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The ancient temple is associated with abundance and prosperity

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9a. “The temple is associated with abundance and prosperity, indeed is perceived as the giver of these”⁷⁶

The ancient temple was associated with abundance and prosperity, because the temple priests dominated much of the local economy. That is not true of the Book of Mormon.⁷⁷ What is true is that the Book of Mormon is the source of prosperity—but only if we understand that word as the Book of Mormon uses it.

*Prosper*⁷⁸ is a code word in the Book of Mormon and is used to represent its most important purpose. Thus, when understood in that way, the Book of Mormon temple comes closer to performing the function of a legitimate temple than an economically based three dimensional temple could ever do.

Prosper as code was used by the Lord when he spoke to Nephi, who wrote,

19. And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart.

20. And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; [Their prospering will precede their arriving in the land of promise, so it can't have reference to good crops after they have arrived. (It doesn't preclude that, of course, but it is simply about something else altogether) Nephi's prospering

⁷⁶Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 58.

⁷⁷However, if it were not for their testimonies of the Book of Mormon not many would pay tithing.

⁷⁸For a discussion of “prosper” see Baker and Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord* (2011 edition), 191-93.

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would occur while he was still in the desert where he was hungry much of the time.] yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands. [It will soon become apparent that “land” is another code word.]

22. And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler [king] and a teacher [priest] over thy brethren (1 Nephi 2:19-22).⁷⁹

The striking thing about this statement is that the opposite of the word “prosper” is not to have bad crops, or even to be hungry.⁸⁰

⁷⁹The earliest use of “prosper” as a code word that relates to having an abundance of spiritual blessings may be in the Psalm 45. The psalm is a scene of a play, and is spoken by many voiced. The first is a narrator or chorus speaking:

1. My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer [addressing the king, the narrator says:]
2. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips [some ordinance has just been performed]: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. [the words of the blessing then follow]
3. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. [glory and majesty are probably the names of clothing, one representing priesthood and the other kingship (as in Job 40:10)]
4. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

⁸⁰Code words would not be code words if they were always used as such. “Prosper” is a good example of that too. Alma strips away the veil from the code and uses it with perfect clarity when he tells the people of Ammonihah,

13 Behold, do ye not remember the words which he spake unto Lehi, saying that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land? And again it is said that: Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from the presence of the

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Rather, it is to “be cut off from the presence of the Lord.” That relationship of ideas is reaffirmed by Lehi (2 Ne. 1:20, 4:4), and also by Alma who said,

13. Behold, do ye not remember the words which he spake unto Lehi, saying that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land? And again it is said that: Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.

14. Now I would that ye should remember, that inasmuch as the Lamanites have not kept the commandments of God, they have been cut off from the presence of the Lord. Now we see that the word of the Lord has been verified in this thing, and the Lamanites have been cut off from his presence, from the beginning of their transgressions in the land (Alma 9:13-14).

Later, Alma explained,

But behold, my son, this is not all; for ye ought to know as I do know, that inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land; and ye ought to know also, that inasmuch as

Lord.

14 Now I would that ye should remember, that inasmuch as the Lamanites have not kept the commandments of God, they have been cut off from the presence of the Lord (Alma 9:13-14a).

But later, in that same speech, he uses “prospered” in its most ordinary sense:

22 Yea, and after having been delivered of God out of the land of Jerusalem... and they have been prospered until they are rich in all manner of things (Alma 9:22).

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ye will not keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence. Now this is according to his word (Alma 36:30).

So in the Book of Mormon, the code word “prosper” and the code phrase “prosper in the land” mean to come unto Christ—either the process of doing so, or to actually have already done so. Mormon's narrative and the prophets he quotes use that phrase both ways. He tells one story about what happened when the ideas of the law of consecration began to take hold in the church under king Mosiah. The people became rich in worldly things. After that, as their adherence to the law of consecration matured, “the Lord did visit them and did prosper them” (Mosiah 27:3-7; see also Alma 9:13, 38:1, 50:20).

As we would expect, this idea of prospering is frequently coupled with the admonition to keep God's commandments. Alma made that association when he said,

Blessed art thou and thy children; and they shall be blessed, inasmuch as they shall keep my commandments they shall prosper in the land. But remember, inasmuch as they will not keep my commandments they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord (Alma 50:20⁸¹).

