

The Investiture Panel at Mari and Rituals of Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East

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When kingship first emerged in the ancient Near East, it was, as far as we can tell, immediately associated with the sacred.¹ According to Sumerian chronicles,² the gods meeting in heavenly council determined to give the kingship to men. The gods acted as celestial guarantors of the king's power, enabling him to assume the position of "big man" in society—as the Sumerian word for "king" (LUGAL, literally "big man") signifies. There were certainly other factors that led to royal power—hereditary right and military conquest among them—but these were also seen as extensions of divine will. The famous stela containing the laws of Hammurabi, king of Babylon (r. 1792-1750 BC), is a representative example. In the preface to the laws, the king recounts how the gods named him to his office and endowed him with the power and wisdom necessary to govern. As an illustration symbolizing the actual bestowal of kingship, the stela shows the sun god Shamash handing the emblems of royal power to Hammurabi.



Figure 1. The god Shamash gives the emblems of royal power to Hammurabi³

This article will explore the ancient Near Eastern rituals that endowed kings with this power, specifically the rites suggested by the Investiture Panel at the palace of Mari. Because contemporary evidence at Mari relating to an interpretation of the Panel and the functions of various rooms of the palace is limited, it will be necessary to rely in part on a careful comparative analysis of religious texts, images, and architecture throughout the ancient Near East, including the Old Testament. Comparative analysis not only has the benefit of increasing our understanding of ancient Mesopotamian religion, but also can enrich our understanding of the Bible. Throughout this discussion, themes relating to Latter-day Saint temple worship will also become apparent, although no hereditary relationship with Mari need necessarily be assumed.



Figure 2. Regional map, with Mari a little left of center on the Euphrates river.⁴

1. Introduction

Mesopotamia, literally meaning “between rivers,” is a fertile area that encompasses the Tigris-Euphrates river system, located mostly in present-day Iraq. Because Mesopotamia is the ancient home of the Akkadians, Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians, it is often called the “cradle of civilization.” The ancient city of Mari is located on the right bank of the Euphrates in Syria, about fifty kilometers north of the present border with Iraq.⁵

Mari was settled by the Amorites, who were probably emigrants from the “desert margins to the west of the Euphrates valley. It was the Amorites who facilitated overland trade between Mesopotamia and the western lands of Canaan and Egypt.”⁶ As one of the major crossroads of the Near East, Mari prospered in trade and agriculture for centuries. Finally, in 1760-1758 BC, during the reign of its last independent sovereign, King Zimri-Lim, the city was sacked and burned by the famous Babylonian king Hammurabi. The location of Mari was lost to history.



Figure 3. Cabane's statue emerges from the ground.⁷

In August 1933, while carrying out a routine inspection tour near his residence in the Syrian desert, the French Lieutenant Étienne Cabane came upon a group of Bedouins procuring stones to decorate the tomb of a recently deceased member of their clan. Because these stones firmly resisted any attempt at removal, Cabane advised them to find an easier quarry elsewhere. Then, a few days later, a local presented himself at the office of the lieutenant, asking him “what he should do with the man that he had found.” Upon further questioning, it became clear that the man in question was not a cadaver, but rather a statue that had been uncovered at nearby Tell Hariri while the natives were digging for stones to protect another tomb from the ravages of nature. Lieutenant Cabane went immediately to Tell Hariri and soon found himself looking at a large stone sculpture of a headless woman that bore a cuneiform inscription. With no small pains, Cabane supervised the transport of the nearly 700-pound statue to his office and notified his superiors of the discovery.

