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## Temple Prayer in Ancient Times

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## CHAPTER 4

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# TEMPLE PRAYER IN ANCIENT TIMES

*John A. Tvedtnes*

Ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts  
of the house of our God, Praise the Lord; for the Lord is  
good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.  
(Psalm 135:2–3)

Among its other functions, the ancient Israelite temple was a place of prayer.<sup>1</sup> When Solomon dedicated the first temple in Jerusalem nearly three millennia ago, he devoted a large portion of his prayer to asking the Lord to hearken to the prayers of those who would pray in or toward his holy house (see 1 Kings 8:29–50; 2 Chronicles 6:20–40). For this reason, Jews throughout the world still pray facing Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> while those living in Jerusalem face the Temple Mount or go to the Western (“wailing”) Wall, one of the few remnants of the temple built by Herod on the site of Solomon’s earlier structure.

In his dedication of the temple, Solomon specified the manner of devotion, for he spoke of the man who prays while “spread[ing] forth his hands toward this house” (1 Kings 8:38; compare 2 Chronicles 6:29). Indeed, Solomon followed the same practice: “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” (1 Kings 8:22; compare 2 Chronicles 6:12). According to 2 Chronicles 6:13, he then “kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven.” “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” (1 Kings 8:54).

Christianity is virtually unique in requiring that prayers be said in a kneeling position. Standing is the norm in many non-Christian religions.<sup>3</sup> Some religions, such as Islam<sup>4</sup> and Buddhism, require varying positions to be used during prayer, but standing is always included. In the pseudepigraphic *Conflict of Adam and Eve*, we frequently read that our first parents stood up to pray, usually spreading their hands to God.<sup>5</sup> The text sometimes notes that they spread their hands to God but does not always indicate whether they were standing.<sup>6</sup>

Although it is permissible to sit during prayers, standing for prayer is the norm in Judaism and is required during the *Amidah* (“standing”) prayer.<sup>7</sup> In the story of the Pharisee and the publican told by Jesus in Luke 18:11–14, both men stand to pray. Standing prayer is also noted in 1 Chronicles 23:30. *Targum Neofiti* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Exodus 14:15 and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Numbers 10:35–36 have Moses standing to pray to the Lord. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Exodus 38:8 speaks of women who stood praying at the entrance of the tabernacle. *Zohar* Exodus 183a notes that during the “high days” associated with the Feast of Weeks, a man “must pray or sing standing, his thighs taut, his feet firm, his body erect.”<sup>8</sup>

## Spreading the Hands

The spreading of hands in prayer is common among Muslims, Greek Orthodox, and other eastern Christian groups; such a custom is used by Catholic priests and some Protestant clergy during the prayers at communion. The raising of hands in prayer is mentioned in the Old Testament (see 1 Kings 8:22, 38, 54; Ezra 9:5; Job 11:13; Psalm 68:31; 143:6; Isaiah 1:15; and Lamentations 2:19; 3:41), the New Testament (see 1 Timothy 2:8), and various pseudepigraphic texts,<sup>9</sup> including Christian gnostic texts found at Nag Hammadi in Egypt.<sup>10</sup> The Mandaean, who claim to be descendants of the disciples of John the Baptist, also spread their hands in prayer. *Mandaean Canonical Prayerbook* 35 contains the words, “I address to thee . . . for this congregation of people who have bent their knees to the ground and stretched forth their hands to the intermediate and upper (*worlds*).”<sup>11</sup>

In the Armenian *History of Abel and Cain the Sons of Adam* 11, we read that when Abel offered his firstborn lamb, it was “with outstretched hands [that] he prayed to the Lord.”<sup>12</sup> In one Ethiopic document, Abraham stretches out his hands while offering prayer,<sup>13</sup> while in another Joseph does the same before he dies.<sup>14</sup> In the pseud-epigraphic *Gospel of Bartholomew* 2:6–13, Mary stands with the apostles in prayer, spreads out her hands to heaven, and prays. The *History of the Virgin* 156a also has Mary spreading out her hands to pray for the apostles, who were then preaching in various nations.<sup>15</sup> In *Acts of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian*, John “stretched forth his hands, and prayed.”<sup>16</sup>

The Bible recounts that when the priest Ezra assembled the Jews who had returned from Babylon to Jerusalem, he “blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people

answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground” (Nehemiah 8:6). In the Book of Mormon, when Alma and Amulek spoke of “stretch[ing] forth our hands, and exercis[ing] the power of God which is in us,” they evidently had reference to an intercessory prayer (see Alma 14:10–11).

