

REPRESENTING THE DIVINE ASCENT: THE DAY OF ATONEMENT IN CHRISTIAN AND NEPHITE SCRIPTURE AND PRACTICE

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The Passover is the Mosaic Festival most overtly connected to Christ's passion in the New Testament.¹ According to the three synoptic gospels, Christ himself provided the imagery when he used the Passover meal (Luke 22:15) to celebrate his atoning sacrifice, thereby preparing the way for the later Christian rite of communion, or Eucharist (or the "sacrament" for Latter-day Saints).² "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matthew 26:26–28).³ Paul also presented Christ as the Passover lamb, emphasizing the image of the feast of unleavened bread — the communal meal located outside the boundaries of the temple: "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7–8).

Notwithstanding the central imagery of the Passover sacrifice and meal,⁴ however, they were not the only Mosaic practices that provided foundational symbols for Christianity.⁵ Imagery from the Day of Atonement, the most sacred festival of the Jewish year, was prevalent in descriptions of Jesus's redemptive mission as found in the Epistle to the Hebrews and elsewhere. It also supplied symbolic imagery for Christian sacraments such as the communion or Eucharist. In similar ways, Book of Mormon authors — particularly, as I will propose, Nephi in 2 Nephi 31–32 — relied upon images and themes from the Day of Atonement. Finally, I will propose that modern Latter-day Saint sacraments (known as "ordinances") also build upon images rooted in the Day of Atonement. Both traditional Christian and Latter-day Saint Christian sacraments take on added meaning when viewed through the light of the High Priest's divine ascent into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement. The

festival of Yom Kippur was the “acme of all temple rituals.”⁶ It continues to exert influence in Christianity today, although that influence is rarely recognized.

Before proceeding, it is important to acknowledge that liturgical symbols are by nature multivalent, pointing to various appropriate meanings and interpretations.⁷ To offer one correct interpretation would be to reduce the liturgical value of the symbol, which is designed to be filled anew with meaning each time the worshipper participates in the sacred ritual, approaching it through the light of current experiences and viewpoints. Some readers, whether from Jewish, Christian, or Latter-day Saint Christian backgrounds, may disagree with the interpretation of the symbols as found in this paper. Others will, I hope, be led to understand new potentialities for symbolic actions which they have studied or in which they have participated. I do not intend the interpretations below to stand as the sole meaning or even as the “most correct” but rather as potentially appropriate interpretations as signified by some of the textual, linguistic, and visual evidence.

Imagery, Symbolism, and Practices of the Jewish Day of Atonement

Jewish Textual Sources

This brief survey of Day of Atonement practices will highlight those actions that have been most important in later Christian usage and adaptation. Although I will present a composite account, it is very difficult today to know which of these practices were part of early, pre-exilic practices in Solomon’s temple, which were added in the Second Temple after the return from Babylon, and which represent even later accretions. For decades, scholarly consensus pointed to the Day of Atonement as a post-exilic creation. Recently some scholars are shifting their estimates in the other direction, to an early origin for this holy day.⁸ The following texts are the most helpful in understanding ancient practices of the Day of Atonement.⁹

In the Torah, the Day of Atonement is discussed in multiple locations: Leviticus 16 (the fullest biblical account), Leviticus 23:27-32, Leviticus 25:9-10, Exodus 30:10, and Numbers 29:7-11. The next-earliest witnesses to Day of Atonement practices are found in Josephus (first century AD), Philo (first century AD), *Jubilees* (second century BC), and the Dead Sea Scrolls (first century BC to first century AD). These texts

show the growing importance of communal prayer, reflecting and likely expanding upon the high-priestly confession of sin in Leviticus 16:21, and encouraging all Israelites to make prayers of confession.¹⁰ Like Passover, then, Yom Kippur contained elements practiced outside of the temple that mirrored the temple ritual and allowed for broader community participation.

In its detailed description of the temple ritual, Mishna *Yoma*, along with the later Palestinian and Babylonian Talmudic additions, is the latest of the ancient witnesses. It appears to reflect portions of the earlier practice, but its assertions are most likely written from post-Second Temple fascination with the temple cult, leading to an effort to reconstruct the Day of Atonement following Leviticus 16.¹¹ As will be seen, *Yoma* contradicts the earlier sources mentioned above in certain places, and — likely written by non-priests — shows evidence that its primary purpose was to strengthen the later rabbinic practices of Yom Kippur in the synagogue.

Later Jewish texts from medieval times include extensive directions for Yom Kippur, known as the *Sefer Avodah*. These texts demonstrate how the rituals of the Day of Atonement were in a sense re-enacted through recitation of the biblical texts after the temple was destroyed.¹² Some elements from the medieval texts may point to earlier practices that are simply not described in the earlier texts, or they may represent later adaptations.

Main Elements of the Day of Atonement Rituals

Yom Kippur was known as the Great Day, or simply as The Day, the greatest of Jewish holy days.¹³ It was the only ritual that incorporated full use of the temple precincts. It was on Yom Kippur alone that entrance into the holy of holies, representing God's presence, was allowed.¹⁴ According to Talmud *Yoma* (which may represent later additions), it was the only day of the year on which the name of God was uttered only by the high priest authorized to speak the "ineffable name" ten times during the various sacrifices.¹⁵ He did so as the representative of God's entire people of Israel. Yom Kippur was the only day that provided a set, ritual purpose for the high priest, the holiest of Israelites, whose direct participation was not ritually required on other days, according to biblical texts.

