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The ancient temple is associated with the waters of life

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3. “The temple is often associated with the waters of life which flow from a spring within the building itself—or rather the temple is viewed as incorporating within itself such a spring or as having been built upon the spring....and of the life-giving, saving nature of the waters of life”²³

In ancient Israelite literature, the hill that arose from the chaotic waters became the Garden of Eden. It was then cleansed and watered by the pure, life-giving waters that fell from the heavens or issued from the depths of the earth. At the top of the hill—the center of the garden—was the tree of life and nearby was a spring that was the fountain of living water. That ancient Israelite tradition is reflected in the Old Testament where it says:

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

10. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads (Genesis 2:9-10).²⁴

The four rivers flowed from the Garden, one toward each of the cardinal directions. That could only be true if their origin was a hill or a mountain.

In the ancient world, three dimensional temples were frequently built on or near a spring or a lake whose water was used to give life to a garden. The temple described by Ezekiel is built

²³Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 57; see Parry, “Sacred Waters,” in “Garden of Eden,” 129-130.

²⁴See also, Moses 3:9-10, Abraham 5:9-10.

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above the mouth of such a spring.

1. Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.
2. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side....
7. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.
8. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed (Ezekiel 47:1-2, 7-8).

Both the water and the garden it sustains were symbolic of the value of the waters of life. On the rock outcropping where Solomon built his temple, there was no spring (the spring is just outside the city walls). But that same kind of symbolism was found as the great bronze basin that rested on the backs of twelve oxen, like a baptismal font. It is significant then, that Alma teaches about the close relationship of the waters of baptism and the tree of life.²⁵

²⁵See, for example, Alma 5:62 that seems to equate the waters of baptism with the waters of life. In Nauvoo, "There was a font erected in the basement story of the Temple, for the baptism of the dead, the healing of the sick and other purposes; this font was made of wood, and was only intended for the present use; but it is now removed, and as soon as the stone cutters get through with the cutting of the stone for the walls of the

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The connection between the waters of life and the tree of life shown in manmade three dimensional temples was both symbolic and real. That is also true with that connection in the Book of Mormon. Nephi explained:

And it came to pass that I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God; and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God (1 Nephi 11:25).

The most defining, and real experience we can have in this life is to feel the cleansing power of the Holy Ghost and the love of God. The purpose of the Book of Mormon is to bring us to that experience.

Temple, they will immediately proceed to cut the stone for and erect a font of hewn stone.” Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols., (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951), 7: 358.