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The ancient temple is oriented toward the four cardinal directions

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6. “The temple is oriented toward the four world regions or cardinal directions, and to various celestial bodies such as the polar star. As such, it is, or can be, an astronomical observatory, the main purpose of which is to assist the temple priests in regulating the ritual calendar.”

“A ritual calendar”: the Book of Mormon itself is to the initiated a detailed sequential description of the way—of the stations along the path we must follow—to come into the presence of God. As the position of the stars, the light of the sun, and the phases of the moon taught the ancient priests the order of things, so the Book of Mormon teaches one where one’s Self is in his personal movement through the sequence of the cosmic myth and the reality of the ancient temple drama. The sequence is universal in that it is the same for everyone.

Yet it is individualistic in every detail. For even though the mountain is the same, every person climbs it at a different pace, stops to rest at a different place, or pauses to admire a different panoramic view—or at times to marvel at the glory in the minute beauty of just one columbine. The Book of Mormon abounds with magnificent panoramas and with individual flowers. Even though it offers each person an ascent that is so very personalized, there is a formality of the sequence of events and progressive stations it recommends. It presents a more perfect pattern by which we may structure our lives than could ever be deduced from the stars, or could ever be incorporated into the physical structure of any building. In this regard, the Book of Mormon is a more perfect temple than any actual building could ever be.

6b)The earthly temple is also seen as a copy or counterpart of a heavenly model.⁵²

There is a Temple in Kolob with a throne where the Father presides, and another from which the Savior conducts the affairs of the Council in Heaven. Ezekiel tried to describe the throne, but his words fell short of their purposes (Ezekiel 1:26-28).

Often, prophets who return to the Council in vision mention the throne. Two examples are Isaiah's own account:

1. I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.
2. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings (Isaiah 6:1b-2a).

And Nephi's description of Lehi's vision:

8. ...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).

⁵²The references in this footnote attest to the ancient belief that Solomon's temple was built to represent the temple of God, and its throne, his throne. That celestial temple is understood to be the place where the Council in Heaven met. Paul alludes to that in the first chapter of Ephesians, and Joseph Fielding Smith (quoted below). In the poetic version of D&C 76, the Prophet Joseph identified the place where the Council met as Kolob(also quoted below). See Lundquist, "Cosmic Sanctuary," in "Temple, Covenant, and Law," 289-291; Nibley, "Circle and the Square," *Temple and Cosmos*, 139-172; Nibley, "What Makes a Temple? The Cosmic Plan," in "What Is a Temple?" 22-25; Parry, Jay A. and Donald W. Parry. "The Temple in Heaven: Its Description and Significance." In *Temples of the Ancient World*, edited by Donald W. Parry, ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 515-532.

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When Solomon built his Temple, its Holy of Holies contained a throne that represented the throne of God. On either side were two great cherubim (1 Kings 6).⁵³ Some scholars say they guard the throne, others suggest they are to be God's messengers. They serve the same function as members of the Council in Heaven, so probably represent members of that Council.

In February 1843, the Prophet Joseph wrote in poetry form his personal version of the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. The poem, called *A Vision*, was published in the *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1843, and republished in the *Millennial Star*, August, 1843. It is full of references to sacred space, sacred time, the heavenly temple, and the throne of God. Following are two groups of stanzas from that poem. In the first, the Prophet identifies Kolob as the seat of the Council in Heaven.

His throne is the heavens—his life-time is all
Of eternity *now*, and eternity *then*;
His union is power, and none stays his hand,
The Alpha, Omega, for ever. Amen.

For thus saith the Lord, in the spirit of truth,
I am merciful, gracious, and good unto those
That fear me, and live for the life that's to come:
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 —

⁵³Seraphims and cherubims are symbolic creatures who attend the throne of God. Cherubims were embroidered on the great veil of both Moses's Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple. They are symbols representing the members of the Council in Heaven. Their wings represent their power to move and to act, as in D&C 77:4.

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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.

Great things of the future I'll show unto them,
Yea, things of the vast generations to rise;
For their wisdom and glory shall be very great,
And their pure understanding extend to the skies.⁵⁴

In the second set he bears his testimony.

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 worshipping 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,
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,

⁵⁴Joseph Smith, *A Vision*, published in the *Times and Seasons*,
February 1, 1843.

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Even all that career 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.⁵⁵

While we have no extensive description of the heavenly temple itself, we do know something of its purposes. One such description of its purposes occupies the whole first chapter of Ephesians. Verses 20-22 identify the place:

20. Which he [the Father] wrought in Christ, when he [the Father] raised him [the Savior] from the dead, and set him [the Savior] at his [the Father's] 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 hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:20-22).

The event described there is the enthronement of the resurrected Savior, the place, then, must be the Father's throne room, which is the Holy of Holies in the heavenly temple. With that understanding of the phrase, "heavenly places," Paul's introduction takes on a celestial, pre-mortal meaning:

3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who [the Father] hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

⁵⁵Joseph Smith, *A Vision*, published in the *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1843.

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4. According as he [the Father] hath chosen us in him [the Savior] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (Ephesians 1:3-4).⁵⁶

In support of the idea that there was a church organization with enabling ordinances in the pre-mortal spirit world, President Joseph Fielding Smith explained:

During the ages in which we dwelt in the pre-mortal state we not only developed our various characteristics and showed our worthiness and ability, or the lack of it, but we were also where such progress could be observed. It is reasonable to believe that there was a Church organization there. The 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.⁵⁷

He then quoted Ephesians 1:3-4. He might also have used I Nephi 20 & 21, Isaiah 61:1, D&C 93:21-23, Alma 12-13, Isaiah 6, or Psalm 23. There was, in that world of “green pastures” and “still waters,” a clearly defined “way”— “the paths of righteousness.”⁵⁸

As Ephesians opens a portal that calls to our remembrance the ordinances and covenants of our pre-mortal experiences, Alma

⁵⁶For a discussion of Ephesians 1 and our premortal covenants see Baker and Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord* (2011 edition), 549-54.

⁵⁷Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* (Genealogical Society of Utah, 1949), 50-1.

⁵⁸For a discussion of Psalm 23 see Baker and Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord* (2011 edition), 431-41.

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12 and 13 opens it wider still. If we read his twice-used phrase, “in the first place,” to mean “in the *first* place,” Alma is telling about our experiences a very, very long time ago.