Enthused by the prospects of Tell Hariri, the Musée du Louvre immediately commissioned a team led by André Parrot to begin excavation. During their second season, the team unearthed a statue inscribed with the name of King Isqi-Mari,⁸ allowing Tell Hariri to be

identified as the site of the ancient city of Mari. Mari was already known to scholars through mentions in Sumerian documents that date its Early Dynastic period to the middle of the third millennium BC.⁹ Over a period encompassing four decades, Parrot supervised twenty-one campaigns to the site, and the excavation of what has become an endless supply of “dazzling riches.”¹⁰ The volume and variety of the discoveries have provided “inexhaustible questions for discussion”¹¹ and “a new paradigm for Old Babylonian History.”¹²

Among the foremost treasures of Mari is what has come to be known as the “Investiture Panel,” the only ancient Mesopotamian figural wall painting that has been recovered in situ. Margueron characterizes this painting as “undoubtedly the richest pictorial work of any that have heretofore been brought to light by Near East archaeology.”¹³ The painting was long presumed to have been created for King Zimri-Lim.¹⁴ However, it has now been convincingly dated by Margueron to a period decades earlier,¹⁵ plausibly during the reign of Zimri-Lim’s father.¹⁶

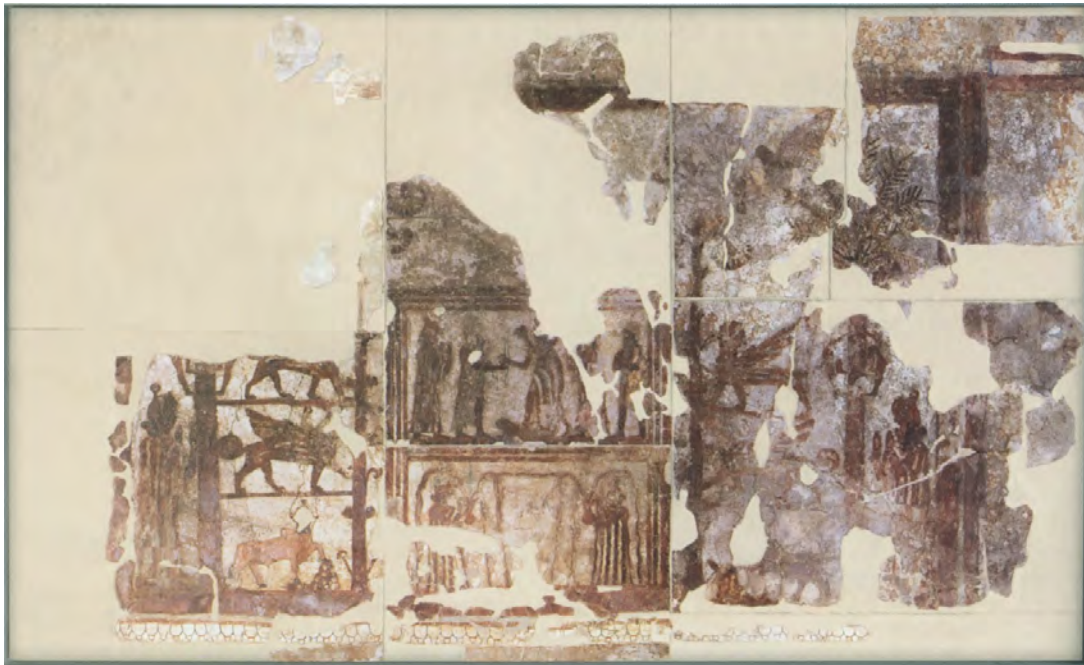


Figure 4. The Mari Investiture Panel as it currently appears in the Louvre Museum in Paris.¹⁷

All scholars are in agreement on the major features of the panel. The goddess Ishtar dominates its upper central portion as she offers royal insignia to the king. The king’s left hand is extended to receive these insignia while his right hand is raised in a gesture of oath-making. Behind the king stands another goddess, the king’s guide and intercessor. Below, goddesses of lower rank hold vases from which flow streams of water. Framing the central register is a garden tableau featuring two kinds of trees, composite animal guardians, and intercessory goddesses resembling those in the central scene.