*Targum Neofiti* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Exodus 9:28–29 declare that when Moses prayed to God to remove the plague of hail from Egypt, he stretched out his hands before the Lord.<sup>17</sup> *Pirqa de Rabbi Eliezer* 44, speaking of the time of the Exodus, notes that “all the Israelites (were standing) outside (their tents); they had gone forth from their tents, and saw Moses kneeling on his knees, and they were kneeling on their knees. He fell on his face to the ground, and they fell on their faces to the ground. He spread out the palms of his hands towards the heavens, and they spread out their hands to heaven.”<sup>18</sup> In *Bahir* 139, we read that “when among Israel there are people who are wise and know the mystery of the Glorious Name, and they lift up their hands, they are immediately answered.”<sup>19</sup>

*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Targum Neofiti* on Exodus 17:11–12 indicate that when Moses held out his hands during the Israelite-Amalekite conflict, he was praying—a fact also noted in *Zohar* Exodus 66a, which adds, “from which we derive the lesson that, although the priest spreads out his hands at the sacrifice to make his mediation complete, yet Israel must co-operate with him in prayer.”<sup>20</sup> Regarding this event, *Bahir* 135 says, “this teaches us that the whole world endures because of the Lifting of Hands.”<sup>21</sup>

Prayer with outstretched hands was also known in the Jerusalem temple.<sup>22</sup> In *3 Maccabees* 2:1, 21, we read that the high priest, Simon, knelt before the temple with hands out-

stretched and prayed to God, his prayer being heard because he offered it according to the prescribed pattern. *Zohar* Leviticus 67a notes that before the high priest entered the holy of holies on the day of atonement, “he bathed himself and washed his hands in preparation for another service, in which he was to enter into a place more holy than all. The other priests, the Levites and the people stood around him in three rows and lifted their hands over him in prayer.”<sup>23</sup> *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer* 8 ordains that for group prayer, the men should sit “in a circle . . . and (then) they stand and spread out their hands before their Father who is in heaven, and the chief of the assembly proclaims the name (of God).”<sup>24</sup> These actions are reminiscent of a prayer circle.

The Psalms, many of which are prayers, reflect the method of prayer in the temple. In one, the petitioner asks the Lord, “Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle” (Psalm 28:2). Another Psalm declares, “I have seen thee in the sanctuary . . . , my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name” (Psalm 63:2–4; see Psalm 88:9). In Psalm 141:2, the lifting of hands in prayer is associated with temple sacrifice: “Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”<sup>25</sup> This lifting of the hands in prayer is reflected in a variant of Psalm 135, cited at the beginning of this article, which immediately precedes it in the psalter: “Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord” (Psalm 134:1–2).

A nonbiblical psalm found in a Dead Sea Scroll psaltery (11QPs<sup>a</sup>, also called 11Q5) contains a prayer also known

from late Syriac psalteries (e.g., 5ApocSyrPs3) as Psalm 155 and attributed to Hezekiah, king of Judah, during the time of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. It reads, "YHWH [Jehovah], I call to you, listen to me; I extend my hands to your holy dwelling; bend your ear and grant my plea, and my entreaty, do not reject it."<sup>26</sup>

### **Clean Hands and a Pure Heart**

There is symbolism in raising the hands in prayer. The gesture exposes to God both the breast and the palms of the petitioner to show that they are pure (clean). This is reflected in one of the temple hymns found in the Bible, Psalm 24, which Donald W. Parry has suggested may relate to a prayer circle:<sup>27</sup>

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. (Psalm 24:3–4)

The message of the Psalm is clear: In order to enter into the temple (the "hill of the Lord," called "the mountain of the Lord's house" in Isaiah 2:2), one must have clean hands and a pure heart.<sup>28</sup> In other words, both acts (represented by the hands) and thoughts (represented by the heart) must reflect righteousness, along with the lips that utter the prayer.<sup>29</sup> This is probably what the author of Job had in mind when he wrote, "prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him" (Job 11:13). Note also Lamentations 3:41, "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens."

