the psalm into alphabetic sections, the full beauty and scope of the psalm can only be found when it is read as a single, uninterrupted unit.

<sup>485</sup> Geo Widengren finds two similar stories. One is in a Coptic psalm and the other is the *Hymn of the Pearl*, in *Mesopotamian Elements in Manichaeism (King and Saviour II)* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz,

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That the young speaker was king and commander in this battle, there can be no question. The way he identified his enemies and his own social status makes that quite clear:

- 23 Princes also did sit and speak against me:  
but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.  
161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause:  
but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.  
46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings,  
and will not be ashamed (Psalm 119:23, 161, 46).

The young king reminded God that while he was completely devoted to the Law, he also had access to the greater sources of knowledge—for he had understood the commandments “of old,” meaning they were known and sustained by him when he was a member of the Council in Heaven:<sup>486</sup>

- 72 The law of thy mouth is better unto me  
than thousands of gold and silver.  
99 I have more understanding than all my teachers:  
for thy testimonies are my meditation.  
100 I understand more than the ancients,

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1946), 52-58.

<sup>486</sup> There are places in the scriptures where the phrase “of old” simply refers to a time in past history. However, there are other times when it is a clear reference to events in the Council in Heaven. Examples are: Deuteronomy 32:7-8; Psalms 25:6-7, 68:32-33, 93:1-2, 102:24-25. The prophecy of the Savior in Micah 5:2 is another example. The most convincing modern example is this statement in the 76<sup>th</sup> section of the Doctrine and Covenants: “And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old.” (D&C 76:6) When the Prophet Joseph wrote a poetic version of his vision, he made its meaning even more clear.

I'll surely reveal all my myst'ries to them—  
The great hidden myst'ries in my kingdom stor'd;  
From the council in Kolob, to time on the earth, (Joseph Smith, “A Vision,” in *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1843.)

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because I keep thy precepts.  
152 Concerning thy testimonies,  
I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever (Psalm 119:72, 99-100, 152).

The greatest portion of the psalm is a series of reminders to God—and no doubt to himself as he engaged in this struggle—of his piety and of his devotion to God. Here is one example:

26 I have declared my ways,  
and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.  
27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts:  
so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.  
71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted;  
that I might learn thy statutes (Psalm 119: 26-27, 71).

Yet, these expressions of devotion are sometimes intertwined with desperate pleas for assistance. Only once was the young king's thought pattern interrupted, when he addressed an adversary— perhaps during a scene of intense sword play:

115 Depart from me, ye evildoers:  
for I will keep the commandments of my God (Psalm 119:115)..

The young king's world was coming down all around him. Yet he did not cower before the enemy, but was determined to stay alive:

75 I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right,  
and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.  
76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort,  
according to thy word unto thy servant.  
77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me,  
that I may live: for thy law is my delight. ...



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- 94 I am thine, save me;  
for I have sought thy precepts.
- 95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me. ...  
but I will consider thy testimonies.
- 110 The wicked have laid a snare for me:  
yet I erred not from thy precepts.
- 116 Uphold me according unto thy word,  
that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.
- 126 It is time for thee,  
Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law.
- 145 I cried with my whole heart; hear me,  
O Lord: I will keep thy statutes.
- 146 I cried unto thee; save me,  
and I shall keep thy testimonies (Psalm 119:75-77, 94-95, 110, 116, 126, 145-6).

Toward the end of the psalm, the young king had become surrounded by his enemies, but he did not give in. Rather he assured himself that they were still his inferiors because they did not keep the Law:

- 150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief:  
they are far from thy law (Psalm 119:150).

Then it was all over. The king's body was at the gates of death—but his spirit was still alive, and his faith in Jehovah was not weakened. In the last stanzas of this scene, he prays that his soul will live on—so that, even in death, he may continue to praise the Lord:

- 173 Let thine hand help me;  
for I have chosen thy precepts.
- 174 I have longed for thy salvation,  
O Lord; and thy law is my delight.
- 175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee;  
and let thy judgments help me.

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176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep;  
seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments (Psalm 119:173-76).

Those last words of the psalm strike the final cord of the young king's time on the earth, and express the hope that will become the ultimate triumph of the entire festival drama: In his last appeal to Jehovah, as his soul approaches the darkness of death and hell, the king pleads: "seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments." That was his testimony of who Jehovah is, and of his knowledge of Jehovah's ultimate authority, and of his anticipation of the saving power of the Atonement. As he entered death, he knew that only Jehovah could save him.<sup>487</sup> He prayed:

1 O Lord God of my salvation,  
I have cried day and night before thee:  
2 Let my prayer come before thee:  
incline thine ear unto my cry;  
3 For my soul is full of troubles:  
and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.  
4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit:  
I am as a man that hath no strength:  
5 Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave,  
whom thou rememberest no more:  
and they are cut off from thy hand.  
6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,  
in darkness, in the deeps.  
7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me,

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<sup>487</sup> Johnson wrote, "Accordingly, while the freedom for which the king longs in his dramatic struggle with the forces of darkness and 'Death' is obviously freedom to live and, implicitly, to prosper, it is not a freedom to live altogether in the way of his own choosing or freedom to prosper at the expense of his fellows. It is a freedom to be of service, a freedom to live in accordance with the will of Yahweh and thus to promote not merely his own personal welfare but the well-being of the community as a whole, i.e. the well-being of the nation for whom he has accepted responsibility under the terms of the Davidic covenant." (*Sacral Kingship*, 137-38.)

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and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves.  
8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me;  
thou hast made me an abomination unto them:  
I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.  
9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction:  
Lord, I have called daily upon thee,  
I have stretched out my hands unto thee.  
10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?  
shall the dead arise and praise thee?  
11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?  
or thy faithfulness in destruction?  
12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?  
and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?  
13 But unto thee have I cried, O Lord;  
and in the morning shall my prayer prevent [come unto] thee.  
14 Lord, why castest thou off my soul?  
why hidest thou thy face from me?  
15 I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up:  
while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.  
16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me;  
thy terrors have cut me off.  
17 They came round about me daily like water;  
they compassed me about together.  
18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me,  
and mine acquaintance into darkness (Psalm 88:1-18).

The king's final prayer was also an introduction to the next scenes of the drama which will celebrate the life, death, redeeming powers, and resurrection of the Savior. But for the present, the king was dead! And with him died, symbolically, all the congregation. There was a mourning sound that rose like a pall above their defeated bodies. Perhaps it was sung by a single voice; perhaps it was the groanings of an entire nation. It was the voice of the dead:

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- 1 I cried unto the Lord with my voice;  
with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication.
- 2 I poured out my complaint before him;  
I shewed before him my trouble.
- 3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path.  
In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.
- 4 I looked on my right hand, and beheld,  
but there was no man that would know me:  
refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.
- 5 I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said,  
Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.
- 6 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low:  
deliver me from my persecutors;  
for they are stronger than I.
- 7 Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name:  
the righteous shall compass me about;  
for thou shalt deal bountifully with me (Psalm 142:1-7).

It would be consistent with other scriptures if, at this juncture in the drama, when the king was confined to the Underworld, that he would remain among the dead for three days before Jehovah came to his rescue.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> The Talmud Yerushalmi *Mo'ed Qatan* 3, 82b maintains that “the soul during the first three days hovers about the dead body, in the hope that it will be resurrected, and it leaves mournfully when putrefaction has set in,” Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, tr. Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1966), 5:78; See John 11:39 and Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1966), 297 fn. 1.

It is certainly not a coincidence that in America, where the festival’s temple drama was being played out in real life, the darkness that foreshadowed the Savior’s coming also began on the fourth day and lasted three days. The record reports, “And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land” (3 Nephi 8:5). That will be discussed in detail in the second half of this book.

## **Act 2, Scene 7: Jehovah Conquers Death and Hell**

During the three days the king remained in the Underworld, the focus of the drama turned to the prophecies in the psalms that sang about the life of the Savior and the saving power of his Atonement. If that is correct, then the chronology of the eight-day Feast of Tabernacles temple drama was probably performed in the following sequence:

Days 1, 2, and 3 were devoted to the beginning acts of the drama as already described . . . During days 4, 5, and 6, while the king remained in the world of the dead,<sup>489</sup> the drama focused on the life and Atonement of the Savior; then on his mission among the dead, and finally on his resurrection.

Day 7, Jehovah (represented by the Ark of the Covenant) and the rescued king, emerged from the Underworld, and joined by the people in a grand procession around the city, then into Solomon's Temple to celebrate the crowning victory of the drama.

Day 8, the festival concluded with a day of sacrificing, feasting, rejoicing, and celebration, representing the fulfillment of Jehovah's covenants and his millennial reign.<sup>490</sup>

The central part of that chronology—the three days that celebrated the Savior's Atonement—is not in the chronology that Mowinckel and his associates would have proposed, because they did not understand that Jehovah and Jesus are the same person, and therefore that the psalms quoted in the New Testament as prophecies about the Savior,

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<sup>489</sup> For an overview of the scholarly debate about whether the king was *really* dead, see Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, 25-29.

<sup>490</sup> The sequence suggested here is our own. Others see it differently. A. M. Hocart suggests the sequence was the same as the seven days of creation in Genesis. *Kingship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 202.

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really were about the life, death, and triumph of Jesus Christ.<sup>491</sup>

Neither did they have any way of knowing about the principle of redemption for the dead. Consequently none of the scholarly reconstructions of the events of the festival's temple drama include an account of the Savior's Atonement. Yet, even as late as New Testament times, the Jews (or at least those who were Christians) understood that some of the psalms spoke explicitly of the Savior.

The psalms are the most quoted Old Testament scriptures in the gospels, and those quotes give us a key by which we may know which psalms might have been used in the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama to represent the Savior life and Atonement. For example, Psalm 69 is quoted or alluded to in each of the gospels,<sup>492</sup> and may have been used in the drama to represent the Savior's sorrow, perhaps as he approached Gethsemane. It reads in part:

- 1 Save me, O God;  
for the waters are come in unto my soul. [These are the waters of chaos.]
- 2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing:  
I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
- 3 I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried:  
mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.
- 4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head:  
they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty:  
then I restored that which I took not away. ...
- 7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach;  
shame hath covered my face.
- 8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren,  
and an alien unto my mother's children.
- 9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;

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<sup>491</sup> For an example of a scholar who can't figure out who the Israelite God is, never mind his relationship with Jesus, see Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 20-25.

<sup>492</sup> Matthew 27:48; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:35-36; and John 2:17, 15:24 -25, 16:5, 19:28.

### *Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.  
10 When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting,  
that was to my reproach.  
11 I made sackcloth also my garment;  
and I become a proverb to them.  
12 They that sit in the gate speak against me;  
and I was the song of the drunkards. ...  
20 Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness:  
and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none;  
and for comforters, but I found none.  
21 They gave me also gall for my meat;  
and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:1-21).

Most of the psalms are addressed to “the Lord,” that is, to Jehovah. However Psalm 42 is a prayer addressed to Elohim—the Father—rather than to Jehovah. It reads as though it were sung in a scene of the drama that represented the Savior’s sacrifice at Gethsemane:<sup>493</sup>

1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks,  
so panteth my soul after thee, O God.  
2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:  
when shall I come and appear before God?  
3 My tears have been my meat day and night,  
while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?  
4 When I remember these things,  
I pour out my soul in me:  
for I had gone with the multitude,  
I went with them to the house of God,  
with the voice of joy and praise,

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<sup>493</sup> In each instance, the word “God” is translated from the Hebrew word “Elohim.” Psalm 43 is also addressed to the Father, and may have been used in that way in this part of the drama.

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- with a multitude that kept holyday.
- 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?  
and why art thou disquieted in me?  
hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him  
for the help of his countenance.
- 6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me:  
therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan,  
and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.
- 7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts:  
all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
- 8 Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime,  
and in the night his song shall be with me,  
and my prayer unto the God of my life.
- 9 I will say unto God my rock,  
Why hast thou forgotten me?  
why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
- 10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me;  
while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?
- 11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?  
and why art thou disquieted within me?  
hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him,  
who is the health of my countenance, and my God (Psalm 42:1-11).

Some scholars believe that Psalm 43 was a continuation of 42, or at least that they belonged together:<sup>494</sup>

- 1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation:  
O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

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<sup>494</sup> For a discussion of Psalms 42 and 43 as a possible comparison to the Savior's experience at Gethsemane, see Edwin D. Freed, "Psalm 42/43 in John's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 29, 1 (1983): 62-73.



### *Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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- 2 For thou art the God of my strength:  
    why dost thou cast me off?  
    why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
- 3 O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me;  
    let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.
- 4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy:  
    yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.
- 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?  
    and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God:  
    for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of  
    my countenance, and my God (Psalm 43:1-5).

The pivotal event of the universe—the one that defines meaning and purpose for all of us—was also the focal point of the ancient temple drama. However, in only one place can we find the prayer of the Atonement. It is in the colophon that introduces the revelation given through Joseph Smith to the Church, in Kirtland, Ohio, March 7, 1831:

- 3 Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—
- 4 Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;
- 5 Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life (D&C 45:3-5).

We would expect that some version of that prayer would have been included in one of the original psalms, but the closest candidate we now have is Psalm 57. It reads:

- 1 Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me:  
    for my soul trusteth in thee:  
    yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge,  
    until these calamities be overpast.

### *In the Old Testament*

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- 2 I will cry unto God most high;  
unto God that performeth all things for me.
- 3 He shall send from heaven,  
and save me from the reproach of him  
that would swallow me up.  
God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.
- 4 My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire,  
even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows,  
and their tongue a sharp sword.
- 5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;  
let thy glory be above all the earth.
- 6 They have prepared a net for my steps;  
my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me,  
into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.
- 7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed:  
I will sing and give praise.
- 8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp:  
I myself will awake early.
- 9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people:  
I will sing unto thee among the nations.
- 10 For thy mercy is great unto the heavens,  
and thy truth unto the clouds.
- 11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens:  
let thy glory be above all the earth (Psalm 57:1-11).

The most powerful testimony that the pre-exilic Israelites understood the full magnitude of the Atonement is found in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm. All four of the gospels recognize that it is about the Atonement. References to Psalm 22 in Matthew are:

And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots (Matthew 27:35).

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And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46).

References to Psalm 22 in Mark are:

And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take (Mark 15:24).

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Mark 15:34).

The references to Psalm 22 in Luke is:

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots (Luke 23:34).

The references to Psalm 22 in John is:

They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did (John 19:24).

The first two thirds of Psalm 22 are a vivid description of the Savior's pain while he was on the cross. Its first lines were quoted by the Savior as he experienced the horror that the psalm had prophesied:

1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?  
    why art thou so far from helping me,  
    and from the words of my roaring?

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- 2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not;  
and in the night season, and am not silent.
- 3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
- 4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted,  
and thou didst deliver them.
- 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered:  
they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.
- 6 But I am a worm, and no man;  
a reproach of men, and despised of the people.
- 7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn:  
they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
- 8 He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him:  
let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
- 9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb:  
thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.
- 10 I was cast upon thee from the womb:  
thou art my God from my mother's belly.
- 11 Be not far from me;  
for trouble is near; for there is none to help.
- 12 Many bulls have compassed me:  
strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.<sup>495</sup>
- 13 They gaped upon me with their mouths,  
as a ravening and a roaring lion.
- 14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint:  
my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
- 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd;  
and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;

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<sup>495</sup> In the phrase “strong bulls of Bashan” the word “bulls” is in italics and was added by the translators, leaving room to wonder if “bulls” was the intended meaning. Jacobs reports that “cow of Bashan” was a derogatory term describing a gossip. Paul F. Jacobs, “‘Cows of Bashan’—A Note on the Interpretation of Amos 4:1,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 (1985): 109-10.

### *Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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- and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
- 16 For dogs have compassed me:  
the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:  
they pierced my hands and my feet.
- 17 I may tell all my bones:  
they look and stare upon me.
- 18 They part my garments among them,  
and cast lots upon my vesture.
- 19 But be not thou far from me, O Lord:  
O my strength, haste thee to help me.
- 20 Deliver my soul from the sword;  
my darling [my life] from the power of the dog.
- 21 Save me from the lion's mouth:  
for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns (Psalm 22: 1-21)

Some time later, the Savior uttered his last words:

- 46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost (Luke 23:46).

These words were quoted from Psalm 31, and he may have spoken them to remind his friends that his death was his final mortal triumph:

- 1 In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust;  
let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.
- 2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily:  
be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.
- 3 For thou art my rock and my fortress;  
therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.
- 4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me:  
for thou art my strength.

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5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me,  
O Lord God of truth (Psalm 31:1-5).

John, the apostle and beloved friend of Jesus, was near the cross when the Savior died. In recounting the experience, he reminded his readers of another psalm. Here we may have one of the few psalms that can be identified as having been sung during the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama by the Israelite women. The scene, if it represented a prophecy about the Savior's atoning sacrifice, would have been this one:

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. ...

32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken (John 19:25-27, 32-36).

The evidence that the psalm was sung by women is: "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." The evidence that it was sung in conjunction with the Savior's death is in verse 20, "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." The Psalm is a reaffirmation of the promise of invulnerability in the Abrahamic covenant:

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- 17 The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth,  
and delivereth them out of all their troubles.  
18 The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;  
and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.  
19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous:  
but the Lord delivereth him out of them all (Psalm 34:17-19).

Those verses are also evidence that the people who sang them during the festival temple drama understood that after the Savior's final sacrifice, their own sacrifice that would be acceptable to the Lord would be a broken heart and contrite spirit. That understanding was confirmed when the people sang:

- 16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it:  
thou delightest not in burnt offering.  
17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:  
a broken and a contrite heart,  
O God, thou wilt not despise (Psalm 51:16-17).

The psalm John cites reads:

- 1 I will bless the Lord at all times:  
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.  
2 My soul shall make her boast in the Lord:  
the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.  
3 O magnify the Lord with me,  
and let us exalt his name together.  
4 I sought the Lord, and he heard me,  
and delivered me from all my fears.  
5 They looked unto him, and were lightened:  
and their faces were not ashamed. ...  
11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me:  
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

### *In the Old Testament*

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- 12 What man is he that desireth life,  
and loveth many days, that he may see good?
- 13 Keep thy tongue from evil,  
and thy lips from speaking guile.
- 14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.
- 15 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous,  
and his ears are open unto their cry.
- 16 The face of the Lord is against them that do evil,  
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
- 17 The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth,  
and delivereth them out of all their troubles.
- 18 The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;  
and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
- 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous:  
but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.
- 20 He keepeth all his bones:  
not one of them is broken.
- 21 Evil shall slay the wicked:  
and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.
- 22 The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants:  
and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate (Psalm 34:1-5, 11-22).

When Jesus died, his body remained on the cross, but his spirit descended into the Underworld where he was awaited by a great congregation of the spirits of the dead who had been faithful in their own lifetimes, and who rejoiced in his coming, “For the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (D&C 138:50). Two psalms that read as though they belonged together recite the longing words of those dead.

During the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, the people who awaited the Savior were those Israelites who had symbolically died with their king in his final battle. Now they anticipated the Savior’s coming to rescue them from death and hell. In Psalm 115, we hear two voices: first the Israelites, then the taunting voice of the heathen:



*Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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*The Israelites:*

1 Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,  
but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy,  
and for thy truth's sake.

*The heathen:*

2 Wherefore should the heathen say,  
Where is now their God?

*The Israelites:*

3 But our God is in the heavens:  
he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.  
4 Their idols are silver and gold,  
the work of men's hands.  
5 They have mouths, but they speak not:  
eyes have they, but they see not:  
6 They have ears, but they hear not:  
noses have they, but they smell not:  
7 They have hands, but they handle not:  
feet have they, but they walk not:  
neither speak they through their throat.  
8 They that make them are like unto them;  
so is every one that trusteth in them.  
9 O Israel, trust thou in the Lord:  
he is their help and their shield.  
10 O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord:  
he is their help and their shield.  
11 Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord:  
he is their help and their shield.  
12 The Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us;  
he will bless the house of Israel;  
he will bless the house of Aaron.  
13 He will bless them that fear the Lord,  
both small and great.

### *In the Old Testament*

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14 The Lord shall increase you more and more,  
you and your children.

15 Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth.

16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's:  
but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

*The heathen:*

17 The dead praise not the Lord,  
neither any that go down into silence.

*The Israelites:*

18 But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.  
Praise the Lord (Psalm 115:1-18).

In Psalm 102, that praise becomes a prayer. Although they are in the Underworld, they are as yet only “appointed to death” (v. 20). Their death was not yet permanent, for in the drama at least, there is still that three-day window before death closes in on them. Through that window one may yet find hope.<sup>496</sup> The near-dead sing:

1 Hear my prayer, O Lord,  
and let my cry come unto thee.

2 Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble;  
incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.

3 For my days are consumed like smoke,  
and my bones are burned as an hearth.

4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass;  
so that I forget to eat my bread.

5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones  
cleave to my skin.

6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness:  
I am like an owl of the desert.

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<sup>496</sup> The Jews believed the spirit lingered near the body for three days, then departed when it began to show signs of decay.

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- 7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.  
8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day;  
    and they that are mad against me are sworn against me.  
9 For I have eaten ashes like bread,  
    and mingled my drink with weeping,  
10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath:  
    for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.  
11 My days are like a shadow that declineth;  
    and I am withered like grass.  
12 But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever;  
    and thy remembrance unto all generations.  
13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion:  
    for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.  
14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones,  
    and favour the dust thereof.  
15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord,  
    and all the kings of the earth thy glory.  
16 When the Lord shall build up Zion,  
    he shall appear in his glory.  
17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute,  
    and not despise their prayer.  
18 This shall be written for the generation to come:  
    and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.  
19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary;  
    from heaven did the Lord behold the earth;  
20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner;  
    to loose those that are appointed to death;  
21 To declare the name of the Lord in Zion,  
    and his praise in Jerusalem;  
22 When the people are gathered together,  
    and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.  
23 He weakened my strength in the way;

### *In the Old Testament*

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he shortened my days.  
24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days:  
thy years are throughout all generations.  
25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth:  
and the heavens are the work of thy hands.  
26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure:  
yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment;  
as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:  
27 But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.  
28 The children of thy servants shall continue,  
and their seed shall be established before thee (Psalm 102:1-28).

During the festival temple drama, while the king waited in the Underworld for Jehovah to rescue him, the people who were outside, in the physical world, prayed for his restoration to life. Psalm 20 was a plea that the Lord would save “his anointed [the king]” and an expression of assurance that Jehovah “will hear him [the king] from his [Jehovah’s] holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.” The people understood that the king was not yet permanently dead. For, as they prayed for his deliverance, they also prayed that he would find encouragement through their faith. Psalm 20 concludes, “Save, Lord: let the king hear us when we call.” In Psalm 13, from the Underworld, the young king joined the plea:

1 How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?  
how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?  
2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,  
having sorrow in my heart daily?  
how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?  
3 Consider and hear me, O Lord my God:  
lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;  
4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him;  
and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.  
5 But I have trusted in thy mercy;

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my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.  
6 I will sing unto the Lord,  
because he hath dealt bountifully with me (Psalm 13:1-6).

Johnson found a symbolic meaning in both the king's death and in his desire to live. He wrote:

Accordingly, while the freedom for which the king longs in his dramatic struggle with the forces of darkness and 'Death' is obviously freedom to live and, implicitly, to prosper, it is not a freedom to live altogether in the way of his own choosing or freedom to prosper at the expense of his fellows. It is a freedom to be of service, a freedom to live in accordance with the will of Yahweh and thus to promote, not merely his own personal welfare, but the well-being of the community as a whole, i.e. the well-being of the nation for whom he has accepted responsibility under the terms of the Davidic covenant.<sup>497</sup>

Jehovah did act in the king's behalf. He asserted his royal prerogatives, and defeated the earthly enemies of Israel with the powers of nature that only he can command. Psalm 104, which is a hymn of praise, may reflect the outcome of that battle:

32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth:  
he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.  
33 I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live:  
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.  
34 My meditation of him shall be sweet:  
I will be glad in the Lord.  
35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth,  
and let the wicked be no more.  
Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord (Psalm 104:32-35).

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<sup>497</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 137-38.

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Then Jehovah himself went down into the Underworld to save the king and his people. Johnson observes, “The ritual combat ...is one between the Davidic king, as the messiah of Jahweh, and the opposing kings of the Earth; and it is only when the outlook is blackest that the God of Hosts intervenes on behalf of the former, and delivers him (and *ipso facto* his people) from ‘Death.’”<sup>498</sup>

The final third of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm is one of the most extraordinary statements in the Old Testament. At the conclusion of its prophecy of the crucifixion, (as described in the first two-thirds of the psalm), it tells that after the Savior left the cross, he descended in triumph into the Underworld. The last third of that psalm takes place “in the midst of the congregation” of the dead—just as in D&C 138. It is remarkable how closely the psalm’s account maps to the concepts found in President Joseph F. Smith’s revelation. Both teach the same things, but not in the same order. To show that, I will insert some verses of D&C 138 into the remainder of Psalm 22. The psalm reads:

22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren:  
in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

138:15 I beheld that they were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand.

138:18 While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful;

23 Ye that fear the Lord, praise him;  
all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him;  
and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;  
neither hath he hid his face from him;  
but when he cried unto him, he heard.

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<sup>498</sup> Johnson, “The Role of the King,” 100.

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138:15 I beheld that they were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand.

138:23 And the saints rejoiced in their redemption, and bowed the knee and acknowledged the Son of God as their Redeemer and Deliverer from death and the chains of hell.

25 My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation:

I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied:

[the meek are those who keep their eternal covenants]

they shall praise the Lord that seek him:

your heart shall live for ever.

27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord:

and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

28 For the kingdom is the Lord's:

and he is the governor among the nations.

29 All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship:

all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him:

and none can keep alive his own soul.

30 A seed shall serve him;

it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto

a people that shall be born,

that he hath done this (Psalm 22:1-31).

In the festival drama, the prayers of the people and the king were answered. Jehovah unlocked the gates of death and hell, and the king was saved from their grasp. He tells his own story in the 18<sup>th</sup> Psalm, where "the worshiper is entangled in the cords of the Underworld. His plight takes on cosmic proportions as does his theophanic deliverance."<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> Norman C. Habel, "He Who Stretches Out the Heavens," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 (1972): 424-25.

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In Psalm 18, the king's return was recognized as both the fulfillment of his request to live and his re-investiture of the royal clothing that had been given to him earlier. The covenant between the king and God was also re-affirmed as he was promised eternal life. It reads in part:

- 4 The sorrows of death compassed me,  
and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.
- 5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about:  
the snares of death prevented [approached] me.
- 6 In my distress I called upon the Lord,  
and cried unto my God:  
he heard my voice out of his temple,  
and my cry came before him, even into his ears.
- 7 Then the earth shook and trembled;  
the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken,  
because he was wroth.
- 8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,  
and fire out of his mouth devoured:  
coals were kindled by it.
- 9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down:  
and darkness was under his feet.
- 10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly:  
yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. ...
- 16 He sent from above, he took me,  
he drew me out of many waters [chaotic waters, i.e. death].
- 17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,  
and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me
- 18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity:  
but the Lord was my stay.
- 19 He brought me forth also into a large place;  
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.
- 20 The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness;



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- according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. ...
- 30 As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried:  
he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.
- 31 For who is God save the Lord?  
or who is a rock save our God?
- 32 It is God that girdeth me with strength,  
and maketh my way perfect.
- 33 He maketh my feet like hinds' feet,  
and setteth me upon my high places. ...
- 34 He teacheth my hands to war,  
so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.
- 35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation:  
and thy right hand hath holden me up,  
and thy gentleness hath made me great.
- 36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me,  
that my feet did not slip. ...
- 49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord,  
among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.
- 50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king;  
and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David,  
and to his seed for evermore (Psalm 18:1-50).

The words of that psalm that strike the cords of eternal power and eternal peace are: "Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great" (v. 35). Psalm 118 contains a further expression of the king's gratitude for his deliverance:

- 10 All nations compassed me about:  
but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.
- 11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about:  
but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

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- 12 They compassed me about like bees;  
    they are quenched as the fire of thorns:  
    for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.
- 13 Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall:  
    but the Lord helped me.
- 14 The Lord is my strength and song,  
    and is become my salvation.
- 15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous:  
    the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.
- 16 The right hand of the Lord is exalted:  
    the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.
- 17 I shall not die, but live,  
    and declare the works of the Lord.
- 18 The Lord hath chastened me sore:  
    but he hath not given me over unto death.
- 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness:  
    I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord:
- 20 This gate of the Lord,  
    into which the righteous shall enter.
- 21 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me,  
    and art become my salvation.
- 22 The stone which the builders refused  
    is become the head stone of the corner.
- 23 This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.
- 24 This is the day which the Lord hath made;  
    we will rejoice and be glad in it.<sup>500</sup>
- 25 Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord:  
    O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.
- 26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

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<sup>500</sup> Adele Berlin observes, "But it is not a day, even a special day, that is the subject of this psalm; it is God's Actions," in "Psalm 118:24," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96, 4 (1977): 567.

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we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.  
27 God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light:  
bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.  
28 Thou art my God, and I will praise thee:  
thou art my God, I will exalt thee.  
29 O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good:  
for his mercy endureth for ever (Psalm 118:10-29).

Verses 10-12 evince that, not only had the king survived, but he had come away stronger and more capable than before. His covenant relationship with God had been renewed, the covenant of invulnerability had been fulfilled, and his enemies no longer had any power over him.

Verse 15, 18 and 19 foreshadow the joyful procession that went up to meet him and would soon dance around the city and enter into its Temple. The king requested that the Temple be opened to him so he could return to be where God is. Thereafter he would perform the ordinances and sacrifices necessary to complete the renewal of the covenants.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> For more on the king as priest, and therefore one who can officiate in the Temple, see Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 299-31, 340-44; Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," 207-302; Lundquist, "Legitimizing Role of the Temple," 212; Ricks and Sroka, "King, Coronation, and Temple" 260-63; Rowley, "Ritual and the Hebrew Prophets," 237; Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle*, 13-33. Widengren, "King and Covenant," 1-27; Widengren, *King and the Tree of Life*, 10-59.

## Act 2, Scene 8: Triumph and Procession

On the of the seventh day of the drama,<sup>502</sup> probably at sunrise,<sup>503</sup> Jehovah (whose presence was represented by the Ark of the Covenant carried by the priests<sup>504</sup>) along with the rescued king, emerged from the Underworld. As the king left the confines of death, he sang his gratitude to God:<sup>505</sup>

- 1 O Lord my God, I cried unto thee,  
and thou hast healed me.
- 2 O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave:  
thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.
- 3 Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his,  
and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. ...
- 11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing:  
thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

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<sup>502</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 118; Johnson, "Role of the King," 97, 111.

<sup>503</sup> Josephus tells a story about the death of Herod Agrippa in 44 A.D. It sounds very much like the ceremony may have been a lingering memory of this meeting of the king, the Ark, and the people. He wrote, "After his seventh year of rule, Agrippa came to Caesarea to celebrate games in honor of Caesar. At daybreak, he entered the theater, dressed in a garment of woven silver which gleamed in the rays of the rising sun. His flatterers started addressing him as a god, but then he looked up and saw an owl perched on a rope overhead and was struck with intense pain. "I, whom you called a god," he cried, "am now under sentence of death!" Five days later he died, at age 54" (Josephus, trans. Maier [1988], 272).

<sup>504</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:130, 170.

<sup>505</sup> Aubrey Johnson understood this uniting of the king and the people as a triumph of righteousness. "In the renewed life of the king, the people live again; his 'Salvation' is also their 'Salvation'. The key to life is SEDEK or 'righteousness,' the loyal functioning of the corporate whole. Thus the procession of the 'righteous' moves forward through 'the Gates of Righteousness;' through 'the Gate wherein the righteous do enter,' to continue the ritual" (Johnson, "Role of the King," 106). His "SEDEK" is the same word as *zedek*.

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12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent.  
O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever (Psalm 30:1-3,11-12).

Perhaps it was then that the king rejoiced with these words:

11 In God have I put my trust:  
I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.  
12 Thy vows are upon me, O God:  
I will render praises unto thee.  
13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death:  
wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling,  
that I may walk before God in the light of the living? (Psalm 56:11-13).

The king and Ark that represented Jehovah, were joined by all the people. Together they sang and danced their way around the city in a triumphal procession.<sup>506</sup> Their singing and dancing were well orchestrated acts of rejoicing, as is shown in Psalm 68:

24 They have seen thy goings, O God;  
even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary  
25 The singers went before,  
the players on instruments followed after:  
among them the damsels playing with timbrels (Psalm 68:24-25).

Psalm 89 probably was also sung during this procession. This is one that Gunkel identified as a royal psalm:

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<sup>506</sup> Booiij also assigned the 84<sup>th</sup> Psalm to the procession. He wrote, "I think the above data may be interpreted to the effect that at the autumnal feast (Sukkoth) the pilgrimage to Jerusalem was concluded with a festive procession into the temple. Together with the pilgrims, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the cult functionaries, the king himself probably took part in it. At any rate, there were prayers for him, and a royal statement might be inserted such as has been preserved in Psalm lxxxiv 11." (Tho Booiij, "Royal Words in Psalm LXXXIV 11," *Vetus Testamentum* 36, 1 [Jan. 1986]: 120).

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- 1 O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things:  
his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.
- 2 The Lord hath made known his salvation:  
his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.
- 3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel:  
all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God
- 4 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth:  
make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.
- 5 Sing unto the Lord with the harp;  
with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.
- 6 With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise  
before the Lord, the King.
- 7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;  
the world, and they that dwell therein.
- 8 Let the floods clap their hands:  
let the hills be joyful together
- 9 Before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth:  
with righteousness shall he judge the world,  
and the people with equity (Psalm 98:1-9).

Perhaps that one was followed by Psalm 100:

- 1 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.
- 2 Serve the Lord with gladness:  
come before his presence with singing.
- 3 Know ye that the Lord he is God:  
it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;  
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
- 4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise:  
be thankful unto him, and bless his name.
- 5 For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting;  
and his truth endureth to all generations (Psalm 100:1-5).

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Anderson understood this singing and dancing to be very literal:<sup>507</sup>

The experience of deliverance in this psalm is not characterized by a simple journey to the Temple to praise God. The psalmist declares that his deliverance can be observed in his own ritual movement. His state of mourning has become dancing, and his sack cloth has been replaced by festive attire. The ritual movement from mourning to joy has mirrored a spatial movement from Sheol to Temple, from the absence of God to the presence of God.<sup>508</sup>

As the people danced and sang in this triumphal procession around the city, they were measuring it with their steps, re-defining it as sacred space.<sup>509</sup> They were creating a New

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<sup>507</sup> It is possible that the Savior's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when he was hailed as king, was a kind of remembering of the more ancient royal procession.

J. Blenkinsopp made this point very well: "We begin from the supposition that the entry into Jerusalem, as recorded in all four gospels, is conceived both as messianic and royal parousia. That the First and the Fourth Gospels see it as messianic event is conveyed explicitly by the quotation from Zech 9: 9, but there are indications enough in Mark that he saw it in a similar light. The passing over the Mount of Olives with its unmistakable associations, the ass 'upon which no man had ever sat,' the wording of the acclamations to 'the one that is to come' point in this direction; and the entry has its expected climax—though not on the same day—in the cleansing of the temple. The significance of most of these elements is very much accentuated by Luke, who makes the progress to Jerusalem centrally thematic in his presentation of the public ministry—beginning from the decisive turning point of 9:51. In particular, we note that the great rejoicing of the disciples begins at the descent of the Mount of Olives, which is, in a special way for Luke, the mountain of revelation and of the Messiah—the scene of his last teaching both before and after the Resurrection, of the eschatological discourse, of his taking up and return." ("Oracle of Judah," 55.)

See also: Duff, "March of the Divine Warrior," 55-71; Freed, "Entry into Jerusalem," 329-38; McCarter, "Ritual Dedication," 273-78.

<sup>508</sup> Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 91.

<sup>509</sup> Mowinckel described how other psalms were used in the procession. "If we agree that the three psalms 68, 132 and 24 belong to Yahweh's royal entry itself, then it is clear that 132 deals with the preparation for the transport of the ark from some place outside the sanctuary, whereas the first scene of 24 is played before and within the gates of the Temple itself. Psalm 68 seems to reflect the start of the procession,

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Jerusalem with a new Temple<sup>510</sup>—and—with the help of Jehovah—the people had now become Zion. Seow described the procession as an expression of triumph:

In sum, the historical cultic referent of Psalm 132 is the procession of the ark into Jerusalem. As in comparable rituals from elsewhere in the ancient Near East, the procession was conducted in joy by priests and other cultic participants. It culminated in a feast celebrating the occasion and symbolizing the deity's acceptance of the city as the divine abode from which blessings would be dispensed to the multitudes. The psalm concludes with a promise by the deity:

17 There I will cause a horn to sprout for David;  
I will prepare a lamp for my anointed.  
18 His enemies I will clothe with shame,  
But on him his crown will gleam (Psalm 132:17-18)<sup>511</sup>

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so that its situation partly overlaps that of 132. But Psalm 132 continues after the procession has passed through the gates" (Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:172).

<sup>510</sup> For a discussion about the importance of the temple, see Peter Hayman, "Some Observations on Sefer Yesira: The Temple at the Centre of the Universe," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37, A (August 1986): 176-82.

For a description of the Temple, see 1 Kings 6:1-38; 1 Chronicles 28:1-21; 2 Chronicles 3:1-17, 4:1-22, 5:1-14.

<sup>511</sup> C. L. Seow, *Myth, Drama, and the Politics of David's Dance* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 196.

Other scholars who have discussed Psalm 132 include, Heinz Kruse, "Psalm CXXXII and the Royal Zion Festival," *Vetus Testamentum* 33, 3 (1983): 279-97; Antti Laato, "Psalm 132 and the development of the Jerusalemite/Israelite Royal Ideology," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54, 1 (Jan. 1992): 49-66; and Brekelmans, "Psalm 132," 262-65.

Hillers has written, "Scholars differ widely as to whether Israelite ritual can be reconstructed from the psalms, and as to the nature and meaning of the rites which are reconstructed. On one point, however, there seems to be general agreement: that the ark was carried in recurring cultic processions, into Jerusalem and into the temple. ...This idea of ritual procession tends to be assumed rather than proved by modern writers, but it seems fair to say that Ps 132:8 ... has been a main factor in leading to the consensus which exists on this point" (Delbert R. Hillers, "Ritual Procession of the Ark and Ps 132" *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30, 1



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They were entering Zion as Zion, for “Zion” has two meanings—both are important and both are relevant here. First of all, Zion is a people: “for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice” (D&C 97:21). Second, Zion is a place. It is the sanctuary that is in Jerusalem and the Rock on which the Temple stood. Ollenburger explains:

We have already explored in some detail the centrality of the theme of Yahweh's royal presence on Zion within the tradition of the Jerusalem cult. We have also had occasion to note that the security symbolized by Zion is rooted in Yahweh's kingship on Zion in our discussion of Ps 9.12-13. This theological notion lies behind other texts as well. In Ps 47, for example, the procession of the Ark into the temple is accompanied by the declaration that ‘Yahweh is Elyon, the great king’. This declaration is justified by the observation that Yahweh subdued the surrounding nations (v. 4) and reigns over them from his holy throne (v.9). Thus Yahweh can be said to be ‘king over all the earth’ (v. 8). Zion symbolizes security because Yahweh reigns there as the king who conquered the powers of chaos hostile to cosmic order, and who subdues Israel's potential foes.

We have noted above that Zion as a symbol of security is paramount in Ps 48. But it is important also to note that Zion has this symbolic power not because of some mythological power inherent in the mountain itself, but because it is the site of Yahweh's royal dwelling and hence the site of his defeat of the hostile kings (vv. 5-9). Because the hostile forces have been defeated praise can be offered to Yahweh, and Zion and ‘the daughters of Judah’ can be glad (vv. 10-12).<sup>512</sup>

Before they reached the gates of the city, probably at the spring Gihon, the king was washed in preparation for his forthcoming anointing. Johnson translated Psalm 68 as an expression of their joy at the spring:

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[1968]: 48-49).

<sup>512</sup> Ollenburger, *Zion, the City*, 71.

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24 What a spectacle was Thy procession, O God,  
    The procession of my God, my King into the sanctuary!  
25 The singers were in front, the minstrels followed behind,  
    All flanked by maidens with their timbrels.  
26 In companies they greeted God,  
    Even Yahweh, from Israel's Spring (Psalm 68:24-26).<sup>513</sup>

When the king was washed at the spring, all the people were symbolically clean so they could enter their Temple. The Day of Atonement had made them clean to enter God's temple in heaven, represented in the first act of the festival temple drama. But since then, during the drama, they had left heaven, had been expelled from the Garden, and worked their way through the experiences of this world until they met death head-on. Now they had to be cleansed again to enter the Temple on earth.

The gates of the city were opened, and they approached the Jerusalem Temple grounds, as Nibley observes:

The boldest and clearest recent statement embracing the world landscape of culture and religion is in the works of M. Eliade, and he brings it all back to the *temple*. 'The Temple ...preeminently the sacred place ...a celestial prototype' and holy mountain, typifies 'the act of Creation ...[which] brought the ordered cosmos out of chaos'; it is the scene of the sacred marriage, the ritual confrontation with evil appearing as the dragon, serpent, or other figures of death and destruction, ending in the victory of the king, whose triumphant coronation inaugurates the New Year and a new age of the world. The combat is an expression of that 'ambivalence and polarity' which characterize the rites in which all things must have their opposite, and where an atoning sacrifice is necessary 'to restore the primal unity' between God and man, and enable the latter to regain the divine presence. The whole, according to Eliade, is suffused with 'memories of paradise,' the loss of which is the result of sin, converting this world into a testing ground in

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<sup>513</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 83.

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which 'suffering always has meaning.'<sup>514</sup>

The procession reached the gates of the Temple precinct. As they approached the gates, they sang the 24<sup>th</sup> Psalm:

- 1 The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;  
the world, and they that dwell therein.
- 2 For he hath founded it upon the seas,  
and established it upon the floods.
- 3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?  
or who shall stand in his holy place?
- 4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;  
who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,  
nor sworn deceitfully.
- 5 He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,  
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.
- 6 This is the generation of them that seek him,  
that seek thy face, O Jacob.
- 7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;  
and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;  
and the King of glory shall come in.
- 8 Who is this King of glory?  
The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.
- 9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;  
even lift them up, ye everlasting doors;  
and the King of glory shall come in.
- 10 Who is this King of glory?  
The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory (Psalm 24:1-10).

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<sup>514</sup> Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 376. His source is: M. Eliade, trans. Willard R. Trask, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Harper, 1959), 7-10.

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Verse 2, “he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods,” is a remembering of the first creation when Eden arose from the chaotic waters to become the paradisiacal home for Adam and Eve. Now, in this triumphal procession, the people walk and dance their way around the city, measuring it with their steps and recreating it as sacred space. It is as though they are returning to their original Eden, but from this one they will not be expelled. In their characters as Adam and Eve, they have done all they were asked to do and can symbolically return in triumph to their first and eternal home where they will have access to the fruit of the tree of life and to the waters of life, and regain their garment of light and be in the presence of God. (That return to paradise will be represented in the events of the next day, the eighth day of the festival temple drama.)

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.” The psalm was not only a command that the doors of the Temple be opened, it was also a declaration of their worthiness to enter the Temple. Weinfeld explains:

Psalms 15, 24:3-6 and Isaiah 33:14-16 specify the moral qualities required for admission to the Temple. All these texts have an identical structure. Each one opens with an interrogative: “Who will dwell in the house” or “Who will ascend the holy mount”, then proceeds to describe the conditions for entrance and ends with a promise for the one who will fulfill these conditions. 1) Thus Psalm 15 opens with the question: “Lord, who may dwell in your tent ...who may reside on your holy mountain?” The answer is: he who walks in perfection who does what is right, etc., who speaks the truth from his heart who has never slandered who has never done harm to his fellows ....who honors those who fear the Lord who stands by his oath even to his hurt who has never lent money at interest or accepted a bribe against the innocent.<sup>515</sup>

Craigie translated the 24<sup>th</sup> Psalm differently from the King James Version. In his translation, it is not the earthly temple that was being opened to the king, it is the celestial

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<sup>515</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, “Instructions for Temple Visitors in the Bible and in Ancient Egypt,” *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 28 (1984): 224-50.

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temple that was being opened to the triumphant Jehovah:

- 1 The earth and its contents belong to the Lord,  
the world and those who dwell therein,.
- 2 for a he has fixed it upon the seas  
and established it upon the rivers.
- 3 Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord  
and who shall stand up in his holy place?
- 4 He who has innocent hands and a pure heart,<sup>516</sup>  
who has not raised his mind to what is false  
and has not sworn<sup>517</sup> deceitfully.
- 5 He will receive blessing from the Lord,  
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.
- 6 This is the generation of those who consult him,  
of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob.
- 7 Lift up your heads, O gates!  
And be uplifted, O eternal doors!  
Then the King of Glory shall come in!
- 8 Who, then, is the King of Glory?  
The Lord, strong and mighty!  
The Lord, mighty in battle!
- 9 Lift up your heads, O gates!  
and be uplifted, O eternal doors!  
Then the King of Glory shall come in!

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<sup>516</sup> For an explanation of clean hands and a pure heart, see David A. Bednar, "Clean Hands and a Pure Heart," *Ensign* 37, 11 (November 2007): 80-83.

<sup>517</sup> Craigie's footnote reads: "Or, 'taken an oath'."

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10 Who is he, then, the King of Glory?  
The Lord of Hosts,  
he is the King of Glory!<sup>518</sup>

The king, and symbolically all the people, entered into the Temple itself. They were in sacred space and in sacred time.

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## **The Coronation in Sacred Time**

The historical writings in the Old Testament (Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles) contain no full account of the king's coronation ceremony. The reason for that is easy to discover. Those books were written or edited after the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews had returned to Jerusalem as a part of the Persian Empire. It would have been treason to celebrate the coronation of their own king, and it would have been politically incorrect to write a history that celebrated the independence of their past. That is also probably the reason the books of Kings speak disparagingly of their kings, laying at their feet everything that went wrong in their history. There is also the matter of their having changed the old religion and religious practices that supported the sanctity of the king.

For those reasons, we learn very little about the ancient coronation ceremonies from the Jewish historical record. The following is about all we can glean from their accounts: Before Solomon's Temple was built, Saul and David were chosen and anointed by the prophet Samuel. Solomon was later anointed by Zadok the priest. Thereafter, Jeroboam was chosen by the prophet Ahijah; and much later, a priest was responsible for making Josiah king.<sup>519</sup> The fact that the kings were anointed and/or chosen by ecclesiastical authority was important because it emphasized that the king was also chosen by God. In the case of Saul and David, their callings were a matter of direct revelation, but in Judah at

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<sup>518</sup> Craigie, Peter, C. *Word Biblical Commentary, v. 19, Psalms 1-50* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983). 209-10.

<sup>519</sup> 1 Kings 1:39, 11:29-40; 2 Kings 11:12.

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least, beginning with Solomon, the crown was passed to the birthright son of the reigning king. So the king was no longer chosen by revelation to men on earth, but by right of birth. It was easy to reason that if God were involved in the choosing, his involvement must have occurred before the prince was born, so that the boy's spirit was assigned to be born into the reigning family. That choosing would have taken place at the Council in Heaven.

The doctrines of this fore-choosing and a subsequent foreordination were fundamental to both the political philosophy and the theology of ancient Israel. The foreordination of the king was affirmed and represented on the stage during the New Year festival by acting out Psalm 82 and 45. In 45, the king-to-be and his queen-to-be received blessings that defined their royal callings on earth and prepared them for their earthly assignments. Bentzen observes that the king's earthly ordination was simply a reaffirmation of that blessing at the Council. He writes, "The [earthly] enthronement of a king is always a repetition of a primeval act. It is a repetition of the enthronement of the first king in the days of the beginning, the primeval age. The first king is the patriarch of the Royal House, identical with the patriarch of mankind."<sup>520</sup>

There were three coronation—or coronation-like—ceremonies performed during the course of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama.

The first was at the Council in Heaven (Psalm 45) where the king received a blessing from Elohim in which he was given all of the powers and authorities requisite for him to fulfill his earthly assignment.

The second was on earth, when he was a young man and heir apparent, he was anointed to become king, as represented by Psalm 72.

The third coronation of the king—the one that established him as king—was performed, and subsequently reenacted, on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, when he was adopted as the son of God (Psalm 2), and sat upon the throne of God in the Holy of Holies—the most sacred of all earthly sacred space. But the legitimacy of that third coronation was based on the presumed reality of the first one which had taken place at the Council in Heaven. Ultimately the king's earthly authority was established by his foreordination at the Council, and his coronation on the earth was a kind of reaffirmation of that original coronation.

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<sup>520</sup> Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, 17.

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The most sacred rites of the ancient Israelite religion were performed in the Jerusalem Temple, and among those were the ordinances of the king's coronation. This coronation ritual was renewed each year as part of the climax to the festival drama. Thomasson explains, "On every anniversary of the first 'coronation' the king should repeat the rites; this leads to welfare, to increase of the country, to the destruction of enemies and so on. Then the 'inauguration' has become cyclic, annually carrying the ruler and his realm beyond a difficult stage, and re-creating the beneficial power inherent in kingship."<sup>521</sup>

It is extraordinary that the coronation rites, which were the high point of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, and the very foundation of the legitimacy of both the king and the kingdom of Israel, should have been so completely lost in the official Israelite history. However, there was another source that was contemporary with the First Temple Period, and therefore even more reliable than the later histories might have been. The last half of Isaiah, beginning with chapter 40 rely heavily on the psalms, follow the pattern of the cosmic myth, and are recognized by some scholars as actually being a commentary on the ancient temple drama.<sup>522</sup> That is where we find a full schedule of the royal coronation/enthronement rites.

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<sup>521</sup> Gordon C. Thomasson, "Togetherness Is Sharing an Umbrella," 1:540.

<sup>522</sup> For discussions of the drama in Isaiah, see Eaton, *Festal Drama*.



## Act 2, Scene 9: The Coronation Ceremony in Isaiah 61 <sup>523</sup>

Even though the Old Testament historical books give no full account of a royal coronation ceremony, Isaiah 61 does contain all five of the most essential elements of any coronation.<sup>524</sup> These rites are so fundamental to human society that they have retained their basic integrity for thousands of years. Fundamentally, the same ceremonies were used in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia,<sup>525</sup> medieval Europe, and modern Britain. For example, on the day of her coronation, the present Queen Elizabeth II was bathed, clothed, anointed, given a regal new name, and crowned. Then, as she sat upon her throne, she spoke to her subjects.

Even though the non-Biblical ancient and modern coronation ceremonies are remarkably alike—and remarkably like the original Israelite coronation ceremony in Isaiah 61—there are striking differences in ritual and meaning. Nibley, while discussing the first chapter of Moses, painted a vivid picture of the significance of the ultimate coronation ceremony in the context of Moses' *sode* experience. He began by citing these verses from the Book of Moses:

23 And now of this thing Moses bore record; but because of wickedness it is not

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<sup>523</sup> In the Beatitudes, the Savior called attention to the promises in this chapter of Isaiah when he paraphrased v. 2 by saying, “blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (3 Nephi 12:4).

<sup>524</sup> The five shown in Isaiah 61:3 are: washed (removing ashes), clothed, anointed, given a new king-name and crowned. They are discussed in considerable detail below.

<sup>525</sup> Hugh Nibley observed, “the earliest coronation ceremony that meets us in Egypt is found likewise in Mesopotamia, though neither version is derived from the other.” (*Lehi in the Desert/The World of the Jaredites/There Were Jaredites* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988], 324. Nibley’s description of the Egyptian coronation ceremony is found in *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 91-126). See also, Ricks and Sroka, “King, Coronation, and Temple,” 236-71; Margaret Dee Bratcher, “Salvation Achieved: Isaiah 61:1-7; 62:1-7; 65:17-66:2,” *Review & Expositor* 88, 2 (1991): 177-87.

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had among the children of men.

24 And it came to pass that when Satan had departed from the presence of Moses, that Moses lifted up his eyes unto heaven, being filled with the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and the Son;

25 And calling upon the name of God, he beheld his glory again, for it was upon him; and he heard a voice, saying: Blessed art thou, Moses, for I, the Almighty, have chosen thee, and thou shalt be made stronger than many waters; for they shall obey thy command as if thou wert God.

26 And lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days; for thou shalt deliver my people from bondage, even Israel my chosen.

27 And it came to pass, as the voice was still speaking, Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it; and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the spirit of God.

28 And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not; and he discerned them by the Spirit of God; and their numbers were great, even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore.

29 And he beheld many lands; and each land was called earth, and there were inhabitants on the face thereof (Moses 1:23-29).<sup>526</sup>

Nibley then writes:

And now the scene changes (verses 23 and 24 read like stage directions); the lights go up, the music soars and Moses, though remaining on earth, is again invested with glory and hears the voice of God proclaiming him victor, worthy and chosen to lead God's people "as if thou wert God"—the type and model of the ancient Year King proclaimed after his victory over death as God's ruler on earth. He is specifically told that he shall "be made stronger than many waters"—for he has just passed through the waters of death and rebirth, *de profundis*; and shown himself capable and worthy of the mission which is now

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<sup>526</sup> Enoch's *sode* experience (quoted above) contains another version of this coronation ceremony, see *Secrets of Enoch*, Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 2:442-43.

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entrusted to him. After this royal acclamation, reminiscent of combat and coronation episodes dramatized in the earliest year rites throughout the ancient world, after the coronation, the scene again changes, as Moses and the reader view the field of labor in which the prophet is to work; he receives a thorough briefing, an intimate knowledge of the earth in its cosmic setting, its physical makeup (“every particle” of it), and everything that lives upon it.<sup>527</sup>

The coronation ceremony in Isaiah 61 is less dramatic, but very significant for the people who experienced it. The Isaiah chapter is about vicarious work for the dead, but the ceremony was much the same as that used for living kings.<sup>528</sup> We know that Isaiah 61 was a prophecy about salvation for the dead because its first verse is quoted in D&C 138:42.<sup>529</sup>

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<sup>527</sup> Hugh Nibley, *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978), 5.

<sup>528</sup> Nibley reported that was also true in ancient Egypt. “It has often been noted how closely the Egyptian funeral rites follow those of the Coronation, and the regular temple ceremonies, we now learn, were nothing but “a small concentrate of the Coronation ceremonies.” In the Books of Breathings the rites performed by and for both living and dead are the same for individual Egyptians as they were for Pharaoh himself, though there is ample indication that it was not always so.” (Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 7.)

Some other scholars who have written about Isaiah 61 are: Bratcher, “Salvation Achieved,” 177-87; Frank M. Cross, Jr., “The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah,” in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 12 (January-October, 1953), 274-77; J. H. Eaton, *Festal Drama*, 90-91; Jan Fekkes, III, ““His Bride has Prepared Herself”: Revelation 19-21 and Isaian Nuptial Imagery,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109, 2 (1990): 269-87; Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, 223-26; George A. Knight, *The New Israel, A Commentary on the Book of Isaiah 56-66* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), 53; Julian Morgenstern, “Isaiah 61,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 40-41 (1969-70): 109-11; John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah, The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1968); Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 364-67.

<sup>529</sup> There are two affirmations in the Old Testament that the ancient Israelites understood that part of the blessings of the Atonement would include vicarious ordinances for the dead. The first is Psalm 22, as we have discussed. The second is Isaiah 61. We can know Isaiah 61 is about temple work for the dead by the context in which its first verse is quoted in D&C 138. Speaking of those who were present to welcome the Savior when he visited the spirit world, President Joseph F. Smith listed a number of people:

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By identifying the “captives” as those in the spirit prison waiting to hear the gospel, it shows that the events described in Isaiah 61 are a prophecy, of which the events described in Section 138 are the fulfillment. The Isaiah prophecy reads:

1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,<sup>530</sup> and the day of vengeance of our God;<sup>531</sup> to comfort all that mourn (Isaiah 61:1-2).

Bratcher made an interesting comment about the meaning of the first verse. Her observation fits perfectly into Joseph F. Smith’s revelation that this is about the Savior’s establishing missionary work among the dead. She wrote, ““To proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners’ ... Some difficulty exists in the translation of the phrase “release to the prisoners.” The Hebrew word translated “release” appears everywhere else in the Old Testament with the meaning “the opening of blind eyes.”<sup>532</sup>

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42 And Isaiah, who declared by prophecy that the Redeemer was anointed to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, were also there (D&C 138:42).

<sup>530</sup> For anything to be acceptable to the Lord in the Old Testament, it had to be done correctly and with the right authority—in *zedek*. Here the dead are to be given assurance that the ordinance performed on the earth will be valid and acceptable. One finds a similar statement in D&C 93:51.

<sup>531</sup> The spirits in prison will have a full opportunity to accept the gospel, with its ordinances and covenants. When that opportunity is passed, the resurrection will follow. “Vengeance” may be the right connotation, but it is rather harsh. The Tanakh comes closer to conveying the intent of the prophecy. “To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, And a day of vindication by our God, To comfort all that mourn” (Isaiah 61:2). Compare (Luke 4:16-21).

<sup>532</sup> Bratcher, “Salvation Achieved,” 178.

## The Meaning of “Comfort”

In verse 2, “comfort” is an important word whose meaning is difficult for us to capture because it has changed since the King James Version was translated. In 1622, when the English word was nearer in time to its Latin origins, the first definition of “comfort” meant just exactly what the Latin said: “with strength,” to strengthen, or to empower. “Comfort” still meant that in 1787 when the American Constitution was written, and treason was defined as “giving aid and comfort to the enemy.” (That did not mean it was treason to give the enemy an aspirin and a warm blanket. It meant that it is treason to empower an enemy.) The most extensive analysis of the Hebrew word is by Gary Anderson, who writes,

This verb “to comfort” (*n-h-m*) does not connote a simple act of emotional identification. Comfort can imply either the symbolic action of *assuming the state of mourning* alongside the mourner, or it can have the nuance of *bringing about the cessation of mourning*. In grammatical terms, the former usage reflects a *processual* usage of the verb, while the latter usage would be *resultative*.<sup>533</sup> He goes on to explain, “The latter usage, to bring about the cessation of mourning, is very common in prophetic oracles of deliverance. The famous exhortation of Isaiah 40:1, ‘Comfort, comfort, my people,’ comes to mind immediately. As Westermann noted, the term conveys ‘God’s intervention to help and restore.’”<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> Anderson, *Time to Mourn*, 84. An important example of the way “comfort” is used in the Bible is this verse from Isaiah:

3 For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody (Isaiah 51:3).

<sup>534</sup> Anderson, *Time to Mourn*, 85.

In footnote 74 Anderson says examples where “the resultative state are present (Gen 37:35; 2 Sam 12:24 (for Isa see n. 77); Jer 31:13; Zech 1:17; Ps 71:20-21; 86:17.”

Anderson’s statement is very significant. What scholars call “Second Isaiah” is the latter half of Isaiah, usually beginning with chapter 40. Because it is different from the first half of Isaiah, they argue that it was written by a different person who lived after the Babylonian conquest. However that cannot be true because

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Anderson's definition can account for the way the English translators used the word "comfort" to mean the bestowal of authority or power—an empowerment—and it also adds substantial depth to the meaning of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm<sup>535</sup> and other scriptures where "comfort" might be read as "to give consolation," they might also be read as "to give power and authority, thus enabling one to transcend sorrow."<sup>536</sup>

The next verse, Isaiah 61:3, explains how the empowerment will happen by detailing the events of a rather standard coronation ceremony. The verse begins with the promise

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the Book of Mormon quotes from "Second Isaiah" from the Brass Plates. Many scholars have observed the close relationship between "Second Isaiah" and the Psalms. The last half of Isaiah (beginning with chapter 40) is a commentary on the New Year festival drama, and is therefore one of the major keys in reconstructing the endowment/enhronement ceremonies and putting the Psalms back in their original order. If that is true, then it is very significant that the word "comfort" as is used in Second Isaiah means not a pat on the head but the actual "bringing about the cessation of mourning" through an empowerment. On page 86 Anderson writes, "In this text, comfort describes the movement from mourning to joy. This process could also be illustrated in the psalms of lamentation."

In footnote 78 Anderson adds, "Note, e.g., Ps 71:20-21. In this text, comfort is equated with the restoration of life and being raised from the netherworld. Psalm 86:17 begins with a petition that God hear the prayer and grant "joy" to the psalmist (v. 4). The psalmist hopes to be delivered from the underworld (v. 13)." On the literary and thematic unity of Isaiah, see the eloquent and persuasive introductory essay of Avraham Gileadi in *The Apocalyptic Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Key* (Provo, Utah: Hebraeus Press, 1982).

<sup>535</sup> In the words, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me," a rod is a scepter, the symbol of kingship; the staff is a shepherd's crook, the symbol of priesthood. So the words say, "I am empowered by the symbols of priesthood and kingship." Psalm 23 is discussed in some detail below.

<sup>536</sup> Isaiah 40:1-2 is an example. The verses report an event at the Council where God (Elohim) speaks to the Council (the word *ye* is plural). If one reads "comfort" to mean empower through the coronation ceremony, the verses take on enormous power. The verses read:

1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins (Isaiah 40:1-2).

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that the people will be made a part of Zion, then it describes the ceremony itself.<sup>537</sup> (One thing to keep in mind, as we read Isaiah's description of the ceremony, is that the word "for" does not mean "in consequence of," but rather, it should be understood as "in exchange for," or, as the *Anchor Bible* has it translated, "instead of." For that reason we have used "instead of" in the headings below.) The King James translation reads:

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,  
to give unto them beauty for ashes,  
the oil of joy for mourning,  
the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;  
that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he  
might be glorified (Isaiah 61:3).<sup>538</sup>

Each of those steps is as interesting as it was indispensable.

### ***“to give unto them beauty instead of ashes”***

The denotation of the Hebrew word translated as "beauty" is the beauty of a hat or turban, rather than a direct reference to the hat itself. The connotation is the glory of a crown. Some translations accept the connotation and use a word for the hat, often "diadem" or "crown," rather than the more literal "beauty" as is found in the King James Version. In either case, the meaning is that the ashes were removed and then replaced by a crown.<sup>539</sup> The removal of the ashes necessarily implies a ceremonial washing. The ashes

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<sup>537</sup> For an excellent discussion of the coronation ceremony, see Ricks and Sroka, "King, Coronation, and Temple," 236-71.

<sup>538</sup> The meaning of the new name is an echo of the Lord's words to Moses, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

<sup>539</sup> Ricks and Sroka, "King, Coronation, and Temple," 241-43, 256-57.

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would have been those of a red heifer, and the washing a ceremonial cleansing from sin.<sup>540</sup>

In ancient Israel, putting a mixture of water and the ashes of a red heifer on one's head was a formal purification ordinance. A red heifer was sacrificed once each year and its ashes were kept to be used in an ordinance that made a person ritually clean. In Isaiah 61 it was used in preparation for other ordinances that would follow. Instructions for the preparation and use of the ashes are given in Numbers 19.<sup>541</sup>

Just as the sacred anointing oil was perfumed with a recipe that could not be legally duplicated, so there was also a sacred recipe for the ashes of the red heifer. The ashes contained “cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet” that were burned with the heifer. The instructions were:

5 And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn:

6 And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast *it* into the midst of the burning of the heifer (Numbers 19:5-6).

Cedar is a fragrant smelling wood. Hyssop is a small bush, a branch of which was used for daubing the lintels of the Israelite homes in the first Passover (Exodus 12:22). It was also used in the ritualistic cleansing of lepers (Leviticus 14). Scarlet was “a highly prized brilliant red color obtained from female bodies of certain insects and used for dyeing woven fabric, cloth, and leather.”<sup>542</sup>

Psalms 51 was sung in conjunction with a cleansing ordinance—the most likely and most appropriate would have been the occasion of the king's purification that was

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<sup>540</sup> For discussions of washing, see Nibley, “What Is a Temple?” 363-64; Nibley, “Sacred Vestments,” *Temple and Cosmos*, 91-138; Ricks and Sroka, “King, Coronation, and Temple,” 241-43; Tvedtnes, “Baptism for the Dead,” 62-67.

<sup>541</sup> For a description of how it was understood in the Savior's day, see Flavius Josephus, trans. William Whiston, *The Complete Works: The History of the Jews*, book 4, chapter 4 (London: London Printing and Publishing, 1876), 69.

<sup>542</sup> *Interpreter's Dictionary*: for “scarlet,” 4:233; for “hyssop,” 2:670.



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preliminary to his being clothed and anointed as king:

- 1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness:  
    according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,  
    and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions:  
    and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight:  
    that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest,  
    and be clear when thou judgest.
- 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;  
    and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- 6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:  
    and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:  
    wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 Make me to hear joy and gladness;  
    that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.
- 9 Hide thy face from my sins,  
    and blot out all mine iniquities.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God;  
    and renew a right spirit within me.
- 11 Cast me not away from thy presence;  
    and take not thy holy spirit from me.
- 12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation [that is the connotation of “to comfort”];  
    and uphold me with thy free spirit.
- 13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways;  
    and sinners shall be converted unto thee.
- 14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,  
    thou God of my salvation:  
    and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

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- 15 O Lord, open thou my lips;  
and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.
- 16 For thou desirest not sacrifice;  
else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.
- 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:  
a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.
- 18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion:  
build thou the walls of Jerusalem.
- 19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,  
with burnt offering and whole burnt offering:  
then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar (Psalm 51:1-19).

The phrase, “purge me with hyssop” necessarily implies a cleansing with the ashes of the red heifer, for (except for leprosy) that was the only ordinance where hyssop was used as part of a ceremonial cleansing agent—that is, the ashes of the red heifer also contained hyssop.

It is important to observe that the purging he requested was not a physical cleansing but a spiritual one. Then, in verses 16 and 17, we find the words that are echoed in the Book of Mormon just before the Savior arrived:

- 16 For thou desirest not sacrifice;  
else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.
- 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:  
a broken and a contrite heart,  
O God, thou wilt not despise (Psalm 51:16-17).

When the Savior came to America, he instructed the people that there would be no more blood sacrifices, but rather they should sacrifice a broken heart and a contrite spirit. This psalm foreshadows those instructions and shows that the pre-exilic Israelites also understood that the blood sacrifices of the Law would be fulfilled, and the sacrifices required in their place would be a broken heart and contrite spirit, as in the psalm uttered by the women at the cross:

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18 The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;  
and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit (Psalm 34:18).<sup>543</sup>

### ***“the oil of joy instead of mourning”*** <sup>544</sup>

Inasmuch as the early scenes of the drama had already shown that the king had been foreordained at the Council in Heaven, this concluding anointing was a re-affirmation of that premortal ordinance. As Borsch believed, “The ceremony is said to take place in the heavenly realms just as the royal ritual was often described as though it were taking place in heaven. Let us notice, too, that the anointing act here is not associated primarily with cleansing or healing, but rather with a rite like King David’s. It is said that the ceremony makes the pneumatic into a *god* as well, just like the one above. In other words he will be a royal god.”<sup>545</sup>

Widengren quoted *Pseudo-Clement* to show that the anointing oil was symbolically a product of the Tree of Life:

This idea of an anointing with oil from the Tree of Life is found in a pregnant form in the Psalm Clementine writings, from which some quotations may be given. In the passage concerned, the author (or rather his original source) discusses the problem of the Primordial Man as Messiah. He is represented as stressing the fact that the Primordial Man is the Anointed One:

But the reason of his being called the Messiah (the Anointed One) is that, being the Son of God, he was a man, and that, because he was the first beginning,

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<sup>543</sup> For a discussion of Psalm 34, see the chapter called, “Act 2, Scene 7, Jehovah Conquers Death and Hell.”

<sup>544</sup> For discussions of the anointing of Israelite kings, see Donald W. Parry, “Ritual Anointing with Olive Oil in Ancient Israelite Religion,” *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 266-71, 281-83. For a discussion of the olive tree as the Tree of Life and of the tree and its oil as symbols of kingship see Stephen D. Ricks, “Olive Culture in the Second Temple Era and Early Rabbinic Period,” *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 460-76.

<sup>545</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 184.

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his father in the beginning anointed him with oil which was from the Tree of Life. Primordial Man, who had received the anointing, thanks to which he had been installed in the threefold office of king, high priest, and prophet, is then paralleled with every man who has received such anointing:

The same, however, is every man who has been anointed with the oil that has been prepared, so that he has been made a participant of that which is possessed of power, even being worth the royal office or the prophet's office or the high priest's office.<sup>546</sup>

The apocryphal *Gospel of Philip*, teaches the same. It reads, "But the tree of life stands in the midst of paradise. And indeed (it is) the olive-tree. From it came the chrism [anointing oil]. Through it came the resurrection."<sup>547</sup> On the next page Philip added:

The chrism [anointing oil] is superior to baptism. For from the chrism [anointing oil] we were called "Christians," [that is, "anointed ones"] not from the baptism. Christ also was so called because of the anointing. For the Father anointed the Son. But the Son anointed the apostles. And the apostles anointed us. He who is anointed possesses all things. He has the resurrection, the light, the cross.<sup>548</sup> Borsch mentioned other facets of the coronation ceremony that are not explicitly mentioned in the Isaiah passage, but which were very important. In the following, he wrote that the king was "initiated into heavenly secrets and given wisdom."<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>546</sup> Widengren, "Baptism and Enthronement," 213-14. The quotes he uses are from *Ps. Clem. Recognitions syriace*, ed. Frankenberg, I, 45, 4 and I, 46, 335.

<sup>547</sup> *Gospel of Philip, New Testament Apocrypha, Revised Edition*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Westminster: John Knox, 1991), 1: 199, 92.

<sup>548</sup> *Gospel of Philip*, 200, 95.

<sup>549</sup> For discussions of secrecy, see Lundquist, "Common Temple Ideology," 59; Lundquist, "What Is a Temple?" 109-11; Hugh Nibley, "Myths and the Scriptures," *Old Testament and Related Studies*, ed. John W. Welch, Gary P. Gillum, Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1986), 37-47; Nibley,

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That initiation may have been part of what Johnson and Mowinckel understood to be an “endowment with the spirit.”<sup>550</sup> It is what Nibley described in his analysis of Moses chapter one, quoted above.<sup>551</sup> It was this spiritual empowerment—not just the physical ordinances—that qualified one to be king. Borsch writes,

The king is anointed. The holy garment is put on him together with the crown and other royal regalia. He is said to be radiant, to shine like the sun just as does the king-god. He is initiated into heavenly secrets and given wisdom. He is permitted to sit upon the throne, often regarded as the very throne of the god. He rules and judges; all enemies are subservient. All do him obeisance.”<sup>552</sup>

The New Year's festival temple drama's coronation ceremonies reached to both ends of linear time; beginning in the Council, then the Garden; and at the conclusion when the king became anew “a son of God.” Consequently, even though a king may have ruled for many years, at this point in the festival, after he had symbolically proven himself, and was escorted into the Temple—then he was again crowned and became again king in fact. The importance of anointing and its association with the king's remarkable spiritual powers are described by Johnson:

The fact that the king held office as Yahweh's agent or vice-regent is shown quite clearly in the rite of anointing which marked him out as a sacral person endowed with such special responsibility for the well-being of his people as we have already described. Accordingly the king was not merely the Messiah or the ‘anointed’; he was the Messiah of Yahweh, i.e. the man who in thus being anointed was shown to

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“On the Sacred and the Symbolic,” 569-72; Nibley, “Return to the Temple,” 61-66; Packer, *Holy Temple*, 25-36.

<sup>550</sup> See: Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 14-16, and Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 374.

<sup>551</sup> Nibley, *Nibley on the Timely*, 5-6.

<sup>552</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 95-96.

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be specially commissioned by Yahweh for this high office: and, in view of the language which is used elsewhere in the Old Testament with regard to the pouring out of Yahweh's 'Spirit' and the symbolic action which figures so prominently in the work of the prophets, it seems likely that the rite in question was also held to be eloquent of the superhuman power with which this sacral individual was henceforth to be activated and by which his behavior might be governed. The thought of such a special endowment of the 'Spirit' is certainly implied by the statement that, when David was selected for this office, Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.<sup>553</sup>

### *“the garment of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness”*<sup>554</sup>

Nibley translated this line a bit differently, and in doing so, he expanded its meaning by projecting its implications to the marriage ceremony that follows in verse 10. He writes:

After you put off the old garments and put on those of spiritual white, you should keep them always thus spotless white. That is not to say that you must always go around in white clothes, but rather that you should be always clothed in what is really white and glorious, that you may say with the blessed Isaiah 61:10), “Let my soul exult in the Lord, for he hath clothed me in a robe of salvation and clothing of

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<sup>553</sup> Johnson, “Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship,” 207-8, quotes 1 Samuel 16:13.

<sup>554</sup> For a discussion of Adam's garment of light, that garment and its significance, see Ricks, “Garment of Adam,” 705-39. For discussions of sacred clothing, see Draper and Parry, “Seven Promises,” 134-36; Hamblin, “Temple Motifs,” 453-54; Nibley, “Sacred Vestments,” 91-138; Parry, “Garden of Eden,” 145; Ricks and Sroka, “King, Coronation, and Temple,” 254-56; John A. Tvedtnes, “Priestly Clothing in Bible Times,” *Temples of the Ancient World*, 649-704. For a discussion of Egyptian Christian clothing, see C. Wilford Griggs, *et al.*, “Evidences of Christian Population in the Egyptian Fayum and Genetic and Textile Studies of the Akhmim Noble Mummies,” *BYU Studies* 33, 2 (1993): 215-43.

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rejoicing.” (The word here used for “clothe” is *endy*, to place a garment on one, and is the ultimate source of our word “endowment,” derived in the *Oxford English Dictionary* from both *induere*, to invest with a garment, and *inducere*, to lead into or initiate.)<sup>555</sup>

The royal robes of the king are not described in detail in the Old Testament.<sup>556</sup> However, some scholars believe that the descriptions of the High Priestly garments were originally descriptions of the royal robes, and the miter hat was the crown used by the king in the coronation ceremony.<sup>557</sup> The implication is that the post-exilic editors who re-worked the books of Moses, allotted to the High Priest the royal garments that had once been worn by their kings. Widengren was among those who believed that all of the ceremonial clothing of the High Priest, including the breastplate which held the Urim and Thummim, was an adaptation of the earlier sacral clothing of the king.<sup>558</sup>

The coronation clothing is almost always described as two separate garments (as

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<sup>555</sup> Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 280-81.

<sup>556</sup> There is an interesting coronation scene described in Zechariah that shows the importance of sacred clothing. It reads:

3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with clean change of raiment.

5 And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by.

6 And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying:

7 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by (Zechariah 3:1-10).

<sup>557</sup> See Ricks, “Garment of Adam,” 705-39; Borsch, *Son of Man*, 185, 194; Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, 62-63; Widengren, “King and Covenant,” 21; Ricks and Sroka, “King, Coronation, and Temple,” 254-57.

<sup>558</sup> Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle*, 25.

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partially discussed earlier in connection with Psalm 45). The sacred clothing attributed to the Aaronic priesthood High Priests consisted of white linen undergarments and outer royal robes.<sup>559</sup> The undergarments were a two part suit—a long sleeved white shirt and breeches “to cover their nakedness” (Exodus 28:42. see also Mosiah 10:5). Above that he wore a solid blue robe with a fringe of alternating golden bells and pomegranates. The pomegranates were made of blue, purple, and scarlet threads—the same colors as in the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Tabernacle (Exodus 28:4-42).<sup>560</sup> Around the waist was a sash,<sup>561</sup> also woven in the same colors as the fringe and the veil. His breastplate was a kind of pouch or pocket in which he placed the Urim and Thummim. It was supported by shoulder straps attached to an apron called the ephod. His crown was a miter, a flat hat made of fine linen, with a gold plate attached that was worn on his forehead. Engraved on the plate were the words “Holiness to the Lord.”

This same ritual clothing—or something very much like it—was worn by the early Christians. Paul described the sacral garments as the protective “armor of God.”<sup>562</sup>

The scriptures often speak of the clothing in terms of their meaning rather than of their physical appearance. Thus, the outer one is usually called “majesty,” representing the powers of kingship, and the other “glory,” representing the authority of priesthood. For example, in Psalm 45, the king’s blessing from Elohim included the instructions to dress himself properly:

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<sup>559</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the temple clothing of ancient Israel see Tvedtnes, “Priestly Clothing,” 649-704.

<sup>560</sup> Exodus 28:4. For excellent illustrations, see Moshe Levine, *The Tabernacle, Its Structure and Utensils* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Melechet Hamishkan, 1989), 127-33.  
Ricks and Sroka, “King, Coronation, and Temple,” 256-57.