Leviticus 16:1-4 details the requirements that had to be fulfilled for the high priest to gain authorized entrance into the holy of holies. Other texts, such as Philo and Josephus, support the practice described

in Mishna *Yoma* of a week-long preparation for the holy day (including sprinkling with ashes from the red heifer on the third and seventh days), but some of the actions described in Mishna *Yoma* (such as requiring the high priest to stay up all night so no accidental ritual impurity could occur) likely do not reflect actual temple practice.¹⁶ The festival began with the preparation of the sacrifices, the identity of which is different in Leviticus 16 and Numbers 29 but which included a bull, at least one ram, and at least two goats.¹⁷ After offering the regular morning sacrifice in his typical golden garments, the high priest bathed himself with water and changed into simple white garments of linen. These included undergarments, a tunic, a sash, and a head covering. The bull was then sacrificed as a sin offering for the high priest. From the two goats, one was chosen by lot to be sacrificed to Yahweh. The second goat, designated the scapegoat, was identified by a red thread. The high priest entered into the holy of holies first to place burning incense before the mercy seat (Hebrew *kapporet*), also offering an intercessory prayer while in the sanctuary. Next, the blood of the sin sacrifice (the bull) was carried in a golden bowl into the holy of holies so its blood could be sprinkled on and before the mercy seat. He then slaughtered the goat designated for the Lord and entered the holy of holies again in order to sprinkle its blood on and before the ark. He also used a mixture of the goat's and bull's bloods to sprinkle the sanctuary and the altars of incense and sacrifice. According to Leviticus 16, these acts atoned for the sins of Israel, which had been imputed to the sanctuary. According to Mishna *Yoma*, there may have been an additional entrance to remove the incense.

After the high priest's return from the holy of holies, he laid both hands on the second goat to designate it as the scapegoat in a confessional prayer. The scapegoat's title of Azazel has been interpreted by most as indicating its demonic nature.¹⁸ Bearing the sins of Israel upon its head, the second goat was cast out of the community to die in the wilderness (said to be cast from a cliff to die in Mishna *Yoma* 6:6), thereby allowing Israel to gain forgiveness of sin and to overcome demonic influences. Afterward the high priest washed again and changed back into his regular high priestly attire before performing a burnt offering sacrifice for himself and for all of Israel with the two rams. He may also have sacrificed the additional animals detailed in Numbers 29:7-11, a bull, another ram, and seven lambs. The many sacrifices conclude with the typical evening sacrifice.

Sirach adds several details that may pertain to the Day of Atonement, including the prostration of the people upon hearing the sounds of

trumpets (also found in Mishna *Tamid* 7:3) and falling down again when the high priest blessed the people.¹⁹ He also mentions that at least part of the day's services included singing and prayers by the people. The Second-Temple Day of Atonement practices appear to have included both fasting and extensive prayer by the community, who were dressed all in white, but also a joyful conclusion to the day with dancing and celebration. According to one interpretation of an account found at Qumran, readings from the creation were also done during the day.²⁰ These readings are clearly included in later accounts from medieval times.²¹

Although the westward journey of the priest — through the doors of the temple into the holy place and to the altar of incense before the veil — was re-enacted on a daily basis, only the activities of Yom Kippur finished the imagery of the return into the presence of God, as the high priest was allowed to pass the cherubim or angels stitched upon the veil into the symbolic presence of God displayed by his throne, the mercy seat (Heb. *kapporet*) in the holy of holies.²² This high-priestly procession reflects the journey of Israel past the cherubim placed eastward of Eden and back into the presence of God, reversing the effects of the fall of Adam and Eve. Entrance into the presence of God entailed the risk of death if the high priest was not appropriately prepared.²³ The danger of entering the presence of God explains one of the symbolic purposes of the cherubim, to protect mankind from inappropriate entrance but also to grant entrance when the individual was appropriately prepared and authorized. The Day of Atonement was the only day of the year that allowed the community of Israel as a whole to receive absolution from its sins. The loss of the temple in 70 AD was deeply felt by Jews and presumably had a significant impact on Christians, as well.²⁴

New Testament and Later Christian Use of Day of Atonement Imagery

Numerous passages in the New Testament refer to fasting,²⁵ a biblically-mandated practice on the Day of Atonement but certainly not the only occasion of fasting in Jesus's day. More pointedly, in Romans 3:25, in what is likely the earliest reference, Paul refers to Jesus as a "sacrifice of atonement (Gr. *hilastērion*), through the shedding of his blood," thereby connecting Jesus's atoning offering with the blood of the Day of Atonement sacrifice that was sprinkled on the mercy seat by the high priest.²⁶ The Epistle to the Hebrews uses the same word (Greek

hilastērion), but the context makes it clear that it refers to the actual mercy seat.

No New Testament passages develop the connection of the symbolic imagery of the Day of Atonement with Jesus's offering more extensively than the Epistle to the Hebrews (typically dated c. 60-95 AD) with the central thrust relying on Day of Atonement imagery found in Hebrews 8-10. (The connection between Hebrews 6 and the divine ascent will be discussed further below.) According to Hebrews 8, Jesus was the true "priest" in heaven after whose example the priests under the Law of Moses were modeled (see especially Hebrews 8:4). They modeled the old covenant (8:9), but Jesus has provided a new covenant (8:10) that will now be written in the "mind" and in the "hearts" of God's people.

Hebrews 9 then outlines the imagery of the tabernacle, in a sense recreating the journey of the High Priest through the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement:

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand and the table with its consecrated bread; this was called the holy place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the most holy place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant ... Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover (Gr. *hilastērion*, Hebrews 9:1-5).