Ironically, the fire set by Hammurabi’s soldiers to destroy the magnificent palace that contained the mural had helped preserve the building complex for later study.¹⁸ Though darkened by age, viewers of the four thousand year-old painting cannot fail to be impressed by the vestiges of its originally-vibrant colors. Even more fascinating, however, are the

particulars of the painting itself, including what Parrot called “undeniable biblical affinities” that “should neither be disregarded nor minimized.”¹⁹ J. R. Porter likewise highlighted several features of the scene that “strikingly recall details of the Genesis description of the Garden of Eden.”²⁰ Of course, it should be remembered that the painting was executed many centuries before the book of Genesis took its current form.²¹ Nevertheless, there is much to be learned by a careful examination of texts and artifacts from the Bible and the ancient Near East that shared the cultural and religious milieu of Mari in large measure. In addition to this shared background, studies of texts from Ugarit, Amarna, and Emar have begun to provide a sound empirical model for the two-way transmission of written documents between Mesopotamia and areas bordering on what later became the nation of Israel during the important transitional periods of the Middle and Late Bronze Age that immediately preceded the flowering of Israelite culture during the Iron Age.²²

Given that the last and only comprehensive study of the iconography of the painting appeared in 1950,²³ an up-to-date comparative analysis of the features of the Mari Investiture Panel is long overdue.²⁴ In this article, we provide an interpretation of the form and the *Sitz im Leben* of the Mari Investiture Panel, consistent with our views of the functions of the palace rooms most directly connected with its emplacement. With this interpretation as background, we explore the points of contact between the cluster of themes found in the painting and ancient religious images and texts from throughout the Near East, including the Old Testament. Like the Mari Investiture Panel, these artifacts prominently associate three motifs: creation, the sacred garden, and rituals enacting the conferral of divine kingship. Though it must be stressed again that we are not suggesting an organic link between rituals at Mari and those of the Latter-day Saints, it is hoped that Mormon readers will be interested in resonances with temple rites in their own tradition, which are believed to fit the faithful for “royal courts on high.”²⁵

2. Description of the Palace

*To Zimri-Lim communicate the following: thus says your brother Hammurabi [of Yamhad]: The king of Ugarit has written as follows: “Show me the palace of Zimri-Lim! I wish to see it.” With this same courier I am sending on his man.*²⁶

Though there may have been hidden motives for this proposed visit of the king of Ugarit or his son to Mari,²⁷ the great interest expressed in seeing the palace of Zimri-Lim and its famed “Court of the Palm” must have at least been sufficiently plausible to be credible. Though the palace’s “renown had doubtless exceeded [its] due,”²⁸ it is clear that the twenty-day journey that would have been required to reach Mari, though not an impossible obstacle in that time, was certainly not something to have been undertaken lightly. The great palace was described as follows by Hempel:²⁹

It was a large building, covering more than two hectares and including some 300 rooms, corridors, and courtyards. The palace had been constructed during the Ur III period. At the time of Zimri-Lim, it was 300 years old, having undergone much reshaping and restoration. It overlaid a smaller but still monumental building, probably a palace, from the last phase of the Early Dynastic Period (roughly 2500-2350 BC), the period when Mari temporarily ruled southern Mesopotamia, according to the Sumerian king list.