### **The Crucified Lord**

In early Christian lore, the spreading of the hands symbolized Christ. Thus, *Ode of Solomon* 27 reads, "I extended

my hands and hallowed my Lord; for the expansion of my hands is his sign. And my extension is the upright cross."<sup>30</sup> Another of the odes declares, "I extended my hands and approached my Lord, because the stretching out of my hands is his sign. And my extension is the common cross, that was lifted up on the way of the Righteous One."<sup>31</sup>

Early Christians apparently saw in the manner of prayer a representation of the cross on which Christ was crucified.<sup>32</sup> The cross is, in early traditions, the tree of life, bringing us back into the presence of God through the Savior's atonement (see *Epistle of Barnabas* 11:1–11). *Epistle of Barnabas* 11:1–6 sees the cross and Christ's crucifixion prefigured by the tree of life, while *Epistle of Barnabas* 12:2–3 says it was represented by Moses raising his hands to provide salvation to Israel during their struggle with the Amalekites (see Exodus 17:8–13) and by Isaiah stretching out his hands to his people to call them to repentance (see Isaiah 65:2, cited in Romans 10:21). Both the sixth-century A.D. Ethiopic document *Kebrā Nagast* 98<sup>33</sup> and *Sibylline Oracles* 8:251–53 indicate that Christ's crucifixion was symbolized by Moses stretching out his hands during the Amalekite war. Two of the earliest Christian writers, Justin Martyr (see *Dialogue with Trypho* 111) and Tertullian (see *Against Marcion* 3.18), indicated that Moses' actions were a prayer and that he prefigured the cross.

### **The Priestly Blessing**

We have already noted examples of priests spreading their hands in prayer at the temple in Jerusalem. In Christ's time, when pronouncing the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24–26 on the people, the priests also lifted their hands.<sup>34</sup> The practice is based on Leviticus 9:22, where we read, "And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and



blessed them" (Leviticus 9:22).<sup>35</sup> *Targum Neofiti*, in citing this passage, notes that Aaron lifted his hands (plural) in prayer. The biblical passage is cited in Mishnah *Tamid* 7:2, where it is noted that in the temple the priests raised their hands above the head, while in other places they were allowed to raise the hands only to shoulder height during the blessing.<sup>36</sup>

Today, the priestly blessing is recited in Jewish congregations on the eve of the Day of Atonement. Of the blessing, we read in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Numbers 6:23, "Thus shall you bless the Israelites while they (the priests) spread their hands upon the pulpit."<sup>37</sup> Ecclesiasticus 50:20 describes the high priest Simon, saying that he "lifted up his hands over the whole congregation of the children of Israel, to give the blessing of the Lord with his lips" (KJV Apocrypha). Philo wrote in *De Abrahamo* 235 that when Melchizedek blessed Abraham (see Genesis 14:18–20), "the great high priest . . . raised his hands to heaven."<sup>38</sup>

Theodor Reik, recalling an experience from his childhood, noted that "the priest pulls the prayer shawl over his head so that his face is concealed; he raises both hands, blessing the community with fingers spread."<sup>39</sup> Of the hand gesture, he wrote, "the third and the fourth fingers of the hand must be held together and be held separately from the other fingers."<sup>40</sup> Known as the Aaronic sign,<sup>41</sup> it can be seen in Jewish cemeteries engraved on the headstones of *kohanim*, "priests," descendants of Aaron. Reik notes that his friend, Karl Abraham, believed that the spread fingers represented the cloven hoof of the clean animals that Israel was permitted to eat, as described in Leviticus 11:3–8.<sup>42</sup>