<sup>561</sup> Our Old Testament calls it a “girdle”; in the Tanakh it is called a “sash” (Exodus 28:8).

<sup>562</sup> Ephesians 6:10-18. It is also in D&C 27:15-18.

Two of the more interesting are in verse 14, “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.”



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- 3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty,  
with thy glory and thy majesty.  
4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously  
because of truth and meekness and righteousness;  
and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible thing (Psalm 45:3-4).

We find the same imagery in Job, only here two double sets of clothing are mentioned. (We have wondered if the reason is because, even though no woman is ever mentioned in the narrative, the second set might belong to his wife.) The Lord asks Job:

- 9 Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?  
10 Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency;  
and array thyself with glory and beauty. ...  
14 Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee (Job 40:9-14).

Later, but in the same context, Job responds:

- 4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak:  
I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.  
5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear:  
but now mine eye seeth thee (Job 42:4-5).

There is a fragment of an ancient text of the Book of Job that suggests the clothing is a replacement for something else that he must first “remove” (as in the *Hymn of the Pearl*). It reads:

- Or have you an arm like God?  
Or with voice like his can you thunder?  
Remove now pride and haughty spirit

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And with splendor, glory, and honor be clothed.<sup>563</sup>

There is a similar description in Psalm 21, and it was apparently sung during a similar ceremony to the one described in Job 40:1-17. After the coronation ceremony, before the king entered God's presence, he was dressed in clothing called "honour and majesty" (Psalm 21:5). We will discuss this psalm more fully below.

The important thing is that there are always two, and they always seem to represent royal and priestly authority, and with rare exceptions, they are always worn together.<sup>564</sup> A similar idea is in the Doctrine and Covenants, where two ideas, "perfectness and peace," are joined together as "charity:"

125 And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace.

126 Pray always, that ye may not faint, until I come. Behold, and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you unto myself. Amen (D&C 88:125-126).

It is significant that these sacred royal garments were patterned after those worn by Jehovah himself, as is shown in two of the psalms. One of those is 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.

2 Thy throne is established of old:  
thou art from everlasting (Psalm 93:1-2).

The other is Psalm 104 where Jehovah's royal clothing is described as honor and

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<sup>563</sup> Marvin H. Pope, *The Anchor Bible, Job* (Garden City, New York: 1965), 319-20.

<sup>564</sup> Another example is the clothing described in the *Hymn of the Pearl*.

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majesty, only there Jehovah wears an additional garment of light:<sup>565</sup>

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul.

O Lord my God, thou art very great;  
thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment:

who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain (Psalm 104:1-2).

The interpretation of Figure 3 in Facsimile No. 2 in the Book of Abraham shows that the clothing given to earthly holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood is symbolic of the clothing worn by God. It reads:

Fig. 3. Is made to represent God, sitting upon his throne, clothed with power and authority; with a crown of eternal light upon his head; representing also the grand Keywords of the Holy Priesthood, as revealed to Adam in the Garden of Eden, as also to Seth, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, and all to whom the Priesthood was revealed.

Nibley's description of the High Priest's garments—which, if the above quoted scholars are correct, were originally the king's royal garments—shows their sacred nature:

The combination of the items that make up the full clothing comes from the description of the high priestly garments at the beginning of Exodus 28. Very recently in Jerusalem, a magnificent book was published based on an attempt to reconstruct the *kelîm*, the *supellectila*, the implements and equipment of the temple, and the priestly garments (fig. 17). A section at the end of the book

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<sup>565</sup> For discussions of the garment of light, see:

“The heavens were fashioned from the light of God's garment.” (Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1:8).

“And my likeness was covered with the light of my garment.” (*The Paraphrase of Shem* (VII, 1), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* [San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1988], 346, 11-12).

Nibley suggests this garment is the Shechinah, which is “the cloud of brightness and glory that marked the presence of the Lord.” (LDS Bible dictionary) (Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 373.)

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describes them in detail. In this particular passage there is general assemblage, a listing, and then a description of what the articles are.

“Thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother,” the Lord tells Moses (cf. Exodus 28:2), *lokabod* ultip’eret, “both for glory and for magnificence”—to give an impression, to fill one with awe. And the Lord instructed Moses to say to all the people of “thoughtful-mindedness” and intelligence “that they shall do so, and make such garments for Aaron, for holiness, and for his priesthood, to represent his priesthood to me” (cf. Exodus 28:3). “And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an *epod* [the much disputed ephod!], and the *mo’il*,” a “cloak, a covering, a long garment”; “a *kotonet*,” the “shirt”; “a *tashbe*,” a thing elaborately woven in a checkerboard pattern, or something similar; “a mitre,” *mi .z ne -p e -t*, “a turban,” “a round cap”; “and a girdle” or “sash”; “and these garments they shall make holy for Aaron, thy brother, and for his sons, to serve me in the priesthood” (Exodus 28:4).<sup>566</sup>

The patriarch Levi reported that during his *sode* experience he was dressed in similar sacred robes. His account reads:

And there again I saw a vision as the former, after we had spent there seventy days. And I saw seven men in white raiment saying unto me: Arise, put on the robe of the priesthood, and the crown of righteousness, and the breastplate of understanding, and the garment of truth, and the plate of faith, and the turban of the head, and the ephod of prophecy. And they severally carried (these things) and put (them) on me, and said unto me: From henceforth become a priest of the Lord, thou and thy seed forever. And the first anointed me with holy oil, and gave to me the staff of judgment. The second washed me with pure water, and fed me with bread and wine (even) the most holy things, and clad, me with a holy and glorious robe. The third clothed me with a linen vestment like an ephod. The, fourth put round me a girdle like unto purple. The fifth gave me a branch of rich olive. The sixth placed a crown on my head. The seventh placed on my head a diadem of

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<sup>566</sup> Nibley, “Sacred Vestments,” 97-98.

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priesthood, and filled my hands with incense, that I might serve as priest to the Lord God. And they said to me: Levi, thy seed shall be divided into three offices, for a sign of the glory of the Lord who is to come. And the first portion shall be great; yea, greater than it shall none be. The second shall be in the priesthood. And the third shall be called by a new name, because a king shall arise in Judah, and shall establish a new priesthood, after the fashion of the Gentiles [to all the Gentiles]. And His presence is beloved, as a prophet of the Most High, of the seed of Abraham our father:

Therefore, every desirable thing in Israel shall be for thee and for thy seed,  
And ye shall eat everything fair to look upon,  
And the table of the Lord shall thy seed apportion.  
And some of them shall be high priests, and judges, and scribes;  
For by their mouth shall the holy place be guarded.,  
And when I awoke, I understood that this (dream) was like the first  
dream.<sup>567</sup>

Sacred garments are not unique to Hebrew literature. Ostler explains, “The idea of the garment is completely at home throughout the ancient world, always in connection with ordinances of initiation related to the “endowment of the Spirit.” The garment is usually mentioned in relation with other ordinances, especially the anointing.”<sup>568</sup> Rubin and Kosman explain further:

This clothing assumed special attributes of its own, independent of its wearer. Wearing regal clothing added authority and a dimension of the regal. The Bible also stressed the transfer of Aaron’s priestly garments to his son Eleazar. There were also garments unique to prophets, such as Samuel’s special coat and Elijah’s

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<sup>567</sup> Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 2: 309. Brackets are in the original.

<sup>568</sup> Blake T. Ostler, “Clothed Upon: A Unique Aspect of Christian Antiquity,” *BYU Studies* 22, 1 (1982): 33.

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distinctive mantle. The holy garments of the Bible thus help link the world above to that below. Here the garment does not function for personal territorial separation and defense of selfhood, but for linking the worlds. This special quality requires the wearer to be ritually pure. Otherwise, the garment can have a deleterious effect. The garment represents the charisma of a formal position without a direct reference to the quality of the priest wearing it. As these garments denote a formal position, their design is also formal and unalterable.<sup>569</sup>

In the vision of Daniel (7:9), however, the clothing of God (the “ancient of days”) is as white snow, and is therefore not merely metaphorical. On angels being clothed, see for example, Ezek 9:2. The angels that appeared to humans were undoubtedly clothed. See for example, Judg 13:15; and regarding the “men” that appeared to Abraham, see Gen 19:1. Incidentally, humans also occasionally wear metaphoric garments, as in, “I clothed myself in righteousness and it robed me; justice was my cloak and turban” (Job 29:14).<sup>570</sup>

In the pseudepigraphal account of the marriage of Joseph in Egypt, his clothing is described in terms that are reminiscent of the royal Hebrew garments:

And Joseph was dressed in an exquisite white tunic, and the robe which he had thrown around him; was purple, made of linen interwoven with gold; and a golden crown (was) on his head, and around the crown were twelve chosen stones, and on top of the twelve stones were twelve golden rays. And a royal staff was in his left hand, and in his right hand he held outstretched an olive branch, and there was plenty of fruit on it, and in the fruits was a great wealth of oil.<sup>571</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Their footnote 33 reads, “As in, e.g., ‘You are clothed in glory and majesty’ (Ps 104:1; cf. Job 40:10).”

<sup>570</sup> Nissan Rubin and Admiel Kosman, “The Clothing of the Primordial Adam as a Symbol of Apocalyptic Time in the Midrashic Sources,” *Harvard Theological Review* 90, 2 (1997): 164., fn. 33.

<sup>571</sup> *Joseph and Aseneth*, trans. C. Burchard, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:208.

***“that they might be called trees of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified”***

One is “called” by one’s name. Similarly, here to be “called” is to be given a new name.<sup>572</sup> One finds the same usage in the Beatitudes: “And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” (3 Nephi 12:9); and in Isaiah: “and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). A new name is a new covenantal identity.<sup>573</sup> In our verse, it denotes one’s new relationship with God, much as Nibley writes, “In Egyptian initiation rites one puts off his former nature by discarding his name, after which he receives a new name.”<sup>574</sup> Truman Madsen explains,

In antiquity, several ideas about names recur, among which are the following:

1. In names, especially divine names, is concentrated divine power.
2. Through ritual processes one may gain access to these names and take them upon oneself.

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<sup>572</sup> A. M. Honeyman, “The Evidence for Regnal Names Among the Hebrews,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 67 (1948): 13-25.

Among the scholars who have discussed the evidence for the ancient Israelite use of sacred king-names are: Bruce H. Porter and Stephen D. Ricks, “Names in Antiquity: Old, New, and Hidden,” *By Study and Also By Faith*, 1:501-22.

Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1: 63 and fn. 86.

Hoffmeier, “Son of God: From Pharaoh to Israel’s Kings,” 48.

<sup>573</sup> See J. E. Barnhart, “The Meaning of the Name *Israel*,” *Harvard Theological Review* 65, 1 (1972):137-46.

Porter and Ricks, “Names in Antiquity,” 501-22.

<sup>574</sup> Truman G. Madsen, “‘Putting on the Names’: A Jewish-Christian Legacy,” *By Study and Also By Faith*, 1: 459.

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3. These ritual processes are often explicitly temple-related.<sup>575</sup>

The regal new name given to the enthroned dead in Isaiah 61 is “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified.” It is a promise of eternal lives. “Trees” suggests the tree of life. “Righteousness” is *zedek*—correctness and propriety in performing and receiving sacred ordinances. “The planting of the Lord” implies eternal increase (trees make fruit, fruit make seeds, seeds make trees, *ad infinitum*). And the words “that he [God] might be glorified” proclaim that the glory of God is inseparably connected with the continuation of the family (as in Moses 1:39). The importance of the family is again emphasized at the end of chapter 61 where we find “a song of rejoicing”<sup>576</sup> in celebration of the sacred marriage. It is a hymn sung by the bride and groom:

10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels (Isaiah 61:10).

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<sup>575</sup> Madsen, “Putting on the Names,” 1:458.

<sup>576</sup> Ellis T. Rasmussen, *A Latter-day Saint Commentary on the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 536.



## **Psalm 2, The Ancient Israelite Royal King-name**

Even though the new royal name that was given to the king during his coronation ceremony in the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama was different from the one cited in Isaiah 61, its promises were no less far-reaching. The ancient Israelite royal new name is found in Psalm 2, which was sung at the time of the king's anointing near the conclusion of the temple drama,<sup>577</sup> In that psalm, the king's new name is "son,"<sup>578</sup> denoting that he had been adopted as a son and heir of Jehovah. Psalm 2 reads:

- 1 Why do the heathen rage,  
and the people imagine a vain thing?
- 2 The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord,  
and against his anointed, saying,
- 3 Let us break their bands asunder,  
and cast away their cords from us.
- 4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:  
the Lord shall have them in derision.
- 5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,  
and vex them in his sore displeasure.
- 6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.
- 7 I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me,  
Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.
- 8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,

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<sup>577</sup> Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, 16-20.

<sup>578</sup> Cook summed up the work of many scholars regarding the meaning of "son" in this psalm. Cooke, "Israelite King as Son," 202-25.

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and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.  
9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;  
    thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.  
10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings:  
    be instructed, ye judges of the earth.  
11 Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.  
12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way,  
    when his wrath is kindled but a little.  
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him (Psalms 2:1-12)

Like many other psalms, this one was spoken by several voices. Again we have provided some suggested stage directions. It begins with the chorus or congregation asking:

*1 Why do the heathen rage,  
    and the people imagine a vain thing?  
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,  
    and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord,  
    and against his anointed, saying,  
3 Let us break their bands asunder,  
    and cast away their cords from us.*

Then, referring to Jehovah, the chorus declares:

*4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:  
    the Lord shall have them in derision.  
5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,  
    and vex them in his sore displeasure.*

The chorus quotes Jehovah's declaration that no king except the one anointed at the Temple at Jerusalem is acceptable to him:

*6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.*

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The king now speaks, restating the words of the covenant of adoption made between Jehovah and himself:

*7 I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me,  
Thou art my Son;  
this day have I begotten thee.<sup>579</sup>*

“Son,” as it is spoken here, is the new king-name. It denotes the covenant of adoption and heirship between the king and Jehovah.<sup>580</sup> The next are God’s promise of invulnerability that is associated with the new name.<sup>581</sup> Here, as is often so, the promise is given in terms of military power:

*8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,  
and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.  
9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;  
thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*

The chorus speaks again, addressing itself to the kings, “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.”

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<sup>579</sup> In Hebrews, Paul cites a number of statements from throughout the Old Testament that show the covenant relationship of the Israel’s king and God. Paul uses those scriptures to show that Jesus is King of Israel by virtue of his relationship with his Father. Psalm 2 is quoted in Hebrews 2:5. In that same verse he also quotes 2 Samuel 7:14, which is Jehovah’s covenant with David.

<sup>580</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 128-30. See also Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1: 58, 63; Honeyman, “Evidence for Regnal Names, 23-24; Hoffmeier, “Son of God: From Pharaoh to Israel’s Kings,” 48. Borsch, *Son of Man*, 152. For discussions of new king names, see Nibley, “Return to the Temple,” 59-61; Ricks and Sroka, “King, Coronation, and Temple,” 244-46, 256-57; Draper and Parry, “Seven Promises,” 136-37.

<sup>581</sup> For a discussion of the covenant of invulnerability, see the chapter called, “The Promise of Invulnerability.”

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A quick reading would cause one to think that these words are addressing the kings who were chastised in verses 1-3. However, there is another, more appropriate reading. That is, that inasmuch as the king had just been adopted as a “son” of God, the same was also true of all of the men in the congregation. What we find in the story of King Benjamin is applicable here. There we read:

7 And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters (Mosiah 5:7).

Gerald Cooke has written an extensive discussion on the nature of the king’s “sonship.” Excerpts from his paper are:

How, then, are these references to the king to be interpreted? The ruler of the Davidic house is to be regarded “as a son to” Yahweh and Yahweh will be ‘as a father to’ the king (II Sam 7:14); the king is to be Yahweh’s “first-born”, “highest of the kings of earth” (Ps 89:28); the king is thought of as Yahweh’s son, “begotten” by Yahweh (Ps 2:7b-c). What is the significance of these references with respect to the Hebrew conception of the king’s nature and status? ...

The second point in the text which offers a basis for argument against a divine king interpretation is the phrase “You are my son.” This is widely recognized as an adoption formula and as having a metaphorical significance. Gunkel, Mowinckel and Weiser are united in interpreting “you are my son, today I have begotten you” as an adoption formula. ...

Ps 89 appears to be consistent with this presentation of the king’s divine sonship in terms of adoption. Verse 20 emphatically states the essential humanity of David: “I have exalted one chosen from the people.” The same view is stated in the “Last Words” of David (II Sam 23:1-7): David is the son of Jesse, a man raised on high. ...

It is likely, then, that we have in II Sam 7:12-14, Ps 2:7 and Ps 89:27-28 a single

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representation of the Davidic king's divine sonship by adoption.<sup>582</sup>

In all of the ceremonies and ordinances of the festival drama, the king represented each person in the audience, as though the play were only about that one person. That would also be true here. Because Psalm 2 represents a similar ordinance where each person in the audience had just been made a sacral king, a more meaningful reading of those last verses would be that the kings addressed were the men in the congregation who were newly created sacral kings:

*10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings:*

*be instructed, ye judges of the earth.*<sup>583</sup>

*11 Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*

*12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way,  
when his wrath is kindled but a little.*

*Blessed are all they that put their trust in him (Psalm 2:1-12).*

The words, “rejoice with trembling” connote the whole power of the joy they have just experienced in the ordinance. Nibley explains:

Even in this life everyone changes from one form to another, gets new names and callings and new identities as he plays his proverbial seven parts—but always preserving his identity as the same conscious living being. The common religion of the human race centers around that theme: the individual and the society pass from one stage of life to another not by a gradual and imperceptible evolution but by a series of abrupt transformations, dramatized the world over in Rites of Passage, of which birth and death are the prime examples coming not unannounced but suddenly and irresistibly when their time is ripe; other passages, as into puberty and

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<sup>582</sup> Cooke, “Israelite King as Son,” 208-9, 211-12.

<sup>583</sup> Rev 1:5-6 and 21:24 also use the phrase “kings of the earth” to represent sacral kings.

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marriage, follow the same pattern.<sup>584</sup>

Psalm 2 marks a high point of the festival drama. It is the conclusion of all that has come before and the beginning of all that comes after.<sup>585</sup> In that psalm, the king's new name is "son,"<sup>586</sup> denoting that he had been adopted as a son and heir of God. Mowinckel believed that the words, "thou art my son" demonstrated the cosmic role with which the king of Israel was entrusted. The king's adoption as a son of Jehovah made him a legal heir, both to his earthly throne and to his rightful place in the eternities. This annual re-enactment of the king's adoption renewed and affirmed the original covenant relationships between Jehovah and the king; between Jehovah and the people; and also between Jehovah, the king, and the people in the recreation of the Kingdom of God.

The ancient Israelites did not consider their kings to be gods, but they did consider them to be adopted sons of God, as Hoffmeier explains:

More directly relevant are two passages in which a Hebrew king appears to have been regarded as a son of God. In 2 Samuel 7:14, Yahweh, the God of Israel, speaks to David regarding his heir: 'I will be his father, and he shall be my son.' And in Psalm 2:6-7 the psalmist quotes Yahweh: 'I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill ... You are my son, today I have begotten you.' Both passages have been used to support the adoptionist view of kingship, whereby the king becomes the son of the deity upon his assumption of the throne.<sup>587</sup>

The festival drama had already shown that the king's first covenants were made at the Council in Heaven. Now they were made anew, here in mortality. The phrase, "Thou art my

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<sup>584</sup> Nibley, *Nibley on the Timely*, 21.

<sup>585</sup> Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, 16-20.

<sup>586</sup> Cooke summed up the work of many scholars regarding the meaning of "son" in this psalm. "Israelite King as Son," 202-25.

<sup>587</sup> Hoffmeier, "Son of God: From Pharaoh to Israel's Kings," 48.

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Son; this day have I begotten thee,” emphasized the eternal relationship that covenant reaffirmed. The Apostle Paul quoted the words of Psalm 2 as a reference to the Savior (Hebrews 1:5). Whenever the Father introduces the Savior, he uses that regal name. It defines the Lord’s literal relationship with his Father as his Only Begotten, and also his status as heir<sup>588</sup> and Lord of Lords.<sup>589</sup> This same covenant name is given to many persons in the scriptures, but uniquely to the Savior. Israel’s special status before God was shown in their designation as his ‘sons,’ as Cook explained, “The people Israel knew themselves to be under the same charge by virtue of their relation to Yahweh in terms of sonship and of covenant righteousness and loyalty.”<sup>590</sup> In these relationships, Israel and the king’s connections with God were bound by temporal and spiritual covenants. Mowinckel explained the intent of the covenant words when he wrote:

He is ‘Yahweh’s son,’ adopted by Yahweh ‘today.’ It is the election, the anointing and the installation which are viewed as an adoption. Thereby the king is, ideally speaking, world-ruler; and all other kings are his vassals, whose duty it is to pay him homage by ‘kissing his feet’—the usual sign of homage to the liege sovereign in the East.<sup>591</sup>

Even though this new king-name was reaffirmed each year, conferring it upon the king was more than symbolic, as Porter and Ricks explain: “The name change or new name marks a turning point in the life of the initiate: he is ‘re-created,’ so to speak, and becomes a

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<sup>588</sup> Examples are: Christ’s baptism, the Mount of Transfiguration, his appearance to the Nephites, and Joseph Smith’s first vision.

<sup>589</sup> For Margaret Barker’s discussion of the relationship between the ancient coronation ceremony and the Savior’s baptism, see “High Priest and the Worship,” 93-111.

<sup>590</sup> Cooke, “Israelite King as Son,” 216-17.

<sup>591</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1:65.

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new man.”<sup>592</sup> It was typical of ancient Near Eastern practices that kings should receive a new covenant name in connection with their coronation ceremonies—often, more names than one, but, as Porter and Ricks observed, not all the new names were known to everyone. “New names were frequently conferred upon individuals at the time of their enthronement. The giving or possessing of a second name, to be kept hidden from others, is widely attested in antiquity among both mortals and divinities.”<sup>593</sup>

The reason it was important to have many names was because each name represented the binding power of a different covenant. In the Israelite temple drama, the king’s personal history covered an enormous span of time, and during that time he played many roles with covenantal responsibilities. Nibley pointed out that, “When Re says to the gods, ‘I have many names and many forms; in me Atun and the youthful Horus are addressed,’ he signifies that he may be conjured either as the Ancient of Days or the Newly-born, depending on the name employed and the situation in which his presence is desired.”<sup>594</sup>

Not all new covenant names were secret, but they were all sacred. In his study of Hebrew royal names, A. M. Honeyman found that the religious practice of giving and receiving a new name “is based upon the belief that the name is or symbolizes the self or soul, and that an alteration of the name will effect or symbolize and perpetuate an alteration of the self; on this supposition a man whose name has been changed is no longer quite the same man, for he has been cut off from his own past, or from certain aspects of it, and the future belongs to a different being.”<sup>595</sup>

A name was more than an identity, as Porter and Ricks explain, “In the cultures of the ancient Near East, existence was thought to be dependent upon an identifying word, that word being a ‘name.’ The name of someone (or something) was perceived not as a mere abstraction, but as a real entity, ‘the audible and spoken image of the person, which was

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<sup>592</sup> Porter and Ricks, “Names in Antiquity,” 507.

<sup>593</sup> Porter and Ricks, “Names in Antiquity,” 507-8.

<sup>594</sup> Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 140-41.

<sup>595</sup> Honeyman, “Evidence for Regnal,” 13.



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taken to be his spiritual essence.”<sup>596</sup>

They further explain, “The intimate connection between naming and existence can be inferred from its role in many ancient Near Eastern creation texts, where the creation of all was dependent upon the gods naming those things which were to be created. When a man received his name, he was considered complete, since he was deemed to be ‘constituted of body and soul and name.’”<sup>597</sup>

Nibley reminded us, “Every name is an epithet designating some peculiar attribute or function of an individual. It is possible for persons even in our society to have more than one name, each name calling attention to a different aspect of the individual: for to have many forms and functions is to have many names.”<sup>598</sup>

In ancient Israel there were some covenant names that were much more significant than others, just as some covenants were much more long-lasting than others. The most important publicly known covenant name was “son”—the one formally bestowed on the king at the time of his coronation. It was the epitome of those because his adoption as a son of God contained the implicit assurance that his sonship would not terminate with his death. It was that name that established the eternal covenant relationships between the king and God, and by extension, between the people, the king, and God.

New names often represented a covenant where no written contract was necessary. All that was necessary were mutual agreements on the terms of the covenant, and a verbal exchange of names, as illustrated in the following hypothetical story: Two persons make a covenant. Sam and Joe covenant that they will be friends forever. The agreement is that if Sam still remembers Joe in ten years, Joe will give him \$100. The responsibilities are these: Sam will contact Joe, and Joe will provide the \$100. To bind the covenant, they exchange new names. Sam’s new name is Green, Joe’s is Blue. Each person is now a larger and more complex individual than he was before because something new has been added to his Self. The new covenant names are more than just an affirmation of friendship, they are an

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<sup>596</sup> Porter and Ricks, “Names in Antiquity,” 501.

<sup>597</sup> Porter and Ricks, “Names in Antiquity,” 501-2.

<sup>598</sup> Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 140.

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evidence of an expansion of their Selves. They are each a larger and more complex person because their friendship made them so. Their covenant names represent their new realities. The covenant names relate to, and are only known by, each other. Their relationship with each other is identifiable by its own name. However, those new extensions of Self will only survive for as long as the covenant remains unbroken. (So, in 1 Nephi 20:11 we hear the Lord say, “For mine own sake, yea, for mine own sake will I do this, for I will not suffer my name to be polluted, and I will not give my glory unto another.”) Ten years pass, a child knocks on Joe’s door and says, “You are Blue, and I represent Green.” She need say no more than that. She is not Sam, but she knows the names, and the covenant is embodied in the names. If Joe does not respond, the covenant is broken and both Green and Blue cease to exist. For example, Nibley writes that in ancient Egypt, preserving the name was of the utmost importance because “the name is a person’s essence. If his name perishes, he himself does not exist any more.”<sup>599</sup> However, the converse is also true. If Joe does respond correctly, and gives the little girl the \$100, then the covenant is sealed, and both Green and Blue—and their bond of friendship—live forever.

Mowinckel understood the significance of new names, and explained why it was so important to the king of Israel. He wrote:

[The king’s] anointing was related to his endowment with the spirit. The later tradition says explicitly that when David was anointed, ‘the spirit of Yahweh leaped upon him’.

In virtue of his endowment with the divine spirit, the king is filled with superhuman power. He receives ‘a new heart’; he is changed into a new man (1 Sam. x, 6, 9). ...He receives a new disposition expressed, according to oriental custom, in giving to him a new name which indicates his new, intimate relationship with the god who has chosen him, and whom he represents.

Through his anointing and endowment with the divine spirit, the king also

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<sup>599</sup> Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 139.

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receives superhuman wisdom.<sup>600</sup>

In another place, Mowinckel identified some of the royal Israelite king names.

The account in II Sam 12:24-25 of the birth of Jedediah-Solomon imputes the former name to the prophet Nathan under divine inspiration and the latter to Bathsheba or David. ... Solomon is the throne name and Jedediah the private name. ... The slayer of Goliath was Elhanan the son of Jesse of Bethlehem, (II Sam. 21:19) Elhanan can be none other than he who reigned as David.<sup>601</sup>

So it appears that “David” (which was not an Israelite name) became the covenant king-name of Elhanan, a man who grew up in Bethlehem, only a few miles from the Jebusite city of Jerusalem.

The point is this: new names represented covenants and were evidence of their validity (that is, a new name was a *pistis*, the substance, evidence, and hope of a covenant<sup>602</sup>). When a person received a new name, both the name and the covenant become a part of the individual.<sup>603</sup>

The reason secret covenant ceremonial names were important was because they gave power. When one knew the names, one could invoke the terms of the covenant (as in the story of the little girl who knew the name). Or, as Nibley observes, “To possess knowledge of another’s name is to hold some power over him, even if it be the high god himself.”<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>600</sup> Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 66. For another discussion on the power of new names, see Gunkel, *Folktale in the Old Testament*, 87.

<sup>601</sup> Honeyman, “Evidence for Regnal Names,” 23-24.

<sup>602</sup> See the chapter called, “Meaning of Faith —*pistis*.”

<sup>603</sup> A few scriptures that help clarify the importance of new covenant names are: Psalm 9:9-10, Isaiah 52:6-8 especially in the context of 3 Nephi 20:29-46, Mosiah 5:7-15, Mosiah 26:23-25, and Ether 4:15.

<sup>604</sup> Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 140.

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Implicitly, some covenant names were known only to God and to the person on whom they were bestowed. Presumably that is so because the names represented the person's eternal past, present, future, and eternal relationship with God. Even for the Lord, exchanging or sharing a covenant name was an expression of the utmost trust. In the last three verses of Psalm 91, the Lord is represented as showing that trust in terms of his love:

- 14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him:  
    I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.  
15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him:  
    I will be with him in trouble;  
    I will deliver him, and honour him.  
16 With long life will I satisfy him,  
    and shew him my salvation (Psalm 91:14-16).

The concepts of righteousness, sonship, adoption, and heirship introduce another important facet to the meaning of the name "son." When one was an heir, there came with the blessing certain social, governmental, and ecclesiastical responsibilities implicit in the covenant. Fensham found, as others had before him, that the terms "father" and "son" included a strong covenantal component. His conclusion included his belief that the name-title<sup>605</sup> "son," in Psalm 2 incorporates the responsibilities and the powers that characterize both ancient covenants and treaties.<sup>606</sup>

Porter and Ricks brought the whole substance of the meaning and significance of the king's new covenant name sharply into focus in the conclusion of their paper:

When contrasted with their general devaluation in the modern west, the significance of naming and the wide attestation of renaming and the giving of hidden names in the ancient world is astonishing. Not merely identification, but existing itself, were thought to be contingent upon the name. If naming constituted

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<sup>605</sup> "Name" is a covenant identification. "Title" denotes a treaty relationship.

<sup>606</sup> Fensham, "Father and Son as Terminology," 130.

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the giving of an identity, the giving of a new name gave a new identity to the recipient, and was frequently associated with an important transition in the recipient's life. As has been shown, in many of the cultures of antiquity the knowledge of certain secrets, including secret names, was requisite to entering into everlasting bliss and to learning his own "True Name," a notion succinctly reflected in the wisdom of Sirach: "He will find gladness and a crown of rejoicing and will acquire an everlasting name."<sup>607</sup>

The new name that the king received at the time of his coronation accorded to him the responsibilities and powers embodied in the ancient concepts of covenants, treaties, adoption, and heirship. His anointing had been the confirming evidence of the validity of those powers, and his new name was the personal verification of them. As was true with all other parts of the ceremony, when the king received his new name, each participant in the audience received the same covenant new name. When a person received a new name, both the name and the covenant become a part of the individual's living Self. If one were to break the covenant and lose the name, he violated that part of the law of his own being, and consequently he became less than he would have been otherwise. It was understood that God could not break his part of the covenant, so that left the king (and his individual subjects) entirely free to define their own destinies. The underlying concept was that God's children had the power to shrink or to expand their individual Selves by breaking or keeping the covenants they had made with God.

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<sup>607</sup> Porter and Ricks, "Names in Antiquity," 513-14.

## **Act 2, Scene 10: The King approaches the Veil** <sup>608</sup>

The large central room of Solomon’s Temple—the Holy Place—where the king stood (probably with the queen and their attendants) was furnished with an incense altar, the Table of Shewbread,<sup>609</sup> and the Menorah. Each was a symbol representing an invitation to come into the presence of God.

The incense on the altar exuded a sweet-smelling smoke that traditionally represented prayer ascending to God.<sup>610</sup> Symbolically, it may have also represented the Shechinah—the veil of light behind which one meets God.<sup>611</sup> We find the same symbol in Isaiah 6, where the prophet reported that the celestial temple “was filled with smoke.”

The Shewbread (Show-bread) was a reminder that the people were invited to come into the presence of God, reminiscent of the time when that invitation had been accepted by only a few—when Moses and “the nobles of the children of Israel” were upon Sinai, when “also they saw God, and did eat and drink” (Exodus 24:11). W. Robertson Smith explained the significance of this and other sacred meals:

According to antique ideas, those who eat and drink together are by this very act tied to one another by a bond of friendship and mutual obligation. Hence we find

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<sup>608</sup> For discussions of the veil, see Hamblin, “Temple Motifs,” 455-56; Nibley, “Return to the Temple,” 80-81; Tvedtnes, “Temple Prayer in Ancient Times,” *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 88-90.

<sup>609</sup> For a discussion of the significance of the temple feast and the “bread of the Presence” (shewbread in the Tabernacle), see P. A. H. de Boer, “An Aspect of Sacrifice,” *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 27-47. The implications are that the bread is a reminder of the of the time God invited Moses and the seventy to eat with him on the Mount. Thus, the sacrament.

<sup>610</sup> Revelation 8:3-4.

<sup>611</sup> See “Shechinah” in LDS Bible dictionary.

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that in ancient religions all the ordinary functions of worship are summed up in the sacrificial meal, and that the ordinary intercourse between gods and men has no other form, we are to remember that the act of eating and drinking together is the solemn and stated expression of the fact that all who share the meal are brethren, and that the duties of friendship and brotherhood are implicitly acknowledged in their common act. By admitting man to his table the god admits him to his friendship; but this favor is extended to no man in his private capacity; he is received as one of a community, to eat and drink along with his fellows, and in the same measure as the act of worship cements the bond between him and his god, it cements also the bond between him and his brethren in the common faith.<sup>612</sup> The Menorah was the seven branched “candlestick” (actually a lamp stand<sup>613</sup>) is probably the most easily recognizable and continually used, of all the ancient symbols of the tree of life. Its light represented the fruit of the tree. When the Lord gave Moses instructions about how to build the Tabernacle, he also taught Moses how to construct the Menorah and the other furnishings to go into the sacred tent. The Lord’s instructions were:

31 And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops,<sup>614</sup> and his flowers, shall be of the same.

32 And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the

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<sup>612</sup> W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (New York: KTAV, 1969), 265.

<sup>613</sup> In our King James Bible, the Menorah is called a candlestick. This is because candles were the source of light in medieval England when the Bible was translated. However in Moses’s time there were no candles. Lamps were used for light, so the correct translation is “lamp stand,” rather than “candlestick.”

<sup>614</sup> The bowls were the lamps. One end of a wick was placed in the bowl of olive oil. A knop is an ornamental knob.

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other side (Exodus 25:31-32).<sup>615</sup>

Yarden observes it was “seven-branched—a number connected with the sanctity of Seven, common to several ancient religions, in the Semitic languages synonymous with All, Totality, Fullness.”<sup>616</sup> It stood just outside the veil of Solomon’s Temple, where its branches—three pairs of extended arms—reached toward heaven as in prayer.<sup>617</sup>

When the ancient Jews prayed, they lifted their arms and hands toward heaven with the

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<sup>615</sup> Josephus writes that at the same time the Ark of the Covenant was placed in Solomon’s Temple, the Israelites brought the Menorah and the other temple furniture also: “Now the ark contained nothing else but those two tables of stone that preserved the ten commandments, which God spake to Moses in Mount Sinai, and which were engraved upon them; but they set the candlestick, and the table, and the golden altar in the temple, before the most secret place, in the very same places wherein they stood till that time in the tabernacle. (Josephus, *Complete Works: History of the Jews*, 8:4:1, 165.)

After that, little is known about the history of the Menorah. When the temple treasures were taken by Nebuchadnezzar, the Old Testament does not list the Menorah among the things that went to Babylon, but Josephus does include the Menorah. Those treasures are listed in 2 Kings 25:13-17, and Josephus, *Complete Works: History of the Jews*, 10:8, 213. There were golden candlesticks in Zerubbabel’s temple. They were taken away by Antiochus Epiphanes in about 168 B.C. when he looted the temple’s treasures. (Josephus, *Complete Works: History of the Jews*, 12:5,255.) The gold Menorah in Herod’s temple was taken by Titus to Rome and paraded before the people in the emperor’s triumphal procession. Thereafter, it was depicted as part of that procession on Titus’s arch that still stands in Rome. See Steven Fine, “The Temple Menorah: Where is it?” in *Biblical Archaeology Review* 31, 4 (July/August, 2005): 18-25, 62-62; Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah*.

We cannot know whether this is an accurate reproduction of the Menorah that was in Herod’s temple, or whether it looks anything at all like the one Moses had built for the Tabernacle, but it remains an important historical symbol of ancient Israel.

<sup>616</sup> Leon Yarden, *The Tree of Light, a Study of the Menorah, the Seven-branched Lampstand* (Uppsala: Skriv Servica, 1972), 43.

<sup>617</sup> Ancient Jews and Christians prayed standing, with their arms reaching toward heaven and their palms open showing them to be clean and without spot. In the iconography of ancient Judaism (e.g., Dura Europos—there was, in fact, ancient Jewish iconography!) the palms faced outward (and upward), whereas in Mesopotamian iconography of prayer the palms faced inward, and in the Egyptian iconography of prayer, the palms faced either outward or inward.



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palms facing outward and upward to show God that they had approached him with clean hands. In that sense, the Menorah appears to have been a visual representation of what the scriptures call “mighty prayer.” Such a prayer may have been the setting of the very short Psalm 134:

- 1 Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord,  
    which by night stand in the house of the Lord.
- 2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord.
- 3 The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion (Psalm 134:1-3).

The 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm is clearly that kind of prayer. It begins, not by lifting one’s hands but with the words, “Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul” (Psalm 25:1).<sup>618</sup>

It is probable that this was the prayer uttered by the king at the time he approached the great embroidered veil of the Temple. That likelihood is supported by the nature of the prayer itself. It is a proclamation that the king (and by extension, all of the people) had kept all of the covenants they made since the very beginning of the festival temple drama in the Council in Heaven. It is a remarkable psalm, and seems to serve as a kind of introduction to the 21<sup>st</sup> Psalm. Psalm 25 reads in full:

- 1 Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
- 2 O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed,  
    let not mine enemies triumph over me.
- 3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed:  
    let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.
- 4 Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths.
- 5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation;  
    on thee do I wait all the day.
- 6 Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses;  
    for they have been ever of old.

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<sup>618</sup> For examples of people praying with their hands extended upward, see 1 Kings 8:22; Ezra 9:5; Isaiah 1:15; Ps 28:2, 63:4, 134:2-3, 141:2, 143:6; Lamentations 2:19, 3:37-42; 1 Timothy 2:8.

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- 7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:  
according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord.
- 8 Good and upright is the Lord:  
therefore will he teach sinners in the way.
- 9 The meek will he guide in judgment:  
and the meek will he teach his way.
- 10 All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth  
unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.
- 11 For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.
- 12 What man is he that feareth the Lord?  
him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.
- 13 His soul shall dwell at ease;  
and his seed shall inherit the earth.
- 14 The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;  
and he will shew them his covenant.
- 15 Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord;  
for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.
- 16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me;  
for I am desolate and afflicted.
- 17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged:  
O bring thou me out of my distresses.
- 18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain;  
and forgive all my sins.
- 19 Consider mine enemies; for they are many;  
and they hate me with cruel hatred.
- 20 O keep my soul, and deliver me:  
let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.
- 21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.
- 22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles (Psalm 25:1-22).

In this psalm we find the eternal meaning to the word "meek."

## **Meaning of “Meek” in Psalm 25: Keeping One’s Eternal Covenants**

A friend describes meekness as the ability to accept offence without being offended. That is an enjoyable perspective, and it works well in many scriptures. However there is another meaning of “meek” that makes it one of the most significant words in the subtextual language of the scriptures. It is one of those “code words” that was never intended to be a code word, because that meaning of “meekness” is clearly explained in the Psalms. In Psalm 37:11, we learn, “The meek shall inherit the earth: and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” The Savior paraphrased that psalm when he spoke the Beatitude, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” He may also have been referring to it with the Beatitude that reads, “And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” In D&C 88:17 he explained much the same thing, that the earth was created so “the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it.” Those ideas are all amplified in the place where one finds the most complete discussion of what meekness means, the 25<sup>th</sup> psalm.

It expands the blessings of meekness to include the doctrine of an eternal family—it promises that not just the meek, but also the children of the meek, will inherit the earth. It is that psalm that gives us the best explanation of who the meek are.

Psalm 25 is an intensely personal statement. The speaker may have been a single individual, or the psalm may have been sung by everyone in the congregation. The individual who sings it (even if there are many who sang simultaneously) is so very human that whether the psalm were sung by one person or the entire congregation would not change the personal nature of the hymn. The Lord’s statement, “For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads” (D&C 25:12), can be true whether one is singing alone, with a congregation, or just listening.

Most other scriptures that tell about the Council in Heaven make it seem very distant and detached because the accounts are about supermen like Abraham, Isaiah, or Lehi. Psalm 25 is not just about the king, but it is about Everyman. It seems to bring the Council home to the fireside where its covenants are a central part of ordinary daily lives. It is a prayer in

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which one lifts one's soul (not just one's hands) as an evidence of one's worthiness. In the prayer, the person unabashedly exposes his inner Self, making himself vulnerable to all those who can know the meaning of his words. He is one who has unbounded faith in the Lord—one who knows he had made some very serious covenants in the Council—and one who is trying to keep those covenants while muddling through the dreariness that is life in this lonely, dark world. In the Book of Mormon, Nephi's psalm in 2 Nephi 4 is so much like Psalm 25 that one wonders if Nephi may have been reflection on its meaning when he wrote his own.

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### **The Meek in Psalm 25**

*1 Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.*

*2 O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed*

One would be ashamed if one had borne testimony of God's covenant, but God didn't keep them. The next lines suggest that the covenant he was asking God to keep is the promise that God would make a way for the psalmist to keep his own covenants:

*let not mine enemies triumph over me*

"Triumph," in the context of this psalm, suggests that they would be able to prevent him from keeping those covenants:

*3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed:*

*let them be ashamed which transgress without cause*

The word "wait" appears three times in this psalm. Each is translated from the same Hebrew word that means to anticipate, "to look for eagerly."<sup>619</sup> The shame mentioned

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<sup>619</sup> Strong 6960.

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would only come if the Lord did not appear and the person who waits is disappointed. The blessings of waiting on the Lord is taught by Isaiah, where he writes:

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isaiah 40:31).

That the psalmist had that same idea in mind is clearly demonstrated by his next phrase, where his words “ways” and “paths” have the same encoded connotation.

*4 Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths.  
5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me  
for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.*

Psalms 25 is set in the context of our premortal covenants, and the next verse contains a word that brings those covenants into a deeply personal friendship/relationship. The word is translated “lovingkindnesses” and is from the Hebrew word *hesed*.<sup>620</sup> The *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* shows the power of that friendship/relationship:

We may venture the conjecture that even in cases where the context does not suggest such mutuality it is nevertheless implicit, because we are dealing with the closest of human bonds.<sup>621</sup>

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<sup>620</sup> Katherine Doob Sakenfeld of Princeton University Seminary wrote a dissertation on “hesed” in which she argued that it meant “to do what is expected of one.” With regard to the covenant, God does what is expected (keep his covenant promises); man should also maintain “hesed” (keep his covenant promises).

Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry* (Missoula, Montana; Scholars Press for the Harvard Semitic Museum, 1978).

<sup>621</sup> G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., trans. Davod E. Green, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 15 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986), article about *hesed*, 5:45-48). The Greek equivalent is *Philadelphia*, fraternal love, as explained in fn 905, p. 680.

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An explanation and clarification of their phrase, “*dealing with the closest of human bonds,*” is found in a new edition of *Strong’s Concordance*:

*hesed*, unfailing love, loyal love, devotion. kindness, often based on a prior relationship, especially a covenant relationship.<sup>622</sup>

Even though the *hesed* relationship described in this psalm is between the king who speaks the words, and Jehovah to whom he addresses them, it must be remembered that in the Israelite temple drama the king represented every man in the congregation. Therefore, the *hesed* relationship described here also evokes the terms of the covenant between Jehovah and each worthy man. That being so, it follows that this same *hesed* relationship also exists as an eternal, fraternal bond of each man with Jehovah, perhaps with their prophet/king, and most certainly each other. Consideration of the this-worldly continuation of those fraternal relationships brings us back to Peter’s assurance that “brotherly kindness” (*philadelphia*) is prerequisite to making one’s calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:1-11).

*6 Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses [hesed, plural];  
for they have been ever of old.*

Here is another example of where the phrase “of old” is a reference to the Council.<sup>623</sup>

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<sup>622</sup> John R. Kohlenberger III and James A. Swanson, *The Strongest Strong’s, Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), Hebrew dictionary # 2617.

<sup>623</sup> Examples of scriptures that use the phrase “of old” as reference to events in the Council in Heaven are: Deuteronomy 32:7-8; Psalms 25:6-7, 68:32-33, 93:1-2, 102:24-25, Micah 5:2 is another example. The most convincing modern example is this statement in the 76<sup>th</sup> section of the Doctrine and Covenants: “And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old.” (D&C 76:6) When the Prophet Joseph wrote a poetic version of his vision, he made its meaning even more clear.

I’ll surely reveal all my myst’ries to them—  
The great hidden myst’ries in my kingdom stor’d;  
From the council in Kolob, to time on the earth, (Joseph Smith, “A Vision,” in *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1843.)

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The prayer bears testimony that he knows that his and Jehovah's *hesed* relationship is now even as it was in the beginning, at the Council in Heaven, and remains forever—unchanged:

*7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:  
according to thy mercy [hesed] remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord.*

It is apparent that the author of this psalm had an almost boundless knowledge of the whole plan of salvation, yet is burdened by his own human frailties as he asks the Lord to remember their former *hesed* relationship. Nephi's psalm echoes a similar lament:

17 Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.

18 I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me.

19 And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins; nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted (2 Nephi 4:17-19).

The 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm continues

: *8 Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way*

Here again, “the way” is the frequently used code in the psalms that refers to the sequence of the ordinances and covenants, and connotes the “way” or “path” by which one climbs the “mountain” that is symbolic of the Jerusalem Temple Mount, and/or the “way” one conducts his life after leaving the Temple. The generic “in *the way*” implies the introductory ideas taught to the initiate there. There is a subtle, but very real difference between teaching “sinners in *the way*,” and teaching the meek “*his way*,” as appears in the next verse. “Sinners,” apparently, are people who have yet to be taught to understand—adults who were repenting, or young adults who typically had been so absorbed in growing up in this world that their premortal covenants were not only lost from

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memory but also from seeming importance. As they mature such “sinners” must be taught “in the way”—the generic principles that have universal application. Then in “his way, as the focus of the prayer moves forward and the singer recounts his own spiritual maturation:

*9 The meek will he guide in judgment:*

In these words, we begin to understand the meaning of “meek.” That he will led them in judgment evinces that the singer has learned, and is still learning, to judge righteously. That represents the essence of the powers of both priesthood and kingship. The qualities of that judgment are described in the next verse and are enshrined in the Savior’s words, “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.”

*and the meek will he teach his way*

The person who sings this prayer is no longer taught in the generic “the way,” but is taught God’s way. He has learned how to judge with “mercy and truth,” and therefore can be taught what he otherwise could not know:

*10 All the paths of the Lord are mercy [hesed] and truth  
unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies*

In the phrase, “the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth,” “mercy” is *hesed* and emphasize that covenant friendship relationship; “truth” is that criteria upon which the judgment is made.

“Covenant,” is another reference to the covenants made at the Council, *sode* in v. 14.

Scholars are not quite sure what “testimonies” mean. But it seems to be a physical testimony (a *pistis*<sup>624</sup>) of God’s covenants with man. In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant is frequently called the Ark of the Testimony,<sup>625</sup> and Johnson suggested that our

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<sup>624</sup> See the chapter called, “Meaning of Faith—*pistis*.”

<sup>625</sup> Examples are: Exodus 25:16, Numbers 7:89, and Joshua 4:16.



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verse is a reference to an embroidered copy of the Ten Commandments the king wore on his person.<sup>626</sup> So verse ten might read, “All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his commandments.”

If that is correct, it appears the meek are those who keep the covenants they made at the Council (and that they re-made here), and also keep the commandments they receive in this world. One gets the same idea from psalms where the “testimony” is related to the experience on Sinai: “He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them” (Psalm 99:7). Keeping the commandments associated with the testimony seems to be a kind of authorization or ratification on the part of men and women, so that God can bless them according to those covenants:

*11 For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.*

“For thy name’s sake” is another instance of the covenant-name’s being used to represent the covenant itself. The meaning of that phrase would remain almost the same if the word were changed so it read: “For thy covenant’s sake.”

It is significant that at this point in this psalm that celebrates man’s eternal success, there is an expression of one’s total dependence upon the principle of repentance and the Savior’s Atonement:

*12 What man is he that feareth the Lord?  
him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose*

That reads: “What man is he that feareth [honor, respect] the Lord? him [the man] shall he [the Lord] teach in the way [same temple codeword as path] that he [the Lord] shall choose.”

That is different from “in *the* way.” This is no longer the generic teachings, ordinances, and covenants taught to “sinners.” Rather, it is the “way” the Lord “shall choose”—it is individually a teaching from the Spirit, designed to enable one to fulfill the covenantal assignments made at the Council:

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<sup>626</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 23-24.

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*13 His [the person's] soul shall dwell at ease;  
and his seed shall inherit the earth*

This is the promise of eternal family. Here is the covenant that the children of the meek, rather than just the meek themselves, shall inherit the earth. As discussed above, the new name given to the dead in the coronation passage of Isaiah 61 is another example of the Old Testament teachings of eternal increase.

*14 The secret [sode] of the Lord is with them that fear him;  
and he will shew them his covenant.*

The word “secret” is translated from the Hebrew word *sode*, so the verse reads, “The secret [*sode*] of the Lord is with them that fear him [“Fear” means respect, honor, revere]. The verse says: Those who honor the Lord will know the secrets of the Council; and the Lord will show them [the meek] his [the Lord's] covenant. That is, he will show them the covenants they made with him at the Council. Such information is an ultimate empowerment. One can not know where he is going unless he knows where he has been and what purpose he has in the journey.

As we have already observed, a *sode* experience is when an individual has a vision in which he is returned to the Council in Heaven to be re-taught about the assignment he received, and to re-affirm the covenants he made there. But, as the scriptures make clear, the Lord need not take Everyman back to the Council in order to teach each his premortal covenants—that was what the New Year festival temple drama was for; and of course, among other things, that is what the Holy Ghost is for.

The whole meaning of the 25<sup>th</sup> psalm is focused on that single verse. Indeed, the whole meaning of the New Year festival drama may also do so. Those words define the “meek” and put everything else in the 25th Psalm into its proper context. Verse 14 fits well with the ideas in verse 10 where one learned, “All the paths [codeword] of the Lord are mercy [being a righteous judge] and truth [knowledge things as they were, are, and will be] unto such as keep his covenant [the covenant made at the Council].”

The meek, then, are those who keep the covenants they made at the Council in Heaven. In that definition, the ordinary meaning of the word “meek” is not lost, but in these contexts,

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“meekness” has only to do with one’s being meek before the Lord, and has nothing whatever to do with being meek before men. Thus it was written of the prophet who defied Pharaoh and defeated all the armies of Egypt, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). What that meant was explained by the Lord to Miriam and Aaron, in the next few verses. The King James Version gives a somewhat muddled translation of that explanation, but the Tanakh makes that explanation very clear:

The Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, stopped at the entrance of the Tent, and called out, “Aaron and Miriam!” The two of them came forward; and He said, “Hear these My words: When a prophet of the Lord arises among you, I make Myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is trusted throughout My household. With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of the Lord. How then did you not shrink from speaking against My servant Moses!”<sup>627</sup>

The important statement is that Moses “is trusted throughout My household.” The “household” of God would be the same as the “household” of a king. That is, it would consist of not only his immediate family but also his official entourage—the inner circle of his counselors and court leaders. In the case of God, his “household” would be the members of the Council in Heaven. So the Lord’s statement that Moses “is trusted throughout My household” is a reference to the fact that Moses was originally called—and is presently sustained—by the other members of the Council. The statement that “Moses was very meek, above all the men,” simply means he kept with care and rectitude the covenants he made with God. One of the best examples in the Book of Mormon of a prophet who was truly meek is Abinadi standing before King Noah, defiantly asserting that Noah cannot have the power to kill him until after the prophet has delivered the message the Lord has sent him to deliver!<sup>628</sup>

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<sup>627</sup> *Tanakh*, Numbers 12:5-8.

<sup>628</sup> “Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver; neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell; therefore, God will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time” (Mosiah 13:3).

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To return to Psalm 25; the verse we are discussing reads:

*14 The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;  
and will shew them his covenant.*

That verse posits that the *sode*—the secret decisions of the Heavenly Council, made, sanctioned, and sealed by covenant in the presence of the Lord—is made known to those who honor him because the Lord would show them what that covenant was. That was done in generic form during the festival temple drama. Thereafter, by the power of the Holy Ghost each individual could be led to understand the intent of the specific covenant he had made. Then he might know what to do and how to live to fulfill that covenant.

An excellent illustration is the story of Jean Wunderlich.<sup>629</sup> At the end of World War II, he was called to be the first post-war mission president in West Germany. His assignment would be to find the remnants of the Saints there and help them come together and make the church a viable organization again. After receiving the call, he and his wife traveled to Salt Lake City where he was to be set apart by President David O. McKay. When they entered the prophet's office, President McKay stood, came from behind his desk, welcomed his guests, and invited them to sit down. Jean's wife sat in a chair by the door. Jean sat in a chair that the prophet had moved to the center of the room.

President McKay placed his hands on Jean's head and began to give him a blessing. Here, Jean stopped his narrative, his eyes lit up, and he said, "When the prophet has his hands on your head, you listen—and I was listening!" However, Jean said that President McKay had spoken only a few sentences when he gave a command that introduced Jean into the most powerful spiritual experience of his life. He saw a beautiful light, and other things which he did not describe. Jean said he again became aware of the prophet and the room, only when the blessing was finished, and he felt President McKay's hands lift from his head. Baker recalls, "Jean said that was the most significant experience of his whole life, and his telling me became one of the most significant conversations of mine. He said he was not telling me a story, he was giving me a gift. The gift he gave me was the words of the command which the prophet spoke, which initiated Jean's profound experience. Those words were these: 'Be true to the Law of your own Being.'"

Jean commented that in LDS theology "law" has an eternal connotation, and the

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<sup>629</sup> The story is as LeGrand Baker remembers Jean told it to him. Jean died several years ago so we cannot ask him to check the details.

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command to be true to that law suggests that one might also apostatize from it—that one may be at variance with who and what one really is. As Jean understood it, “the law of one’s own being” is simply what one IS—the individual personalities we each have developed and nurtured from the beginnings of our premortal cognizance.

He suggested that sin is simply one’s being in violation of the eternal law that is one’s Self—defying the law of one’s own being. He said that there are some things which none of us can do without doing violence to our Selves, such as stealing, blaspheming, and hurting other people. These generic sins are all covered by the basic commandments. But there are also things that are specific sins to only one individual, and are not sins to everyone else. He said he believed that a chief function of the Holy Ghost is to help one bring one’s earthly life into perfect accord with that law.

The phrase “law of one’s own being” is not found in the scriptures, but the concept is there, and the word “law” is used in connection with that concept.<sup>630</sup> It seems that if one is to comprehend the law of one’s own being, one must first seek to understand its origin, objective, and primary consequences—its relationship to the preliminaries of one’s foreordination; its relationship to one’s keeping the laws and commandments of the Lord while we were intelligences, then spirits, now in this life, and again in the next. It appears that is what the psalmist meant when he wrote:

*14 The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;  
and will shew them his covenant.*

During the presentation of the festival temple drama, for each individual the basic covenants were the same, but for each the individual meaning was specific, and the expanse of those covenants was among the biggest ideas one’s mind could reach around. It was probably in response to the bigness of the idea, that the next line recalls the Lord’s covenants of invulnerability, and expresses thanks for the fulfillment of those covenants:

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<sup>630</sup> Many of these scriptures also emphasize free agency: D&C 88:28-33, 93:29-38; 2 Nephi 2:11-30, 9:14-16, 26:10; Alma 13:3, 40:24-26, Alma 42:7; Moses 4:3-4; Moroni 7:15-17; Ether 12:27-35; Moroni 10:32-33; 2 Ne. 10:23-24 Abraham 3:22-28. At the funeral of Jedediah M. Grant, Heber C. Kimball reported: “He said that after he came back [from the spirit world] he could look upon his family and see the spirit that was in them, and the darkness that was in them; and that he conversed with them about the Gospel, and what they should do, and they replied, ‘Well, brother Grant, perhaps it is so, and perhaps it is not,’ and said that was the state of this people, to a great extent, for many are full of darkness and will not believe me.” (*Journal of Discourses* 4:136).

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*15 Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord  
for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.*

The “net” would be the people or other obstacles that seek to entangle one’s feet to prevent one from “walking” in the “way” and from keeping one’s covenants. Those impediments are very real, and once again, in this psalm which is a celebration of the blessings of eternal life, one is brought face to face with the difficulty of just muddling through this lonely, dark world.

We have wandered so far in our discussion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm, that it seems a good idea to read it again without all the interruptions, and also to add the concluding verses which evoke the promises of the covenant of invulnerability. The Psalm reads in full:

- 1 Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
- 2 O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed,  
let not mine enemies triumph over me.
- 3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed:  
let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.
- 4 Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths.
- 5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me:  
for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.
- 6 Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses [*hesed*];  
for they have been ever of old.
- 7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:  
according to thy mercy [*hesed*] remember thou me for thy goodness’ sake, O Lord.
- 8 Good and upright is the Lord:  
therefore will he teach sinners in the way.
- 9 The meek will he guide in judgment:  
and the meek will he teach his way.
- 10 All the paths of the Lord are mercy [*hesed*] and truth  
unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.
- 11 For thy name’s sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.
- 12 What man is he that feareth the Lord?  
him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.
- 13 His soul shall dwell at ease;

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- and his seed shall inherit the earth.
- 14 The secret [*sode*]of the Lord is with them that fear him;  
and he will shew them his covenant.
- 15 Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord;  
for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.
- 16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me;  
for I am desolate and afflicted.
- 17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged:  
O bring thou me out of my distresses.
- 18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain;  
and forgive all my sins.
- 19 Consider mine enemies; for they are many;  
and they hate me with cruel hatred.
- 20 O keep my soul, and deliver me:  
let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.
- 21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me;  
for I wait on thee.
- 22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles (Psalm 25:1-22).

The final three verses return the audience to the place where the psalm began. It is a prayer for strength to retain one's integrity, so that the Lord can keep his part of the covenant.

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## **The King at the Veil of Solomon's Temple**

Because Solomon's Temple was built like Moses's Tabernacle, we can go back to the Lord's instructions to Moses to discover the general appearance of the veil before which the king stood. The Lord's instructions read:

- 31 And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made:
- 32 And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver.

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33 And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.

34 And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place.

35 And thou shalt set the table without the vail, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side (Exodus 26:31-35).

The instructions, as recorded there, show that a single veil separated the Holy Place where the king was prepared and invited to enter God's presence, from the Holy of Holies which was Gods throne room.<sup>631</sup> However, Paul's description has an altogether different ring. He wrote:

1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.

3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant (Hebrews 9:1-4).

The clear implication is that Paul understood that there were two veils between the Holy Place, where the menorah and shewbread table were, the Holy of Holies where the Ark was. The rationale that it imposes is very simple. If there was a "second veil" that led into the Holiest of All, then there must also have been a first veil that stood before it. One would suppose that the first would have been the beautifully embroidered curtain. Behind that curtain would have been the veil Paul referred to that led directly into the most sacred part of Solomon's Temple. It is probable that after the Babylonian captivity the Jews who had changed their temple ceremonies would not have known what to do with the second one, so the authors and editors of our Old Testament simply failed to mention it. It is also unlikely that there was a second veil behind the embroidered curtain in Herod's Temple. If there was

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<sup>631</sup> Exodus 36:35-36 tells that Moses followed those instructions.



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not, then when the New Testament gospels speak of the veil of the temple that was rent at the time of the Savior's death, they refer to the embroidered curtain (Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45).

The psalms suggest there is a third veil—the real one, the *shechinah*, the veil of light—that is represented by the one in Solomon's Temple. One of the Psalms seems to speak of it as separating us from the presence of God:

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great;  
thou art clothed with honour and majesty.  
2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment:  
who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain (Psalm 104:1-2).

The Book of Mormon gives an explicit understanding of the opening of that veil. Here we quote only Moroni's commentary about the brother of Jared's experience:

6 And it came to pass that when the brother of Jared had said these words, behold, the Lord stretched forth his hand and touched the stones one by one with his finger. And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood; and the brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear. ...

19 And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting.

20 Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him (Ether 3:6, 19-20).

Later, Moroni tells us:

19 And there were many whose faith was so exceedingly strong, even before Christ came, who could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld with an eye of faith, and they were glad.

20 And behold, we have seen in this record that one of these was the brother of Jared (Ether 12:19-20).

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The ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood are prerequisite to entering that veil, as the Lord explained:

- 19 And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.  
20 Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.  
21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;  
22 For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.  
23 Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God (D&C 84:19-23).<sup>632</sup>

The king's standing before the veil of Solomon's Temple was symbolic of that. It was a culmination of all of the hopes, prayers, sacrifices, and covenants that he and the people had experienced through the whole duration of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama.<sup>633</sup> It symbolized God's having kept all of the covenants he made with the king and the people

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<sup>632</sup> Implicitly, there may be more than three. Another may separate us from Kolob and the sacred space where one can see all things in sacred time. The Lord explained to Joseph:

22 Behold, it is my will, that all they who call on my name, and worship me according to mine everlasting gospel, should gather together, and stand in holy places;

23 And prepare for the revelation which is to come, when the veil of the covering of my temple, in my tabernacle, which hideth the earth, shall be taken off, and all flesh shall see me together (D&C 101:12-23).

In another place, the Lord told the Prophet:

95 And there shall be silence in heaven for the space of half an hour; and immediately after shall the curtain of heaven be unfolded, as a scroll is unfolded after it is rolled up, and the face of the Lord shall be unveiled;

96 And the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened and be caught up to meet him.

97 And they who have slept in their graves shall come forth, for their graves shall be opened; and they also shall be caught up to meet him in the midst of the pillar of heaven—

98 They are Christ's, the first fruits, they who shall descend with him first, and they who are on the earth and in their graves, who are first caught up to meet him; and all this by the voice of the sounding of the trump of the angel of God (D&C 88:95-98).

<sup>633</sup> For a shorter, but still complete, description of a veil ceremony, see 2 Nephi 9:41-42.

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long before, when they were at the Council in Heaven.

One of the most stirring psalms that celebrates the love between God and his children is described by Harrelson this way: "This meditation on God's power and knowledge focuses upon the inner being of man, that sense man has of being dealt with by God at every moment, whether waking and sleeping. The external world hardly appears at all until close to the end of this profound psalm."<sup>634</sup> He is describing the 139<sup>th</sup> Psalm. It reads:

- 1 O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.
- 2 Thou knowest my downsitteing and mine uprising,  
    thou understandest my thought afar off.
- 3 Thou compasses my path and my lying down,  
    and art acquainted with all my ways.
- 4 For there is not a word in my tongue,  
    but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.
- 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before,  
    and laid thine hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
    it is high, I cannot attain unto it.
- 7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit?  
    or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
- 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:  
    if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
- 9 If I take the wings of the morning,  
    and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
- 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me,  
    and thy right hand shall hold me.
- 11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;  
    even the night shall be light about me.
- 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee;  
    but the night shineth as the day:  
    the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.
- 13 For thou hast possessed my reins:

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<sup>634</sup> Walter Harrelson, "On God's Knowledge of the Self—Psalm 139," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 2 (1975): 261.

### *In the Old Testament*

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thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.  
14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made:  
    marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.  
15 My substance was not hid from thee,  
    when I was made in secret,  
    and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.  
16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect;  
    and in thy book all my members were written,  
    which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.  
17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!  
    how great is the sum of them!  
18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand:  
    when I awake, I am still with thee.  
19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God:  
    depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.  
20 For they speak against thee wickedly,  
    and thine enemies take thy name in vain.  
21 Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?  
    and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?  
22 I hate them with perfect hatred:  
    I count them mine enemies.  
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart:  
    try me, and know my thoughts:  
24 And see if there be any wicked way in me,  
    and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:1-24).

The psalm asserts the king's worthiness to approach God. The veil before which the king stood was like the one that Moses had made for the Tabernacle (Exod. 26.31; 36.35), except the one in Solomon's Temple was much larger. It was fine white linen with cherubim embroidered on it in threads of blue, purple, and crimson (2 Chronicles 3:14).<sup>635</sup> The

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<sup>635</sup> Barker gives a history of the temple veil: "The veil of the temple was woven from blue, purple, crimson and white thread, and embroidered with cherubim (2 Chron. 3.14); the veil in the tabernacle had been similar.<sup>2</sup> It was a valuable piece of fabric, and both Antiochus and Titus took a veil when they looted the temple (1 Macc. 1.21-22; Josephus, *War* 7.162). In the second temple it was some 200 square metres of fabric

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cherubim represented the members of the Council who stood before the throne of God (as in Isaiah 6)

One of the most meaningful of the Psalms was sung as the king stood at the veil and requested, as an adopted son, to enter the Holy of Holies. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Psalm, as in many of the others, the words were spoken by different voices. One can recognize those voices even though there are no stage directions. This was another high point of the festival drama, when the king entered the presence of Jehovah in his own throne room. The sense of awe one finds here is reminiscent of Job's response as he considered the wonder of a similar situation and of the things he had done and said that had brought him to this point:

1 Then Job answered the Lord, and said, ...

3 I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee (Job 42:1-5).

In Alma 5 in the Book of Mormon, when Alma was asking the people in the congregation if they could still the song of redeeming love, as they had once sung it, it seems likely that the hymn he was referring to was the 21<sup>st</sup> Psalm.<sup>636</sup>

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and when it contracted uncleanness and had to be washed, 300 priests were needed for the job (*m. Shekalim* 8.4-5). Josephus says it was a Babylonian tapestry (*War* 5.212), a curtain embroidered with a panorama of the heavens (*War* 5.213). The veil separated the holy place from the most holy (Exod. 26.33), screening from view the ark and the cherubim or, in the temple, the ark and the chariot throne. We are told that only the high priest entered the holy of holies, once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Josephus, who was himself a priest (*Life* 1), says that the tabernacle was a microcosm of the creation, divided into three parts: the outer parts represented the sea and the land but 'the third part thereof. ..to which the priests were not admitted, is, as it were, a heaven peculiar to God' (*Ant.* 3.181). *Thus the veil which screened the holy of holies was also the boundary between earth and heaven.*" (Barker, *Great High Priest*, 188.)

<sup>636</sup> For a further explanation, see the chapter below that discusses Alma 5, 739-64.

## **The Veil Ceremony in Psalm 21**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Psalm begins as someone describes the action on the stage. Again, it might have been a chorus, or a narrator, but we prefer to believe it was the entire congregation who sang this part:

1. *The king shall joy in thy strength,  
O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!*
2. *Thou hast given him his heart's desire,  
and hast not withholden the request of his lips.*

This is what we know about what has already happened on the stage: the king has asked the Lord for something, and the Lord has granted that request. In the next verse there is an unusual word, “preventest.” The footnote in the LDS Bible helps with that. It says that the words “thou preventest him” might be translated “thou wilt meet him.” When we use that phrase, this is the way the chorus described the Lord’s response to the king’s request:

3. *For thou wilt meet him with the blessings of goodness:  
thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head,<sup>637</sup>*

In the next verse we learn what the blessing was that the king had requested:

4. *He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him,  
even length of days for ever and ever. [i.e. through all eternity]*
5. *His glory is great in thy salvation:  
honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him*

“Honour and majesty” are the names of the clothing that represents his priesthood and

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<sup>637</sup> The prophet Enoch describes an experience in a similar sequence:  
3 And it came to pass that I turned and went up on the mount; and as I stood upon the mount, I beheld the heavens open, and I was clothed upon with glory;  
4 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 (Moses 7:3-4).

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kingship.<sup>638</sup> The implication here is that God himself has either dressed the king, or more likely, that God has given instructions about how he should be dressed.

*6. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever:  
thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.*

The king had received a blessing that reached “for ever,” and now the king is “exceeding glad” because he had seen the countenance of God. This could not say more clearly that the king has been invited into the presence of his God.

*7 For the king trusteth in the Lord,  
and through the mercy of the most High  
he shall not be moved.*

That he will not be moved is an affirmation of the king’s integrity, and his determination to keep the covenants he has made with the Lord.

The next five verses in the psalm are spoken by God to the king. It is easy for us to read them in the context of our own time—and that without much understanding, for they sound like a battle hymn whose emphasis is victory in war. But when one recalls that they were written in a time very unlike our own, then the words have a different ring altogether. In the days of ancient Israel, there were no police forces that kept one safe as he traveled. People built walls around cities, and the wealthy built fortifications on their own estates. The words in our psalm, and many like them in other psalms and in Isaiah, are promises of protection—of personal invulnerability—the same kind of invulnerability he promises all those who keep his commandments:

*8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies:  
thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.*  
*9. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger:  
the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath,  
and the fire shall devour them.*  
*10. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth,  
and their seed from among the children of men.*

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<sup>638</sup> See the chapters on the king’s coronation for more details, 461-552.

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11. *For they intended evil against thee:  
they imagined a mischievous device,  
which they are not able to perform.*
12. *Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back,  
when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy  
strings against the face of them.*

The final verse is an anthem of praise, sung by the people who sang the first verses of the psalm:

13. *Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength:  
so will we sing and praise thy power. (Psalm 21:1-13)<sup>639</sup>*

About these events, Barker observes:

The rituals of the holy of holies were thus taking place outside time and matter, in the realm of the angels and the heavenly throne, and those who functioned in the holy of holies were more than human, being and seeing beyond time.<sup>640</sup>

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<sup>639</sup> For a discussion of Psalm 21, see F. Charles Fensham, "Ps 21 – A Covenant-Song?" *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 77 (1965): 193-202.

<sup>640</sup> Barker, *Great High Priest*, 81



## **Act 2, Scene 11: The King Enters the Holy of Holies of Solomon's Temple**

When the veil was parted the king entered the Holy of Holies, the most sacred of all earthly sacred space. It, like its predecessor in the Tabernacle, was a perfect cube.<sup>641</sup> It contained no furniture except a throne on the back wall.

In the Tabernacle, Moses had built a small prototype of God's throne on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, with two Cherubim whose wings stretched over the invisible throne, called the Mercy Seat. Below the lid, in the Ark itself, he placed the stone tablets on which the Lord had written the Ten Commandments, the staff of Aaron which was a symbol of his priesthood, and a jar of manna which represented the bread of life—the law (kingship), the staff (priesthood), and the bread of life (power of salvation).

Solomon's Temple throne was like that, but much larger. In the Temple's Holy of Holies, on either side of the throne were two great golden cherubim. Their wings touched the sides of the walls and made a kind of canopy that stretched over the throne; over whoever sat upon that throne; and over the Ark of the Covenant which now sat in front of the throne as its footstool (1 Kings 6:24, 8:6-7). The phrases that God “dwesteth between the cherubims (Psalm 80:1 and Isaiah 37:16), and “sitteth between the cherubims” (Psalm 99:1), are references to God sitting on his throne, either in his heavenly or in his earthly temple.

The throne was patterned after a chariot (1 Chronicles 28:1-21),<sup>642</sup> representing God's ability to move among the clouds, and the symbolism of cherubim's overshadowing wings represented the powerful wings of the celestial cherubim, upon whose majesty God himself is also said to have ridden. For, “he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind” (Psalm 18:10 and 2 Samuel 22:11). And upon whose wings he invites his children to ride also. “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall

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<sup>641</sup> For a description of the Holy of Holies, see 1 Kings 6:1-38, 8:1-15; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chronicles 28:1-21; 2 Chronicles 3:1-17, 5:1-14.

<sup>642</sup> For a discussion of the possible patterns of Solomon's chariots, see Chaim Herzog and Mordechi Gichon, *Battles of the Bible* (London: Greenhill Books, 1997), 118-19.

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mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

Josephus’s description of the interior of the Temple is the most complete. He writes:

Now when the king had divided the temple into two parts, he made the inner house of twenty cubits every way, to be the most secret chamber, but he appointed that of forty cubits to be the sanctuary; and when he had cut a door-place out of the wall, he put therein doors of Cedar, and overlaid them with a great deal of gold, that had sculptures upon it. He also had veils of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and the brightest and softest linen, with the most curious flowers wrought upon them, which were to be drawn before those doors. He also dedicated for the most secret place, whose breadth was twenty cubits, and length the same, two cherubim of solid gold; the height of each of them was five cubits they had each of them two wings stretched out as far as five cubits; wherefore Solomon set them up not far from each other, that with one wing they might touch the southern wall of the secret place [the Holy of Holies], and with another the northern: their other wings, which joined to each other, were a covering to the ark, which was set between them; but nobody can tell, or even conjecture, what was the shape of these cherubim. He also laid the floor of the temple with plates of gold; and he added doors to the gate of the temple, agreeable to the measure of the height of the wall, but in breadth twenty cubits, and on them he glued gold plates. And, to say all in one word, he left no part of the temple, neither internal nor external, but what was covered with gold. He also had curtains drawn over these doors in like manner as they were drawn over the inner doors of the most holy place; but the porch of the temple had nothing of that sort.<sup>643</sup>

It was there, in the Holy of Holies, at the throne of God, that the final scenes of the festive drama were conducted.

The cherubim who surround the celestial throne of God are represented as having wings, by Isaiah (6:2), Ezekiel (1:6-11), Daniel (7:4-6), and John (Revelation 4). But we were told by the Prophet Joseph that “wings are a representation of power, to move, to act,

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<sup>643</sup> Josephus, trans. Whiston, *Complete Works: History of the Jews* 8:3, 163. See Barker, *Great High Priest*, 188.

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etc.” (D&C 77:4). That is also probably a way of describing their priesthood power.

Because the throne and its overshadowing wings were symbolic of the reality and power of priesthood and kingship, they were also symbolic of the invitation to receive the gift of eternal life. The Savior used that symbolism repeatedly, as a lament addressed to those who would not accept the invitation. He said:

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!  
(Matthew 23:37, see Luke 13:34, 3 Nephi 10:4-6, D&C 43:24).

And also as a promise to those who would:

2 [The Savior] will gather his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, even as many as will hearken to my voice and humble themselves before me, and call upon me in mighty prayer (D&C 29:2, see 10:65). Nephi's statement, resounding as it does with the clarity of the ancient enthronement ordinances, is a testimony of the validity of those ordinances, and an example of their fulfilment:

25 And upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away upon exceedingly high mountains. And mine eyes have beheld great things, yea, even too great for man; therefore I was bidden that I should not write them (2 Nephi 4:25).

The wings have a further and expected symbolism. It is the association of the ideas of enthronement with the promise of security and peace, as Nephi prophesied:

Behold, they will crucify him; and after he is laid in a sepulchre for the space of three days he shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings;<sup>644</sup> and all those who shall believe on his name shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Wherefore, my soul delighteth to prophesy concerning him, for I have seen his day, and my

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<sup>644</sup> One wonders if this beautiful phrase might have come from a psalm that is now lost to us. It was also quoted by Malachi (4:2) and he was quoted by the Savior (3 Nephi 25:2), but Nephi could not have had access to Malachi's statement. Neither could Malachi have had access to Nephi's. That suggests that each quoted some earlier source we do not now have.

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heart doth magnify his holy name (2 Nephi 25:13).

After his ordination and anointing, the king was a living messiah<sup>645</sup>—not *the* “Messiah,” but rather *a* “messiah,” meaning an anointed one, a king of righteousness, and the legitimate “son” and heir of God. He had been crowned with a “crown of pure gold”<sup>646</sup> and accepted God’s invitation to sit upon his own throne in the Temple. Mowinckel observes,

“We know that Solomon had furnished the Temple with an (empty) cherub’s throne, which was certainly understood to be the throne of Yahweh. In the very old Psalm 110 Yahweh is the king, sitting on his throne and offering to his ‘son’, the earthly king, the seat of honor at his right side. In the likewise very old Psalm 68 the worshiper calls Yahweh ‘his king and his god.’”<sup>647</sup>

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## **Jehovah’s Ascent to His Own Celestial Throne**

Mowinckel’s description of the king’s entering the Holy of Holies is that of a scholar who had a deep reverence for the scene he was describing. He wrote:

Everything contained in the enthronement psalms, then, gives the strongest impression of belonging to the actual present. It is not only in their imagination that the poets have witnessed Yahweh’s arrival and ascent of the throne as a present event (which by its nature might belong either to the past or to the future); no, they

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<sup>645</sup> Aubrey R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 14.