The only item of significance left out in this description of the holy place and the holy of holies is the altar of incense that stood before the second veil. The altar of sacrifice and the laver of water in the courtyard outside the tabernacle are not referenced until later. The chapter goes on to describe that the priests proceeded only to the westernmost side of the holy place, before the veil, and that only the high priest, on one day of the year, proceeded beyond the holy place and into the holy of holies (9:6-7). Hebrews 9 discusses that the high priest required the sacrifice of an animal (imagery pointing to the altar of sacrifice) along with gifts of food and drink (imagery pointing to the table of shewbread), ceremonial washings (imagery pointing outside the tabernacle to the laver of water), and other "external regulations" (9:9-10) to be able to enter into the inner sanctuary. "The Holy Spirit was showing by this that *the way* into the most holy place had not yet been disclosed" (9:8, emphasis added). Christ, on the other hand, did not travel through the earthly tabernacle but traveled through the heavenly tabernacle upon which the earthly was

modelled. He did not need the blood of goats and bulls; unlike the earthly high priest, he entered by virtue of his own blood (9:12). The tabernacle on earth was not cleansed by the blood of animals, a sanctification made necessary because of the polluting influence of the congregation's sins, but instead the heavenly tabernacle was cleansed by his own blood, so Jesus could safely bring the congregation of Christians into God's presence.²⁷ He did not need to die each year, as with the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement (9:25), but was able to die once to seal his testament or will (9:16-17), and thus "he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence" (9:24).

Hebrews 10:1 points again to the high priest's ascent into the holy of holies, year after year, as made possible by yearly animal sacrifices. After reviewing the significance of Jesus's offering that would complete and fulfill all previous yearly blood offerings of animals, Hebrews uses the imagery of the divine ascent to encourage Christians forward into the presence of God. In the past only the High Priest could enter God's presence, and this only as symbolized by the earthly tabernacle. Now all can enter into God's true presence in heaven because of Jesus's atoning sacrifice:

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, *by a new and living way* opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing but encouraging one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 9:20-25, emphasis added).

In these verses, the imagery of the Day of Atonement serves to remind the Christian of the importance of faith in the atoning blood of Christ sprinkled upon them and of having their bodies washed with pure water (using the imagery of the laver, probably to point to baptism). The "Day approaching" of Christ's return becomes the focal point of Christian expectation of the returning presence of God, whereas the "Day of Atonement" was the focal point under the Law of Moses.

Later Christian interpretation continued to rely on Day of Atonement imagery to teach principles of the gospel. For Tertullian (c. 155-240)²⁸ and Theodoret of Cyrus (c. 393-458),²⁹ the two goats together pointed to the true nature of Christ. The goat that was sacrificed and whose blood was carried into the holy of holies represented the divine nature of Christ, unsullied by the taint of human sin he had carried and accepted into the presence of God. The scapegoat that was driven into the wilderness represented Christ's human nature under the weight and taint of human sin he carried, rejected by God and thus separated from his presence to die alone.

These two Christian commentators were building upon an early, lengthy Christian interpretation of the Day of Atonement given by the Epistle of Barnabas (typically dated 80-120 AD and found in its entirety at the end of the Codex Sinaiticus).³⁰ This commentary connects the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement with the Aqedah — Abraham's binding of Isaac — both pointing to the atonement of Christ (Barnabas 7:3).³¹ It goes on to include the differentiation of the two goats, one that was cursed and on which was placed a crown, symbolically represented by the red woolen thread used to mark the scapegoat (Barnabas 7:11). The suffering of the scapegoat is likened to the suffering that the repentant sinner must undergo: "whoever desires to take away the scarlet wool must suffer greatly ... and can only gain possession of it through affliction. Likewise, he says, 'those who desire to see me and to gain my kingdom must receive me through affliction and suffering'" (Barnabas 7:11).

Christians did not use connections with the Day of Atonement only in their texts. They also implemented them in their buildings and liturgy. In part, this adaptation of temple symbolism can be attributed to the use of patterns found in the synagogue.³² An "ark" within which is housed the biblical scroll is found at the back of the synagogue and is thought to symbolize the presence of God among the Jewish worshippers. By the fourth century, some churches had begun to be called temples,³³ and Eusebius had described the Holy Sepulcher (the area where Jesus's crucified body was placed and which was discovered empty) as the holy of holies, signifying the holy witness of the resurrected of God.³⁴ For those making pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the Holy Sepulcher substituted for the holy of holies.

The connections to the divine ascent were not evident only in the structure of the church. The church was designed to provide a setting for liturgical reenactments. Beginning in the second century, bishops and others who officiate in mass or the divine liturgy are called "high

priests” and “priests”, and “high priesthood” is used to describe anyone officiating with the Eucharist.³⁵ The *hilastērion* (i.e., place of atonement) became the holy of holies in the Greek church, where the emblem of the Divine Liturgy — the blood of the sacrifice — was carried by the Christian “high priest.” *Anaphora* is the Greek word in the Septuagint used for the priestly offering of a sacrifice. This word — or the “Eucharistic prayer” in western Christian traditions — was and is used in Christian services as a title for the priestly prayer in which the sacred name of God is spoken through priestly authority and the symbols of bread and wine are consecrated as the body and blood of Christ in this holiest section at the rear of the church. The area is separated by a veil — known as an iconostasis or screen in Orthodox churches — on which are typically found the images of Mary or other saints. Incense is often lit before this veil or iconostasis and is kept burning during the liturgical celebration. At times the emblems of the Eucharist are placed — behind the curtain, veil, or separation and in the holy of holies — on the holy table, sometimes referred to as a throne, in which can be stored bones of saints, the scriptures, or the elements of the Eucharist. With its position standing in the holy of holies, this table can appropriately signify the mercy seat over which the Eucharist is prepared and consecrated as Christ’s flesh and blood, meaning that God’s presence dwells there over the table. After the high priestly prayer, the emblems of the Eucharist are brought out, still covered in a veil or cloth, which is then removed following more prayer, allowing the worshippers to enter symbolically into the presence of God. Cyprian connects worshippers in Christian communal prayer with Old Testament participants in the high priest’s intercessory prayer as they wait for him to exit the holy of holies with the Eucharist blessed:

For, if Christ Jesus, our Lord and God, is himself the high priest of God the Father and first offered himself a sacrifice to the Father and commanded this to be done in commemoration of himself, certainly the priest who imitates that which Christ did and then offers the true and full sacrifice in the Church of God the Father, if he thus begins to offer according to what he sees Christ himself offered, performs truly in the place of Christ.³⁶

The connection with the Day of Atonement would become even more explicit in medieval Christian practice, with some authors making

full and clear references to Yom Kippur, even including a form of the scapegoat ritual.³⁷

Although the bishop's connection with the high priest in the rite of Eucharist has been described, his ordination — with its connections to the divine ascent — must still be mentioned. In 372, Gregory of Nazianz described his ordination in this way:

For you anoint a high priest and put on him the [high-priestly] robe, and crown him with the turban, and lead him to the altar of the spiritual burnt offering, and sacrifice the calf of perfection, and fill his hands with the Spirit [to “fill the hand” is the literal meaning of “ordain” or “consecrate” in the Hebrew Old Testament], and lead him into the holy of holies in order to initiate him.³⁸

With this view of the ordination of a Christian bishop, the Day of Atonement imagery is basically complete with: sacred vestments, anointing by the Holy Spirit, and a Eucharistic procession past an altar of incense and past the veil upon which are found images of saints (acting as cherubim) into a holy of holies containing the holy table, or throne of God, where the high priestly prayer is offered, speaking the name of Christ with priestly authority and consecrating the emblems as the body and blood — the very presence — of Christ while the congregation prays without. The emblems are then brought out, still covered by a veil, followed by further prayer, at which time the veil is removed, and the worshippers are invited into the presence of God.

The Book of Mormon and the Day of Atonement

An excellent study has already detailed possible connections between King Benjamin's speech, Mosiah's coronation in the Book of Mormon, and the High Holy Days festivals that include Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year), Yom Kippur, and the Feast of Tabernacles.³⁹ I will not repeat that study here as additional evidence for continued Nephite awareness and practice of the Day of Atonement.

Additionally, both Lehi and Alma the Younger (who built on the imagery provided by Lehi) described their visionary ascent into the presence of God in terms provided by the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies, which is flanked on either side by two angelic cherubim: “[Lehi] was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, 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; see also Alma 36:22). This holy of holies imagery is dependent on the concept of authorized priestly entrance into the presence of God, as in the Day of Atonement festival. Although not discussing it in terms of the Day of Atonement ritual, scholars have previously pointed out connections between these visionary experiences and other biblical throne theophanies.⁴⁰

Next, the word “atonement” holds a prominent place in the Book of Mormon, where it is mentioned twenty-eight times, compared to eighty times in the Old Testament (as the Hebrew *kippur*, all but four of which are found in the temple texts of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers), and twice in the New Testament (as the Greek *hilastērion*, depending on how it is translated). It is tempting to see the prevalent use of the word “atonement” in the Book of Mormon as a reflection of the Nephites’ Old Testament (rather than New Testament) ancestry and to look for possible connections to the Day of Atonement as it points to Christ’s sacrificial offering at each occurrence of the word. While this would create an interesting study (the Book of Mormon occurrences are found in the teachings of Lehi, Jacob, Nephi, King Benjamin, Abinadi, Alma the Younger, and Amulek), the analysis would be complicated by our inability to know the original word(s) behind the English translation of “atonement.” The most important connections are likely to be found in Amulek’s insistence, as in Hebrews, on the supremacy and finality of the atoning sacrifice of Christ (see Alma 34:13-15).

In the following paragraphs, I will propose that in 2 Nephi 31-32, Nephi used the imagery of the high priestly ascent into the holy of holies in order to provide a foundation for his teachings of what Article of Faith 4 calls the first principles and ordinances of the gospel and what Nephi calls “the doctrine of Christ” (31:2). In teaching these concepts of the doctrine of Christ that may have been new to the Nephites, who had been living under the Levitical Law of Moses until their flight into the wilderness, he provided them with a familiar context by describing them in terms provided by the Temple of Solomon. In his book, *An Other Testament: On Typology*, Joseph Spencer has already proposed a connection between 2 Nephi 31-33 and the veil of Solomon’s Temple. He actually sees this entire section as Nephi’s textual veil leading into the holy of holies and draws connections between Nephi’s sacred teachings as the culmination of his thought, leading from the Creation (1 Nephi 1-18), to the Fall (1 Nephi 19 – 2 Nephi 5), to the Atonement (2 Nephi 6-30), to the Veil (2 Nephi 31-33).⁴¹ As useful as this approach is in terms of understanding Nephi’s broader writing project, I will expand that view

of 2 Nephi 31-33 to propose that these chapters rely upon imagery of the high priest's divine ascent from the east end of the Temple (at the altar of sacrifice) to its west end (in the holy of holies).

Nephi begins the section by stating that he will now teach "the doctrine of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:2), a term also found in the King James Version of Hebrews 6:1, where it is connected with faith, repentance, baptism, the laying on of hands [presumably for the gift of the Holy Ghost], judgment, and resurrection. The Epistle to the Hebrews goes on to describe the risk of tasting "of the heavenly gift" and falling away from that knowledge in terms that D&C 76 connects with those called Sons of Perdition (Hebrews 6:4-9; D&C 76:31-38).⁴² After this warning, Hebrews encourages the saints to continue in diligence by hope until the end and obtain the promises of Abraham (Hebrews 6:11, 15). This hope will act as "an anchor for the soul," allowing the worshipper to pass beyond the veil into the holy of holies (Hebrews 6:19), following the example of Christ, who passed there first as "a forerunner" (Hebrews 6:20).

