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Ancient temples, in their architectonic orientation, express the idea of a successive ascension toward heaven

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Source: *The Book of Mormon as an Ancient Israelite Temple: Nineteen Classic Temple Characteristics of the Book of Mormon*

Published: Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2012

Page(s): 78–81

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7. “Temples, in their architectonic orientation, express the idea of a successive ascension toward heaven.”⁵⁹

The key to the design of this sacred mountain and the concept that makes the Book of Mormon itself a splendid representation of the idea of successive ascensions toward heaven is the scriptural use of the idea of a “straight” line.

In the scriptures, a “straight” line is not defined as the shortest distance between two points. Rather, *straightness means that one does not digress by turning to the right or to the left*. Thus walking the straight and narrow path has to do with our integrity to stay on the path, as well as with our progress along the way. (see Deuteronomy 5:32, 1 Samuel 6:12, 2 Kings 22:2, Alma 56:37, D&C 3:2)

Using the laws and tools of geometry, there are three ways to construct such a “straight” line.

The first way is by using a ruler to draw a line between two points. Theoretically, such a line can be continued forever, from eternity to eternity, and is without beginning or end. The single line made by a ruler, drawn between two points is like the straight line between one’s Self and the pinnacle of the sacred mountain. When the Garden of Eden is the hillock/temple, the tree of life was at its top and center. A straight line is the path that every individual must walk from wherever he or she is just now, in order to get to the tree of life, that is, in order to “come unto Christ.”

The second way to draw a straight line is to use a compass

⁵⁹Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 57-58

For discussions on the heavenly ascent see Richard D. Draper, and Donald W. Parry, “Seven Promises to Those Who Overcome: Aspects of Genesis 2-3 in the Seven Letters,” *Temple in Time and Eternity*. 121-41; William J. Hamblin, “Temple Motifs in Jewish Mysticism,” *Temples of the Ancient World*, 440-76; M. Catherine Thomas, “Hebrews: To Ascend the Holy Mount,” *Temples of the Ancient World* 479-91; Hamblin, “Temple Motifs,” 440-76.

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to draw a circle around a single point. A circle is a “straight” line in that the line drawn by the compass is always exactly the same distance from the center point, without varying to the right or left. This straight line is also without beginning or end. A circle made by a compass inscribes a boundary, and can thereby delineate sacred space. (This may be implied in Abraham 3:23 and 3 Nephi 17 where the word “midst” may indicate the center of the circle) Or a circle can be used to diagram a sequence of events such as those of the cosmic myth, the coronation ceremony, or the Israelite temple drama, where one leaves home and ultimately returns again—“triumphant” to the same place. In that case, the diagram of the cosmic myth would not look like an open triangle, with its ends at different points, but like a circle where the beginning and ending place are the same.

The third way to draw a straight line is to use a ruler, a square, and a compass to create a golden rectangle. Within it one draw a perfect spiral. Each part of this spiral is proportionally perfect in relation to its focal point—creating a theoretically possible infinity of concentric circles that expand to create a spiral where each portion is proportionally perfect replicas of the one on either side of itself and also of every other circle in the spiral—with no variance to the right or to the left, from the infinitely small to the infinitely forever.

In the Book of Mormon, this spiral pattern is a multi-dimensional depiction of successive steps in our ascension toward heaven. Nephi promised:

For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round (1 Nephi 10:19).

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Or a spiral may be used to show a sequence of other ideas where the beginning and ending of the sequence are the same, but higher. The cycle that is the Book of Mormon begins with Lehi at the Council in Heaven and concludes with:

And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen (Moroni 10:34).

There are many smaller spirals within the larger spiral that constitutes the text of the Book of Mormon: First Nephi, where they begin by leaving the wealth of their home to go into a desert—and end by leaving the desert, crossing the water, and arriving at a promised land. Second Nephi to Third Nephi 11 is another. It begins by Lehi saying that he and some of his sons have been in the presence of God, follows the entire ancient ritual and drama, and concludes with the people being brought into the presence of the Savior. The plan of salvation is a similar circle. The Lord said,

2. For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round” (D&C 3:2).

That same pattern is represented in the many ancient three dimensional temples by steps leading up to the next level of sacredness. Within the overall text of the sacred language of the Book of Mormon there is a progression that becomes a spiral when their ideas are laid end to end. This spiral constitutes a most detailed description of the “way.” For that reason the spiral of the Golden Section is the best geometric form to demonstrate the inter-

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related circles described sequentially in the Book of Mormon as its sacred language leads its readers in a straight path through these successive cycles of their “ascension toward heaven.”