

Temple Themes in the Book of Moses

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Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

The book of Moses is an ideal starting point for a scripture-based study of temple themes. It is well known, for example, that the LDS temple endowment, like the book of Moses, includes the stories of Creation and of Adam and Eve. What is more rarely appreciated, however, is that the relationship between scripture and temple teachings goes two ways. Not only have many of the stories of the book of Moses been included in the endowment, but also, in striking abundance, themes echoing temple architecture, furnishings, ordinances, and covenants have been deeply woven into the text of the book of Moses itself.

In order to identify and explore temple themes in the book of Moses, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw has combined insights from scripture, modern prophets, and religious scholars with relevant excerpts from ancient religious documents. Written in a clear and compelling style, and including over one

hundred full color images, this book aims to provide an increased appreciation for the doctrines and ordinances of the temple, and for the book of Moses as inspired scripture.



Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Ph.D., is a Senior Research Scientist at the Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC) in Pensacola, Florida (www.ihmc.us/groups/jbradshaw/). His professional writings have explored a wide range of topics in human and machine intelligence and their interaction. Jeff has written a highly-acclaimed scholarly commentary on the book of Moses entitled *In God's Image and Likeness* (www.imageandlikeness.net). It has been

praised by the eminent Old Testament scholar Margaret Barker as “remarkable,” by the Emeritus Director of FARMS S. Kent Brown as a “most interesting tapestry,” by BYU Professor of Ancient Scripture David R. Seely as being of “cosmic scope” with a “wealth of stunning artistic and literary images,” and by prominent LDS scientist David H. Bailey as a “uniquely modern and honest treatment.” With David J. Larsen, Jeff is preparing a second volume of commentary (*In God's Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel*, Eborn, 2012). He has also authored *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, and articles on temple studies and the ancient Near East for *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity*, *Element: A Journal of Mormon Philosophy and Theology*, *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, and *BYU Studies* (www.templethemes.net). Jeff serves on the Executive Board of *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* (www.mormoninterpreter.com). He was a missionary in the Belgium-Brussels mission, and has since served in a variety of Church capacities including early-morning seminary teacher, bishop, high councilor, stake presidency counselor, and temple ordinance worker. Jeff and his wife Kathleen are the parents of four children and seven grandchildren.

Review of *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses* by George L. Mitton

<http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/book-review-temple-themes-in-the-book-of-moses-by-jeffrey-m-bradshaw/#more-466>

In an earlier work entitled *In God's Image and Likeness*, Jeffrey Bradshaw provided a remarkable commentary on much of the Book of Moses from the Pearl of Great Price, relating its details to many examples and parallels from ancient literature and summarizing recent scholarly work and commentary on this important scripture received from the Prophet Joseph Smith. *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses* expands on that commentary in a special way, emphasizing those aspects of the Book of Moses that help explain and illuminate the customs, teachings, and ordinances of the temple.

It should be noted that the Book of Moses resulted from the Prophet's inspired work with Genesis and was an early revelation that followed the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830. What is clear today, and a fact duly noted by Bradshaw, is that the Book of Moses anticipated in many ways Joseph's teachings and instructions on temple ordinances more than a decade later during the Nauvoo period of church history. The greater understanding of the ancient temple proceeding from recent scholarship helps demonstrate Joseph's prophetic foresight to those who consider these solemn things. Bradshaw's *Temple Themes* is very instructive in this regard. It is especially so in bringing the reader's attention to many resources, ancient and modern, that are important for a serious consideration of the temple.

Of much interest is the chapter "The Vision of Moses as a Heavenly Ascent." This ascent refers to revelations in which prophets receive a vision of the heavens, usually with God on his throne surrounded by angels in the heavenly court or temple, there to receive instruction and a commission. The temple ritual is related to this ascent and what is learned from it. Bradshaw was assisted in writing this chapter by David J. Larsen, a Latter-day Saint student of the important, extensive, and growing literature on the heavenly ascent (p. 23). The discussion is informed by a review of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, an ancient Jewish ascent account discovered after Joseph Smith's day, in which are seen many striking parallels to the Book of Moses. I was particularly interested in how each text tends to throw light on the others. Bradshaw reproduces, for the first time in more than a century, the remarkable illustrations of the *Apocalypse* found in the Sylvester Codex, a fourteenth-century manuscript. The illustrations help us to know how the Christians of that time interpreted these interesting writings.

Among the temple-related themes treated by Bradshaw, we find discussions of creation and the Garden of Eden as models for temple architecture, the symbolisms of the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, the symbolism of the "sacred center," the concept of the "keeper of the gate," the tree of knowledge as a symbol of death and rebirth, the question of whether Eve was beguiled, and the concept of "standing" in holy places. He further discusses the clothing of Adam and Eve and the symbolism associated with it, the prayer and temple work of Adam and Eve, and the new and everlasting covenant.

The book has more than one hundred informative illustrations and concludes with an appendix discussing the relationship of the Book of Moses with Genesis in the Old Testament.