Reik and Abraham also saw the prayer shawl, or *tallith*, worn by Jews during certain prayers,<sup>43</sup> as a representation

of the sacrificial ram. Though often made of silk, the prayer shawl is ideally made of sheep's wool, and some worshipers prefer the wool of lambs raised in the Holy Land. The rectangular shawl has tassels (*zizzith*) attached to each corner,<sup>44</sup> each tassel consisting of four white and four blue threads and bound together by knots formed by the longest thread.<sup>45</sup> Reik suggests that "the tallith, made from the wool of a ritually clean animal, might be the substitute for the fleece of a ram, originally roughly cured and worn by the Hebraic tribes. The *zizzith* would then allude to the animal's four legs, and the knotting of the many threads would represent the joints,"<sup>46</sup> to which I would add that the blue threads may have originally represented the veins running through the legs.

Reik concludes that wearing the *tallith*, a garment sacred to the Jews, was originally intended to identify the wearer with the God of Israel.<sup>47</sup> To the Christian—and to Latter-day Saints in particular—this would suggest that the wearer "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27; compare Romans 13:14), thus representing "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).<sup>48</sup> When, therefore, the priests wore the prayer shawl and raised their arms to bless the people, they unknowingly symbolized the Messiah to come.

### The Prayer Circle

One further stipulation regarding the priestly blessing is that the priests were not allowed to raise their hands unless ten adult males were present (see *M Megillah* 4:3).<sup>49</sup> The ten constitute the minimum number required in Jewish law to form a *minyan*, or quorum for group prayers. These prayers are typically offered while the group stands in a circle, which is hence often termed a *minyan*.

The prayer circle is also known from early Christian texts and has been discussed at length elsewhere.<sup>50</sup> One of the most remarkable descriptions is in the fourth book of the Coptic *Pistis Sophia*, where we find Jesus standing at the altar praying, surrounded by his apostles and women disciples clad in linen garments (see *Pistis Sophia* 136). A short while later, Jesus sets out an offering of wine, water, and bread. He then stands before the offering, with the disciples behind him clad in linen garments and making signs with their hands as Christ prays (see *Pistis Sophia* 142). The account of this offering is also found in another Coptic document, *2 Jeu* 45–47. The scene is followed by Jesus' instructions on how the disciples can use the signs and names to pass beyond both gods and angels to enter the presence of the Father (see *2 Jeu* 48–50). In *1 Jeu* 41, Jesus has the twelve surround him while he prays and they repeat after him. In *2 Jeu* 42–43, Jesus asks that the twelve and the women disciples surround him so he can teach them the mysteries of God. What then follows in the text is a discussion of signs, seals, and how to pass by the guardians at the veils to the presence of God. Hugh Nibley noted

how the bishop leading the prayer circle in the Syriac Testament of Our Lord “stands with upraised hands and offers a prayer at the veil,” after which he proceeds “to make the sacrifice, the veil of the gate being drawn aside.” St. Augustine's version of the Priscillian prayer circle ends with the apparently incongruous statement, “I am the Gate for whoever knocks on me,” which Augustine explains in terms of Psalms 24:7, referring to the veil of the temple [*Letters* 237].<sup>51</sup>

### **Prayer Opens the Veil**

Anciently, a veil or curtain separated the holy of holies from the rest of the tabernacle or temple (see, for example,

Exodus 26:31–33; 2 Chronicles 3:14; and Hebrews 9:3, 5). The Lord instructed Moses that the high priest should not pass through the veil until he had been washed, dressed in priestly clothing, and brought a sacrifice (see Leviticus 16:2–4).

The earthly veil is paralleled by the veil of the heavenly temple mentioned in many early Jewish and Christian texts. When the brother of Jared prayed, “the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord” (Ether 3:6; see Ether 3:1–6). The same thing has happened in modern times. Joseph Smith recorded that after dropping the veils of the Kirtland Temple around the pulpit (see the preface to D&C 110) on 3 April 1836, he and Oliver Cowdery offered prayer and “the veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened. We saw the Lord” (D&C 110:1–2). Significantly, it is only after prayer that the veil is uncovered. This is symbolic of the uncovering of the heavenly veil, which also occurs after prayers.