Nephi's account is structured to follow a similar trajectory, showing how Christ first set the example in fulfilling the doctrine of Christ as forerunner, then demonstrating how Christ's disciples must follow that example, continuing on from the first principles and ordinances to enter into the presence of God and know him face to face. Accordingly, Nephi briefly details that Christ did not need repentance, so he could not serve as an example of that principle, but that he did submit to baptism and then received the Holy Ghost. Receiving the Holy Ghost allowed Jesus to walk the strait path and enter at the narrow gate (2 Nephi 31:9). Nephi clearly explains that Christ's divine ascent was set up as a model for his disciples to follow: "And the Father said: Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son. And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying: He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do" (2 Nephi 31:11-12).

Nephi goes on to repeat the process for Jesus's followers, adding for sinful humans the step of repentance with "full purpose of heart," then baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, mentioning that receiving the Holy Ghost will allow the disciples to "speak with the tongue of angels" so they can shout praises to God (2 Nephi 31:13) in a familiar "throne-room," or holy of holies scene mentioned above in 1 Nephi 1:8 and Alma 36:22. This promise is followed in the next verse by a warning reminiscent of that in Hebrews, that having this type of experience and afterwards denying it is worse than never having known God (2 Nephi 31:14). As

with the description of movement through and beyond the “doctrine of Christ” in Hebrews, eventually leading beyond the veil at the end of Hebrews 6, the implications of the divine ascent and the great risk of entering into the presence of God do not become clear immediately. The imagery of the ascent begins outside the temple/tabernacle with the preparatory behavior of repentance — moving by faith or real intent to and then past the altar of sacrifice, which Jesus states is the sacrifice of a repentant, “broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20) — then to the ordinance of baptism, symbolized by the laver of water. Baptism by water then leads along the strait path or *way* (connecting symbolically with the teaching in Hebrews 9:8, 20 that Christ has shown the better *way*). The way or path leads through the narrow gate symbolized by the entrance into the temple proper. Here, inside God’s house, as a covenant member of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19), the worshipper can receive the baptism of fire and see by the light of the Holy Ghost, symbolized by the blazing menorah or lampstand inside. According to his “plainness” (2 Nephi 31:2), Nephi repeats the process, emphasizing the images: “Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 31:17). Again, repentance (symbolized by the altar of sacrifice) and baptism (symbolized by the laver of water) lead the worshipper through the narrow gate (symbolized by the first veil of the tabernacle or by the temple doors) and into the covenant community (symbolized by the temple). Then the disciple receives the Holy Ghost (symbolized by the blazing menorah) and is prepared to move forward.

Nephi’s mention of the ability to speak with the “tongue of angels,” first found in 2 Nephi 31:13, may come as a surprise to a reader who has not connected Nephi’s discourse with temple imagery. The barrier of the first veil of the tabernacle that opens like a gate into the holy place had cherubim, or angelic figures, stitched upon it representing the cherubim who were placed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to guard the way back into God’s presence. According to Nephi’s symbolic usage, these angelic beings had watched over the sacrifice and washings in the first stages of the divine ascent (or in this case, over repentance and baptism) to ensure that all had been done correctly (compare Moroni 6:1-4) and that the disciple could safely and appropriately enter into the covenant household of God. This would have been the first image encouraging

the worshipper to “speak with the tongue of angels” (2 Nephi 31:14), described as occurring only after passing through the gate and being baptized in fire by the light of the Holy Ghost.

Like Hebrews, though, Nephi urges the disciple not to stop there. The divine ascent is not complete. After you have “entered in by the gate” and received the Holy Ghost in fulfillment of the promise that was made, “that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive” (2 Nephi 31:18), Nephi then rhetorically asks “if all is done” (2 Nephi 31:19). The answer is, of course, that the worshipper has only begun the path and must continue on and “endure to the end” (2 Nephi 31:20). How to endure to the end, moving beyond the first principles and ordinances — the doctrine of Christ — that Nephi has detailed (2 Nephi 31:22), is the subject of the remainder of Nephi’s discourse.

2 Nephi 32 accordingly begins with the disciple of Christ standing on the inside of the temple in the glorious blaze of the menorah’s light, wondering what to do or how to proceed. Nephi again mentions the importance of speaking with the tongue of angels (2 Nephi 32:2). The next image of angels would be visible on the other end of the well-lit room, encouraging the worshipper forward to the second veil, the curtain that protected and led into the holy of holies. In the New Testament this was the location where the angel Gabriel stood to speak with Zacharias to announce the birth of Christ. Gabriel spoke with “the tongue of angels” at the veil, communicating how to enter into the presence of God, but Zacharias did not believe the message and thus lost his ability to speak, symbolizing the darkness of rejecting the word of God and the invitation to enter into the presence of God. Nephi encourages the reader to receive the Holy Ghost, which would allow one to speak with the tongue of angels in order to continue the divine ascent.⁴³

Nephi’s image of feasting upon the word of Christ provides the next surprise in 2 Nephi 32:3, but Nephi had already introduced this theme in 2 Nephi 31:20 when discussing the importance of enduring to the end: “If ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 1:20). In 2 Nephi 32:3, he develops the theme further, connecting the importance of the feast with the ability to understand the tongue of angels: “Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.” The image on which Nephi is relying to impel his audience forward is that provided in the holy place by the

table of shewbread, on which stood bread and wine. This bread and wine provide a communal feast with God, symbolizing the strengthening power of the word of God (and possibly also symbolizing the importance of the Eucharist, or the *sacrament* in Latter-day Saint terminology) to move forward in the name and power of Christ.

