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The ancient temple is the link between this world and the next

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11. “The temple is associated with the realm of the dead, the underworld, the afterlife, the grave. The unifying features here are the rites and worship of ancestors. Tombs can be, and in Egypt and elsewhere are, essentially temples (cf. the cosmic orientation, texts written on tomb walls which guide the deceased into the afterlife, etc). The unifying principle between temple and tomb is resurrection. Tombs and sarcophagi are "sacred places," sites of resurrection....The temple is the link between this world and the next”⁹⁴

The Savior’s paraphrasing Isaiah 61 in the Beatitudes is sufficient evidence that the Nephite people understood the principles of salvation for the dead.⁹⁵ But the link the Book of Mormon provides between this world and the world of the dead is much stronger than that.

The Book of Mormon, by its own claims, is precisely designed to be a communication between the living of our day and the dead of the past.

There are two themes in the Book of Mormon that bring its dead into the world of our living. The first is that the prophets of the Book of Mormon asked the Lord to preserve their words for future generations. The second is the fulfillment of the Lord's promise that he would do so, and that they would speak to the people in the last days,⁹⁶ as Nephi prophesied:

16 For those who shall be destroyed shall speak unto them out of the ground, and their speech shall be low out of the dust, and their voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit; for the Lord God will give unto him power, that he may whisper concerning them, even as it were out of the ground; and their speech shall whisper out of the dust (2 Nephi 26:16).

Similarly, among Moroni’s last words is this warning that the Lord will take our part of that communication very seriously.

⁹⁴Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 58. See King, *Come to the House of the Lord*, 140-153; Nibley, “Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times,” *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 100-167; Nibley, “Return to the Temple,” *Temple and Cosmos*, 79; James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1912), 89; John A. Tvedtnes, “Baptism for the Dead in Early Christianity,” *Temple in Time and Eternity*, 55-78.

⁹⁵Compare D&C 138:42, Isaiah 61:1-3, and 3 Nephi 12:4.

⁹⁶2 Nephi 3:19, Enos 1:16, Alma 37:12-19, Ether 12:22, D&C 3:19.

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27 And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust? (Moroni 10:27)

In the Book of Mormon the association of ourselves, the living, with the dead who speak to us through the words of the book is not symbolic. Nephi, Mormon and Moroni were not writing to a contemporary living audience. They were writing to us. They understood that, and repeatedly reminded us it was so. In the Book of Mormon, the teacher-student relationship between the dead and the living is real because of the efficacy of Moroni's promise.

4. And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

5. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things (Moroni 10-4-5).

The reality and the overriding importance of the message of the dead speaking to the living is the underpinning of the entire book. It is a voice from the dust, the fulfillment of the covenants between the Lord and his prophets that their words would be preserved for the Lamanites, the gentiles, and the Jews in the last days.