

MAHONRI'S MODEL FOR TEMPLE WORSHIP:  
RENDING THE VEIL OF UNBELIEF

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After having molten sixteen glass stones, the brother of Jared ascends Mount Shelem, a mountain of “exceeding height” (Ether 3:1) to ask the Lord to touch the glass stones that they might give light for the vessels as they cross the deep ocean. “I know, O Lord, that thou hast all power, and can do whatsoever thou wilt for the benefit of man; therefore touch these stones...with thy finger” (Ether 3:4).

Atop the mount, the problem that initially constrained the brother of Jared to seek the Lord’s assistance is quickly solved. “The Lord stretched forth his hand and touched the stones one by one with his finger. And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood” (Ether 3:6). The Lord now uses the occasion to teach the brother of Jared that which can only be “done in a place or house built for that purpose.”<sup>1</sup>

This day, in the Mount Shelem Temple, the brother of Jared—as a welcomed but uninvited guest<sup>2</sup>—progresses from seeing the finger of the Lord to beholding the personage of the Lord: “Jesus showed himself unto this man in the spirit, even after the manner and in the likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites” (Ether 3:17). We, too, can rend the veil through our faithful temple worship, so that we

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commune with the Lord in person: “Verily I say unto you that it is your privilege, and a promise I give unto you that...that inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears, and humble yourselves before me... you shall see me and know that I am” (Doctrine and Covenants 67:10). The Lord wants to reveal himself to his children in holy temples. In the command to construct a temple, the Lord promised his saints: “Inasmuch as my people build a house unto me...my glory shall rest upon it; Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God” (Doctrine and Covenants 97:15-16). Every time we participate in an endowment session we symbolically enter into the Lord’s presence as we progress from the telestial to the celestial. One day our experience will go beyond the metaphor as we rend the veil of unbelief—literally entering into his presence. The account of the brother of Jared (Mahonri Moriancumer) illustrates this principle.

Often in my life, temple attendance sprang simply from my perceived covenant obligation to help those who have died without the ordinances of salvation. The account of the brother of Jared teaches us an additional

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reason for worshipping in holy temples—as we seek spiritual blessing for others we can also use temple worship to rend the veil as we “seek the face of the Lord” (Doctrine and Covenants 101:38). Faithful temple worship not only helps us find answers to life’s questions but more importantly it helps us find God as we seek answers to those questions. The Lord taught the Prophet Joseph Smith: “I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:19).

The brother of Jared sought light for his eight seagoing vessels so that his loved ones would not travel in darkness. As faculty at Brigham Young University–Idaho, we seek to light the eyes of understanding of the next generation of leaders to see with an “eye of faith” (Ether 12:19). With a temple in our own backyard and literally an extension of the university campus,<sup>3</sup> now is a good time to reflect on our vision of the temple and the role it can play in our classrooms and homes. As we try to understand and implement the new university initiatives, we, like the brother of Jared, can ascend 2<sup>nd</sup> East to “seek the Lord...and find him, though he be not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27).

The brief dialectic between the Lord and the brother of Jared illustrates the means to increase the effectiveness of our temple worship. “*Because of thy faith thou hast seen* that I shall take upon me flesh and blood...for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger” (Ether 3:9 emphasis added).

The brother of Jared’s experience shows that it is increased faith that can result in rending the veil: “Because of thy faith thou hast seen.” It appears from this Book of Mormon account that the brother of Jared fully expected the Lord to touch the glass stones. I refer to the rending of the veil as the Mahonri model of temple worship. In addition, this account demonstrates at least four other principles of temple worship.

#### THE LORD PROVES MAHONRI BEFORE REVEALING HIMSELF

Already “highly favored of the Lord” (Ether 1:34), Mahonri continued to learn by faith as he asked the Lord for needed blessings. His faith in God grew as “the Lord had compassion” on him (Ether 1:40). On at least three different occasions the Lord grants exactly what the brother of Jared has requested (see Ether 1:35-36, 38).