The worshipper has now proceeded past the menorah and the table of shewbread and stands before the altar of incense at the second veil. Although the altar of incense was not used in the description of the divine ascent in Hebrews, the New Testament interprets the altar of incense as a symbol for prayer. Revelation 8:3, for example, indicates that an angel placed incense upon the altar “in front of the throne” with “the prayers of all God’s people.” (Notice again the location of the angel, officiating at the second veil of the temple.) Luke 1:10 describes that “the whole multitude of the people were praying . . . at the hour of incense,” as they waited for Zacharias to make the offering of incense in the temple. At this moment of prayer, connected with the altar of incense, the angel Gabriel appeared at the veil to help usher God’s people into the presence of God. Accordingly, at this point in Nephi’s description, he states that if the readers cannot understand what Nephi is trying to teach, it is because they “ask not, neither do [they] knock” (2 Nephi 32:4). The key to move forward, speaking with the tongue of angels, is found through praying, asking, or knocking at the second veil, which leads into the holy of holies. After stating that a failure to ask or knock will leave them in the dark, outside of the light, Nephi again reminds the reader that entering in by the way will give them the light of the Holy Ghost that will show them how to proceed (2 Nephi 32:5).

The worshipper is left at the veil, seeking to speak the tongue of angels by a reliance on the word of God and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Nephi then states that this is as far as the doctrine of Christ can take them: “Behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and there will be no more doctrine given” (2 Nephi 32:6). Nephi continues, however, showing how the divine ascent concluded. “There will be no more doctrine given until after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh. And when he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh, the things which he shall say unto you shall ye observe to do” (2 Nephi 32:6). Nephi has promised that if the worshipper will endure appropriately, it is possible to pass through the veil and enter into the presence of God, seeing him in the flesh, face to face.⁴⁴ He then indicates how sacred this knowledge is, stating that the Spirit will not allow him to say more. He mourns at the foolishness of mankind, “for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great

knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness, even as plain as word can be” (2 Nephi 32:7). He has taught the reader in language as simple and plain as possible how to enter into the presence of God, but he worries that the message will be lost. He therefore backtracks again, reminding the worshipper that the key to understanding is prayer and that all things should be done in prayer (2 Nephi 32:9). Prayer and asking, or knocking, are what will allow the reader to conclude the divine ascent.

Moroni’s edited account of the brother of Jared — although he lived centuries before the existence of Moses’s tabernacle or the temple of Solomon — demonstrates an abbreviated form of this same divine ascent. After being chastised, he repents and comes before the Lord with a solution to the dilemma of traveling in darkness. (Notice again the importance of having one’s path lit.) His mighty prayer of faith is the key that allows him to enter into God’s presence (see Ether 3:1-6). In response to his plea, God pierces the veil resting upon the mind of the brother of Jared (see Moroni’s specific use of “veil” language in Ether 4:7, 15), and he is allowed to see God’s finger as it touches the stones God has prepared. Having seen God’s hand, the brother of Jared longs to see more, and taking the first glimpse of God’s hand as evidence that God has a visible body and that God will allow the brother of Jared to see all of him, he boldly pushes through the veil to stand in the presence of God, completing the process of the divine ascent.

Latter-day Saint Ordinances and the Day of Atonement

The Book of Mormon examples provided above demonstrate that the imagery of the divine ascent was not simply an adaptation of later Christianity but that it also appeared among the Nephites and Jaredites, indicating that this pattern was provided by God. In many respects, Latter-day Saint chapel worship may seem devoid of this divine pattern. This absence may primarily exist because that imagery, the highest of divine, ritual patterns provided by the Law of Moses — allowed in its full expression only on the Day of Atonement — belongs in the sacred confines of temples. After the destruction of the temple, Christians began to adopt and adapt temple practices into their church religious worship, thus situating practices intended for the temple within church worship.⁴⁵ Since most Christians came to view temples as a fixture of Old Testament practices that provided a foundation for Christian worship, this would not have been considered inappropriate. When the Reformation occurred, Protestants questioned these strange liturgical forms. Not seeing them clearly delineated in the New Testament and thus

believing they were not a part of true, biblical worship, they eliminated them from their worship services. Latter-day Saints, who do believe in the importance of temples, maintain in their churches the “low liturgy” detailed in the New Testament, which exhibits strong similarities to Protestant worship. They have moved “high liturgy” worship back into the temple.

Notwithstanding this Latter-day Saint approach to temple practices, both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon witness that the imagery of the Day of Atonement, with its re-enactment of the divine ascent, still has a place and influence in worship performed outside of temples. One should bear in mind that the symbols of the liturgical practices described below are multivalent. The potential connections with Day of Atonement imagery discussed here are only one way to interpret their significance and should not necessarily prevent or supplant other interpretations.

First, Day of Atonement imagery is found in the “ordinance” of the Eucharist or the “sacrament.” In the sacrament ordinance as practiced in the Latter-day Saint tradition, priests stand at the veil to the presence of God, as symbolized by the cloth covering the elements of the sacrament. One kneels at the veil, pronouncing a priestly prayer using priesthood authority, stating clearly the name of God, while the entire congregation also prays for the forgiveness of sins. At times, in a manner similar to the Day of Atonement, the congregation comes fasting to this ordinance. The congregation always comes in mourning, with broken heart and contrite spirit (2 Nephi 2:7). After the prayer, the priests gain access to the presence of God through the veil that has been parted. They then deliver the symbols of God’s presence to other priesthood holders, who invite the congregation, one by one, symbolically into the presence of God. The bishopric acts as the cherubim, overseeing the process and ensuring that it is done correctly, both in worthiness interviews with individual members and during the ordinance. It is highly dangerous to enter into the presence of God. Indeed, both Paul and Jesus stated that whoever eats and drinks unworthily, “eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul” (3 Nephi 18:29; see also 1 Corinthians 11:29).