According to *1 Enoch* 9:10, prayers go to the gate of heaven. In *3 Baruch* 11:1–9, we also learn that the gates of heaven are opened to receive prayers, an idea confirmed in *Testament of Adam* 1:10. A prayer in *Sepher Razi'el* 441 asks God to open “the gates of light and prayer.”<sup>52</sup> Rabbi Ishmael reported that it was only after prayer that he was ushered by an angel into the presence of God (see *3 Enoch* 1:1–6).

The symbolism of the veil extends to women during temple prayer. Paul wrote that the woman’s head should be covered during prayer (see 1 Corinthians 11:4–7, 13–15), which led to the practice of women covering their heads in the Catholic and Eastern churches (traditionally with a veil), though the practice is also known in orthodox Judaism.

We noted earlier that ancient temple prayer was sym-

bolic of the crucified Christ. It is in this light that we must understand some of the teachings found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In Hebrews 10:19–20 we read that the veil is the flesh of Jesus, who went ahead as a forerunner for us. The veil, then, is mortality, or our present carnal state. Jesus submitted the flesh to the will of the spirit and was thus able to pass beyond the carnal or earthly state into the celestial, where he now stands as the eternal high priest of the church and as our advocate with the Father. Having entered through the veil into the heavenly holy of holies, Christ desires that we, too, should pass by the veil into the presence of God. Hebrews 6:19–20 speaks of the “hope [which] we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Prayer is also tied to the opening of the heavenly door in the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus admonished, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8).<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusions

From the preceding discussion, we can see that ancient temple prayer was a symbol of Christ. From the wearing of the *tallith* (symbolizing the Lamb of God) to the raised arms with spread fingers (symbolizing the crucified Christ and, in Judaism, the cloven hoof of the sacrificial lamb) to the veil that opens when prayers are uttered, everything points to the Savior. It is altogether fitting, therefore, that we are commanded to pray to the Father in the name of Christ (see 2 Nephi 32:9; 3 Nephi 20:31).<sup>54</sup>

## Notes

1. In Doctrine and Covenants 88:119 and 109:8, the Lord calls the temple a “house of prayer” (compare D&C 59:9; 88:137). Indeed, prayer is one of the more important activities performed in today’s temples.

2. See M *Berakhot* 4:4–6.

3. The Jews prostrate themselves in prayer on the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur. In 3 *Maccabees* 1:16, we have an example of the priests, dressed in their sacred vestments, prostrating themselves to ask God for help.

4. Koran 22:27 requires alternate standing, bowing, and prostration during prayer. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (A.D. 839–923), in his *Taʾriḫ al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, noted that when Abraham delivered his wife to “the tyrant” (either Pharaoh or Abimelech), he “stood up to pray.” William M. Brinner, trans., *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Prophets and Patriarchs*, vol. 2 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 63.

5. See *Conflict of Adam and Eve* I, 5:1, 4; 23:4; 26:18–19; 27:8; 28:3; 32:7–8; 33:2; 34:3; 39:4; 41:8; 45:1; 47:6; 48:14; 50:1, 3; 52:3, 11; 54:1; 58:1, 3, 5; 61:13, 16; 63:6; 64:3, 8; 65:1; 66:2, 6; 68:10, 18; 69:2, 10; 71:6; 72:13, 15, 19–20; 73:6; and 77:4. Adam’s immediate family also prayed in this manner (see *Conflict of Adam and Eve* II, 6:10; 9:8; 11:3; 18:12), as did their descendants (see *Conflict of Adam and Eve* II, 17:3, 43; *Conflict of Adam and Eve* III, 5:18; 7:15; 19:2, 8; 20:3; 21:5; and *Conflict of Adam and Eve* IV, 11:11).