For a discussion of both the title, “messiah,” and its significance to Israel’s kings see Davenport, “Anointed of the Lord,” 67-92. Davenport shows that the idea of a Davidic messiah persisted long after the Babylonian exile, and that the continued belief in a Davidic messiah was “important primarily as testimony to the dependability of God.” 85.

<sup>646</sup> His golden crown is found in Psalm 21. For a discussion of the types and symbolisms of ancient crowns see Gregory M. Stevenson, “Conceptual Background to Golden Crown Imagery in the Apocalypse of John (4:4, 10; 14:14),” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 114, 2 (Summer 1995): 257-72. He wrote about the crown of the Israelite High Priests (p. 263), but does not mention the crowns of the pre-exilic kings.

<sup>647</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1:125.

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refer to something objective and experienced outside themselves but with which they have been contemporaneous. That which they are witnessing: that the Lord after certain acts, goes up, and seats himself on the throne and is acclaimed as having taken the name of the king, is an act which already to the poet's vision is a myth, and might easily have been presented in the epic form of the myth. But it is noticeable that the poets never describe this enthronement as such; they merely refer to it in hymnal form as something real and well known, and which the audience also can understand. They do not need to describe it; they merely rejoice that it has now taken place. If it had been an image of the future, present only in their imagination, they could not have expected their audience to have understood what they were talking about; we should then have expected them to describe what they saw and tell their listeners that this many-sided and portentous enthronement was now taking place, or was going to happen. The picture of the enthronement is thus not simply a poetical conception which the authors have received individually and which they put before their listeners to make them also experience the event. They take it for granted that the series of events referred to is well known beforehand to those who are to hear or sing the psalm; they refer to a (mythical) conception which they share with a large group. The enthronement of Yahweh must to them have been an event which could be both presented and alluded to, because the group knew that it had now taken place.<sup>648</sup>

Symbolically, after the king and the Ark entered the Holy of Holies, Jehovah returned to his own throne in the heavens and left the earthly king to preside in his kingdom. Psalm 99, which is one that Gunkel identified as a "royal psalm," celebrates Jehovah's kingship:

- 1 The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble:  
    he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.
- 2 The Lord is great in Zion;  
    and he is high above all the people.
- 3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name;  
    for it is holy.
- 4 The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity,  
    thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

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<sup>648</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:111-12.

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- 5 Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool;  
for he is holy.
- 6 Moses and Aaron among his priests,  
and Samuel among them that call upon his name;  
they called upon the Lord, and he answered them.
- 7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar:  
they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them.
- 8 Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God:  
thou wast a God that forgavest them,  
though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.
- 9 Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill;  
for the Lord our God is holy (Psalm 99:1-9).

Widengren cited Psalm 7:7, "May the congregation of the peoples surround Thee, and Thou, above it, return to the height," and took that to mean "that Yahweh, enthroned in this congregation, returns to the height (where as we have seen, He has His throne)."<sup>649</sup> He observes, "God has His seat here on the top of the cosmic mountain which is, as it were, His throne."<sup>650</sup>

The line in Psalm 29, "The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever," seems to be a celebration of Jehovah's return to his own temple. The psalm is certainly a celebration of his power and glory. It reads:

1. Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty,  
give unto the Lord glory and strength.
- 2 Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;  
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
- 3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters:  
the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters.
- 4 The voice of the Lord is powerful;  
the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.
- 5 The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars;

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<sup>649</sup> Widengren, "Early Hebrew Myths," 193.

<sup>650</sup> Widengren, "Early Hebrew Myths," 164.

### *Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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- yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.  
6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf;  
    Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.  
7 The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.  
8 The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness;  
    the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.  
9 The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests:  
    and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.  
10 The Lord sitteth upon the flood;  
    yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.  
11 The Lord will give strength unto his people;  
    the Lord will bless his people with peace (Psalm 29:1-11).

Gunkel recognized Psalm 96 as another royal psalm that celebrated Jehovah's own supremacy and coronation. The psalm reads:

- 1 O sing unto the Lord a new song:  
    sing unto the Lord, all the earth.  
2 Sing unto the Lord, bless his name;  
    shew forth his salvation from day to day.  
3 Declare his glory among the heathen,  
    his wonders among all people.  
4 For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised:  
    he is to be feared above all gods.  
5 For all the gods of the nations are idols:  
    but the Lord made the heavens.  
6 Honour and majesty are before him:  
    strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.  
7 Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people,  
    give unto the Lord glory and strength.  
8 Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name:  
    bring an offering, and come into his courts.  
9 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness:

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fear before him, all the earth.<sup>651</sup>

- 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.
- 11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;  
let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.
- 12 Let the field be joyful, and all that Lordis therein:  
then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice
- 13 Before the Lord: for he cometh,  
for he cometh to judge the earth:  
he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the  
people with his truth (Psalm 96:1-13).

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<sup>651</sup> See Freedman and Hyland, "Psalm 29," 244 reads: "'the holy place,' i.e., the heavenly temple of Yahweh, as well as its earthly counterpart in the central sanctuary."



## **Act 2, Scene 12: “Establishing” the King’s Feet**

Probably at the beginning of the performance of the festival drama, the Ark of the Covenant had been removed from Solomon’s Temple. When it was returned during the great procession of the seventh day, it represented God’s presence, and later it symbolized God’s authority when it sat in the Holy of Holies before the great golden throne at the conclusion of the drama.

The Ark of the Covenant had been the portable earthly throne of God while the Israelites had a portable temple, but when the Tabernacle was replaced by the Temple of Solomon, the Ark took on a slightly different role. When Solomon built his magnificent Temple, he also built, in its Holy of Holies, a new and wondrous throne. In the Temple the throne was a permanent fixture that sat between two huge cherubim. The Ark of the Covenant, still portable, and still representing God’s celestial throne, was placed in front of the throne and became an integral part of it.<sup>652</sup>

After Jehovah symbolically left the earthly temple to be enthroned in his Celestial one, the Ark of the Covenant no longer represented the presence of God, but now it represented God’s authority. As such, it became the footstool of the throne in the Holy of Holies. Sarna explains:

This conception of the sacred Ark of the Covenant as a footstool beneath the throne of God in the Holy of Holies seems strange to the Western mind. It becomes intelligible, however, if it is viewed within the context of the thought world of the ancient Near East. There, the throne and the footstool go together so that often they may form a single article of furniture. In many instances the footstool would be richly and symbolically decorated. So important were the two appurtenances of royalty that in Egypt, throne and footstool were frequently entombed together with the mummy of the pharaoh. The reason for their extraordinary status is that they evoked notions of majesty, exaltation,

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<sup>652</sup> 1 Chronicles 28:1-6; 2 Chronicles 9:1-20; Psalms 99:4-9, 132:2-18; Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:7, 59, 117, 129, 176, 177; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 20-21; Seow, *Myth, Drama*, 139. G. Henton Davies, “The Ark of the Covenant,” *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 5 (1967): 30-47.

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preeminence, sovereignty, and power. In the Israelite Tabernacle there was no actual throne, only the boxlike Ark with its tablets of stone inside it and its cherubim on top of it—an abiding reminder both of the invisible presence of the sovereign God and of His inescapable demands upon His people.

All this explains why the Ark was thought to assume a numinous aspect and to possess a dangerous potency. It constituted the understructure of the sacred space above it, space that was imbued with the extra-holiness radiated by the Divine Presence.<sup>653</sup>

Designating the Ark as the footstool was not a sacrilege, because a footstool was an essential part of the throne, and no human feet would ever rest upon it except those of the anointed king, who was the adopted son and legal earthly heir of Jehovah.

When the king and the Ark of the Covenant entered the Holy of Holies, Jehovah, having reestablished his earthly kingdom, symbolically returned to his own throne in the heavens and left the mortal king, his adopted son and heir, to preside in this world. The king's legitimacy was confirmed by his actually taking his seat upon the throne of God. This was important, for the king was still Adam. He had regained his garment of light, and could reclaim his place on the earthly throne of God. Symbolically everyone in the audience had also participated in *all* the rites of the drama. Thus, Jehovah had created a nation of priests and sacral kings.

Therefore, sitting upon the throne under the wings of the cherubim represented not only priesthood power and temporal majesty but also security and peace, as is expressed in the 63rd psalm, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice" (Psalm 63:7).<sup>654</sup> Mowinckel asserted: "In the cultic drama he represents David: Yahweh is represented by His holy ark, by the 'footstool' before the throne on which He [God] is invisibly seated. ...It is the king who receives Yahweh's promises, His blessings, and His power; and he transmits them to the community which he represents."<sup>655</sup>

The sacred Ark of the Covenant, serving as the footstool to the throne of God,

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<sup>653</sup> Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 210-11.

<sup>654</sup> See also Psalms 17:8, 36:7, 57:1, 61:4, 91:4

<sup>655</sup> Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 84. As examples Mowinckel's footnote gives Psalms 132:11ff; 72; cf. 20:8f; 21:10; and Isaiah 55:3.

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represented the authority of God in three ways: (1) It was the means—provided by Jehovah—by which the king ascended to the throne of God; (2) it contained within it the sacred emblems of kingship, priesthood, and the fruit of the tree of life;<sup>656</sup> and (3) it was the place where the king's feet were “established” after his coronation.<sup>657</sup> Johnson observes that “just as the Ark is the symbol of Yahweh's Person, so Mount Zion corresponds to the divine Mount of Assembly, and the Temple itself is the earthly counterpart of the divine King's heavenly Palace.”<sup>658</sup>

Thus the king's being on the throne with his feet securely planted on the Ark of the Covenant was a multi-faceted affirmation of his royal status and of his acceptability before God.<sup>659</sup>

The Ark of the Covenant was placed before the throne in the Holy of Holies in the Rock that was believed to be the connecting place between heaven and earth.<sup>660</sup>

Ritmeyer's report that the Ark was not simply placed *on* the floor of the Holy of Holies, but that anciently an indentation the same size as the Ark had been carved into the Rock so that the Ark sat *in* the Rock, suggests that the Ark became an extension of the Rock. Ritmeyer's report reads:

‘The Priests brought the Ark of the Covenant of YHWH to its place, in the holy of

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<sup>656</sup> Paul writes that “the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant” (Hebrews 9:4), but by the time the Temple was built, the rod and the pot of manna had been lost. When the Ark was retrieved from the Canaanites, only the tablets were in it.

<sup>657</sup> This idea of kingship being represented by the “establishment” of one's feet, is represented in a prophecy of Isaiah about the time of the restoration of the gospel. The verse was on the brass plates, but is not the Bible version of Isaiah. It reads, “Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; for the feet of those who are in the east shall be established; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for they shall be smitten no more; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted” (1 Nephi 21:13).

<sup>658</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 75, fn.

<sup>659</sup> For that reason, the priests of Noah challenged Abinadi with, “What meaneth the words which are written, and which have been taught by our fathers, saying: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings” (Mosiah 12:20-21).

<sup>660</sup> Ritmeyer, *Secrets of Jerusalem's Temple Mount*, 91-110.

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Holies of the Temple’ (1Kings 8:6). That ‘place’ can now be identified as the rectangular depression in es-Sakhra [the sacred Rock that is covered by the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem] that measures 2 feet, 7 inches by 4 feet, 4 inches – 1.5 by 2.5 cubits – the same dimensions as the Ark of the Covenant that God commanded Moses to build in the wilderness (Exodus 25:10) and that was later housed in the Temple.”<sup>661</sup>

In its new role as the footstool of the throne, the Ark represented the connection between earth and heaven—and the king’s feet were established upon that Ark—symbolically giving evidence that he was also the connection between earth and heaven and therefore the ultimate political and ecclesiastical authority in Israel.

Psalms 132 refers to the people’s worshiping at God’s footstool, and anticipates the Lord’s returning to heaven:

7 We will go into his tabernacles:

we will worship at his footstool.

8 Arise, O Lord, into thy rest;

thou, and the ark of thy strength (Psalm 132:7-8).<sup>662</sup>

The symbolism is important. The footstool is the way by which one ascends the throne; in the Temple it was the throne of God. That same symbolism reflects a similar purpose for the creation of the earth and the purpose of the people on it. Isaiah wrote, “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool” (Isaiah 66:1). And the Savior warned:

34 But verily, verily, I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne;

35 Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool (3 Nephi 12:34-35)

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<sup>661</sup> Ritmeyer, *Secrets of Jerusalem’s Temple Mount*, 104.

<sup>662</sup> For discussions of Psalm 132, see Kruse, “Psalm CXXXII” 279-97; Laato, “Psalm 132 and the Development,” 49-66; Seow, *Myth, Drama*, 196; Hillers, “Ritual Procession,” 48-55.

Psalm 99 is similar in tone, but the reference is more subtle. It reads: 5 Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy (Psalm 99:5).

## *Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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The thrones—both the Ark in the Tabernacle and the great throne in Solomon's Temple—were designed to represent an earthly replica of God's heavenly throne, and the cherubim who guarded them were representative of the members of the Council in Heaven who attended God and guarded his throne in the celestial world.<sup>663</sup>

On the occasion of his enthronement, the king sat upon the throne of God in the Temple. There is an important account of that in the story of Solomon's coronation:

21 And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings unto the Lord, on the morrow after that day, even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel:

22 And did eat and drink before the Lord on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him unto the Lord to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest.

23 Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered,<sup>664</sup> and all Israel obeyed him (1 Chronicles 29:21-23).<sup>665</sup>

The passage gives only a brief sequence of the events of the coronation ceremony. After the king was anointed and adopted as a son, he had the right to sit on the throne of Jehovah as his heir and representative. Mowinckel elaborated, "It was supposed that 'Yahweh who sits upon the cherubim' was seated on it [the throne in the Holy of Holies] invisibly. When the king as the 'son of Yahweh' seats himself on his throne, this is a symbolic expression of the fact that he, as Yahweh's appointed governor, sits on the Lord's own throne, i.e. wields sovereign power in the name of Yahweh."<sup>666</sup>

Wensinck has written that the king's sitting upon the throne of God in the Holy of Holies would have been seen as a necessary part of the coronation because, symbolically, the king was still playing the part of Adam who had reclaimed his original royal status:

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<sup>663</sup> See for examples, Isaiah 6; D&C 77 and the associated passages in Revelation.

<sup>664</sup> The Hebrew word translated "prospered" is the same as the word used in Elohim's blessing to the prince in Psalm 45. 267.

<sup>665</sup> See Barker, "High Priest and the Worship," 93-111.

<sup>666</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:63-64.

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In the Old Testament the Holy Rock [upon which the Holy of Holies of Solomon's temple was built] is not mentioned; but Jerusalem as the place of the Divine Throne occurs I Chron. 29, 23: "And Solomon set himself upon the throne of Yahwe as a king, instead of David, his father." Here the royal throne is called the throne of Yahwe. Of course this expression springs from the idea that the king is the Khalifa of God; how closely God and the king are connected, appears in the idea that the royal throne is also the divine throne or an image of it. As God in his heavenly sanctuary sits upon his throne, so the king sits in the earthly sanctuary upon his throne. The centre of the earth and the pole of heaven, both are intimately connected with the throne. We find this already in the legends about Adam.

In the centre of the earth Adam is inaugurated by God as a king and a priest and set upon a throne. All this is meant typically of course; here the analogy is proclaimed between heaven and earth, godhead and kingship, navel and throne.<sup>667</sup>

During the ceremonies of the New Year Festival, the king had *walked* in the way of *righteousness* until he had come to the summit of the mountain where Jehovah's own throne awaited him. Now his feet were firmly established upon the Ark of the Covenant, and the sacred emblems of priesthood and kingship which it contained were the symbols of his own authority. The king's sitting on God's throne was a major symbolic act, an acknowledgment that he was God's legitimate son and heir.

There is evidence that post-exilic Jewish authors and editors of the Old Testament understood that principle also. Some of the evidence is not in what they wrote but what they left out when they edited the Law and Isaiah. Isaiah 49 presents an interesting example. It is a prophecy of the restoration of the gospel and the gathering of Israel. The Old Testament version of verses 13 reads:

13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted (Isaiah 49:13).

The same verse on the brass plates reads:

13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; for the feet of those who are in the east

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<sup>667</sup> A. J. Wensinck, *The Ideas of the Western Semites concerning the Navel of the Earth* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1916), 54-55.

### *Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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shall be established; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for they shall be smitten no more; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted (1 Nephi 21:13).

The missing phrase, “for the feet of those who are in the east shall be established” is a promise of sacral kingship. The “east” is the place where the righteous dwell. The reference to their feet being “established” is a reminder of the time when the king sat upon the throne of God in the Holy of Holies, with the Ark of the Covenant as the footstool to that throne. The promise in Isaiah a promise of sacral kingship. One gets a glimpse of it in the 40<sup>th</sup> Psalm that was probably sung as a celebration of the triumph of the great feast day of the drama:

1 I waited patiently for the Lord;  
and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.  
2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit,  
out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock,  
and established my goings (Psalm 40:1-2).

It is apparent that since the post-exilic Jews could no longer implement that promise, the phrase in Isaiah became an awkward reminder of the blessings of the past. That awkwardness was removed when the phrase was simply edited out of the passage. In contrast, modern revelation uses the phrase in the context of eternal priesthood and kingship:

16 Who hath appointed Michael your prince, and established his feet, and set him upon high, and given unto him the keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One, who is without beginning of days or end of life (D&C 78:16).

Four psalms allude to the king's sitting on the Temple throne under the cherubim wings. Of those, one says simply “in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast” (Psalm 57:1). Excerpts of the first three are:

7 Shew thy marvelous lovingkindness,

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O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put  
their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.

8 Keep me as the apple of the eye,  
hide me under the shadow of thy wings (Psalm 17:2-15).

1 Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.

2 From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee,  
when my heart is overwhelmed:

lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

3 For thou hast been a shelter for me,  
and a strong tower from the enemy.

4 I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever:  
I will trust in the covert of thy wings.

5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows:  
thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name (Psalm 61:1-5).

3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life,  
my lips shall praise thee.

4 Thus will I bless thee while I live:  
I will lift up my hands in thy name.

5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness;  
and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:

6 When I remember thee upon my bed,  
and meditate on thee in the night watches.

7 Because thou hast been my help,  
therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice (Psalm 63:3-7).

The fifth is a prayer of thanksgiving, spoken by “the children of men.” It is one of the strongest evidences that not just the reigning king but all of his people as sacral kings could symbolically—by right—sit upon the Temple throne:

1 The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart,  
that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes,  
until his iniquity be found to be hateful.



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- 3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit:  
    he hath left off to be wise, and to do good.
- 4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed;  
    he setteth himself in a way that is not good;  
    he abhorreth not evil.
- 5 Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens;  
    and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.
- 6 Thy righteousness is like the great mountains;  
    thy judgments are a great deep:  
    O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.
- 7 How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!  
    therefore the children of men put their trust under the  
    shadow of thy wings.
- 8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house;  
    and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.
- 9 For with thee is the fountain of life:  
    in thy light shall we see light.
- 10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee;  
    and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.
- 11 Let not the foot of pride come against me,  
    and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.
- 12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen:  
    they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise (Psalm 36:1-12).

This psalm may have been the one the Savior referred to when he lamented, “how often would I have gathered thy children together ... and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37).<sup>668</sup>

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<sup>668</sup> Luke 13:32-35; 3 Nephi 10:1-7; D&C 10:64-68, 29:1-4, 43:19-25.

## **The King's Palace Throne and The Importance of the Coronation Rites**

There were two royal thrones in Jerusalem. One was in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. It was the throne of Jehovah when he visited the world, and the one the king approached when he wished to speak with God.<sup>669</sup>

The other was in the king's palace. It was made of ivory overlaid with pure gold. Six steps led up to that throne, "with a footstool of gold, which were fastened to the throne" (2 Chronicles 9:18). On either side of the throne there were two lions, and other lions on each of the ascending steps.<sup>670</sup> The throne itself defined the king as preeminent above all other men.<sup>671</sup>

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<sup>669</sup> An example is when Hezekiah received a message from the king of Assyria demanding his surrender, and threatening otherwise to destroy Jerusalem:

14 And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord.

15 And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. ...

19 Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only. (2 Kings 19:14-15, 19)

<sup>670</sup> For a description of the king's palace, see 1 Kings 7:1-51. For a description of his throne, see 1 Kings 10:16-20 and 2 Chronicles 9:15-19.

<sup>671</sup> Ginzberg recorded a story of Joseph that sheds a great deal of light on the importance of the throne and the steps that elevated the king above all others. He wrote: "They brought him [Joseph] hastily out of the dungeon, but first Joseph, out of respect for the king, shaved himself, and put on fresh raiment, which an angel brought him from Paradise, and then he came in unto Pharaoh.

"The king was sitting upon the royal throne, arrayed in princely garments ... The throne upon which he sat was covered with gold and silver and with onyx stones, and it had seventy steps. If a prince or other distinguished person came to have an audience with the king, it was the custom for him to advance and mount to the thirty-first step of the throne, and the king would descend thirty-six steps and speak to him. But if one of the people came to have speech with the king, he ascended only to the third step, and the king would come down four steps from his seat, and address him thence. It was also the custom that one who knew all the seventy languages ascended the seventy steps of the throne to the top, but if a man knew only

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The symbolism of the king's coronation can be lost in the details of the ceremony if the rites are not understood as a single event: He had been washed, clothed in sacred garments, and anointed with a dual ordinance wherein the king was adopted and given the new royal name of "son" of God (Psalm 2) and made king of Israel. Thus he was the legitimate "son" and legal heir to the throne. Mowinckel had observed that his anointing was also a coronation ordinance wherein he received "a special endowment of the Spirit [which] is clearly associated with the rite."<sup>672</sup> He was crowned with a golden crown. Then the living king ascended to the throne of God, which was also representative of the throne of Adam. Thus the living king became as Adam, the first king and the son of God. As king, he was also the father to the then-present generation.<sup>673</sup> Mowinckel explains, "His divinity depends on the endowment he has received at his election and anointing and on the power flowing to him through the holy rites of the cult, by Yahweh's free will, and depending on the king's loyalty and obedience towards Yahweh's commandments."<sup>674</sup>

Borsch understood the ascension of Enoch to be similar to the enthronement of the king in the festival drama. He wrote:

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some of the seventy languages, he was permitted to ascend as many steps as he knew languages, whether they were many or few. And another custom of the Egyptians was that none could reign over them unless he was master of all the seventy languages. ...

"Joseph did more than merely interpret the dreams. When the king gave voice to doubts concerning the interpretation, he told him signs and tokens. ...

"[The Pharaoh] appointed the following day as the time for examining Joseph, who had returned to his prison in the meantime. ... During the night Gabriel appeared unto Joseph, and taught him all the seventy languages, and he acquired them quickly after the angel had changed his name from Joseph to Jehoseph. The next morning, when he came into the presence of Pharaoh and the nobles of the kingdom, inasmuch as he knew every one of the seventy languages, he mounted all the steps of the royal throne, until he reached the seventieth, the highest, upon which sat the king, and Pharaoh and his princes rejoiced that Joseph fulfilled all the requirements needed by one that was to rule over Egypt" (Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 2: "Joseph Before Pharaoh," 68-72).

<sup>672</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 15. The Bible records the anointings of six Israelite kings: Saul: 1 Samuel 10:1, David: 2 Samuel 5:3, Solomon: 1 Kings 1:39, Jehu: 2 Kings 9:6, Josh: 2 Kings 11:12, Jehoahaz: 2 Kings 23:30. Absalom was also anointed to be king: 2 Samuel 19:11.

<sup>673</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 152.

<sup>674</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:58. He cites: "Psalms 89:31-33; 18:21-25; 20:4; 132:10; 2 Samuel 7:14ff."

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But we are not astounded. Rather are we reminded of the king who is thought to ascend to the heavenly realms, falls down before his god, is raised up by the *priest*, calls out to the god and is proclaimed to be the counterpart and ancestor, that one who was before the creation, he who can be thought now to have an existence in heaven, the first of kings, the Man, or (emphasizing the idea of a counterpart) the Son of Man. The earthly king mounts to the throne of his primeval (now heavenly) ancestor and *becomes* him, or, if you will, becomes his representative. The Son of Man has existed before the creation, yes. But that one who is *now* to be the Son of Man, who is to be the king-Man, is now named and enthroned.<sup>675</sup>

The Temple at Jerusalem represented the same concepts as the Garden of Eden. The Temple was not just sacred space, it was the navel of the earth—the counterpart of the heavenly temple. It was the symbolism of creation, the place of enthronement, the gathering place of men and gods, the site of the sacred meal (representing the fruit of the tree of life). All these come together at the conclusion of the New Year festival temple drama. In ancient Israel, the Temple was the geographic and cosmic focal point of the earth, where the great New Year rites were presided over by the king as a representative of God on earth.<sup>676</sup>

One of the most beautiful and most significant of the psalms is the one the devil quoted when he tempted the Savior.<sup>677</sup> His reference to Psalm 91 was very apt. It was about the king, and Jesus is the Eternal King. During the coronation ceremony of the New Year festival, the sequence might have been this: Psalm 2, where the king received the royal new name; Psalm 21, where the king stood before the veil, received a promise of royal invulnerability, and saw God; and Psalm 91, where the king sat upon God's throne, where

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<sup>675</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 152. Barker believes this passage means what it says, that the king actually sat upon the throne of God in the Holy of Holies. Barker, *Great High Priest*, 81, 189. See Barker, "High Priest and the Worship," 94-99.

<sup>676</sup> Nibley, Hugh W., "Ancient Temples: What Do They Signify?" *Temples of the Ancient World*, 405.

<sup>677</sup> Matthew records:

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God (Matthew 4:5-7).

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the promises of invulnerability in this world were confirmed when the Lord showed him his salvation.

In the first verse of Psalm 91, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High,” “dwelleth” refers to the king’s being there in the Holy of Holies by right of his ordinances and because he kept God’s commandments. It was the same idea as in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” If that is correct, then “the secret place of the most High” was God’s throne in the Holy of Holies, and “shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” was a reference to the king’s sitting upon the throne in the Holy of Holies overshadowed by the great eagle-like wings of the cherubim. That interpretation seems to be confirmed in verse 4. The psalm reads:

- 1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High  
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 I will say of the Lord,  
He is my refuge and my fortress: my God;  
in him will I trust.
- 3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,  
and from the noisome pestilence.
- 4 He shall cover thee with his feathers,  
and under his wings shalt thou trust:  
his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.
- 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night;  
nor for the arrow that flieth by day;
- 6 Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness;  
nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.
- 7 A thousand shall fall at thy side,  
and ten thousand at thy right hand;  
but it shall not come nigh thee.
- 8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold  
and see the reward of the wicked.
- 9 Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge,  
even the most High, thy habitation;
- 10 There shall no evil befall thee,  
neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.
- 11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee,

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to keep thee in all thy ways.  
12 They shall bear thee up in their hands,  
lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.  
13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder:  
the young lion and the dragon  
shalt thou trample under feet (Psalm 91:1-13).

The last three verses of the psalm define the Davidic covenant as a promise of royal invulnerability: because of the king's love for the Lord, and because the king knew God's name (there is always a new name associated with a new covenant), the Lord will deliver him, will answer his prayers, and will guarantee him long life and salvation:

14 Because he hath set his love upon me,  
therefore will I deliver him:  
I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.  
15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him:  
I will be with him in trouble;  
I will deliver him, and honour him.  
16 With long life will I satisfy him,  
and shew him my salvation (Psalm 91:14-16).

Now, in his full capacity as king, in the full regalia of royalty (probably including his wearing an embroidered copy of the Ten Commandments on his person<sup>678</sup>), and having his feet firmly planted on the Ark of the Covenant as the root and source of this power, he read a portion of the Law of Moses to the people, and taught them its meaning and application.<sup>679</sup>

The king was now king indeed. He had passed through the entire sequence of events of the drama and had accumulated all of the powers of his progenitors. Borsch explained the importance of that concept. After discussing the king's role as Adam,<sup>680</sup> he added:

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<sup>678</sup> For a discussion of the king's wearing a copy of the Ten Commandments see the chapter entitled "Abinadi: The Drama's Sacral Kingship is about Being a Child of God," 691-724.

<sup>679</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 23; Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle*, 24-26, 36-37; Widengren, "King and Covenant," 9-10, 13, 21, 23.

<sup>680</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 92-93. See Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 424.

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We hope that we have now given good reason for holding that the legends involving First Man and king and Primordial Man (as a version of the king-god) are all inextricably bound one with another. Though obvious and useful distinctions are to be made, the fact of the matter is that myth and dramatic ritual seem often to have *confused* the attributes of these figures. Primarily it is the king, *playing* the role of his royal ancestor [Adam], who ascends to *become* the cosmic ruler, that has been the cause of this confusion.<sup>681</sup>

The “cosmic ruler” he speaks of is not God, or Adam, but David (or his heir), the king who was adopted as the son of God and can thereby legitimately rule over Israel as its king and sit upon the throne of God in the Temple.

In the drama, Adam was shown as the first king, “uniting in his person the three functions of king, priest, and prophet.”<sup>682</sup> The king (David or whichever of his descendants then occupied the throne) also played the part of Adam.<sup>683</sup> As David, during his reign, played the part of Adam, the first king of the earth, so, during subsequent reigns, other kings played the parts of both David and Adam, and they also became the first king of Israel. Mowinckel wrote that “The whole thing has the character of a cultic and historical drama, in which the king, the Anointed, evidently plays the part of David.”<sup>684</sup> Borsch added, “It is not so much that the divine has come to earth to be represented by a mortal man, as that the king-man has *become a divine* being and can represent the king-god to his people.”<sup>685</sup> In another place Borsch explains:

The festival was seen as a re-creation of the world. The powers of nature had been decaying, relapsing again toward chaos over the course of the year. The cycle had run its limit, and, if the natural order were to go on, the forces of chaos and death had to be defeated anew. During the days of the festival the creation story was therefore either ritually enacted or, at the least, ceremonially read. For these reasons the festival can be described, as

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<sup>681</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 132.

<sup>682</sup> Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle*, 28.

<sup>683</sup> See Widengren, *King and the Tree of Life*.

<sup>684</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:175.

<sup>685</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 93.

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it often was, as the festival of the New Year or the feast of the ending or turning of the year.

The central figure was the king; he was both chief actor and priest. Not only did he function as the representative of the people and their intermediary with the divine, but he could assume for certain designated parts of the drama the role of the king-god. 'What happens to the king symbolizes what has happened to the god' [Mowinckel]. The stage was cosmic; distinctions between earth and heaven were temporarily suspended. The king and the king-god could, represent-ationally, be one, their attributes confused.<sup>686</sup>

The confusion, which, by the way, Borsch believed to be deliberate, was partly the result of the dual nature of the Israelite concept of God and god, King and king, Messiah<sup>687</sup> (the Anointed One), and messiah (the one whose anointing was approved by

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<sup>686</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 92-93. See Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 424.

<sup>687</sup> "'Messiah' (Greek, *Messias*) represents the Aramaic *Mesiha*, Hebrew *ham-masiah*, 'the Anointed One'. ...'Jesus Messiah', or in Greek 'Jesus Christ', were His name and His title in the speech of the community, until the term 'Christ' also came to be regarded as a personal name." Sigmund Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 3.

"The word *messiah* is the Anglicized form of the Hebrew word for "anointed one" and forms the equivalent of the Greek *Christos*, from which we derive the title Christ. In the Old Testament, this term was used for kings when they were anointed with oil. (See Judg. 9:8; 1 Sam. 16:3, 12-13; 1 Kings 1:39; Psalm 89:20; Jac. 1:9; and Eth. 6:22, 27.) The future Messiah or anointed one, then, was described as a king who would rule over the house of Israel and all nations. (See Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5, 10; Hag. 2:22-23; and Zech. 9:9.) The same term is also applied to the high priest and other priesthood officials who were anointed in association with their priesthood offices. (See Exod. 28:41; 29:7; Lev. 7:35-36; and Num. 35:25.) The phrase "Messiah of Aaron and Israel" in the *Damascus Document* refers to a messiah who will be king over Israel and also stand as the great high priest, presiding over all the functions of the priesthood." (S. Kent Brown and C. Wilfred Griggs, "The Messiah and the Manuscripts, What Do Recently Discovered Documents Tell Us about Jesus?" *Ensign* 4, 9 [September 1974]: 69.)



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Jehovah)<sup>688</sup> —all of which are celebrated in the Psalms..<sup>689</sup>

Further confusion might arise from the fact that the people in the audience were also gods by virtue of their relationship with the Father in the premortal existence, as the Psalmist wrote, “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.”<sup>690</sup> Gunkel explains:

All the glory that surrounds the king comes from God—all that he actually now possesses and all the promise that the future holds for him. Jahveh has anointed him with the oil of joy and placed the crown of gold upon his head. It is Jahveh who gives him immortality and deathless glory. Scenes of battle are described in which God marches at the king's side and inspires the nations with fear before Him. But however highly the Court poet may laud the monarch, he never forgets Jahveh is high above the king. The great song of the victory that is promised in Psalm xxi.6 is not meant to extol the king, but to proclaim the glory of the deity who has helped him.<sup>691</sup>

In ancient Israel, the covenant relationship between the king and Jehovah seems to be symbolic of, if not parallel to, the covenant relationship between the people and Jehovah. The temples of heaven and earth both defined and sanctified those relationships, so that

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<sup>688</sup> “In the Old Testament the primary and proper sense of the expression ‘Yahweh’s Anointed’ is *the king*, the earthly king who at any given time is reigning over Yahweh’s people. The expression implies his close relationship to Yahweh, the sacral character of his office and his person (as priest-king), and the abnormal endowment of holy power which is his because he has been anointed king.’ (Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, 5.)

<sup>689</sup> To avoid confusion it should be noted that Aubrey R. Johnson, whose excellent work is quoted extensively here, capitalizes the word “Messiah” when he is referring to David or one of his descendants who has been anointed king. To retain the integrity of the quotations, and also to retain the continuity of this book, when we quote Johnson, we have changed that to a lower case “messiah.”

For a discussion of the comparison of the idea of “king” and of “messiah,” see Patai, *Man and Temple*, 205-7.

<sup>690</sup> Psalms 82:6. This is quoted by the Savior in John 10:32-38.

<sup>691</sup> Gunkel, *What Remains of the Old Testament*, 91.

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within the temples all things became intelligible. In each, the God of Heaven conversed with the members of the Council, first in the premortal world, now on the earth. The King of Heaven presided over the kings of earth. The Eternal Messiah blessed the earthly “messiah.” It happened in reality in the temple in heaven and symbolically during the festival temple drama on earth. Similarly, Solomon’s Temple was the key to earthly kingship. It was both the source and the evidence of one’s legitimacy as king.

Patai maintained that the ordinances of the two temples were apparently similar.<sup>692</sup> The primary or ultimate purpose of each was the anointing and enthronement of gods and kings. Thus, the ordinances of the earthly temple became the “way,” the connecting link between heaven and earth,<sup>693</sup> and an invitation to “walk” along its path toward heaven was an invitation to come to the heavenly temple where Jehovah is, and thereby avoid the sorrows of hell. A prayer in the Psalms reflects that belief. It reads:

- 10 For thou art great, and doest wondrous things:  
    thou art God alone.
- 11 Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth:  
    unite my heart to fear thy name.
- 12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart:  
    and I will glorify thy name for evermore.
- 13 For great is thy mercy toward me:  
    and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell (Psalm 86:10-13).

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<sup>692</sup> Patai, *Man and Temple*, 131-32.

<sup>693</sup> For a discussion of the importance of that connection, see Wensinck, *Ideas of the Western*, 43-45, 49.

## **Act 2, Scene 13: The King's Lecture from the Throne of God**

At the conclusion of the coronation ceremony, while the king sat upon Jehovah's throne in Solomon's Temple, it was his duty to give a lecture. Since there is apparently no account of that lecture in the Bible, we cannot know what he said. However, several scholars have suggested what it might have been. John Tvedtnes reported:

From the descriptions we have reviewed, we may reconstruct the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles as observed in the sabbatical and jubilee years, as follows. ...

The leader (king, where applicable) delivered an address in which (a) he read from the Law of Moses and cited the blessings and curses contained therein, (b) exhorted the people to love and fear God and serve him, (c) recounted God's dealings with the fathers (especially the Exodus from Egypt), (d) designated God as creator and the source of all we have, (e) called upon the people to assist the needy, (f) read (where appropriate) the "Paragraph of the King," (g) blessed the people, and (h) added such other items as necessary (notably, comments on the plan of salvation).<sup>694</sup>

There are two examples in the Book of Mormon of this coronation speech. One is in the King Benjamin story, where the king delivered a sermon on the importance of the Atonement. The other is in Third Nephi, where the Savior spoke the Beatitudes and the Sermon at the Temple<sup>695</sup> (Jacob's speech in 2 Nephi is probably another). In those instances, the lecture was more than just a reminder of the Law, it was also a renewal of the covenants between Jehovah and Israel. That concept of renewal is consistent with the way Wedengren explains the significance of the king's speech:

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<sup>694</sup> Tvedtnes, "King Benjamin and the Feast," 2:220.

<sup>695</sup> For evidence that the Savior's sermon was a coronation speech, see the chapter about the his coronation among the Nephites, 925-96.

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It is the king who plays the central role in this act of covenant making. Not only is it he who convokes the assembly, but it is he also who reads out to it the words of the book of the law, which is the basis of the covenant. ...Thus the king appears before us here fully exercising his duties as the real High Priest. ...The covenant is made in the temple. ...

Everything would seem to indicate that as long as the kingship existed in Israel it was the king who at the New Year's festival renewed the covenant between Yahweh and the people, reading on this solemn occasion from the book of the law and commandments which served as the foundation of the covenant.<sup>696</sup>

When Mowinckel addressed the question of the speech given by the king, he wrote, "When the king had mounted the throne, and received the 'king's homage', it is part of the ceremony that he is to make a speech to his people and his vassals. In so doing he points to the legitimate foundation of his sovereignty and to the way he intends to exert it."<sup>697</sup>

He also suggested the king may have recited the 101<sup>st</sup> Psalm. He described it as the king's charter in which he promised to "behave himself wisely in a perfect way."<sup>698</sup> Mowinckel's appraisal of Psalm 101 is as follows:

And if the official installation of the king was identical with the great new year festival ..., and was celebrated every year in connexion with the latter, then king as well as people had to face Yahweh's demands at many points during the festival ritual.

The psalm of promise, Psalm 101, is the answer of the king to these demands from Yahweh, the promise made by him on the day of his election and anointing as king of Yahweh's people. It is, so to speak, his religious 'charter'. It is the counterpart of the intercession for the king in Psalm 72, to the effect that Yahweh may give him 'righteousness' and 'judgments'. ... And, as already mentioned, we have reason to believe that it was repeated every year as a regular part of the great new year festival, at which the king used to play such a

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<sup>696</sup> Widengren, "King and Covenant," 3 and 19.

<sup>697</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:64.

<sup>698</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:65.

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prominent part.<sup>699</sup>

Psalm 101 may be seen as a kind of constitution of Israel that defined the powers and the responsibilities of the king. Kselman saw it as a code of conduct, and also suggested it may have been sung as a promise of the king on the occasion of his enthronement. He wrote, "Psalm 101 is not a monologue, the utterance of a single voice (the king's), as commonly assumed, but a dialogue involving both king and deity."<sup>700</sup> He suggested the first person in verses 1 and 2, and the negative confession in 3-5 are spoken by the king. And that the first person in verses 6-8 is God. Following that pattern, the 101<sup>st</sup> Psalm reads as follows:

*The king:*

- 1 I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee,  
    O Lord, will I sing.
- 2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.  
    O when wilt thou come unto me?  
    I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.
- 3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes:  
    I hate the work of them that turn aside;  
    it shall not cleave to me.
- 4 A froward heart shall depart from me:  
    I will not know a wicked person.
- 5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour,  
    him will I cut off:  
    him that hath an high look  
    and a proud heart will not I suffer.

*God responds:*

- 6 Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land,  
    that they may dwell with me:

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<sup>699</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:67.

<sup>700</sup> John S. Kselman, "Psalm 101: Royal Confession and Divine Oracle," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33 (1985): 45.

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he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.  
7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house:  
he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.  
8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land;  
that I may cut off all wicked doers  
from the city of the Lord (Psalm 101:1-8).

Kings like David and Solomon who were the ruling monarchs of Israel, were not just the “head of state,” they were the state personified.<sup>701</sup>

The king’s power was not only political and ecclesiastical, it was a priesthood authority as well. Thus the coronation rites of the New Year festival re-affirmed the king as the personification and upholder of the Law, the epitome of justice and mercy, and the ultimate earthly priesthood authority. In one or all of those roles, throughout the festival, the king was the focal point of all of the ancient temple activities. That does not imply that he was exclusively the focal point, but rather that his person represented the connecting place between the events on earth and the events in heaven. Thomasson explained that, when he wrote:

Every people required connection with the divine, and that connection was embodied in the king. ...It was in his presence or on his person that the most sacred rituals and the highest mysteries had to be performed, and the divine king became the gnostic *par excellence*, holding the knowledge, power, and authority upon which the welfare and salvation of his subjects depended.<sup>702</sup>

When the coronation ceremony was completed, the remainder of that day was devoted to sacrificing and feasting.

Thus, it was in Solomon’s Temple that the odyssey of the Feast of Tabernacles drama concluded. The king and his people had been delivered from their enemies. Jehovah reigned in Israel and in heaven, and the king was now God’s tried and proven emissary.

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<sup>701</sup> Carlo Zaccagnini, “Sacred and Human Components in Ancient Near Eastern Law,” in *History of Religions* 33, 3 (February 1994): 265-86. For a discussion of the Israelite government of the Old Testament, see Cohen, “Kings, Priests, and Prophets,” 17-40.

<sup>702</sup> Thomasson, “Togetherness Is Sharing an Umbrella,” 1:533-34.

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Inasmuch as the king represented all of the people, they were also restored to their original premortal covenantal relationship with God. Yet this was not entirely correct either. The king and the people had changed since the beginning of the drama where the covenants of Psalm 82 were first made. They had experienced the mortal world with all of its trials and adversities, and had emerged triumphant. So now, at the conclusion, they were the same, yet different. Their time travel through the drama experience had been a spiral, rather than a one dimensional circular journey. The festival drama showed their progression from a lower state to a higher one, so that at the conclusion of the ceremony, Israel had become a nation of priests and sacral kings—exactly as had been promised to them in their earlier covenants. Psalm 85 resonates with the sense of joy they experienced following their triumphal coronation:

- 8 I will hear what God the Lord will speak:  
    for he will speak peace unto his people,  
    and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.
- 9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him;  
    that glory may dwell in our land.
- 10 Mercy and truth are met together;  
    righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- 11 Truth shall spring out of the earth;  
    and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
- 12 Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good;  
    and our land shall yield her increase.
- 13 Righteousness shall go before him;  
    and shall set us in the way of his steps (Psalm 85:8-13).

## **Act 3. The Day of the Great Feast Prelude to Eternal Peace and Prosperity**

The concluding day—the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama and the twenty-second day of the festival—was a day of celebration, sacrificing, and feasting.<sup>703</sup> It was the day of the great feast when the king supplied the nation with all the animals for the sacrifices and all the food for the feast. Eating together emphasized the covenantal unity between God, the king, and all of Israel. The king’s supplying all the food symbolized a return to the Garden with free access to the fruit of the tree of life—for on this day, all things had been restored again to their proper order,<sup>704</sup> representing the fulfillment of Jehovah’s covenants and his millennial reign. It emphasized the covenantal unity between God and Israel with a meal shared by all the nation.<sup>705</sup> The 122<sup>nd</sup> Psalm expresses the jubilation of that day. It reads:

1 I was glad when they said unto me,  
Let us go into the house of the Lord.

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<sup>703</sup> As we have already observed, the description of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Old Testament simply leaves out the drama of the first seven days, then briefly mentions the events of the eighth day. It reads:

33 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

34 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord.

35 On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

36 Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein (Leviticus 23:33-36).

Milgrom believes the eighth day was not part of the original festival. He writes: “As all sources agree that the Festival of Booths lasts for seven days (w. 34, 39, 40,41,42; Num 9:12; Deut 16:13; 1 Kgs 8:65-66; Ezek 45:25; Neh 8:18; 2 Chr 7:8, 9), the eighth day mentioned here [Leviticus 23:36 ] is clearly an added day” (Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2028).

<sup>704</sup> Widengren, *King and the Tree of Life*, 32-34.

<sup>705</sup> Ahlström, in “Administration of the State in Canaan”, 587-603, recognizes the meal as one of the stages in the enthronement rituals for Israel.



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- 2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.  
3 Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:  
4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord,  
    unto the testimony of Israel,<sup>706</sup>  
    to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.  
5 For there are set thrones of judgment,  
    the thrones of the house of David.  
6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:  
    they shall prosper that love thee.  
7 Peace be within thy walls,  
    and prosperity within thy palaces.  
8 For my brethren and companions' sakes,  
    I will now say, Peace be within thee.  
9 Because of the house of the Lord our God  
    I will seek thy good (Psalm 122:1-9).

Ahlstrom described the same scene, but did it a little differently. “Yahweh’s day, in other words, can be characterized as his epiphany day, the day on which he comes to show himself as he is—mighty, powerful, terrifying his enemies, bringing light and establishing *sedaqah* [*zedek*] for his own people.”<sup>707</sup>

Perhaps it was early in the morning of the eighth day that the people sang the 116<sup>th</sup> Psalm, which includes an invitation to a feast:

- 1 I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice  
    and my supplications.  
2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me,  
    therefore will I call upon him as long as I live  
3 The sorrows of death compassed me,  
    and the pains of hell gat hold upon:  
    I found trouble and sorrow.

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<sup>706</sup> That is, the Ark of the Covenant that was kept in the Holy of Holies. In some places in the Old Testament it is called the Ark of the Testimony. As in Exodus 25:16, Numbers 4:5, and Joshua 4:16.

<sup>707</sup> Ahlstrom, *Joel and the Temple*, 66.

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4 Then called I upon the name of the Lord;  
    O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.  
5 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;  
    yea, our God is merciful.  
6 The Lord preserveth the simple:  
    I was brought low and helped me  
7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul;  
    for the Lord hath dwelt bountifully with thee  
8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death,  
    mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling  
9 I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living . ...  
13 I will take the cup of salvation,  
    and call upon the name of the Lord  
14 I will pay my vows unto the Lord  
    now in the presence of all his people. ...  
17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving,  
    and will call upon the name of the Lord (Psalm 116:1-9, 13-14, 17).

The invitation to the meal is found in verses 13 and 17 where both drink and food are mentioned. In verse 17, we are told that the king would offer a thanksgiving offering, which indicated the meat of the animals was to be eaten,<sup>708</sup> for, like the peace offering, the thanksgiving offering was eaten by the worshipers.<sup>709</sup> It was also understood that, because of its sacred nature, it was God who had invited them to the feast. Nelson explains:

Most Israelite sacrifices resulted in a meal shared by the worshipers. The company of diners would consist of family...and a circle of invited guest. ...As such, sacrifice may be understood as table fellowship with Yahweh for whom a portion of the meal was set aside by burning. ...Those sharing the sacrificial meal

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<sup>708</sup> A very early example (perhaps the prototype) of this feast is recorded in 2 Samuel 6. After David brought the Ark to Jerusalem, he “dealt all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as the men, to every one a cake of bread, and good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine” (v.19).

<sup>709</sup> Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 113.

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would have seen it as a way of strengthening family and group associations, but also as a way of making personal contact with Yahweh.<sup>710</sup>

In the Old Testament, we get a glimpse of the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles in the account of Solomon's dedication of his Temple. It describes the enormous quantity of food provided for the masses, when the whole nation came together to attend the dedicatory services. The account in Chronicles (the version of the history that was written by the post-exilic priests) says the services lasted seven days, but it only hints at the nature of the drama performed on those days. It then says that the celebration concluded on the "eighth day":

4 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord.

5 And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.

6 And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of musick of the Lord, which David the king had made to praise the Lord, because his mercy endureth for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood.

7 Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that was before the house of the Lord: for there he offered burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the brasen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offerings, and the meat offerings, and the fat.

8 Also at the same time Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt.

9 And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days (2 Chronicles 7:4-9).

Ratification of the covenant between Israel and her God was symbolized by a shared meal. For example, in Isaiah 25:6-8, God's victory over death will be celebrated with "a feast of fat things, a feast of wine." This feast will be provided at the temple when God

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<sup>710</sup> Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 67-68.

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erases the veil separating himself from the people. Similarly, the Israelite New Year festival ended with the king providing a feast for all of Israel, which symbolized the confirming of all the previous covenants between God, the king, and the people, and looked forward to that great millennial time.

To Widengren, feasting on the bounties of the most recent harvest symbolized a return to paradise.<sup>711</sup> Mowinckel concurred: “The Danish poet, Brorson, strikes a truly biblical note when he speaks of the eternal feast of booths by the river of the water of life, the lamb of God being at once host and guest. So was Yahweh on Mount Zion, when the ‘river of God ran full of water’, the blessing of the new year.”<sup>712</sup>

Thus, with the representation of the fruit/light of the tree of life<sup>713</sup> and the sustaining-cleansing powers of the waters of life,<sup>714</sup> the participants’ relationship with Jehovah was re-established and secure.

The celebration was a representation of the king and his people returning to their original paradisiacal home. So this final day of the festival introduced a new era of peace, when, symbolically at least, one could eat freely of the fruit of the tree of life and drink of the waters of life—not at all unlike the promises in the concluding chapters of the book of Revelation. Borsch believed that the imagery of the fruit of the tree of life was the necessary conclusion to this cosmic drama:

All would be well with the society. Once more the people share in the drama of their king, now in its happy conclusion. Feasting ensues. The king fulfils his role as the great provider, giving to his people gifts of food and drink like those of which he had partaken. Mythically it is the food of paradise, for now he rules in paradise next to the tree of life and beside the river of life which is peaceful and

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<sup>711</sup> Widengren, *King and the Tree*, 35-38.

<sup>712</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1: 190. Mowinckel does not give the source of the Brorson poem.

<sup>713</sup> For discussions of the tree of life, see Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 57, 67-71; Draper and Parry, “Seven Promises,” 123-29; C. Wilfred Griggs, “The Tree of Life in Ancient Cultures,” *Ensign* 18, 6 (June 1988): 27-38; Parry, “Garden of Eden,” 127-29.

<sup>714</sup> For discussions on the waters of life, see Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 57, 66-67; Lundquist, “What Is a Temple?” 88-89; Parry, “Garden of Eden,” 129-30.

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ordered again and over which he exercises control. All nature is his dominion. It is the beginning of creation all over again, and the king is the First Man and ruler restored, the father of his people.<sup>715</sup>

Psalm 138 is a prayer of thanksgiving and praise that brings the singers full circle by uniting the events of the Council in Heaven with the sacredness of Solomon's Temple. It is one of those psalms that a person may read and simply bask in the music of its words. But, as with others, that music is capable of lulling one to sleep, so that its poetry masks its power. We will read it together twice: first as music, then as power.

- 1 I will praise thee with my whole heart:  
before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.
- 2 I will worship toward thy holy temple,  
and praise thy name for thy  
lovingkindness and for thy truth:  
for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.
- 3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me,  
and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.
- 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee,  
O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth.
- 5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord:  
for great is the glory of the Lord.
- 6 Though the Lord be high,  
yet hath he respect unto the lowly:  
but the proud he knoweth afar off.
- 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me:  
thou shalt stretch forth thine hand  
against the wrath of mine enemies,  
and thy right hand shall save me.
- 8 The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me:  
thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever:  
forsake not the works of thine own hands (Psalm 138:1-8).

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<sup>715</sup> Borsch, *Son of Man*, 96.

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Here is a careful analysis:

*1 I will praise thee with my whole heart:*

The heart is the cosmic center of the person. It is the seat of one's intellect, one's emotions, and one's spiritual connectiveness with God. To praise with "the whole heart" is to praise with "all the energy of soul."

*before the gods will I sing praise unto thee*

The "gods" are those who were at the Council in Heaven. Both Lehi and Enoch witness that they sang in their meetings. Our psalm testifies that they sing still. Enoch wrote:

And who am I to tell of the Lord's unspeakable being, and of his very wonderful face? And I cannot tell the quantity of his many instructions, and various voices, the Lord's throne *is* very great and not made with hands, nor the quantity of those standing round him, troops of cherubim and seraphim, nor their incessant singing, nor his immutable beauty, and who shall tell of the ineffable greatness of his glory (*Secrets of Enoch*, 22:3).

And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God (1 Nephi 1:8).

The psalm does not take place at the Council, but rather it recalls one's experiences there. It is an expression of hope—of absolute assurance—that one will return to that throne room and sing those hymns of praise again, forever.

*2 I will worship toward thy holy temple,*

There has been no change of scene here, so the psalm still projects itself into the eternal future. Therefore, the Temple toward which one longs to worship is the Temple of God in the heavens.

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*and praise thy name*

“Name” is a multifaceted word that denotes one’s personal name, thus an intimate association; one’s name-title, thus an expression of honor; and the evidence or token of a covenant. Here it represents all three.

*for thy lovingkindness*

The word implies intimate association, and reciprocated love.

*for thy truth:*

Thus, the expression of honor—the acknowledgment that God is the life, the light, and the truth that animates and gives not only life, but also the reason for the life of man.

*for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name*

Here, “name” clearly represents more than the fulfillment of the original covenant. These words acknowledge that God has not only kept his covenants but that his blessings have been more than the recipient can contain. How and to what extent the Lord did that is expressed in the next verse:

*3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.*

The Tanakh reads, “You inspired me with courage.” This expression of thanks rings with an eternal truth. We came to the earth to discover and confirm our own strengths. Often, when the Lord asserts his power in our behalf, it is to remind us who we are and what our abilities really are.

*4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth.*

*5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord.*

It is possible, of course, that this is a reference to political rulers, but it is more likely

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a reference to those sacral kings who had been anointed either in fact or in symbol during the enactment of the festival temple drama.

*6 Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.*

*7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.*

These verses are probably best understood as a single referent. Its setting is established by the words, “thou wilt receive me,” and “thy right hand shall save me.” Those words also explain why “the proud he knoweth afar off,” for, as Jacob reminds us, those who are proud, and do not know his name, cannot enter his presence.<sup>716</sup>

*8 The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands (Psalm 38:1-8).*

The last verse is a reaffirmation of the hope expressed earlier by the psalmist, that the Lord will keep his covenants “for ever.”

Another psalm that employs language that is reminiscent of events in the Council but that also rejoices in God’s protection of Israel in this world is Psalm 136. It is a hymn of praise, addressed first to Jehovah, who is the covenant God of Israel and the one who conducts the affairs of the Council. Then it addresses Elohim, who is the Father of the gods and the one who presides at the Council. Then it addresses Jehovah again as Lord of Lords. Its first three verses read:

1 O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good:

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<sup>716</sup> 41 O then, my beloved brethren, come unto the Lord, the Holy One. Remember that his paths are righteous. Behold, the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name.

42 And whoso knocketh, to him will he open; and the wise, and the learned, and they that are rich, who are puffed up because of their learning, and their wisdom, and their riches—yea, they are they whom he despiseth; and save they shall cast these things away, and consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the depths of humility, he will not open unto them (2 Nephi 9:41-42).



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- for his mercy endureth for ever.  
2 O give thanks unto the God of gods:  
for his mercy endureth for ever.  
3 O give thanks to the Lord of Lords:  
for his mercy endureth for ever (Psalm 136:1-3).

There is one psalm, brief but much beloved, that recalls the entire panoramic sweep of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama. Perhaps it was at this time, when the whole experience could be celebrated as a single event in sacred time, that the ancient Israelites sang the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. This, the most remarkable of all the psalms, may be most loved because it describes in only six verses it follows the pattern of the cosmic myth to trace the eternal odyssey of Everyman. In it, one begins at the Council in Heaven, leaves the premortal world to enter the valley of the shadow of death, remembers the empowering symbols of priesthood and kingship, anticipates the temple feast, receives a coronation anointing, acknowledges God's help, and finally returns home, to stay "for ever."

As one considers the ancient Israelite temple drama, one discovers a sub-textual message that runs through the whole of it like a great subterranean river that rushes beneath the rocks and down the mountain side, raising itself occasionally to the surface as springs of living water that refresh and give life to the trees who take root in the rocks. That subtext has a single message, expressed again and again in the bubbling of the springs and in the crystal spindrift of the cascading fountains: that message is the overriding importance and the eternal necessity of the Savior's Atonement.

## **The Twenty-third Psalm**

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.
- 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
- 3 He restoreth my soul:  
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
- 5 Thou preparest a table before me  
in the presence of mine enemies:  
thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life:  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (Psalm 23:1-6)

While the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is very short, it is remarkably complete: Its surface text is almost universally acknowledged to be one of the most beautiful poems ever written. Its subtext is awesome. The subtext is not hidden, it is only not apparent to those who do not know its sacral language. It is a short play, divided into three acts: (1) the premortal existence; (2) “the valley of the shadow of death”; (3) and finally “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

### **Act One**

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

Almost all of the accounts we have of foreordinations contain the principles and promises expressed in these words. The Lord is in charge. It is he who gives us instructions and foreordains us to do specific tasks in this world; he and his Father make covenants with us regarding the fulfillment of those tasks; and it is by his sustaining power that we are enabled to perform those tasks and keep those covenants. “The Lord is my

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shepherd”—the one whom I shall follow because I choose to.

The second clause, “I shall not want,” is the same assurance as Paul’s, which was also set in the context of the covenants of the premortal world: “ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which [sealing] is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Ephesians 1:14).

Jeremiah is a good example of the covenant of invulnerability and empowerment—of how the Lord enables one to keep his covenants even though it seems utterly impossible to do so. During Jeremiah’s *sode* experience:

Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See I have this day set thee over the nations (Jeremiah 1:9-10).

That was his assignment, but its provisions seemed increasingly impossible to fulfill. King Zedekiah didn’t like Jeremiah and caused him to be lowered into a pit of mire up to his neck. He was left to stand there until he was exhausted, when it was expected he would simply sink into the morass and drown in the mud (Jeremiah 38:5-6). Someone pulled him out and he didn’t die then, but it is reported he was later taken to Egypt and murdered there. The point is, he wasn’t drowned in the mud, but lived to fulfill his mission. The Lord hadn’t promised his assignment would be a piece of cake, only that he could not be prevented from doing it.

Not everyone is set over the nations, but everyone is given an equivalent guarantee of success—and perhaps an equivalent guarantee that the success will not come easily. To understand that, one must remember that not all of our assignments related to this mortal world only. Some cannot be fulfilled until we enter the spirit world. In short, in order for one to understand that God always keeps his covenants, this mortal experience and the spirit world after it must be considered as a part of the same overall experience:

*2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,*

There are two assurances here that easily merge into one. The first meaning is explained by Nephi as a declaration of the Savior’s ultimate kingship:

25 And he gathereth his children from the four quarters of the earth; and he numbereth his sheep, and they know him; and there shall be one fold and one

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shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture.

26 And because of the righteousness of his people, Satan has no power; wherefore, he cannot be loosed for the space of many years; for he hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reigneth (1 Nephi 22:21-31).

The second probable meaning is deduced from what follows in the psalm:

*he leadeth me beside the still waters.*

The waters of life are moving, living, tranquil waters.<sup>717</sup> They give life as rain, rivulets, and great rivers, but they are never stagnant and never salty. Nephi wrote that the waters of life and the fruit of the tree of life represent the love of God. If that was so in Nephi's day, it would have been equally so at the time of Adam and David, and in our own time as well. The symbols of the tree of life and the waters of life are fundamental to the Feast of Tabernacles drama. In the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm we do not have a tree that sustains life because the symbol here is sheep, rather than people. So in conjunction with the waters of life we have "green pastures" instead of a tree representing the sustaining fruit of the tree of life.<sup>718</sup>

*He restoreth my soul.*

In the Doctrine and Covenants, when the Lord was explaining resurrection and exaltation, he used the word "soul" and defined it for clarification in that context as the body and spirit of man (D&C 88:15). But elsewhere—almost everywhere else—the scriptures use "soul" to mean the spirit that animates one's physical body and gives it life.<sup>719</sup> That is not a contradiction. The spirit is an intelligence with a spirit body, just as a person in this world is a spirit with a physical body. The concept is the same, only the particular referents are

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<sup>717</sup> Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 4496: peaceful, quiet, rest.

<sup>718</sup> Earlier we observed that in Israelite tradition the most frequent symbol of the tree of life is the Olive tree. However, grape vines and bread made from wheat were also used as symbols of the tree of life in the New Testament. For information on the symbolism, see Ad de Vries in *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1974), 474.

<sup>719</sup> For examples see Alma 29:16, 36:15, 40:11, 41:2; Matthew 10:28; 2 Nephi 1:22; D&C 59:19).

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different. A “soul” is an intelligence clothed with a body, whether that body is a spirit, or both spirit and physical, the definition still holds.

The “soul” in the 23rd Psalm is “restored”—we are still in Act 1 of the psalm. So this happened before the soul falls from the world of light into the world of darkness in the valley of the shadow of death. In that premortal spirit world we could sin, as is evinced by the seriousness with which a third of the hosts of heaven did sin. Then as now, the consequence of sin was uncleanness, and no unclean thing can be in the presence of God. Then, as now, the only antidote for sin was the power of the Atonement coupled with one’s own effectual repentance. Thus the Lord explained to the Prophet Joseph:

Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, man became again, in their infant state, innocent before God (D&C 93:38).

We were “innocent in the beginning”—that would be when we were born to our heavenly parents as spirit children. And we “become again” innocent, a second time when we are born to our earthly parents. In order for us to have become innocent *again*, something had to happen to make us un-innocent after “the beginning.” It’s easy to know what. Free agency is meaningless unless there are real choices. Experience in knowing the difference between correct and incorrect choices is necessary for growth, even though making wrong choices subjects one to the laws of justice. That is what repentance is for, and notwithstanding the wrong choices we made in the premortal spirit world, the Atonement made it possible for us to be born into this world as innocent little babies. Thus, the psalm proclaims, “He restoreth my soul.”

*he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.*

“Paths of righteousness” are the “way,” the system of steps, ordinances and covenants through which one must pass in order to return to God. The word “righteousness” (*zedek*) identifies the path as the ancient temple and priesthood ordinances and covenants. They are performed “in righteousness” when they are done in the right place, in the right way, for the right reason, using the right words, dressed in the right clothing, in the Temple and with precisely the right priesthood authority. There was, in the pleasantness of that world of “green pastures” and “still waters,” a clearly defined “way” which the psalmist calls “the paths of righteousness.” During the festival temple drama, those ordinances were shown

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to have taken place in the Holy of Holies of the celestial temple:

*for his name's sake.*

“Name” is almost always a key word because new covenants are almost always associated with new names.

The psalm’s “he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake,” is about as straightforward as it can be. “Paths” equal ordinances, “righteousness” is *zedek*, and name is “covenant.” Without changing its meaning, it might read, “He leads me through the priesthood ordinances for the sake of the covenants we make together.”

### **Act Two**

*4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:  
for thou art with me.*

There is not a voice change here, but there is a change in the way the king speaks about God. Throughout act one the king is rehearsing the story of his own past, and God is spoken of as “He.” But when the king enters the world of “the valley of the shadow of death,” the psalm becomes a prayer, and God is addressed as “Thou.” The Tanakh gives a more vivid and accurate translation describing the hazards that the king must now confront.

4 Though I walk through the valley of the deepest darkness,  
I fear no harm, for You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)<sup>720</sup>

The king’s prayer in this psalm is an expression of hope and confidence that God will fulfill his part of the premortal covenant so the king may also fulfill his: One’s assignment may be difficult from that of everyone else, but in the fulfillment of those assignments there is no fundamental difference—and in one’s struggle, one is never alone.

Of all the things we treasure in this world, the most precious thing we can retain after we get dead is our “sociality” with the Lord and with the other people we love (D&C

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<sup>720</sup> Tanakh, *The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text.*

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130:1-2). The only attribute that will bring us to where they are is charity. But charity is not complete unless it is the compound of three parts: the first is the feeling of love we have for others, and the second is empathy—hurting when they hurt, rejoicing when they rejoice, and the third helping to satisfy their needs. Empathy must be learned. It is impossible for us to have empathy if we have not hurt as they hurt and have not rejoiced as they rejoice. Consequently, in this life some of the most worthwhile experiences we have are the ones that teach us how to feel the hurts that other people feel, so we can comfort them in a language that teaches them that we know and care. In order to make our own hard experiences worthwhile, rather than crippling, we must be strong enough to turn the difficulty into power. The third is way we do that. It is called the Law of Consecration. They are a composite of one: charity and empathy are what we *are* when the law of consecration is what we *do*.

*thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

As observed above, a rod is a symbol of kingship.<sup>721</sup> It is the same as the royal scepter that is the branch of the Tree of Life.

Aaron's staff was a symbol of priesthood authority. When Aaron's authority was challenged, he put his staff in the ground and the next morning it had blossomed. Thereafter that staff was kept in the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. It also represented the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life is the Love of God. The powers of priesthood and kingship must be exercised as an expression of that love.

"Comfort" is to empower, just as it is in the introduction to the coronation ceremony in Isaiah 61:1-3, where the "comfort" (empowerment) is accomplished through the coronation ceremony which includes washing, anointing, clothing, crowning, and giving a new name.<sup>722</sup> The coronation depicted in this part of the psalm is apparently a this-world re-play of the earlier "he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." The intent of this verse might read, "Even though I am in the darkness of this world, I have no reason to fear, for I am empowered by the symbols of kingship (rod) and of

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<sup>721</sup> Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Hebrew 7626: "a *stick* (for punishing, writing, fighting, ruling, walking, etc.) or (fig) a clan: – correction, dart, rod, sceptre, staff, tribe."

<sup>722</sup> See the discussion of Isaiah 61 in the chapter called "Act 2, Scene 9, Coronation Ceremony in Isaiah 61.

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priesthood (staff).”

The relationship between the kingly authority of the rod and Melchizedek priesthood authority seem to have been established in the 110<sup>th</sup> Psalm, which we read earlier:

- 1 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand,  
until I make thine enemies thy footstool.<sup>723</sup>
- 2 The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion:  
rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.
- 3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,  
in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning:  
thou hast the dew of thy youth.
- 4 The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent,  
Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:1-4).

In the Tanakh the “rod” of verse two is translated as “scepter”:

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<sup>723</sup> Three times in the New Testament, this scripture is quoted to show that Jesus, who was a descendant of David, was also the “Lord” (i.e. Jehovah) whom David worshiped. Two are in the gospels:

35 And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?

36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37 David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly (Mark 12:35-37).

42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David.

43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

44 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions (Matthew 22:24-46).

Paul also used it as part of the whole series of kingship scriptures about the Savior that he quoted in the first chapter of Hebrews:

13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? (Hebrews 1:13-14).



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The Lord will stretch forth from Zion your mighty scepter;  
Hold sway over your enemies!

Nephi described the rod as a source of power:

23 And they said unto me: What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw,  
that led to the tree?

24 And I said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would hearken  
unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish;  
neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them  
unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction (1 Nephi 15:23-24).

There, Nephi may be suggesting the rod was scripture. He equates the rod with the word of God, which he also equates with defense against “fiery darts of the adversary.” That may suggest that the rod was also a symbol of the scepter of sacral kingship.

*5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.*

The table prepared was the temple feast for the whole community. It was the great triumphal feast at the conclusion of the ancient temple drama. However, its symbolism was much older than the Law of Moses, and it represents something far more important than a temporal meal. A possible example is when Melchizedek met Abraham returning from rescuing Lot. He received tithes from Abraham and brought bread and wine to serve to him. Melchizedek was High Priest of Salem. Not only did he build a temple there, but he also gave the city a new name, Jerusalem, city of peace.<sup>724</sup>

The meal in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is the Temple feast and might be thought of as the meat that was taken from the seething pot at the Temple in Jerusalem. There the people who offered a peace or thanks offering sat with the priests and ate the meat of the sacrifice. If these are the meals the psalmist referred to by the words, “Thou preparest a table before me,” then he was also talking about symbolically eating in the presence of the Lord. In any case it was a royal banquet, where Jehovah confirmed the rule of the king and his approval

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<sup>724</sup> *Josephus*, trans. Maier, (1988), 367.

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of the people.<sup>725</sup>

It was also a remembering of the feast when men actually did eat in the presence of God. There are several examples of such a temple feast. The first was with Moses on Mount Sinai.<sup>726</sup> Others were the Last Supper, and the Savior's sharing food with the people of Nephi. All of these are represented by the bread and water of the sacrament:

*in the presence of mine enemies.*

The enemies are an important part of the story because however much they may persist in being there, they are not present at the table. The enemies are not invited to the meal; they are round about, trying to upset things, but their anger is irrelevant to both the peace and security of the occasion. They are of no consequence no matter how much fuss they make. It was a reiteration of the promise of invulnerability—that the covenants will be fulfilled no matter who tries to prevent it. It was as though the psalmist were describing himself as living within a glass bubble, through whose walls he can communicate with the world, but none can come in except by invitation. Those who come in find an intimacy of pure love. The world may rage on as it will, but his soul transcends the rage, and in the bubble he finds peace.

*Thou anointest my head with oil.*

That refers to the priesthood and kingship coronation rites described in Isaiah 61.

*My cup runneth over.*

To have one's cup run over is to have so many blessings that there is not room

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<sup>725</sup> In an extended discussion of the question, Barre and Kselman write that "the banquet scene is properly a royal banquet, where the (divine) overLord reconfirms the rule of his vassal-king." Michael L. Barre and John S. Kselman, "New Exodus, Covenant, and Restoration in Psalm 23," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth*, ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 104.

<sup>726</sup> Exodus 24:9-11. For a discussion of the significance of the temple feast and the "bread of the Presence" (shewbread in the Tabernacle), see de Boer, "An Aspect of Sacrifice," 27-47. The implications are that the bread is a reminder of the time God invited Moses and the seventy to eat with him on the Mount. Thus the sacrament.

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enough to receive them. That blessing is a logical—even necessary—conclusion to the coronation ceremony and the sacral temple feast that confirms it.

*6 Surely goodness and mercy [hesed] shall follow me all the days of my life,*

In English, goodness has to do with how one acts, and mercy has to do with how one judges. Barre and Kselman translated the line as: “Henceforth may only (your) covenant blessings pursue me all the days of my life.”<sup>727</sup> However, Freedman showed that “goodness and mercy” were not adjectives but personal nouns, actually name-titles, and probably represented guardian angels who were members of the Council and who had covenanted to come to the earth to assist the king during his lifetime. Freedman wrote:

In Psalm 23, the situation is reversed: the Psalmist will be accompanied by divine goodness and mercy. We may compare this passage with Psalm 43:3, where the divine attributes, “your light and your truth” will guide the poet. In the background is the mythological picture of the principal deity accompanied by lesser divine beings who serve him as retinue and bodyguard. The pre Israelite tradition has been preserved almost intact in Hab. 3:5 where Pestilence (*deber*) and Plague (*resp*)<sup>28</sup> are described as marching before and behind the Deity. Elsewhere the accompanying figures have been demythologized in the form of divine attributes, as e.g., in Psalm 96:6

Honor and majesty are before him

Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

In Psalm 23, there is a further adaptation. The divine virtues will leave their posts in the heavenly court, and accompany the Psalmist throughout his life. There is a hint that something approaching divine honors is being accorded to the Psalmist. Perhaps we have here an early form of the later doctrine of guardian angels.<sup>728</sup>

*all the days of my life.*

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<sup>727</sup> Barre and Kselman, “New Exodus, Covenant,” 89.

<sup>728</sup> Freedman, “Twenty-Third Psalm,” 298. He also mentions Psalm 43:3 and Psalm 96:6 in this regard.

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If “goodness and mercy” are the personified support system that God guaranteed to the king before he left the Council, then the words “all the days of my life” are a promise that God will bless him that he may have sufficient opportunity and resources to fulfill the covenants he made while at the Council. But there is another connotation that cannot be ignored: “all the days of my life” sounds very much like “endure to the end”—and that also fits, no matter which way one interprets “goodness and mercy.”

### **Act Three**

*and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

As is frequently the case in the scriptures, act three and the end of act two are represented by the same words, “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever” is the perfect ending for act two. But “forever” lasts longer than this earth life, so that same sentence is also a very abbreviated version of the eternal continuance of act three.

If the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm were sung on the eighth day of the festival temple drama, it would have represented both a summation and a continued promise of all that the ceremony had shown.

On that last day, notwithstanding its emphasis on sacrifice, feasting, and remembering the drama, there was an even more important idea that was probably expressed. For the most important sacrifice is one’s Self—the personal sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit. That was probably the final theme—the crescendo of the festival temple drama. The probability that the pre-exilic Israelites understood that principle is supported by two important facts. The first is that the word “sacrifice” does not mean to give up something that will be forever lost; rather it means to set something apart, to designate it as sacred. The second is that there are psalms that actually say that blood sacrifices are not God’s chief concern.

Psalm 15, even though it is very short, addresses the same hope as the last line of Psalm 23. It gives the qualities of those who will “dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” It asks:

- 1 Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?  
    who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
- 2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,  
    and speaketh the truth in his heart.

### *Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship*

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- 3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue,  
nor doeth evil to his neighbour,  
nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.
- 4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned;  
but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.  
He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.
- 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 15:1-5)

Those psalms may have been introduced by Psalm 50 where the Lord declares he has no real need for blood sacrifices:

- 1 The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken,  
and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the  
going down thereof.
- 2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.
- 3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence:  
a fire shall devour before him,  
and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.
- 4 He shall call to the heavens from above,  
and to the earth, that he may judge his people.
- 5 Gather my saints together unto me;  
those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.
- 6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness:  
for God is judge himself.
- 7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak;  
O Israel, and I will testify against thee:  
I am God, even thy God.
- 8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices  
or thy burnt offerings,  
to have been continually before me.
- 9 I will take no bullock out of thy house,  
nor he goats out of thy folds.
- 10 For every beast of the forest is mine,

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and the cattle upon a thousand hills.  
11 I know all the fowls of the mountains:  
and the wild beasts of the field are mine.  
12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee:  
for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.  
13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls,  
or drink the blood of goats?  
14 Offer unto God thanksgiving;  
and pay thy vows unto the most High:  
15 And call upon me in the day of trouble:  
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. ...  
23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me:  
and to him that ordereth his conversation<sup>729</sup> aright will I  
shew the salvation of God (Psalm 50:1-15, 23).

The admonition in verses 13 and 14 sounds remarkably like the account of the conclusion of King Benjamin's New Year festival ceremony, as does Psalm 40. It reads:

1 I waited patiently for the Lord;  
and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.  
2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit,  
out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock,  
and established my goings.  
3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth,  
even praise unto our God:  
many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.  
4 Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust,  
and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.  
5 Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done,  
and thy thoughts which are to us-ward:  
they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:  
if I would declare and speak of them,  
they are more than can be numbered.

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<sup>729</sup> "Conversation" implies actions, or life style, rather than only the words one speaks.

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- 6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire;  
mine ears hast thou opened:  
burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.
- 7 Then said I, Lo, I come:  
in the volume of the book it is written of me,
- 8 I delight to do thy will, O my God:  
yea, thy law is within my heart.
- 9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation:  
lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest.
- 10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart;  
I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation:  
I have not concealed thy lovingkindness  
and thy truth from the great congregation.
- 11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord:  
let thy lovingkindness and thy truth  
continually preserve me (Psalm 40:1-11).

The other is Psalm 51 (discussed above), which introduces this new sacrifice with an acknowledgment of the necessity to first become personally clean. It is likely that the intent of those psalms was to teach that the time would come when blood sacrifices would no longer be acceptable. But that time had not come yet. The last verse reads:

- Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,  
with burnt offering and whole burnt offering:  
then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar. (Psalm 51:19)

When the festival temple drama was concluded, all was right with the world; there was no baggage of sin that either the individuals or the nation must carry with them into the next year. Chaos was overcome and cosmos was established so that all might begin anew. Psalm 85 may have been one of the last sung at the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama. It was an assurance that the Lord would bless and sustain his people in peace and righteousness:

- 1 Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land:  
thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

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- 2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people,  
    thou hast covered all their sin.
- 3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath:  
    thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.
- 4 Turn us, O God of our salvation,  
    and cause thine anger toward us to cease.
- 5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?  
    wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?
- 6 Wilt thou not revive us again:  
    that thy people may rejoice in thee?
- 7 Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.
- 8 I will hear what God the Lord will speak:  
    for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:  
    but let them not turn again to folly.
- 9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him;  
    that glory may dwell in our land.
- 10 Mercy and truth are met together;  
    righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- 11 Truth shall spring out of the earth;  
    and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
- 12 Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good;  
    and our land shall yield her increase.
- 13 Righteousness shall go before him;  
    and shall set us in the way of his steps (Psalm 85:1-13).

