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The “tablets of destiny” are the key to the future of individuals and nations

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13. “The tablets of destiny are consulted both in the cosmic sense by the gods, and yearly in a special temple chamber.... It was by this means that the will of deity was communicated to the people through the king or prophet for a given year”⁹⁹

For the pagan priests and kings who oversaw the temples of their ancient Near Eastern gods, the tablets of destiny, or tablets of fate, were the magic devices by which they controlled the masses. The power in these illusive tablets lay in the belief that they held the key to the future of individuals, as well as of the king, and even of the state. The eminent scholar E. A. Wallis Budge explained,

Nowhere in the texts is any description of this Tablet given, but we probably find a parallel to it in the Book of the Dead and in the Kur'n. In the former there is a mention of a “brick,” on which the decrees of Ptah-Tanen concerning the destiny of Osiris were inscribed (Chap. clxxii.1.15), and in the later we have the “Preserved Tablet” (Surah x.62), on which the destiny of every man was written at or before the creation of the world.¹⁰⁰

Even though the tablets are not described, we can know something of their power by the part they played in the war in heaven as told in the legends of the Mesopotamian gods. In these stories, whichever of the gods owned the tablets could control the affairs of both heaven and earth.

The story is that Marduk became the chief god of the people of Mesopotamia and ruled over them by virtue of his possession of the tablets. He could use the information they contained about men’s foreordinations to interfere in the lives of men and frustrate the purposes of the other gods. The priests of Babylon who sacrificed to Marduk hoped to get access to the information on the tablets by examining the markings on a sheep's liver or by using other devices to discover omens that predicted their future—and the future of the king and the people. The Babylonian god was believed to have had power to control each man and woman upon the earth because he had information about the foreordained destiny of each, and of the assignments they were given from the foundation of the world. (There is an interesting correlation between that belief and the belief of many Latter-day Saints that Satan has not forgotten who we are, and seeks to frustrate our purposes.)

⁹⁹Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 59. See Hauglid, “Sacred Time and the Temple,” 636-645 Hauglid, Brian M. “Sacred Time and the Temple.” In *Temples of the Ancient World*, edited by Donald W. Parry. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994.

¹⁰⁰E. A. Wallis Budge, *Babylonian Life and History* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1925), 80-83, 102, 104, 138.

*The Book of Mormon as an
Ancient Israelite Temple*

The Nephite temple that is the Book of Mormon is not a place for checking sheep's liver to find the secrets of things to come. However it is a legitimate key to knowing the covenants we made in our pre-mortal past and to know how they might be fulfilled now and in the future.

Individually, that is precisely true because the Book of Mormon is the map of the *way* along which every individual must walk to return to God. As such its principles may serve as a prophecy of the spiritual growth in the lives of every righteous person.

Collectively, it is different but also true, because as a key to the future the Book of Mormon contains many prophecies about the future of the Kingdom of God. These covenants were made with us and many others before the foundation of the world They talk about the restoration of the gospel and the gathering of Israel—and beyond until the millennial reign of the Savior.

The Book of Mormon is replete with the assurances that our Father knows us individually. He knows our assignments and the parts each of us will play in achieving his ultimate ends. He will fulfill all the covenants he made with each of us so that we can keep the covenants we made with him.