6. See *Conflict of Adam and Eve* I, 26:5; 28:3; and 58:1. For the same practice among Adam’s immediate family, see *Conflict of Adam and Eve* II, 17:43.

7. The exception is Yom Kippur, when one is expected to prostrate oneself on the ground.

8. Maurice Simon and Paul P. Levertoff, trans., *The Zohar* (New York: Bennet, 1958), 4:119.

9. See *Testament of Moses* 4:1; *Joseph and Aseneth* 11:15, 19.

10. See *Exegesis on the Soul*, II, 6, 136; *Second Apocalypse of James*, V, 4, 62.

11. Elisabeth S. Drower, trans., *The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 34.

12. W. Lowndes Lipscomb, *The Armenian Apocryphal Adam Literature* (West Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania, 1990), 160; compare 271.

13. See chapter 13 of *Kebrâ Negast* ("The Glory of Kings" of Ethiopia), in E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek* (London: Medici Society, 1922), 10.

14. See Book II ("The Death of Joseph") of *Zênâhu La-Yosêf*, a manuscript from the Dabra Bizon monastery, cited in E. Isaac, "The Ethiopic *History of Joseph*: Translation with Introduction and Notes," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 6 (April 1990): 112.

15. The text is cited in Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Bee* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1886), 98 n. 1.

16. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1886; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 8:563.

17. See Martin McNamara, trans., *Targum Neofiti 1: Exodus*, and Michael Maher, trans., *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Exodus*, *The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 2 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994), 40, 184.

18. Gerald Friedlander, trans., *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer* (New York: Hermon, 1965), 347.

19. Aryeh Kaplan, trans., *The Bahir* (York Beach, Maine: Weiser, 1979), 52.

20. Harry Sperling, Maurice Simon, and Paul P. Levertoff, trans., *The Zohar* (New York: Bennet, 1958), 3:206–7.

21. Kaplan, *The Bahir*, 49.

22. *Zohar* Genesis 65a quotes Rabbi Simeon as saying, "When praying, I raise my hand on high; . . . my mind is concentrated on the highest." Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon, trans., *The Zohar* (New York: Bennet, 1958), 1:212. In *Zohar* Genesis 94b, we read that Rabbi Abba "lifted up his hands and blessed them [some who studied the Torah]" (ibid., 1:310). *Zohar* Exodus 9a says that "R. Simeon then lifted up his hands in prayer to the

Holy One" (ibid., 3:26). *Zohar* Exodus 57a notes that "when a man raises up his hand in prayer, his purpose is to bless God" (ibid., 3:177). *Zohar* Exodus 67a–b speaks of spreading the hands and lifting them to heaven in prayer and blessing. *Zohar* Deuteronomy 260a says that he who "offers his prayer before his Master . . . must stand like the heavenly angels, who are also called 'those who stand.'" Maurice Simon and Harry Sperling, trans., *The Zohar* (New York: Bennet, 1958), 5:342. That standing is ordinary for prayer is also noted in *Zohar* Deuteronomy 260b (ibid., 5:342–43).

23. Simon and Sperling, *The Zohar*, 5:60.

24. Friedlander, *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer*, 58.

25. In the Keret text from Ugarit (KTU 1.14.II.22–24), lifting the hands to heaven parallels the offering of sacrifice. In his celestial vision, John saw the prayers of the saints rise before God from the hands of an angel, along with the incense he offered (Revelation 8:3–4). He also wrote of the odors from the vials held by the four beasts and the twenty-four elders being "the prayers of the saints" (Revelation 5:8; the idea corresponds to Psalm 141:2, "Let my prayer be set before thee as incense"). In 3 *Baruch* 14:2, Michael brings the prayers of men to God as an offering (compare 12:8). Michael offers sacrifice in the heavenly temple in the fourth of seven heavens, according to TB *Ḥagigah* 12b (compare *Seder Rabba de-Bereshit* 24; *Hadar*, Leviticus 9:2), while in other Jewish traditions, it is the angel Metatron who ministers as high priest in the heavenly tabernacle (*Midrash Rabbah Numbers* 12:12).