It is probable that the very last hymn sung was a parting acclamation, for all were now priests and sacral kings. The 133<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is very short but powerful. It has only three verses, but those three verses are a celebration of timeless brotherly love and eternal peace:

- 1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
    for brethren to dwell together in unity!
- 2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head,  
    that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard:  
    that went down to the skirts of his garments;



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3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that  
descended upon the mountains of Zion:  
for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life  
for evermore.(Psalm 133:1-3).

Prayer is like walking in the mountain with a friend. There are times when you see a sunrise so expansive and glorious that it must be shared with your friend to be fully appreciated. There are times you walk with the other in silence, then you stop and your eyes look—alone—as you ponder the perfect beauty of a columbine. Sometimes you talk together—your friend and you—but only briefly – because a smile can say so much more. Sometimes the words flow like the confluence of two great rivers and the ideas reach out to embrace a world as big as the open sea. Sometimes you walk together quietly and say nothing, and the unspoken words are more profound than speech. There is no aloneness in the quiet, just as there was no aloneness when all your conscious world was only the beauty of a single columbine. Friendship is like that. So is prayer.

## Conclusion to Part 1

The twenty-second-day of the New Year festival (which was also the eighth day of the festival temple drama) concluded some of the most sacred rituals of pre-exilic Israel. The New Year day had heralded a new beginning. The Day of Atonement cleansed and prepared the people to participate in a drama that represented their relationship with Jehovah during the whole eternal sweep of their existence. The rites and psalms of the drama gave the king, queen, and all the people the opportunity to re-experience the ordinances of salvation and re-make the covenants that sealed their relationships.

As we traced the patterns of the Feast of Tabernacles drama, we also traced the patterns of a *sode* experience and of the cosmic myth. Because the drama was an enactment of the universal story, it was also a dramatization of the principles of the plan of salvation. It was a symbolic recounting of the Savior's eternal mission, as it was of the history of the king of Israel and of all the people who participated in the drama. As such, it confirmed the eternal relationship of every individual as a child of God.

It concluded with the fulfilment of the promise that each one could return home again to their proverbial Garden Paradise, where each could reclaim the garment of light, could have unrestricted access to the empowering fruit of the tree of life, and drink the sustaining/cleansing waters of life. Their relationship with Jehovah was re-established and secure. Jehovah was again enthroned in the heavens, and the king was enthroned on the earth. All of Israel was a nation of priests and sacral kings, and "all the universe is in perfect harmony."<sup>730</sup>

The cosmic sweep of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama had many personal messages about the individual life-experiences of each participant. One of the most important was that it came to an end before it dazzled the initiate with a false sense of peace. It promised invulnerability, but did not deliver it in the instant. Like the classic mentor in ancient mythology, it taught the secrets of their own eternal identity, then left to the initiate the responsibility of actualizing their own hidden powers. In the cosmic myth, the mentor—sometimes old, but always wiser than other men—appears in the story just at the time when the youth, who is the hero, is old enough to begin to question who he is and why his aspirations, spiritual powers, and sense of reality are different from other people's. The mentor helps the youth understand his destiny by teaching him his origin and showing

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<sup>730</sup> Widengren, "Early Hebrew Myths," 197.

him his purpose. As the youth becomes a young man, he leans less and less on the mentor and more and more on his own sense of Self. Eventually the mentor dies, or otherwise must go away, leaving the young man alone. But he is not alone; the teachings of the mentor have become a part of him, and now he can define his Self in the same way his mentor had already defined him. It is not until after the mentor goes away that the young man can truly discover that Self. Alone, and still a bit unsure, he begins—humbly, but determined, now a dignified follower of the eternal law of his own being—to fulfill and make new his everlasting covenants and his own destiny in the cosmos. Later—seemingly much later—he and his friend will embrace again when he reaches the summit of his journey.

The ancient temple drama was like that. At first it barely parts the fog that hides the way back to one's eternal Self, affording only a small window through which the youth can see a portion of the sky as sacred space in sacred time. Then the window closes, and the initiate must go away to walk the path he had been shown. In his mind and on the stage of this heart, the drama replays itself many times year after year. It leads the youth to manhood—like the pillar of light of Moses's night, showing Israel the way through the desert, to come to the source of the cool mountain springs of the Promised Land—until the youth, now a man, reaches the top of that sacred mountain from which he can view the horizons of eternity.

# **Part 2: The Temple Drama of the Ancient Israelite Feast of Tabernacles In the Book of Mormon**

## **Introduction to Part 2 <sup>731</sup>**

It is our belief that one of the great wonders of the Book of Mormon's English translation is that it employs the language of the King James Version of the Bible with such precision and care that one can use the translated English wording in one ancient scripture to understand the same words in the other. That is the foundation of this whole second half of our book.

The prophets of the Book of Mormon show a profound understanding of the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, and that understanding colors and enhances much of what they said and wrote. The Book of Mormon does not describe the drama. Its authors must assume we have the books of the Law and that we understand the nature of the festivals, for they continually use them as a point of reference. Consequently, there is enough information scattered throughout the narratives and sermons of the Book of Mormon to enable one to confidently assert that the Nephites observed all of the Israelite festivals that were required by the Law of Moses, including the New Year festival with the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, just as the pre-exilic Jews did, and as they were

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<sup>731</sup> For discussions of temples in the Book of Mormon, see Thomas, "The Brother of Jared at the Veil," *Temples of the Ancient World*, 388-98; Valletta, "Conflicting Orders," 189-90, 193-94; John W. Welch, "The Temple in the Book of Mormon," *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 369-75; John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999).

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known to Lehi and Nephi before they left Jerusalem.<sup>732</sup> Here, for example, are the words of father Lehi to his sons as he encapsulates many of the teachings found in the festival drama:

10 But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief, after they have received so great blessings from the hand of the Lord—having a knowledge of the creation of the earth, and all men, knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord from the creation of the world; having power given them to do all things by faith; having all the commandments from the beginning, and having been brought by his infinite goodness into this precious land of promise— (2 Nephi 1:10).

That is a significant and somewhat typical passage because what it says is determined not by the author who wrote it but by the understanding that its reader brings to it. If one comes to it to discover the dangers of apostasy, its words speak loudly and deliberately to that issue. If one comes to it to rediscover the wonderful physical works of the Lord, it speaks to that with equal clarity. But if one comes to it in the contest of the drama, and focuses on a single word—*hand*—and takes that word to have a literal ceremonial meaning,<sup>733</sup> then asks “*Where* does that happen?” then one can discover a whole new intent in Lehi’s words. Then, the “land promise” become the conclusion that is the drama’s destination. It is not so much that the verse is encoded as it is that it is reader-specific. That is, the meanings of the words adapt themselves to the view and mindset of the one who reads them.

A point that must not be lost is that the people of the Book of Mormon come out of

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<sup>732</sup> For examples of LDS scholars’ research into those matters, see Nibley, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 295-310; and *Since Cumorah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 247-51; John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 29; Thomasson, “Togetherness Is Sharing an Umbrella,” 1:523-61; Tvedtnes, “King Benjamin and the Feast of Tabernacles,” 2:179-237; Welch, “King Benjamin’s Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals,” *FARMS Preliminary Report* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1985).

<sup>733</sup> Seely, David Rolph, “The Image of the Hand of God in the Book of Mormon and the Old Testament,” *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 140-50; Lynn M. Hilton, “The Hand as a Cup in Ancient Temple Worship,” *Newsletter of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology*, BYU 152 (March 1983): 1-5.

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the religious culture of the pre-exilic Old Testament—the period when Solomon’s Temple was standing and in use. So the religion of Lehi, Nephi, and their descendants was the religion of the Jews *before* the changes were made in our texts of the Old Testament. What we have in our Old Testament is a severely edited version of the Law of Moses. But the text on the brass plates in 600 B.C. left Jerusalem before those editorial changes were made. That means that our most reliable contemporary texts that date to pre-exilic times is found in the Book of Mormon, and its religion is operative on the other side of the world from the apostate Jews.

Like Lehi, other authors in the Book of Mormon apparently assume we would have a full understanding of both the sequence and the principles of the drama, and they make frequent reference to it without stopping to explain how or why. Consequently, the drama formula is found in various stages of complexity and completeness throughout the entire Nephite record.

The most important messages of the ancient Israelite temple drama were also among the most important messages taught by the Nephite prophets—and often in the same context as in the festival drama.<sup>734</sup> Just as the whole intent of the festival drama was to introduce the king (and symbolically all of the congregation) into the throne room and presence of God, that same invitation is found repeatedly throughout the Book of Mormon, where it is often expressed by the words “come unto Christ.”

Similarly, the crowning act of the drama’s coronation ceremony was when the king was adopted as the son and heir of God, and given the regal new name of God’s “son” (Psalm 2). So also in the Book of Mormon, the prophets placed repeated emphasis on the importance of one’s becoming a son of God and being adopted as a joint heir with the Savior.<sup>735</sup>

Perhaps better than anyone else, Richard Dilworth Rust encapsulated the power of the multi-layered messages of the Book of Mormon when he wrote:

Essentially every event or person in the Book of Mormon may well remind us of another event or person; the book is like a beautifully composed symphony with repeated themes and motifs. Reference to the deliverance of Lehi and his family

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<sup>734</sup> They also provide a standard by which to judge whether the sequence we have proposed in the first part of this book is correct.

<sup>735</sup> Moroni 7:26, 48; 3 Nephi 7:26, 9:17.

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from Jerusalem evokes the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. We are reminded of Noah by Lehi, of Joseph the Patriarch by Joseph the son of Lehi, and of Captain Moroni by Moroni the son of Mormon. Most significantly, all God-given events or God-directed persons in the Book of Mormon are reminders of Jesus Christ or his gospel. This is Nephi's point in saying, "Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him" (2 Ne. 11:4). Abinadi says that all performances and ordinances of the law of Moses "were types of things to come" (Mosiah 13:31). Through their being types, the "things which have been given of God" in the Book of Mormon testify that Jesus is the Christ.<sup>736</sup>

That is why the Book of Mormon can be at the same time the greatest of all missionary tools, and an equally magnificent temple text.

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<sup>736</sup> Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 196.

## Nephi's Review of the Festival Temple Drama

There are many examples, but one of the first we encounter is “mystery” in the first verse of the Book of Mormon. As observed earlier, the Greek word translated “mystery” in the New Testament is the same as the Hebrew *sode* that is translated “secret” in the Old Testament. That being true, we can know that Nephi’s intent in the first verse of the Book of Mormon was to teach us that he is—by definition—a true prophet. He wrote:

Having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the *mysteries* of God ...

With those words he tells us that he has had a *sode* experience,<sup>737</sup> and therefore (given the

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<sup>737</sup> The distinguished Catholic Biblical scholar, Raymond E. Brown, has shown that the meaning of the Greek word *mysterion* (translated "mystery" in the English versions of the New Testament) and of the Hebrew word *sode* (translated "secret" in the English versions of the Old Testament) is essentially the same. *Mysterion* is more specific since it refers to secrets disclosed during initiation into sacred religious rites, [Strong 3466: “the idea of silence imposed by initiation into religious rites”] while *sode* is more general in that it refers to the deliberations (or decisions) of either a religious or a secular council. Brown observes that the New Testament *mysterion* refers to the Council in Heaven. He shows that in the Old Testament *sode* sometimes refers to that Council or its decisions (as in Amos 3:7), though it is sometimes used to describe any gathering, whether legal, or illegal and conspiratorial. (see Raymond E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 2-6).

Understanding these words casts a fascinating light on the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. The Nephites most likely spoke Hebrew or some other Semitic language, not Greek, so the Greek word *mysterion* was probably not a part of their language, whereas the Hebrew word *sode* (with its English equivalents) was likely familiar to the ancient Book of Mormon peoples. In the Book of Mormon, as in the Bible, *sode* might refer to a Council in Heaven *sode* experience, or a ceremony related to the temple drama representing a *sode* experience, or even the secret decisions of conspirators. In this, the English translation of the Book of Mormon is very precise. When the underlying word *sode* used in the negative sense it is translated as "secret," as in "secret combinations." However, when the underlying word *sode* is used in the positive sense—indicating a temple or temple-like experience—it is always translated as "mystery," equivalent to the English New Testament translation of the Greek *mysterion*. Thus, Nephi writes of "having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God" (1 Nephi 1:1).

For a more detailed discussion of the *sode* experience see the chapter called, “Sode Experience.”



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criterion established by Jeremiah 23:18-23) he is a true prophet who has the right and responsibility to speak the words that God has instructed him to speak.

To Nephi, that simple declaration—that he knows the mysteries—is sufficient for himself, because he will give us details of his *sode* experience later in his narrative. But for his father, Lehi, Nephi gives us all the information we need to judge that he was also a true prophet. In his account of his father's vision, Nephi mentioned all of the classic elements of a true *sode* experience:<sup>738</sup> (1) Lehi was taken in vision to the premortal Council in Heaven where he saw “numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.” (2) “He saw God sitting upon his throne.” (3) He received his earthly assignment from Jehovah who “gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read.” Lehi's assignment was in the words of the book. (4) He was promised that he would be able to fulfill his assignment and his covenants. That promise is not explicitly stated, but it is strongly asserted by Lehi's response to the information he received in the vision:

And it came to pass that when my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as: Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and, because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish! (1 Nephi 1:14)

Thus, Nephi begins his account in exactly the way we would expect from an Israelite prophet. He says that both he and his father have had *sode* experiences—that they have revisited the Council in Heaven, have received instructions from God, and have authority to speak God's words. They are, therefore, true prophets.<sup>739</sup>

First Nephi is a magnificent chiasmic poem that took Nephi ten years to compose. One can deduce that time from his statement in Second Nephi:

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<sup>738</sup> Blake T. Ostler, “The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: a Form-Critical Analysis,” *BYU Studies* 26, 4 (Fall 1986): 67-95. See Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 36-37, 190-91; Stephen D. Ricks, “The Narrative Call Pattern in the Prophetic Commission of Enoch (Moses 6),” *BYU Studies* 26, 4 (Fall 1986): 97-105.

<sup>739</sup> Examples of Old Testament passages in which prophets introduce themselves by telling of their *sode* experience are Isaiah 6 (2 Nephi 16 is a better version); Jeremiah 1:4-6, and Ezekiel 1:3-28. John does the same in Revelation.

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28 And thirty years had passed away from the time we left Jerusalem.

29 And I, Nephi, had kept the records upon my plates, which I had made, of my people thus far.

30 And it came to pass that the Lord God said unto me: Make other plates; and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight, for the profit of thy people.

31 Wherefore, I, Nephi, to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord, went and made these plates upon which I have engraven these things.

32 And I engraved that which is pleasing unto God. And if my people are pleased with the things of God they will be pleased with mine engravings which are upon these plates.

33 And if my people desire to know the more particular part of the history of my people they must search mine other plates.

34 And it sufficeth me to say that forty years had passed away, and we had already had wars and contentions with our brethren (2 Nephi 5:21-34).

Earlier in the record, Nephi explained the purpose for this set of small plates. He wrote:

3 And after I had made these plates by way of commandment, I, Nephi, received a commandment that the ministry and the prophecies, the more plain and precious parts of them, should be written upon these plates; and that the things which were written should be kept for the instruction of my people, who should possess the land, and also for other wise purposes, which purposes are known unto the Lord.

4 ... and that these plates should be handed down from one generation to another, or from one prophet to another, until further commandments of the Lord (1 Nephi 19:3-4b).

That the plates of Nephi were to be “handed down ...from one prophet to another” implies that their purpose was to be a kind of spiritual rudder to prevent the people from wandering off into strange religious paths, as had happened with the people in Jerusalem. To achieve that end, Nephi recorded the vital story of his colony’s spiritual beginnings, but he also wanted those future prophets to understand that the primary purpose for leaving Jerusalem (apart from saving their lives) was to preserve the pure religion of the Israelites. It was probably for that reason that he repeatedly chose the pattern of the Feast of

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Tabernacles temple drama as an encoded testimony that he did, in fact, have “a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God.”

That also helps explain why he introduced himself and his father within the context of that drama, for in the first six verses of First Nephi he mentions, in their correct order, every one of the most significant concepts in the New Year festival temple drama, creating a subtextual colophon that identifies himself and his father as true prophets. He divides it into the same three acts that we found in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm:

### **Act 1**

*1 I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father;*

### **Act 2**

He enters the “valley of the shadow of death” and tells his qualifications and purposes for writing:

*and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.*

He says his writing will include a subtext:

*2 Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.*

He did not write that his father’s language was a combination of the languages of the Jews and the Egyptians, but rather that it consisted of the *learning of the Jews* (the concepts expressed in the code of the Jewish sacral language) *and the language of the Egyptians* (the non-sacral script or language of the world).

He then bears a powerful legal witness:

*3 And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand ;*

One does not make a record true with one’s “hand” simply by writing the words. Something more is required. For example, in our courts of law, even though one’s

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testimony may already be written, it is made “true” by a hand gesture—raising the arm to the square while swearing that the information is correct according to one’s own first-hand knowledge. It is likely that Nephi may be referring to such a hand gesture.

In a very real way, one’s hand is the expression, even the personification, of one’s Self. If one were to slip and fall, it is likely that the hand would be the first thing to touch the ground because the hand is the protector of the body, both defensively and aggressively. It is especially protective of the face. One’s hand not only protects but also sustains the body. It cleanses one’s body, brings it food and drink, attends to its pain, and brings it pleasure. One’s hand is also the outward expression of one’s inner Self. The hand attends to and comforts others, and it can convey the expression of the full range of human emotion, from hate to sorrow, to tenderness and love, and to adoration. Thus, it is appropriate that one’s hand—especially the right hand—is the symbol of one’s honesty, integrity, power, and love.

*and I make it according to my knowledge.*

He has said his record is true, symbolically used his hand to verify its truthfulness, and now has sworn that his is primary evidence and is not hearsay.

The combined elements of Nephi’s evidence—the assertion that it is true, the symbolism of the hand, and the affirmation of his personal knowledge—make Nephi’s testimony as legally binding upon his readers as can be done with written words:He now mentions kingship:

*4 For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah,*

He mentions priesthood leadership:]

*(my father, Lehi,*

He mentions sacred space:]

*having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days);*

He calls attention to those who make and fulfill their covenants:

*and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent,*

He predicts the reality of the combat:

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*or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.*

He mentions prayer:

*5 Wherefore it came to pass that my father, Lehi, as he went forth prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of his people.*

He mentions the veil (the *Shechinah*):

*6 And it came to pass as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him;*

#### **Act 3**

As in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, Act 3 is very brief. Here it is simply,  
*and he saw and heard much* (1 Nephi 1:1-13).

In that subtextual colophon, Nephi has taken us through the festival drama with such care that it is apparent that he wished us to identify his writings with the ancient temple drama. His being able to write that way is a second evidence that he is a true prophet. Then, apparently to make sure we would not think that reciting the main points of the drama was only a happenstance, he immediately repeated the drama's sequence again in the first two chapters of his book. This time he used a first-person version of its events of the cosmic myth to create a second subtextual colophon.

(1) The sequence begins with his father's *sode* experience where Lehi returns to the Council in Heaven. So Nephi's third colophon begins in the Council just like the ancient temple drama did. He does not tell the Adam and Eve story with its promise that death will bring deliverance from this world. Rather, he tells its near equivalent in the boldest of up-to-date terms—only rather than the promise that death will bring deliverance, its focus is on the proposition that death is the consequence of unrepented sin:

*18 Therefore, I would that ye should know, that after the Lord had shown so many marvelous things unto my father, Lehi, yea, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, behold he went forth among the people, and began to prophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard.*

*19 And it came to pass that the Jews did mock him because of the things which he testified of them; for he truly testified of their wickedness and their*

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*abominations; and he testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world (1 Nephi 1:18-19).*

(2) Lehi's Melchizedek priesthood is shown in the next verse, not by telling when he received it but by showing that he had the authority to exercise its power:

*But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance (1 Nephi 1:20).*

(3) The Abrahamic Covenant includes the blessings of priesthood the assurances of family, and a promised land. Nephi mentioned them all. His father was a prophet ("the Lord commanded my father, even in a dream"), he mentions family ("that he should take his family"), and he implies the promised land as the destination of their travel ("and depart into the wilderness").

(4) Only a few verses later, Nephi demonstrates that his father can establish sacred space for after "he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent." Each time Nephi mentions his father's tent, it is, like this one, in conjunction with sacred rites or events, showing that it was the family's "tabernacle"—that is, the central tent of the camp was sacred space. That is confirmed in the next verse where he talks about ordinances and shows that Lehi had the authority to officiate in them:

*And it came to pass that he built an altar of stones, and made an offering unto the Lord, and gave thanks unto the Lord our God (1 Nephi 2:7).*

(5) For Nephi the ritual combat of the drama is very real. He next introduces us to his personal nemeses, his brothers Laman and Lemuel:

*Now this he [Lehi] spake because of the stiffneckedness of Laman and Lemuel; for behold they did murmur in many things against their father, because he was a visionary man, and had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things, to perish in the wilderness. And this they said he had done because of the*

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*foolish imaginations of his heart* (1 Nephi 2:11).

(6) Nephi shows that notwithstanding their attempts to prevent him from keeping his covenants, Jehovah himself would intercede in his behalf:

*And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart* (1 Nephi 2:19).

(7) The coronation ceremony of the seventh day of the drama is made reality when the Lord promised Nephi that he would be a king and a priest, thus establishing his own authority and the legitimacy of his new dynasty:

*20 And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.*

*21 And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.*

*22 And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler [king] and a teacher [priest] over thy brethren* (1 Nephi 2: 20-22).

Because Nephi would soon own the brass plates, the royal clothing, and sword worn by Laban, the words “a ruler and a teacher” came closer to expressing Nephi’s future role than “king and priest” might have done.<sup>740</sup>

(8) In that same blessing is the hope of the final scene of the festival drama:

*Ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.*

Thus, in the narrative of only the first two chapters of his small plates, Nephi has twice directed our thoughts through the entire sequence of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama. It is significant that he did this without calling attention to the drama itself.

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<sup>740</sup> See Ahlstrom, *Joel and the Temple*, 102-3.

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For, as he wrote at the outset, he would teach us in “double speak”: “Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews [the ancient temple drama subtext] and the language of the Egyptians [the everyday speech of the surface-text]” (1 Nephi 1:2). He not only told us that he would do it, but as we have seen he immediately showed us how he would do it.

Consistent with his word, and as further evidence that his intent was to preserve an understanding of the festival drama, Nephi patterned the entire book of First Nephi after the cosmic myth, that is, after the same chiasmic pattern as the festival drama:

- A. Nephi and his family must leave home.
  - B. They are given a seeming impossible task.
    - C. They receive all necessary empowerment.
      - D. Rebellion and starvation in the wilderness.
        - C. The Liahona leads to a mountain top for sustenance.
          - B. They travel to Bountiful to complete their task.
            - A. They arrive at the promised land.



## **Mormon's Outline of the Book of Mormon**

The prophet Mormon followed the same principle. An examination of the subtextual outline of the entire Book of Mormon shows a carefully structured pattern. If one does a hopscotch across the pages of the book and only lands on the major sermons and on an occasional outstanding ecclesiastical event, the following is what one finds:

- 1) As one would expect, the Book of Mormon begins with the decisions made in the Council in Heaven. During a *sode* experience Lehi attends a meeting of the Council where Elohim sits on his throne and presiding. Jehovah, who conducts the affairs of the Council, gives Lehi an earthly assignment.
- 2) Lehi and his family make the necessary preparations to fulfill their assignment. (Much of First Nephi is about their receiving the things requisite for the success of the mission. They included, among others, Nephi's new dynastic authority, the brass plates, Ishmael and his family, Lehi's tree of life vision, Nephi's vision of the tree of life and of his posterity so he could understand the importance and intent of his mission.)
- 3) They cross the chaotic waters (the ancient symbol of creation as well as of birth) and they go to a new world.
- 4) When they get there, Lehi teaches his sons about Adam and Eve and the Fall.
- 5) Nephi's psalm asks why we have come here when it is so very difficult.
- 6) Jacob seems to answer that question by teaching about the Atonement.
- 7) Nephi quotes much of the first part of Isaiah whose underlying message is that God is the God of this world and Satan is not.
- 8) Nephi concludes Second Nephi by teaching about faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- 9) Jacob teaches about the importance of keeping covenants
- 10) Enos teaches that one must pray.
- 11) King Benjamin teaches his people about the importance of obedience. They make a covenant that they will obey, and they receive a new name.
- 12) Abinadi teaches Alma the gospel. He does this by explaining the Savior's sacrifice; then we see Abinadi's sacrifice also.
- 13) At the Waters of Mormon the people are baptized. But Alma's prayer does not mention the remission of sins. This baptism seems to be the token of a covenant

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- that the people will support each other, the church, and the kingdom.
- 14) When Alma and his followers are in the wilderness, they briefly live the law of consecration.
  - 15) They get to Zarahemla, and in Alma 5 and 7 the prophet sums up many of the principles of the drama and admonishes the people to keep their covenants.
  - 16) In Alma chapters 12 and 13, he teaches Zeezrom about the eternal legitimacy of priesthood and kingship.
  - 17) Alma 26 and 29 are psalms about responsibilities of missionary work.
  - 18) Alma 32 teaches how to partake of the fruit of the tree of life, and eventually how to become as a tree of life. (The tree of life is always an important part of the drama. If Alma 32 were not there the whole structure of the pattern would collapse.)
  - 19) When Alma talks to his three sons,
    - 19a) he teaches his oldest son he must keep sacred things sacred.
    - 19b) he teaches the second that he must be true to the law of his own being.
    - 19c) he tells the third about justice and mercy and the importance of the laws of chastity.
  - 20) There are many wars in Book of Mormon history as the people struggle to overcome the aloneness of this dark and dreary world. But Mormon chooses to give the most detail about one, which he identifies as a sacred war between good and evil. He introduces it with a whole series of covenants and covenant names (There are always new names associated with new covenants).
    - 20a) Captain Moroni tears off a piece of his coat (after that it is called “garment” so it is the outer of the two—there are always two).
    - 20b) He writes a chiastic poem on it. The poem is a covenant, and he gives it the title of “Liberty.”
    - 20c) At this point Mormon interrupts his narrative to insert the information that those who believe in Christ “took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ,” and are called Christians.
    - 20d) Captain Moroni then identifies the land in terms of its geographical boundaries (measuring it and defining it as sacred space) and gives it the same name as the poem—“the land of liberty.”
    - 20e) The people come and join in the covenant that they will keep the Lord’s commandments and he will preserve them in their Liberty.

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- 20f) Shortly thereafter we are told that the sons of Helaman “entered into a covenant,” and “they called themselves Nephites” (Alma 53:16-17).
- 20g) It is in the context of these covenants that Helaman tells the story of their part of the war. The point being that all the boys who made and kept their covenants were protected—some were badly hurt, but they all survived.
- 21) After the war, Nephi, Lehi are baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost.
- 22) Nephi is given the sealing power—“even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word “ (Helaman 10:5).
- 23) Samuel the Lamanite tells the people that the Savior is coming, and urges them to get ready to see him.
- 24) In three days of darkness, the world is cleansed of its unrighteousness (this maps to Jehovah’s restoring Israel and the king after he has been in the Underworld for three days).
- 25) The Savior comes to his temple just as the king does in the drama.
- 26) The Savior organizes his church and kingdom, and teaches the people how to keep their covenants (these map to the seventh day of the drama).
- 27) Then in Fourth Nephi the people do keep their covenants and live the law of consecration (this maps to the eighth day of the drama). In the symbolism, they had returned to the Garden to enjoy the blessings of the eating freely of the fruit of the tree of life (3 Nephi 20:5-9), and the promised millennial reign.
- 28) The book of Ether is the counterbalance of that story. It shows the destructive consequences when people do not keep their covenants with God.
- 29) The Book of Mormon’s crescendo is repeated three times near the end of the book. There the reader is taught one must have faith, hope, and charity in order to enter the presence of God (Ether 12:28,39; Moroni 7; and Moroni 10:20-21).
- 30) Then Moroni reviews the entire drama and in the last verse he says, “I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, ... before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah.”

First Nephi set the example for that sub-textual pattern. While the surface texts of both are primarily concerned with the testimony of the Savior and the message and principles of the festival drama, their subtexts approach the same principles from a different point of view. They focus on the sequence, covenants, and ordinances of the drama, throwing a magnificent light on their meaning in the context of priesthood, temple, and the covenant relationship between Jehovah and each participant in the drama.

## **King Benjamin: The Drama's Sacral Kingship is about Being a Child of God**

The speech delivered by King Benjamin and its setting have been recognized by LDS scholars as one of the most convincing evidences that the text of the Book of Mormon is as ancient as it claims to be and that its religion and culture stem from the background of pre-exilic Israel.<sup>741</sup> The fact that the occasion described here is a celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, and not just a political gathering, is evinced by several striking features. First, the event required a pilgrimage where people gathered from all over. They attended as families, and performed sacrifices. Second, King Benjamin spoke from the temple and from a tower. Third, the people stayed in tents that were occupied by entire family units, and all the tents faced the temple.<sup>742</sup> That the families temporarily resided in tents rather than leaf-covered booths as in the Old Testament, is interesting. The reason for that modification in the ritual is easily understood. In Jerusalem the booths provided protection from the sun, but in ancient Mesoamerica it may have been much more important to be protected from the rain. Fourth, as in the Old Testament, the king lead the people in their covenant-making ceremonies, and the people who watched also participated in the ceremonies. Similar audience participation appears in other places in the Book of Mormon.<sup>743</sup>

King Benjamin's speech also evinces that this was a special ceremonial occasion. As John Welch observed, "Whoever composed Benjamin's speech knew essentially what

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<sup>741</sup> For a full volume of essays by LDS scholars, see Welch and Ricks, *King Benjamin's Speech*.

<sup>742</sup> John W. Welch, "Good and True" in Susan Easton Black, ed. *Expressions of Faith: Testimonies of Latter-day Saint Scholars* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1996: 235-36.

<sup>743</sup> Examples are: Mosiah 5:1-8, where the people speak in unison to make a covenant; 3 Nephi 4:28-33, where there seems to be a ceremony where the people also speak in unison; 3 Nephi 20:1-10, where the Savior administers the sacrament, and "when the multitude had all eaten and drunk, behold, they were filled with the Spirit; and they did cry out with one voice, and gave glory to Jesus, whom they both saw and heard." (v.9)

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belonged in an ancient coronation ceremony held in conjunction with a Feast of Tabernacles or the Day of Atonement and a covenant renewal.”<sup>744</sup>

As time passed, it seems that among the Nephites, King Benjamin’s speech came to be recognized as something like the official commentary on the most significant portions of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama.<sup>745</sup>

In his own writings, the prophet-historian Mormon described neither the beginning events of King Benjamin’s festival, nor the drama, nor the sacred ordinances performed in conjunction with it. Rather, he placed his emphasis on their meanings, by focusing on the royal speech and on the covenants made at the conclusion of the ceremony. The speech is extraordinary for three reasons—these reasons are also sound evidences that it was delivered during the Feast of Tabernacles. The first is that King Benjamin was both king and prophet, and he used this occasion to give his farewell address. The second is that it was given in conjunction with the consecration of Benjamin’s son Mosiah, who became the next king.<sup>746</sup> The third is that the content of the speech was initiated by an angel who visited King Benjamin to explain the most important meanings of the festival drama.

Other LDS scholars have carefully analyzed the speech and its festival setting,<sup>747</sup> but we find the visit of the angel to be most interesting because he used the psalms to explain the most significant doctrines taught in the festival and its drama. Inasmuch as the psalms were the liturgy of the temple drama, it seems reasonable to suppose that any reference the angel made to the psalms was also a reference to the meaning of the drama.

It appears from the narrative that King Benjamin had already given the traditional

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<sup>744</sup> Welch, “Good and True,” 235.

<sup>745</sup> See Mosiah 8:3, 26:1; and Helaman 5:9 as examples.

<sup>746</sup> Thomasson, “Mosiah: the Complex Symbolism,” 26. Mark J. Morrise, “Simile Curses in the Ancient Near East, Old Testament, and Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, 1 (Spring 1993): 132. For a discussion of the relationship of adoption, redemption, and covenant, see Jennifer Clark Lane, “The Lord Will Redeem His People: Adoptive Covenant and Redemption in the Old Testament and Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, 2 (Fall 1993): 48.

<sup>747</sup> For examples of its use, see Mosiah 8:3, 26:1; Helaman 5:9. For a discussion of the festival setting of King Benjamin’s address, see Terrence L. Szink and John W. Welch, “King Benjamin’s Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom,”* ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1998), 147-223.

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royal sermon, and the events of the festival were nearly concluded. The angel's visit apparently caused the king to break with tradition, because the record says the king instructed his son to gather the people together again. He then apparently delivered a second speech that began with an account of the angel's visit:

1 And again my brethren, I would call your attention, for I have somewhat more to speak unto you; for behold, I have things to tell you concerning that which is to come.

2 And the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God. And he said unto me: Awake; and I awoke, and behold he stood before me [in the Old Testament, one stands to make or initiate a covenant<sup>748</sup>].

3 And he said unto me: Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee; for behold, I am come to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy.

4 For the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, that they may also be filled with joy (Mosiah 3:1-4).

Twice, the angel commanded the king to awake. That word may also have reflected words found in the festival drama. "Awake" has two meanings. The first is to be awakened from sleep. The second is to become mentally alert. The angel used both.<sup>749</sup>

The principles the angel was about to explain were most important. The Feast of Tabernacles drama carried two concurrent messages: the first and most easily recognized was the eternal biography of each individual as told through the story of the king, in the context of the work and power of Jehovah. The second was that the biographical account of the king was parallel to and, therefore, representative of, the biography of the God of Israel, first as Jehovah, then as the Messiah, Jesus, and the Resurrected Christ. The angel called attention to the second symbolic meaning of the drama when he paraphrased and elaborated on the 146<sup>th</sup> Psalm. The psalm reads:

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<sup>748</sup> As in 2 Kings 23:1-3 and Psalm 82:1.

<sup>749</sup> For examples of these uses, see Psalms 7:6, and 44:23. In Paul's statement, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14), awake seems to mean to become mentally alert, and arise to become physically alive.

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- 1 Praise ye the Lord.  
Praise the Lord, O my soul.
- 2 While I live will I praise the Lord:  
I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.
- 3 Put not your trust in princes,  
nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.
- 4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth;  
in that very day his thoughts perish.
- 5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help,  
whose hope is in the Lord his God:
- 6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea,  
and all that therein is:  
which keepeth truth for ever:
- 7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed:  
which giveth food to the hungry.  
The Lord looseth the prisoners:
- 8 The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind:  
the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down:  
the Lord loveth the righteous:
- 9 The Lord preserveth the strangers;  
he relieveth the fatherless and widow:  
but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.
- 10 The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion,  
unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord (Psalm 146:1-10).

In that psalm, the Lord himself is represented as fulfilling the covenantal responsibilities that were given to the members of the Council in Psalm 82:

- 3 Defend the poor and fatherless:  
do justice to the afflicted and needy.
- 4 Deliver the poor and needy:  
rid them out of the hand of the wicked.
- 5 They know not, neither will they understand;  
they walk on in darkness:  
all the foundations of the earth are out of course (Psalm 82:3-5).

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The Angel who spoke to King Benjamin said:

5 For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases.

6 And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men (Mosiah 3:5-6).

Again from Psalm 82:

6 I have said, Ye are gods;  
and all of you are children of the most High.

7 But ye shall die like men,  
and fall [in battle] like one of the princes (Psalm 82:6-7).

The angel said to King Benjamin:

7 And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.

8 And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary.

9 And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him (Mosiah 3:7-9).

The angel referred to the drama scene where Jehovah rescued the reigning king from death and hell when he explained:



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10 And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men (Mosiah 3:10).

Then the angel reiterated the promise of salvation for the dead that is represented in Psalm 22, where the Savior visits the Underworld to proclaim the gospel to the spirits there:

11 For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned.

12 But wo, wo unto him who knoweth that he rebelleth against God! For salvation cometh to none such except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ (Mosiah 3:11-12).

The angel further explained:

15 And many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows showed he [the Lord] unto them [the Israelites], concerning his coming; and also holy prophets spake unto them concerning his coming; and yet they hardened their hearts, and understood not that the Law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the Atonement of his blood (Mosiah 3:15).

Perhaps that statement was a suggestion that some of King Benjamin's people had missed the most important meanings of the festival and its drama. The next explanation by the angel was another clear reference to the doctrine of salvation for the dead that is taught in the final third of Psalm 22.<sup>750</sup>

17 And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.

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<sup>750</sup> For a discussion of Psalm 22, see the chapter called, "Act 2, Scene 7, Jehovah Conquers Death and Hell."

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18 For behold he judgeth, and his judgment is just; and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; but men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and become as little children, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.

19 For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

20 And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

21 And behold, when that time cometh, none shall be found blameless before God, except it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent.

22 And even at this time, when thou shalt have taught thy people the things which the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, even then are they found no more blameless in the sight of God, only according to the words which I have spoken unto thee. (Mosiah 3:17-22).

The angel's teaching about children may have been another explanation of a portion of the festival drama that was not fully understood by the Nephites. The most explicit reference to children in the psalms is Psalm 131. Its three verses are a celebration of childhood innocence:

1 Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty:

either do I exercise myself in great matters,  
or in things too high for me.

2 Surely I have behaved and quieted myself,

as a child that is weaned of his mother:  
my soul is even as a weaned child.

3 Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever (Psalm 131:1-3).

Another short psalm spoke of the importance of the family:

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- 1 Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it:  
    except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.
- 2 It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late,  
    to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.
- 3 Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord:  
    and the fruit of the womb is his reward.
- 4 As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man;  
    so are children of the youth.
- 5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed,  
    but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate (Psalm 127:1-5).<sup>751</sup>

The angel who spoke to King Benjamin concluded his instructions by reiterating the same ideas with which he had begun: “For the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, that they may also be filled with joy” (v. 4). Now he tied his entire message into a neat bow by reminding the king of the story of Adam and Eve and the Fall, and reaffirmed the Lord’s powers of both justice and mercy. That understanding of kingship is described in the 89<sup>th</sup> Psalm:

- 14 Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne:  
    mercy and truth shall go before thy face.
- 15 Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound:  
    they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.
- 16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day:  
    and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.
- 17 For thou art the glory of their strength:  
    and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.
- 18 For the Lord is our defence;  
    and the Holy One of Israel is our king.
- 19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst,  
    I have laid help upon one that is mighty;  
    I have exalted one chosen out of the people.

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<sup>751</sup> Daniel E. Fleming, “Psalm 127: Sleep for the Fearful, and Security in Sons,” *Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 107 (1995): 435-44.

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- 20 I have found David my servant;  
with my holy oil have I anointed him:  
21 With whom my hand shall be established:  
mine arm also shall strengthen him.  
22 The enemy shall not exact upon him;  
nor the son of wickedness afflict him.  
23 And I will beat down his foes before his face,  
and plague them that hate him.  
24 But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him:  
and in my name shall his horn be exalted (Psalm 89:14-24).

One of the most obvious themes of the drama emphasized the rights of the reigning king to judge, but the angel pointed out that the ultimate authority to judge rested with God himself:

- 23 And now I have spoken the words which the Lord God hath commanded me.  
24 And thus saith the Lord: They shall stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the judgment day; whereof they shall be judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.  
25 And if they be evil they are consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment, from whence they can no more return; therefore they have drunk damnation to their own souls.  
26 Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God, which justice could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy could have claim on them no more forever.  
27 And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever. Thus hath the Lord commanded me. Amen (Mosiah 3:23-27).

Even this description of the final fate of the wicked was an echo of one of the psalms. The angel said:

- 26 Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God, which justice

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could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy could have claim on them no more forever.

27 And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever. Thus hath the Lord commanded me. Amen (Mosiah 3:26-27).

The psalm reads:

4 The Lord is in his holy temple,

the Lord's throne is in heaven [Note: this throne is not on the earth]:  
his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men.

5 The Lord trieth the righteous:

but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest:  
this shall be the portion of their cup.

7 For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness;

his countenance doth behold the upright (Psalm 11:4-7).

When King Benjamin had concluded telling about the angel, and adding his own instructions, the people fell to the earth and:

2 ... viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, [they spoke in unison] saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men (Mosiah 4:2b).

While this appears to be a formally structured, probably orchestrated, response, that did not preclude its being a heartfelt one by each individual who participated:

3 And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith

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which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them (Mosiah 4:2-3).

After they had spoken these words, the king continued his speech by admonishing them to bind themselves in a covenant whose conditions sound remarkably like the covenant in Psalm 82, and like the law of consecration as it would be practiced by the later Nephites:

11 And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel. ...

13 And ye will not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably, and to render to every man according to that which is his due.

14 And ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, ...

15 But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another.

16 And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish. ...

21 And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another. ...

26 ... I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked,

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visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.

27 And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order (Mosiah 4:11-27).

Once again, the people responded “with one voice”:

2 Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.

3 And we, ourselves, also, through the infinite goodness of God, and the manifestations of his Spirit, have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things.

4 And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceedingly great joy.

5 And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he shall command us, all the remainder of our days, that we may not bring upon ourselves a never-ending torment, as has been spoken by the angel, that we may not drink out of the cup of the wrath of God (Mosiah 5:2b-5).

King Benjamin complimented them on the covenant they had just made by giving them a new name, “Ye shall be called the children of Christ.” That is clearly a paraphrase of the royal coronation hymn. In that psalm the king testifies:

I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me,  
Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee (Psalm 2:7).

The story of King Benjamin’s covenant ceremony is of great value to us when we try to recreate the festival drama of the Old Testament. We have the text of the drama in the psalms, but scholars can only conjecture what else was going on. But in the Book of

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Mormon we have many of the missing stage directions, and we discover, as a certainty, that not only was the king adopted as a son and heir of God, but the entire congregation shared in that adoption. After the people had spoken the words of the covenant, King Benjamin said to them:

6 Ye have spoken the words that I desired; and the covenant which ye have made is a righteous covenant.

7 And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.

8 And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

9 And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ. ...

12 I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the left hand of God, but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you.

13 For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart? ...

15 Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all. Amen (Mosiah 5:6b-15).

Even though the visitation of the angel apparently caused the king to change some of the details of the ceremony, this account of the conclusion of the drama gives us a good



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look into some of the most important parts of the drama as they were performed during pre-exilic Old Testament times.

King Benjamin's paraphrasing Psalm 2 that the psalm itself had been used earlier in his ceremony. Otherwise he would have quoted it rather than paraphrased it. It shows something else too: the Nephites understood that the king must be an adopted son of God in order to legitimately sit upon his throne as king and in order to represent God in priesthood and theological matters. If he were not a son, he would be a usurper.

That is an important insight into the politics and theology of the Book of Mormon. It was the principle with which Alma confronted Zeezrom when the latter was planning to conduct a *coup* to overthrow the Nephite government. The principle was actualized when the Savior established his new kingdom in Third Nephi. There he ordained the Twelve, then taught the Beatitudes—the pinnacle of which reads: “And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” (3 Nephi 12:9).

## **Abinadi: The Drama's Sacral Kingship is About Being a Child of God**

The nature, qualifications, and promises of sacral kingship were the whole focus of Abinadi's argument before King Noah as he described to Alma what one must be to become a child of God. The coronation rites at the conclusion of the New Year festival temple drama not only represented the renewal of the king's earthly authority as an adopted son and heir of God, but they also represented the renewal of the ordinances and covenants of salvation for the king and every individual who participated in the ceremonies. Consequently, when Abinadi asked, "who shall be his [the Savior's] seed," then answered his own question, answering in terms of sacral kingship:

10b And who shall be his seed?

11 Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God (Mosiah 15:10b-11).

Because we know the end of the story of Abinadi and Alma, we can also know more about the beginning of the story: Abinadi had come to the city for the single purpose of becoming the mentor to the young prince Alma<sup>752</sup> —to teach him who he was and

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<sup>752</sup> There are several indications that Alma was a young prince. Evidence of his age is found when his son Alma II spoke to the people of Zarahemla, saying:

5 And behold, after that, they were brought into bondage by the hands of the Lamanites in the wilderness; yea, I say unto you, they were in captivity, and again the Lord did deliver them out of bondage by the power of his word; and we were brought into this land, and here we began to establish the church of God throughout this land also (Alma 5:5).

So "they" were brought into bondage, and "we" came out. When Luke wrote "we" and "they" in Acts, it is taken as a key to knowing when he was and was not with Paul's party. If that same principle can be applied here, it says that when they were brought into bondage Alma II was not with them, but he was when they came out—indicating that he had been born while they were there.

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something about what his responsibilities would be. To do that, Abinadi subjected himself to arrest and trial at Noah's court—Alma would be there, and that would be the boy's only opportunity to hear the prophet. At the trial, Abinadi was interrogated by Noah's priests:

19 And they began to question him, that they might cross him, that thereby they might have wherewith to accuse him; but he answered them boldly, and withstood all their questions, yea, to their astonishment; for he did withstand them in all their questions, and did confound them in all their words.

20 And it came to pass that one of them said unto him: What meaneth the words which are written, and which have been taught by our fathers, saying:

21 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth;

22 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion;

23 Break forth into joy; sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem;

24 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God?

25 And now Abinadi said unto them: Are you priests, and pretend to teach this people, and to understand the spirit of prophesying, and yet desire to know of me what these things mean? (Mosiah 12:19-25).

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It was customary that a boy be married by the age of 18 to 20, but if one were not a "young man," he could not sit in the councils of the Israelites, until he was 32, married, and had a child. If Alma II were his father's oldest child, or at least his oldest son, and born when his father was in his early twenties, then Alma I may have been only in his late teens when he heard Abinadi. That was too young to sit in the king's Council unless one was a prince.

Another indication of Alma's high rank (and probably of his popularity among the people) is that Noah did not arrest him, as he would have done a commoner, but rather sent someone to assassinate him.

Probably the strongest evidence is that after he got to Zarahemla and the king's sons refused to accept the throne, Alma was next in line for the throne. That could only be true if Zeniff, the king of the Nephites in the land of Nephi, were also a Nephite prince, and if Alma were his son and Noah's younger brother, and, therefore, a legal heir to both Nephite thrones.

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If the scripture with which Noah's priests challenged Abinadi was intended to evoke an answer that would justify their sentencing the prophet to death on charges of blasphemy and treason, then the answer they expected was probably something like this: "In Isaiah's acclamation, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings,' he was calling attention to the fact that at the king's coronation he sat upon the throne in the temple with his feet 'established' upon a footstool that was a sacred box containing the symbols of priesthood and kingship. At that time the king had been given authority as Jehovah's 'son' and heir. Therefore, in consequence of those ordinances, King Noah is the legal earthly representative of Jehovah."

If Abinadi had given that answer, it would have been the technically correct one, but that is not what Abinadi said:

25 And now Abinadi said unto them: Are you priests, and pretend to teach this people, and to understand the spirit of prophesying, and yet desire to know of me what these things mean? (Mosiah 12:25).

That kind of retort is what one would expect from either someone who doesn't know the answer and is playing for time, or else from someone who is very sure of himself and is about to seize control of the situation—which is precisely what Abinadi was about to do. The king's priests who challenged Abinadi were probably the same officials who had presided over King Noah's coronation rites, so the prophet was about to challenge their authority as well as the king's. Abinadi's next statement confirms that he had just taken complete control of the conversation:

26 I say unto you, wo be unto you for perverting the ways of the Lord! For if ye understand these things ye have not taught them; therefore, ye have perverted the ways of the Lord.

27 Ye have not applied your hearts to understanding; therefore, ye have not been wise. Therefore, what teach ye this people? (Mosiah 12:26-27).

The word "wise" as spoken by Abinadi appears to be much stronger than it is in typical American English where it means something between prudent or clever. Anciently, "wisdom" was the knowledge of God—not knowledge about God, but God's

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knowledge.<sup>753</sup> By saying they had not been wise—that is, that they had not acted in accordance with God's knowledge—Abinadi again challenged the very foundation of their ecclesiastical and political authority. When they responded, they ignored his challenge and did what people do who lean on tradition rather than revelation:

28 And they said: We teach the law of Moses.

29 And again he said unto them: If ye teach the law of Moses why do ye not keep it? Why do ye set your hearts upon riches? Why do ye commit whoredoms and spend your strength with harlots, yea, and cause this people to commit sin, that the Lord has cause to send me to prophesy against this people, yea, even a great evil against this people?

30 Know ye not that I speak the truth? Yea, ye know that I speak the truth; and you ought to tremble before God.

31 And it shall come to pass that ye shall be smitten for your iniquities, for ye have said that ye teach the law of Moses. And what know ye concerning the law of Moses? Doth salvation come by the law of Moses? What say ye?

32 And they answered and said that salvation did come by the law of Moses.

33 But now Abinadi said unto them: I know if ye keep the commandments of God ye shall be saved; yea, if ye keep the commandments which the Lord delivered unto Moses in the mount of Sinai, saying:

34 I am the Lord thy God, who hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

35 Thou shalt have no other God before me.

36 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing in heaven above, or things which are in the earth beneath.

37 Now Abinadi said unto them, Have ye done all this? I say unto you, Nay, ye have not. And have ye taught this people that they should do all these things? I say unto you, Nay, ye have not (Mosiah 12:28-37).

Abinadi was a very difficult kind of person to deal with. The Savior was also that kind of person, as were Alma and the Prophet Joseph Smith. When discussing gospel

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<sup>753</sup> Proverbs 1-3 is an essay about Wisdom. There it is the very extension and expression of the knowledge and power of God. See also: Barker, *Older Testament* (1987), 81-99; Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), 97-99.

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principles, prophets do not have the option of reverting to a position of compromise. So one must deal with them on their terms. One must accept them as a speaker of truth or else try to prove them to be frauds. If one knows but can't handle the fact that the prophet is saying the truth, then in order to justify disbelief, one tries to demonstrate that the prophet is a false prophet. To do that, people often resort to the simple expedient of demonstrating that the prophet is unable to enforce his truth or that he cannot be sustained by the truth he espouses. That may be done by throwing him in jail or by killing him. That approach is an extremely dangerous position to work from because, if one does that, one is likely to go to hell. That was precisely the bind King Noah was in. He had power over the life and death of his subjects, and he reacted exactly the way one might expect:

1 And now when the king had heard these words, he said unto his priests: Away with this fellow, and slay him; for what have we to do with him, for he is mad.

2 And they stood forth and attempted to lay their hands on him; but he withstood them, and said unto them:

3 Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver; neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell; therefore, God will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time (Mosiah 13:1-3).

If verse 3 was translated by the same criteria as the Old Testament, then the word "Elohim" is rendered as "God" and "Jehovah" as "Lord." So the statement would read:

3 Touch me not, for God [Elohim] shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord [Jehovah] sent me to deliver; neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell; therefore, God [Elohim] will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time.

4 But I must fulfill the commandments wherewith God [Elohim] has commanded me; and because I have told you the truth ye are angry with me. And again, because I have spoken the word of God [Elohim] ye have judged me that I am mad (Mosiah 13:3-4).

That statement is not a complete description of a *sode* experience, of course. It does not mention that God was sitting on his throne, and it does not mention other members of the Council being present. But this was hardly the kind of conversation where one would

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expect Abinadi to stop and explain the details of what had brought him to find and talk to Alma. Nevertheless, his argument was very important because it shows that Abinadi had a perfect understanding of the Godhead.

It also shows that Noah and the priests had a similar understanding—otherwise there would have been no reason for Abinadi to use his words with such care.

The temple drama of the New Year festival was a generic depiction of a *sode* experience. It clearly portrayed the relationship of Elohim, Jehovah, and the members of the Council who were to become the earthly prophets, kings, and sacral kings.<sup>754</sup> During a *sode* experience the prophet sees God (Elohim) sitting on his throne. But he receives his assignment and instructions from Jehovah. For example: in Psalm 82 and Abraham 3 it was Elohim who made the covenant. Jehovah made the assignment, as in Abraham 3-5 and in Isaiah 6, where Isaiah reports, “The voice of the Lord [Jehovah], saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us [the Council]?” In 1 Nephi 1, Lehi saw God [Elohim] sitting on his throne, and one whose “luster was above the sun at noon-day” [Jehovah] gave him the book that contained instructions for his mission.

Therefore, when Abinadi carefully distinguished between which God did what, he was calling on his antagonists’ understanding of the festival drama to let them understand that he had received his instructions during a real *sode* experience. Abinadi was giving evidence in the strongest possible terms that he was a true prophet and that he had come to deliver an official message from God and the Council. Abinadi had just overridden Noah’s claim to sonship by asserting he had a *sode* experience, which made him, by definition, a true prophet, and he had put Noah and his priests on notice that they were speaking to a true prophet—with all of the attendant dangers of doing so!<sup>755</sup>

The king’s theoretical claim to authority rested on the belief that he was chosen at the Council, and his continued authority rested on his claim that his decisions represented the decisions of God. Now Abinadi was challenging those claims by asserting that his own authority was based on a covenant between Elohim and himself and that his instructions were from Jehovah. Abinadi was pitting his authority against the king’s, claiming that part of the assignment he had received during his *sode* experience was to call Noah’s subjects to repentance (something the king had failed to do) and to warn the king and his priests of

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<sup>754</sup> See chapters about Psalms 25 (525-44), 45 (255-304), 82 (227-44).

<sup>755</sup> See Jeremiah 23:18-22. For a discussion of a *sode* experience being the criterion for a true prophet, see the chapter called, “Sode Experience—Return to the Council in Heaven.”

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an impending doom. It is little wonder that their fury was so intense that it required the powers of heaven to defend him from their immediate retaliation. Alma, who wrote the story, reported:

5 Now it came to pass after Abinadi had spoken these words that the people of king Noah durst not lay their hands on him, for the Spirit of the Lord was upon him; and his face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses' did while in the mount of Sinai, while speaking with the Lord.

6 And he spake with power and authority from God; and he continued his words, saying:

7 Ye see that ye have not power to slay me, therefore I finish my message. Yea, and I perceive that it cuts you to your hearts because I tell you the truth concerning your iniquities.

8 Yea, and my words fill you with wonder and amazement, and with anger (Mosiah 13:5-8).

One of the powers of a prophet is to know the thoughts of the persons with whom he is dealing. It is probably safe to assume that Abinadi's describing their "wonder, amazement, and anger" was more than just guessing by the looks on their faces. If he knew their thoughts, then he would also have known that his words were understood by them, and he knew that they knew he was a true prophet (as with Zeezrom in Alma 12:7). He warned:

9 But I finish my message; and then it matters not whither I go, if it so be that I am saved.

10 But this much I tell you, what you do with me, after this, shall be as a type and a shadow of things which are to come (Mosiah 13:9-10).

As he stood there, it is possible but not likely, that his accusers would have given Abinadi a copy of the Law so he could use it in his defense. And there can be little doubt that the prophet could have quoted the Ten Commandments verbatim. Yet, the account says he "read" them to the king. It is likely that Noah was actually wearing an



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embroidered copy of the Ten Commandments as part of his royal clothing.<sup>756</sup>

The evidence that a visual copy of the Ten Commandments was a part of the royal regalia comes from an Old Testament story about an unworthy queen who was assassinated by temple priests. They then put a boy on the throne in her stead. The story reads:

12 And he [the priest] brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king (2 Kings 11:12; see 2 Chronicles 23:11).

Johnson explained, "the fact surely is that the king was made to wear, not merely the royal crown, but a document embodying the basic terms of Yahweh's covenant with the House of David."<sup>757</sup> The document or "testimony" they gave the boy-king was probably a copy of the Ten Commandments which the king would then wear on his person. The evidence that it was the Ten Commandments is this: The stone tablets on which the Commandments were written were the testimony of the Lord's covenant with Israel and were often called the "testimony."<sup>758</sup> For example, the account in Exodus reads:

28 And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

29 And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him (Exodus 34:28-29).

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<sup>756</sup> For discussions of the king's wearing a copy of the Ten Commandments, see Widengren, "Early Hebrew Myths," 167-68; Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle*, 25-26.

<sup>757</sup> *Johnson, Sacral Kingship*, 23-24.

<sup>758</sup> The stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments are written are called the Testimony in Exodus 31:18, 32:15; 34:28-29. The "Testimony" was put in the Ark of the Covenant: Exodus 16:33-34; 25:16. The Ark of the Covenant is called the Ark of the Testimony: Exodus 30:26; Numbers 7:89. The "testimony" is in the Holy of Holies: Exodus 26:33-34; 27:21; 30:6.

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The significance of the king's actually wearing a copy of the Ten Commandments on his royal person would have been a reminder that, as Widengren wrote, "One fact after all remains primary: the king is always the ultimate authority so far as the *Torah* is concerned."<sup>759</sup>

That would add considerable tension to the exchange between the prophet and the king. We may envision Abinadi as a dignified old man—whose voice resounded with the quiet authority of a prophet—standing in front of King Noah, pointing to the copy of the Ten Commandments which the king wore—pointing directly at the king—and saying, in effect: "Obedience to *those* laws are the first conditions of being a legitimate son and heir of Jehovah—and you and your priests just don't qualify!"

There would have been another good reason for Abinadi beginning his rebuttal with a reference to the Ten Commandments. They represented the very foundation of the king's authority. Abinadi was not only challenging the ecclesiastical status of the king and his priests, he was also challenging their political right to rule. Their accusations against the prophet were about the most fundamental and sacred ordinances of Israelite temple worship—and that was where they were most vulnerable. After "reading" the Ten Commandments to his accusers, Abinadi continued:

27 And now ye have said that salvation cometh by the law of Moses. I say unto you that it is expedient that ye should keep the law of Moses as yet; but I say unto you, that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the law of Moses (Mosiah 13:27).<sup>760</sup>

While the king and his priests were conducting their farcical courtroom trial, there was a powerful drama going on before their eyes which they neither saw nor heard. The safety of the prophet was no longer in question, so he could now focus his attention on teaching Alma. When a prophet speaks by the power of the Holy Ghost, and another person listens by that same power, both know what is happening. Alma was listening, so

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<sup>759</sup> Widengren, "King and Covenant," 17. For a discussion of the importance of the king having the Law, see Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book*.

<sup>760</sup> His argument looks forward to the Savior's Atonement just as Paul's looked back to it. Paul's explanation was that "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer" may purify one in this world, but only the blood of a God can cleanse the souls of men for eternity (Hebrews 9:13).

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Abinadi understood. In the development of Abinadi's speech, one hears the venerable prophet lecturing the king with defiance, almost belligerence, and then he changes his approach as he teaches the young prince what it really means to be a son of God.

Isaiah's words "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings" can be understood in three different ways. Abinadi first dealt with the interpretation that was most obvious to the priests who had accosted him, that is, that the Isaiah passage was about the earthly king as a representative of Jehovah. In doing so, the prophet also addressed the second interpretation—the one what was probably most obvious to himself: that Isaiah's statement was a celebration of the Kingship of Jehovah. As he explained to Alma, the passage is, first of all, about Jehovah-Jesus-Messiah-Savior as Eternal King:

29 And now I say unto you that it was expedient that there should be a law given to the children of Israel, yea, even a very strict law; for they were a stiffnecked people, quick to do iniquity, and slow to remember the Lord their God;

30 Therefore there was a law given them, yea, a law of performances and of ordinances, a law which they were to observe strictly from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him.

31 But behold, I say unto you, that all these things were types of things to come.

32 And now, did they understand the law? I say unto you, Nay, they did not all understand the law; and this because of the hardness of their hearts; for they understood not that there could not any man be saved except it were through the redemption of God.

33 For behold, did not Moses prophesy unto them concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people? Yea, and even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began—have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?

34 Have they not said that God himself should come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth?

35 Yea, and have they not said also that he should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, and that he, himself, should be oppressed and afflicted? (Mosiah 13:29-35).

Abinadi's discussion of the Savior's Atonement contained a subtext that was designed to

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help Alma begin to comprehend his own Self. Abinadi's next response to Alma's unspoken question was not just the next logical step in the young prince's education, it was the next necessary step. The question Abinadi must now address would be, "How does one become a son of God and an heir to the kingdom of heaven?"

The third interpretation of "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings" (the one Abinadi expanded to teach and convert Alma) was about the priesthood and sacral kingship of every worthy individual. Abinadi defined for the young prince what constitutes a legitimate heir of God (Ether 3:14). To do that, Abinadi quoted Isaiah's statement in full context (See Mosiah 14.). It begins:

1 Yea, even doth not Isaiah say: Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? (Mosiah 14:1).

John the Beloved explained its meaning:

37 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

38 That the saying of Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. [He was quoting Isaiah 6.]

41 These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him (John 12:37-41).

John was asserting that until one can see (either truly see or symbolically see) the arm of God, one can not truly "understand with their heart, and be converted." Other scriptures suggest something of the same thing.<sup>761</sup>

Abinadi's purpose was to help Alma understand the conflict between the Alma who had his own eternal nature and the Alma whose apparent present nature had been molded

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<sup>761</sup> 1 Nephi 22:10-12; 2 Nephi 8:5-9; 3 Nephi 9:14-17, 16:17-20, 20:30-39; Psalm 20:6, 45:2-24, 48:9-10, 98:1-3; Job 40:3-14, 42:1-5. See also D&C 1:13-16, 109:23-24, 133:1-4.

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in the environment of this apostate King Noah. So after Abinadi quoted Isaiah 52, he brought the passage home to be incorporated into Alma's personal understanding of his Self. He did that by describing the same kinds of tensions that would be felt by the mortal Jesus with respect to the covenantal responsibilities of the premortal Jehovah.

When reading this passage, it is helpful to remember that Abinadi's perception of Jesus was quite different from our own. We have four accounts of his ministry in the New Testament and a fifth in the Book of Mormon. Abinadi had no such information. For him, details about the life and Atonement of the Savior were limited to what he learned from the scriptures and the festival temple drama and what he had learned from personal revelation. Abinadi lived in Old Testament times. The mortal Jesus was as distant from Abinadi in time and circumstance as our own understanding of the Savior's Second Coming and millennial reign may be distant from us. Abinadi was trying to explain that the man Jesus would be the same person as the God Jehovah.

The Feast of Tabernacles temple drama taught the relationship between Jehovah and the sacral kings of Israel. Like other prophets of the Old Testament, the God with whom Abinadi and Alma had most to do was named Jehovah, who is "the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth." The drama told how Jehovah had conducted the affairs of the Council, including its members' participation in the creation of the heavens and the earth.

The first eight verses of Mosiah 15 are considered by many to be some of the most difficult to understand in the Book of Mormon, but they become easy to follow when one realizes that Abinadi was talking about Jehovah and Jesus and the tensions they had to overcome so that Jesus could accomplish the Atonement and keep the covenants made by Jehovah—for they are the same God:

1 And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself [Jehovah] shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. ["Redeem" in this context means to bring his people back into the presence of God—that is, to completely undo the effects of the Fall of Adam, so that we can return to the presence of God. (See Mormon 9:13; Ether3:13; 2 Nephi 1:15, 2:1-4; Alma 58:41).]

2 And because he [Jehovah] dwelleth in flesh [Jesus] he [Jesus] shall be called the Son of God [the Son of Elohim], and having subjected the flesh [Jesus] to the will of the Father [Jehovah], being the Father [Jehovah] and the Son [Jesus]—

3 The Father [Jehovah], because he [first as Jehovah and then again as Jesus] was conceived by the power of God [Elohim]; and the Son [Jesus], because of the

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flesh; thus becoming the Father [Jehovah] and Son [Jesus]—

4 And they [Jehovah-Jesus] are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.

5 And thus the flesh [Jesus] becoming subject to the Spirit [Jehovah], or the Son [Jesus] to the Father [Jehovah], being one God [Jehovah-Jesus], suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself [Jesus] to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people.

6 And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he [Jesus] shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he [Jesus] opened not his mouth.

7 Yea, even so he [Jesus] shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh [Jesus] becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son [Jesus] being swallowed up in the will of the Father [Jehovah] (Mosiah 15:1-7).

There are few scriptures which touch the soul more deeply than that last verse. It exposes all the tensions: Jesus the man—with his natural aversion to physical pain and his desire to remain with the people he loved. Jehovah the God—whose covenantal love for his friends was even more powerful—informed and inspired Jesus’s determination to perform the Atonement. They are, as Abinadi said, one God, but it was Jesus—not just Jehovah—who had to decide.

One of the reasons that scripture is so important to us—and the reason the words were so important to Alma—is that it throws a burning light on each one of us—but a light that only we ourselves can see. Perhaps the easiest way to describe that light is to try to conceptualize its effect on Alma. It was bringing into focus and personalizing the chiastic balance of the cosmic myth.

Before he left his Heavenly Father’s presence, the premortal had made Alma covenants regarding his own mission here and what he would do to fulfill his mission. What Paul wrote to the Thessalonians was true of Alma and all of Heavenly Father’s other children also: “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13). But now on this earth as a young, wealthy, demonstrably popular prince, Alma could no longer remember who he really was. His memory was darkened by the light his physical eyes could see. On earth, the expanse of his mind was limited by earthly things and his body limited through its knowledge of how to feel happiness, hunger, passion, weariness, pain, and exhilaration.

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There was a time, before his memory fogged and his eyes and ears were closed, that Alma could look forward to this life and see his own purpose—when he could clearly understand his own desires. It was then, when he was fully cognizant, that he had made covenants about what he would do here. Then he was in the company of the premortal Jehovah. But now he could not remember that any more, and had come on this occasion to King Noah's court to sit in judgment against the prophet. Abinadi, for his part, had come to answer questions that young Alma may not yet have asked, and to give credence to the things the Spirit would teach him about himself. It was Abinadi's task to help the physical and cultural Alma, who sat in King Noah's council, to understand that he must seek to become subjugated to the Alma who once sat in the Council of the gods. Abinadi understood that if Alma could achieve that quality of understanding and freedom, then with the tutelage of the Holy Ghost he could acquire the power to fulfill the covenants he had made. In short, the will of Alma's present Self must be swallowed up in the will of his premortal, fully cognizant Self.

The author of the *Hymn of the Pearl* described that principle. In the poem this passage is about the boy's recalling his eternal covenants:

And even as it [the covenant] was engraven in my heart  
Were the words of my letter written.  
I remembered that I was a son of kings  
And my noble birth asserted itself.<sup>762</sup>

That is what Abinadi was explaining about Jesus: “the will of the Son [Jesus] being swallowed up in the will of the Father [Jehovah].” Alma heard. His premortal “noble birth asserted itself”; he listened to the prophet and put his own life on the line when he spoke out to defend the good old man. In doing so, Alma began to sever the ties that bound his eternal Self to his earthly environment, and he began to become the prophet he had covenanted to become. The next question Abinadi addressed was, “How is it to be done?”

8 And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over  
death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men—  
9 Having ascended into heaven, having the bowels of mercy; being filled with  
compassion towards the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice;

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<sup>762</sup> For a discussion of the *Hymn of the Pearl*, see that chapter.

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having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice.

10 And now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed?

11 Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God (Mosiah 15:8-11).

Abinadi was not negating the importance of the coronation ceremony, but he was saying that the ceremony alone was not enough. Those who become priests and sacral kings, whether of royal birth or not, believe the prophets, believe that the Lord will redeem his people, and live their lives to that end—“they are the heirs of the kingdom of God”:

12 For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed?

13 Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed.

14 And these are they who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation; and said unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!

15 And O how beautiful upon the mountains were their feet! (Mosiah 15:12-15).

For the young prince Alma, Abinadi had just symbolically removed the sacred emblems from under the feet of an unworthy monarch and made them the foundation of Alma’s own priesthood and sacral kingship. At this early stage, Alma could not have understood all about what his assignment was or what he must do to fulfill it. But given Alma’s response, there can be no question that he understood that he had once made sacred covenants and that Abinadi’s words were designed to teach him about the absolute authority by which he would ultimately act. (In time, Alma would become both king [chief judge] and priest to his people.)



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While Abinadi's words were addressed to Alma, Alma's writing them was for the sake of whoever could read them. Abinadi's words continue:

16 And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that are still publishing peace!

17 And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who shall hereafter publish peace, yea, from this time henceforth and forever! (Mosiah 15:16-17).

Abinadi had now established that the real thrones—those of priesthood and sacral kingship—are the rights of all those who are children of Christ and are adopted heirs of Elohim through the Atonement of his Son. These are the rights that belong to the prophets as well as to those who heed the words of the prophets. Abinadi did not say that principle precluded the frightened King Noah, only that Noah was not exempt from the same standards as everyone else. Everything about the drama of the temple coronation rites insisted that the earthly king must not only meet those standards but that he must also be the epitome of their perfection. Abinadi's accusative reading of the Ten Commandments had shown that in the eyes of this prophet, King Noah and his priests had been weighed in the balance of that criterion and were found wanting.

In the order of things, no royal authority is autonomous: lesser kings report to greater kings; the Council reports to Jehovah; Jehovah to Elohim. As the Lord explained to Abraham:

19 These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all" (Abraham 3:19).

So it was not only appropriate but also necessary that Abinadi, who spoke on behalf of Jehovah and his council, should insist that this earthly king was subject to his Eternal King:

18 And behold, I say unto you, this is not all. For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people; yea, him who has granted salvation unto his people;

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19 For were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people, which was prepared from the foundation of the world [at the Council], I say unto you, were it not for this, all mankind must have perished.

20 But behold, the bands of death shall be broken, and the Son reigneth, and hath power over the dead; therefore, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead (Mosiah 15:18-20).

It is significant *here* that Abinadi referred to his God as “the Son” rather than as Jehovah. Abinadi’s whole sermon had been devoted to the clarification of the rights of sonship. And at this point, Abinadi’s purpose seems to have been to teach the young prince that he, as *a son*, must be entirely subservient to Jehovah, who is *the Son*:

21 And there cometh a resurrection, even a first resurrection; yea, even a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until the resurrection of Christ—for so shall he be called.

22 And now, the resurrection of all the prophets, and all those that have believed in their words, or all those that have kept the commandments of God, shall come forth in the first resurrection; therefore, they are the first resurrection.

23 They are raised to dwell with God who has redeemed them [brought them into his presence]; thus they have eternal life through Christ, who has broken the bands of death (Mosiah 15:21-23).<sup>763</sup>

Abinadi’s next statement is a declaration of the eternal constancy of God’s criteria for the salvation of mankind and the hope extended to those who died in ignorance of the Savior and his Atonement. It is one of those quiet assurances in the ancient scriptures about the principle of salvation for the dead:

24 And these are those who have part in the first resurrection; and these are they that have died before Christ came, in their ignorance, not having salvation declared unto them. And thus the Lord bringeth about the restoration of these;

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<sup>763</sup> In connection with these sacral kings, the Prophet Joseph wrote: “The heavens were opened upon us, and I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell. I saw the transcendent beauty of the gate through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire (D&C 137:1-2).

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and they have a part in the first resurrection, or have eternal life, being redeemed by the Lord.

25 And little children also have eternal life (Mosiah 15:24-25).

Unless Abinadi was speaking from personal revelation, there appears to be only one obvious way to account for his knowing that “these are they that have died before Christ came, in their ignorance, not having salvation declared unto them.” That is, Abinadi knew and understood the meaning of the last half of Psalm 22 and of Isaiah 61—both of which testify that the Savior would visit the dead and provide a way for those who had not heard the gospel to hear it then.

Apparently, this promise that salvation is available to those who repent after death brought Abinadi’s mind back to his original audience. Having established the criteria upon which all men and women will be judged, Abinadi unabashedly told Noah and his priests that if they and their people did not meet those criteria in this life, they would all go to hell:

26 But behold, and fear, and tremble before God, for ye ought to tremble; for the Lord redeemeth none such that rebel against him and die in their sins; yea, even all those that have perished in their sins ever since the world began, that have wilfully rebelled against God, that have known the commandments of God, and would not keep them; these are they that have no part in the first resurrection.

27 Therefore ought ye not to tremble? For salvation cometh to none such; for the Lord hath redeemed none such; yea, neither can the Lord redeem such; for he cannot deny himself; for he cannot deny justice when it has its claim (Mosiah 15:26-27).

After delivering that short message, Abinadi returned to the scripture with which they had first confronted him. He had answered their question about the meaning of the second part of the scripture which began, “How beautiful upon the mountain”; now he would address the most important meaning of all:

28 And now I say unto you that the time shall come that the salvation of the Lord shall be declared to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

29 Yea, Lord, thy watchmen shall lift up their voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

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30 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

31 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

1 And now, it came to pass that after Abinadi had spoken these words he stretched forth his hand and said: The time shall come when all shall see the salvation of the Lord; when every nation, kindred, tongue, and people shall see eye to eye and shall confess before God that his judgments are just.

2 And then shall the wicked be cast out, and they shall have cause to howl, and weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth; and this because they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord; therefore the Lord redeemeth them not.

3 For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them; yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil.

4 Thus all mankind were lost; and behold, they would have been endlessly lost were it not that God redeemed his people from their lost and fallen state.

5 But remember that he that persists in his own carnal nature, and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state and the devil hath all power over him. Therefore, he is as though there was no redemption made, being an enemy to God; and also is the devil an enemy to God.

6 And now if Christ had not come into the world, speaking of things to come as though they had already come, there could have been no redemption.

7 And if Christ had not risen from the dead, or have broken the bands of death that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting, there could have been no resurrection.

8 But there is a resurrection, therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ (Mosiah 15:28–16:8).

In the New Year festival temple drama, the coronation rites are founded on the understanding that the king's claim to his earthly throne was based on the belief that Jehovah himself had descended into the Underworld, defeated death and hell, rescued the king, brought him back to the world of the living, and placed him on his temple throne. Abinadi asserted not only the reality of that restoration to life but also the reason for it:

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9 He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death.

10 Even this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption, and shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to their works whether they be good or whether they be evil—

11 If they be good, to the resurrection of endless life and happiness (Mosiah 16:9-11).

Then, striking an eternal contrast, Abinadi explained why neither King Noah, nor his priests, nor his people—unless they repented—can be legitimate heirs, for they could not be called the children of the God of Light:

11b and if they be evil, to the resurrection of endless damnation, being delivered up to the devil, who hath subjected them, which is damnation—

12 Having gone according to their own carnal wills and desires; having never called upon the Lord while the arms of mercy were extended towards them; for the arms of mercy were extended towards them, and they would not; they being warned of their iniquities and yet they would not depart from them; and they were commanded to repent and yet they would not repent.

13 And now, ought ye not to tremble and repent of your sins, and remember that only in and through Christ ye can be saved?

14 Therefore, if ye teach the law of Moses, also teach that it is a shadow of those things which are to come—

15 Teach them that redemption cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father. Amen.

1 And now it came to pass that when Abinadi had finished these sayings, that the king commanded that the priests should take him and cause that he should be put to death.

2 But there was one among them whose name was Alma, he also being a descendant of Nephi. And he was a young man, and he believed the words which Abinadi had spoken, for he knew concerning the iniquity which Abinadi had testified against them; therefore he began to plead with the king that he would not be angry with Abinadi, but suffer that he might depart in peace.

3 But the king was more wroth, and caused that Alma should be cast out from

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among them, and sent his servants after him that they might slay him.

4 But he fled from before them and hid himself that they found him not. And he being concealed for many days did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken.

5 And it came to pass that the king caused that his guards should surround Abinadi and take him; and they bound him and cast him into prison.

6 And after three days, having counseled with his priests, he caused that he should again be brought before him.

7 And he said unto him: Abinadi, we have found an accusation against thee, and thou art worthy of death.

8 For thou hast said that God himself should come down among the children of men; and now, for this cause thou shalt be put to death unless thou wilt recall all the words which thou hast spoken evil concerning me and my people (Mosiah 16:11–17:8).

Abinadi had made his point. It took three days for King Noah and his priests to come up with “an accusation...worthy of death.” The accusation they “found” was inadequate and absurd. At the beginning of this trial, they had tried to entrap him by getting him to speak treason mingled with blasphemy, to demonstrate that he was a false prophet. He had spoken treason, all right, by declaring that the king was the usurper of his own throne, but he had couched his declaration in terms that were legally unchallengeable. If they were going to murder him under cover of the law, they would have to invent an accusation. And that, of course, is what they did. In the New Year festival, God himself did not actually appear, but his presence was represented by a sacred box which contained emblematic representations of his priesthood and kingship. However, Abinadi had said God himself would come among men. It was apparently on that technicality that they reasoned Abinadi was worthy to die:

9 Now Abinadi said unto him: I say unto you, I will not recall the words which I have spoken unto you concerning this people, for they are true; and that ye may know of their surety I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands.