With the granting of the third request, however, the second part of the pattern emerges—the Lord begins making requests of the brother of Jared. “Thou shalt go at the head of them down into the valley which is northward. And there will I meet thee, and I will go before thee into a land which is choice above all the lands of the earth...thus I will do unto thee because this long time ye have cried unto me” (Ether 1:42).

Obedient to the instruction, the Jaredites travel to the valley of Nimrod and as promised, the “Lord came down and talked with the brother of Jared; and he was in a cloud” (Ether 2:4). Greater learning by faith develops as the Lord increases the difficulty of the assigned tasks: “Go forth into the wilderness, yea, into that quarter where there never had man been. And...the Lord did go before them, and did talk with them as he stood in a cloud and gave directions whither they should travel... being directed continually by the hand of the Lord” (Ether 2:5-6).

This increase in divine expectation is part of a progression of God unveiling himself to the brother of Jared. Prayer, which at the beginning of the account consisted of a series of mortal requests and heavenly answers, now feels more like a conversation though the Lord remains veiled in a cloud and, “the brother of Jared saw him not” (Ether 2:4).

With language still intact amongst family and friends, the brother of Jared and fellow travelers find themselves dwelling in tents on the seashore. And either because he is cowed by “the great sea which divideth the lands” or content with life on the beach, he “remembered not to call upon the name of the Lord,” and this for the “space of four years” (Ether 2:13-14).

This part of the story illustrates the third and last part of the pattern—the need to prove ourselves faithful in times of ease as well as trial. There is a tendency in our own lives to avoid the hard work of seeking exaltation. Beach life on this side of the great sea which separates us from the journey to obtain the promised land is pretty alluring. In this state (2 Nephi 28:21-25) it is easy to forget to call upon God. Of a people driven out of Zion, the Lord observed: “They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God... In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me” (Doctrine and Covenants 101:7-8).

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On the seashore, “the Lord came again unto the brother of Jared, and stood in a cloud and talked with him. And for the space of three hours...chastened him because he remembered not to call upon the name of the Lord” (Ether 3:14). Why did God come to an inattentive Mahonri? Perhaps this should remind us that God loves us better than we love him, or that spiritual experiences come according to his will and timing (John 4:19; Doctrine and Covenants 88:68). But in any case, with reproof comes future opportunities for valiancy: “And the brother of Jared repented of the evil which he had done, and did call upon the name of the Lord... And the Lord said unto him: I will forgive thee and thy brethren of their sins; but thou shalt not sin any more” (Ether 3:15). When mortal performance finally meets divine expectation the Lord is able to show himself to the brother of Jared. Regarding this last portion of the pattern, the prophet Joseph taught:

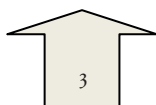
After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands, which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter.<sup>4</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball reiterated the same idea in our day:

I have learned that where there is a prayerful heart, a hungering after righteousness, a forsaking of sins, and obedience to the commandments of God, the Lord pours out more and more light until there is finally power to pierce the heavenly veil and to know more than man knows. A person of such righteousness has the priceless promise that one day he shall see the Lord's face and know that he is.<sup>5</sup>

THE LORD'S PATTERN FOR MAKING HIMSELF  
KNOWN TO MAN

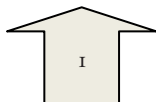
We continue in the process until we have proven ourselves faithful in all things the Lord asks of us. When we qualify and desire, he makes himself known to us.



The Lord then begins to ask things of us and in accordance to our obedience he conditionally and partially begins to reveal himself to us.



We gain confidence by asking the Lord for needed blessings that he is willing to grant.



BY ALIGNING HIS WILL WITH GOD'S WILL, MAHONRI  
OVERCOMES HIS FALLEN NATURE

Prior to the Lord's touching of the glass stones, the brother of Jared pleads with the Lord: "For we know...we are unworthy before thee; because of the *fall our natures have become evil continually*; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that *from thee we may receive according to our desires*" (Ether 3:2, emphasis added).