26. Florentino García Martínez, trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 308.

27. See Donald W. Parry, "Temple Worship and a Possible Reference to a Prayer Circle in Psalm 24," *BYU Studies* 32/4 (1992): 57–62.

28. Compare Doctrine and Covenants 88:74: "purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean." Doctrine and Covenants 88 contains many temple elements. Also note one of Jesus' beatitudes, "Blessed are



the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8), which reminds us that, in ancient Israel, God frequently appeared to the prophets in his temple. Returning to Psalm 24, we note that verse 6 speaks of those who seek the face of the Lord.

29. The Book of Mormon teaches that God will judge us on the basis of our actions, our words, and our thoughts (see Mosiah 4:30; Alma 12:14; compare D&C 18:38; 88:109; 137:8–9; Isaiah 55:7; Matthew 12:36–37; 15:19; Mark 7:21; Acts 8:22). According to 2 *Enoch* (J) 71:10, one can sin before God by word and thought, while in 3 *Enoch* 45:1, we read that the deeds and thoughts of all mankind are written on the curtain that hangs before God. The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* indicate that we should love in deeds and thoughts, in the heart (see *Testament of Gad* 6:1, 3; 7:7; compare *Testament of Joseph* 4:6).

30. James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 2:759.

31. *Ibid.*, 2:770.

32. See D. Plooij, "The Attitude of the Outspread Hands ('Orante') in Early Christian Literature and Art," *Expository Times* 23 (1912): 265–69, cited in John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 94–95.

33. See Budge, *The Queen of Sheba*, 181–82.

34. See M *Berakhot* 5:4; *Megillah* 4:3, 5–7; TB *Ta'anit* 26a–b; *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Genesis 12:3. The spreading of the hands in priestly blessing is also noted in *Zohar* Exodus 232b, Leviticus 35a, and Numbers 147b. *Bahir* 123–24 and 138 discuss the raising of the priest's hands during blessing, saying that the ten fingers represent the Ten *Sefirot* and the Ten Commandments.

35. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, "he lifted up his hands, and blessed" his apostles (Luke 24:49–51). The lifting of hands by the rabbis when blessing people is noted in *Zohar* Numbers 186a. In his new year greeting of 1 January 1901, President Lorenzo Snow declared, "I lift my hands and invoke the blessing of heaven upon the inhabitants of the earth." James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966),

3:335. The lifting of hands to heaven in blessing was a feature of the Kirtland and Nauvoo Temples (see *History of the Church*, 2:386–87; compare *History of the Church*, 3:352; 4:557; 5:333; 7:271). In the revelation commanding the construction of the Kirtland Temple, the Lord told the Saints to “establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God; that your incomings may be in the name of the Lord; that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord; that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with uplifted hands unto the Most High” (D&C 88:119–20). He further commanded that the formal greeting in the school of the prophets be made “with uplifted hands to heaven” (D&C 88:132, 135). Formerly, in the church, hands were raised during the blessing of the sacrament; the right hand is still raised when reciting the baptismal prayer.

36. The *Zohar*, describing the practice following the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, notes that when the priests spread their hands to bless the people, the right hand is held higher than the left (see *Zohar* Exodus 225a; *Zohar* Numbers 146a). *Zohar* Numbers 195b notes the following statement by Rabbi Eleazar: “I lift up my hand in prayer before the Holy King, for we have learnt that it is forbidden for a man to raise his hand above him save in prayer and blessing and supplication, since the fingers of man have an important significance—and so I do now, and say that if any man shall arrange his service thus before his Master and sincerely carry out this purpose, his prayer shall not return unanswered. At first he must make himself a servant to arrange a service of praise and song before Him. Again he becomes a servant to recite the standing-up prayer, and once more after saying his prayer.” Simon and Sperling, *The Zohar*, 5:279.

37. Ernest G. Clarke, trans., *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Numbers*, *The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 4 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995), 205.