10 Yea, and I will suffer even until death, and I will not recall my words, and they shall stand as a testimony against you. And if ye slay me ye will shed innocent blood, and this shall also stand as a testimony against you at the last day.

11 And now king Noah was about to release him, for he feared his word; for he

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feared that the judgments of God would come upon him.

12 But the priests lifted up their voices against him, and began to accuse him, saying: He has reviled the king. Therefore the king was stirred up in anger against him, and he delivered him up that he might be slain.

13 And it came to pass that they took him and bound him, and scourged his skin with faggots, yea, even unto death.

14 And now when the flames began to scorch him, he cried unto them, saying:

15 Behold, even as ye have done unto me, so shall it come to pass that thy seed shall cause that many shall suffer the pains that I do suffer, even the pains of death by fire; and this because they believe in the salvation of the Lord their God.

16 And it will come to pass that ye shall be afflicted with all manner of diseases because of your iniquities.

17 Yea, and ye shall be smitten on every hand, and shall be driven and scattered to and fro, even as a wild flock is driven by wild and ferocious beasts.

18 And in that day ye shall be hunted, and ye shall be taken by the hand of your enemies, and then ye shall suffer, as I suffer, the pains of death by fire.

19 Thus God executeth vengeance upon those that destroy his people. O God, receive my soul.

20 And now, when Abinadi had said these words, he fell, having suffered death by fire; yea, having been put to death because he would not deny the commandments of God, having sealed the truth of his words by his death (Mosiah 17:9-20)

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## **A Meaning of “Redeem”— to “Come Unto Christ”**

The entire message of the Book of Mormon revolves around a single concept. It is the same as the pivotal doctrine of the festival temple drama—the basic human need to return to the Garden and to the presence of God. All other discussions in those chapters are subsets of that most important doctrine. It is what Alma called “the plan of redemption” (Alma 12). In the Book of Mormon, the word “redeem” has a specific meaning rarely found in the Old Testament. The meaning is the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama which follows the pattern of the universal “cosmic myth—

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returning home triumphant.”<sup>764</sup>

For each person who participated, the entire ancient dramatic temple presentation was a review of one’s own eternal odyssey. Its purpose was, as Amulek assures us:

32 For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors (Alma 34:32)

The operative word here is “prepare.” For some this life is the time to meet God, but even for such, there are necessary preparations to be made. For the rest of us, that meeting will come later, and this life truly is the time to prepare. Speaking of our time, Nephi wrote,

32....wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved (1 Nephi 15:14).

That was the entire point of the ancient temple drama: to teach one how to come. As we approach the great mountain, those familiar with it’s heights can tell us that there is only one way to get to the top. We must walk that path, and that path only, or we will never reach the Holy of Holies at the summit. The path is described in brief this way:

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am (D&C 93:1).

The way is described in much greater detail elsewhere. The following are examples:

26 And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who

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<sup>764</sup> As discussed above, the cosmic myth is the universal story that is always in the pattern of a chiasmus. In its simplest form it looks like this:

The hero is required to leave home.  
He is given a seemingly impossible task.  
He confronts overwhelming odds and certain failure  
He succeeds in accomplishing the task.  
He returns home, triumphant.



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is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved (Omni 1:26).

The “power of his redemption” is the power to bring us back to him. In much of the Book of Mormon the realization of the drama’s crescendo—to become a son and heir of God, and return to his presence—is encapsulated in the single word “redeem.”<sup>765</sup> For that reason, an analysis of the way the Book of Mormon often uses the word seems very much in order.

“Redeem” has a number of different meanings in the scriptures, and its context determines what its meaning is. In both the New and the Old Testaments the words translated “redeem” or “redeemed” mean to purchase (as one would purchase something in the market place) or to ransom (as to pay to get another out of prison or out of bondage). The connotation is that through his Atonement, the Lord has ransomed or purchased us from the consequences and the bondage of sin and death.<sup>766</sup>

The primary difference between the meanings in the New and Old Testaments has to do with one’s relationship with the person who does the redeeming. In Hebrew thought, the debt is paid by a brother or other relative, and the family relationship is a necessary part of the word’s meaning. For example, when a man dies and leaves behind his widow and family, a “redeemer” might be a near kin who is obligated by law to care for the them. In the story of Ruth, Boaz married Ruth according to his family rights to redeem her in her widowhood because, as Naomi pointed out, he was their “kinsman.” It is significant that “kinsman” in that story, and “redeemer” in Job’s statement, “I know that my redeemer

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<sup>765</sup> The redemption was enacted in conjunction with Psalm 21, and is similarly referenced throughout the Book of Mormon. Examples are: Ether 3:6; 3 Nephi 27:28-29; 2 Nephi 9:41-42, Ether 112:27; Alma 5:9, 26; Moroni 7:19; D&C 18:23-25; Moroni 10:28-34; 1 Nephi 10:17-19.

For discussions on symbolically entering the presence of God, see Hamblin, “Temple Motifs,” 454-55; Hanks, “Christ Manifested to His People,” 3-28; Madsen, “The Temple and the Atonement,” *Temples of the Ancient World*, 63-79; Packer, *Holy Temple*, 131-42; Ricks and Sroka, “King, Coronation, and Temple” 246-48; Valletta, “Conflicting Orders,” 219-21.

<sup>766</sup> See the Hebrew and Greek dictionaries at the back of Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Strong lists several Greek words that were translated redeem, redeemed, or redemption. They mean either to purchase or to ransom.

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liveth” are translated from the same Hebrew word.<sup>767</sup>

In the New Testament, the Greek meanings of the words that are translated “redeem” carry no connotation of family responsibility. Consequently, the word “Redeemer” is not found in the New Testament. Even though the Greek words do not convey the idea of a family relationship, almost all of the ways the words “redeem” and “redeemed” are used in the New Testament focus on the ideas of one’s being a child and an heir of God.<sup>768</sup>

The most important meaning of the word in the Old Testament, and the one used by most writers of the Book of Mormon, is in the Book of Job:<sup>769</sup>

23 Oh that my words were now written!  
    oh that they were printed in a book!  
24 That they were graven  
    with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!  
25 For I know that my Redeemer liveth,  
    and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:  
26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body,  
    yet in my flesh shall I see God:  
27 Whom I shall see for myself,  
    and mine eyes shall behold, and not another;  
    though my reins be consumed within me (Job 19:23-27).

Job’s testimony is that because his Redeemer lives, Job shall see God. That same meaning

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<sup>767</sup> Strong, Hebrew 1350. The definition reads: “to redeem (according to the Oriental law of kinship), i.e. to be the next of kin (and as such to buy back a relative’s property, marry his widow, etc) ... purchase, ransom, redeem (redeemer).” The word “Redeemer” is found 18 times in our Old Testament; all but five are in Isaiah. Of those five, two are in the psalms, and the other three are in various books. Isaiah 6 shows that he had a firsthand understanding of the word. Nephi cherished Isaiah’s words because he, like Nephi, had seen the Savior (2 Nephi 11:1-3).

<sup>768</sup> The words Redeem and “redeemed” are only found in only a few places in the New Testament. They are: Luke 24:13-25; Galatians 3:1-16, 4:1-9; Titus 2:8-15; Revelation 5:1-12, 14:1-9.

<sup>769</sup> The book of Job is believed by many scholars to be the oldest book in the Old Testament. Assuming that is true, the use of the word “Redeemer” in Job, referring to one’s being brought into the presence of God, would make that the oldest use of the word in the scriptures.

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is also found in the psalms. For example, in the 49<sup>th</sup> Psalm where to be redeemed is to be brought from the grave and into the presence of God:

- 14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave;  
    death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have  
        dominion over them in the morning;  
    and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.  
15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave:  
    for he shall receive me.(Psalm 49:14-15).

Psalm 69 speaks of redemption before death comes. It reads:

- 16 Hear me, O Lord; for thy lovingkindness is good:  
    turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.  
17 And hide not thy face from thy servant;  
    for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.  
18 Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it:  
    deliver me because of mine enemies (Psalm 69:16-18).

That meaning is found throughout the Book of Mormon, where the words “redeem,” “redeemed,” and “Redeemer” usually mean the same thing as in Job: “yet in my flesh shall I see God.” It is the opposite of “second death,” which is to be excluded from the presence of God.

In the Book of Mormon, the “Redeemer” is the One who makes that return possible, because he is the God to whom one first returns.

The definition of “redeem” is given by Samuel the Lamanite when he said, “the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord.” The context in which he said that is as follows:

- 14 And behold, again, another sign I give unto you, yea, a sign of his death.  
15 For behold, he surely must die that salvation may come; yea, it behooveth him and becometh expedient that he dieth, to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, that thereby men may be brought into the presence of the Lord.  
16 Yea, behold, this death bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death—that spiritual death; for all mankind, by the fall of

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Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead, both as to things temporal and to things spiritual.

17 But behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord.

18 Yea, and it bringeth to pass the condition of repentance, that whosoever repenteth the same is not hewn down and cast into the fire; but whosoever repenteth not is hewn down and cast into the fire; and there cometh upon them again a spiritual death, yea, a second death, for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness [*zedek*] (Helaman 14:14-18).

If to be redeemed means to be brought into the presence of God, then the phrase “plan of redemption” means the plan whereby one can be brought back into God’s presence and has the same connotation as the frequently repeated invitation to “come unto Christ.”<sup>770</sup>

Nowhere is that more clearly explained than by the Savior when he introduced himself to the brother of Jared:

13 And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you.

14 Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters (Ether 3:13-14).

A beautiful example of the fruition of that invitation is the one spoken by Lehi:

15 But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell [past tense]; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love (2 Nephi 1:15).

That is one of the most important verses in the Book of Mormon because it identifies

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<sup>770</sup> See Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:26.

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a facet of the single most important doctrine of the gospel: by using the symbolism of an embrace it describes the Savior's personal relationship with the righteous and incorporates into that same verse a number of other key words in addition to "redeemed." The entire concept of this redemption is suspended on the past tense quality of the word "hath." For Lehi, his redemption had occurred in his own past, but through the embrace it also continues as the vitality of his present and is the projected hope of his future.

The final phrase in our verse, "and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love," is a reference to a physical embrace, a present and eternal token of friendship—a "hope" that brings the future fulfillment of the covenant into the reality of the present until it changes the very nature of one's eternal being. (That, by the way, is how the meaning of the word "hope" in Moroni 7 may be understood.)

The concept and the realization of "redemption" are together the most important doctrine of the gospel. It encompasses the power and meaning of the Atonement and of all our eternal relationships with the Savior—as a flower encompasses all of the promises of the seed that was planted, is the product of the stem and the hope of the nourishment from the roots and the leaves that grew from that seed – and that same flower is the promise of fruit which will produce other seeds, and thus the flower is both the glory of the past and the prefiguration of eternal lives in perpetuity. Redemption is the epitome of friendship, and the timeless light of all that is life. Another Book of Mormon example is Lehi's blessing to his son Jacob:

2 Nevertheless, Jacob, my first-born in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain.

3 Wherefore, thy soul shall be blessed, and thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother, Nephi; and thy days shall be spent in the service of thy God. Wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer; for thou hast beheld that in the fulness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men.

4 And thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory (2 Nephi 2:2-4a).

Here again, the power of the concept is in the verb: "I know that thou art [present tense] redeemed," for "thou hast [past tense] beheld" God. Another example is Nephi, writing about himself, his brother Jacob, and Isaiah:

2 And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in

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his words. For I will liken his words unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him.

3 And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him; wherefore, I will send their words forth unto my children to prove unto them that my words are true. Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word. Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words (2 Nephi 11:2-3).

In another place Nephi wrote:

6 I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell [past tense].

7 I have charity for my people, and great faith in Christ that I shall meet many souls spotless at his judgment-seat (2 Nephi 33:6-7).

Alma left us with this testimony of being with God and thus being redeemed:

23 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, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort:

24 For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord [past tense]; behold I am born of the Spirit.

25 And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

26 And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

27 I say unto you, unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know, because I was like to be cast off.

28 Nevertheless, after wading through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God (Mosiah 27:23-28).

A favorite example is the conclusion of Helaman's letter to Moroni. It gives us a

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subtle insight into the foundation and fruition of the very intimate friendship shared by these two great prophets:

41 And now, my beloved brother, Moroni, may the Lord our God, who has redeemed us and made us free [both past tense], keep you continually in his presence; yea, and may he favor this people, even that ye may have success in obtaining the possession of all that which the Lamanites have taken from us, which was for our support. And now, behold, I close mine epistle. I am Helaman, the son of Alma (Alma 58:41).<sup>771</sup>

Abinadi's entire instructions to Alma rest upon the importance of one's becoming a child of God. In that context, one may assume that in his statement, "For behold, did not Moses prophesy unto them concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people?" Abinadi was using the word "redeem" to mean to be brought into the presence of God and also to teach Alma that one must become a child of Christ.

If the whole plan of salvation were reduced to a single sentence, the first part of that sentence would be about the Savior's Atonement, and the last part might read: "that one might return and remain in the presence of God." That was the promise from the beginning. After Adam and Eve left the Garden, they were taught the meaning of sacrifice:

9 And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will (Moses 5:9).

Adam understood the full impact of "thou mayest be redeemed" and he said:

10 Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God (Moses 5:10).

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<sup>771</sup> More examples of "redeem" meaning to be brought into the presence of God are Jacob 6:8-9; Mosiah 26:21-28; Alma 13:1-6, 19:6-14, 36:22-26, 58:41; Helaman 8:22-23, 14:15-19; Mormon 9:12-14; Moroni 7:2-4; D&C 43:29-30, 88:14-32, 138:58-60, and even though the word is not there, one must also include the Lord's promise to Everyman in D&C 93:1-5.

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It is significant that the Savior emphasized that same relationship in the Beatitudes:

Blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God.  
And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God  
(3 Nephi 12:8-9).

The prophet Abinadi's testimony to the young prince Alma uses different words, but carries the same message:

23 They are raised to dwell with God who has redeemed them; thus they have eternal life through Christ, who has broken the bands of death (Mosiah 15:23).

In the 2007 October general conference, Elder David A. Bednar explained the importance of the phrase to "come unto Christ."

The risen Lord next explained the importance of coming unto Him. The multitude gathered together at the temple was invited literally to come forth unto the Savior "one by one" (3 Nephi 11:15) to feel the prints of the nails in the Master's hands and feet and to thrust their hands into His side. Each individual who had this experience "did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he" (v. 15), even Jesus Christ, who had come.

The Savior also taught the people to come unto Him through sacred covenants, and He reminded them that they were "the children of the covenant" (3 Nephi 20:26).

Repenting and coming unto Christ through the covenants and ordinances of salvation are prerequisite to and a preparation for being sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost and standing spotless before God at the last day.<sup>772</sup>

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<sup>772</sup> Bednar, "Clean Hands and a Pure Heart," 80-83.



## **Alma 5: The Song of Redeeming Love**

When Alma spoke to the people in Zarahemla, he was aware that there were those in the audience who were not members of the church (v. 62), but Mormon made a point of telling us that he addressed himself specifically to the members (v. 2, 6) and to the reader. It becomes immediately apparent that Alma's intent was to bring to bear upon his audience his most relevant and powerful arguments—their own covenants and the meaning of their most sacred rites as those rites related to both their cultural and personal histories.

In his narrative, he did not recite the ancient Israelite history as it was told in the festival drama. Rather, he reminded them of their own history, beginning with God's giving his father Alma sufficient authority to create and manage the church:

3 I, Alma, having been consecrated by my father, Alma, to be a high priest over the church of God, he having power and authority from God to do these things, behold, I say unto you that he began to establish a church in the land which was in the borders of Nephi; yea, the land which was called the land of Mormon; yea, and he did baptize his brethren in the waters of Mormon (Alma 5:3).

In the implications of that brief statement, he summed up the whole first parts of the festival drama—but in terms of their own immediate history. His audience knew of his own *sode* experience, so, implicitly at least, he had referred to foreordination, creation (establishment of the church), and Garden (the waters of Mormon), and even the first ordinance after Adam left the Garden (baptism). Then he focused on the battle. He did not describe to them the ritual battle of the drama, but rather he reminded them of their fathers' own struggles for survival:

4 And behold, I say unto you, they were delivered out of the hands of the people of king Noah, by the mercy and power of God.

5 And behold, after that, they were brought into bondage by the hands of the Lamanites in the wilderness; yea, I say unto you, they were in captivity, and again the Lord did deliver them out of bondage by the power of his word; and we were brought into this land, and here we began to establish the church of God throughout this land also (Alma 5:4-5).

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Having done that, Alma turned to the consequences of the ritual battle—not the death of the king but the intercession of Jehovah and their deliverance from death and hell:

6 And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, you that belong to this church, have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers? Yea, and have you sufficiently retained in remembrance his mercy and long-suffering towards them? And moreover, have ye sufficiently retained in remembrance that he has delivered their souls from hell? (Alma 5:6).

Like every other human whose eyes do not see beyond death, the members of his audience had no sure evidence that the souls of their fathers had been delivered from hell. Consequently, that last question “have ye sufficiently retained in remembrance that he has delivered their souls from hell?” had no better contextual meaning than their understanding of the promises presented in the festival temple drama. While one may read his next statement as an emblematic description of their conversion, it reads more convincingly as a vivid description of their participation in the events of salvation represented in the temple drama:

7 Behold, he changed their hearts; yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God. Behold, they were in the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word; yea, they were encircled about by the bands of death, and the chains of hell, and an everlasting destruction did await them.

8 And now I ask of you, my brethren, were they destroyed? Behold, I say unto you, Nay, they were not.

9 And again I ask, were the bands of death broken, and the chains of hell which encircled them about, were they loosed? (Alma 5:7-9).

In the drama, the king represented everyone in the audience. Symbolically, all had died. All had experienced the darkness of the Underworld. All had accepted the miracle of the Atonement, and all had entered the New Jerusalem and experienced the quintessential hope of the world of the future:

I say unto you, Yea, they were loosed, and their souls did expand, and they did sing redeeming love. And I say unto you that they are saved (Alma 5:9b).

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In those words, one can visualize the exuberance of the procession around the city. The king and the people have been saved from death. Now, in the drama, they ask and respond:

- 3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?  
or who shall stand in his holy place?  
4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;  
who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.  
5 He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,  
and righteousness from the God of his salvation (Psalm 24:3-5).

Alma reminded his audience, “they did sing redeeming love,” but later he will be more specific. He will refer again to “the song of redeeming love,” which was probably a reference to a specific psalm that invited them to come into the presence of God.

In this very short introduction, Alma had carried their minds through the entire sequence of the festival temple drama. Now he focuses on the pivotal message of the drama—the Atonement of the Savior:

- 10 And now I ask of you on what conditions are they saved? Yea, what grounds had they to hope for salvation? What is the cause of their being loosed from the bands of death, yea, and also the chains of hell?  
11 Behold, I can tell you—did not my father Alma believe in the words which were delivered by the mouth of Abinadi? And was he not a holy prophet? Did he not speak the words of God, and my father Alma believe them?  
12 And according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart. Behold I say unto you that this is all true.  
13 And behold, he preached the word unto your fathers, and a mighty change was also wrought in their hearts, and they humbled themselves and put their trust in the true and living God. And behold, they were faithful until the end; therefore they were saved (Alma 5:10-13).

When he asks the most important question in the Book of Mormon, Alma defines that salvation by calling their attention to the coronation ordinances and the royal new name. The question is found again and again. It is among the last words of Lehi and Nephi and in the conclusion of the temple drama conducted by King Benjamin, and in the entirety of the

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message of Abinadi to Alma:

14 And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? (Alma 5:14).

The answer to that question is found at the very epitome of the Savior's Beatitudes:

And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be *called* the children of God (3 Nephi 12:9).

And it is the concluding promise of Mormon's greatest sermon:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen (Moroni 7:48).

Alma then gave the criteria for the correct answer when he asked two other questions, the first of which is not asked anywhere else in the canonical scriptures:

Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? (Alma 5:14b).

So our question now becomes, "What does it mean to receive his image in your countenances?" As a partial answer, we find the Lord giving these instructions to the prophet Samuel:

But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

And later, this description of David:

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And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance (1 Samuel 17:42).

In the Doctrine and Covenants we find a usage that more closely approaches Alma's meaning:

14 Verily, this is fasting and prayer, or in other words, rejoicing and prayer.  
15 And inasmuch as ye do these things with thanksgiving, with cheerful hearts and countenances, not with much laughter, for this is sin, but with a glad heart and a cheerful countenance (D&C 59:14-15).

We find a similar meaning in a famous prayer in the writings of Moses:

24 The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:  
25 The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:  
26 The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace (Numbers 6:24-26).

That was said even more clearly in President Joseph F. Smith's vision of the redemption of the dead, where its usage fits perfectly into the sequence of Alma's sermon:

23 And the saints rejoiced in their redemption, and bowed the knee and acknowledged the Son of God as their Redeemer and Deliverer from death and the chains of hell.  
24 Their countenances shone, and the radiance from the presence of the Lord rested upon them, and they sang praises unto his holy name (D&C 138:23-24).

President McKay, like Alma, brought that principle home to our everyday experiences in our everyday lives:

Every man and every person who lives in this world wields an influence, whether for good or for evil. It is not what he says alone; it is not alone what he does. It is what he is. Every man, every person radiates what he or she really is. Every person is a recipient of radiation. The Savior was conscious of that. Whenever He came into the presence of an individual, He sensed that radiation—whether it

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was the woman of Samaria with her past life; whether it was the woman who was to be stoned, or the men who were to stone her; whether it was the statesman, Nicodemus, or one of the lepers. He was conscious of the radiation from the individual. And to a degree so are you, and so am I. It is what we are and what we *radiate* that affects the people around us.<sup>773</sup>

Alma's sermon continues, but his questions now suggest that his earlier question, "Have ye received his image in your countenances?" may have as much to do with a formal ordinance—with the coronation ceremony—and with way they are dressed at the conclusion of that ceremony, as with the light that shines from their persons. In these verses Alma gives us sure evidence that he was referencing the festival drama when he cites Psalm 24, inviting them into the temple and asking, "Can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands?"<sup>774</sup> (v. 19). In the festival drama, after they had entered the temple and received the coronation ordinances, the king stood before the temple veil and (in Psalm 21) requested that he might come into the Lord's presence. Thus, Alma asks:

15 Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?

16 I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?

17 Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say—Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you?

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<sup>773</sup> David O. McKay, "Radiation of the Individual," *The Instructor* (October 1964): 373-74. Reprinted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 227.

<sup>774</sup> 3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?  
or who shall stand in his holy place?

4 He that hath clean hands,  
and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3-4).

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18 Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God?

19 I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances? (Alma 5:15-19).

With this question, Alma suggests that the image of God was not only on their countenances but was “engraven upon” their countenances, suggesting it was the sacred clothing they were wearing. In the ceremony, that was the same kind of clothing that the psalms say is worn by God himself:

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.

2 Thy throne is established of old:  
thou art from everlasting (Psalm 93:1-2).

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great;  
thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment:  
who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain  
(Psalm 104:1-2).

Jacob understood that principle, and in his sermon at the temple<sup>775</sup> he taught it:

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<sup>775</sup> The importance of Jacob's sermon at the temple is explained by John Thompson:

“Isaiah 40-55, from which Jacob quotes his Isaiah passages, have often been analyzed with form-critical methods; but because many units or forms within the text have little or no comparative material (for instance, the Servant Songs), solid conclusions have been difficult to achieve. However, J. H. Eaton feels that there is enough evidence ‘to guide us to the decisive factors of tradition behind Isa. 40-55.’ J. Begrich points out as early as 1938 that many of the forms in this section resemble materials from earlier services in the temple, such as hymns, laments, and prophetic oracles of assurance. Mowinckel took this connection a step further, noting that there seems to be an association between the second division of Isaiah and the preexilic autumn festivals—namely the Feast of Tabernacles. However, Mowinckel, who does not understand how the Servant

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Wherefore, we shall have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness; and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness (2 Nephi 9:14).

While the principle is found throughout the scriptures, the actual phrase, “having the image of God engraven upon your countenances,” is found nowhere else in the canon. To discover it in the ancient noncanonical writings, one must go to the *Hymn of the Pearl*.

Even though many scholars place the writing of the *Hymn of the Pearl* as early as the time of the Patriarchs, there is no sure evidence that there was a copy of it on the brass plates. Neither is there any evidence that Alma was actually referring to that ancient poem. However, there is a great deal of evidence that he was using the same imagery as is found in the *Pearl*. That leads one to conclude that either he was actually referring to the *Pearl* itself or else he was citing either its original source or else a parallel version of the poem that also reflected that original source. In the *Pearl*, when the boy rediscovers his robe, he rejoices:

82 My splendid robe adorned  
Gleaming in glorious colours. ...  
86 And the likeness of the king of kings  
Was completely embroidered all over it.<sup>776</sup>

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Songs fit into the picture, stopped short of completely relating chapters 40-55 to *Sukkot*. It was I. Engnell and Eaton who completed the correspondence between the second division of Isaiah, including the Servant Songs, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Engnell concluded that Isaiah 40-55 ‘is a prophetic collection of traditions’ that may be called ‘*liturgy*, ...not a cult liturgy but a prophetic imitation thereof.’

“The conclusions of these scholars are significant in light of the possible setting of Jacob's sermon, for if the second division of Isaiah, from which Jacob obtained his quotes, is a prophetic imitation of *Sukkot* liturgy, then it is possible that Nephi instructed Jacob to use Isaiah not only for the prophetic teachings and elevated language, but because Isaiah's words reflect the very festival in which they, the Nephites, were participating” (Thompson, “Isaiah 50-51, the Israelite Autumn Festivals, and the Covenant Speech of Jacob in 2 Nephi 6-10,” 137-38). See, Donald W. Parry and Janet L. Garrard Willis, “Notes on Vocabulary in Isaiah 2-11, 13-14, 29, 48-54,” *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 409-22.

<sup>776</sup> Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2:502-3.



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About that, Nibley observed, “And the image of the King of Kings covered the whole thing.” Then he added this note: “If the whole rest of the poem is applied to the garment only, it is full of strange anomalies, which become perfectly clear in terms of the well-known Veil of the Temple.”<sup>777</sup> So Alma’s questions have brought his audience to the same place that is the destination of the temple drama—to stand before the veil. Then he asks:

20 I say unto you, can ye think of being saved when you have yielded yourselves to become subjects to the devil?

21 I say unto you, ye will know at that day that ye cannot be saved; for there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins.

22 And now I ask of you, my brethren, how will any of you feel, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with blood and all manner of filthiness? Behold, what will these things testify against you?

23 Behold will they not testify that ye are murderers, yea, and also that ye are guilty of all manner of wickedness?

24 Behold, my brethren, do ye suppose that such an one can have a place to sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and also all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white?

25 I say unto you, Nay; except ye make our Creator a liar from the beginning, or suppose that he is a liar from the beginning, ye cannot suppose that such can have place in the kingdom of heaven; but they shall be cast out for they are the children of the kingdom of the devil (Alma 5:20-25).

Once again, he refers to the “song of redeeming love.” He does not identify the song, but in the temple drama it was probably the 21<sup>st</sup> Psalm when the chorus, or the perhaps the entire audience, sang:<sup>778</sup>

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<sup>777</sup> Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 271 .

<sup>778</sup> The psalm is only quoted here with suggested stage directions. For a full explanation of the psalm and its context, see the chapter called, “Act 2, Scene 10: The King at the Veil.”

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- 1 The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord;  
and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!
- 2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire,  
and hast not withholden the request of his lips.
- 3 For thou *wilt meet him*<sup>779</sup> With the blessings of goodness:  
thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.
- 4 He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him,  
even length of days for ever and ever.5 His glory is great in thy salvation:  
honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.
- 6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever:  
thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.
- 7 For the king trusteth in the Lord, and through the mercy of the most High  
he shall not be moved (Psalm 21:1-7).

The psalm concludes with the Lord blessing the king with the promise of personal invulnerability.<sup>780</sup> It was apparently in that context, that Alma asks:

26 And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now? (Alma 5:26).

Alma then used a code word that is found throughout Isaiah and the Psalms. As the mountain is code for the temple, so “walk,” “path,” and “way” are codes meaning the ordinances and covenants by which one ascends that holy mountain to come to its heights where one may meet God. Similarly, those same code words are used to describe the way one lives one's life after he has come down from the mountain to fulfill the mission he received from God. It was in that context that Alma asked:

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<sup>779</sup> The king has asked the Lord for something, and the Lord has granted that request. In this verse there is an unusual word, “preventest.” The footnote in the LDS Bible helps with that. It says that the words “thou preventest him” might be translated “thou wilt meet him.”

<sup>780</sup> For a more complete discussion of this psalm and its context, see the chapter called, “The King at the Veil.”

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27 Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your s have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins? (Alma 5:27).

As in the *Hymn of the Pearl* and other places in the Book of Mormon, one cannot be clothed in the robes of righteousness until one first removes the filthy clothing by which one is defined in and by this world, thus becoming “naked” before God.<sup>781</sup> “Naked” does not necessarily mean nude. To be naked is to be stripped of the insignia by which one is defined, as when a court-martialed general is cashiered. He is stripped of medals that denoted his honors and rank, but he is not disrobed. He stands naked, but not nude. So Alma asked:

28 Behold, are ye stripped of pride? I say unto you, if ye are not ye are not prepared to meet God. Behold ye must prepare quickly; for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand, and such an one hath not eternal life.

29 Behold, I say, is there one among you who is not stripped of envy? I say unto you that such an one is not prepared; and I would that he should prepare quickly, for the hour is close at hand, and he knoweth not when the time shall come; for such an one is not found guiltless (Alma 5:28-29).

Now Alma has taught his audience how to define their Selves as they stand, symbolically, in one of the final and most glorious scenes of the festival temple drama. He reminded his listeners:

33 Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you.

34 Yea, he saith: 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;

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<sup>781</sup> An apocryphal writing reports that Jesus’s disciples asked, “‘When will you become revealed to us and when shall we see you?’ Jesus said, ‘When you disrobe without being ashamed and take up your [clothes] and place them under your feet like little children and tread on them, then will you see the son of the living one, and you will not be afraid’” (*Gospel of Thomas* in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* [San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1988], 130-37).

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35 Yea, come unto me and bring forth works of righteousness, and ye shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire (Alma 5:33-36).

Alma had reviewed for the members of the church the full eternal scope of their most sacred ordinances and covenants. As he concluded that portion of his speech, he brought them to the final act of the play, to the time of peace and security where they were invited to return to the Garden, return to God’s presence where they would “partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely.”

He does not leave the Garden scene, but remains there with his audience, turning their attention to the psalm that was sung on the day of that great feast. It sums up all of the three acts of the drama in only six verses. We can know he is referring to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm because in verses 38 to 41 he refers to the “good shepherd first,” and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is (in our canon at least) the most ancient source of that idea:<sup>782</sup>

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
    he leadeth me beside the still waters.  
3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness  
    for his name’s sake (Psalm 23:1-3).<sup>783</sup>

The phrase “Good Shepherd” is not found in the Old Testament. Psalm 88 refers to Jehovah as the “Shepherd of Israel” (v.1), and Isaiah prophesied:

10 Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.  
11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young (Isaiah 40:10-11).

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<sup>782</sup> The nearest earlier statement that suggests something like that is Numbers 27:18. “That the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.” Other references to the “Good Shepherd” are in the New Testament, so they did not influence the Book of Mormon authors.

<sup>783</sup> The psalm is only quoted here. For a full explanation of the psalm and its context, see the chapter called, “Act 3: The Day of the Great Feast – Prelude to Eternal Peace and Prosperity.”

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Isaiah wrote about 250 years after the psalms were composed, so it is likely that his prophecy was also an echo of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.<sup>784</sup>

Alma's sermon to the people of Zarahemla was not a warm and fuzzy invitation to repent. It was a vigorous reminder that they were losing their sense of direction, and that they must repent and return to "the ways of righteousness." His first reference to the psalm that invited them to peace was a stern warning that they might never arrive there:

37 O ye workers of iniquity; ye that are puffed up in the vain things of the world, ye that have professed to have known the ways of righteousness nevertheless have gone astray, as sheep having no shepherd, notwithstanding a shepherd hath called after you and is still calling after you, but ye will not hearken unto his voice!

38 Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ; and if ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd, to the name by which ye are called, behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd.

39 And now if ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are ye? Behold, I say unto you, that the devil is your shepherd, and ye are of his fold; and now, who can deny this? Behold, I say unto you, whosoever denieth this is a liar and a child of the devil.

40 For I say unto you that whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil.

41 Therefore, if a man bringeth forth good works he hearkeneth unto the voice of the good shepherd, and he doth follow him; but whosoever bringeth forth evil works, the same becometh a child of the devil, for he hearkeneth unto his voice, and doth follow him (Alma 5:37-41).

That was no idle referent. The royal king-name that had been given to each of them was "son," as in Psalm 2. They were, by definition, the children of God.<sup>785</sup> His implication

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<sup>784</sup> The phrase is found in Helaman 7:18, and the Savior, described himself as the good shepherd in John 10:11-15 and D&C 50:41-46.

<sup>785</sup> In Psalm 2 and elsewhere, the generic name "son" is given, but in the Beatitudes, the Savior removed the gender-specific language and made it more clear when he said, "they shall be called the children of God." (v.9).

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was, if one rejects his sonship relationship with Jehovah, then that covenant of sonship is somehow transferred to a relationship with the devil. Alma explains:

42 And whosoever doeth this must receive his wages of him; therefore, for his wages he receiveth death, as to things pertaining unto righteousness, being dead unto all good works (Alma 5:42).

Alma was very clear about this. Here, as in chapter 12 and elsewhere, Alma defined the second death he was talking about, not as the fate of a son of perdition but as one's being denied the sealing blessings of the Israelite temple: "as to things pertaining unto righteousness"—*zedek*, temple and priesthood correctness.<sup>786</sup> Alma continued not by just calling them to repentance, but by doing it officially—legally, if you will—by evoking his authority as President of the Church:

43 And now, my brethren, I would that ye should hear me, for I speak in the energy of my soul; for behold, I have spoken unto you plainly that ye cannot err, or have spoken according to the commandments of God.

44 For I am called to speak after this manner, according to the holy order of God, which is in Christ Jesus; yea, I am commanded to stand and testify unto this people the things which have been spoken by our fathers concerning the things which are to come.

45 And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken

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<sup>786</sup> Examples are:

16 And now behold, I say unto you then cometh a death, even a second death, which is a spiritual death; then is a time that whosoever dieth in his sins, as to a temporal death, shall also die a spiritual death; yea, he shall die as to things pertaining unto righteousness (Alma 12:16).

30 And thus we can plainly discern, that after a people have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness, and then have fallen away into sin and transgression, they become more hardened, and thus their state becomes worse than though they had never known these things (Alma 24:30).

26 But behold, an awful death cometh upon the wicked; for they die as to things pertaining to things of righteousness; for they are unclean, and no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God; but they are cast out, and consigned to partake of the fruits of their labors or their works, which have been evil; and they drink the dregs of a bitter cup (Alma 40:26).

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are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

46 Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me (Alma 5:43-46).

Neither was Alma's testimony spoken casually. In his call to repentance, he not only evoked his priesthood authority but he sealed that call with his testimony as a prophet and living witness:

47 And moreover, I say unto you that it has thus been revealed unto me, that the words which have been spoken by our fathers are true, even so according to the spirit of prophecy which is in me, which is also by the manifestation of the Spirit of God.

48 I say unto you, that I know of myself that whatsoever I shall say unto you, concerning that which is to come, is true; and I say unto you, that I know that Jesus Christ shall come, yea, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth. And behold, it is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world, yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name.

49 And now I say unto you that this is the order after which I am called, yea, to preach unto my beloved brethren, yea, and every one that dwelleth in the land; yea, to preach unto all, both old and young, both bond and free; yea, I say unto you the aged, and also the middle aged, and the rising generation; yea, to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again (Alma 5:47-49).

To be born again meant to become a child of God. To become a child of God meant to take upon one's Self his name. The meaning of that stretched to the eternities, as Alma explained when he described the kingship of Jehovah-Jesus:

50 Yea, thus saith the Spirit: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand; yea, the Son of God cometh in his glory, in his might, majesty, power, and dominion. Yea, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, that the Spirit saith: Behold the glory of the King of all the earth; and also the King of

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heaven shall very soon shine forth among all the children of men.

51 And also the Spirit saith unto me, yea, crieth unto me with a mighty voice, saying: Go forth and say unto this people—Repent, for except ye repent ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of heaven (Alma 5:50-51).

He returned to the symbolism of the garden, only this time the garden was not paradise:

52 And again I say unto you, the Spirit saith: Behold, the ax is laid at the root of the tree; therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire, yea, a fire which cannot be consumed, even an unquenchable fire. Behold, and remember, the Holy One hath spoken it.

53 And now my beloved brethren, I say unto you, can ye withstand these sayings; yea, can ye lay aside these things, and trample the Holy One under your feet; yea, can ye be puffed up in the pride of your hearts; yea, will ye still persist in the wearing of costly apparel and setting your hearts upon the vain things of the world, upon your riches?

54 Yea, will ye persist in supposing that ye are better one than another; yea, will ye persist in the persecution of your brethren, who humble themselves and do walk after the holy order of God, wherewith they have been brought into this church, having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and they do bring forth works which are meet for repentance—

55 Yea, and will you persist in turning your backs upon the poor, and the needy, and in withholding your substance from them?

56 And finally, all ye that will persist in your wickedness, I say unto you that these are they who shall be hewn down and cast into the fire except they speedily repent (Alma 5:2-56).

In his conclusion to this sermon, Alma brought his audience back to the final day of the festival drama, and invited them to reconsider the symbolic choices they made there:

57 And now I say unto you, all you that are desirous to follow the voice of the good shepherd, come ye out from the wicked, and be ye separate, and touch not their unclean things; and behold, their names shall be blotted out, that the names of the wicked shall not be numbered among the names of the righteous, that the word of God may be fulfilled, which saith:



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58 For the names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life, and unto them will I grant an inheritance at my right hand (Alma 5:57-58a).

Here Alma was quoting God in a scripture that we do not otherwise have, for the phrase “book of life” is not found in our Old Testament.<sup>787</sup> Alma continued:

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<sup>787</sup> However the phrase is found in the New Testament, and one that is very similar is found in the *Hymn of the Pearl*, where the prince is promised:

46 Remember thy splendid robe,  
And think of thy glorious toga,  
47 That thou mayest put them on and deck thyself therewith,  
That thy name may be read in the book of the heroes  
48 And thou with thy brother, our crown prince,  
Be heir in our kingdom.  
(Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 500-1)

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58 And now, my brethren, what have ye to say against this? I say unto you, if ye speak against it, it matters not, for the word of God must be fulfilled. The names of the wicked shall not be mingled with the names of my people;

59 For what shepherd is there among you having many sheep doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock? And behold, if a wolf enter his flock doth he not drive him out? Yea, and at the last, if he can, he will destroy him.

60 And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed.

61 And now I, Alma, do command you in the language of him who hath commanded me, that ye observe to do the words which I have spoken unto you.

62 I speak by way of command unto you that belong to the church; and 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 5:58-62).

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## **Alma 12, The Universal Pattern of Apostasy**

Alma and Amulek's confrontation with Zeezrom and the people of Ammonihah presents some interesting and perplexing questions for us. Hugh Nibley described this Alma 12 as "the hardest chapter in the Book of Mormon. It's the one that separates us farthest from the world. It's the chapter of Alma where the gospel plan is given."<sup>788</sup>

We know the Ammonihahites had apostatized, but we are not told the nature or the extent of their apostasy. The reason for the perplexity is that the prophets challenge them with some of the most sacred and profound teachings of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama. One may ask, "How is it that Zeezrom and his partisans knew so much about the sacred rites of the Law of Moses, and yet were caught up in such abject corruption that they were willing to kill innocent people just to prove that Alma and Amulek didn't have the power to stop them?" To explore a possible answer, it may be instructive to look at an evolutionary pattern that is typical of an apostasy generally, to see that theirs was not unique—the pattern of apostasy is almost always the same. Whenever anyone or any group of people leave the church, they always think their situation is justified because it is remarkable. In fact their self-justification is not at all remarkable, and the path of their apostasy almost always carries them down the same predictable slippery slope.

It begins with a challenge to priesthood authority. Its script may vary, but not much. It will read something like, "They do not understand as well as I do," or "They did something that I know was wrong," or "They do not understand my situation." That challenge to priesthood authority almost always has an even deeper underlying cause: It is easier to criticize others than to repent of one's own shortcomings—or else, simply, repentance is not as attractive as sin. In the Book of Mormon, Korihor's teachings are an excellent example. He preached:

16 Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so.

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<sup>788</sup> Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon—Semester 1*, 330.

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17 And many more such things did he say unto them, telling them that there could be no Atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime (Alma 30:16-17).

Apostasy may also stem from a political or economic challenge to priesthood authority. A biblical example is Jeroboam, who split the kingdom of Israel after Solomon died (1 Kings 12). To ensure that his people did not return to Jerusalem to worship, Jeroboam built his own alternative sanctuaries, established the worship of golden calves, “and Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar” (v. 32). Since it was on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month—the same as the Feast of Tabernacles—it is reasonable to suppose he changed the temple drama just enough to satisfy his own purposes without making everyone else too upset.

It appears that apostate leaders who are reported in the Book of Mormon did essentially the same thing as Jeroboam. For example, since Abinadi’s recorded words are mostly about becoming an adopted child of God, it is reasonable to suppose that in the orchestrated apostasy sponsored by King Noah, the king and his priests had retained the forms of at least the coronation scene and its promise of sonship in the temple drama, but had ignored or perverted the doctrines taught by the drama.

After the challenge to priesthood authority, the next step in an apostasy and the first major change of doctrine is to corrupt the understanding of the Atonement, then the Godhead, then the covenant meanings of the ordinances, and then other doctrines as they become inconvenient. The last things to go are the forms of the ordinances.

The reason the meaning of the Atonement is first is because a correct belief in the Atonement imposes the need to repent. Throughout history, people have been willing to pay a great deal of money to any preacher who could convincingly teach them that they need not change their lives very much in order to be saved.

Along with the change in the responsibilities imposed by the Atonement and repentance comes the question of salvation—if it is easy to come by, then what makes it worthwhile? Without the ennobling powers of repentance, salvation must be defined as something less than godhood. So it becomes a state of eternal bliss and happiness with no responsibility—some variety of Nirvana. With that notion, the understanding of the eternal relationship between Heavenly Father and his children simply dissolves into an undefinable

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eternal bliss. Now, the nature of the Godhead must also be changed in order to accommodate for that new undefinable relationship. Such changes are most apparent when one observes the apostasy of the post-exilic Jews and the similar apostasy of the Christians after the death of the apostles.

The Israelites of the First Temple period worshiped Elohim, the Father of the gods; and Jehovah, the God of Creation and the covenant God of Israel. They also acknowledged a heavenly Council of gods. After the Babylonian conquest, the post-exilic Jews abandoned Elohim, rejected the Council, and worshiped an unembodied, undefinable “One God” whom they called Jehovah. About 800 years later, the Christians did essentially the same sort of thing. They redefined the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and combined them into an unembodied, undefinable “One God.”

Notwithstanding the severity of any apostasy, there is almost always a desire to maintain the forms of legitimacy in the changed religion, and that is most easily accomplished by keeping reasonably true to the forms of the ordinances and the rituals—by continuing to do things the way they had always been done. Therefore, to some degree or other, the form of the ceremonies remain intact. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the royal coronation ceremonies. The ceremonial washing, clothing, anointing, crowning, and giving a new name are more ancient than Egypt and Babylon. They are also as recent as the coronations of the present Pope and the reigning English queen. Again, the reason is obvious: legitimacy requires continuity. In each generation, the next king must be crowned in the same way as the last king. Otherwise, eyebrows will rise and legitimacy be questioned. So the form of that ritual has remained essentially the same from generation to generation for at least the last 5,000 years.

Apparently something like this was the situation among the people of Ammonihah. They had preserved enough of the festival drama that when Alma and Amulek spoke to them, the prophets’ approach was to call vivid attention to the original meanings of the ordinances the apostates had preserved but corrupted in their ritual.

The crescendo of the ancient temple drama was when the people entered the temple in the presence of God, showing that the king (and symbolically, all the people) was worthy to be crowned king and priest. The Book of Mormon authors sum up that entire concept with the word “redeem,” which means to enter the presence of God.<sup>789</sup> That concept is the one Alma used to convince Zeezrom that he must repent.

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<sup>789</sup> See the chapter called, “Meaning of Redeem—to ‘come unto Christ’.”

## **Alma 12:3, “But Thou Hast Lied unto God”**

When Zeezrom challenged Alma, the prophet responded:

Now Zeezrom, seeing that thou hast been taken in thy lying and craftiness, for thou hast not lied unto men only but thou hast lied unto God; for behold, he knows all thy thoughts, and thou seest that thy thoughts are made known unto us by his Spirit (Alma 12:3).

The indictment in those words, “for thou hast not lied unto men only but thou hast lied unto God,” is an invitation to walk through the gates of hell. It was the reality of the invitation that struck Zeezrom to the core of his being.

The alternative to keeping one’s covenants is a spiritual disintegration—a profoundly withering, devastating blow to the soul’s capacity to know truth and do good. (Beginning with verse 9 in this chapter, Alma explains how and why that is so.)

The reason that not keeping one’s covenants is so spiritually, emotionally, and mentally debilitating is easy to discover. One cannot lie to God without first lying about one’s Self to one’s Self—squeezing one’s Self in a vice of contradictions. In order for one to accept the lie, he must create an artificial Self to replace the one that is consistent with the eternal law of his own being. The reason that not keeping one’s covenants is so spiritually, emotionally, and mentally debilitating is easy to discover. One cannot lie to God without first lying about one’s Self to one’s Self—squeezing the real Self in a vice of contradictions. In order to accept that lie, he must create an artificial Self — first as a facade, then as a replacement for the Self that is consistent with the eternal law of his own being—perpetuating and justifying a mask he tries to hide behind. Then one’s dominant personality has become a meaningless facade—like a termite-infested building with a new brick face that will present only the pretense of stability—and like the proverbial tree that looks strong on the outside but is rotten on the inside will eventually collapse upon itself because the outer shell can no longer hold up the height, weight, and “surpassing beauty” of the tree’s rich green foliage. So the shell implodes, and foliage turns brown and dies.

When one chooses to cease keeping the covenants he has made with God, there are two ways that open to him as alternatives. They appear on the outside to be different, but

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to the inner consequence they are the same.

One may try to demonstrate the correctness of his choice by seeking to show that the covenants were never valid. Such people often try to justify their actions by asserting that the covenants themselves were a fraud. The idea seems to be that their own part of the covenant is void because when the covenants were made God was off somewhere else. Elder Maxwell once discussed this phenomena:

The Prophet Joseph spoke of how apostates often bring severe persecutions upon their former friends and associates. "When once that light which was in them is taken from them they become as much darkened as they were previously enlightened, and then, no marvel, if all their power should be enlisted against the truth, and they, Judas like, seek the destruction of those who were their greatest benefactors" alone!<sup>790</sup>

Strange, how often defectors *leave* the Church, but they cannot leave it alone!<sup>791</sup>

Jeremiah described these sorts of apostates and intertwined his description of their actions with his own understanding of the waters of life:

11 Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

12 Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord.

13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Jeremiah 2:11-13).

The Lord used that same kind of analogy when he said to the Prophet Joseph:

22 And now, verily I say unto you, that as I said that I would make known my

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<sup>790</sup> Smith, Joseph. *History of The Church*, 2:23.

<sup>791</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 108.

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will unto you, behold I will make it known unto you, not by the way of commandment, for there are many who observe not to keep my commandments.

23 But unto him that keepeth my commandments I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life (D&C 63:22-26).

The other way to lie to God is to remain “active” in the Church while selectively keeping the *convenient* covenants and covertly disregarding those that are not convenient. As time passes, the disregarded ones will grow in numbers and strength, and the poor ill-defined self will be swallowed up in a morass of duplicity. The Savior said: described that kind of apostasy as follows:

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matthew 23:25-31).

The result is not different for those who openly rebel and for those whose rebellion is a quiet subversion.

Each of us tends to look upon our Self with a prejudiced eye, having a too-intimate relation with our own imperfections. Those who do not wish to project a counterfeit of themselves seek to uncover the sterling nature of their own reality, but that requires a good bit of honesty. If applied, its return will be greater honesty. One of the surest ways to know whether one is being true to the law of one’s own being is to observe one’s Self and ask: “How much wiggle room do I need in order to be content with the notion that I am keeping all of the *necessary* covenants?” The answer will reveal that the wiggle room may be a problem, but if some of the covenants are thought of as unnecessary, that is a problem indeed!

If the question is asked often enough, and with real intent, the question’s own relevance will shrink until one has no pretenses left to hide, and the answer will become, “Oh, I mostly just go about being myself—I keep my covenants with an unassuming rectitude that is as unconscious as breath, as clean as charity, and as free as happiness.” When that is the answer, one has become free of self-disparagement, because one’s Self has come to be in perfect accord with the eternal law of one’s own being.



## **Alma 12:5-6, The Power of an Embrace**

Alma continued to instruct Zeezrom:

5 Now this was a plan of thine adversary, and he hath exercised his power in thee. Now I would that ye should remember that what I say unto thee I say unto all.

6 And behold I say unto you all that this was a snare of the adversary, which he has laid to catch this people, that he might bring you into subjection unto him, that he might encircle you about with his chains, that he might chain you down to everlasting destruction, according to the power of his captivity (Alma 12:5-6).

An honest, heartfelt embrace is much more than just a symbol of love.<sup>792</sup> It is the way we take other people into our Selves—the way we offer our Selves to them—an invitation to make each a part of the other's being. The greatest of all human powers may be found in a tender, meaningful embrace. The scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, frequently celebrate the magnitude of a similar, but eternal, embrace.

One of the most beautiful testimonies of the Savior recorded anywhere in the scriptures is this reflection spoken by Lehi: “But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul

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<sup>792</sup> A personal note from LeGrand Baker: I was only seven years old when my Grandpa, Claude Vincent Baker, died, and I have only one short memory of him. There are some recollections of the circumstances surrounding the incident, but they are memories of the context of the event, and not really of my Grandpa. The year was 1945. He and Grandma lived on their ranch in Boulder, Utah, far from any good doctors. Grandpa was very ill, and had come to stay with us while he saw a doctor here. The doctor put him in the hospital, and he died there. The circumstances surrounding my memory of him are these: He was sitting on a chair in our living room, and he motioned for me to come to him. When I did, he lifted me up and sat me on his lap. I remember those things, but they do not really count as memory of him. The single thing I remember about him is how I felt when I sat on his lap. He wrapped his arms around me and held me up tight against his chest and I was encompassed in his love. I felt his love for me, and I knew that I was truly, truly loved. That hug and the warm feeling that went all the way through my young body as I sat there enwrapped in his arms is my only memory of the reality of my Grandpa. The memory does not fade. Whenever I think of him, or see his picture, I re-experience the overwhelming warmth of that embrace.

That seems so right to me. If I could have chosen to retain only one memory of my Grandpa, the one I would have chosen would have been the beauty of his love. Similarly, if I could choose to leave only one memory to my family and to my friends, that memory would be a hug.

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from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love” (2 Nephi 1:15). The Lord promised a similar blessing to Oliver Cowdery:

20 Behold, thou art Oliver, and I have spoken unto thee because of thy desires; therefore treasure up these words in thy heart. Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love.  
21 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God (D&C 6:20-21).

The people we hug become a part of us. That is most true of the Savior, as Lehi said, for it projects his lovingkindness into the eternities. It is an encounter with pure love, and it is above all things most powerful, most liberating, and most precious. There is a sharp contrast between an embrace of love and the “chains of hell” that Alma described to Zeezrom. Alma did not speak of loving, tender, outstretched, beckoning arms, but rather provides a very different picture:

5 Now this was a plan of thine adversary, and he hath exercised his power in thee. Now I would that ye should remember that what I say unto thee I say unto all.  
6 And behold I say unto you all that this was a snare of the adversary, which he has laid to catch this people, that he might bring you into subjection unto him, that he might encircle you about with his chains, that he might chain you down to everlasting destruction, according to the power of his captivity (Alma 12:5-6).

The prospects of the confining, restricting, damning encirclement with which Alma forewarned Zeezrom are as real a possibility as is an embrace of love. That was Alma’s message to his antagonists.

In the remainder of chapter 12, Alma drove home that contrast by describing the eternal implications of our keeping or our not keeping the covenants we make with God. He said that if we keep our covenants, then the expanse of eternity will open to our view and present us with limitless possibilities. But, on the other hand, if we choose not to keep our covenants, then that view of eternity will implode on us and its power will turn from a freedom to act according to our own wills to the impotency of our having surrendered our wills to the devil, letting him use the power of our personalities to accomplish his purposes. Satan has no power of his own which he can wield against the righteous, so he must entice those who seek self-aggrandizement in the wrong places to do his bidding.

When there are none willing to serve his purposes, Satan can accomplish nothing and, therefore, “Satan shall be bound, that he shall have no place in the hearts of the children of men (D&C 45:55).<sup>793</sup>

What Alma will tell us, in this and the following chapter, is that we cannot avoid an eternal embrace, but we can choose whom we will embrace and whose power we will assimilate into ourselves when we do.

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## **Alma 12:7-8, Zeezrom's Response**

7 Now when Alma had spoken these words, Zeezrom began to tremble more exceedingly, for he was convinced more and more of the power of God; and he was also convinced that Alma and Amulek had a knowledge of him, for he was convinced that they knew the thoughts and intents of his heart; for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy.

8 And Zeezrom began to inquire of them diligently, that he might know more concerning the kingdom of God. And he said unto Alma: What does this mean which Amulek hath spoken concerning the resurrection of the dead, that all shall rise from the dead, both the just and the unjust, and are brought to stand before God to be judged according to their works? (Alma 12:7-8).

Ordinary people cannot know what another person is thinking. However, the Spirit can make a righteous person privy to another person's thoughts. Since Mormon was not present, it is very unlikely that he knew such intimate details of the story unless he had access to a fuller account of Zeezrom's testimony than he has given us. It is also possible that Mormon is reminding us of the message in an important psalm that was sung during the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama:

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<sup>793</sup> See Revelation 20:2; D&C 43:30-3,1 84:100, 88:110.

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11 The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.<sup>794</sup>  
12 Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord,  
and teachest him out of thy law (Psalm 94:11-12).

That is a two-edged statement, for it not only tells us what God knows, it also tells us what God does with what he knows. As in the case of Zeezrom, God teaches, initiates experiences, and helps one to understand. He does this in accordance with covenants we and He made together before the foundation of the world.

Whenever our premortal covenants are mentioned in the scriptures, there is also the promise that the Lord will ensure that we have sufficient ability and opportunity to fulfill our part of those covenants. That promise is always given to the prophets during their *sode* experiences. For example, in the case of Jeremiah, the Lord said:

5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.  
6 Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.  
7 But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.  
8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.  
9 Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.  
10 See I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant (Jeremiah 1:5-10).

Not only do the prophets have this promise of unfettered opportunity for success, but each of us has a similar promise. We call it the covenant of invulnerability. Isaiah wrote of

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<sup>794</sup> Paul's paraphrase of this psalm might almost be read as a commentary on Zeezrom's thinking.

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain (1 Corinthians 3:18-21).

Job also understood that principle. At the conclusion of a magnificent conversation, he said to the Lord, "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee" (Job 42:2).

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that promise when he addressed, in prophecy, those of us who were to come in the last days to assist in the gathering of Israel. Speaking in the first person, representing those who were assigned to participate in the gathering of Israel, he wrote:

1b The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name [name = covenant name].

2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword [the word of God is priesthood power<sup>795</sup>]; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me [ordination], and made me a polished shaft [ An arrow may be polished (anointed) with olive oil to keep it from warping]; in his quiver hath he hid me;

3 And said unto me [the assignment]: Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. ...

5 And now, saith the Lord—that formed me from the womb that I should be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him—though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.

6 And he said: It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth (1 Nephi 21:1b-6).

One of the phrases that is most relevant to our purpose here is “in his quiver hath he hid me.” The prophets are not hidden. They make their pronouncements for all to hear. It is the ordinary people who go about the business of living and keeping their covenants who are hidden from the world. Isaiah may well have been referring to a similar promise in the 31<sup>st</sup> Psalm:

19 Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee;  
which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man:  
thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues  
(Psalm 31:19-20).

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<sup>795</sup> In Paul's description of the whole armor of God, we find “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17).

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Another Old Testament example is the blessing given to the king and queen in Psalms 45 and 82, as shown above.

It is the covenant of invulnerability.

The Apostle Paul devoted the first chapter of Ephesians to a review that covenant in terms of the covenants we made with our Father in Heaven while in the Council in Heaven. He brings the chapter to a crescendo where he focus all of those premortal experiences on the assurance that God has sufficient power to enable us to keep our covenants. Paul wrote:

*1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:*

Paul begins by calling our attention to his own foreordination, when he was chosen by God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. “Christ” means the Anointed One. “Jesus” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “Joshua,” which means “Jehovah saves.” Jesus Christ means “Jesus the Anointed One.” That anointing occurred at the Council in Heaven. So the first thing Paul does, is call our attention to his own foreordination, after which he calls our attention to the Saviour’s. The rest of the chapter is about our own.

*2 Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

The word “grace” often suggests the power of the truth, light, love which emanate from the presence of God. “Lovingkindness” is the word used in the Old Testament. “Loving” is what God is; “kindness” is what he does. Similarly, we are expected to *be* charity, and *do* the law of consecration.

“Peace” in the Beatitudes (3 Nephi 12:9), is the quality of those who are called by the covenant name of “the children of God.” Its significance is taught at the beginning of Moroni 7.

*3 Blessed be the God [Elohim] and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

Verse 20 of this same chapter identifies the "Heavenly places" as the throne room where God presides, and where Christ sits on the right hand of his Father. In Solomon’s Temple, the throne room is the Holy of Holies. If that is Paul’s meaning, the heavenly places are the Holy of Holies of the temple in heaven—probably Kolob. In the poetic version of Section 76, the Prophet Joseph identified the place where the Father presides over the Council in Heaven as Kolob. Joseph quoted the Savior:

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My delight is to honour the Saints with repose,  
That serve me in righteousness true to the end;  
Eternal's their glory and great their reward.  
I'll surely reveal all my myst'ries to them --  
The great hidden myst'ries in my kingdom stor'd;  
From the council in Kolob, to time on the earth,  
And for ages to come unto them I will show  
My pleasure and will, what the kingdom will do  
Eternity's wonders they truly shall know.<sup>796</sup>

If those connections are correct, then the “all spiritual blessings” we received “in heavenly places,” were the covenants and ordinances received in the temple of Kolob where the Father presided over the ceremonies.

4 *According as he [the Father] hath chosen us in him [the Savior] before the foundation of the world [That is, before the Council in Heaven described in Abraham 3:22-4:1], that we should be holy and without blame before him [the Father] in love.*

Charity is the great commandment here, and was there, even before the foundation of the world.

Here Paul is saying the same thing Moroni said at the conclusion of the Book of Mormon: “that you become holy, without spot.”

32 Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.

33 And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot (Moroni 10:32-33).

To be holy is to be perfect. This is not an arbitrary perfection, but a perfection of Self, with our personality and integrity fully intact—true to the law of our own

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<sup>796</sup> “A Vision by The Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1843.

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beings—sealed in that truth by the power of our own and of the Savior’s love.

5 *Having predestinated [foreordained] us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself [the Father], according to the good pleasure of his [the Father's] will.*

We are already Heavenly Father’s children, but to be birthright children who can inherit all that the Father has, we must be adopted to the Father through the atonement of the Saviour. In the ancient temple drama, Psalm 2 represented that adoption.

6 *To the praise of the glory of his [the Father's] grace [Moroni 10:32-33, just quoted, is probably the clearest description of the Father’s grace.], wherein he [the Father] hath made us accepted in the beloved [Son].*

7 *In whom [the Son] we have redemption through his [the Son's] blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his [the Father's] grace;*

8 *Wherein he [the Father] hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;*

“Abounded” is the verb form of abundance. It means to give abundantly—but the abundance we receive will be according to his wisdom and his prudence. That is, the Father will not place on us all at once the full weight of our mission in this world, but will teach us only the things we need to know, when they are immediately relevant to that part of our mission we need to fulfill it just now..

9 [The Father,] *Having made known unto us the mystery of his [the Father's] will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:*

The word “mystery” is translated from the Greek *mysterion*. As is explained on page 464, *mysterion* refers to the ancient temple covenants and ordinances, and may be the same as the Hebrew *sode*, which refers to our experience and the assignments we received in the Council in Heaven. Here Paul is reminding us that our assignments for this earth-life were made by the Father and understood by ourselves while we were at that Council.

10 *That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he [the Father] might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him [the Father]:*



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Paul understood that what those early Saints did 2000 years ago would ultimately effect the restoration of the gospel in our time. Similarly, even though we may not live to know how, what we do as we fulfill our assignments, will help bring about the Savior's second coming.

11 *In whom [the Father] also, we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated [foreordained] according to the purpose of him [the Father] who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*

The words, “we have obtained an inheritance,” are in past tense: they are a reference to the blessings we received “in heavenly places.” before the world was.

12 [The inheritance includes:] *That we should be to the praise of his [the Father's] glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

To say that the Father “first trusted in Christ” takes us back to the very beginnings of our beginnings. The next phrases teach us that we also trusted in the Savior before the foundation of the world. It was that trust that brought us to receive “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

13 *In whom [the Savior] ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth [“in the first place” Alma 13], the gospel of your salvation: in whom [the Savior] also, after that ye believed, ye were [past tense, again a reference to the experience in the Heavenly Places] sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*

We are taught in Section 132 that no ordinance or covenant is valid in the eternities unless it is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise. That is an eternal principle, and those blessings and covenants we received in the “heavenly places” were sealed upon us before we came to this world—however, the sealing was conditional upon our keeping our covenants while we are here. Paul explains that in the next verse.

14 *Which [sealing] is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his [the Father's] glory.*

“Earnest” is a commercial term. It is the name of a contract that precedes the sell of property. If one were to purchase a house, he would give the seller “earnest money,” in exchange for which the seller would sign a contract guaranteeing that he will not sell the home to anyone else during the next stated time, and that during that time he will sell the home to the other person who signs the contract for the agreed

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price. In that contract, the seller guarantees that he will sell the house to the buyer, but the buyer is free to not buy that house if he changes his mind. Paul uses the word “earnest” to describe the premortal covenant we made with the Father that he will bless us if we choose to be blessed. The covenant is an earnest, binding the Father to bless us if we accept the blessings, but giving us all the wiggle room we want in this world, leaving it entirely up to each of us whether we choose to claim the blessings he has covenanted to give us if we obey.

At this point in Paul’s letter, he concludes his introduction which talks about our pre-earth-life relationship with the Father and the Son. Paul now explains why our pre-mortal covenants are so important to us in this life.

*15 Wherefore I [Paul] also, after I heard of your faith [pistis, object, evidence, and hope of the covenants] in the Lord Jesus, and love [charity, the same law still applies] unto all the saints,*

*16 [Wherefore I] Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;  
17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him*

*18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know [the following three things:]*

The three principles that follow are among the most important things we can know, as we seek to fulfill our eternal covenants. They are:

[First:] *what is the hope of his [the Father’s] calling [to us]*

The Greek word that is translated “calling” is a gerund, from the verb “to call.” It implies the act of speaking, or issuing an invitation or an assignment. Thus, it is the Father’s call to us to serve. It is that assignment to which we were foreordained. “The hope of his calling” is its intended conclusion or objective.

[Second:] *and what the riches of the glory of his [the Father's] inheritance in the saints,*

“The riches of the glory” are those blessings promised to those who keep their eternal covenants. Twice the Lord admonished the Latter-day Saints, “ Seek not for riches but for wisdom; and, behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich (D&C 6:7 and

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11:7).” The riches of his glory” are those blessing that were, and will be again, sealed upon us by the Holy Spirit of Promise.

[Third:] 19 *And [that you may know] what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*

This is the crescendo of the entire chapter: it is the ultimate promise of invulnerability. Paul says that he prays that we may know that Heavenly Father will exercise the same power in our behalf, so that we may fulfill our eternal covenants, just as he did for the Savior.

20 *[according to the working of his mighty power,] Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,*

21 *Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*

22 *And [the Father] hath put all things under his [the Son's] feet, and gave him [the Son] to be the head over all things to the church,*

23 *Which is his [the Son's] body, the fullness of him [the Father] that filleth all in all.*

In that chapter, the apostle reviews the covenants we made with our Father in Heaven in the premortal world. This review is an introduction to a more complete discussion of those covenants which follows in the remainder of his letter. But before proceeding to that, he tells the Saints of his prayer for them, that they may:

1. know the covenants we made at the Council in Heaven
2. know the blessings awaiting us as we keep those covenants
3. know that God has the power to remove any external obstacle that might prevent our fulfilling those covenants. In other words, God promises that we cannot fail, unless we choose to fail. He does not promise we won't have difficulties, but only that the difficulties will not preclude our keeping our covenants.

In each of those scriptural discussions of our premortal covenants and foreordinations. With each comes the covenant of invulnerability—the promise that the Lord will divert anything that would prevent us from doing what we came to this earth to do. For the enormous majority of us, that means quietly expending our resources and our energies to support the growth of the Kingdom. What God will not do is force us to obey.

In our story of Alma and Zeezrom, the two men who face each other in this debate

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are excellent examples of that principle. Alma had been told by an angel that he must either repent or suffer the pains of hell—that is, the angel gave Alma the option, but it was Alma who made the choice. Now Zeezrom was having a similar experience—but it was Alma the prophet, rather than an angel, who was delivering the ultimatum.

Both men responded the same way. They chose to suffer the pains of repentance rather than the pains of hell—but they could have chosen not to repent, gone about life as before, and refused to believe what the consequence would be. We do not have much information about Zeezrom immediately after this experience, except that the sorrow nearly killed him. Alma blessed him to recover his health, and he was baptized (Alma 15). Later he was a missionary companion to Alma and Amulek (Alma 31:6, 30).

For each of us, throughout our life’s experience, we remain free to do and believe what we will. In our egotism we tend to equate “truth” with whatever we choose to believe and “falsehood” with whatever we do not choose to believe. But truth is truth and it is independent of our belief. Whether we believe a true thing or not does not affect its validity, but our believing or not sets the course of our lives. Embracing truth brings freedom—ultimate, absolute freedom—for it authorizes us to believe.<sup>797</sup> It unites our individual power with the blessing God has given us that we can succeed in our earthly mission, and peacefully reconciles our souls with the problems that beset us. Embracing and defending a falsehood restricts our ability to know, uses up our energy to become, and leaves our covenant responsibilities and their attendant blessings unfulfilled.

In the end, each one of us will have to say, as Alma and Zeezrom were able to testify, that the Lord gave us all the opportunities requisite for our knowing and keeping our eternal covenants.

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<sup>797</sup> “George A. Smith, while serving in the First Presidency, reported: ‘Joseph Smith taught that every man and woman should seek the Lord for wisdom, that they might get knowledge from Him who is the fountain of knowledge; and the promises of the gospel, as revealed, were such as to authorize us to believe, that by taking this course we should gain the object of our pursuit.’” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, A Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, [Melchizedek Priesthood manual] [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007], 266.

## **Alma 12, Review of the Feast of Tabernacles Drama**

One of the most striking aspects of Alma's conversation with Zeezrom—also heard and understood by others who were in the audience—is that it was not the kind of setting where Alma would be expected to introduce new concepts that they had never heard before. Yet these chapters are among the “deepest doctrinal” chapters in the Book of Mormon, which in turn implies that Zeezrom had an amazingly profound understanding of the gospel. This implies either that he had been a student of the scriptures but had gotten off onto some pretty thin ice or else that the “deep” doctrines Alma was discussing were generally known among all of the Nephites. In chapter 12, Alma confronted Zeezrom with the covenants he had made in this world in chapter 13 he clobbered him with the covenants he had made in his premortal existence. Chapter 12 focused on the covenants associated with the temple drama of the Feast of Tabernacles which concluded with the invitation:

34 Therefore, whosoever repenteth, and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine Only Begotten Son, unto a remission of his sins; and these shall enter into my rest.

But it included the warning:

35 And whosoever will harden his heart and will do iniquity, behold, I swear in my wrath that he shall not enter into my rest (Alma 12:34-35).

Before issuing that invitation and that warning, Alma had reviewed the most relevant parts of the drama:

28 And after God had appointed that these things should come unto man [that is, at the Council in Heaven when the decisions and assignments were made], behold, then he saw that it was expedient that man should know concerning the things whereof he had appointed unto them;  
29 Therefore he sent angels [We don't know how many, three, perhaps.] to converse with them, who caused men to behold of his glory. [The object of the

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angels' coming was to teach people how to enter God's presence.]

30 And they [the people] began from that time forth to call on his name [so the angels taught them how to pray]; therefore God conversed with men [the Father himself spoke], and made known unto them the plan of redemption ["redeem" in the Book of Mormon often means to enter God's presence (Ether 3:13; 2 Nephi 1:15, 2:1-3; Helaman 8:23)], which had been prepared from the foundation of the world; and this he made known unto them according to [that is, these were the methods or teaching tools he used for instructions] their faith [*pistis*, the substance and evidence of the covenants<sup>798</sup>] and repentance [repentance is a very efficient teacher] and their holy works ["holy" means holy, so "holy works" were probably the ordinances and covenants performed during the ancient temple drama; that is, the ordinances were also a source of instruction].

31 Wherefore, he gave commandments unto men, they having first transgressed the first commandments as to things which were temporal ["temporal" is time-related, so he was probably talking about the commandments associated with linear time] and becoming as gods, knowing good *from* evil [that is very different from "good *and* evil"], placing themselves in a state to act, or being placed in a state to act according to their wills and pleasures, whether to do evil or to do good——

32 Therefore God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption [again, having taught them how to come into his presence], that they should not do evil, the penalty thereof being a second death, which was an everlasting death as to things pertaining unto righteousness [righteousness is *zedek*, which is correctness in priesthood and temple things, so the second death he was talking about is the state of being without *zedek*-type blessings]; for on such the plan of redemption could have no power [without *zedek*, one cannot come into God's presence], for the works of justice could not be destroyed, according to the supreme goodness of God.

33 But God did call on men, in the name of his Son (this being the plan of redemption which was laid), saying: If ye will repent and harden not your hearts, then will I have mercy upon you, through mine Only Begotten Son;

34 Therefore, whosoever repenteth, and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine Only Begotten Son, unto a remission of his sins;

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<sup>798</sup> See the chapter called, "Meaning of Faith—*pistis*."

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and these shall enter into my rest.

35 And whosoever will harden his heart and will do iniquity, behold, I swear in my wrath that he shall not enter into my rest.

36 And now, my brethren, behold I say unto you, that if ye will harden your hearts ye shall not enter into the rest of the Lord; therefore your iniquity provoketh him that he sendeth down his wrath upon you as in the first provocation, yea, according to his word in the last provocation as well as the first, to the everlasting destruction of your souls; therefore, according to his word, unto the last death, as well as the first.

37 And now, my brethren, seeing we know these things, and they are true, let us repent, and harden not our hearts, that we provoke not the Lord our God to pull down his wrath upon us in these his second commandments which he has given unto us; but let us enter into the rest of God, which is prepared according to his word (Alma 12:28-37).

## **Alma's Invitation to Enter into the Rest of the Lord**

Alma's speech in chapter 12 reached a powerful crescendo which in turn became the springboard to his discussion of the priesthood covenants in the premortal world in chapter 13. For us, the crescendo often falls flat because his ideas are outside of our usual frame of reference. But for his audience, his point was powerful and well aimed.

In verses 36-37, Alma called their attention to both the warning and the blessing promised in the 95<sup>th</sup> Psalm. The psalm reads:

- 1 O come, let us sing unto the Lord:  
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.
- 2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,  
and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.
- 3 For the Lord is a great God,  
and a great King above all gods.
- 4 In his hand are the deep places of the earth:  
the strength of the hills is his also.
- 5 The sea is his, and he made it:  
and his hands formed the dry land.
- 6 O come, let us worship and bow down:  
let us kneel before the Lord our maker.
- 7 For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture,  
and the sheep of his hand.  
To day if ye will hear his voice,
- 8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation,  
and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:
- 9 When your fathers tempted me,  
proved me, and saw my work.
- 10 Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said,  
It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:
- 11 Unto whom I swear in my wrath  
that they should not enter into my rest (Psalm 95:1-11).



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Alma said that a similar provocation on their part would preclude their entering into the Lord's rest. Many years before that, Nephi's brother Jacob had drawn a similar conclusion:

Wherefore we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God, that they might enter into his rest, lest by any means he should swear in his wrath they should not enter in, as in the provocation in the days of temptation while the children of Israel were in the wilderness (Jacob 1:7).

Paul understood the 95<sup>th</sup> Psalm's message the same way:

7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,  
8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:  
9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.  
10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.  
11 So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) ...  
15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.  
16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.  
17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?  
18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?  
19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:7-19).

Each used the ideas in the psalm to remind his audience of the time when the children of Israel were camped at Horeb, at the foot of Mount Sinai. There, though they had the opportunity, they refused to hear the voice and see the face of the Lord. The Lord stood on the mountain, concealed behind dark smoke (as a veil), and spoke to them, but they refused to hear him or to regard his invitation. This is the way the story is told in Exodus:

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3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel. ...

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. ...

10 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes,

11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. ...

16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

19 And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

20 And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up (Exodus 19:3-20).

On the mountain, Moses received the Ten Commandments:

18 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

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22 And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

23 Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold (Exodus 20:18-23).

Moses retold the story with a somewhat different emphasis in Deuteronomy, which was his great last sermon to his people:

10 Specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

11 And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.

12 And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice (Deuteronomy 4:10-12).

4 The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire,

5 (I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the work of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;) saying,

6 I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage (Deuteronomy 5:4-6).

8 Also in Horeb ye provoked the Lord to wrath, so that the Lord was angry with you to have destroyed you.

9 When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant which the Lord made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water:

10 And the Lord delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the Lord spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly (Deuteronomy 9:8-10).

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The provocation was that the Lord had invited them to hear his own voice and see his face, but they refused. In the above accounts, there are four verses that tell the whole story:

18 And all the people saw the thunders, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die (Exodus 20:18-19).

4 The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire,  
5 (I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the work of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount) (Deuteronomy 5:4-6).

Alma spoke of two “provocations.” The first was the time the people refused to enter the Lord’s rest at Sinai:

36 And now, my brethren, behold I say unto you, that if ye will harden your hearts ye shall not enter into the rest of the Lord; therefore your iniquity provoketh him that he sendeth down his wrath upon you as in the first provocation (Alma 12:36a).

The second would be the present invitation of the festival temple drama to enter the presence of God rather than refuse because they cannot endure the glory of the Lord:

yea, according to his word in the last provocation as well as the first, to the everlasting destruction of your souls; therefore, according to his word, unto the last death, as well as the first (Alma 12:36b).

In the last verse of the chapter, Alma returned to his earlier statement that to harden one’s heart is to refuse to know the mysteries of godliness. Thus he wrapped this part of his discourse into a single package, with the “second commandments” being their present opportunity to enjoy the ordinances and covenants that brings one in the presence of God.

## **Alma 13, The Quest for Self: To Know the Law of One's Own Being**

It is apparent from the many and various ways Alma used the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama as a teaching tool that the principles presented in the drama were the foundation of his worldview. For us to understand much of Alma's rationale, it would be helpful to first examine that worldview and the eternal context in which he places man. It is in that context that he derives his understanding of God's purpose. That context is most readily understood through his words to Zeezrom, especially in Alma 13, where he uses the conditions of our premortal existence as his jumping off place to discuss the meaning of the Melchizedek Priesthood. In the next few pages we will examine the concepts of our premortal life, and later use that (as Alma did) to explain justice and mercy in terms of the differences between cosmos and chaos.<sup>799</sup>

We usually think of "the creation" as the time when Jehovah and the Council brought this physical world into existence. However, that was only one step in a series of events to bring about perfect harmony. The earth and all other of God's creations needed to pass through a sequence of "creations" in order to attain that perfection. The first was the spiritual creation, then the physical, and finally the resurrection. One can also describe the whole of that sequence as "the creation."

The resurrection of the earth—and all else the Lord has made—is a gift of the Savior's Atonement. However, the quality of one's resurrection is conditional upon the spiritual truth, light, and love one has chosen to assimilate along the way.<sup>800</sup>

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<sup>799</sup> For a discussion of chaos, creation, and cosmos, see the chapter called, "Act 1, Scene 3: The Creation."