The brother of Jared's prayerful observation sets up an interesting scriptural tension. We are granted according to our desires (Alma 29:4-5; 41:3, 5), but because of the fall and our evil natures, we often desire the wrong thing. Alma, desiring to be an angel to declare the gospel with the sound of a trumpet, noted: "I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me" (Alma 29:3). He then makes this insightful observation: "For I know that [God] granteth unto men according to their desire...according to their wills" (Alma 29:4).

We see this tension between God's command to pray and our potential to express selfish desire in our prayers. Often that which we petition the Lord for is not in our best interest at all. From the Bible Dictionary we read concerning prayer: "We pray in Christ's name when our mind is the mind of Christ, and our wishes the wishes of Christ...We then ask for things that are possible for God to grant. Many prayers remain unanswered because they are not in Christ's name at all; they in no way represent his mind, but spring out of the selfishness of man's heart."<sup>6</sup> Thankfully, a loving Father is patient with our mortal yearnings and withholds from us those things that would be a detriment to our salvation.

Thanks to the eternal perspective we gain in temple instruction, we better discern when our mortal yearnings are in conflict with God's plans for us. To overcome the fallen man is to "strip yourselves from jealousies and fears, and to humble yourselves before me...[so that] you shall see me and know that I am" (Doctrine and Covenants 67:10). Then we are ready to submit to the Father's will. Elder Neal A. Maxwell described the process as laying a gift on God's altar: "[As] you submit your wills to God, you are giving Him the *only* thing you *can* actually give Him that is really yours to give. Don't wait too long to find the altar or to begin to place the gift of your wills upon it! No need to wait for a receipt; the Lord has His own special ways of acknowledging."<sup>7</sup>

As we learn how to pray in temple worship, we see pure hearts come together to receive the Lord's will. The Lord in turn promises to perfect our understanding of the principles and doctrines of the kingdom (Doctrine and Covenants 97:13-15). We begin to see with "restoration eyes" all the possibilities before us. This enlarged panoramic view of our

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place in the “plan of happiness” enables and strengthens us in the battle over our fallen natures. We draw closer to our Father in Heaven as we begin to understand more fully our role in his kingdom.

To each of us, the Lord has promised: “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:63). Prayer oriented to obtaining the will of the Lord opens the portals of heaven from which flows answers to those prayers. When our temple worship produces resolve to accomplish God’s will, coupled with clean hands and pure hearts, we are “endowed with power from on high” (Doctrine and Covenants 105:11).

President Spencer W. Kimball taught, “If we live in such a way that the considerations of eternity press upon us, we will make better decisions.”<sup>8</sup> There is no better place to discern and adjust mortal desire than in the temple. Against the backdrop of eternity we begin to see clearly the course we must pursue. As we set our sights higher we make better decisions. The fallen man now enabled through righteous desire lives with higher purpose and determination.

MAHONRI ACKNOWLEDGES WHAT THE LORD HAS  
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RECEIVE MORE

Atop the mount, his will aligned with God’s, Mahonri expresses his assurance that God can illuminate the stones: “Behold, O Lord, thou canst do this. We know that thou art able to show forth great power, which looks small unto the understanding of men” (Ether 3:5). What happens next? “Behold, the Lord stretched forth his hand and touched the stones one by one with his finger. And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord...and fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear” (Ether 3:6).

After asking why the brother of Jared had fallen to the earth, the Lord observes: “Never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this?” (Ether 3:9).

Is the Lord quizzing the brother of Jared to help him make connections to past promises and teachings? Surely the Lord knows the answer to this question before asking it. Regardless, it provides the brother of Jared an opportunity to acknowledge and declare to the Lord what he saw and learned. I find the brother of Jared’s confident response to the Lord’s question ample evidence a connection was made: “Nay; Lord, show thyself unto me” (Ether 3:10). What confidence the brother of Jared must have possessed (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:45).