38. C. D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 431.

39. Theodor Reik, *Pagan Rites in Judaism* (New York City:

Farrar, Straus, 1964), 154. The spreading of the priest's fingers during the blessing is noted in *Zohar* Numbers 186b. Reik noted that he had disobeyed the injunction to refrain from looking at the priests during the blessing. The prohibition against looking at the priests' fingers during the blessing is noted in TB *Ḥagigah* 16a and in the *Zohar* (Exodus 66b, Leviticus 84a, Numbers 147a).

40. Reik, *Pagan Rites in Judaism*, 155. *Zohar* Genesis 87a, referring to the blessing of Abraham by Melchizedek, adds, "After this model it behoves [*sic*] the priest on earth to intertwine his fingers when blessing in the synagogue in order that he may be linked with the Right and that the two worlds may be linked together." Sperling and Simon, *The Zohar*, 1:290.

41. See Reik, *Pagan Rites in Judaism*, 155.

42. See "The Day of Atonement," in Karl Abraham, *Selected Papers* (London: Hogarth, 1955), 145, cited in Reik, *Pagan Rites in Judaism*, 155–56.

43. For a brief discussion and illustration of the *tallith*, see John A. Tvedtnes, "Priestly Clothing in Bible Times," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 659–60.

44. These are the "fringes" mentioned in Numbers 15:37–39 and Deuteronomy 22:12 and the "hem" of the garment mentioned in Matthew 9:20, 36.

45. See Reik, *Pagan Rites in Judaism*, 110–11.

46. *Ibid.*, 141.

47. See *ibid.*, 141–51.

48. Compare John 1:36; 1 Nephi 10:10; 11:21, 27, 31–32; 12:6, 10–11, 18; 13:24, 28–29, 33–34, 38, 40–41; 14:1–3, 6–7, 10, 12–14, 25; 2 Nephi 31:4–6; 33:14; Alma 7:14; Mormon 9:2–3; and D&C 88:106. In the early Christian document known as the *Shepherd of Hermas*, those who take upon themselves the name of Christ are also expected to take upon them certain virtues, which are represented by articles of clothing. See the discussion in Tvedtnes, "Priestly Clothing in Bible Times," 672–75. In *1 Jeu 4*, an early Coptic document from Egypt, Christ tells his apostles that those

who bear his good qualities and his garment without understanding blaspheme his name.

49. The text does not specify that these must be adult males, but that is the intent of the passage. The number ten is based on the fact that God told Abraham that he would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if he found ten righteous persons therein (Genesis 18:32). One of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the *Manual of Discipline*, requires that wherever there are ten men of the community, there should also be a priest to bless the wine and bread and a man to interpret the law (1QS 6.3–6). In orthodox Judaism, all males who have received their bar mitzvah initiation (usually at age 13) qualify for the count.

50. For ancient Christian prayer circles, see Hugh W. Nibley, “The Early Christian Prayer Circle,” *BYU Studies* 19/1 (1978): 41–78, reprinted as chapter 3 in Hugh W. Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 45–99; and Hugh W. Nibley, *Old Testament and Related Studies* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1986), 161–66, 183. For LDS prayer circles, see D. Michael Quinn, “Latter-day Saint Prayer Circles,” *BYU Studies* 19/1 (1978): 79–105, and Bruce H. Porter, “Altar,” and George S. Tate, “Prayer Circle,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:36–37, 3:1120–21. The reader should note, however, that Todd Compton was correct when he wrote that “some of the examples cited by Nibley are not really group prayers, or are not really circles, and so on, though there are some similarities to prayer circles.” Todd Compton, review of *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*, by John W. Welch, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): 322.

51. Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 75.

52. Martin S. Cohen, *The Shi‘ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1985), 120.

53. Welch, in *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*, 90, has noted the threefold petition involved in asking, seeking, and knocking and ties this aspect of prayer and of the opening of the door to the temple.

54. I have noted elsewhere that the word *amen*, with which we

conclude our prayers, is a title of Christ. See John A. Tvedtnes, "Faith and Truth," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/2 (1994): 114–17.