<sup>800</sup> LeGrand Baker once saw an interview on TV where a sophisticated young woman with a city accent had discovered a black woman in the South who had 19 children. The sophisticate marveled that the woman had reared such a large family and asked, "Was there one that you loved more than the others?" "Oh, yes," replied the mother, "The one that needed me just then."

Watching that mother in that conversation opens a whole new concept of love. It is this: The power of godliness is his capacity to love all his children with equal intensity, and his ability to let them know that—with each of his children also understanding that he can focus his love on just the one without diminishing his love for all the others.

In our world, families help us learn how to do that, as do Church callings, but so does our just going

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It appears that love, light, and truth are equivalents—they come from God and are expressions of his glory. The conclusion that they are actually the same thing is easy to come by. Truth is knowledge of eternal reality—“of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.” That is, truth is knowledge of all reality in sacred time and space. The Savior is the Spirit of Truth, and “he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ ...which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space” (D&C 88:7-12, 93:24-26). Thus, both truth and light permeate and sustain everything in the universe. The fact that God’s love is also everywhere is a given that needs no proof. Since his light, truth, and love are everywhere and in every individual, they either occupy the same space at the same time, or else they are the same thing. If the latter is correct, then the differences we perceive are simply ways we have of describing the multiple effects of the power of his godliness. Joy is the product of truth/light/love. It is most meaningful when it is shared. The more we recognize and assimilate the truth/light/love of others, the greater the joy we and they experience. The ultimate expanse of that joy is described by the Prophet Joseph this way:

1 When the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves.

2 And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy (D&C130:1-2).

Our very lives testify that this is true. As we acknowledge the eternal reality of a dear friend we become more alive. We begin to rediscover the eternal truth of who and what that friend was, is, and will be. That recognition opens a window through which we can get a glimpse of our own eternal Self. The light that emanates from the soul of one’s friend penetrates just a bit of the veil that clouds our memory of our own past eternal self. It reveals a shining new aspect of a forgotten portion of who and what we were before we came into this world. It does that by teaching us who our friend was and how dearly we loved him. As we re-experience the light that is his personality and goodness; we feel again the love we shared for each other before we came into mortality. The friendship brings more truth, light, and love that blend anew into a unity of joy. It gives new vibrance

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about living ordinary lives as good, kind human beings.

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to our lives and helps us overcome the loneliness of this otherwise dreary world. Thus the friendship makes both beings more complete—more of what and who we were. The friend's light seems also to extend a beckoning hand even beyond the veil of death that obscures the hope of our eternal future.

That beckoning hand and the different ways we might respond to it reflect the immortal words of Edna St. Vincent Millay:

The World Stands out on either side  
No wider than the heart is wide;  
Above the world is stretched the sky, –  
No higher than the soul is high.<sup>801</sup>

Not everyone sees. Not everyone listens. Not everyone reaches for the hand. Not everyone is the same. Consequently, the reason there must be differences in the three degrees of resurrected glory is that there must ultimately be a place where everyone can find an absolute compatibility between the quality of his own spiritual self and the everlasting quality of his exalted physical person<sup>802</sup>—for the overriding object of creation is the perfection of both. To understand this, “perfection” must be defined in terms of an unimpaired harmony both within the person and between him and his environment. Thus, the “immortality” that distinguishes each of the three degrees of glory might be understood a kind of individual wholeness and qualities of cultural unity.

“Eternal life” is the perfection of both. Among the gods in the celestial world the purity of that internal unity extends beyond the reaches of one's Self. Without losing the uniqueness of one's own personality, the fullness of truth, light, love, and joy in celestial glory becomes both the product and the expression of love and eternal friendships: the “sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy” (D&C130:1-2).

In accordance with that principle, we learn from both the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama and the scriptures that creation was initiated in the Council in Heaven when Jehovah instructed the gods:

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<sup>801</sup> Edna St. Vincent Millay, *Renascence One Hundred and One Famous Poems*, ed. Roy J. Cook (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 166-70.

<sup>802</sup> This is all explained in D&C 88:1-45.

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24 We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

25 And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them (Abraham 3:24-25).

In those instructions, Jehovah identified two kinds of incompleteness—of chaos. The first was space and matter without structure. The second was a group of intelligences without perfection. How they were organized was explained by Alma in chapter 12, but for the answer to the question of who those intelligences were, we turn first to an early Melchizedek Priesthood manual written by Elder B. H. Roberts. His concepts were originally published in the *Improvement Era*, where they were introduced by this note: “Elder Roberts submitted the following paper to the First Presidency and a number of the Twelve Apostles, none of whom found anything objectionable in it, or contrary to the revealed word of God, and therefore favor its publication.”<sup>803</sup> Elder Roberts wrote:

**The Nature of Intelligences:** There is in that complex thing we call man, an intelligent entity, uncreated, self existent, indestructible. He—for that entity is a person; because, as we shall see he is possessed of powers that go with personality only, hence that entity is “he,” not “it,”—he is eternal as God is; co-existent, in fact, with God; of the same kind of substance or essence with deity, though confessedly inferior in degree of intelligence and power to God. One must needs think that the name of this eternal entity—what God calls him—conveys to the mind some idea of his nature. He is called an “intelligence;” and this I believe is descriptive of him. That is, intelligence is the entity’s chief characteristic. If this be a true deduction, then the entity must be self-conscious, and “others—conscious,” that is, he must have the power to distinguish himself from other things—the “me” from the “not me.” He must have the power of deliberation, by which he sets over one thing against another; with power also to form a judgment that this or that is a better thing or state than this or that. Also there goes with this idea of intelligence a power of choosing one thing instead of another, one state rather than another. These powers are inseparably connected

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<sup>803</sup> B. H. Roberts, “Immortality of Man,” *Improvement Era* 10, 6 (April 1907): 401-23. This introduction was also included on the first page of the priesthood manual. Roberts spells it “intelligencies.”



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with any idea that may be formed of an intelligence. One cannot conceive of intelligence existing without these qualities any more than he can conceive of an object existing in space without dimensions. The phrase “the light of truth” [Doc. & Cov., Sec. xciii.] is given in one of the revelations as the equivalent for an “intelligence” here discussed; by which is meant to be understood, as I think, that intelligent entities perceive the truth, are conscious of the truth, they know that which is, hence “the light of truth,” “intelligence.” Let it be observed that I say nothing as to the mode of the existence of these intelligences, beyond the fact of their eternity. But of their form, or the manner of their subsistence nothing, so far as I know, has been revealed, and hence we are without means of knowing anything about the modes of their existence beyond the fact of it, and the essential qualities they possess, which already have been pointed out. ...

The intelligent entity inhabiting a spirit-body makes up the spiritual personage. It is this spirit life we have so often thought about, and sang about. In this state of existence occurred the spirit’s “primeval childhood;” here spirits were “nurtured” near the side of the heavenly Father, in his “high and glorious place;” thence spirits were sent to earth to unite spirit-elements with earth-elements—in some way essential to a fulness of glory and happiness (Doc. & Cov. Sec. xciii: 32-35)—and to learn the lessons earth-life had to teach. The half awakened recollections of the human mind may be chiefly engaged with scenes, incidents and impressions of that spirit life; but that does not argue the non-existence of the uncreated intelligences who preceded the begotten spiritual personage as so plainly set forth in the revelations of God.

The difference, then, between “spirits” and “intelligences,” as here used, is this: Spirits are uncreated intelligences inhabiting spiritual bodies; while “intelligences,” pure and simple, are intelligent entities, but unembodied in either spirit bodies or bodies of flesh and bone. They are uncreated, self-existent entities, possessed of “self-consciousness,” and “other-consciousness”—they are conscious of the “me” and the “not me”; they possess powers of discrimination (without which the term “intelligence” would be a solecism) they discern between the evil and the good; between the “good” and “the better.” They possess “will” or “freedom,”—within certain limits at least—the power to determine upon a given course of conduct, as against any other course of conduct. This intelligence “can think his own thoughts, act wisely or foolishly, do right or wrong.” To accredit an “intelligence” with fewer or less important powers than these, would

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be to discredit him as an “intelligence” altogether.<sup>804</sup>

We find a fascinating account of the story implicit in Elder Roberts’s discussion in Alma 13. Here we learn how the noble and great ones came to qualify to be members of the Council in Heaven. Alma spoke of the time when they were ordained by our Father in Heaven to the priesthood “which is after the order of his Son.” Alma did not mention that they were members of the Council, but all indications suggest that the ordinations he talked about took place at that Council, so the settings of Alma 13:1-8 and Abraham 3:22-4:1 are the same, and each is simply a different version of the same story—except that Abraham is talking about the purpose for creating the world, and Alma 13 tells us more about intelligences—and therefore, gives us much more detail about who we were before we were spirits.

In chapter 13 Alma addressed the most important mystery in the universe: the answer to the somber cry for purpose: “Why and who am I?” The ever seemingly elusive answer can only be discovered within the light of the greater question: “Why and who is Jehovah-Messiah-Jesus-the Resurrected Christ?”

As one begins to discover the answer to that question, one’s perception of eternal reality also begins to grow, and the veil begins to dissolve that separates one’s Self in linear time from a vision of the law of one’s own being in sacred time. One comes to grasp the significance of the eternal magnitude of the Savior’s Atonement, and in that understanding, one discovers the meaning of Self.

The Feast of Tabernacles temple drama offered a nearly comprehensive approach to the answer to the constantly repeated question: “Why and who am I?” In doing so, it first posed, then addressed the answer to the more fundamental question, “What physical (meaning time and space, as well as world and body) environment must have been provided for us in order that the Atonement would work?” The answer reaches through the full span of our eternities.

Alma apparently understood that the story told in the festival temple drama showed that we began before our spirit birth as cognizant beings whose primary characteristic was that we were intelligent. That is, we could think, experience emotions, and make decisions based on information we evaluated through our perceptions. We were, as John Taylor wrote, “a spark of deity, struck from his eternal blaze”—a person of light, with an

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<sup>804</sup>Roberts, *Seventy’s Course in Theology*, 2:8-11. See Orson Pratt, “Great First Cause, or the Self-Moving Forces of the Universe,” *Series of Pamphlets by Orson Pratt* (Liverpool: R James, 1851).

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individual personality.<sup>805</sup> Using that simple light as a comparison, the Savior was a blazing fire. We see that in Lehi's vision where the Savior is described as having a luster "above that of the sun at noon-day," but the twelve who followed him were only brighter than the "stars in the firmament" (1 Nephi 1:9-10). That observation about the Savior's glory helps us answer the next necessary question: Why was Christ the First Born? There are three possible answers:

(1) It was a jolly good bit of luck—an answer that is completely unacceptable.

(2) God made Christ better than everyone else. That is an equally unacceptable answer because it violates all the laws of free agency. Such a notion simply takes Calvin's idea of predestination and moves it back one step from our physical birth to our spirit birth. If we teach that God created people differently rather than letting them set their own destiny—even if we put that creation back to our premortal spirit birth—that is still Calvinism. It is still predestination, and it is still false.<sup>806</sup>

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<sup>805</sup> President Taylor said, "I profess to be an immortal being, as we all are. A spark of Deity, struck from the fire of His eternal blaze, dwells in us, a portion of that intelligence that dwells with the Gods; which, if we will follow out through the influence of the Holy Ghost, of which I have spoken, will bring us back again into the presence of God; and with us our wives, our children, and our associations." (John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 24: 5-6.)

President Taylor used phrases like, "a spark of Deity, struck from the fires of his eternal blaze," many times. Some examples are: *The Mormon* (New York, August 29, 1857; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church, John Taylor* [Melchizedek Priesthood Manual, 2003] (Salt Lake City, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 211-12. [Quoted from G. Homer Durham, *Gospel Kingdom* (1941), 1-3.]; *The Gospel Kingdom: Selections from the Writings and Discourses of John Taylor*, selected, arranged, and edited, with an introduction by G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1941], 63.); *Journal of Discourses*, 8:3-4, 10:131-32.

<sup>806</sup> Because John Calvin did not believe in a premortal existence, he assumed that God created people at the time of their mortal birth. That assumption presented him with a theological dilemma. This was its rationale: (1) God is perfect, therefore his creations are also perfect; (2) However, some of his creations are bad and are going to go to hell; (3) Therefore, either God messed up when he created them (not an acceptable conclusion), or he did not err; (4) If he did not err, then he created them exactly the way he wanted them to be; (5) Therefore, he created the bad people with the intent that they should go to hell; (6) Conclusion: God created some people to go to heaven, and other people to go to hell. That is called predestination.

We have a similar dilemma if we believe intelligence is used as a synonym for spirit, and that God took a basic element, called intelligence, and used it to create the spirit bodies of his spirit children, and that the spirit creation was the origin of cognizance. That belief simply takes Calvin's predestination back one step into the previous world. It assumes that the Savior is better than all the rest, because God made him first, with more light, and therefore better. However, that same argument would also assume that Satan is bad because

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(3) As an intelligence, Christ never sinned. Therefore he was clean and could—by right—be born into our Father’s presence as the first one. Because of his infinite and eternal Atonement, the rest of us intelligences who had sinned by experimenting with truth and non-truth, could repent, become clean again, and thereby become qualified to be born as spirit children of our Father in Heaven. That is the only possibly correct scenario.

That conclusion insists on another: if only Christ was clean and without sin, then that presupposes it was possible for intelligences not to be clean. That is, they could sin. That is easy to understand because, as the Savior observed in the Sermon on the Mount, attitudes and motives are not lesser sins than actions. If intelligences could distinguish between “me” and “not me,” then they could also understand self-interest. They could seek to dominate others or to bless them. Therefore they could act on impure motives or on pure charity. They could hold others in contempt, or they could love them. They could sin or not sin.

If this is correct, then Alma’s sermon gives us great insight about the meaning and extent of the Atonement—about what it means to say that the Atonement is infinite and eternal. That insight is this: intelligences are represented by Alma as being self-cognizant, capable of learning and of interacting with others. They have free agency and are therefore capable of error. If they were capable of error—sin—they could become unclean while they were still intelligences. Since no unclean thing can enter into the presence of God, no intelligence who had ever made a wrong decision could enter his presence to become one of his spirit offspring. (Only Christ had never sinned, so only Christ could—by right—enter the presence of God to become his Son. Therefore Christ was the “Firstborn” and “Only Begotten.”) However, the intelligences could enter the presence of God on the same principles that one has always been able to do so. That is, because Christ’s Atonement is infinite and eternal, it has the power to reach back in time to where intelligences could be redeemed and brought into the presence of God. If we read Abraham 3 and Alma 13 correctly, some intelligences qualified to become spirit children of Heavenly Father before others qualified. Those who qualified first became members of

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God made him with less light, and therefore not as good as others. In that case, that is if we assume that our personalities were not already established while we were intelligences, before God gave us spirit bodies, then it must follow that the way God made us, not our own agency, will ultimately determine whether we will go to the Celestial Kingdom or to some other place.

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the Council (Satan, who was a liar from the beginning,<sup>807</sup> qualified by knowing the requisite things and performing the requisite performances, but when he was presented with a plan that would send him to earth where he would be judged by charity rather than performance, he realized he could no longer lie his way through the system and tried to mess everything up for everyone else).

In the cosmic myth, the mentor—sometimes old, but always wiser than younger men—appears in the story just at the time when the youth, who is the hero, is old enough to begin to question who he is and why his aspirations, spiritual powers, and sense of reality are different from other people's. The mentor helps the youth understand his destiny by teaching him his origin and showing him his purpose. As the youth becomes a young man, he leans less and less on the mentor and more and more on his own sense of Self. Eventually the mentor dies, or otherwise must go away, leaving the young man alone. But he is not alone; the teachings of the mentor have become a part of him, and now he can define his Self in the same way his mentor had already defined him. It is not until after the mentor goes away that the young man can truly discover that Self. Alone, and still a bit unsure, he begins—humbly, but determined, now a dignified follower of the eternal law of his own being—to fulfill and make new his everlasting covenants and his own destiny in the cosmos. Later—seemingly much later—he and his friend will embrace again when he reaches the summit of his journey.

The ancient temple drama was like that. At first it barely parts the fog that hides the way back to one's eternal Self, affording only a small window through which the youth can see a portion of the sky as sacred space in sacred time. Then the window closes, and the initiate must go away to walk the path he had been shown. In his mind and on the stage of this heart, the drama replays itself many times year after year. It leads the youth to manhood—like the pillar of light of Moses's night, showing Israel the way through the desert, to come to the source of the cool mountain springs of the Promised Land—until the youth, now a man, reaches the top of that sacred mountain from which he can view the horizons of eternity.

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<sup>807</sup> 24 And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come;  
25 And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning (D&C 93:24-25).

## **Alma 13:1-9, Premortal Responsibilities and Opportunities to Bless Others**

In chapter 13, Alma began with those same premises. If one can define one's Self as unique and individual, then the beginning of the answer to the question "Why and who am I?" will be found "in the first place"—at the dawn of one's Self-definition. That is where chapter 13 begins. Alma said:

1 And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, teach these things unto the people (Alma 13:1).<sup>808</sup>

Because the verb in the part of the sentence that reads "that the Lord God ordained priests" is in the past tense, the word "forward" presents an interesting challenge. But when one goes to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, that challenge melts away. The first *OED* definition of "forward" is to project our thoughts backward to the first or earliest part of a period of time.<sup>809</sup> So even though Joseph Smith's translation does not use the

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<sup>808</sup> The word "order" is repeated so many times in Alma 13 that one gets the impression that Alma's intent is to focus Zeezrom's attention on the eternal nature of the priesthood. An interesting exercise is to highlight all the words "order" in the chapter, then read just the verses with the highlighted words.

<sup>809</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*: The first definition of the word "forward" reads: "The front part of (any thing material); the first or earliest part of (a period of time. etc.)." It means toward the beginning, like the forward of a book is at the beginning. In verse 2, we find "forward" again, but this time it has the more common meaning, projecting our attention into the future.

While one of the authors (Stephen Ricks) was attending a class offered by Avraham Malamet at the

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phrase “in the beginning,” it does use the correct word to take us there. As in Abraham 3, the setting of our story is the time and place when the Father—the Lord God, Elohim—chose his “rulers” (Abraham 3:22-13) and ordained them to be high priests (Alma 13:1).

We know Alma was talking about our Heavenly Father because Alma explained, “the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children,” then “ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son.” In Abraham 3, we are told that the Father chose the “noble and great ones” who were “spirits.” To be a spirit one must have received a spirit body from heavenly parents. Thus, they were, as Alma says, “his children.” So Abraham 3 (“and he said: These I will make my rulers”) and Psalm 82 (“God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth [chooses] among the gods”) each tell the same story as Alma 13.

Alma said that the purpose of their ordination was so the “children” could “teach these things unto the people.”

Now the question is, Who were the “people,” and why were they not also called “children”? The answer seems straightforward enough: if “people” are different from “children,” and the children are those who had already received spirit bodies from their heavenly parents, then the “people” must be intelligences who were individuals but who had not yet been born into spirit bodies. If that is so, then the purpose of the teaching would have been to prepare the “people” to enter the presence of God and be born as “children.” That interpretation is substantially strengthened as we continue in the passage:

2 And those priests [the “children’] were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people [intelligences] might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption (Alma 13:2).

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Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Professor Malamat observed that in Biblical Hebrew (unlike the Western European languages) one looked “forward” to the past and “back” to the future. John Tvedtnes, in a personal communication, notes that “regarding citing minds forward (Alma 13:1), if we take ‘forward’ to be a translation from QEDEM, the word means ‘before’ in both a temporal and a locative sense. This would suggest that, in the Alma passage, it would have a temporal meaning and hence refer to the past, i.e., that which had gone before.”

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To be redeemed is to be brought into the presence of God,<sup>810</sup> so children were to teach the intelligences how to look to the time when they could—by the blessings of the Atonement—come into the presence of Heavenly Father as his children.

Abraham 3-5 tells about the Father’s spirit children who, with the Savior, created the heavens and the earth. Of those members of the Council, Abraham had written simply that “God saw these souls that they were good.” Alma chapters 12 and 13 tell about the Father’s spirit children who were ordained to teach the unorganized intelligences. However, about their qualifications, Alma is much more explicit. He tells us how and why they were “good:”

3 And this is the manner<sup>811</sup> after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God (Alma 13:3a).

Alma then says that “foreknowledge” was a projection of the past into the future—that is, God knew their works in the past; he knew their integrity, and he knew their future worth:

[they,] being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works (Alma 13:3b).

They were called and prepared because of their faith (*pistis*— the covenant, its substance or assurance, evidence, hope, and ultimate fulfillment<sup>812</sup>), and good works (in many places in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, the word “works” refer to ordinances.<sup>813</sup>) That should come as no surprise, because that is always the criterion God

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<sup>810</sup> For a discussion of the meaning of the word “redeem,” see the chapter called, “Meaning of ‘Redeem’—to ‘Come unto Christ’.”

<sup>811</sup> See Isaiah 40: 12, 21.

<sup>812</sup> Hebrews 11:1. See the chapter called, “Meaning of Faith — *pistis*.”

<sup>813</sup> Mention has already been made of “holy works” in Alma 12:30. Some other scriptures where “works” refer to ordinances are: Psalms 145:17-18, all of the book of James, Alma 5:54, Alma 11:44, Alma



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uses for entering his presence. Alma continues,

In the first place being left to choose good or evil (Alma 13:3c).

In Alma's discussion, the phrase "in the first place" is used twice. Alma's care with words posits that the phrase means: "in the *first* place." Thus, the phrase introduces us to a description of the integrity of the members of the Council in Heaven in their very beginning, as intelligences, and tells why and how they qualified to be among the earliest spirit children born to our Heavenly Parents. That is, as intelligences they, and we, were free to choose good or evil. It is easy to understand that intelligences could choose, when we consider that most of the sins we subject ourselves to—like hate, avarice, contempt, anger—happen in one's mind rather than with one's body. When we act out those sins, our bodies get involved, but the root of the sins are in the mind. Intelligences could experience, even cultivate, those kinds of sins:

therefore they [the "children" when they were intelligences] having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith [in Christ] (Alma 13:3d).

In this verse these "children" are described as having "exceeding faith and good works" and "exercising exceedingly great faith." If "faith" means belief, that speaks highly of their conviction. However, if "faith" means the same as *pistis*—tokens of the covenant<sup>814</sup>—that helps us understand a great deal about their environment, their abilities, and their commitment. Alma continues by saying that:

[the children] are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such (Alma 13:3e).

Those words give us great insight about the eternal nature of the priesthood.

"Preparatory redemption" is another key phrase that helps us determine the time this was happening. "Redemption" is coming into the presence of God. In terms of this life, to

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13:3, Moroni 8:23.

<sup>814</sup> See the chapter called, "Meaning of Faith — *pistis*."

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be redeemed is to be brought back into his presence.<sup>815</sup> The final redemption is being brought into the Celestial Kingdom where one may reside with God.

The phrase “preparatory redemption” does not say “preparing for redemption”; rather it describes a redemption that is preparatory. It describes the preliminary redemption which prepares one for the final redemption. That is, the first redemption is bringing intelligences into the presence of God as his children, but it is “preparatory” because it is not permanent.<sup>816</sup> As his children, we must leave his presence when we come into this world. Hereafter, when we return to his presence to stay, that will be a permanent redemption. So the first redemption when we became his spirit children was “preparatory” because it looked toward to the final redemption:

4 And thus they [the “children,” spirit children who are the members of the Council] have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith [in Christ], while others [the intelligences] would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts [that phrase is defined in Alma 12:9-11 as one’s refusing to know the “mysteries” of God] and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this [their refusal to know] they [the intelligences] might have had as great privilege as their brethren [the “children”] (Alma 13:4).

That may be one of the most important concepts in the scriptures, because, as the next verse makes clear, the noble and great ones were noble and great not because they had some special advantages but “on account of their exceeding faith and good works”—that is, because of the way they exercised their free agency. Their advancement as intelligences was an entirely individual matter. (Abraham 1:1-4 and 3:18-21 confirm that):

5 Or in fine, in the first place [“In the first place”—when they were intelligences] they [the “people”] were on the same standing with their brethren [the

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<sup>815</sup> Ether 3:13-14, Helaman 14:17, 2 Nephi 2:2-4, 2 Nephi 1:15. For a discussion of the meaning of the word “redeem,” see the chapter called, “Meaning of Redeem— to ‘come unto Christ’.”

<sup>816</sup> Preparatory is defined as “1. That prepares or serves to prepare; preliminary; introductory, 2. Undergoing preparation, or preliminary instruction.” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language* [Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1959])

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“children”] (Alma 13:5a).

That is, at some point in time—in the very distant past—the intelligences whom Alma identified as the “people” were on the same standing as the intelligences whom he identified as God’s “children.” There was nothing arbitrary about the selection of the noble and great ones. They were not noble and great because they were among the first to be born to our Heavenly Parents, but they were among the first to be born to our Heavenly Parents because they were noble and great:

thus this holy calling [the calling and ordination mentioned in verse 1] being prepared from the foundation of the world [that always means at or before the Council] for such as would not harden their hearts [when they were intelligences], [this priesthood calling] being in and through the Atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared—(Alma 13:5b). This passage says that in the very beginnings of our beginning we were free to choose. Those who chose to have faith in Christ and follow him did so; those who chose not to, did not do so. To accept that notion, one must also accept the idea that the Atonement reaches back forever (“Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” [D&C 93:29]) and it continues forever into the future. Our origin is not so two dimensional that our choices were limited to only accepting Christ or not accepting him. By the time we had matured sufficiently as an “intelligence” to be ready to be born a child in the world of the spirits, we had not only developed an inclination to love the Lord and his children but we had also fully, or very nearly, developed the whole complex system of preferences and non-preferences that we call personality. All the other attributes of personality were subsets of the most important one, which was (still is) the quality of our charity—the extent of our love for the Father and his children.

That would mean that intelligences are individual, cognizant entities who are capable not only of thought but also capable of love and decision making. Therefore, they are capable of hate and of making wrong decisions, and therefore they are in need of repentance. Since no unclean thing can enter the presence of God, they could be born as spirit children of God only when they were cleansed by the Atonement—which gives an endlessly expansive meaning to the phrase that the Atonement is “infinite and eternal.”

When the intelligences became spirit children of our Father in Heaven, they were

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given spirit bodies. It must be so that in those spirit bodies the intelligences would have had experiences that would give them opportunity for additional growth. There, we were confronted with the great question: “Will you obey?” (“And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” [Abraham 3:25].) Our positive response to that question qualified us for still further blessings of the Atonement. So again, after repentance and being cleansed through appropriate ordinances, we were born as innocent babies into this world.

That is consistent with the scriptures: the Lord explained to the Prophet that we are innocent twice by virtue of the Atonement: first as spirit children of our Father in Heaven, then in our “infant state” in this world:

38 Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God (D&C 93:38).

And Joseph Fielding Smith quoted Paul to show that there were sacred ordinances performed in the spirit world before we came here.<sup>817</sup>

In this world, the question is different from the one we were asked before. That one had been, “Will you obey?” Even though obedience is necessary in this world, it is apparent that if this world were designed to ask only that question, then one must conclude it was very poorly designed. The reason is that most people never have an opportunity to know what to obey, neither do they have the political, social, or religious freedom to obey even if they did know. So, for them, the question “Will you obey?” can have no rational response. Of course, it is necessary to teach a child to obey or he would run out into the street and get hurt. In this world, obedience required by culture is taught by culture, but obedience to cultural norms does not bring salvation. The Savior said:

15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

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<sup>817</sup> Smith, *Way to Perfection*, 50-51. Quoted above.

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18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you (John 14:15-18).

The kind of obedience he means is a natural consequence of love, not a conformity imposed by culture. Even though this world is not designed to give everyone an opportunity to even know what to obey, there is another question that this world (including the spirit world that follows this one) is perfectly designed to ask and to answer. In this world, the question is “Why did you obey?” Our experience here in limited and linear time is perfectly designed to answer that question. If the answer is that one obeyed as an intelligence and in the spirit world because one could see the advantages that would come through obedience, then that person in this world (having forgotten the advantages he sought there) will be apt to seek advantages such as power, money, expensive toys, or any other sort of authority that gives one advantage over others. Or in this environment he may discover that he can still repent.

But if the answer is that we obeyed as an intelligence and in the spirit world because we loved God and his children, then that love will inform our motives and actions in this world. If not, then this world is an opportunity to repent. Here, the first commandment is to love the Lord. The second is to love our neighbors. If the experiences of this physical life are designed to see if we will love while in this environment that is not at all conducive to love, then it was designed very well indeed. The farmer who beats his dogs and children, and indiscriminately uses his chickens for a football is, at his core, not substantially different from the tyrant who overtaxes his people and oppresses them with unjust laws. Similarly, the impoverished housewife who has never heard the gospel but who cares for the needs of others is not substantially different from the middle class Latter-day Saint sister who looks after her sick neighbor because she chooses to rather than because she feels it is her duty. Our experience in this world was designed not to show if we will obey but to show why we obeyed—that is, so we can have sufficient opportunity to confirm to ourselves and all creation whether we obeyed in the spirit world because we knew which side our bread is buttered on, or whether we obeyed because we truly love the Lord and love his children.

In the Gospel of John, the beloved disciple quoted the Savior as saying:

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:34-35).

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This does not imply that the command to love one another was never given before that time. In his letters, John explains that the commandment is “new” because it is renewed in this world, but it was first given in the premortal existence. He used the phrase, “from the beginning” four times in these few verses:

4 He that saith, I know him [God], and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him (1 John 2:4-10).

1 The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;

2 For the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

3 Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it (2 John 1:1-6).

If the object of our earth-life experience was designed to achieve that end, then

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human and individual history takes on a whole new meaning. Whether in the extreme of poverty and utter obscurity or in great wealth and reputation (or somewhere in between) the purpose of life is the same for everyone. Only the specific assignments are different—in this life and in the spirit world that follows. Since “where much is given, much is required” is a true principle for the rich and the poor, the well educated and the poorly educated, the opportunities for doing good in this life (and in the next) are ultimately worked out on a level playing field.

An example is a deeply moving autobiography of an obscure Mormon pioneer. Martha Cox's parents were among the first settlers in St. George, Utah. All of her life Martha was very poor. Near the end of her autobiography she wrote something like this: “I have always been grateful to the Lord that I had no money. I have noticed that rich people cannot give to poor people without the poor people being reluctant to accept, because they think the rich people are being condescending. But I have always been so poor that I could help whomever I wished, and they were always able to accept and appreciate whatever I had to give.”<sup>818</sup>

It appears that one's charity (in combination with other personality attributes) and one's priesthood authority, as they are described as a single unit in Abraham 1:2-4, constitute the law of one's own being.<sup>819</sup>

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<sup>818</sup> Paraphrased from the autobiography of Martha Cragun Cox, 1852-1932. Original is in the Church Historical Department in SLC; a xerox copy is in Special Collections at BYU library. MSS SC 319 I.

<sup>819</sup> As we consider it, the phrase “priesthood authority” is the right concept there, but as we use the words it probably not the right phrase—though we have no idea what a better one would be. Considering the grand sweep and eternal scope of Abraham's statements, we think the concept is far too big for our phrase “priesthood authority” to say all that is necessary to say. But as we observed, we haven't the foggiest idea what a better phrase would be.

## **Alma 13, Alma Teaches about the Eternal Nature of Priesthood and Kingship**

In Alma's confrontation with Zeezrom, the prophet's purpose was to teach the lawyer that the political coup he was preparing had not been approved at the Council in Heaven and therefore could not be valid. So at this point in his speech, Alma moves his discussion from the premortal life to this world, and the responsibilities of the members of the Council after they come to the physical earth:

6 And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest – (Alma 13:6).

Earlier he had said they were to teach the "people"; now he says they are to teach the "children of men." He appears to have been making a very careful distinction about when and where the teaching was performed—both in time and in space. Now he is saying that the members of the Council are given the same assignment in this world as they had before—that is to teach. Alma concluded his statement by summing up the eternal nature and authority of the priesthood:

7 This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things—

8 Now they were ordained after this manner—being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order, which calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without beginning or end—

9 Thus they become high priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth. And thus it is. Amen (Alma 13:7-9).



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The “Amen” concludes Alma’s comments about the eternal nature of priesthood and priesthood callings.

He continued his sermon by shifting all of his focus from the premortal world to this one, but he did not change the subject. He introduced the earthly priesthood by discussing the sanctifying powers of the Savior’s Atonement.

10 Now, as I said concerning the holy order, or this high priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish;

11 Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.

12 Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

13 And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest (Alma 13:10-13).

He then equated the authorities of priesthood with the responsibilities of kingship. To do that, he discussed the achievements of Melchizedek, who had been both priest and king to his people.

14 Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever.

15 And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed.

16 Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord (Alma 13:14-16).

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This statement is a flashback to verse two, which reads: “And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.” Alma used those words to describe the ordinances that were performed at the Council in Heaven. Now he is using those same words to explain the meaning of the earthly ordinances. Yet in neither case did he actually identify which ordinances he was talking about. That leaves one to suspect that he thought it would have been inappropriate to describe them further. Alma continued:

17 Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness;

18 But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father (Alma 13:17-18).

## **Alma 14: The Origins of Good and Evil**

1 And it came to pass after he had made an end of speaking unto the people many of them did believe on his words, and began to repent, and to search the scriptures.

2 But the more part of them were desirous that they might destroy Alma and Amulek; for they were angry with Alma, because of the plainness of his words unto Zeezrom; and they also said that Amulek had lied unto them, and had reviled against their law and also against their lawyers and judges.

3 And they were also angry with Alma and Amulek; and because they had testified so plainly against their wickedness, they sought to put them away privily.

4 But it came to pass that they did not; but they took them and bound them with strong cords, and took them before the chief judge of the land.

5 And the people went forth and witnessed against them—testifying that they had reviled against the law, and their lawyers and judges of the land, and also of all the people that were in the land; and also testified that there was but one God, and that he should send his Son among the people, but he should not save them; and many such things did the people testify against Alma and Amulek. Now this was done before the chief judge of the land. ...

8 And they brought their wives and children together, and whosoever believed or had been taught to believe in the word of God they caused that they should be cast into the fire; and they also brought forth their records which contained the holy scriptures, and cast them into the fire also, that they might be burned and destroyed by fire.

9 And it came to pass that they took Alma and Amulek, and carried them forth to the place of martyrdom, that they might witness the destruction of those who were consumed by fire. ...

14 Now it came to pass that when the bodies of those who had been cast into the fire were consumed, and also the records which were cast in with them, the chief judge of the land came and stood before Alma and Amulek, as they were bound; and he smote them with his hand upon their cheeks, and said unto them: After what ye have seen, will ye preach again unto this people, that they shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone?

15 Behold, ye see that ye had not power to save those who had been cast into the fire; neither has God saved them because they were of thy faith. And the judge smote them again upon their cheeks, and asked: What say ye for yourselves?

16 Now this judge was after the order and faith of Nehor, who slew Gideon (Alma

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14:1-5, 8-9, 14-16).

There is an instructive pattern in Mormon's writings that helps us understand his intent. That is, he frequently gives us a sermon by one of the Nephite prophets, then follows that by telling a story that expands upon, or illustrates, his point. Alma 14 is an example of that pattern. In this chapter he gives us a vivid conclusion to what Alma has been teaching.

Throughout chapters 12 and 13, Alma taught, in ever expanding examples, the contrast between good and evil. Chapter 12 focuses on the invitation we must accept in order to come into the presence of God, contrasted with the consequences of our refusing to accept that invitation. Chapter 13 begins at the Council in Heaven and shows the responsibilities of its members to help others. He contrasts the noble and great ones with those who were not in the Council, and shows that the differences were entirely of their own making:

4 And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren.

5 Or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the Atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared— (Alma 13:4-5).

Alma then calls our attention to the earthly attributes of those who had the priesthood at the Council. He does this by discussing the reign and accomplishments of Melchizedek, who was both king and high priest. However, Alma does not contrast that with those in this world who reject the principles of salvation and seek to become a law unto themselves (that is, they reject the law that is the Savior's gospel and seek to find some sort of supremacy some other way).

It is Mormon who presents the contrasting example by showing the arguments and methods used by the apostates to subdue and discredit the prophets. Their actions demonstrate what the Savior explained to Nicodemus, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John 3:20). Mormon gives us a vivid example of those who do not want their deeds exposed to

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the light. He tells us, "They were also angry with Alma and Amulek; and because they had testified so plainly against their wickedness" (Alma 14:5).

Their accusations against the prophets were consistent with their sidestepping the matter of their own apostasy. Those who had been challenged misrepresented the prophets' words, "testifying that they had reviled against the law, and their lawyers and judges of the land, and also of all the people that were in the land; and also testified that there was but one God, and that he should send his Son among the people, but he should not save them."

Then they did the most heinous thing of all. They sought to prove Alma and Amulek were not true prophets by showing they did not have power to protect other people, or themselves. To do that, they drove the believing men from their homes and property, and "brought their wives and children together, and whosoever believed or had been taught to believe in the word of God they caused that they should be cast into the fire; and they also brought forth their records which contained the holy scriptures, and cast them into the fire also."

Finally they turned on the prophets themselves. The chief judge "smote them with his hand upon their cheeks, and said unto them: After what ye have seen, will ye preach again unto this people, that they shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone?"

By telling this story, Mormon had drawn a sharp contrast between the righteousness of Melchizedek and the evil of Alma's adversaries, showing their evil to be functionally extreme, but conceptually typical. This is the classic conflict between good and evil that was represented in so many ways during the full eternal sweep of the Feast of Tabernacles Temple drama.

In chapters 12-14, Alma and Mormon also introduced us to the answers to some of human philosophy's most perplexing questions: what is the origin of evil? and Why does God permit it?

Alma's profound assurance in chapter 13 is one key to those answers: "in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren" (Alma 13:5). The other key is in B. H. Roberts's discussion about the most fundamental characteristics of an intelligence. He wrote:

He is called an "intelligence;" and this I believe is descriptive of him. That is, intelligence is the entity's chief characteristic. If this be a true deduction, then the entity must be self-conscious, and "others-conscious," that is, lhe must have the power to distinguish himself from other things-the "me" from the "not me." He must

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have the power of deliberation, by which he sets over one thing against another; with power also to form a judgment that this or that is a better thing or state than this or that. Also there goes with this idea of intelligence a power of choosing one thing instead of another, one state rather than another.<sup>820</sup>

Their key ideas are these: at the beginning of our cognizance we were all on an equal standing and could tell the difference between “me” and “not me.” That basic knowledge imposed on us our first and most eternal dilemma: “What is in *my* best interest and how do *I* secure that objective?”

One possible answer was “It is my best interest to make ‘not me’ subservient to ‘me’ and thereby subvert his desires to my profit and aggrandizement. I can use *another* for *my* purposes, to gratify my desires, to bring about my own glorification.” If that was the premise on which an individual built his existence, then he has incorporated into himself the seeds of the most fundamental evil.

On the other hand, one could aspire to this purpose: “As light, truth, love, and life fuse to produce joy in me, so do they produce joy in others—and the most efficient way of obtaining that joy is to lift others and to be lifted by them, therefore, I will expend my energies to lift others.” If that is the answer by which one seeks to define one’s Self, then he has discovered the way by which he may achieve the ultimate good—which is also the way to achieve ultimate personal joy.

Those examples are the two extreme ends of the spectrum, the profoundly evil and the supremely good. At one end is the telestial glory with its multiple degrees of fading light and increased darkness. At the other is celestial glory, with its three degrees of goodness and purity. Somewhere in between are the “honorable” people of the world—the terrestrial who are neither full of contempt nor full of love, but are suspended in a kind of disregard—perhaps indifference to others—an unconcern that neither descends into hurtfulness nor rises to the law of consecration.

Because the powers of the Atonement enable us to repent and turn from what we seem to be just now, to what we strive to be, we have the agency to reject mistaken attitudes and actions, and to ultimately become precisely what we choose to become.

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<sup>820</sup> Roberts, *Seventy’s Course in Theology*, 2:8-9. The following note appears on the title page: “Elder Roberts submitted the following paper to the First Presidency and a number of the Twelve Apostles, none of whom found anything objectionable in It, or contrary to the revealed word of God, and therefore favor its publication.-Editors.” Elder Roberts full quote is found in the chapter about Alma 13, 806-9.

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Therefore, in the end, each of us will become the eternal product of our own making. Examples of the differences are all around us, and are clearly given in the scriptures. Satan epitomized the one extreme when he said “surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor. give me thy glory” (see Moses 4:1-3). Cain brought it to the practicalities of this world:

32 And Cain went into the field, and Cain talked with Abel, his brother. And it came to pass that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him.

33 And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands (Moses 5:32-33).

In contrast, the Savior epitomized the other end of the spectrum when he said, “and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me” (3 Nephi 27:13).

Shortly before his death, Peter explained that principle in simple terms, illustrating how one makes his calling and election sure:

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (2 Peter 1:5-7).

Not long before his death, Mormon taught the same principle to his friends: “Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all” (Moroni 7:46). And the Savior explained:

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Matthew 22:37-39).

For those who keep their covenants, charity is the summation of all that they are. For

those same people, living the law of consecration is the summation of all that they do.

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## **Alma and Lehi Explain Justice and Mercy to Their Sons**

There was apparently a strong and not very subtle subtext that ran through the ancient temple drama. It was elaborated on by both Lehi and Alma when they were speaking with their sons. The notion that it was a subtext of the drama comes from the fact that both prophets presented the ideas by using events of the drama to illustrate and reinforce the points they were trying to make. (Or, perhaps it was not a subtext at all. Perhaps the psalms that taught it so clearly have been lost from our canon.)

It is apparent from the words of Lehi and Alma that the message of the festival temple drama was broader and deeper than one might realize even from a detailed study of the psalms we have. Alma used the drama as the basis of his sermon in Alma 5, then used it differently in his address to his “beloved brethren” in Alma 7. He called on the power of its teachings during his confrontation with Zeezrom, and then used it again when he tried to explain the relationship of justice and mercy to his son Corianton. At the beginning of his conversation with Corianton, he had said:

3 And it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good.

4 And if their works are evil they shall be restored unto them for evil (Alma 41:3-4a).

Corianton was unable to see why God would exclude anyone from the pleasures of heaven, so his father turned to the principles presented in the drama to help his son understand. Alma said to him:

2 Now behold, my son, I will explain this thing unto thee. For behold, after the Lord God sent our first parents forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground, from whence they were taken—yea, he drew out the man, and he placed at the



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east end of the garden of Eden, cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the tree of life—

3 Now, we see that the man had become as God, knowing good and evil;<sup>821</sup> and lest he should put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever, the Lord God placed cherubim and the flaming sword, that he should not partake of the fruit—

4 And thus we see that there was a time granted unto man to repent, yea, a probationary time, a time to repent and serve God.

5 For behold, if Adam had put forth his hand immediately, and partaken of the tree of life, he would have lived forever, according to the word of God, having no space for repentance; yea, and also the word of God would have been void, and the great plan of salvation would have been frustrated (Alma 42:2-5).

Lehi had taught his children the same principle. He said:

19 And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth.

20 And they have brought forth children; yea, even the family of all the earth.

21 And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents (2 Nephi 2:19-21).

Near the conclusion of Alma's words to Corianton, he summed up all he had said with this observation:

26 And thus God bringeth about his great and eternal purposes, which were prepared from the foundation of the world (Alma 42:26).

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<sup>821</sup> This is an interesting and probably very careful choice of words. As pointed out earlier the object of this life is to learn by experience good *from* evil. However at this point in the story Adam and Eve are still in the Garden and have had no such experience, therefore they only know good *and* evil. If they were to remain in the Garden in that state, then their paradise would become a hell.

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Those words also sum up the whole message of the festival temple drama. It was about the realization—the fulfillment—of the plan that had been established from before the foundation of the world.

The entire story of the cosmic creation as told in the festival temple drama covered the full sweep of human existence from the time we began as cognizant beings until our future glorious new beginning when we will receive fully functional resurrected bodies. The story of that creation sequence is primarily an account of the workings of the Savior's Atonement—of his bringing chaos into cosmos.

The great plan of redemption that was implemented by the Savior was designed to answer the needs of both the intelligences and of their spiritual and physical bodies—it would bring them into perfection together, thus bringing universal cosmos out of universal chaos.

Both had to be accomplished together because each was dependent on the other. As the Lord explained:

33 For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy;

34 And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy.

35 The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple (D&C 93:33-35).

All material element must be brought into a perfection that is consistent with the perfection of the intelligence who inhabit it. Lehi understood that and taught:

14 And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon.

15 And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter.

16 Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself.

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Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other (2 Ne 2:14-16).

For celestial persons, not just their individual physical bodies but the earth also must be brought to a celestial perfection—

17 that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it.

18 Therefore, it [the earth] must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory;

19 For after it hath filled the measure of its creation, it shall be crowned with glory, even with the presence of God the Father;

20 That bodies who are of the celestial kingdom may possess it forever and ever; for, for this intent was it made and created, and for this intent are they sanctified....

25 And again, verily I say unto you, the earth abideth the law of a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law—

26 Wherefore, it shall be sanctified; yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall be quickened again, and shall abide the power by which it is quickened, and the righteous shall inherit it (D&C 88:17b-26).

The question of creating physical cosmos (including the perfection of our own bodies) is entirely taken care of by the power of the Savior's resurrection. Similarly, the matter of spiritual cosmos is conditionally taken care of by the Savior's Atonement.

The ultimate rectitude of the Atonement's powers enables intelligences to seek and achieve perfection according to their own sense of fulfillment, wholeness, and cosmos. It can only come as the fruition of their own agencies—the product of their individual self-identification and the ultimate maturation of the laws of their own beings.

Perfection is a state of wholeness. Moroni described celestial perfection as being "holy, without spot" (Moroni 10:33). Paul described it as "holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). Mormon described it as being:

... filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure (Moroni 7:48b).

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The Lord explained:

94 They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and they see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fulness and of his grace (D&C 76:94).

In each of those descriptions there is no incongruity within one's Self. There is only perfect harmony—"holy [whole, complete, perfect] without spot."

If perfection is a state of integral wholeness, but one's self-definition is something different from celestial love, then there must be accommodation for a kind of perfection (internal unity—cosmos) that is different from celestial glory. And there is, as the Lord has explained:

28 They who are of a celestial spirit shall receive the same body which was a natural body; even ye shall receive your bodies, and your glory shall be that glory by which your bodies are quickened.

29 Ye who are quickened by a portion of the celestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

30 And they who are quickened by a portion of the terrestrial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

31 And also they who are quickened by a portion of the telestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

32 And they who remain shall also be quickened; nevertheless, they shall return again to their own place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received (D&C 88:28-32).

"Perfection" is a statement about a thing's wholeness, but need not necessarily be a reference to its value. Thus there can be a perfect diamond, a perfect crystal goblet, and a perfect glass window. Each may be "perfect" in its own right even though there is an enormous range in their respective values. This seems to be analogous to the three degrees of glory.

To say each is perfect only says each has internal integrity with no flaws. The value is found in the object that is perfect, not in the perfection of the object. For intelligences who

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define their sense of self in terms different from “the pure love of Christ,” there is a state of perfection and glory that is compatible with their self-definition. But for those who love as the Savior loves, the perfection of that compatibility is equivalent to eternal life. For the intelligences who receive celestial resurrected bodies, cosmos is perfect symmetry and harmony—in their physical persons, their personal sense of Self, and also in their celestial social environment. The Lord continued in section 88:

40 For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy and claimeth her own; justice continueth its course and claimeth its own; judgment goeth before the face of him who sitteth upon the throne and governeth and executeth all things.

41 He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever (D&C 88:40-41).

Since the success of the entire plan of salvation has always rested upon the Savior’s providing an opportunity for people to come to this earth where they can define themselves in an environment away from the overriding influence of the presence of our Father in Heaven, a path had to be provided so that people could leave his presence and then return again. But was to enter this world’s chaos.

To enable the intelligences to achieve a final perfection of self-identification and cosmos, they had to leave the presence of God. They were given bodies and introduced into new conditions of chaos. The first was that they received a spirit body in a world where they could learn and choose to obey. From there, the intelligences (now spirit persons) were introduced into physical bodies and into our present chaotic environment where the quality of our love can be challenged by avarice, advantage, and the desire to acquire worldly things and authority. Chaos in this world is our confrontation with seemingly never-ending choices and equivocal consequences. Its value comes from having maximum opportunity to choose. We live among people whose choices cover the full range of the possibilities of good and evil, so we have ample opportunity to see the consequences of good from bad, and to choose which of their options we wish to make a part of our own Self.

It is in the tensions and contrasts of this world that we are enabled to define what and

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who we really are. We do that by identifying and seeking to replicate—and ultimately to perpetuate—the experiences and relationships in which we find fulfillment and happiness. We are here to discover for our Selves whether that fulfillment is consistent with telestial, terrestrial, or celestial glory. For us to be able to do that, this world’s environment must be full of difficult choices with inexplicable tensions and contradictions. Yet those very contradictions are necessary to the success of the plan, as Lehi explained to his sons:

24 But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

25 Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy (2 Nephi 2:24-25).

Joy is neither sterile nor static. It is the essence of a fruitful life. Adam’s being a gardener forever, even in Eden, would have become very tiresome. Lehi explained:

22 And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.

23 And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin (2 Nephi 2:22-23).

A few verses later, Lehi explained that because they ate the fruit, they were placed in an environment that gave them the opportunity to be free forever:

26 And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given (2 Nephi 2:26).

It was not doing sin, but being exposed to the opportunity to do sin, that was important. Otherwise, there could be no self-definition. Some love the Lord and his children and find exquisite joy in that love. However, when people misrepresent self-

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gratification as “joy,” and seek after self-aggrandizement as “pleasurable,” they look upon the thing the prophets call joy, as tedious and unfulfilling. In the great plan, these people could not be forced to find joy in love:

12 Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God.

13 And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away (2 Nephi 2:12-13).

Alma taught the same principles, but in a slightly different way:

24 For behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved.

25 What, do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God.

26 And thus God bringeth about his great and eternal purposes, which were prepared from the foundation of the world. And thus cometh about the salvation and the redemption of men, and also their destruction and misery.

27 Therefore, O my son, whosoever will come may come and partake of the waters of life freely; and whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds.

28 If he has desired to do evil, and has not repented in his days, behold, evil shall be done unto him, according to the restoration of God (Alma 42:24-28).

For Adam and his children, coming to this world was an introduction to a new kind of chaos in a darkness we had not known before. Its experience is invaluable, but to remain here would be an eternal damnation, just as remaining in the Garden would have been utterly profitless. Therefore, Lehi assured his sons:

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5 And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil. And the law is given unto men. And by the law no flesh is justified; or, by the law men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever (2 Nephi 2:5.)

Our coming into this chaos would have been counterproductive if a way had not been provided for us to get out and return home in the full bloom of our cognizance. Therefore a way had to be provided so we could escape. But that way appears from human perspective to be into an even greater chaos—the natural consequence of mortal sin—to be entombed by the twin monsters of death and hell. Alma and Lehi each explained:

12 And now, there was no means to reclaim men from this fallen state, which man had brought upon himself because of his own disobedience;

13 Therefore, according to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state, yea, this preparatory state; for except it were for these conditions, mercy could not take effect except it should destroy the work of justice. Now the work of justice could not be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God.

14 And thus we see that all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence.

15 And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an Atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also.

16 Now, repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment, which also was eternal as the life of the soul should be, affixed opposite to the plan of happiness, which was as eternal also as the life of the soul (Alma 42:12-16).

17 And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God.

18 And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he



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sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil (2 Nephi 2:17-18).

17 Now, how could a man repent except he should sin? How could he sin if there was no law? How could there be a law save there was a punishment?

18 Now, there was a punishment affixed, and a just law given, which brought remorse of conscience unto man.

19 Now, if there was no law given—if a man murdered he should die—would he be afraid he would die if he should murder?

20 And also, if there was no law given against sin men would not be afraid to sin.

21 And if there was no law given, if men sinned what could justice do, or mercy either, for they would have no claim upon the creature?

22 But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God.

23 But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the Atonement; and the Atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice (Alma 42:17-23).

The escape route from this world through death was explained to Adam.

15 And I, the Lord God, took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it.

16 And I, the Lord God, commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat,

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Moses 3:15-17).

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Every word in that scripture is important. “And I, the Lord God, commanded the man, saying ...But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it.” God had to forbid it. The laws of justice and mercy insist that he do so. God could not have commanded them to eat that fruit, or even told them that it would be acceptable, because if he had, then he would have been responsible for their expulsion from the Garden and into this world. If he had been responsible for putting us here, he would have been equally responsible for getting us back. That would have left us without responsibility, without agency, purpose, or the freedom be our Selves. We would have come, not to act, but to be acted upon. So his instructions were, “nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee.”

What was true of Adam and Eve was equally true of ourselves. We did not leave the premortal spirit world because we were forced to come to this earth, but because we understood our Heavenly Father’s plan and trusted in the Savior’s Atonement. We came here because we chose to come. And now, having made that decision, we are free to make the decisions about what we will do while we are here.

In those same verses, we read the words of the very first covenant that our Father in Heaven made with his earthly children: “for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Because, from our this-worldly perspective, death is sometimes a fearful thing, those words are usually read as a curse rather than as a blessing. But they are not a curse, they are the words of the covenant that evoke one of the greatest blessings of the Atonement.

They say, “If you choose to go down into that dark and dreary world, then, after you have learned what you are supposed to learn, you may return. We are not compelled to stay there in this world because the Lord has provided a way for us to come home again—the promise is, “thou shalt surely die.”

From our earthly perspective, death is a blackened wall through which, if one passes, one cannot return again. But it is, in fact, a veil that brings us from this world of grey into a world of light. Alma added:

4 And thus we see that there was a time granted unto man to repent, yea, a probationary time, a time to repent and serve God (Alma 42:4).

Alma explained to his son:

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6 But behold, it was appointed unto man to die—therefore, as they were cut off from the tree of life they should be cut off from the face of the earth—and man became lost forever, yea, they became fallen man.

7 And now, ye see by this that our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord; and thus we see they became subjects to follow after their own will (Alma 42:6-7).

The promise of death was the guarantee that this earth-life experience is an empowering part of the journey and not its conclusion. Death is the way out of this world. It is a foreshadowing of something beyond—of continued eternal progression. Thus, death, and the spirit world into which it introduces us (like birth and the experiences we now share), is among the greatest blessings of the Atonement. But from a human perspective it is as dark and foreboding as a closing grave. Without the final acts of the Savior's Atonement, the odyssey of the intelligences who are traversing linear time and profane space to find perfection, would have ended in the eternal darkness of death and hell. Alma understood this, and taught:

8 Now behold, it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would destroy the great plan of happiness.

9 Therefore, as the soul could never die, and the fall had brought upon all mankind a spiritual death as well as a temporal, that is, they were cut off from the presence of the Lord, it was expedient that mankind should be reclaimed from this spiritual death.

10 Therefore, as they had become carnal, sensual, and devilish, by nature, this probationary state became a state for them to prepare; it became a preparatory state (Alma 42:8-10).

The fullness of the creation that began with the work of Jehovah could not be accomplished until death and hell are defeated by the Savior's Atonement. As in the great temple drama, when the Atonement was accomplished, cosmos, light, and life arose from all the benighted domains of hatred and chaos:

11 And now remember, my son, if it were not for the plan of redemption (laying it aside) as soon as they were dead their souls were miserable, being cut off from the presence of the Lord (Alma 42:11).

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Thus, the Savior's triumphs at Gethsemane, on the cross, in the congregation of the dead, and in the tomb of the resurrection—all of those triumphs together constituted the culminating acts of creation—of bringing order to chaos and establishing eternal cosmos. This could only be done by the Savior.

The prophets of all ages have testified of the Atonement, and the ancient Israelite Feast of Tabernacles temple drama brought its reality into sharp and tangible focus. Near its conclusion it portrayed the death of the king (and symbolically of all mankind) and showed that Jehovah himself would descend into death and hell, and he would rescue the entombed king. Psalm 18 recounts that event from the king's perspective:

- 4 The sorrows of death compassed me,  
    and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.  
5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about:  
    the snares of death prevented me.  
6 In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God:  
    he heard my voice out of his temple,  
    and my cry came before him, even into his ears (Psalm 18:4-6).

In that same psalm, the king tells why Jehovah had condescended to do this. Later, in the Beatitudes, Jesus cited this psalm as a reciprocal promise to those who are merciful to others:

- 20 The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness;  
    according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me ...  
24 Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness,  
    according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.  
25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful;  
    with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright;  
26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure (Psalm 18:20, 24-26a).

The Beatitude simply says:

And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (3 Nephi 12:7).

The Book of Mormon prophets had a perfect understanding of this principle of

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salvation, and they spoke of it often.<sup>822</sup> Lehi's explanation is one of the easiest to understand:

6 Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

7 Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.

8 Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise.

9 Wherefore, he is the firstfruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved.

10 And because of the intercession for all, all men come unto God; wherefore, they stand in the presence of him, to be judged of him according to the truth and holiness which is in him. Wherefore, the ends of the law which the Holy One hath given, unto the inflicting of the punishment which is affixed, which punishment that is affixed is in opposition to that of the happiness which is affixed, to answer the ends of the Atonement—

11 For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my first-born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility (2 Nephi 2:6-11).

The powers exercised by the Savior in the beginning were the same powers by which he defeated death and hell. Those powers are his perfection of character and his

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<sup>822</sup> See also, 2 Nephi 9; 2 Nephi 28:19-27; Jacob 3:10-14; Alma 5:6-11, 13:27-31.

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lovingkindness. These are expressed most beautifully in his own recitation of his prayer of Atonement. He said:

1 Hearken, O ye people of my church, to whom the kingdom has been given; hearken ye and give ear to him who laid the foundation of the earth, who made the heavens and all the hosts thereof, and by whom all things were made which live, and move, and have a being.

2 And again I say, hearken unto my voice, lest death shall overtake you; in an hour when ye think not the summer shall be past, and the harvest ended, and your souls not saved.

3 Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—

4 Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;

5 Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life (D&C 45:1-5).

Finally, we have this testimony from the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is part of *A Vision*, his poetic version of the revelation that is now section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

And while I did meditate what it all meant,  
The Lord touch'd the eyes of my own intellect.

Hosanna, for ever! They open'd anon,  
And the glory of God shone around where I was;  
And there was the Son at the Father's right hand,  
In a fulness of glory and holy applause.

I beheld round the throne holy angels and hosts,  
And sanctified beings from worlds that have been,  
In holiness worshiping God and the Lamb,  
For ever and ever. Amen and amen.  
And now after all of the proofs made of him,  
By witnesses truly, by whom he was known,

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This is mine, last of all, that he lives; yea, he lives!  
And sits at the right hand of God on his throne.

And I heard a great voice bearing record from heav'n,  
He's the Savior and only begotten of God;  
By him, of him, and through him, the worlds were all made,  
Even all that careen in the heavens so broad.

Whose inhabitants, too, from the first to the last,  
Are sav'd by the very same Savior of ours;  
And, of course, are begotten God's daughters and sons  
By the very same truths and the very same powers.<sup>823</sup>

Thus, as Lehi, Alma, and the ancient temple drama so clearly taught, all the covenants made at and before the Council in Heaven are fulfilled through the Savior's Atonement. Perfect order is accomplished in material things through the resurrection, and perfect order is given the intelligences according to the expansiveness or limitations with which they choose to define themselves. Perfect Love brings Perfect Love. All else is perfected in its own right. The only chaos remaining is for those who choose "to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received" (D&C 88:32).

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<sup>823</sup> The Prophet Joseph Smith rewrote the vision that is now the 76th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants in poetic form. It was published in the *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1843, and republished in the *Millennial Star*, August, 1843. The poem has features that are strikingly different from the canonical version. The poem is very personal, speaking only in the first person about Joseph's own experiences. One gets the impression that this version, although it is written after the same pattern as the D&C section, is a composite description of many such visions, including the First Vision.

# **The Real Feast of Tabernacles Temple Drama**

## **Third Nephi as an Actualization of the New Year's Festival Drama**

*Psalms are inserted into the narrative of this chapter because Mormon was, we believe, familiar with them as an integral part of the festival drama, but more especially as a way of trying to recreate the sense of the original Old Testament drama. Because we do not have a directive to teach us how the original festival was performed, it is impossible to know where some of the psalms fit into its drama. But it seems to us that by placing them in a seemingly appropriate place in Mormon's recounting of the drama in Third Nephi, we can begin to discover where the psalms might have fit in the drama as it was performed in the ancient temple ceremony.*

One of the strongest evidences that Mowinckel and other scholars were correct in their reconstruction of the last two days of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama is that their findings conform almost perfectly with the sequence of events described in the Book of Mormon<sup>824</sup> when the Savior came to America to establish his kingdom.<sup>825</sup>

The pinnacle of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama was the coronation of the king in the Holy Place and in the of Holies. It established and legitimized the enthroned priest-king, and his subjects as priests and sacral kings—all as children and heirs of God. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Mormon wrote his account of the highpoint of the story of his people in America he used as his outline the sequence of the coronation as described in the festival's temple drama. He repeatedly tells us that he cannot write a

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<sup>824</sup> That might be explained the Prophet Joseph' own doing if he had access to the work of those scholars, but, it must be remembered, the scholars' work did not begin until 100 years *after* the Book of Mormon was published.

<sup>825</sup> There is a biblical parallel. In Zechariah 14:19, where the prophet tells about the events of the Second Coming, the only part of the Law celebrated will be the Feast of Tabernacles.



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hundredth portion of what happened during those two days, so he limits the part he does tell us to the events of the festival coronation. His doing so constitutes a testimony so that we may know that he knows that Jesus is Priest and King. This portion of his story testifies to the fulfillment of all the covenants the Lord had made with Lehi, Nephi, and their descendants, culminating in the coming of Christ to his temple in Bountiful. Mormon clearly also intended to show that the Savior fulfilled all the promises of the eighth day of the festival drama by establishing a government that would rule an ennobled community in peace and happiness. Mormon shows that the Savior's coronation in America was an actualization of the festival temple drama's coronation ceremony, only instead of the Ark representing the presence of Jehovah, Jehovah himself was present and performed the ordinances that were only symbolically performed during the drama.

Mormon showed that Christ is the King who, having defeated the enemies of his Kingdom, came triumphantly to his temple and was recognized as the Son of God. The Savior then lay the new organizational foundations of his Kingdom in righteousness by establishing the Twelve as its leaders, and inviting all to come and be a part of it. Then he gave a profound lecture on the gospel law, with its related principles and ordinances. Finally, as King, he blessed his people and their children and provided them with the sacral temple feast of the eighth day. Then he ascended to his Father. All this had been represented symbolically at the conclusion of the ancient New Year's festival temple drama which had been celebrated by Israel since at least the days of King David. Now, Mormon shows that it happened in fact. Christ's enthronement in America became the fulfillment of the anticipatory ordinances and covenants of the New Year's festival temple drama so, at its conclusion, in accordance with the procedures of long established and readily recognizable law, *Christ IS King*.

Let us go back with Mormon to the place in the sequence of the festival temple drama, after the events of the Council, creation, and garden had been depicted; and the young king has been given all of the priesthood and kingship authority necessary for his success. Now he confronts the forces of all of the combined enemies of his kingdom, and he pleads for the intercession of his God. This intercession came in the reality of Third Nephi at the same time when the Savior hung on the cross at Calvary, half a world away.

In America, the enemy was "a professional class of high priests who conspired with chief judges and lawyers against inspired men and good government."<sup>826</sup> But it was not only the mortal people who fought against the Kingdom, it is also Satan, with whom they:

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<sup>826</sup> Sidney B. Sperry, *Our Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, 1948), 210.

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... did enter into a covenant one with another, yea, even into that covenant which was given by them of old, which covenant was given and administered by the devil, to combine against all righteousness (3 Nephi 6:28b).

Just as was portrayed in the festival temple drama, this combination hatched a plot to be carried out with such violence that God himself was compelled to intercede in behalf of his people. As the American Saints looked to God for help, they might have sung:

- 1 In the Lord put I my trust: How say ye to my soul,  
Flee as a bird to your mountain?
- 2 For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string,  
that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.
- 3 If the foundations be destroyed,  
what can the righteous do?
- 4 The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven:  
his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.
- 5 The Lord trieth the righteous:  
but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.
- 6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest:  
this shall be the portion of their cup.
- 7 For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness;  
his countenance doth behold the upright (Psalm 11:1-7).

In the festival drama they asked:

- 1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.  
They are corrupt, they have done abominable works,  
there is none that doeth good.
- 2 The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men,  
to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.
- 3 They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy:  
there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
- 4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?  
who eat up my people as they eat bread,  
and call not upon the Lord (Psalm 14:1-4).

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One can also imagine that in the drama performed during the festival, at this point the people might sing the 20<sup>th</sup> Psalm:<sup>827</sup>

- 1 The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble;  
the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;
- 2 Send thee help from the sanctuary,  
and strengthen thee out of Zion;
- 3 Remember all thy offerings,  
and accept thy burnt sacrifice;
- 4 Grant thee according to thine own heart,  
and fulfil all thy counsel.
- 5 We will rejoice in thy salvation,  
and in the name of our God we will set up our banners:  
the Lord fulfil all thy petitions.
- 6 Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed;  
he will hear him from his holy heaven  
with the saving strength of his right hand.
- 7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses:  
but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.
- 8 They are brought down and fallen:  
but we are risen, and stand upright.
- 9 Save, Lord: let the king hear us when we call (Psalm 20:1-9).

They might also have cried:

- 1 Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer:  
preserve my life from fear of the enemy.
- 2 Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked;  
from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:
- 3 Who whet their tongue like a sword,  
and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words:

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<sup>827</sup> For a discussion of the meaning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Psalm see Johnson, "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," 216-17; for a literary study of the 20<sup>th</sup> psalm see J. Kenneth Kuntz, "King Triumphant: A Rhetorical Study of Psalms 20 and 21," *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986): 157-76.

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- 4 That they may shoot in secret at the perfect:  
suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.
- 5 They encourage themselves in an evil matter:  
they commune of laying snares privily;  
they say, Who shall see them?
- 6 They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search:  
both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.
- 7 But God shall shoot at them with an arrow;  
suddenly shall they be wounded.
- 8 So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves:  
all that see them shall flee away.
- 9 And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God;  
for they shall wisely consider of his doing.
- 10 The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him;  
and all the upright in heart shall glory (Psalm 64:1-10).

Eaton understood that the Psalm was used in that way. He wrote, "Psalm 20 v. 2-6 the Psalmist addresses the king, expressing his people's blessing-wish for him. He anticipates a 'day of distress' (Psalm 18:7, 19) and desires that Yahweh will answer the king's cry and send help from the holy place."<sup>828</sup>

During the New Year's festival such cries for help seem not only to be cries of expectation but also reminders of the covenant the Lord had already made with the people and their king. Such covenants also suggest ordinances, for ordinances are often the token of the sealing or ratification of the covenants. In the New Year's festival there were apparently several preliminary ordinances to the coronation rites. Mormon mentions only baptism.<sup>829</sup>

- 23 And it came to pass that Nephi went forth among the people, and also many others, baptizing unto repentance, in the which there was a great remission of

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<sup>828</sup> Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 116.

<sup>829</sup> For an interesting comparison, see Widengren, "Baptism and Enthronement," 205-17.

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sins. And thus the people began again to have peace in the land (3 Nephi 1:23).<sup>830</sup>

The concept of repentance is central to the cleansing necessary for participation in the ordinances and covenants of the Old Testament. The intensity of that feeling is expressed by the 6<sup>th</sup> Psalm:

- 1 O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger,  
neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
- 2 Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak:  
O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed.
- 3 My soul is also sore vexed:  
but thou, O Lord, how long?
- 4 Return, O Lord, deliver my soul:  
oh save me for thy mercies' sake.
- 5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee:  
in the grave who shall give thee thanks?
- 6 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim;  
I water my couch with my tears.
- 7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief;  
it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.
- 8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;  
for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.
- 9 The Lord hath heard my supplication;  
the Lord will receive my prayer.
- 10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed:  
let them return and be ashamed suddenly (Psalm 6:1-10).

On the fourth day of the eight-day festival temple drama, the Canaanites symbolically attacked Jerusalem. They laid the city waste, destroyed the temple, and killed the king. Similarly, in Third Nephi—on the fourth day of the new year—there was also a great destruction:

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<sup>830</sup> We shall observe, when we get to a discussion of the Beatitudes, that “peace” may have ritualistic connotations.

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5 And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land.

6 And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder.

7 And there were exceedingly sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land (3 Nephi 8:5-7).

In the temple drama the people had prayed for help and the Lord had responded with the powers of heaven and the fierceness of an offended earth. In the psalms there is a prophecy of the Savior's coming. It is like the story told by Mormon. It reads:

1 The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice;

let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

2 Clouds and darkness are round about him:

righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

3 A fire goeth before him,

and burneth up his enemies round about.

4 His lightnings enlightened the world:

the earth saw, and trembled.

5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord,

at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. ...

11 Light is sown for the righteous,

and gladness for the upright in heart.

12 Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous;

and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness (Psalm 97:1-5, 11-12).

The 18<sup>th</sup> Psalm describes how God exercised his power in behalf of this people. The following translation by Aubrey Johnson is more vivid than the one in our King James Version:

In His Palace (*or* Temple) He heard my voice,

And my appeal came to His Ears.

The earth heaved and quaked,

While the foundations of the mountains quivered;

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Yea, they rocked because He was wroth.  
Smoke rose from His Nostril,  
While fire leapt devouring from His Mouth;  
Live coals came kindling therefrom.  
He parted the heavens, and descended,  
With a cloud beneath His Feet.  
He rode upon a cherub and flew;  
He sped on the wings of the wind.  
He made darkness His covert,  
His shelter around Him the watery blackness,  
Masses of cloud which had no brightness.  
Ahead of Him through His clouds there passed  
Hailstones and coals of fire.  
Yahweh thundered in the heavens;  
The Most High uttered His Voice.  
He sent forth His arrows, scattering them abroad,  
Even lightnings in abundance, making them resound.  
Then the bed of the sea could be seen,  
And the foundations of the world were laid bare,  
At Thy rebuke, O Yahweh,  
At the tempestuous breathing of Thy Nostril.  
He reached from on high, He took me,  
He drew me out of the many waters.  
He delivered me from my powerful enemy,  
From my foes, for they were too strong for me.  
They confronted me on the day of my calamity;  
But Yahweh became my support.  
He set me at liberty;  
He freed me, for He was pleased with me.<sup>831</sup>

After the storm, the darkness hung as a tangible shroud upon the earth for three long days. During those same days, a glorious light shone in the Underworld, just as the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm promised it would. The Savior reminded his friends of the promise of that psalm as

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<sup>831</sup> Psalm 18:6-19, translated by Johnson and published in his *Sacral Kingship*, 118-19.

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he hung on the cross. It begins with the words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It gives a vivid description of the pain he suffered, then the last third of the psalm testifies that he would fulfill his promises after his spirit left his tortured body.<sup>832</sup>

In America, those who survived the earthquake and the storm did not huddle in the darkness for very long wondering what had happened. They heard a voice recount the extent of the damage and the reasons for that day’s destructions:

1 And it came to pass that there was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land, crying:

2 Wo, wo, wo unto this people; wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth except they shall repent; for the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice, because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people; and it is because of their iniquity and abominations that they are fallen! ...

10 because of their wickedness in casting out the prophets, and stoning those whom I did send to declare unto them concerning their wickedness and their abominations.

11 And because they did cast them all out, that there were none righteous among them, I did send down fire and destroy them, that their wickedness and abominations might be hid from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints whom I sent among them might not cry unto me from the ground against them.

12 And many great destructions have I caused to come upon this land, and upon this people, because of their wickedness and their abominations (3 Nephi 9:1-2, 10b-12).

The voice continued, but this time it urged those who had been spared to repent and come to the Savior and be healed. The Savior said these had been saved from physical destruction because of their righteousness—*zedek*. The Hebrew word denotes correctness in priesthood authority, ordinances, covenants, and power—rectitude in temple things.<sup>833</sup> Nephi III was the prophet who had sustained them in that. The story Mormon does not tell is about the personal and institutional preparations necessary for them to become ready

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<sup>832</sup> See the chapter called, “Act 2, Scene 7, Jehovah Conquers Death and Hell.”

<sup>833</sup> For a discussion of *zedek*, see the chapter called, “The Meaning of *Zedek*.”



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for the coming of the Savior. Nephi III was the prophet who directed that as well. The Lord said:

13 O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?

14 Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me (3 Nephi 9:13-14).

In the drama, that invitation and its fulfillment were symbolic—a kind of dress rehearsal for the real thing. In Third Nephi, both the invitation and its fulfillment were the reality. Having issued that invitation, the Savior introduced himself. In his words he followed with remarkable exactitude the coronation sequences of the New Year's drama.

Without questioning the correctness of the translation, one wonders what the Nephites really heard. It was certainly not the English version of the Greek translation of his Hebrew name and name-title: "I am Jesus Christ." Jesus is translated from *Joshua/Jeshua/Jeshu*. Joshua was a rather common Jewish name and the one that was most appropriate. It was not only Jesus's given name, it was also a name-title:

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus [Joshua].

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David (Luke 1:30-32).

His name in Hebrew would be *Joshua/Jeshua/Jeshu* that means *Jehovah Saves* or *Savior*. *Christ* is a name-title that is the equivalent of the Hebrew *Messiah*, which means the *Anointed One*. Thus, when the Savior announced himself, he used name-titles that denoted his Eternal Priesthood and Kingship: "I am Jesus Christ—the *Anointed Savior*—the Son of God."<sup>834</sup>

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<sup>834</sup> Isaiah 61:1 speaks of the anointing of Christ in the pre-existence, and Peter testified that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 10:34-48).

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Then he spoke of his own pre-earth life—when he was with his Father in the beginning, when he created the heavens and earth and all things. He spoke of his humiliation and ultimate triumph, of his ownership of the Law, and thus of its fulfillment. He concluded by affirming that he is the light and life of the world, not only its beginning but also its end:

15 Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name.

16 I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled.

17 And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled. 18 I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (3 Nephi 9:15-18).

His introduction was also his eternal biography and the outline of his role in the

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Mowinckel wrote: “‘Messiah’ (Greek, *Messias*) represents the Aramaic *Meshiha*, Hebrew *ha-mashiah*, ‘the Anointed One’. ... ‘Jesus Messiah’, or in Greek ‘Jesus Christ’, were His name and His title in the speech of the community, until the term ‘Christ’ also came to be regarded as a personal name” (*He That Cometh*, 3). See Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 1.

*Encyclopedia of Mormonism* concurs:

Since Jesus Christ is the central focus both in Church devotion and in scripture, he is naturally known under many names and titles, including the following:

JESUS. The Hebrew *yeshua*’ or *yehoshua*’, meaning “Jehovah saves,” is transliterated into English as the name Joshua. In Greek, it became *Iesus*, thence *Iesus* in Latin and *Jesus* in English. Since Jesus was actually Jehovah performing saving work, his name *yeshua*’, “Jehovah saves,” coincides precisely.

MESSIAH. This title comes from the Hebrew *meshiach*, “anointed one.” Among the Israelites, prophets, priests and kings were anointed, designating them as rightful successors. Commonly, “messiah” referred to a figure awaited by Israel to be her king. Applied to Jesus, the title retains its full sense of “anointed” prophet, priest, and king.

CHRIST. Greek for Messiah (anointed one) is *Christos*, Christ in English. Thus, “Jesus Christ” joins a name and a title, and means Jesus the Messiah.

(*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols., ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:740.

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festival temple drama. That outline testified of himself and also of the importance of the teachings, ordinances, and covenants of the drama by focusing on its ultimate objective: “to them have I given to become the sons of God” (as in Psalm 2). A restatement of that introduction, written as the outline of the festival temple drama, might read:

#### Act 1

Behold, I am Jesus Christ [“the Savior Anointed”]  
the Son of God.  
I created the heavens and the earth,  
and all things that in them are.  
I was with the Father from the beginning.  
I am in the Father, and the Father in me;  
and in me hath the Father glorified his name.

#### Act 2

I came unto my own, and my own received me not.  
And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled.  
And as many as have received me,  
to them have I given to become the sons of God;  
and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name,  
for behold, by me redemption cometh,  
and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled.

#### Act 3

I am the light and the life of the world.  
I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

None of the ideas the Savior expressed when he spoke to the people would have been new or strange to those who heard them. The understanding that Jehovah is the Savior was expressed in the psalms (D&C 106:21<sup>835</sup>), and even more explicitly by Isaiah, who quoted the Lord as saying, “I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Savior” (Isaiah 43:11<sup>836</sup>), and “thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer,

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<sup>835</sup> 20 Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

21 They forgat God their Savior, which had done great things in Egypt (Psalm 106:20-21).

<sup>836</sup> See also: Isaiah 19:20; 43:3; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 63:8. We learn in D&C 138:42 that the person anointed in Isaiah 61:1 is the Savior.