Moroni suggests the rending of the veil is the result of acting on prior teachings and promises: “For so great was [the brother of Jared’s]

faith in God, that when God put forth his finger he could not hide it... because of his word which he had spoken unto him, which word he had obtained by faith...because of the promise which the brother of Jared had obtained by faith, the Lord could not withhold anything from his sight; wherefore he showed him all things, for he could no longer be kept without the veil” (Ether 12:20-21). We too have received the same “precious promises: that by these [we] might be partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

Before granting the brother of Jared this final request the Lord further qualifies him: “Believest thou the words which I shall speak? (Ether 3:11) The believing brother of Jared responds: “Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie” (Ether 3:12).

Atop the temple mount the brother of Jared with faith, courage, virtue, and knowledge rends the veil: “And...the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you” (Ether 3:13). As glorious as this manifestation must have been for the brother of Jared it doesn’t end there. After instructing him to record the things he had seen the Lord proceeded to show the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of this earth. “And...he showed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be; and he withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth” (Ether 3:25).

#### MAHONRI’S FAITHFUL ADHERENCE TO PAST KNOWLEDGE ALLOWS HIM TO RECEIVE MORE

The account of the brother of Jared serves as an invitation to each of us to learn by faith through our temple worship. A scriptural welcome has been extended to each of us to attend the temple and enter into the presence of the Lord. Learning to worship as the brother of Jared opens the portals of heaven. Mahonri’s experience suggests that we should record the impressions of our temple worship always seeking to be obedient to what we have been taught. After the brother of Jared came home from his temple experience he was commanded to record the events: “And the Lord commanded the brother of Jared to go down out of the mount from the presence of the Lord, and write the things which he had seen” (Ether 4:1). Moroni’s observation of why this account was recorded is especially helpful. He observed:

Behold, I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw; and there never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared.... They shall not go forth unto

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the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord. And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are. (Ether 4:4; 6-7)

Most likely we have not seen the finger of the Lord or his body or all the inhabitants of this earth. But we have seen his majestic hand moving in our lives, across this campus, and in this valley. And there is a reality to seeing his hand moving in our lives that is as real as seeing his hand. Would it be a valuable exercise to record what we have learned about God up to this point in our lives through our temple worship? What have we received by way of revelation and commandment in God's house as it pertains to his house? Are we obedient to all we have been taught in the house of the Lord? If we were more faithful, courageous, and virtuous in our worship could we rend the veil and behold the marks in his hands and feet? Are we prepared to replicate the scriptural experiences of great men and women of faith? The Prophet Joseph Smith once said to the twelve, "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them."<sup>9</sup>

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We can rend the veil of unbelief as we implement Mahonri's model for temple worship. When the Lord has thoroughly proved us we may hear Him say, "because of thy faith thou hast seen." Seen what? According to Moroni we can see all that the brother of Jared saw: "And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me...then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw" (Ether 3:7). ∞

## NOTES

- 1 Joseph Smith, Jr. *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed., 5:423-24. "The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby he could reveal unto his people the ordinances of his house and the glories of his kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose."
- 2 Jeffrey R. Holland. *Christ and The New Covenant*. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 23.
- 3 David A. Bednar's address "BYU-Idaho, A Disciple Preparation Center," (BYU-Idaho Devotional Address, August 31, 2004.)
- 4 Joseph Smith, Jr. *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Ed. B. H. Roberts. 2nd ed., Rev. 7 vols (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932), 51.

- 5 Spencer W. Kimball, "Give the Lord Your Loyalty," *Ensign*, March 1980, 2.
- 6 Bible Dictionary, s.v. "prayer."
- 7 Neal A. Maxwell, "Remember How Merciful the Lord Hath Been," *Ensign*, May 2004, 44-46.
- 8 Spencer W. Kimball, "The Things of Eternity—Stand We in Jeopardy?" *Ensign*, January 1977, 3.
- 9 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 149.