Baptism and confirmation in the Latter-day Saint tradition serve as other examples of the divine ascent. The disciple has been interviewed by the bishop, or by a missionary, who acts as an angelic guardian of the path into the presence of God and seeks to help the worshipper enter God’s presence appropriately (see Moroni 6:1-6). The individual brings a “broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20), has demonstrated

repentance, and has changed clothes, typically dressing all in white. Two figures stand as witnesses at the edge of the baptismal font, guarding the pathway into the presence of God. The priest officiates, declaring his authority and speaking the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost while signifying his authority by his upraised arm. He then lowers the disciple backwards into the water, in a symbol of death or the fall of Adam and Eve. Immediately after, he pulls the participant upward through the veil of the baptismal waters into a new life as part of God's covenant people, "in the household of God." The divine ascent is completed in the ordinance of confirmation as God uses the priesthood holder to reach his hands through the veil, as they are placed on the disciple's head, and as the worshipper is granted the authority and power to always stand in the presence of the God the Spirit, provided she or he maintains the appropriate standards of worthiness. The high level of risk entailed by this new status is signified by the title of the unforgiveable sin. To "blaspheme against the Holy Ghost," according to Mark 3:29, is a sin that puts one in danger of eternal damnation.

As indicated with the symbolism of the ordinance of confirmation above, priesthood blessings act as another effort to enter into the presence of God through the exercise of one's faith and submission to God's priesthood authority. The participant in one sense appeals to the Lord — who is hidden by the veil of mortality — for a blessing. The priesthood holder, after stating his authority and that he acts in the name of God, then represents God, who reaches through the veil over the disciple's mind, as those hands are placed upon her or his head. Additionally, in a general sense as indicated by Nephi's encouragements regarding prayer and the brother of Jared's experience, even personal prayer is an effort to ascend into God's presence by using the sacred name of God to gain heavenly entrance so that God may in turn reach out to touch the life of the individual.

The biblical theme of the divine ascent into the presence of God is found most clearly and prevalently in the Mosaic festival of the Day of Atonement. That powerful theme continued to find expression in the New Testament, and its symbolism continues to play an important role in the liturgy and ordinances of Christianity. Understanding some of the symbolic foundation of those sacred ritual practices can enhance the modern worshipper's experience. For Latter-day Saints, understanding these biblical foundations can help inform their experience in the "chapel" ordinances of baptism, confirmation, and the sacrament and

will ultimately point them towards a rich experience in modern-day temples.

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Endnotes

1. “The most distinctive appropriation of a Judaic festival within the church was occasioned by Passover.” See Bruce D. Chilton, “Festivals and Holy Days: Jewish,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, eds. Craig A. Evans and Stanley R. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 376.
2. Matthew 26:1-25; Mark 14:1-24; Luke 22:1-20; John 13:1. For the earliest account of the Last Supper, see Paul’s description in 1 Cor. 11:23-26.
3. All biblical passages are from the NIV, unless otherwise noted.
4. The Old Testament Passover provided much of the structuring symbolism for the Christian Eucharist. It was a time when the Lord “passed over” the children of Israel and did not destroy them because of the identifying mark of the blood of the lamb upon their doorposts, just as the identifying mark of the Eucharist identifies Christians. Passover was a time that celebrated the departure of Israel from the world. It was a time when the Israelites removed the leaven from their homes and their lives, both as a symbol of the urgency to depart from their captive state and later as a symbol of removing sin. The lamb without blemish was killed in a joyous festival that celebrated the planting of seeds in the ground, as Jesus’s body would be planted in the ground. All of these themes provided an excellent foundation for the rite designed to reconnect

- Christian disciples with God as they departed from sin and became unified with Christ by partaking of his flesh and blood.
5. Other New Testament authors write about Jesus as the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29), as a “sheep [led] to the slaughter” (Acts 8:32, quoting Isaiah 53:7) and as “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). These references can connect Jesus either with the daily burnt offering, with the Passover lamb, or with other temple offerings.
 6. Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century*, (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 28.
 7. See, for example, Lindsay Jones, “Eventfulness of Architecture: Teaching About Sacred Architecture *is* Teaching about Ritual,” in *Teaching Ritual*, ed. Catherine Bell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 256-57; and Linda Heckstrom and Richard D. Hecht, “Ritual Performance and Ritual Practice: Teaching the Multiple Forms and Dimensions of Ritual,” in *ibid.*, 229-50. See also, Michael B. Aune and Valerie DeMarinis, eds., *Religious and Social Ritual: Interdisciplinary Explorations* (New York: State of New York Press, 1996), 6-7.
 8. The reasons for this shift are complex but include phrases and structuring in earlier biblical texts that appear to build upon Day of Atonement language. See, for example, Richard J. Bautch, “The Formulary of Atonement in (Lev 16:21) in Penitential Prayers of the Second Temple Period,” *The Day of Atonement*, eds. Thomas Hieke and Tobias Niklas, *Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions*, Vol. 15 (Boston: Brill, 2012), 34.
 9. For a review of the texts below, and of their importance in understanding the development and varying approaches or “imaginaires” for the Day of Atonement, see Ben Ezra, 79-114. See also, David P. Wright, “Day of Atonement,” *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, 6 Vols., ed. David Noel Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 75-76. For a lengthier treatment of the sources in separately authored chapters, see Hieke and Nicklas, *Day of Atonement*, 49-62 (Book of Jubilees), 63-74 (Dead Sea Scrolls), 97-120 (Josephus), 121-138 (Mishna Yoma).
 10. See Bautch, 33-34.