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the mighty One of Jacob” (Isaiah 60:16). The first part of his concluding statement—“I am the light and the life of the world”—is expressed in two psalms:

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?  
the Lord is the strength of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1).

For with thee is the fountain of life:  
in thy light shall we see light (Psalm 36:9).

But it is best explained in D&C 93 where the Savior says:

2 And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;  
3 And that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one—  
4 The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men.  
5 I was in the world and received of my Father, and the works of him were plainly manifest.  
6 And John saw and bore record of the fulness of my glory, and the fulness of John’s record is hereafter to be revealed.  
7 And he bore record, saying: I saw his glory, that he was in the beginning, before the world was;  
8 Therefore, in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation—  
9 The light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men.  
10 The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him (D&C 93:2-10).

His final statement, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end,” is described

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by Isaiah in two ways. One is in terms of his kingship:<sup>837</sup>

6 Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God (Isaiah 44:6).

The other is in terms of his priesthood power:

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isaiah 46:10).

This concept was clearly understood by the early American prophets:

And Amulek said unto him: Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth, and all things which in them are; he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last (Alma 11:39).

The Savior then gave two sets of instructions. Both had to do with the temple and both may readily be seen as instructions to help participants prepare for the final acts of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama. He said:

19 And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings.

20 And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not (3 Nephi 9:19-20).

One can hardly wish for a stronger evidence that the Nephites knew and understood

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<sup>837</sup> Johnson observes that throughout Israelite history, “the king, or to be more precise, the ruling member of the House of David is regarded in the same way as the light or life of his people” (*Sacral Kingship*, 2).

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the meaning of the psalms in their ceremonies, for here the Savior himself just reminded them of two psalms:

The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;  
and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit (Psalm 34:18).

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it:  
thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:  
a broken and a contrite heart, O God,  
thou wilt not despise (Psalm 51:16-17).

As with the rest of the meaning of the festival drama, the Nephite pioneers had brought that understanding with them from Jerusalem. Lehi taught it to his son Jacob, in conjunction with his father's blessing:

5 And by the law no flesh is justified; or, by the law men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever.

6 Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

7 Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered (2 Nephi 2:5-7).

In his own magnificent psalm, Nephi expressed the same understanding, couching it in words that ring of the symbolism of the ancient temple drama:

31 O Lord, wilt thou redeem my soul? Wilt thou deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies? Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin?

32 May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite! O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road!

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33 O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness! (2 Nephi 4:31-33).

To sacrifice does not mean to lose something or to give it away; rather, it means to set something apart, to remove it from the profane and make it sacred. An example is tithing. Tithing is a sacrifice in that it is set apart to be used for sacred purposes. If one is to sacrifice a broken heart and contrite spirit, it does not mean that these things are somehow to be lost to ourselves, but rather that they are to be made sacred. The Hebrew word translated “broken” means the same as the English word. For example, if two pots are sitting on a shelf, one an earthen pot and the other made of plastic, and something bumps the shelf and causes them to fall, the plastic one will bounce, but the clay pot will shatter. The difference is not the height from which they fall, nor the floor they hit, but their ability to maintain their structure. The plastic pot stays as it was, the earthen pot is not a pot any more.

In the ancient world, the heart is the cosmic center of the human being. It is the seat of both one’s intellect and of one’s emotions. That is easy to understand because when we learn something excitingly new, we do not feel the idea in our head, but in our heart, just as we feel all emotions in our chest area.<sup>838</sup>

The plastic pot is as one whose attitudes, preconceptions, and prejudices are well established and will not change, like a kind of spiritual and intellectual rigor mortis. The earthen pot is as one who is still alive—whose mind is still open to new ideas and who has cleansed his emotions from the debility of prejudice. It is one who can see the world—and more especially the people in it—as God sees them, as they really are in sacred time. Thus the clay pot is broken, but its little pieces might be put together and restructured into something different. A broken heart is like that—subject to becoming different from what it was before.

The word *contrite* is usually taken to mean downcast, or humble, but the meaning is much larger than that. The Hebrew and English words mean the same thing: to rub, to pulverize, or turn to powder. It is what a hammer would do to the clay pot, or what a new shoe would do to one’s heel during a long hike. It is not something the pot can do to itself because it can only be done by some external force.

The spirit is the spirit—it is the Self that animates and gives life to the body. For one’s

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<sup>838</sup> That is true of all emotions except pity or empathy. If you saw a puppy hit by a car, you would feel it right in the pit of your stomach. Thus the phrase, “the bowels of mercy.”

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spirit to be contrite, it must be hurt by others. For one's sacrifice to be a contrite spirit, one must willingly take upon oneself the pain and sorrow of other people. An example might be when one hears a juicy bit of gossip and does not pass it on. Or when Junior comes home and tells dad he has just mashed the car. The Dad might dump the whole burden of the situation—its guilt and its costs—upon the boy, or he might put his arm around his son and say something like, "Did I ever tell you about the time I did that to my dad's car?" In the latter case, the father does not take away the responsibility, but he does take upon himself the burden of the guilt and the hurt. The car can be dealt with after the pain is gone.

A broken heart might be likened to the Savior on the cross when all of his earthly and physical desires were subordinated to his need to die and accomplish the resurrection. A contrite spirit was when the Savior suffered for all of us in Gethsemane.

In short, what the Savior requires of us is the same sacrifice that he made—but a sacrifice that is within the limits of our ability. To sacrifice one's Self is to set one's Self apart from the world and make one sacred. The sacrifice is accomplished when our preconceptions and prejudices are opened to the Savior's light so we see that others have real value and we extend our Selves to try to take away some of the hurt this world imposes upon them. To make that sacrifice is to open one's Self to the fulfillment of the Lord's promise:

26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

Then will the prayer of the psalms be made reality:

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God;  
and renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence;  
and take not thy holy spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;  
and uphold me with thy free spirit (Psalm 51:10-12).



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The ramifications of the Savior's instruction that there should be no more blood sacrifices and burnt offerings were complex and very far reaching. Blood sacrifices predated the Law of Moses and were lately incorporated into the Law. The first sacrifice was performed by Adam soon after he left the Garden.<sup>839</sup>

6 And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

7 And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth.

8 Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore (Moses 5:6-8).

Lundquist observed that, "the purpose of the sacrifice is to seal and to sanctify the covenant."<sup>840</sup> The Savior's atoning sacrifice had sealed and sanctified the covenant of the Father (Moroni 10:32-33). What remained—indeed, what always remains—were the sealing and sanctifying of the covenant on the part of the people. The sacrificing of animals had symbolized the Savior's act of ratification. Now that act was accomplished, no such symbolism was required, but the act of ratification on the part of the people remained. That ratification, too, had to be sealed and sanctified by sacrifice—in a manner similar to the way the Savior's was—with a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

For the Saints in the New World, if sacrifices and burnt offerings were to be done away, then that would require that they make significant changes in their temple and temple grounds. The great sacrificial altar that no doubt dominated the courtyard of the temple had to be dismantled and removed. Blood would no longer be sprinkled in the temple and the Holy of Holies, and incense would no longer be burned since those practices were a part of the sacrificial ceremonies. The barns to hold the sacrificial animals would have to be removed, and many of the tools and implements that had been used in the services would have to be put away. If those Saints were like modern-day Saints, they would not have just torn down the old structures, and left the empty places. Rather, they

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<sup>839</sup> Moses 5:5-7. Jubilees:3:26-27.

<sup>840</sup> Lundquist, "Temple, Covenant, and Law," 300.

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might plant flowers in their place, clean the temple, and beautify its grounds.

The second instruction the Savior gave when he spoke in the darkness had to do with making changes in the temple drama. But it also was not explicit and would require additional revelation before it could be implemented. The Savior said:

21 Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin. Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God.

22 Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved (3 Nephi 9:21-22).

Such a statement may, of course, be read as only beautiful symbolic words and not as instruction at all. But even so, the phrase “come unto me” may have had some implications about remodeling the interior of the temple. Mormon continues:

1 And now behold, it came to pass that all the people of the land did hear these sayings, and did witness of it. And after these sayings there was silence in the land for the space of many hours;

2 For so great was the astonishment of the people that they did cease lamenting and howling for the loss of their kindred which had been slain; therefore there was silence in all the land for the space of many hours<sup>841</sup> (3 Nephi 10:1-2).

After a long silence, the people heard the voice of the Lord speak again. Again he reminded them of the psalms and the concluding events of the festival drama:

3 And it came to pass that there came a voice again unto the people, and all the people did hear, and did witness of it, saying:

4 O ye people of these great cities which have fallen, who are descendants of Jacob, yea, who are of the house of Israel, how oft have I gathered you as a hen

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<sup>841</sup> The idea of silence has not only the connotation of awe and reverence but also a worshipful meaning. As Hayward noted, “The proper attitude of the highest heavenly beings in the face of the Divine Presence is a *silent* worship of God in their uttering the prescribed formula of blessing.” C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple* (London: Routledge, 1996), 34.

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gathereth her chickens under her wings, and have nourished you.

5 And again, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, who have fallen; yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem, as ye that have fallen; yea, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not.

6 O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart. (3 Ne. 10:3-7).

With great emphasis the Savior had repeated three times words similar to those he had also spoken before his death:

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how oft would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matthew 23:37).

His words echoed the promise of the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm:

1 He that dwelleth in the secret place [Holy of Holies] of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress:  
my God; in him will I trust.

3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,  
and from the noisome pestilence.

4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust:  
his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night;  
nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

6 Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness;  
nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday (Psalm 91:1-6).<sup>842</sup>

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<sup>842</sup> See also Matthew 4:6 and Luke 4:11. That is the same Psalm that Satan used to challenge him during his three “temptations.”

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On the seventh day of the festival drama, the king sat on the throne of God in the Temple. The throne was overshadowed by the great golden wings of the cherubim. Thus, to be invited to come under the Savior's wings was the same as being invited to sit on his throne as his son and heir (as in Psalm 2). That was the invitation the Savior referred to as he spoke in the darkness, and that is the invitation he would issue again when he came to his temple.

After the voice had spoken, the oppressive darkness remained for three days. When the darkness lifted, the scenes that followed might most easily be visualized as they would have occurred at the conclusion of the drama's coronation ceremony, when the darkness dispersed and the world was light again:

and their mourning was turned into joy, and their lamentations into the praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord Jesus Christ, their Redeemer (3 Nephi 10:10b).

Here, once more, Mormon interjects himself into the story, not in an autobiographical way, but in the much more typical "and thus we see" kind of way. He wrote, "And thus far were the scriptures fulfilled which had been spoken by the prophets" (3 Nephi 10:11).

Then Mormon again picked up the pattern of the temple drama. During the three days when the king was in the confines of death, the drama turned its focus from the king to the psalms that told of the Savior's life, death, Atonement, and Resurrection.<sup>843</sup> Mormon maintained that sequence of thought by quoting the prophecies of Zenos, and Zenock, and Jacob with reference to the coming of Christ (3 Nephi 10:12-17). Their testimonies provided a kind of conjunction that allowed Mormon's narrative to move from the events that began on the fourth day of the thirty-fourth year to "the ending of the thirty and fourth year"<sup>844</sup> without a break in the continuity of his thought. Even though a year had passed, he could now pick up the sequence of the festival in the same place where he had left it.

This Mormon did that with great grace and, typically, without calling undue attention to what he was doing. Accordingly, he tells us nothing about the remodeling of the temple and its immediate environs, which would have been necessitated by the Savior's instructions that sacrifice and burnt offerings should no longer be performed.

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<sup>843</sup> See the chapter called, "Act 2, Scene 7, Jehovah Conquers Death and Hell."

<sup>844</sup> 3 Nephi 8:5 and 10:18.

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In the festival drama, on the morning of the seventh day a new temple was symbolically re-created. In a great procession, the people walked around Jerusalem, measuring it with their steps and redefining it as sacred space. Thus, there was a New Jerusalem, a new Temple, and those who entered were a new Zion. The sequence of events in America followed that same pattern. The destruction began on the fourth day in both the drama and in the reality. After three days, that is, on the seventh day of the drama, Jehovah came to his temple. Mormon's account virtually jumps over the intervening time between the end of the darkness and the time the Savior came, so that if one reads it quickly, it appears that he is saying the Savior came to the temple almost immediately after the darkness dissipated, thus implying but not saying that it was also on the seventh day. Mormon then recounts the events of that and the following day as corresponding to the seventh and eighth days of the festival temple drama.

The remodeling of the temple was also the signal for the establishment of the new government. Mowinckel asserts that "together with the enthronement of the god goes the building and construction of his temple."<sup>845</sup> Lundquist explains why that is so. "In the Near East, temple building/rebuilding/restoring is an all-but-quintessential element in state formation and often represents the sealing of the covenant process that state formation in the ancient Near East presumes."<sup>846</sup>

The remodeling of the temple in Bountiful would probably have required a rededication. If such were to occur it should have happened during the next New Year's festival because that was the occasion of the dedication of Solomon's temple.<sup>847</sup> Snaith claims that "Solomon would have no choice as to the date when the Temple should be dedicated. He was bound to wait until the next annual feast after the completion of the building operations. It was in the proper month and at the proper full moon that the people

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<sup>845</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:132.

<sup>846</sup> Lundquist, "Legitimizing Role of the Temple," 180. Runnalls's assertions that the building or restoration of temples was such an important part of the overall enthronement process that Jesus' claim to the messiahship would not have been complete had he not cleansed the temple can readily be adapted to fit the situation described in 3 Nephi. See Donna Runnalls, "The King as Temple Builder: A Messianic Typology," in, *Spirit Within Structure: Essays in Honor of George Johnston*, ed. E. J. Furcha, (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick, 1983), 19, 30.

<sup>847</sup> 2 Chronicles 7:8-10. Widengren, "King and Covenant," 8-9; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 54. Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:127.

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would appear with their gifts.”<sup>848</sup> In Psalm 60 the people sing:

- 1 O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us,  
thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.
- 2 Thou hast made the earth to tremble;  
thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.
- 3 Thou hast shewed thy people hard things:  
thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.
- 4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee,  
that it may be displayed because of the truth.
- 5 That thy beloved may be delivered;  
save with thy right hand, and hear me (Psalm 60:1-5).

If that were true in America, as it was in Palestine, then the remodeling of the temple had been a necessary prerequisite to the establishment of the theocracy of 4 Nephi. If, then, the Temple at Bountiful had been remodeled it would also have needed to be rededicated. The most likely time for that ceremony if Lundquist’s statements hold true here, would be during the New Year celebration. For Engnell, the New Year festival was “especially celebrated in connection with the consecration of temples.”<sup>849</sup> There was good precedent for that, for example, after Solomon’s Temple was finished, he waited until the New Year festival to hold its dedication.<sup>850</sup> It is possible Nephi III would have felt it necessary to do the same.

Lundquist gives us another bit of good circumstantial evidence that this was the time of a temple rededication. He wrote that new kings would typically do five things:

1. Cite their divine calling.

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<sup>848</sup> Norman H. Snaith, *The Jewish New Year Festival: Its Origins and Development* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1947), 52. That might be a bit strong. One supposes that Solomon might have done what Nabonidus, king of Babylon (Belshazzar’s father), did about 60 years after Lehi left Jerusalem. He built a new temple and forbade the celebration of the New Year’s festival until the building was completed. Budge, *Babylonian Life*, 53.

<sup>849</sup> Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, 10.

<sup>850</sup> 1 Kings 8:2; Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 296-97; Snaith, *Jewish New Year Festival*, 46; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 54-58.

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2. Issue new laws.
3. Ordain officers.
4. Erect monuments.
5. Enter into a new legal order by way of covenant with a ritually prepared community.<sup>851</sup>

We do not know, from the Book of Mormon, of any new monuments erected, but the other four were exactly what the Savior did when he came to his temple in America.

Mormon tells us nothing about what happened during that intervening year. He spares us all accounts of the aftermath of the wind, fire, and earthquake. But he introduced us to one of the most important elements of the New Year festival: the establishment of a new order and a new world—“the prime element of the enthronement festival being a new creation.”<sup>852</sup> A new world must follow the destruction of the old. The central feature of that new creation must be a temple, as Lundquist explained:

A community is made cosmic through the foundation of the temple. The elaborate ritual, architectural, and building traditions that lie behind temple construction and dedication are what allow the authoritative, validating transformation of a set of customary laws into a *code*.

The temple creates law and makes law possible. It allows for the transformation of a chaotic universe into a cosmos. It is the very capstone of universal order and by logic and definition creates the conditions under which law is possible. ...

Thus order cannot exist, the earth cannot be made cosmic, society cannot function properly, law cannot be decreed, except in a temple established on earth that is the authentic and divinely revealed counterpart of a heavenly prototype . ...It is the creation of the temple, with its cosmic overtones, that founds and legitimizes the state or the society, which, in turn makes possible the formal promulgation of law.<sup>853</sup>

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<sup>851</sup> Lundquist, “Temple, Covenant, and Law,” 293-305.

<sup>852</sup> Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, 34.

<sup>853</sup> Lundquist, “Temple, Covenant, and Law,” 299, 302.

## **The Savior Comes to America**

In the Old Testament portion of this book, we drew particular attention to the concluding events of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, whose purpose was an unmistakable foreshadowing of the final events of the Savior's life and coronation, and the establishment of Zion. But because the people in Jerusalem rejected their King, the final ceremonies of his coronation did not happen there. Rather, they happened after his resurrection and in America among the Nephites, where the sequence of events of the Savior's coming to America followed the same pattern as Moses's coronation on Mount Sinai. When Mormon began his narrative again, he tells us simply:

1 And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful; and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place.  
2 And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death (3 Nephi 11:1-2).

In this place, Mormon gives us no details whatever about who these people were or why they had gathered to the Temple. Perhaps he thought he did not need to. In one sense he would have been correct, because there is a good deal we can know about them without his telling us. Moroni filled in some of the details when he wrote:

7 For it was by faith that Christ showed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead; and he showed not himself unto them until after they had faith in him (Ether 12:7).

In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 93 lists the prerequisites necessary to see the Savior, and then follows that with a statement which sounds very much like the way the Savior introduced himself in America:

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;



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2 And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;  
3 And that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one—  
4 The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men.  
5 I was in the world and received of my Father, and the works of him were plainly manifest (D&C 93:1-5).

Additional prerequisites to seeing the Savior are emphasized in other scriptures. They include: One must be “pure in heart”; “follow peace with all men, and holiness”; and have the authority and the ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood. And to have seen Christ, one must also have been “quickenened by the Spirit of God.” One’s mind must be single to the glory of God, and “the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will.”<sup>854</sup>

Therefore, the people who gathered at the temple that day were not those who just happened to be there. Each individual, in his or her own right, must have been worthy to see the Savior. That fact strongly suggests that those who were present were there by invitation, that they had been spiritually prepared for the experience, and that no one who was not prepared had been invited. The next day, others would be invited to come also, but that does not suggest a diminution of the preparedness or qualifications of the people in either group. Those same qualifications have always been requisite. As Enoch wrote:

For from the beginning the Son of Man was hidden,  
And the Most High preserved him in the presence of His might,  
And revealed him to the elect.  
And the congregation of the elect and holy shall be sown.  
And all the elect shall stand before him on that day.<sup>855</sup>

Mormon reported:

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<sup>854</sup> 3 Nephi 12:8; D&C 97:16; Hebrews 12:14; D&C 84:19-22 & Psalms 17:15; D&C 67:11; D&C 88:66-68.

<sup>855</sup> Book of Enoch, 62:7-8, Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 2:228.

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1 And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful,<sup>856</sup> and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place.

2 And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death.

3 And it came to pass that while they were thus conversing one with another, they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.

4 And it came to pass that again they heard the voice, and they understood it not.

5 And again the third time they did hear the voice, and did open their ears to hear it; and their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came.

6 And behold, the third time they did understand the voice which they heard; and it said unto them:

7 Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name--hear ye him (3 Nephi 11:1-7).

This introduction is the same as that spoken many times by Heavenly Father.<sup>857</sup> It is also the same as Jehovah spoke in the second psalm, sung at the coronation services of the festival drama, when he declared that the king is a son of God.<sup>858</sup> Here, in 3 Nephi, the royal name-title “Son” is used in precisely the same way—as part of the coronation service in which Christ is enthroned as Eternal King. Consequently, the words spoken by the Father, “this is my Beloved Son,” would have been understood by the people to be an

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<sup>856</sup> For a discussion of the importance of the temple in the Book of Mormon see Welch, *Sermon at the Temple*, 16-19.

<sup>857</sup> Matthew 17:5; Mark 1:11, 9:7; Luke 3:22, 9:35, 20:13; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 1:2; 2 Peter 1:17; 2 Nephi 31:11; D&C 93:15; Moses 4:2; Joseph Smith—History 1:17.

<sup>858</sup> See the chapters beginning, “Act 2, Scene 9: The Coronation Ceremony in Isaiah 61,” 457-516.

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announcement that Christ is God, but it also would also have been understood as the ceremonial announcement that he is Jehovah, the King of kings. A whole series of psalms had predicted his coming, as Mowinckel has outlined:

Yahweh's enthronement day is that day when he 'comes' (Psalm 96. 13; 98. 9) and 'Makes himself known' 98.2), reveals himself and his 'salvation' and his will (93.5; 99. 7), when he repeats the theophany of Mount Sinai (97.3ff.; 99.7f), and renews the election (47.5) of Israel, and the covenant with his people (95.6ff.; 99. 6ff.). The mighty 'deed of salvation' upon which his kingdom is founded is the Creation, which is alluded to in a rather mythic guise (93.3f.).<sup>859</sup>

Thus the people in America heard the voice of the Father declaring that Jesus is his rightful Heir—Eternal Priest and King—“my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name.”

8 And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.

9 And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

10 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

11 And behold, I am the light and the life of the world (3 Nephi 11:8-11a).

The resurrected Jesus introduced himself with the same words he had used at the

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<sup>859</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:118. He defines “election,” as he uses it here, as “of the deliverance from Egypt, of the miracle at the Reed Lake and of the Covenant of Kadesh-Sinai and the victory over the natives after the settlement, in short *the election*.” *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:140. Each of the citations in this quote refers to the psalms.

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beginning of the three days of darkness: “Behold, I am the Savior Anointed...<sup>860</sup> I am the light and the life of the world.” Then he told them what he had accomplished during those three days while they waited in the dark:

and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning (3 Nephi 11:11b).

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## **The Savior’s Coronation in America**

When he joined the people who were gathered at the temple, it seems likely that he would have embraced some, then would have moved into the temple itself.

The people responded, perhaps automatically, in a way reminiscent of the way an ancient Lamanite king “did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth” (Alma 22:17).

12 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven (3 Nephi 11:12).

The scene that followed might most easily be visualized as it would have occurred at the conclusion of the drama’s coronation ceremony: as follows during the festival ceremony, the great doors of the temple were swung open, the veil before the Holy of Holies was pulled back, and the king was brought into the sacred chamber. The king—the adopted son and legal heir of Jehovah—sat upon the golden throne with his feet

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<sup>860</sup> The name “Jesus Christ” is an English translation of the Greek version of his name, so those words, “Jesus Christ,” are not what he would have said to the Nephites. “Jesus” is the Greek form of the name Joshua, which means “Jehovah saves” or “Savior.” “Christ” is the Greek form of the Hebrew “Messiah,” which means the “Anointed One.” So when Jesus introduced himself to the Nephites, what they heard was: “Behold, I am the Savior Anointed whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.” See LDS Bible Dictionary.

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“established” in the Ark as his footstool.<sup>861</sup> While sitting there, he gave a lecture in which he taught his people the meaning of the Law.

The Savior’s real coronation was probably like that. The Nephite Temples were built after the pattern of Solomon’s Temple,<sup>862</sup> so, as in Jerusalem, its Holy of Holies contained Jehovah’s throne, for “the throne in the sanctuary is considered as the image of the divine throne.”<sup>863</sup>

In Mormon’s account, this was not the dress rehearsal as it had been during the festival temple drama. The King was really Jehovah, the Eternal Priest and King of Israel. He had come to *his* temple. The Holy of Holies was *his* throne room. In it was *his own* throne. It is likely that the people who were present would have understood that what they were witnessing was the true enthronement—the reality for which the conclusion of the New Year’s festival drama was only a preparatory enactment.

When the Savior came to the Temple at Bountiful, we may suppose that he would have done precisely what the people would have expected him to do, that is, the veil before the Holy of Holies would have been pulled back, and their King—Jehovah-Messiah—the resurrected Savior—would have gone into the Holy of Holies and sat upon his own throne. If the room were arranged like the one in Solomon’s Temple, the throne would have been elevated above the floor, and there would have been a footstool there, a sacred box akin to the Ark of the Covenant, containing emblems of priesthood and kingship—perhaps the sword of Laban, the Liahona, the small plates, and other sacred symbols of divine authority. When the Savior sat upon his throne, his feet would have been “established” upon that footstool and his priesthood and kingship would have been acknowledged.

It was probably perfectly silent in the temple, but running through the minds of some may have been the words appropriate to this time during the temple drama:

6 Sing praises to God, sing praises:  
sing praises unto our King, sing praises.  
7 For God is the King of all the earth:  
sing ye praises with understanding.

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<sup>861</sup> For a discussion of the Ark of the Covenant as a footstool, see Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 210-11.

<sup>862</sup> 2 Nephi 5:16, Alma 16:13.

<sup>863</sup> Wensinck, *Ideas of the Western*, 55.

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8 God reigneth over the heathen:

God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

9 The princes of the people are gathered together, even  
the people of the God of Abraham:

for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is  
greatly exalted (Psalm 47:6-9).

There the people came. One by one they came before the Savior, knelt before him, embraced by the overwhelming power of his love; they would have looked up through the brilliant light that is an expression of his love and that defines him as God—and into his smiling eyes. Each one touching his hands and his side.

Looking upon him, they saw a man—real and tangible as themselves—yet his person was wholly different from their own. He was white beyond anything they could imagine or describe. The whiteness was not a quality of his exterior, but of himself. He was pure light, there was no darkness in him, therefore, he was not full of light, but he was light. He was not full of truth, but rather the personification of truth. He was not the expression of love; he was the fulfillment of love, which is truth and light. For that reason, darkness could not be where he was but by definition must have fled from his presence. Therefore all that were within his presence must have become pure as he was pure.

They were clean—not because they were innately clean—but because he had forgiven them of all their past sins and had accepted only their present repentant, humble Selves into his presence. Therefore, they understood that they were clean. In that came the greater understanding that if they were to remain clean they must forgive as they had been forgiven. They must acknowledge that which was good in others and permit them to leave behind their sins, as each one of them had been permitted to leave behind his own sins when he came into the presence of the Savior.

As they knelt before him and held his hands in theirs, they realized that they could not comprehend such unbounded magnificence. They looked down at his hands and sought to comprehend him; they realized that he is the pure embodiment of truth and light and love. They were filled to overflowing with his love, and they were not afraid.

As they knelt before him, perhaps each one, like Nephi, “bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet.” As they held his feet in their hands—washing them with their tears, then caressing his feet with their fingers—their fingertips would have reached back to the place where the nail had been driven through his heels and into the wood of the

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cross.<sup>864</sup> As each individual knelt there, within the unspeakable power of his love, their joy and their tears bore testimony to their souls that he is real—their fingers which touched the wounds testified that he is the resurrected God. Before leaving, some might tenderly wipe his feet with their own hair—feeling that to use anything else would be inappropriate.

Later, the memory of it would fill their souls with wonderment, for their finite minds could comprehend neither his glory nor the joy they felt in his presence. And their greatest desire was to be forever where he is.

Isaiah's words, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isaiah 52:7) call to mind that scene.

13 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying:

14 Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

15 And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come (3 Nephi 11:13-15).

There (probably in the Holy of Holies, and probably as he sat on his throne, with his

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<sup>864</sup> "In 1968, the bones of a crucified man were found at Giv'at ha-Mivtar just north of Jerusalem. These belonged to a man about 26 years old and 167 cm (5' 5 1/2") tall. The heel bones (calcanea) were still fixed together by a nail. An examination showed that the nail had first been hammered through a piece of Pistacia or Acacia wood and then through both heel bones before entering the cross made of olive wood. The lower leg bones were broken. There was the mark of a nail on one of the lower right arm bones (radius.)

"The nails were probably put through a plaque of wood to stop them tearing through the flesh. The weight of the body would have pulled the arm nails up the forearm to the wrist. The legs were broken against the side of the cross. All the weight of the victim's body would be on the arms causing death by suffocation." Peter Connolly, *A History of the Jewish People in the Times of Jesus from Herod the Great to Masada* (New York: Peter Bedrick, 1983), 51.

See also illustration on page 48 of: Jodi Magness, "What did Jesus' Tomb Look Like?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32, 1 (January/February, 2006): 38-49, 70.

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feet established upon the sacred box, elevated above the ground so the people could touch them conveniently), one by one (procession-like) twenty-five hundred people filed past him, and each touched his hands, his side, and his feet, obtaining for themselves a sure testimony of the reality of his divinity and of his resurrection. Then the people responded just as they did in the ceremonies described in King Benjamin's festival drama. They spoke in unison, in a declaration of belief that rings true as a covenant of fidelity.

16 And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying:

17 Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him (3 Nephi 11:16-17).<sup>865</sup>

It is significant that, when all who were present at the Bountiful Temple had seen, touched, and knew, then the shout of Hosanna resounded through the temple. Perhaps the people may also have sung:

22 The stone which the builders refused  
is become the head stone of the corner.

23 This is the Lord's doing;  
it is marvellous in our eyes.

24 This is the day which the Lord hath made;  
we will rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord,  
I beseech thee, send now prosperity.

26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord:  
we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.

27 God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light:  
bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.

28 Thou art my God, and I will praise thee:

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<sup>865</sup> See also: Hugh Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), ch. 19, "Christ among the Ruins," 407-34. Johnson points out that the word translated "save now," which he translates, "grant salvation," "has been made familiar through the Greek of the New Testament as 'Hosanna!'" Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 126-27. See "handle something" in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 120.



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thou art my God, I will exalt thee.  
29 O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good:  
for his mercy endureth for ever (Psalm 118:22-29).

Perhaps they sang other psalms appropriate to this phase of the New Year's festival. If so, then Psalm 7 may have been among them. "So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes there return thou on high."<sup>866</sup> Perhaps the people also sang this "enthronement Psalm"<sup>867</sup>:

1 The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble:  
he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.  
2 The Lord is great in Zion;  
and he is high above all the people.  
3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name;  
for it is holy.  
4 The king's strength also loveth judgment;  
thou dost establish equity,  
thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.  
5 Exalt ye the Lord our God,  
and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.  
6 Moses and Aaron among his priests,  
and Samuel among them that call upon his name;  
they called upon the Lord, and he answered them.  
7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar:  
they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them.  
8 Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God:  
thou wast a God that forgavest them,  
though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.  
9 Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill;

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<sup>866</sup> Psalm 7:7.

<sup>867</sup> Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 70.

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for the Lord our God is holy (Psalm 99:1-9).<sup>868</sup>

Then Jesus, their King, did exactly what Jehovah was represented as doing during the temple drama. He appointed a new ruler to represent himself in his sacral kingdom. In the drama, Jehovah appointed the king; but here, in reality, it was the resurrected Christ who appointed Nephi and the others of the Twelve:

18 And it came to pass that he spake unto Nephi (for Nephi was among the multitude) and he commanded him that he should come forth.

19 And Nephi arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet.

20 And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood before him.

21 And the Lord said unto him: I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven. ...

41 Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth (3 Nephi 11:18-21, 41).

When the Savior came to the temple, he made the Twelve the leaders of the church and apparently the heads of the governing body of a new theocracy. Lundquist wrote that a temple's building, rebuilding, or restoring was essential to the legitimizing of a new government.<sup>869</sup>

Whether the people had come for a temple dedication we can only conjecture. However, what we can know, is that the Savior used this occasion to establish a new government for his kingdom. The next thing he did also followed the pattern of the drama.

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<sup>868</sup> Johnson's comment about the 99th Psalm is relevant here:

"The point of view which the Psalm reveals is thus perfectly clear, and may be summed up by saying that, after the long vicissitudes of the Wandering and the Settlement, Yahweh is now firmly established in Zion, where, manifesting His presence as 'He that is seated on the cherubim' through the instrumentality of the Ark, He is to rule over the earth as the universal King; and, what is more, the achievement of justice and righteousness amongst His own chosen people is to be the guarantee of His actual presence as a King who is resolved that His rule shall be just and equitable" (Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 71-72).

<sup>869</sup> Lundquist, "Legitimizing Role of the Temple," 179-235.

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Just as at the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, apparently while Jesus was sitting on his throne, he delivered an address to the people. In 3Nephi, the text of the sermon the resurrected Christ spoke is in two parts: the Beatitudes were a synopsis of the whole meaning of the ancient temple rites, and the remainder of the American Sermon on the Mount was a review of the temple covenants and a very practical statement about how one might live them—the object of the rites and the object of the sermon being the same.<sup>870</sup>

Again Jesus did what they would have anticipated he might do. In the festival after the coronation, the seventh day concluded with rejoicing and feasting—as did this day. When Jesus had finished teaching, “Jesus commanded his disciples that they should bring forth some bread and wine unto him.” When they brought it, he blessed it and caused that there was enough for the disciples and all the multitude to eat “until they were filled”:

1 And it came to pass that Jesus commanded his disciples that they should bring forth some bread and wine unto him.

2 And while they were gone for bread and wine, he commanded the multitude that they should sit themselves down upon the earth.

3 And when the disciples had come with bread and wine, he took of the bread and brake and blessed it; and he gave unto the disciples and commanded that they should eat.

4 And when they had eaten and were filled, he commanded that they should give unto the multitude.

5 And when the multitude had eaten and were filled, he said unto the disciples: Behold there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break bread and bless it and give it unto the people of my church, unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name (3 Nephi 18:1-5).

The following day was like the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama. The Savior came to them, and again he did what the ritual of the temple drama said the king would do. On that day there was a great feast, and all the food was provided by the king himself. It represented his power and authority to rule with generosity, equity, justice, and mercy. Symbolically, in the drama this was a return to paradise where the people might eat freely of the fruit of the tree of life.

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<sup>870</sup> The sermon is discussed in the next chapters.

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In his account, Mormon made a point of telling us that the events of this day followed that same pattern. Jesus himself provided the food for the entire multitude:

6 Now, there had been no bread, neither wine, brought by the disciples, neither by the multitude;  
7 But he truly gave unto them bread to eat, and also wine to drink (3 Nephi 20:6-7).

This bread and wine did, in fact, represent the fruit of the tree of life and the waters of life, as the Savior explained:

8 And he said unto them: He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled (3 Nephi 20:8).

The symbolism was unmistakable. The Savior had symbolically—and literally—reintroduced the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve back into their paradisiacal Garden home, where they could be in God’s presence and eat freely of the fruit of the tree of life and drink from the river of the waters of life.

During his stay with the Nephites, their Savior-King had actualized the final events of the festival drama by instituting a new age—a time of peace and prosperity that endured for much of the next 200 years.

There is one more detail in Mormon’s account that rings with singular significance. He tells us that on each of the two occasions when Jesus came to the multitude, he was dressed differently. The first time:

And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them (3 Nephi 11:8).

The next day, when he came again, he did not wear a robe (singular), but garments (plural):

25 And it came to pass that Jesus blessed them as they did pray unto him; and his

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countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof (3 Nephi 19:25).

Mormon does not explain the difference; he only mentions it in passing. However, it may be that the different clothing was appropriate for the different occasions. The first day (equivalent to day seven of the festival drama) was the day of coronation, when Christ not only acted the part of the newly anointed king but also established Nephi and the others of the Twelve as sacral priests and kings. The next day, like the eighth day in the temple drama, was a day of celebration, ushering in a new age when the king had established peace and prosperity. It is possible that his “garments” were appropriate to such a celebration.

As one considers both the events of the Savior’s coming to America and the concluding events of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, one realizes that the correlation between them is much too close to be a coincidence—and since the Prophet Joseph could not have known the details of the ancient festival from any source except Mormon’s gold plates, this account of the Savior’s coronation as the Eternal King of the newly established era of peace is another strong academic testimony of the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon as an ancient book.

Thus the story itself bears witness that the authors of the Book of Mormon were privy to all the sacred rites and ordinances which were necessary to salvation. It appears that Mormon’s purpose as editor of the volume was to use the pattern of the New Year’s enthronement festival as one more testimony that Jesus *is* King, that he *is* the Anointed Savior and the Only Begotten Son of the Living God. The account in 3 Nephi is a testimony of the Savior and an account of the precision and rectitude of the events of his American coronation.

As already observed, the great Bible scholars of the last century believed that the ancient coronation ceremony was about the people as well as about the king and queen. When the king was anointed and adopted as a child of God, that ordinance symbolically represented the anointing and adoption of each individual who participated in the ceremony. Ultimately, perhaps the best evidence that they were correct in that belief is the way Mormon reports the beginning of the Savior’s lecture on the Law and the gospel:

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1 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve), and he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them. ... (3 Nephi 12:1).

The point here is that the Savior had only just been giving specific instructions to Nephi and the Twelve, but when he gave the coronation lecture, he addressed the entire multitude.

The lecture began with the Beatitudes. There are several differences between the Beatitudes in the Bible and those in the Book of Mormon. One of the most often repeated differences is the use of the word *all*. An example is Matthew’s “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” There, “peacemakers” may be read as a generic characteristic. But in the Book of Mormon’s “And blessed are *all* the peacemakers ...” with the word *all* focusing on each individual. “Peacemakers” may be a generic term, but “all peacemakers” separates those in the group into individual persons—and it is as individuals that “they shall be called [named] the children of God.” That is a very significant difference.

The other most frequently found difference is that the Matthew Beatitudes are several loosely connected sayings that some scholars believe were put in their present form by a later editor. But in 3 Nephi each one begins with the word “yea” or “and.” Those words are conjunctions that string the Beatitudes into a single coherent and sequential statement—emphasizing that the Beatitudes are to be understood as a unit—and that the sequence it represents is for *all* the people, reminding his audience that these are the personal requisites of eternal priesthood and sacral kingship.

## The Savior's Coronation Sermon

*(For the sake of clarity, we use the word "Beatitudes" to include all of verses 1 through 16 in 3 Nephi 12. They begin "Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve" and conclude, "Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.")*

### The Beatitudes: "In the state of the gods"

One of the most interesting examples of Joseph Smith's statement, "We believe the Bible to be the word of God so far as it is translated correctly," is found in the *Anchor Bible's* very scholarly where a whole volume or more is devoted to each biblical book. The book of Matthew, which contains many quotes from the Old Testament, has two author/translators, W. F. Albright, a distinguished Old Testament scholar, and C. S. Mann, an equally distinguished New Testament scholar. This is the way they translated the Beatitudes:

3 Fortunate are the humble in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. 4 Fortunate are those who mourn, for they shall be consoled. 5 Fortunate are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Fortunate are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 Fortunate are the merciful, [and so on].

In a footnote, they explain why they chose the word *fortunate*:

3.*Fortunate*. The word in Greek was used in classical times [to mean] of the state of the gods in contrast to men. The usual English "blessed" has more and more come to have liturgical or ecclesiastical overtones, and we have chosen "fortunate" as being the best translation available to us.<sup>871</sup> Third Nephi uses the same language as the King James Version: "Blessed are all the meek for they

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<sup>871</sup> W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible, Matthew* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971), 45.

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shall inherit the earth.” It does not jar its first-time readers with language that stretches their understanding too far. It is important that Joseph used the same word in the Book of Mormon that is in the King James Matthew, because it lets us compare the Bible and the Book of Mormon with confidence and know that the Book of Mormon carries the same understanding as the Bible. It is also important that these two scholars have clarified what the Bible actually says—and therefore what the Savior said to the people at Bountiful. The thing that is so interesting about the clarification in their footnote is that these world-class scholars knew what the Greek word means—“in the state of the gods”—but they did not believe Jesus could have meant that, so they came up with a watered-down word—“fortunate” —because that made more sense to them. Then, consistent with their training as scholars, they put the real meaning in a footnote, leaving LDS readers of the Book of Mormon free to pursue the limits of the meaning if they wish to, but without imposing it on them:<sup>872</sup>

1 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye

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<sup>872</sup> The words Joseph Smith chose when he translated the Book of Mormon are striking. For example, he used the word “blessed,” with the meaning in the Beatitudes, when he translated 1 Nephi. It was written in Egyptian characters almost 600 years earlier, and we have no idea what Egyptian word was used here. But there can be little question about its intent. In this example, the word *blessed* in 1 Nephi might best be understood as “in the state of the gods,” meaning the condition of the past, present, and future members of the Council in Heaven. In the festival drama, kingship began with a foreordination, extended through this life and continued forever. When the Lord spoke to Nephi, that one word embraced that entire continuum.

“And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed [in the state of the gods] art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, ...And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher [king and priest] over thy brethren” (1 Ne. 2:19-22).



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have seen me and know that I am.

2 And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.

3 Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 And again, blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 And blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.

7 And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

8 And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

10 And blessed are all they who are persecuted for my name's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 And blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake;

12 For ye shall have great joy and be exceedingly glad, for great shall be your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.

13 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.

14 Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of this people. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

15 Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house;

16 Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven (3 Nephi 12:1-16).

The Beatitudes—as written in 3 Nephi—are among the most complete and succinct statements of the ideas—not the events, but the ideas—of the Feast of Tabernacles temple

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drama that one can find anywhere in the scriptures. Most of the Beatitudes are very short quotes or paraphrases from the Psalms or from Isaiah. It is apparent that the Savior quoted these passages in order to evoke his listeners' memories of the entire passage to which he was referring. His speaking the Beatitudes would have only taken about three minutes. For his audience it must have been an overwhelming experience to hear the Savior run through that sequence of ideas so quickly—while their minds were filled to overflowing with the full intent of those passages of scripture. As the Spirit conveyed the message to his listeners, their minds would have been flooded with a quick succession of infinitely powerful ideas.

The following discussion of the Beatitudes is not intended to be anything like an exhaustive one. Indeed, it is intended to be rather limited.

## **The Beatitudes in the Book of Mormon**

*1 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: (3 Nephi 12:1a).*

That is extremely important: Jesus had just established a theocratic government and had been speaking to the Twelve whom he had chosen. Now he speaks to the entire “multitude”—a congregation of “about two thousand and five hundred souls; and they did consist of men, women, and children” (3 Nephi 17:25). His introduction testifies that the blessings of priesthood and sacral kingship he was about to discuss are not reserved to the leaders but are instead intended for all the Saints.

**2 Blessed [enjoying “the state of the gods”]  
are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve  
whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you,  
and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power  
that they may baptize you with water (3 Nephi 12:1b).**

This first Beatitude is about obedience to the Brethren because they hold the keys of the Kingdom and no ordinances are “acceptable” without their authority. Each of the following statements by the Prophet Joseph help explain why that is true:

The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose.

It was the design of the councils of heaven before the world was, that the principles and laws of the priesthood should be predicated upon the gathering of the people in every age of the world. Jesus did everything to gather the people,

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and they would not be gathered, and He therefore poured out curses upon them. Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles.

It is for the same purpose that God gathers together His people in the last days, to build unto the Lord a house to prepare them for the ordinances and endowments, washings and anointings, etc. One of the ordinances of the house of the Lord is baptism for the dead. God decreed before the foundation of the world that the ordinances should be administered in a font prepared for the purpose in the house of the Lord. ...

If a man gets a fullness of the priesthood of God he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord. Where there is no change of priesthood, there is no change of ordinances, says Paul.<sup>873</sup>

Further:

If men would acquire salvation, they have got to be subject, before they leave this world, to certain rules and principles, which were fixed by an unalterable decree before the world was. ...

The organization of the spiritual and heavenly worlds, and of spiritual and heavenly beings, was [past tense] agreeable to the most perfect order and harmony: their limits and bounds were fixed irrevocably, and voluntarily subscribed to in their heavenly estate by themselves, and were by our first parents subscribed to upon the earth. Hence the importance of embracing and subscribing to principles of eternal truth by all men upon the earth that expect eternal life.<sup>874</sup>

*And after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed [enjoying “the state of the gods”] are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am (3 Nephi 12:1c).*

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<sup>873</sup> Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, 308.

<sup>874</sup> Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, 324-25.

There is an important distinction here. The Twelve had the power to baptize with water, but the Savior himself will baptize with fire and the Holy Ghost. When someone lays his hands on another person's head and says, "Receive the Holy Ghost," those are the words of a command. It is also an authoritative promise. The promise is that one may do so, but the command implies that one must learn how to receive the Holy Ghost. That comes through patience and practice. One learns, through faith and repentance how to listen to the Spirit; how to know that its feeling is different from all other feelings; and how to ask questions and receive answers that are confirmed by that feeling. Eventually, one is able to fulfill the command then, as with a mantle of light, one receives the Holy Ghost as a gift from the Savior. (We find that described in verse 6.)

Having spoken to and about the people who were present, the Savior then expanded his discussion beyond his immediate audience and speaks about those who would not be there to see him.

**2 ...Yea, blessed [enjoying "the state of the gods"] are they  
who shall believe in your words,  
and come down into the depths of humility  
and be baptized,  
for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost,  
and shall receive a remission of their sins (3 Nephi 12:2).**

This is not just a review of the first principles and ordinances of the gospel, it is a focus statement about how to prepare for what is coming next. Having a remission of one's sins is a fundamental and necessary step that is accomplished not just by baptism, but also through the process of receiving the Holy Ghost. Here the Savior explains that they will be "visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost." Moroni later explained that after people had "been received unto baptism," they "were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 6:4). What the Savior describes next is what follows in reality.<sup>875</sup>

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<sup>875</sup> While many of the Beatitudes are clearly quotes or paraphrases from specific Old Testament sources, others cannot be identified as such—probably because our scriptures are not complete. Verse 3 is an example of that. The phrase "kingdom of heaven" does not appear in our Old Testament. Yet we know it was familiar to the Nephites because it is often found in the Old Testament portion of the Book of Mormon. An example

**3 Yea, blessed [enjoying “the state of the gods”]  
are the poor in spirit  
who come unto me,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (3 Nephi 12:3).**

That Beatitude is easier to understand if one reads it backwards to discover first its object and then its method. The object is: “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” That does not say they shall be citizens of the kingdom, it says it is “theirs”—they shall own it. People who own kingdoms are called priests and kings. So, implicitly, the beatitude says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for they are the priests and sacral kings of the kingdom of heaven.”

To “come unto me” means precisely what the words say. It is not about just doing good things, it means one must go to the place where he is. The entire purpose of the drama of the New Year festival was to bring one behind the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the world. Understood symbolically, the phrase “come unto me” happened when one had passed beyond the veil and entered the Holy of Holies of Solomon’s Temple—God’s earthly throne room—to be in the presence of Jehovah. Taken quite literally it meant one must come to the place where Christ is.<sup>876</sup>

Implicitly then, the Beatitude says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit who came through the veil of the ancient temple to the place where they may meet God, for they are the priests and kings of the kingdom of heaven.”

The question now is “Who are the ‘poor in spirit’?”

Commentators on Matthew’s text insist the phrase has nothing to do with being impoverished. “Poor” does not mean lacking either spirit, spirituality, or worldly goods. There is nothing about poverty that precludes one’s coming to Christ. Similarly, there is nothing about emotional, spiritual, or worldly poverty that qualifies one to come to the

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is:

37 And I say unto you again that he cannot save them in their sins; for I cannot deny his word, and he hath said that no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore, how can ye be saved, except ye inherit the kingdom of heaven? Therefore, ye cannot be saved in your sins. (Alma 11:37)

<sup>876</sup> See Bednar, “Clean Hands and a Pure Heart,” 80-82.

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place where the Savior is, or to be anointed to become a king or queen, unless that “poverty” is acquired in righteousness and according to eternal law. The “poor in spirit” are not spiritually impoverished, but “those living in uprightness, or ‘perfection.’”<sup>877</sup>

The only kind of poverty that fits those criterion is acquired through sacrifice. “Sacrifice” does not mean to lose something or to give it up; rather, it means to make it sacred—to set it apart. Throughout the scriptures—even while animal sacrifices were still performed under the Law of Moses—the sacrifice the Lord declared to be most acceptable was that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. The Savior explained the meaning of this Beatitude a few moments later when he said:

19 And behold, I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled.

20 Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven (3 Nephi 12:19-20).

Earlier, when the Lord spoke to the Nephites out of the darkness, he explained that a broken heart and a contrite spirit is the acceptable sacrifice:

18 I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

19 And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings.

20 And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 9:18-20a).

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<sup>877</sup> Albright and Mann did with “poor in spirit” the same sort of thing they did with “fortunate.” They translated it as “humble in spirit,” then in the footnote they suggested an altogether different and more powerful meaning: they wrote that it meant “Those living in uprightness, or ‘perfection.’” That idea is remarkably close to enjoying “the state of the gods.” (Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 45-46.)

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The Psalmist had promised:

The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;  
and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit (Psalm 34:18).

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice;  
else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:  
a broken and a contrite heart,  
O God, thou wilt not despise (Psalm 51:16-17).

The Lord reiterated the same principle to the Prophet Joseph:<sup>878</sup>

Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness [*zedek*], even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit (D&C 59:8).

It is apparent that the phrase “poor in spirit” is a reference to those who have made the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit in the context of the ordinances of the ancient temple, and in preparation to entering the Lord’s presence there, and becoming priests and kings of the kingdom of heaven. Thus, one way of reading this Beatitude might be, “Blessed are those who make the sacrifice, who come to where I am, for they are the sacral kings of the kingdom of heaven.”

In the Beatitudes, the Savior will repeat the phrase “theirs is the kingdom of heaven” again. That repetition leads one to believe that the use of the phrase here in verse three represents the ancient tradition of first anointing one to become king, then later actually anointing him as king, which apparently is represented as occurring later on in verse 10.<sup>879</sup>

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<sup>878</sup> See also D&C 35:15; 56:17-20; 88:17-19. Twice Isaiah equates the poor and the meek with those who will embrace the gospel (Isaiah 11:1-7, 12; 29:18-19).

<sup>879</sup> For a discussion of the practice of anointing one to become king, then later as king, see the section called, “The Mortal World,” the chapter called, “Act 2, Scene 2: Anointed to Become King.”



**4 And again, blessed [enjoying “the state of the gods”]  
are all they that mourn,  
for they shall be comforted (3 Nephi 12:4).**

This is a paraphrase from Isaiah 61, which is a prophecy of the Lord’s visit to the Underworld during the period between his own death and his resurrection. President Joseph F. Smith saw in vision the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy. In recording his own vision, President Smith used much of Isaiah’s language:

While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful (D&C 138:18; compare Isaiah 61:1).

When President Smith identified the persons who were waiting to welcome the Savior, he included:

Isaiah. ... who declared by prophecy that the Redeemer was anointed to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound (D&C 138:42).

Knowing that, we have the key to understanding what non-LDS scholars consider to be one of the most perplexing chapters in the Old Testament. One of the things they cannot understand is why verse 3 contains the entire ancient priestly and royal coronation ceremony,<sup>880</sup> then concludes with a wedding ceremony in verse 10.

Isaiah 61 appears to be a commentary on the last third of Psalm 22, which is also a prophecy that the Savior will enter the Underworld and conquer death and hell.<sup>881</sup> Isaiah begins by recalling the Savior’s anointing at the Council in Heaven:

1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to

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<sup>880</sup> For discussion of coronation ceremony, see chapters beginning, “Act 2, Scene 9: The Coronation Ceremony in Isaiah 61.”

<sup>881</sup> For a discussion of Psalm 22, see the chapter called, “Act 2, Scene 7: Jehovah Conquers Death and Hell.”

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preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives [those in the spirit prison], and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord  
(Isaiah 61:1-2a).

In the Old Testament, that which is “acceptable” is performed in righteousness—*zedek*—with the proper authority, in the right place and the right way, using the right words, and dressed the right way:<sup>882</sup>

and the day of vengeance<sup>883</sup> of our God; to comfort all that mourn (Isaiah 61:2b).

This second verse is the one that was paraphrased by the Savior in the Beatitudes. The Isaiah version, which is still speaking of the spirits of the dead, reads, “to comfort all that mourn.” The Savior said, “Blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (3 Nephi 12:4, Matthew 5:4). There, as in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, comfort means to bring about the cessation of sorrow. In this context, to comfort does not mean to give someone an aspirin, a hug, and a warm blanket. It means to empower, and the empowerment causes one to be able to transcend suffering and sorrow.<sup>884</sup>

From President Smith, we learn that they, the spirits of the dead, mourned because they “looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (D&C 138:50). And from Isaiah we learn that empowerment is accomplished by the ancient royal coronation rites. The third verse of Isaiah 61 reads:

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion [to make the dead a part of Zion], to

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<sup>882</sup> Thus, the Lord instructed Sidney Rigdon, who had been a preacher and had baptized people before he joined the church, to go tell those people that the ordinance could now be done properly and with the proper authority. He said:

51 Now, I say unto you, my friends, let my servant Sidney Rigdon go on his journey, and make haste, and also proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the gospel of salvation, as I shall give him utterance; and by your prayer of faith with one consent I will uphold him (D&C 39:51).

<sup>883</sup> The Tanakh reads, “And a day of vindication by our God.”

<sup>884</sup> For a discussion of the meaning of “comfort,” see the chapter, “The Coronation Ceremony in Isaiah 61.”

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give unto them beauty for ashes [a ceremonial washing to remove the ashes], the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called [new name] trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified (Isaiah 61:3).<sup>885</sup>

This new name represents two important ideas. The first is the Tree of Life, and second is the principle of eternal family. Trees make fruit, fruit make seeds, seeds make trees, *ad infinitum*. Thus, it continues forever. The symbolic eternal repetition of this process is what Isaiah calls “the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.” The new name given to those who are “comforted” contains the blessings of eternal family, but this new name is not the only part of Isaiah’s prophecy that conveys that promise.

The symbolism in the next six verses of Isaiah chapter 61 describes the relationship between the dead and those who will do genealogical and temple work, sealing families together.

Then the last two verses of the chapter bring us back to the coronation scene. It is a sacred marriage ceremony. From the relationship between Isaiah 61 and D&C 138, we know that this wedding is also part of the temple work for the dead. In Isaiah, the bride and groom sing a hymn of thanksgiving:

10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels (Isaiah 61:10).

The last part of their wedding hymn is a testimony of the promised resurrection.

11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations (Isaiah 61:11).

The Book of Mormon lays specific emphasis on the fact that in this Beatitude the Savior is quoting Isaiah 61, for as it is given in 3 Nephi, it is a more exact quote of Isaiah

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<sup>885</sup> For a discussion of the coronation ceremony, see the chapter, “The Coronation Ceremony in Isaiah 61.”

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than the way it is recorded in Matthew (Isaiah 61:3 and Nephi 12:4 each have the word “all,” but Matthew 5:4 does not). Thus it is apparent that the Savior’s intent when he said, “Blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” is that those few words were an encapsulation of the ordinances and blessing associated with salvation for the dead and the promise to them of the blessings of eternal family relationships.

**5 And blessed [enjoying “the state of the gods”]  
are the meek,  
for they shall inherit the earth (3 Nephi 12:5).**

The Savior’s words “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” are lifted almost verbatim from the psalms. He is quoting Psalm 37:11, “The meek shall inherit the earth: and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” That principle is greatly amplified in the 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm, where one finds the most complete discussion of covenant-related meaning of meekness.

Psalm 25 also expands the blessings of meekness—and therefore of the Savior’s Beatitude—to the promise of an eternal family. It promises that not just the meek, but also the children of the meek, will inherit the earth. As we discussed earlier, it is in this psalm that we learn that the meek are those who keep their eternal covenants and are therefore meek before God. Here is a quick review of those parts of the psalm:

- 9 The meek will he guide in judgment  
[the quality of priesthood and sacral kingship]:  
and the meek will he teach his way.  
[“way” is a code word that indicates how one climbs the “mountain”  
and how one lives the covenants made there]
- 10 All the paths [same code word as “way”] of the Lord are mercy and truth  
unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.
- 11 For thy name’s sake [covenant’s sake], O Lord,  
pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.
- 12 What man is he that feareth the Lord?  
him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.
- 13 His soul shall dwell at ease;  
and his seed shall inherit the earth [eternal increase].

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14 The secret [*sode*] of the Lord is with them that fear him;  
and he will shew them his covenant [that is, the *sode* covenant, the one made at  
the Council in Heaven] (Psalm 25:9-14).<sup>886</sup>

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord explained that the earth was created so “the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it” in its glorified, celestial state:

17 And the redemption of the soul is through him that quickeneth all things, in  
whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it.  
18 Therefore, it must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be  
prepared for the celestial glory.  
19 For after it hath filled the measure of its creation, it shall be crowned with  
glory, even with the presence of God the Father;  
20 That bodies who are of the celestial kingdom may possess it forever and ever;  
for, for this intent was it made and created, and for this intent are they sanctified  
(D&C 88:17-20).

Thus, the words “meek” and “poor” identify those who will inherit the celestial glory. That use of “poor” is consistent with the Savior’s words, “Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” That use of “meek” is also consistent with the way the word is used elsewhere in the scriptures, as in Isaiah 61 where the prophet wrote that the Lord was anointed “to preach good tidings to the meek.” Joseph F. Smith quoted that verse, and added that among those to whom the Lord preached were “the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning to be rulers in the Church of God” (D&C 138:42, 55).

Meekness is not timidity; it is power. It is the power to do or say what the Lord tells one to do or say, without fear, boastfulness, belligerence, or contention but with humility, kindness, charity, and resolve. One of the best examples of meekness in the Book of Mormon is Abinadi, standing defiantly before King Noah while delivering the Lord’s message to him and his priests. In this case “meekness” is descriptive of the prophet’s attitude toward God (and probably toward Alma), but not of his attitude toward King Noah and his priests when he defies them to touch him until he has delivered his message.

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<sup>886</sup> For a discussion of Psalm 25, see the chapter called “Act 2, Scene 10: The King at the Veil.”

**6 And blessed [enjoying “the state of the gods”]  
are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness,  
for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 12:6).**

To “hunger and thirst after righteousness [*zedek*]” is the chief characteristic of the meek—those who remember (or are re-taught by the Spirit) to keep the covenants they made at the Council in Heaven.

In Hebrew tradition, as Adam and Eve left their Garden home, Satan and his henchmen began to bring their plan into play. They planned to “cast men into great distractions and pains in life, so that their men should be preoccupied with life, and not have time to attend on the Holy Spirit.”<sup>887</sup> But the Lord sent angels to teach Adam about sacrifice and the Savior’s Atonement so that Adam and Eve would know how to come home again. Thereafter, the great desire of the righteous was to find the way to “return to the Garden” where they could regain their garments of light, again enjoy the company of God, and where they could eat freely of the fruit of the tree of life and drink of the waters of life.

That also became the ultimate promise to the faithful Saints in New Testament times. John the Beloved concludes his Revelation with this vision of the celestial world:

1 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.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ...

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. ...

1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and

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<sup>887</sup> *Hypostasis of the Archons*, trans. Bullard, 29, lines 7-11.

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the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. ...

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. ...

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 21:1-2, 6-7; 22:1-4, 13-14, 16-17).

Alma understood that the fruit of the tree of life and the waters of life were both the blessing to the righteous and the product of their own righteousness. He said:

40 And thus, if ye will not nourish the word, looking forward with an eye of faith to the fruit thereof, ye can never pluck of the fruit of the tree of life.

41 But if ye will nourish the word, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow, by your faith with great diligence, and with patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life.

42 And because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.

43 Then, my brethren, ye shall reap the rewards of your faith, and your diligence, and patience, and long-suffering, waiting for the tree to bring forth fruit unto you (Alma 32:40-43).

The Savior explained how that is so. He first taught it to the people in Jerusalem:

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53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever (John 6:53-58).<sup>888</sup>

And he taught it more fully to the Saints in America:

3 And it came to pass that he brake bread again and blessed it, and gave to the disciples to eat.

4 And when they had eaten he commanded them that they should break bread, and give unto the multitude.

5 And when they had given unto the multitude he also gave them wine to drink, and commanded them that they should give unto the multitude.

6 Now, there had been no bread, neither wine, brought by the disciples, neither by the multitude;

7 But he truly gave unto them bread to eat, and also wine to drink.

8 And he said unto them: He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled (3 Nephi 20:3-8).<sup>889</sup>

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<sup>888</sup> See Matthew 26:26-28. Mark 14:22-24, 1 Corinthians 11:24-25, Moroni 4-5, 3 Nephi 18:1-11. It is interesting that Mormon does not mention that Jesus also ate and drank with his disciples. His apparently not doing so may reflect what he told his apostles in Jerusalem: “Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25).

<sup>889</sup> According to a number of sources, some early Christians thought of the cross as a tree of life, and that the Savior’s body was the fruit of that tree, and his blood was the waters of life. See Griggs, “Tree of Life,” 29. The *Gospel of Philip* says the cross was made of olive wood, in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson, 153.



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This doctrine was not unknown to ancient Israel. It is not expressed that explicitly in the psalms we now have, but the understanding is there. Psalm 143 is a prayer. Ancient Israelites prayed with their hands lifted toward heaven (“I stretch forth my hands unto thee”). Recalling the peace of the Council in Heaven (“I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works”), its author longs to be there again:

- 1 Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications:  
    in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.
- 2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant:  
    for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.
- 3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul;  
    he hath smitten my life down to the ground;  
    he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.
- 4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me;  
    my heart within me is desolate.
- 5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works;  
    I muse on the work of thy hands.
- 6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee:  
    my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land.
- 7 Hear me speedily, O Lord: my spirit faileth:  
    hide not thy face from me,  
    lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.
- 8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust:  
    cause me to know the way wherein I should walk;  
    for I lift up my soul unto thee.
- 9 Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies:  
    I flee unto thee to hide me.
- 10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God:  
    thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.
- 11 Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake:  
    for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.
- 12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies,  
    and destroy all them that afflict my soul:  
    for I am thy servant (Psalm 143:1-12).

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The 63<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is also a prayer—one that is simply running over with ancient temple imagery:

- 1 O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee:  
    my soul thirsteth for thee,  
    my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;
- 2 To see thy power and thy glory,  
    so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.
- 3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life,  
    my lips shall praise thee.
- 4 Thus will I bless thee while I live:  
    I will lift up my hands in thy name.
- 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness;  
    and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:
- 6 When I remember thee upon my bed,  
    and meditate on thee in the night watches.
- 7 Because thou hast been my help,  
    therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.
- 8 My soul followeth hard after thee:  
    thy right hand upholdeth me.
- 9 But those that seek my soul, to destroy it,  
    shall go into the lower parts of the earth.
- 10 They shall fall by the sword:  
    they shall be a portion for foxes.
- 11 But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory:  
    but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped (Psalm 63:1-11).

The blessing promised in the Beatitudes to “all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness” is that “they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.”

The classic—and probably the best known—LDS statement about the gift of the Holy Ghost was written by one of the Church’s foremost early poets, Parley P. Pratt:

The gift of the Holy Spirit adapts itself to all these organs or attributes. It quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections; and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to

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their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness and charity. It develops beauty of person, form and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation and social feeling. It develops and invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens, invigorates, and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being.

In the presence of such persons, one feels to enjoy the light of their countenances, as the genial rays of a sunbeam. Their very atmosphere diffuses a thrill, a warm glow of pure gladness and sympathy, to the heart and nerves of others who have kindred feelings, or sympathy of spirit. No matter if the parties are strangers, entirely unknown to each other in person or character; no matter if they have never spoken to each other, each will be apt to remark in his own mind, and perhaps exclaim, when referring to the interview—"O what an atmosphere encircles that stranger! How my heart thrilled with pure and holy feelings in his presence! What confidence and sympathy he inspired! His countenance and spirit gave me more assurance, than a thousand written recommendations, or introductory letters." Such is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and such are its operations, when received through the lawful channel – the divine, eternal Priesthood.<sup>890</sup>

In the ancient Temple, hungering and thirsting after *zedek* ultimately focused on the coronation ordinances of sonship. As the Holy Ghost comforts,<sup>891</sup> teaches, cleanses (Moroni 6:4), sanctifies (3 Nephi 27:20), and empowers us to transcend the sorrows of this world, its empowerment may imply a restoration and maturation of the garment of light. That seems consistent with the Lord's words to the Prophet Joseph.

33 For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing

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<sup>890</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Liverpool, F.D. Richards & London, L.D.S. Book Depot, 1855), 98-99.

<sup>891</sup> For a discussion of two Comforters, see Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, 149.

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of their bodies.

34 They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

35 And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

36 For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

37 And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

38 And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

39 And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

40 Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved (D&C 84:33-40).

To “be filled with the Holy Ghost” is ultimately to fulfill the command to “receive the Holy Ghost.” It is the necessary prerequisite to accomplishing the next step in the Savior’s outline in the Beatitudes.

**7 And blessed [enjoying “the state of the gods”]  
are the merciful,  
for they shall obtain mercy (3 Nephi 12:7).**

The focal point of Moses’s Tabernacle was the Mercy Seat, the throne of God that sat upon the lid of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. It is significant that the word that is translated “mercyseat” in the New Testament is the same word which is translated “atone” elsewhere, so the name of the Lord’s throne might also be the “seat of Atonement.”<sup>892</sup> That is consistent with Enoch exclamation, “naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne” (Moses 7:31). To be merciful is a primary characteristic of one who exercises in righteousness the judgment responsibilities of priesthood and sacral kingship. As the pattern for that, Psalm 98 is a celebration of God’s judgment in righteousness:

1 O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things:

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<sup>892</sup> Hebrews 9:5. Strong, “mercyseat”, 2435.

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- his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.
- 2 The Lord hath made known his salvation:  
his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.
- 3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel:  
all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
- 4 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth:  
make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.
- 5 Sing unto the Lord with the harp;  
with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.
- 6 With trumpets and sound of cornet  
make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King.
- 7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;  
the world, and they that dwell therein.
- 8 Let the floods clap their hands:  
let the hills be joyful together
- 9 Before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth:  
with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity
- 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.
- 11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;  
let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.
- 12 Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein:  
then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice
- 13 Before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth:  
he shall judge the world with righteousness,  
and the people with his truth (Psalm 98:1-13).

The responsibility and power that are implicit in the titles of priest and sacral king are to judge righteously.<sup>893</sup> As in English, the Hebrew word for judge means one is empowered to condemn, absolve, or to choose. It can also mean to establish a standard of excellence by which one may conduct one's Self and to help one adhere to that standard.

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<sup>893</sup> For a discussion of the foreordained responsibilities of the king and queen, see the chapters beginning, "Act 1, Scene 2: The Royal Wedding in Psalm 45."

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Thus, in anticipation of learning how to do that, the psalmist sang:

7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart,  
when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments (Psalm 119:7).

In his letter from Liberty jail, the Prophet Joseph echoed that sentiment. He urged the Saints:

45 Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

46 The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever (D&C 121:45-46).

And in section 88, the Lord explained why that must be so:

40 For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy and claimeth her own; justice continueth its course and claimeth its own; judgment goeth before the face of him who sitteth upon the throne and governeth and executeth all things (D&C 88:40).

Mercy is a necessary attribute of both priests and sacral kings. In the Beatitudes, the Savior has brought his audience to the place in the festival temple drama where the king has also shown that he—in the depths of this world’s experiences, the worst environment and the closest to hell that his eternal odyssey has brought him—here he has again shown himself to be worthy of his crown.

It is apparent that the Beatitudes are not just a list of desirable attributes and blessings. They are tied together as a chain with the conjunction “and,” making them a sequence of ideas that build upon each other. In that sequence, learning to judge with mercy is the crowning characteristic of the meek, just as it is prerequisite to what follows.

In the festival drama, this is where the people sing the 24<sup>th</sup> Psalm. Jehovah has

conquered death and hell, but in a less powerful way, the king has also. They come in triumph together to the new kingdom where there is a new Jerusalem, a new temple, and the people are Zion. In the 3 Nephi chronology, it is when the Savior comes to his temple, commends Nephi for his steadfastness, and gives him the authority of priest and king. To all the others who had gathered at the temple, it is the time when the Savior celebrates their integrity, and acknowledges them as priests and sacral kings. In his short recounting of the sequence of the festival's temple drama, the Savior reminds them of all of that when he says:

**8 And blessed [enjoying “the state of the gods”]  
are all the pure in heart,  
for they shall see God (3 Nephi 12:8).**

The 24<sup>th</sup> Psalm, which the Savior references in this Beatitude, celebrates the moment of their triumphal entry into the city and the temple. The Psalm reads:

- 1 The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;  
the world, and they that dwell therein.
- 2 For he hath founded it upon the seas,  
and established it upon the floods.
- 3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?  
or who shall stand in his holy place?
- 4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;  
who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.
- 5 He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,  
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.
- 6 This is the generation of them that seek him,  
that seek thy face, O Jacob.
- 7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up,  
ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.
- 8 Who is this King of glory?  
The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.
- 9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;  
even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

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10 Who is this King of glory?

The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory (Psalm 24:1-10).

The ultimate sacrifice that is the entrance key to the celestial world is “a broken heart and contrite spirit.” In verse 3 of the Beatitudes the Savior had focused on the “poor in spirit,” now his emphasis is the “pure in heart.”<sup>894</sup> To the ancients, the heart was the cosmic center of the human body and soul. It is therefore the seat of our emotions as well as our intellect. Luz explained:

“Pure in heart” or a “pure heart” is a Jewish expression which comes from Old Testament psalm piety. This means undivided obedience toward God without sin. “Heart” designates in Jewish usage not an internal area of the human being but the center of human wanting, thinking, and feeling. ...The reference to Psalm 24:4, i.e.,<sup>895</sup> that psalm which is sung at the entrance in the *temple*, also points to the inner unity of the concept of purity, not to polemic against the cult.<sup>896</sup>

As we observed earlier, to have a broken heart is to shatter our prejudices and preconceptions so we may revisit our thoughts and feelings and set them aright. When they are perfectly aligned with eternal truth and full of light, one becomes “holy, without spot,” (Moroni 10:33) Or, as Paul more fully explained:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (Ephesians 1:3-4).

The Savior’s reference in this Beatitude to the 24<sup>th</sup> Psalm not only identifies where, in the festival’s temple drama, he has brought his audience, it also shows that his intent in

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<sup>894</sup> For a discussion of “pure in heart,” see the chapter about “Blessed are the Poor in Spirit.”

<sup>895</sup> The text reads, “Psalm. 23:4,” but, given the description of the psalm in question, “23” is an obvious typographical error.

<sup>896</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 238-39.



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bringing them there is the same as in the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama. He mentions only the attribute of being pure in heart, but, as the psalm says, another necessary prerequisite to seeing God is having clean hands. In ancient Israel, and early Christianity, when one prayed, one lifted one's hands and spread them toward heaven, as a gesture of supplication, of praise, and with the palms open and upward to show that the hands were clean. If the hands were clean, the heart could also be pure. Psalm 24 is, as Nibley observed, "an ancient temple recommend." He explained:

When you turn to other places where we might also find these kinds of virtues mentioned, you also run into ritual or mystery religion contexts. Take the phrase *pure in heart*. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Both of those phrases—*pure in heart* and seeing God—are loaded with temple symbolism and meaning. The *pure in heart* phrase comes out of twenty-fourth psalm—a psalm that is very well described as an ancient temple recommend. "Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord?" That, of course, is to the temple. Who is worthy to enter the temple? Those who have clean hands and a pure heart. And what will they see when they enter the temple? The Doctrine and Covenants tells us those who enter the temple in Kirtland (this is D&C 97:16) will see God. These phrases are referring to temple-type experiences. Such is not completely lost, even on our Gentile scholars. You can find, for example, Hans D. Betz speculating about what on earth these Beatitudes should be understood to mean. His conclusion: The Beatitudes are the entrance requirements for the kingdom of heaven—his way of saying "temple recommend questions" perhaps. Georg Strecker concludes that the Beatitudes are "the conditions that must be fulfilled in order to gain entrance into the Holy of Holies." You need to do a little research into why they are saying these kinds of things, but they see this list of Beatitudes in a very sacred context.<sup>897</sup>

The Lord explained to the Prophet Joseph how important that is:

74 And I give unto you, who are the first laborers in this last kingdom, a commandment that you assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves, and prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and

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<sup>897</sup> Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1*, 136-37.

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cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean;  
75 That I may testify unto your Father, and your God, and my God, that you are clean from the blood of this wicked generation; that I may fulfil this promise, this great and last promise, which I have made unto you, when I will (D&C 88:74-75).

To his audience at the temple in Bountiful, the Savior explained that more fully when he said:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.  
22 The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.  
23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!  
24 No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon (3 Nephi 13:21-24).

In the gospel of Luke, he added this observation:

36 If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light (Luke 11:36).

To be pure in heart is to be holy—wholly one’s Self—in this earthly environment, it is to be again what one was at the Council in Heaven. From the time we first become cognizant in this world, we find that everything about it is designed to challenge what we truly are and to teach us to reject the law of our own being and become compatible with worldly darkness and sin. In contrast, to be pure in heart is to throw off all those parts of our acquired self that are not our true Self, so that what is left is only the person whom we really are. If, through the power of the Atonement, we can achieve that kind of perfection in this worldly environment, then we become “pure,” “holy without spot.” In the *Gospel of Thomas*, the Savior taught his apostles what they must do to achieve that wholeness. Jesus said:

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“When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty.”<sup>898</sup>

And in another place:

Jesus said: He who knows the all but fails to know himself, misses everything.<sup>899</sup>

Moroni's last words were devoted to teaching us that principle:

32 Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.

33 And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot (Moroni 10:32-33).

Then, perhaps to show us that it is possible, Moroni added:

34 And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen (Moroni 10:34).

When one's heart is pure, the light it accepts—and the light it reflects—is the light of Christ. When it is only that, one can be where the Savior is. Such people are called Zion.

From the beginning of this world, people have been instructed to build temples so they and God could come and meet together. The Savior's instructions to the Prophet

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<sup>898</sup> *Gospel of Thomas, Nag Hammadi Library*, 126 3.

<sup>899</sup> *The Coptic Gospel of Thomas, New Testament Apocrypha, Revised Edition*, 1:126, 67.

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Joseph to build a temple in Zion is a shining example of this principle:

15 And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it;

16 Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God.

17 But if it be defiled I will not come into it, and my glory shall not be there; for I will not come into unholy temples.

18 And, now, behold, if Zion do these things she shall prosper, and spread herself and become very glorious, very great, and very terrible.

19 And the nations of the earth shall honor her, and shall say: Surely Zion is the city of our God, and surely Zion cannot fall, neither be moved out of her place, for God is there, and the hand of the Lord is there;

20 And he hath sworn by the power of his might to be her salvation and her high tower.

21 Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn (D&C 97:15-21).

In a personal letter to his daughter, Professor James Cannon wrote about the pure in heart in a most meaningful way:

In the Doctrine and Covenants and in the Pearl of Great Price, there is some very curious type-setting whose purpose I do not know. For example, in Doctrine and Covenants, Section 97, verse 21, it says, “let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion— THE PURE IN HEART,” and the pure in heart is set in small capital letters. I like to think that this is more than just a description of the people who shall dwell in Zion. I like to think of this as a title, as a name, as a name for those who are pure in heart because they have promised to be so, because they have covenanted to be pure in heart. I like to think that we will be in Zion if we care so much about Zion that we promise ourselves and God that we will be pure in heart, that we are pure in heart by covenant. “Behold,” says the Lord, “if Zion do these things she shall prosper, and spread herself and become very glorious, very great, and very terrible. And the nations of the earth shall honor her place, for God is there, and

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the hand of the Lord is there.” Only the pure in heart will be there, because the Lord reigns there, and only the pure in heart can dwell in the presence of God. Zion will be very great and very terrible because only the pure in heart will feel comfortable there.

I want “Pure in Heart” to be part of my very long name. I want “Kind” to be part of my long name. I want “loving” to be part of my long name. I want “Hard Working” and “Responsible” to be part of my long name. I hope that we will make it very apparent to the people that we live around that we have very long names which describe who we really are and that those names will remind us how to behave from day to day. We want as part of our name that covenant which says that we are preparing to go to the temple to be sealed forever with someone else who has a very long and righteous name, in the presence of God, who has the longest and most righteous name of all, that God who has promised us all that is his if we but keep his commandments. We dare not let anything tear us from these sacred promises, these wonderful names that describe who we really are.