Nephi associated the phrase “prosper in the land” with being able to read the scriptures and to know how to keep God's commandments. When he wrote about his struggle with the idea of killing Laban, he remembered,

14 And now, when I, Nephi, had heard these words, I remembered the words of the Lord which he spake unto me in the wilderness, saying that: Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall

⁸¹See Jarom 1:9, Mosiah 2:22, Alma 48:25.

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prosper in the land of promise.

15 Yea, and I also thought that they could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the law of Moses, save they should have the law.

16 And I also knew that the law was engraven upon the plates of brass (1 Nephi 4:14-16).

King Benjamin also related reading the scriptures and keeping the commandments to the idea of to “prosper in the land.”

And now, my sons, I would that ye should remember to search them [the plates of brass] diligently, that ye may profit thereby; and I would that ye should keep the commandments of God, that ye may prosper in the land according to the promises which the Lord made unto our fathers (Mosiah 1:7).

Mormon used the phrase, “prosper in the land,” to mean that captain Moroni and his followers received revelation. The revelation was about the way they should prepare for war.

And this was their faith, that by so doing God would prosper them in the land, or in other words, if they were faithful in keeping the commandments of God that he would prosper them in the land; yea, warn them to flee, or to prepare for war, according to their danger (Alma 48:15).

The word “prosper” is not always a code word, of course. Depending on its context, it is as apt to refer to economic or political success as it is to serve as a code word in the sacral language. In the following, King Benjamin seems to make an interesting parallel between both usages. First he used “prospered”

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to suggest (without limiting its meaning) that the Lord had kept them from falling to the hands the Lamanites. Then, almost immediately thereafter, he used the phrase “prosper in the land” to mean that no enemy, neither spiritual nor physical, would have the power to keep them out of the presence of God. He said,

31. And now, my brethren, I would that ye should do as ye have hitherto done. As ye have kept my commandments, and also the commandments of my father, and have prospered, and have been kept from falling into the hands of your enemies, even so if ye shall keep the commandments of my son, or the commandments of God which shall be delivered unto you by him, ye shall prosper in the land, and your enemies shall have no power over you.

32. But, O my people, beware lest there shall arise contentions among you, and ye list to obey the evil spirit, which was spoken of by my father Mosiah.

33. For behold, there is a wo pronounced upon him who listeth to obey that spirit; for if he listeth to obey him, and remaineth and dieth in his sins, the same drinketh damnation to his own soul; for he receiveth for his wages an everlasting punishment, having transgressed the law of God contrary to his own knowledge (Mosiah 2:31-33).

One of the most interesting uses of the phrase “prosper in the land” is in association with Nephite clothing that was “to cloth our nakedness.” That last phrase is also a code. It is like the one used in the Old Testament to describe the sacred garments worn by the High Priest.⁸² King Zeniff chose to use that phrase in his own autobiography. He wrote,

And I did cause that the women should spin, and

⁸²Exodus 28:41-42.

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toil, and work, and work all manner of fine linen, yea, and cloth of every kind, that we might clothe our nakedness; and thus we did prosper in the land—thus we did have continual peace in the land for the space of twenty and two years (Mosiah 10:5).

Perhaps the most significant use of the code phrase, “prosper in the land,” is when Mormon described the prophet Helaman to his readers. Mormon gave a quick spiritual biography of Helaman in which he employed almost all the accolades used in the Old Testament to describe a faithful, prophet-king. He wrote,

Nevertheless Helaman did fill the judgment-seat with justice and equity; yea, he did observe to keep the statutes, and the judgments, and the commandments of God; and he did do that which was right in the sight of God continually; and he did walk after the ways of his father, insomuch that he did prosper in the land (Helaman 3:20).

Even a casual reader must admit that after such a list of spiritual superlatives, it would be rather anticlimactic to suggest, as their conclusion, that the king also made a lot of money that year. It says that, of course, if one wishes to read it that way. But it also says something much more important and much more consistent with the spiritual crescendo to which the early part of the verse is building.

In summary, as the sacred encoded language uses the word “prosper,” the temple text of the Book of Mormon not only promises that we may “prosper in the land,” it also illuminates the way that leads us to the fulfillment of that promise.