11. Ben Ezra, 24-28.
12. Ben Ezra, 97, 127.
13. For the majority of information in this section, see Ben Ezra, 18-77, and Wright, "Day of Atonement," AYBD, 2:72-76.
14. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16, The Anchor Yale Bible*, vol. 3 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 25.
15. This is a late tradition recorded in Palestinian Talmud *Yoma* 3:7 and in the Babylonian Talmud *Yoma* 39:2. The two sources differ as to when the name was pronounced. The Babylonian Talmud includes the legend that the uttering of the divine name could be heard all the way to Jericho, adding that the goats in Jericho would sneeze from the incense used and the women in Jericho did not even need to wear perfume that day.
16. Ben Ezra, 23.
17. These are listed as two rams, a bull, and two goats in Leviticus 16 but as one ram, seven lambs, and three goats in Numbers 29:7-11. One of the evidences that *Yoma* primarily reflects later rabbinic exegesis of the biblical text rather than early knowledge is that it discusses this discrepancy but is unable to resolve it. A resolution would have been simple for those with actual knowledge of the temple rite and how it was practiced prior to the temple's destruction.

The meaning of the texts describing the burning of incense is debated. The high priest may have burned incense on the altar of incense outside the holy of holies, rather than inside the holy of holies directly in front of the ark of the covenant.
18. David P. Wright, "Azazel," AYBD, 1:536. The text has also been interpreted by some as indicating that the goat is an offering *to* or *for* the demonic figure Azazel.
19. Ben Ezra, 32.
20. Ben Ezra, 45, 56.
21. An interesting ceremony is recorded from medieval times in which a representative places his hands upon a rooster and then places his hands upon the head of the person who will be benefitted, stating, "This [rooster] shall be instead of this (person); this rooster shall be the substitute (הילוף) for this person; this rooster shall be the

- ransom (מזורל) for this person [or, this person is to be redeemed by this rooster.” See Ben Ezra, 65-66.
22. For this understanding, see Exodus 25:21, 1 Samuel 4:4, 2 Samuel 6:2, 2 Kings 19:15, 1 Chronicles 13:6; Psalms 80:1, 99:1, Isaiah 37:16.
 23. “The sanctuary purification is a very dangerous chore, so special precautions must be taken. If these were not observed, the officiator would perish (Lev 16:2, 13).” David P. Wright, “Day of Atonement,” AYBD, 2:73. The legend of a rope tied around the waist or ankle of the high priest in order to pull out his body if he dies in the presence of the Lord is not found until medieval times.
 24. See Hugh Nibley, “Christian Envy of the Temple,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 50 (1959—60): 97-123, 229-40. Other sources for this claim will be cited below.
 25. See Luke 5:33-35, Luke 18:9-14
 26. For an extensive discussion of this important passage, see Markus Tiwald, “Christ as Hilasterion (Rom 3:25). Pauline Theology on the Day of Atonement in the Mirror of Jewish Thought,” *The Day of Atonement*, 189-210. See also Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*, Anchor Yale Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 374-442; and Harold W. Attridge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia Bible Commentary, vol. 79, ed. Helmut Koester (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 216-83.
 27. See George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews”, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 975.
 28. Tertullian, Against Marcion 3.7.7, as found in A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols. (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1994), 3:327.
 29. Theodoret of Cyr, Dialogue 3, as found in P. Schaff et al., eds., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2 series of 14 vols. each (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1994), Series 2, 3:226.
 30. For the translation used in this analysis, see Barnabas, *Apostolic Fathers: English Translations*, 3rd ed., ed. and tr. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 7:1-11.

31. Interestingly, medieval Jewish commentator Abarbanel identified the two goats as Jacob (the sacrificed one) and Esau (the rejected, cursed one). See Michael Carasik, ed. and tr., *Leviticus, The Commentator's Bible: The JPS Miqra'ot Gedolot* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2009), 16:5 (additional comments). For Paul's usage of Jacob and Esau, not typically connected to the Day of Atonement, see Romans 9:10-13. The Epistle to the Hebrews also uses language from the Aqedah (Hebrews 6:14) but does not connect Isaac explicitly to Christ.
32. See Louis Finkelstein, "The Origin of the Synagogue," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 3 (1930): 49—59 as found in Nibley, "Christian Envy," note 139.
33. G. W.H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 897.
34. *Ibid.*, 19.
35. *Ibid.*, 239.
36. Cyprian, Epistle 63, *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Fathers of the Third Century*, vol. 5, tr. Ernest Wallis (Edinburgh, 1885), 63:14:4.
37. Ben Ezra, 269.
38. Gregory of Nazianz, *Homily* 10:4 as quoted in Ben Ezra, 271.
39. See Terrence L. Szink and John W. Welch, "King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals," *King Benjamin's Speech*, eds. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2013), ch. 6. Some of the imagery in the composite description of the Day of Atonement was included because of its connection with elements in the Book of Mosiah described in the article above.
40. See Blake T. Ostler, "The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form-Critical Analysis," in *BYU Studies* 26:4 (1986): 67-95. Joseph Spencer has discussed Alma's dependence on Lehi's description in Alma 36:22. See Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2012), 9-11, 19-21, 26-27.
41. Spencer, 42. Spencer's insightful analysis of 2 Nephi 31-33 is found on pp. 36-42.
42. See a further description of these similarities in my forthcoming article entitled "Salvation by Grace, Rewards of Degree by Works:

The Soteriology of Doctrine and Covenants 76,” *Let us Reason Together* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2015), 337-64.

43. Brigham Young likely also relied upon Day of Atonement imagery when he stated, “Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the house of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words.” John Widtsoe, ed., *Discourses of Brigham Young*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954), 416.
44. This, of course, is not the only interpretation of this verse. On another level, Nephi could also be teaching the Nephites that they need to follow their current understanding and the practices of the Law of Moses until Christ will appear to them (as recorded in 3 Nephi 11). At that point, they should follow the teachings that he brings. Although this is in one sense the most straightforward understanding of 2 Nephi 32:6, the following verse, in which Nephi mourns that his readers will misunderstand his true intent, seems to indicate that he is communicating another message which could be missed, although explained with great clarity.
45. See Nibley, “Christian Envy of the Temple.”