Each week we renew our covenant to take upon us the name of Christ. “Jesus, name of wondrous love, name all other names above.”<sup>900</sup>

In the Book of Mormon one learns that if one is to “be found spotless,” it is because he has been “cleansed by the blood of the Lamb,” “for there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins.” (Mormon 9:6, Alma 5:21, 1 Nephi 12:10-12, Alma 5:27, Alma 34:36, 3 Nephi 27:19)

This law is eternal; no unclean thing can enter into the temple’s Holy of Holies and be in the presence of God. But notwithstanding the surety of the conditions, the promise is as universal as the invitation is all inclusive. The Beatitude says “all” the pure in heart shall see God. Section 93 spells that out very clearly:

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am (D&C 93:1).

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<sup>900</sup> James W. Cannon, Orson Pratt Professor of Mathematics at Brigham Young University, in a letter to his daughter, Adria, May 22, 2002.

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In section 88 the Lord further explained:

67 And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.

68 Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will (D&C 88:67-68).

At the beginning of that section the Lord affirmed that this is not a theoretical, nebulous promise, but for some a reality. In the introduction to that revelation the Lord addressed those persons who were present when the revelation was given with these words:

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you who have assembled yourselves together to receive his will concerning you:

2 Behold, this is pleasing unto your Lord, and the angels rejoice over you; the alms of your prayers have come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and are recorded in the book of the names of the sanctified, even them of the celestial world.

3 Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise; which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John.

4 This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom (D&C 88:1-4).

This promise, as is shown in the sequence of the Beatitudes, is designed to bring peace. When the Prophet Joseph sent a manuscript copy of section 88 to his friends in Missouri, he called it “the olive leaf which we have plucked from the Tree of Paradise, the Lord’s message of peace to us.”<sup>901</sup> The promises that Zion, the pure in heart, will see God and be endowed with peace are real and powerful promises.

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<sup>901</sup> Joseph Smith to W. W. Phelps, January 14, 1833. See the introduction to section 88.

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In this Beatitude, as in the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, one who is pure in heart is brought within the ancient Temple, where he passes through the veil to enter the Holy of Holies to be where God's throne is. In the Inspired Translation of the Bible, the Prophet Joseph altered Psalm 42 so that it reads:

- 1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks,  
so panteth my soul after thee; O God.
- 2 My soul thirsteth for to see God, for to see the living God;  
when shall I come and appear before thee, O God? (JST Psalm 42:1-2).<sup>902</sup>

When the Lord elaborated on this promise, he did so in terms that have universal application. The Lord does not put restrictions on our blessings—only we can do that:

- 1 Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;
- 2 And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world (D&C 93:1-2).

All of this was explained by the Savior:

- 23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.
- 24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.
- 25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.
- 26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

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<sup>902</sup> The King James Version reads:

- 1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks,  
so panteth my soul after thee, O God.
- 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:  
when shall I come and appear before God? (Psalm 42:2).

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27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:22-27).

The peace the Savior gives is not a peace that the world understands. It is an empowerment.

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**Calling and Election Made Sure,  
Explained  
in the Epistles of Peter**

As though to explain to Jim and others like him how this can be accomplished, the Apostle Peter testified that Christ is the Lamb whose sacrificial blood purifies, makes clean, and prepares one to come into the presence of his Father. Peter explained:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren,

see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter 1:18-23).

In another place, Peter explained how it is done:

1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have



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obtained like precious faith [*pistis*.<sup>903</sup>] with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ: [like Mormon in Moroni 7, Peter addresses these words to temple worshipping Saints]

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Peter 1:1-4).

In these verses, Peter has identified his audience as temple-worshipping Saints. He now tells what they must do after they leave the temple.<sup>904</sup>

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue;<sup>905</sup> and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness [“reverence” in the LDS Bible footnote; one cannot hurt anyone or anything that one reveres];

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness;<sup>906</sup> and to brotherly kindness charity.

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<sup>903</sup> A *pistis* is a covenant with the guarantee of fulfillment. For a more complete discussion, see the chapter called The Meaning of Faith—*pistis*.”

<sup>904</sup> For a more complete discussion of 2 Peter, see the chapter called “A Meaning of “Hope.”

<sup>905</sup> “In ancient thinking, ‘virtue’ was closely tied to what seemed ideal masculine qualities: toughness, courage, simplicity of life, loyalty, piety, and contempt for suffering and even death.” Steve Mason, “Did the Essenes Write the Dead Sea Scrolls?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 34, 6 (November/December 2008): 62.

<sup>906</sup> In this verse, the King James Version uses the phrase “brotherly kindness,” but elsewhere in the New Testament that same Greek word is always translated as “brotherly love” which has a somewhat stronger connotation (Strong: Greek 5360 [first edition, 1894] reads: “**philadelphia**; *fraternal affection*: brotherly love (kindness), love of the brethren.” [Emphasis is in original).

This is probably significant. Righteous masculine virtues include priesthood, extended brotherly love, and charity. In contrast, righteous women enjoy the focused yet overriding feminine virtue that has a more

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8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5-11).

In Peter's sequence, the first four steps are about what one does for one's Self: faith, virtue, knowledge, and temperance. The second four are about one's attitude toward others: patience, reverence, brotherly love, and charity.

In the Beatitudes, the Savior had now brought his audience to that same place within the veil where "peace" is a gift of the Spirit. To have peace while in this world is to be able to transcend sorrow. It is the same concept as "comfort" in Psalm 23. To be a peacemaker is to enable others to share that blessing. The Savior then said:

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singular quality of charity than men have. In the eternities our Father's objective has always been to bring each of us back to him in the eternal family unit where friendship, love, and charity are the sealing power—timeless in both directions—and where each participates in the creation of endless lives "after their own image"—"as innumerable as the stars" in the heavens (D&C 132:30-31).

**9 And blessed [enjoying “the state of the gods”]  
are all the peacemakers,  
for they shall be called the children of God (3 Nephi 12:9).**

Inasmuch as most of the Beatitudes can be identified as snippets from the psalms or from Isaiah, one wonders which this Beatitude may have referenced. The answer seems to be the 37<sup>th</sup> Psalm. It is a promise of invulnerability to the righteous. It is also a perfect transition between the Beatitude that say:

8 And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God (3 Nephi 12:8-9).

The words that create that transition are:

11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. ...

22 For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.

23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. ...

29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.

31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. ...

37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace (Psalm 37:11, 22-24, 29-31, 37).

The other candidate is Isaiah 52, which is also virtually overflowing with temple code:

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good

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tidings, that publisheth peace [peacemaker]; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!<sup>907</sup>

8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion (Isaiah 52:7-8).

The easiest way to visualize people seeing eye to eye is to see them standing in a circle. Here they are singing, or perhaps speaking in unison. This seems to be a reference to a pre-exilic prayer circle. That idea would fit with Nibley's pattern. He wrote, "It is because each prayer circle is a faithful reproduction of the celestial pattern that impulses can be transmitted from one to the other by all who are in a receptive state; the thoughts of those in the circle are concentrated as in a burning glass."<sup>908</sup> Isaiah continues:

9 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God (Isaiah 52:9-10).

The phrase "the Lord hath made bare his holy arm" is apparently a reference to the expression of sacred fellowship shown in Psalm 45, "And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things," (v. 4) and Job 40, "Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee" (v.14).<sup>909</sup>

We get further insight into the meaning of this Beatitude in Mormon's great sermon in Moroni 7. It begins by Mormon's addressing his "beloved brethren" and declaring the authority by which he was "permitted to speak" these things. ("These things" are Book of Mormon code for the temple drama and teachings.) Then he identifies his audience as peacemakers:

2 And now I, Mormon, speak unto you, my beloved brethren; and it is by the

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<sup>907</sup> For a discussion of the meaning of this passage, see the chapter called, "Act 2, Scene 12: 'Establishing' the King's Feet."

<sup>908</sup> Hugh Nibley, "The Early Christian Prayer Circle," *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 69.

<sup>909</sup> For a discussion of this topic, see Todd M. Compton, "The Handclasp and Embrace as Tokens of Recognition," *By Study and Also By Faith*, 1:611-42.

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grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and his holy will, because of the gift of his calling unto me, that I am permitted to speak unto you at this time.

3 Wherefore, I would speak unto you that are of the church, that are [present tense] the peaceable followers of Christ, and that have obtained [past tense] a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord, from this time henceforth until ye shall rest with him in heaven.

4 And now my brethren, I judge these things of you because of your peaceable walk with the children of men (Moroni 7:2-4).

It appears that Mormon's sermon in Moroni 7 is a commentary on this Beatitude. The sermon begins by acknowledging his audience as those who walk peaceably with the children of men. It then teaches them what they must now do so they can reach the conclusion: "that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure" (Moroni 7:48). In his teaching, Mormon explains that faith, hope, and charity are the keys to attaining that end (We will discuss Moroni 7 in more detail below).

In the ancient temple drama of the Feast of Tabernacles, the day following the coronation was a great day of feasting and celebration, representing the time of eternal peace when Jehovah shall reign in heaven and on earth.

But in the Savior's Beatitudes, what follows the day of coronation is much closer to the reality of this world. He had also cited Psalm 25 and 37 to show that the meek were those who keep their eternal covenants. Now he reminds his audience that there is a burden—often a severe cost—to those who are the children of God. He said:

**10 And blessed [enjoying "the state of the gods"]  
are all they who are persecuted for my name's sake,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (3 Nephi 12:10).**

"For my name's sake" might be written "for the sake of the covenant." Because all new covenants are sealed with a new name, "name" and "covenant" can be interchanged in this sort of context without changing the meaning.

Here, he places persecution in juxtaposition with a second coronation ceremony. In verse three he had said, "Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now he says, "And blessed are all they who are persecuted for my name's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." These two statements suggest the

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ancient Israelite practice of anointing the heir apparent to become king, then later, after he had proven his worthiness, of anointing him again, this time as king.<sup>910</sup>

**11 And blessed [enjoying “the state of the gods”]  
are ye when men shall revile you and persecute,  
and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake;  
12 For ye shall have great joy and be exceedingly glad,  
for great shall be your reward in heaven;  
for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you  
(3 Nephi 12:11-12).**

The Savior had warned his apostles of the same thing:

- 1 These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.
- 2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.
- 3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.
- 4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you (John 16:1-4).

People who know—who really know—and who bear testimony of what they know, are often perceived by others to be very difficult, to be hypocritical, or even dangerous—men like the Savior, Abinadi, Nephi, the Prophet Joseph, and the local grocer who is not afraid to tell people about the restoration of the gospel. When the Spirit testifies to another person that someone is telling the truth, that leaves the other person with two options: he can repent, or refuse to repent. If he refuses to repent, then he is almost always driven by a need to prove he chose correctly. The only way to do that is to

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<sup>910</sup> For a discussion of the practice of anointing a prince to become king, see the chapter called, “Act 2, Scene 2: Anointed to Become King.”

show that the prophet was not actually a prophet, and the most efficient way to do that is to show that the prophet does not have the power to protect himself—so the persecutions! Ultimately, in many cases, this brings about the murder of the prophet, whereupon the prophet seals his testimony with his blood, and the persecutors are left to their own means to try to settle for some sort of salvation outside the realms of truth and righteousness. But the salvation they find, like their own souls, is mostly darkness.

**13 Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
I give unto you to be the salt of the earth;  
but if the salt shall lose its savor  
wherewith shall the earth be salted?  
The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing,  
but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.  
(3 Nephi 12:13)**

Some time ago LeGrand Baker wrote a short article that appeared in the *Ensign* called, “What does it Mean to be the ‘Salt of the Earth?’”<sup>911</sup> In it he wrote the following:

The scriptural phrase “salt of the earth” has come to mean many things. In likening the scriptures unto ourselves (see 1 Ne. 19:23), we may sometimes overlook the author’s primary intent and the key points of comparison in his use of metaphor. A full understanding and appreciation of a given passage of scripture may thus elude us.

That sometimes appears to be the case with the metaphor of salt. Perhaps we have observed that just as salt enhances the taste of certain foods, so we must be as salt, living our lives to bless and enhance the lives of others and make the gospel palatable to them. We may have also noted that salt is a preservative not unlike the preserving influence of righteous Saints who uphold gospel ideals in a world of shifting values.

While such applications are relevant and meaningful to Latter-day Saints

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<sup>911</sup> LeGrand L. Baker, “What does it mean to be the ‘salt of the earth’?” *Ensign* 29, 4 (April 1999): 53-54.

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worldwide, to the ancients the central figurative meaning of salt had to do not with taste but with smell.

When sacrifices were offered upon the altars of ancient Israel, the Israelites did not give the Lord the flesh of the animal, the fruit of the ground, or the ashes or smoke of such sacrifices. The acceptable part of the offering presented to the Lord was the smell, “a sweet savour unto the Lord” (Leviticus 1:17).

In the Bible, the word *savour* most often refers to the pleasant smell of burning sacrifice in the Temple. To ensure that the smell would be sweet, the Mosaic law required that the offering be liberally sprinkled with salt.

The scent of an unsalted burnt offering would be the stench of scorched flesh. But if the meat were generously salted, the odor would be quite different, due to the reaction of the salt upon the cells that compose animal flesh. Under high-salt conditions, cellular fluid rapidly escapes the cells to dilute the salts outside cell membranes. When accentuated by heat, these fluids cause a sweet savor to emanate.

The Lord’s requirements concerning their offerings was clear. Referring to “the salt of the covenant,” the Lord instructed ancient Israel, “With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt” (Lev. 2:13). Flavius Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian, explained how that was done. He wrote that the priests “cleanse the bodies [of the sacrificial animals], and divide them into parts, and salt them with salt, and lay them upon the altar, while the pieces of wood are piled one upon another and the fire is burning. ... This is the way of offering a burnt offering” (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. Whiston, 1876, 3:9:1).

The purpose of the law of performances and ordinances given to the children of Israel through Moses was to point their souls to Christ and to bear witness of His gospel.

The atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled the law of Moses and ended blood sacrifice. The resurrected Lord explained the new law of sacrifice to His followers on the American continent: “Ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away. ...

“And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Ne. 9:19-20).

In this context the charge to be the “salt of the earth” takes on marvelous



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significance. The Lord said, “I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted?” (3 Ne. 12:13). The Savior’s audience no doubt understood the law of Moses and the close connection between salt and acceptable sacrifice.

It is clear that under the new covenant the followers of Christ, as “salt,” are responsible for extending gospel blessings to the whole earth. “When men are called unto mine everlasting gospel, and covenant with an everlasting covenant,” the Lord explains, “they are accounted as the salt of the earth and the savor of men” (D&C 101:39). It is our privilege and blessing to lovingly lead our brothers and sisters to Christ, helping them receive their covenant blessings. As we do so, we become the figurative salt that makes it possible for them to offer the acceptable sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. In addition, our own covenant sacrifice of time, talents, and means is pleasing to the Lord.

This tremendous responsibility of helping bring salvation to others is coupled with caution: “But if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men” (3 Ne. 12:13). Salt used anciently for sacrifice could easily lose its savor, and always for the same reason—impurity. If such impure salt was heated, the combination of impurities and salt can result in an unpleasant odor. It was therefore discarded, lest its use desecrate the sacrifice and offend the Lord.

Likewise, we are displeasing to the Lord to the degree that we are impure and ineffective “not the saviors of men,” but instead “as salt that has lost its savor” (D&C 103:10).

So how do we become the salt of the earth? The Apostle Paul points out that charity is a key to this process: “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Eph. 5:1-2). We must seek to love others purely, as the Savior loves us. It is through this love that we can help bring souls to Him, that they and we might be found acceptable “unto God a sweet savour of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15).

**14 Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
I give unto you to be the light of this people.  
A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.  
15 Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel?  
Nay, but on a candlestick,  
and it giveth light to all that are in the house;16 Therefore let your  
light so shine before this people,  
that they may see your good works  
and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (3 Nephi 12:1-16)**

The mandates found in both this charge and the preceding one, begin with the words, “I give unto you to be. ...” They are not a suggestion, but a commission that is part of the definition of one who has been anointed to be a sacral king. The previous commission “to be the salt of the earth” was a charge to teach those who were not yet a part of the kingdom. The present one, “to be the light of this people,” is a charge to fulfill one’s covenants with regard to the people of the Kingdom. It is about individual and communal friendships with each other and with God. “A city [Zion] that is set on a hill” was to be a place of sanctuary and peace. And while it is also a beacon toward which others might look, it is primarily the home of the pure in heart. Within Zion is a Temple, and within the Temple is the menorah, a “candlestick.”

Christ is the light and the life of the world, often represented as the Tree of Life—a tree of light. In the Holy Place in Solomon’s Temple there was a great menorah, the “candlestick” that was not a candlestick at all, but a lamp stand. It was shaped like a tree, which represented the tree of life whose three sets of branches lift toward heaven as in prayer, uttered three times. The cups at the ends of its upraised branches were filled with olive oil—the same kind of oil that was used to anoint priests and kings. The fires from these lamps lit the interior of the Temple, and symbolically the light reached out to light the rest of the world as well. Thus it became a burning bush that lights the way—the tree of life that invites one to come to the great multi-colored veil of Solomon’s Temple. It is a tree of anointing light.

The Savior asked, “Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel?” Then he responded to his own question. “Nay, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house.” His reference to a candlestick invites one’s mind into the Temple where

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the great Menorah stood just outside the veil. Thus the “house” would be the Temple, where the Saints may come at will. He adds, “Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

It should be remembered that at this time he was speaking not just to the Twelve but to the entire congregation. The light of each was to enlighten and enhance the light of each other. This was a charge to bless and be blessed, to enlighten the enlightened, and to love those who exuded charity.

It did not create an exclusivity club among the elite, for it magnified, rather than negated, the charge to be the salt of the earth. The Lord gave a similar charge to the Saints in Kirtland and Missouri. He said:

40 For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy and claimeth her own; justice continueth its course and claimeth its own; judgment goeth before the face of him who sitteth upon the throne and governeth and executeth all things.

41 He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever. ...

67 And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.

68 Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will (D&C 88:40-41, 67-68).

When the Savior came to America, he introduced himself by saying, “I am the light and the life of the world.” Now, consistent with the other commandments he had given them, he told the Saints that they must become like him.

The remainder of the Savior’s coronation sermon is, as Welch explained so well, a review of the ancient temple drama and a practical reminder of how one must keep his

covenants.<sup>912</sup> In the Book of Mormon it is instructive to follow the Sermon at the Temple as a temple text.

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## **3 Nephi 20, A Review of the Israelite Temple Drama**

Some of the strongest evidences of the continuance of the ancient temple drama after the ending of animal sacrifice are in 3 Nephi 20, where the Savior paraphrases Isaiah 52. The Isaiah passage is full of ancient temple code, most of which we have discussed already. It reads:

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

9 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God (Isaiah 52:7-10).

In chapter 20 of 3 Nephi, the Savior prophesied what would happen in America from that time until he came again. When he reached the place in time when the gospel would be restored, he described that restoration in terms of the ancient Israelite temple drama. He said:

30. And it shall come to pass that the time cometh, when the fulness of my gospel shall be preached unto them;

31. And they shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and shall pray unto the Father in my name.

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<sup>912</sup> See Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & Sermon on the Mount*.

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32. Then shall their watchmen lift up their voice, and with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye.

33. Then will the Father gather them together again, and give unto them Jerusalem for the land of their inheritance.

34. Then shall they break forth into joy—Sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Father hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

35. The Father hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of the Father; and the Father and I are one.

36. And then shall be brought to pass that which is written: Awake, awake again, and put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

37. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

38. For thus saith the Lord: Ye have sold yourselves for naught, and ye shall be redeemed without money.

39. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that my people shall know my name; yea, in that day they shall know that I am he that doth speak.

40. And then shall they say: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings unto them, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings unto them of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion: Thy God reigneth! (3 Nephi 20:30-46).

Now, having read it, let's examine it closely:

*30 And it shall come to pass that the time cometh, when the fullness of my gospel shall be preached unto them (3 Nephi 20:30).*

“Fullness” is not a code word. It means “fullness.” The key to reading some texts is to understand them to mean precisely what they say. Since there can be no “fullness” of the gospel where there is not also a knowledge of the ancient temple and every doctrine that goes with it, the phrase “fullness of the gospel” immediately tells one that he has entered the sacred space of the Book of Mormon:

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31 *And they shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and shall pray unto the Father in my name.*

32 *Then shall their watchmen lift up their voice, and with the voice together shall they sing* (3 Nephi 20:31-32a).

Watchmen are people whose primary interest is the preservation of the kingdom. Here, the watchmen sing in unison,<sup>913</sup> as is symbolized in the ancient Temple by the lifted arms of the Menorah. Another passage that suggests the continuation of the most basic parts of the festival drama is:

1 *And it came to pass that as the disciples of Jesus were journeying and were preaching the things which they had both heard and seen, and were baptizing in the name of Jesus, it came to pass that the disciples were gathered together and were united in mighty prayer and fasting.*

2 *And Jesus again showed himself unto them, for they were praying unto the Father in his name; and Jesus came and stood in the midst [“midst” means center, as in the center of a circle] of them, and said unto them: What will ye that I shall give unto you?* (3 Nephi 27:1-2).

Elder McConkie commented on those last verses this way:

The Nephite Twelve “were united in mighty prayer and fasting ...They were praying unto the Father in the name of Jesus.” This is the perfect pattern for gaining revelation or whatever is needed. In this setting, the record says: “And Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said to them: What will ye that I shall give you?”<sup>914</sup>

*for they shall see eye to eye* (3 Nephi 20:32b).

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<sup>913</sup> For further discussions of the ancient prayer circle, see Nibley, “Appendix V, Cyril of Jerusalem’s Lectures,” *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 279-83; Nibley, “Early Christian Prayer Circle,” 45-99; Nibley, “On the Sacred and the Symbolic,” 568-69; Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 313-16; Tvedtnes, “Temple Prayer in Ancient Times,” 79-98.

<sup>914</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 557-58.

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“Eye to eye” may mean there are no hard feelings or disagreements among the participants. It may mean that they can look across the circle and see into each other’s faces. It may mean what it meant to Alma:

For because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold, many have been born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted, and have seen eye to eye as I have seen; therefore they do know of these things of which I have spoken, as I do know; and the knowledge which I have is of God (Alma 36:26).

The Savior continues:

*33 Then will the Father gather them [the watchmen] together again, and give unto them [those who pray] Jerusalem for the land of their inheritance.*

*34 Then shall they [those who are thus gathered] break forth into joy—Sing together [the same song], ye waste places [sacred space that had become profane, but now is sacred again] of Jerusalem; for the Father hath comforted his people (3 Nephi 20:34a).*

As in Psalm 23, Isaiah 40, and 61, to “comfort” is to empower. In Isaiah 61 it is to administer the coronation ceremony of washing, clothing, anointing, giving a new name, and crowning.<sup>915</sup>

*he hath redeemed Jerusalem (3 Nephi 20:34b).*

To be redeemed may mean purchased, ransomed, or being helped by a kinsman. However in the Book of Mormon and elsewhere it often means to be brought back into the presence of the Savior.<sup>916</sup>

*35 The Father hath made bare his holy arm (3 Nephi 20:35a).*

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<sup>915</sup> For a discussion of the coronation ceremony, see the chapters beginning, “Coronation Ceremony in Isaiah 61.”

<sup>916</sup> For a discussion of the meaning of the word “redeem,” see the chapter called, “Meaning of ‘Redeem’.”

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Similarly, it was on the mountain where the Lord extended his hand and the brother of Jared saw the finger of the Lord, just before the brother of Jared saw the Savior.

*in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of the Father; and the Father and I are one.<sup>36</sup> And then shall be brought to pass that which is written: Awake, awake again, and put on thy strength (3 Nephi 20:35b-36a).*

Strength, as we will soon be told, is a descriptive code for sacred clothing:<sup>917</sup>

*O Zion [Zion is the pure in heart]; put on thy beautiful garments,<sup>918</sup> O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean .*

*37 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit down, O Jerusalem (3 Nephi 20:36b-37a).*

In the Old Testament, one stands to make a covenant, as in 2 Kings 23:1-3. “And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord. ...And all the people stood to the covenant.”

*loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion (3 Nephi 20:37b).*

A covenant with God is an enabling power, therefore, it conveys the idea of removing this from bondage:

*38 For thus saith the Lord: Ye have sold yourselves for naught, and ye shall be redeemed [brought into the presence of God] without money.*

*39 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that my people shall know my name yea, in that*

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<sup>917</sup> For a discussion of sacred clothing, see the chapter called, “the garment of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness.”

<sup>918</sup> On the last page of the Book of Mormon, Moroni uses the phrase, “put on thy beautiful garments,” to suggest eternal marriage. For a discussion, see the chapter called, “Moroni’s Farewell.”



*day they shall know that I am he that doth speak* (3 Nephi 20:38-39).

Knowing the name of God is very important, as the psalmist testified:

10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee:  
for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee (Psalm 9:10).

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## **Moroni 7: Faith, Hope, and Charity**

As observed above, Mormon's great sermon in Moroni 7 begins by his addressing his "beloved brethren" and declaring the authority by which he was "permitted to speak." It appears that Mormon's sermon in Moroni 7 is a commentary on the Beatitude. "And blessed [enjoying "the state of the gods"] are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (3 Nephi 12:9).

The sermon begins by acknowledging his audience as those who walk peaceably with the children of men. It then teaches them what they must now do so they can reach the conclusion: "that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure" (Moroni 7:48). In his teaching, Mormon explains that faith, hope, and charity are the keys to attaining that end.

## Meaning of “Faith” — *pistis*

In Moroni 7, Mormon teaches his “beloved brethren” (probably *hesed*, equivalent to the Greek *philadelphia*) that the next steps after becoming a “peacemaker” are to become the very personifications of the great triumvirate faith, hope, and charity. He explains each, using the same meanings as are found in the New Testament.

In their simplest form in our culture, faith, trust, hope, and belief mean essentially the same thing. They are the quality of mind that prevents us from going mad: the stability that comes from accepting the past as evidence of the continuity of the future. Examples are as simple as turning on a light switch because one expects there will be light, or as complex as sitting comfortably in a building without being concerned that the world outside has suddenly gone away. One cannot see that world from within the walls of the building but feels secure because the world has never gone away before. Similarly, people of all cultures and beliefs have faith in their God because there is a constancy or at least a repetition of physical and emotional phenomena that cannot be explained otherwise. One reads the scriptures, believes he understands who God is, and has faith that God will act in accordance with that belief. The Prophet Joseph describes that kind of faith in the first lecture in *Lectures on Faith* as “the assurance which men have of the existence of things which they have not seen, and the principle of action in all intelligent beings.”<sup>919</sup> If we did

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<sup>919</sup> Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 1:9.

The prophet Joseph was responsible for, but not the author of all of the lectures, as Dahl explains in “Authorship and History of the Lectures on Faith” (Larry E. Dahl and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective* (Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1990), 8-10.

One of the authorship studies of the Lectures on Faith was done by Alan J. Phipps as a master's thesis in 1977. He compared the frequency of use of certain "function words" in the Lectures with the use of the same words in the writings of several persons who may have had a hand in writing the Lectures, ie, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, William W. Phelps, and Parley P. Pratt. He concludes: The study showed that Sidney Rigdon's use of function words corresponded very closely with that in Lectures One and Seven, and fairly well with Two, Three, Four, and Six. Joseph Smith's use of function words matched closely those in Lecture Five, with some evidence of his having co-authored or edited Two, Three, Four, and Six. . . . The data and tests appear, therefore, to assign the authorship of the Lectures on Faith mainly to Sidney Rigdon, with Lecture Five and perhaps some parts of the other lectures, except One and Seven, to Joseph Smith (66-67).....

### Conclusions About Authorship

What then can we conclude about authorship of the Lectures on Faith? It is clear that several

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not have that kind of emotional stability, we would be so disorientated that we could perform no action at all.

However, by the end of the *Lectures* he has expanded the meaning so that it carries the same connotation as *pistis* in the New Testament. He writes “that faith was the principle of action and of power in all intelligent beings, both in heaven and on earth,”<sup>920</sup>

It would be interesting to know what Hebrew word Mormon used and Joseph translated as “faith” in the Book of Mormon. In our Old Testament, the word “faith” is found only twice.<sup>921</sup> Otherwise, the Hebrew word translated in those two places as “faith” is translated as “trust” throughout in the Old Testament.

That works well because trust, like the Greek word translated “faith,” is always based on the expectation of the fulfillment of a covenant. The covenant may be implicit like the mutual trust between friends, or explicit like a legal contract, but it must always be in place if the trust is founded on rational principles. For if there were no covenant or agreement, there could be no reasonable exception, and therefore, no evidence or assurance in which one can place one’s trust. The early Israelites’ trust in God was based on their covenants with God, but the word translated as “trust” also presupposes that both parties will keep their part of the covenant.

In the New Testament, “faith” is translated from the Greek word *pistis*, which is all about making and keeping covenants. In Paul’s time, *pistis* was not a religious term.<sup>922</sup> It

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of the brethren participated in writing them. It is also clear that Joseph Smith and perhaps others prepared them for publication after they were written. Undoubtedly, the Lectures were, in the words of President John Taylor, “published with the sanction and approval of the Prophet Joseph Smith” (Woodford 1:87). It would therefore seem appropriate to attribute the ideas, principles, and doctrines in the Lectures on Faith to the Prophet Joseph.

<sup>920</sup> Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 7:2.

<sup>921</sup> Deuteronomy 32:20 and Habakkuk 2:4.

<sup>922</sup> New Testament writers often avoided using in-vogue religious terms when teaching the new gospel. LDS missionaries do the same. For example, in the South, missionaries avoid using the phrase “born again.” That is a powerful and very important scriptural concept, but it is a phrase Mormons cannot use when doing missionary work in the Southern States because the Baptists and others have already defined it their way. If Mormon missionaries used that phrase when speaking to those people, “born again” would be understood according to the hearer’s prior learning, and unless the missionary laboriously redefined it, his words would be understood according to their usage, so when Mormons discuss being “born again” we speak of becoming a son or daughter of God.

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was used either as a diplomatic word that had to do with making a treaty, or else as an economic term that had to do with securing the validity of a contract.<sup>923</sup> *pistis* did not actually refer to the conditions of the contract, but rather to its object and to the evidence that the contract was binding.<sup>924</sup>

Friedrich's ten volume *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* has more than 40 pages discussing *pistis* and related Greek words. In his primary definition of *pistis*, Friedrich wrote:

Stress is often laid on the fact that this is a higher endowment than wealth. ... Concretely *pistis* means the "guarantee" which creates the possibility of trust, that which may be relied on, or the assurance of reliability, "assurance". ... *pistis* is the "oath of fidelity," "the pledge of faithfulness," "security." This leads on the one side to the sense of "certainty," "trustworthiness," on the other to that of "means of proof," "proof." In particular *pistis* denotes the reliability of persons, "faithfulness." *It belongs especially to friendship.*<sup>925</sup>

Much of the remainder of Friedrich's definition shows the chronology of the evolution of the word's meaning. He begins by giving the classic definition of *pistis* as the intent of the contract and the evidence upon which trust is based. Then he shows how that meaning has changed over the years. Early Christians shifted the focus of *pistis* to a religious term, and in time reduced it to mean simply believing without any further reference to either the covenant, its object, or its evidence. Consequently, in today's common usage the meaning of "faith" often slides along a continuum that ranges from wishing hard to just anticipating

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<sup>923</sup> "The words [beginning with] *pist-* did not become religious terms in classical Greek. . . . Nor did *pistis* become a religious term. At most one can only say that the possibility of its so doing is intimated by the fact that it can refer to reliance on a god." (Gerhard Friedrich, ed., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1964-1976], article about *pistis*, 6:179).

<sup>924</sup> Friedrich gives a further definition: "Stoic Usage: Primarily, then, *pistis* is an attitude of man to himself, not to others. As Man's faithfulness to himself, however, *pistis* makes possible a right relation to others. He who is *pistos* = 'faithful' to himself, can also be *pistos* = 'faithful' to others; he alone is capable of genuine friendship. (Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 6:182)

<sup>925</sup> Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 6: 177. In the text *pistis* is written in Greek letters. In this quote *pistis* is written in italics. In the last sentence emphasis is added.

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without any substantiating covenant to support the anticipation.

Because our most common meaning for “faith” tends to be entirely different from the way the authors of the New Testament used *pistis*, when we read “faith” in the scriptures we may superimpose the new meaning onto the scriptural text and miss the author’s intent altogether.

Paul defined *pistis* with succinct precision when he wrote:

Now *pistis* [our Bible translation reads “faith”] is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

There, as elsewhere in classic Greek, *pistis* is a compound of two parts. First is the “substance” that is the object or intent of the covenant. Second is the evidence that the covenant is in place and binding.

In Lecture One of the *Lectures on Faith*, Joseph quoted Paul but used “assurance” rather than “substance.”<sup>926</sup> Both Paul and the Prophet Joseph got it absolutely right. The Prophet Joseph did not change the meaning of faith when he changed “substance” to “assurance.” Joseph’s “assurance” focuses on the spiritual intent of *pistis*, while the King James Version’s “substance” focuses on its visible or tangible intent. When the substance (object, or intent) is something one can see (as in purchasing a bike or removing a mountain), then the bike or the mountain is the substance. But when the covenant is about one’s own salvation, and the substance is one’s Self, then Joseph’s “assurance” carries the more accurate connotation.

There are five parts of Paul’s definition of *pistis*. Three are stated. Two are implied because they are obviously so necessary that they are simply presupposed.

1. (presupposed) There must be a covenant or contract that defines the agreement and the methodology by which it will be accomplished.

2. There must be a mutually understood “substance,” that is the object, objective, purpose, assurance, or intent of the covenant.

3. There must be binding “evidence” (a handshake, signature, or appropriate other token or tokens) that validates the agreement and guarantees the fulfillment of the covenant.

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<sup>926</sup> *Lectures on Faith*, 1:8. see JST Hebrews 11:1. “Assurance” is also one of the synonyms that Friedrich uses in the above quote.

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4. The next is a functional “hope.” That is, taking the covenant at full value and acting or living as though the terms of the covenant were already fulfilled.

5. (implied) Finally, the conclusion or fulfillment of the terms of the covenant.<sup>927</sup>

*pistis* always implies such a covenant and covenantal process—whether formal and explicit, or informal and implicit—a covenant is always an integral part of *pistis*.

There must always be an adequate “evidence” that affirms the terms of the covenant are agreed upon by both parties and therefore binding on both. Between friends it is the “oath of fidelity,” the spoken words that guarantees trust, perhaps a code word or even a hug. Or it may be something more tangible such as a ring, a diadem, or written contract with a signature—but it is always something. In a modern court of law, raising the right hand to the square is legal assurance that one has sworn to tell the truth. Anciently, exchanging covenant names or name-titles was a token of a covenant, an evidence of fidelity. *pistis* is not the act of trusting, but rather it is the confirmation by which one may trust.

A simple example is this: If Albert wished to buy Tom’s bicycle for \$50 and Tom wished to sell it to him, they would settle on the terms and shake hands to seal the agreement. In that example, the covenant is the agreement. The “substance of things hoped for” are bike and money. The “evidence of things not seen” is the handshake. They will make the exchange the next day. The bike is old and needs paint so that same afternoon *before* he gets the bike, Albert goes to the store and buys the paint and whatever else is necessary to repair it. Purchasing the paint on the assurance that the agreement is effectual and the covenant will be fulfilled is “hope.” Hope is living as though the covenant was already fulfilled.

Let us give you an example where “faith” is used in Book of Mormon the same way that *pistis* is used in the New Testament. Pretend you are an artist who wishes to create a painting depicting this verse:

For the brother of Jared said unto the mountain Zerin, Remove – and it was

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<sup>927</sup> Bauer defines *pistis* as having three parts:

“1. That which causes trust and faith—faithfulness, reliability

“2. Solemn promise, oath

“3. Proof, pledge”

(Walter Bauer, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

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removed. And if he had not had faith it would not have moved; wherefore thou workest after men have faith (Ether 12:30).

As you begin to sketch, you must decide three things: (1) Who is the brother of Jared talking to? Is he praying to God or is he addressing the mountain? (That's easy—the scripture reads, he “said unto the mountain.”) (2) Is he kneeling or standing? And (3) does he have his fingers crossed to show he is wishing really hard, or is he holding his arm in an attitude of priesthood authority. The way you choose to paint him will be the way you define his faith.

We have no more of the story than what is in that verse, but we suppose what happened is that the Lord told the brother of Jared that the mountain was in the way, and then made a covenant that he would move the mountain when the brother of Jared was ready to have it moved. In our imaginary painting of the brother of Jared, he is standing. Moving the mountain and creating a path where the mountain used to be are the objects or the “substance” of the covenant. The way he holds his arm and the words he speaks—in righteousness—are the “evidence.” So the mountain moves. For the brother of Jared, the evidence is in the operative power of his own words and actions—but the real power comes from the Lord's fulfilling his part of the covenant in accordance with the conditions already agreed upon. That means we read the verse this way:

For the brother of Jared said unto the mountain Zerim, Remove—and it was removed. And if he had not had faith [that is, if he and the Lord had not made the covenant, and if he had not received appropriate instructions and evidences from the Lord; then, if he had not acted according to the conditions of the covenant] it would not have moved; wherefore thou [God] workest after men have faith (Ether 12:30).

That is, God works after he has made a covenant, its purpose defined, and appropriate evidences given and received. People cannot simply decide on the purpose, assume the covenant, and invent the evidences. If we presumed to do that, we might stand here shouting at Utah's mountains until doomsday, and they wouldn't move at all.

A more important example is this: God made a covenant with Adam and Eve in the Garden. The covenant was that if they were clean at the end of their earthly adventure, they could die, leave this world, regain their garments of light, and return to where God is. As an evidence of the validity of that covenant he gave them garments made of skins as a temporary replacement for their garments of light. The covenant was that they could

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return to him again. The substance (in this case, the assurance) was themselves—their own eternal redemption—and the evidence was the garments that would protect them throughout their odyssey here.

Always, on God's part, the evidence is in the power of the symbolism of the ordinances, the fullness of the blessings of the priesthood and of the Savior's Atonement. On our parts, the evidence is our own integrity—keeping his commandments with a determination to serve him to the end.

In the New Testament, when writers used the word *pistis* ("faith") to represent our covenants with God, the evidences they stated or implied on our part were: doing the ordinances, obeying, forgiving, repenting, sacrificing a broken heart and contrite spirit, loving God's children (the law of consecration is functional charity), taking upon oneself the name of Christ, and doing whatever the Spirit instructs one to do. In other words, the ultimate evidence of a person's fidelity is one's Self—the way one lives his life.

The Greek *pistos* is "faithful," and is a description of those who keep their covenants. Paul began his letter to the Ephesians by addressing it to "the faithful in Christ Jesus." Then for almost the entire first chapter he discusses the covenants we made at the Council in Heaven. Moroni reiterates those ideas as his farewell to us on the last page of the Book of Mormon. When we understand our relationship with the Savior and with his Father in terms of those premortal covenants, then we can comprehend the power of our own independence—that is, we have maximum free agency when we keep those covenants and realize that we have total freedom while under the umbrella of the Savior's Atonement. Then our lives truly do become the evidence of the validity of our covenants—an evidence of things hoped for. That is what the Prophet meant in Lecture Six when he described sacrifice, and that is what it means to have "faith in Christ," and to be "faithful in Christ Jesus."

The Prophet Joseph never uses the word *pistis* in the *Lectures on Faith*, but his discussion of faith covers the full range of the meaning of that word.<sup>928</sup> At the beginning, he tells us that his definition of faith is going to grow. He wrote:

As we receive by faith all temporal blessings that we do receive, so we in like

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<sup>928</sup> The Book of Mormon is very consistent in that it almost always uses "faith" the same way that Peter, James, Paul and the other New Testament writers used *pistis*. However, the Doctrine and Covenants uses "faith" the same way Joseph Smith uses it in the *Lectures on Faith*. That is, with its full range of both ancient and modern meanings.



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manner receive by faith all spiritual blessings that we do receive. But faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth.<sup>929</sup>

In the final lecture, Lecture Seven, he leads us to the principle of the power he promised. The lecture begins:

In the preceding lessons we treated of what faith was, and of the object on which it rested. Agreeable to our plan, we now proceed to speak of its effects.<sup>930</sup>

Joseph invites our minds to go with him to the very beginning where

...no world has yet been framed that was not framed by faith, neither has there been an intelligent being on any of God's creations who did not get there by reason of faith as it existed in himself or in some other being....for it is by faith that the Deity works.<sup>931</sup>

Joseph then gives us an expanded definition of faith. It is not contrary to, but it is different from, his first definition that faith is a principle of action:

Let us here offer some explanation in relation to faith, that our meaning may be clearly comprehended. We ask, then, what are we to understand by a man's working by faith? We answer—we understand that when a man works by faith he works by mental exertion instead of physical force. It is by words, instead of exerting his physical powers, with which every being works when he works by faith. God said, "Let there be light: and there was light."<sup>932</sup>

In Lecture Seven, the Prophet lifts us up to the pinnacle of the promises of the covenants:

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<sup>929</sup> Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 2:13.

<sup>930</sup> Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 7:1.

<sup>931</sup> Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 7:2.

<sup>932</sup> Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 7:3.

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3. Faith as power. It is the mechanism by which humans exercise divine power. ...Ultimately faith is the power to be like God. ... The whole visible creation, as it now exists, is the effect of faith. It was faith by which it was framed, and it is by the power of faith that it continues in its organized form, and by which the planets move round their orbits and sparkle forth their glory. So, then, faith is truly the first principle in the science of theology, and, when understood, leads the mind back to the beginning, and carries it forward to the end; or, in other words, from eternity to eternity.<sup>933</sup>

By moving our minds back to the covenants we made in the beginning—to the Council in Heaven or earlier—Joseph shows us the most fundamental essence of what and who we are, then he projects that understanding into the eternal future:

As faith, then, is the principle by which the heavenly hosts perform their works, and by which they enjoy all their felicity, we might expect to find it set forth in a revelation from God as the principle upon which his creatures here below must act in order to obtain the felicities enjoyed by the saints in the eternal world.<sup>934</sup>

It is reasonable to believe that the assignments we received at the Council are consistent with our eternal personalities—the laws of our individual beings.

In summary: like virtually every other word in the scriptures, “faith” has a meaning that expresses the original intent of the author, but also, and no less important, is that “faith” has a meaning that the reader understands according to his or her own language and experience. In its simplest form it is what the Prophet Joseph said it is: “the principle of action in spiritual things as well as in temporal.”<sup>935</sup> It is the sense of constancy and continuity that keeps us sane and teaches us to keep trying. As a principle of action, it is the motivation behind one’s willingness to flip a switch in a dark room, knowing that if he does an electric bulb to give light. It is that same simple yet profound faith of a child when she prays to her Heavenly Father because she knows he is listening.

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<sup>933</sup> Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 7:5.

<sup>934</sup> Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 7:6.

<sup>935</sup> Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 1:12-13.

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At the other end of its spectrum, “faith” is as Joseph described it in the conclusions of *Lectures on Faith*. It is the power by which God created all things and it is the power that brings one to salvation. In that sense, the meaning of “faith” is so expansive that it comprehends the complete range of all of the principles, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel. That is apparently how Peter intended *pistis* to be understood when he wrote:

- 1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to *them that have obtained* like precious faith [*pistis*] with us *through the righteousness*<sup>936</sup> of God and our Savior Jesus Christ:
- 2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you *through the knowledge* of God, and of Jesus our Lord,
- 3 *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness*, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:
- 4 *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises*: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:1-4a, emphasis added).

That is also the meaning Mormon intended. The center of his sermon in Moroni 7, the focal point of its chiasmus, are the verses that focus on the same covenantal concept Peter described (1 Peter 1:2-4, 2 Peter 1:1-10). In the following, we have also emphasized the code words we discussed earlier in this book.

- 19 Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will *lay hold upon* every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a *child of Christ*.
- 20 And now, my brethren, how is it possible that ye can *lay hold upon* every good thing? (Moroni 7:19-20)

When one “lays hold” of something, one uses his hand. By using the hand as an introduction to his observations about faith, Mormon has successfully turned the next few verses into a virtual commentary on the 21<sup>st</sup> Psalm. He wrote:

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<sup>936</sup> The word Peter uses is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Zedek*. See Strong, Greek 1342 and 1343. It means just, meek, righteous.

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21 And now I come to that *faith*, of which I said I would speak; and I will tell you the *way* whereby ye may *lay hold* on every good thing.

22 For behold, God knowing all things, being from everlasting to everlasting, behold, he *sent angels* to minister unto the children of men, to make manifest concerning the *coming of Christ*; and *in Christ there should come every good thing*.

23 And God also declared unto prophets, *by his own mouth*, that *Christ should come*.

24 And behold, there were divers ways that he did manifest things unto the children of men, which were good; and all things which are good cometh of Christ; otherwise men were fallen, and there could no good thing come unto them.

25 Wherefore, *by the ministering of angels*, and *by every word* which proceeded forth *out of the mouth of God*, men began *to exercise faith in Christ*; and thus *by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing*; and thus it was *until the coming of Christ*.

26 And *after that he came men also were saved by faith in his name*; and *by faith, they become the sons of God*. And as surely as Christ liveth he spake these words unto our fathers, saying: Whatsoever thing ye shall *ask the Father in my name*, which is good, *in faith* believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you (Moroni 7:21-26).

Having established his meaning, Mormon now turns to the practical importance of what he has just taught.

27 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased because Christ hath ascended into heaven, and *hath sat down on the right hand of God*, to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men?

28 For he hath answered the ends of the law, and he claimeth all those who have *faith* in him; and they who have *faith* in him will *cleave unto every good thing*; wherefore he advocateth the cause of the children of men; and he dwelleth eternally in the heavens.

29 And because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men.

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30 For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, *showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness.*

31 And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and *to do the work of the covenants of the Father*, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him.

32 And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the *way* that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the *Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts*, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, *the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men* (Moroni 7:27-32).

It is reasonable to posit that what we have just read is Mormon's description of his own mission as well as that of some members of his audience. He next quotes the Saviour in first person.

33 And Christ hath said: *If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.*

34 And he hath said: Repent all ye ends of the earth, and *come unto me*, and be baptized in my name, and *have faith in me, that ye may be saved* (Moroni 7:33-34).

When one has faith in the Saviour, then Joseph Smith's change in Paul's definition of *pistis* becomes absolutely correct. When the "substance" of the covenant is one's own soul, then "assurance" of salvation is a much more accurate way of describing the object of the covenant and the intent of its fulfillment. Mormon now returns to the very practical meaning and responsibilities of faith

35 And now, my beloved brethren, if this be the case that these things are true which I have spoken unto you, and *God will show unto you*, with power and great glory at the last day, that they are true, and if they are true has the day of miracles ceased?

36 Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved?

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37 Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain.

38 For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have *faith in his name*; wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also; and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no *redemption* made.

39 But behold, my beloved brethren, I judge better things of you, for I judge that ye have *faith in Christ because of your meekness*; for if ye have not faith in him then ye are not fit to be numbered among the people of his church (Moroni 7:35-39).

## A Meaning of “Hope”

Joseph clarified Peter's statement by showing that the destiny of God's children is to become like him. The Prophet reasoned:

Two beings who are unlike each other cannot both be saved; for whatever constitutes the salvation of one will constitute the salvation of every creature which will be saved; and if we find one saved being in all existence, we may see what all others must be, or else not be saved. ... Thus says John, in his first epistle, third chapter, second and third verses: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (Lecture 7:9).

In our colloquial language, “hope” is a wish overcast with doubt. But in the scriptures, to hope is to anticipate in the full light of life—to live as though the covenant were already fulfilled. The “things hoped for” are, as Alma described them:

Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest (Alma 13:29).

Thus, Alma could also explain:

And now as I said concerning faith—faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true (Alma 32:21).

If one reads faith as *pistis*, the substance and the evidence of the covenants, then, in the triumvirate faith, hope, and charity, hope is greater than *pistis*, but lesser than charity, “which is the greatest of all.” (Moroni 7:46) Prayer is the way that leads to all three.

Prayer is like walking in the mountain with a friend. There are times when you see a sunrise so expansive and glorious that it must be shared with your friend to be fully appreciated. There are times you walk with the other in silence, then you stop and your eyes look—alone—as you ponder the perfect beauty of a columbine. Sometimes you talk

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together—your friend and you—but only briefly – because a smile can say so much more. Sometimes the words flow like the confluence of two great rivers and the ideas reach out to embrace a world as big as the open sea. Sometimes you walk together quietly and say nothing, and the unspoken words are more profound than speech. There is no aloneness in the quiet, just as there was no aloneness when all your conscious world was only the beauty of a single columbine. Friendship is like that. So is prayer.

Prayer in the name of Christ is requisite to show one’s reliance on the Father’s covenant that is personified in the Savior (see Moroni 10:32-33). One’s faith in Christ increases as one begins to rely more heavily on the feelings that can be identified as the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Those feelings are the evidence—the assurance—the *pistis*—of the divinity of Christ, of the validity of the Atonement, and of the absolute integrity of the Father who first made the covenant. When we exercise “faith in Christ,” we evoke the powers promised by the Father’s covenants, but we also give evidences of our own faithfulness to the conditions of the covenants. The Prophet Joseph concludes Lecture Seven:

That it was a system of faith—it begins with faith, and continues by faith; and every blessing which is obtained in relation to it is the effect of faith, whether it pertains to this life or that which is to come. ... And through the whole history of the scheme of life and salvation, it is a matter of faith: every man received according to his faith—according as his faith was, so were his blessings and privileges; and nothing was withheld from him when his faith was sufficient to receive it. He could stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire, escape the edge of the sword, wax valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens; women could, by their faith, receive their dead children to life again; in a word, there was nothing impossible with them who had faith. All things were in subjection to the Former-day Saints, according as their faith was. By their faith they could obtain heavenly visions, the ministering of angels, have knowledge of the spirits of just men made perfect, of the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven, of God the judge of all, of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and become familiar with the third heavens, see and hear things which were not only unutterable, but were unlawful to utter (center of lecture 17).

...it was by obtaining a knowledge of God that men got the knowledge of all



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things which pertain to life and godliness, and this knowledge was the effect of faith; so that all things which pertain to life and godliness are the effects of faith.<sup>937</sup>

For our part, the evidences of the covenants we make with God are as numerous as the covenants themselves. Ordinances are the evidences of the covenants—the acts of baptism, the sacrament, the other ordinances, and taking upon us the name of Christ. Ultimately, however, the evidence of the covenant is not what one wears or what one does, but *what one is*. As one “walks” the “path” that leads to the top of the “mountain” one receives many assurances. But, and perhaps more important, after one leaves the “mountain,” the “way” one continues to “walk”—forgiving, repenting, obeying God’s commandments and instructions, sacrificing a broken heart and contrite spirit, loving our Father’s children—all these are “the evidences of things not seen.” Then, as Christ *is* the personification, the fulfillment, and the token of the Father’s covenant with us, so, after much preparation and many preliminaries, the way we conduct our lives becomes the living evidence of our covenants with the Father through the Savior.

Mormon continues to discuss the practical meaning of faith by defining “hope” in a way that is compatible with the way we defined it—as living as though the covenants were already fulfilled.

40 And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?

41 And *what is it that ye shall hope for?* Behold I say unto you that ye shall have *hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise.*

42 Wherefore, if a man have *faith* he must needs have *hope*; for without faith there cannot be any hope. [without defining the substance and giving evidence of the validity of the covenant there can be no anticipation of its unspecified fulfillment]

43 And again, behold I say unto you that *he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.*

44 If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the

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<sup>937</sup> Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 7:19.

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*meeek* [as in the 5<sup>th</sup> verse of the Beatitudes] and lowly in heart [as “broken heart and contrite spirit”]; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity (Moroni 7:40-44).

Hope is living as though the covenants are already fulfilled, and charity is the binding power that validates the covenants and seals their promises into reality.

## A Meaning of “Charity”

Like Peter (1 Peter 1:2-4, 2 Peter 1:1-10), Mormon places charity as the indispensable peak of the mountain one must climb to find eternal life.

45 And *charity* suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, *hopeth* all things, endureth all things.

46 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, *if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—*

47 But *charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him (Moroni 7:45-47).*

Mormon's final words are like “act 3” of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm: “and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” They are also the conclusion of the 9<sup>th</sup> verse of the Beatitudes: “And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” Mormon's final words are:

48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, *pray unto the Father* with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that *ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen (Moroni 7:48).*

The beginning and ending of Moroni 7 are the same beginning and ending as verse 9 of the Beatitudes: “And in the state of the gods are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called ‘the children of God.’” The only difference is that here Mormon is speaking to his “beloved brethren,” while Jesus was speaking to a congregation of men, women, and children. That difference is reflected in Mormon's words, “that ye may become the sons of God,” while the Savior's words are not gender-specific: “for you shall be called ‘the children of God.’”

His word, *called*, denotes that they are given a new name, and the name is the same

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one that is recorded as the royal king-name in Psalm 2 where God is represented as saying:

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.  
[And then the king testifies, ]  
7 I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me,  
Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. (Psalm 2:6-7)<sup>938</sup>

We look around the world and see other people whom our eyes and ears testify to our brain are real. Experience has taught us to accept the testimony of our eyes and ears, and we believe the people are real. We can interact with them, as well as see, hear, and touch them. All of those sensations are in the “heart”—the cosmic center of the person where the ancients assigned both one’s emotions and one’s intellect.<sup>939</sup> But the heart/brain is not designed to be able to give its owner absolute proof of anything. (Food that tastes good may not be good for the body; people who look beautiful may not be kind.) All that we see hear and feel are only our brain’s interpretation of electronic impulses. We get much the same kind of electronic information when we sit in a movie theater as when we watch a live theatrical production.

Although we believe the latter is the more real, we have no better evidence than what our body and our experiences have taught us to accept. In fact, we have no compelling evidence at all. If one projects that argument to its logical conclusion, we have no absolute evidence that any of our family or friends even exist. That’s an age old philosophical question. We might go back to the primary question and suggest that we have no absolute evidence that we are real.

We write that, and we suppose it sounds rational, but it is really quite silly. To begin with, we know that we are—not for the classic reason: “I think therefore I am,” but because we love. We know love is real because we know—*really know*—that Jesus is God: we have experienced his love for us and ours for him. That charity *IS* reality—it is the ultimate experience that finds confirmation in the combined testimony of both our bodies and our souls. Our having experienced that love is the only absolute proof we have

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<sup>938</sup> For a discussion of coronation ceremony, see chapters beginning, “Act 2, Scene 9: The Coronation Ceremony in Isaiah 61.”

<sup>939</sup> For further information, see “heart” in subject index.

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that we are. We know that we are, because we know that He exists. We see family and friends, and we love them. We know that kind of love is also real because it is like the love we have for our Savior. They receive and reciprocate, therefore we know that they are real also. Through those experiences, we are also assured that the people whom we love, but who do not reciprocate, are also real. In that knowledge—the sure knowledge that we have the capacity to both love and be loved—is absolute proof that God is, that we are, and that other people are. (Truth, light, and love are only slightly different expressions of the same thing, and their product is joy.)

Friendships, like families, are eternal. One of the reasons it is so important that we are sealed to our families is that our friends are also sealed to theirs. Somewhere, way back in the generations, we will come to the place where our families are the same. We will find that we are sealed to our friends with the same authority that we are sealed to our immediate families. Friendships are eternal because families are eternal. This concept is a perfect thread that runs through the stories of friendships in the Book of Mormon. Its most powerful expression is at the conclusion of Helaman's epistle to Moroni:

41 And now, my beloved brother, Moroni, may the Lord our God, who has redeemed us and made us free, keep you continually in his presence; yea, and may he favor this people, even that ye may have success in obtaining the possession of all that which the Lamanites have taken from us, which was for our support. And now, behold, I close mine epistle. I am Helaman, the son of Alma (Alma 58:41).

That expression of brotherly love is bound up in their mutual love of the Savior. It must be that way, or it cannot be eternal.

Truth, in D&C 93 is knowing reality as God knows it in sacred time, past, present, and future. He knows all truth, which at least in our context means his knowledge includes all things in linear time and in the space associated with it. His light is in and through all things (D&C 88 & 93<sup>940</sup>). All things are made by, through, and of him. In theoretical

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<sup>940</sup> The evidence that truth, light, and life are the same things are in D&C 88 and 93. The fact that God's love, as well as his light, is in and through all things is self evident and needs no proof.

4 This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom;

5 Which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son—

6 He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all

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physics, it comes down to the string theory that holds that all things are little wiggles of energy. Energy is light—i.e., all things are made “of him”—of his light—not of his person but of the light that surrounds and defines him.

His love is also in all things and sustains all things.

So, light, truth, and love are equivalents. The words are simply different ways we have of describing the same thing. When we know someone in sacred time and perceive the light that is in them, then we love them. The product of light, truth, and love is joy—which is the essence of a full life. There can be no fullness of joy if we are alone. In the Celestial Kingdom people are sealed together in an eternal bond, and therefore, in the Celestial Kingdom their joy is complete.

In the knowledge of the reality of eternal love is embedded the foundation of the laws of our own beings. Within the context of that knowledge—our knowledge of our relationship with the Savior and with his children—we may begin in this life to re-discover the nature, quality, and origin of our eternal personalities. As we come to know ourselves, we also discover the window through which we can learn what truth is. The window is formed within the perimeters of our own reality—the law of one’s own being. The

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things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth;

7 Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. ...

11 And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;

12 Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—

13 The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God. (D&C 88:4-7,11-13)

8 Therefore, in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation—

9 The light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men.

10 The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him. ...

24 And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come;

25 And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning.

26 The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth, and John bore record of me, saying: He received a fulness of truth, yea, even of all truth;

27 And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments.

28 He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things. (D&C 93:8-10, 24-28)

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meaning and expansiveness of that law can best be understood by the Prophet's assurance:

1 When the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves.

2 And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy (D&C 130:1-2).

It is there in the bonds of eternal togetherness—family and friends—where one discovers the fruition of one's own Self. It is within that togetherness that we keep and therefore seal the covenants we made at the Council in Heaven. It is not Nirvana. We do not lose our personalities, but rather we perfect them through the love we have for others. The implication is this: perfection is simply the maturation of what one is—the self-defined—and God approved—eternal law of one's own being.

Sin, then, is a violation of the law of one's own being because it is a degradation of one's Self just as it is the intrusion upon the integrity of others. Generic sins (like anger, stealing, inappropriate sex—the ones that are spelled out in the commandments) are actions and attitudes that do violence to everyone's Self as well as to others. If that is true, then sin is being something other than what one is; really serious sin is the maturation of what one is not. (As we write that it occurs to us that it would be easy for someone to take that statement out of context and make it a self-justification for almost anything one wishes. But that won't work—it is the "God approved" part that restricts one's definition of his eternal Self to the principles of righteousness.) So sin is simply functioning, or seeking to function, outside the righteous law of one's own being.

If that is correct, then for God to teach one "his way" and for one to walk in that way, probably means seeking to retain or reclaim the identity and personality we had at the Council—to retain in this world's environment, the integrity we maintained in the world before this one. That can be done, as Abinadi insisted, by seeking to understand the intimate sonship relationship between the Savior and his children. Charity is knowing and loving in sacred time. Nibley completes the story:

These five things you have asked me about (the Lord tells the apostles after his resurrection, in the Kephalaia) appear very small and unimportant to the world, but they are really a very great and holy thing. I will teach you the mysteries now. These tokens (*semeia*) go back to the ordinances of the first man, Adam himself. He brought them with him when he came out of the garden of Eden, and having

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completed his struggle upon the earth, he mounted up by these very same signs and was received again into the Aeons of Light. The person who receives these becomes a Son. He both gives and receives the signs and the tokens of the God of truth, while demonstrating the same to the Church--all in hopes that some day these things may become a reality. So the apostles realized that these things are but forms and types, yet you can't do without them. You cannot do without analogues. For us they may only be symbols, but they must be done here, the Lord says. They may be but symbols here, but they are indispensable steps to the attainment of real power. 'In fact', say the *pistis* Sophia, 'without the mysteries one loses one's power. Without the ordinances, one has no way of controlling matter, for such control begins with the control of one's self. The ordinances provide the very means and the discipline by which light operates on material things. 'You don't understand this now,' it continues, 'but your level, or taxis, in the next world will depend on the ordinances you receive in this world. Whoever receives the highest here will understand the whys and the wherefores of the great plan.' 'You can't understand it now, but you will. Your faith is being tested here. It is through the ordinances that one makes this progress in knowledge, so that those who receive all available ordinances and teachings here shall pass by all the intermediate topoi and shall not have to give the answers and signs, nor stand certain tests hereafter.'"<sup>941</sup>

This world really is a lonely, dreary place. The only power that penetrates its shroud of darkness are the light of the Saviour, and the smiling light of the people we love. Significantly, that light is the only thing we can take with us to enjoy after we leave this world.

The idea that the quality of one's love is the defining characteristic of one's eternal Self is sustained, not only by the scriptures that teach us about charity, but also by statements like these:

1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith [*pistis*] with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: [Here Peter combines *pistis* and righteousness to represent all of the blessings of the ancient temple, just as Mormon does in Moroni 7.]

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<sup>941</sup> Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 310-11.



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2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:1-3).

61 If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and *peaceable things*--- that which *bringeth joy*, that which *bringeth life eternal* (D&C 42:61).

The source of that joy is identified in Section 88:

40 For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy... (D&C 88:40).

It is further clarified in Section 130.

1 When the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves.

2 And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy (D&C 130:1-2).

That same section of the Doctrine and Covenants contains two verses that wrap up the whole panorama of our existence into a single idea:

18 Whatever *principle of intelligence* [that does not say “academic information”] we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

19 And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come (D&C 130:18-19).

Beginning with the premise that the words given by the Lord to the Prophet Joseph are carefully chosen and precise in meaning, we can conclude that in that scripture “knowledge” cannot mean an accumulation of ephemeral and transitory information. If the

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knowledge has eternal value, it must be knowledge of eternal truth.

24 And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; (D&C 93:24).

It is equally evident what is meant by the phrase “whatever principle of intelligence.” “Principle” is singular, so the word “whatever” refers to possible variants in quality, not in quantity. (If the Lord had said “principles of intelligence,” then he would have been talking about quantity.) That being so, we may know he is talking about only that one supreme principle that James calls “the royal law,” “the perfect law of liberty” (James 2:8, 1: 25).

That eternal law is the ever-expansive “principle of intelligence.” As we have already discussed, intelligence is defined in Section 93 as “the light of truth.” In 88, we learn that “truth shines.” Truth is knowledge in sacred time, is equivalent to light, is equivalent to love, is equivalent to joy. Thus, the scripture says—and all of the scriptures affirm—the “principle of intelligence” that we must “attain unto in this life” and that will “rise with us in the resurrection” is truth-light-love-joy. The quality of our love for the Saviour and for our Father’s children is also the quality of joy that will define and sustain us throughout all the eternities to come.

## Moroni's Farewell

In his final chapter, Moroni wrote to us:

3 Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts (Moroni 10:3).

One wonders if this is simply saying that we should remember how kind God has always been, or if Moroni's reference to "the creation of Adam" is a quiet reminder of the ancient Israelite temple drama theme that has permeated his father's writings.

In his final testimony, Moroni reflects, "I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies"—not that the prophecies will be fulfilled, but that his declaration is fulfilling them. Just as prophets speak by the power of God, but are not confined to speaking projections into the future, so prophecies are words of the prophets spoken by the power of God, but not limited to being about the future.<sup>942</sup> If one removes the projection into the future of Moroni's word, "prophecies," then the whole passage reads differently. It becomes a review of the sequence of the ancient temple drama.

28 I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God; [God is speaking, so we are listening] and his word shall hiss [whisper<sup>943</sup>] forth from generation to generation. [It will always be the same.]

29 And God shall show unto you [God is showing, so we are watching], that that which I have written is true.

30 And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ [in the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, that happened after the coronation ceremony], and lay hold upon every good gift [one does that with one's hand], and touch not the evil

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<sup>942</sup> See 2 Nephi 25 for Nephi's discussion of prophets and prophecies.

<sup>943</sup> "Whisper" is the dictionary's synonym for "hiss." The connotation seems to be that it is spoken in a whisper, as is a secret or a mystery.

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gift, nor the unclean thing. [There will always be counterfeits, and they must be left alone.]

31 And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled (Moroni 10:28-31).

This is a paraphrase of Isaiah, so it comes from his culture rather than from Moroni's. In the Near Eastern desert, when a man married, he gave his wife a tent, just large enough for the two of them. It was then hers, and she was responsible for it. As her family grew, she made additional flaps for the tent, and added more stakes to secure it. Thus, Moroni's statement may be a reference to family homes—eternal families—“forever”—rather than being about future church units of wards and stakes. The Isaiah passage that Moroni paraphrased is also about God's promise of eternal families. It reads:

2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes (Isaiah 54:2).

“Thine habitations” are homes. The tents are the places where families dwell. Moroni continues:

and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled (Moroni 10:31b).

If those words are about the ancient Nephite temple experience, then Moroni's last words are about what one did after one left the ancient temple:

32 Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.

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33 And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot (Moroni 10:32-33).

Then, as though to give evidence that what he had recommended was well within the realm of possibility, he concluded with his own testimony:

34 And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen (Moroni 10:34).

## **Conclusion, The Purpose of the Ancient Israelite Temple Drama**

The Book of Mormon is surely the most powerful missionary tool ever written. Its words speak to the soul of every person who seeks to know eternal truth. The Lord promised:

For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power, by the administration of the Comforter, shed forth upon them for the revelation of Jesus Christ (D&C 90:11).

There is no redundancy there. “Tongue” and “language” do not necessarily mean the same thing. We each have a “tongue” that is common to us and to our neighbors. It is the way we communicate with each other.

We also have languages that are specific to our professions. A farmer, mechanic, dentist, logician may all speak the same language when they meet their colleagues, but they could not describe the technicalities of their daily work in words the “ordinary” people could understand.

In addition, we each also have a private language that is privy only to ourselves and our intimate family and friends.

Like a private language, there is an encoded language of the scriptures, sometimes called “the tongue of angels.”<sup>944</sup> The scriptures, through the power of the Holy Ghost, speak to each of us in the language that is most meaningful to ourselves, and that evokes the most powerful and profound images in our own minds. Thus the scriptures teach both the new convert and the sacral king—the new student and the seasoned reader—using the same words, but with quite different meanings. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained the power of the Book of Mormon as scripture when he wrote, “I told the brethren that the

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<sup>944</sup> In 1 Corinthians 13:1, Paul refers to “the tongues of men and of angels.” This is the only instance in scriptures of “the tongues of angels.” The phrase is “tongue of angels” five times in 2 Nephi 31 and 32.

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Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”<sup>945</sup> Those words, “a man would get nearer to God,” are not only the perfect way to describe the purpose of the Book of Mormon, they are also the perfect way to describe the purpose of the ancient Israelite temple.

That magnificent concept was most beautifully expressed by President John Taylor:

Standing upon its broad platform, encircled by the mantle of truth, the man of God, by faith, peers into the future, withdraws the curtains of eternity, unveils the mystery of the heavens, and through the dark vista of unnumbered years, beholds the purposes of the great Elohim, as they roll forth in all their majesty and power and glory. Thus standing upon a narrow neck of space, and beholding the past, present, and the future, he sees himself an eternal being claiming an affinity with God, a son of God, a spark of Deity struck from the fire of his eternal blaze. He looks upon the world and man, in all their various phases, knows his true interests, and with intelligence imparted by his Father Celestial, he comprehends their origin and destiny.

His intelligence, lit up by God and followed out, will be expansive as the world and spread through space; his law is the law of love; his rule, the rule of right to all. He loves his neighbor, and he does him good; he loves his God and therefore worships him; he sees the power of truth, which, like the light of God, spreads through all space, illuminates all worlds, and penetrates where men or angels, God or spheres are known; he clings to it. Truth is his helmet, buckler, shield, his rock, defense; his all in time and in eternity. Men call him a fool because he cannot be directed by their folly, nor follow in their erratic, truculent wake. But while they are grasping at shadows, he lays hold of the substance. While they are content with a rickety sprawling religion, fashionable for a time, but having nothing to do with eternity, and smother the highest, noblest principles of man, he dare acknowledge God; and acknowledging him, he dare obey him and confess that faith which God has given to him. He grasps at all truths, human and divine. He has no darling dogma to sustain or favorite creed to uphold. He has nothing to lose but error, and nothing to gain but truth. He digs, labors, and searches for it as for hidden treasure; and while others are content

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<sup>945</sup> Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, 194.

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with chaff and husks of straw, he seizes on the kernel, substance, the gist of all that's good, and clings to all that will ennoble and exalt the human family.<sup>946</sup>

The purpose of the ancient Israelite temple drama was to give a sense of eternal orientation to each participant—to show where one is in the universe and how one came to be here. The presentation of the drama did that by inviting each individual to observe the events of profane space and linear time from the perspective of sacred space and sacred time.

The easiest way for Latter-day Saints to visualize that, is to recall the story of King Benjamin where the people spoke in unison—with each individual making the appropriate covenants as the ceremony progressed.

In this very real way, the drama was a time and place of orientation. There people learned anew where they came from, how they came to be here, what they were expected to do while they were here, and how they could return home again.

By doing that, it enabled the participants to transcend linear time and see themselves as priests and sacral kings in sacred space within the reality of sacred time. Yet to do that, they had to redefine linear time, not so much as a contrast to sacred time but in a way that emphasized the overriding importance of their own personal odyssey through the pattern of the cosmic myth—the importance of their overcoming the impossibilities and fulfilling their covenants before returning home.

As one considers the ancient Israelite temple drama, one discovers a sub-textual message that runs through the whole of it like a great subterranean river that rushes beneath the rocks and down the mountain side, raising itself occasionally to the surface as springs of living water that refresh and give life to the trees who take root in the rocks. That subtext has a single message, expressed again and again in the bubbling of the springs and in the crystal spindrift of the cascading fountains: that message is the overriding importance and the eternal necessity of the Savior's Atonement.

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<sup>946</sup> John Taylor, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church, John Taylor*, 211-12. [Quoted from G. Homer Durham, *Gospel Kingdom* (1941): 1-3.]



## **Afterword**

### **Stephen D. Ricks**

Though argument does not create conviction, lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish (Austin Farrer, commenting on C. S. Lewis)

Reading the book of Psalms is crucial to understanding the religion of ancient Israel. The themes of the Psalms are temple, the kingship of God and the kingship and man, Messiah, and priesthood. The themes of the Book of Mormon—itsself the story of messianic Israelites who depart from Jerusalem because the father and leader of the family, Lehi, believes it has become irretrievably wicked and ripe for destruction—are Messiah, temple, the kingship of man and the kingship of God, and (implicitly) priesthood., strikingly similar to the pre-exilic theology of the psalms.

As was mentioned earlier, King Benjamin's address to his people near the time of his departure from the scene reflects in a stunning fashion the same themes of pre-exilic religion that we find in the Psalms: temple, Messiah, kingship of man, as well as the observance of the ancient Israelite festivals and covenant renewal—themselves both venerable parts of pre-exilic Israelite faith and practice.

The connection of the circumstances of King Benjamin's address to the traditional ancient Israelite Feast of Tabernacles is nothing short of spectacular: first, all Israelites were commanded to come up as entire families—"All that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths" (Lev. 23:42)—something the Nephites did before listening to King Benjamin's address: "When they came up to the temple, they pitched their tents round about, consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters, and their sons, and their daughters, from the eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another" (Mosiah 2:5). Second, at the Feast of Tabernacles Israelites lived in tents—"Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths" (again, Lev. 23:42)—and, in anticipation of hearing King Benjamin's sermon, the Nephites stayed in tents facing toward the temple from which the sermon was given: "And they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them" (Mosiah 2:6). Third, perhaps the largest number of

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sacrifices were performed in any Israelite festival at the Feast of Tabernacles, outlined in over two dozen verses in Numbers 12 (Numbers 12:13-38), a practice followed by the Nephites at the time of Benjamin's address: "They also took of the firstlings of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifice and bunt offerings according to the law of Moses" (Mos. 2:3).

But the sublime purpose for which the Nephites, following the most venerable tradition in Israelite history, was to renew the covenant originally made at Sinai (Deut. 31:9-13). Psalm 89:20 speaks of maintaining *hesed* (chesed), a kind of loyalty to observing friendship covenants that the righteous were expected to do. The pattern of covenant renewal that occurred at Sinai (and renewed elsewhere in Israel's history) is repeated in the course of King Benjamin's address:

- (1) Introduction of the participants in the covenant—at Sinai the participants were God and the Israelites (Ex. 19:3b; 20:1; Deut. 1:1-5; Josh. 24:1-2a), while in King Benjamin's address the participants were God (represented by King Benjamin) and the Nephites (Mos. 2:9a).
- (2) The "antecedent history" of God's relations with the Israelites (Ex. 19:4; 20:2; Deut. 1:6-3:29) or, in the instance of King Benjamin's address, of the preceding history of God's relations with the Nephites (Mos. 2:9b-21, 23-24a, 25-30).
- (3) The "covenant stipulations," commandments by which the Israelites (Ex. 19:5-6; 20:3-23:19; Deut. 4-26; Josh. 24:14, 18b, 23) and the Nephites (Mos. 2:22, 24b, 31-41; 4:6-30) were expected to live.
- (4) The "formal witness" that indicated that the Israelites (Ex. 19:8; 24:3; Josh. 24:16a, 19a, 21-23) and Nephites (Mos. 5:2-8) had heard and understood the commandments they had been called upon to observe.
- (5) The "blessings and curses" that would come upon the Israelites (Ex. 23:20-33; Deut. 27:9-28:68; Josh. 24:19b-20) and Nephites (Mos. 5:9-15) should they obey, or fail to obey, the commandments that God laid on them (in the case of Mosiah only blessings are mentioned).

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- (6) The “reciting and deposit of the covenant” to remind the Israelites (Ex. 19:7; 24:4-8; Deut. 27:1-8; 31:9, 24-26) and Nephites (Mos. 6:1-3, 6) of their responsibility to keep the commandments.

It is interesting that the sacrament prayers—another Nephite document (Moroni 4:3; 5:2) repeated in the Doctrine and Covenants (D & C 20:77, 79)—reflect features of the treaty/ covenant pattern; it is truly astonishing that features of the treaty/covenant pattern are also to be seen in ceremonies performed in the sacreddest places on earth.

## **About Ricks and Baker**

**Stephen D. Ricks** was born in Berkeley, California, "when it was a peaceful university community." He served an LDS mission in Switzerland, completed his B.A. in Ancient Greek and M.A. in the Classics at Brigham Young University, then received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley and Graduate Theological Union. While completing his doctoral work he spent two years studying at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He is now professor of Hebrew and Cognate Learning at Brigham Young University where he has been a member of the faculty nearly thirty years.

His academic work includes research and publication on the Book of Mormon, the Old Testament, Hebrew, and the temple, including studies on the ritual use of creation texts in the ancient world, temple-building motifs, enthronement ceremonies in history, and the garment of Adam in the ancient world. Professor Ricks has also done research on Isra'iliyyat, Arabic literature dealing with biblical figures. He is the author or editor of twenty books and the author of more than eighty articles on the temple, the Old Testament, the ancient Near East, and the Book of Mormon.

From 1988 to 1991 he was the president of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) (now the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship). From 1991 to 1997 he served as the chairman of FARMS board of directors. He was the founding editor of the Journal of Book of Mormon Studies serving as editor from 1992 to 1997. From 1992 to 1996 he also served as the associate dean of general education and honors at BYU.

Professor Ricks has used his reading knowledge of more than 20 languages in his research, and is an expert in Biblical Hebrew. For many years he has worked toward promoting positive relations between the LDS Church and Jewish groups.

He and his wife Shirley are the parents of six children and the grandparents of six.

**LeGrand L. Baker** was born on his grandfather's ranch in Boulder, Utah, then grew up on a small farm in Utah Valley. After graduating from Brigham Young University he received a Master's degree and Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in American History—the period of the American Revolution and the writing of the Constitution. He recently retired from BYU where he had been Curator of the Wells Freedom Archives and adjunct professor of history. At BYU he taught American Constitutional History for many years. While a graduate student at U. W., he taught

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Church History and Doctrine in the L.D.S. Institute, and he has taught in Education Weeks. At BYU he taught many religion classes. He especially enjoyed teaching about the Book of Mormon. He has taught Gospel Doctrine class in Sunday School for an accumulative total of well over 30 years, in every ward and branch he has lived in since he returned from an L.D.S. mission in England.

His articles have appeared in *The Improvement Era* and the *Ensign*, and he is the author of *Murder of the Mormon Prophet, the Political Prelude to the Death of Joseph Smith* and *Joseph and Moroni*. The latter tells how Moroni taught Joseph to be a prophet. It is the history of the friendship that developed between the angel and young Joseph.

LeGrand and his wife Marilyn have four children and fourteen grandchildren.

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