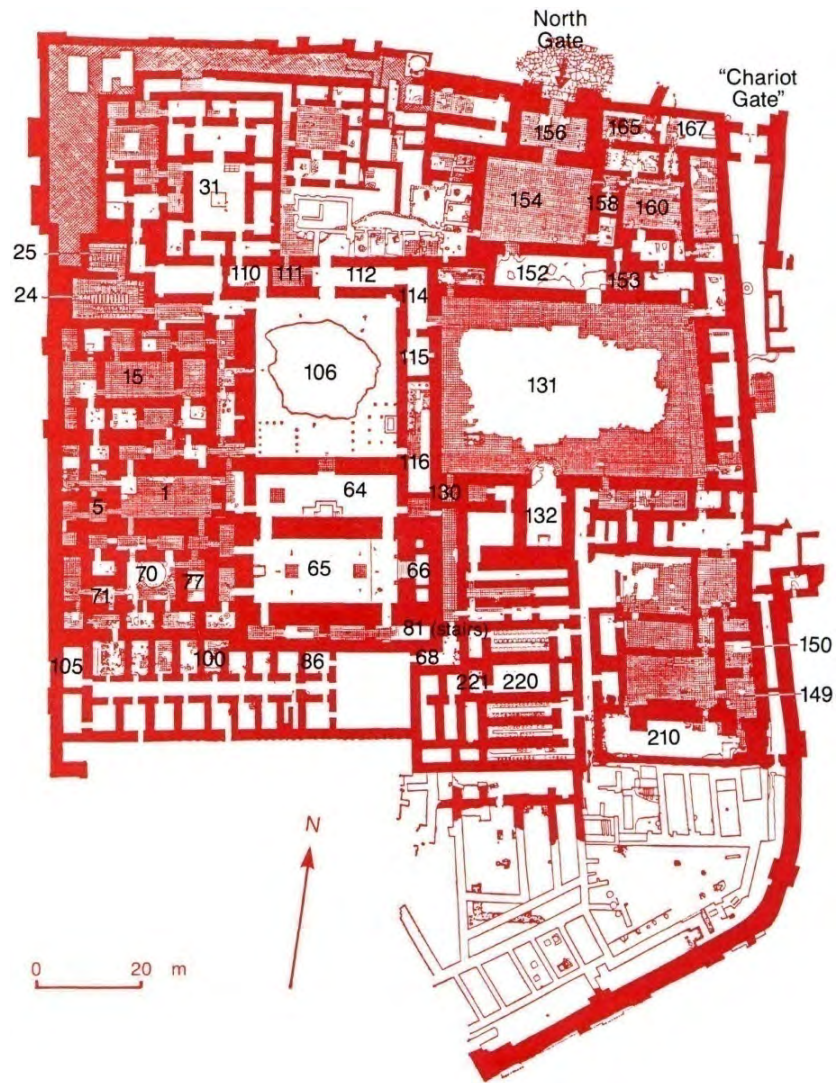


Figure 5. Plan of the Old Babylonian period palace, as revealed by Parrot’s excavations.³⁰

It is one thing to identify the walls of the palace, and quite another to be sure of the function of its rooms and open areas. For example, various locations have been proposed for the celebrated “Court of the Palm,”³¹ located within the palace. Parrot identified this area with a large courtyard (131), facing what he called the king’s audience chamber (132),³² and featuring a live planting of date palms.³³ Margueron, on the other hand, situated palm trees within courtyard 106. As shown in figure 17 below, he pictured a solitary artificial palm tree in the center, “made largely of bronze and silver plating on an armature of wood.” In support of the placement of this tree, Muller writes that “in the 1984 campaign, two gypsum paving stones were found set on top of each other (together reaching 70 centimeters in height) exactly in the center of the courtyard, with a central perforation of 30-32 centimeters in diameter, the base of a mast whose thickness gives some idea of its great height. It is difficult not to conclude that this was the placement of the emblematic palm tree to which the texts make allusion.”³⁴ The court may have also contained a series of live palm trees in pots that formed an alley leading to the scenes of sacrifice and the Investiture Panel, both of which were painted on the south wall of courtyard 106.³⁵

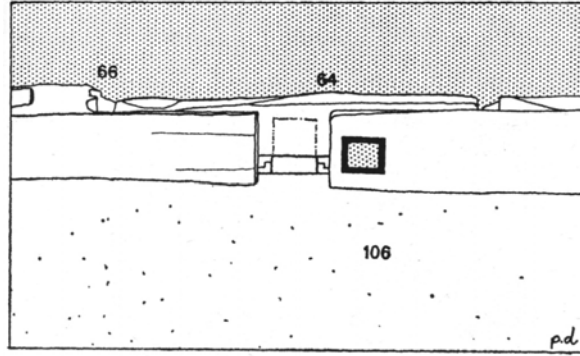


Figure 6. Court 106 showing the framed setting of the Investiture Mural on the south wall.³⁶ Visitors' eyes would have been naturally drawn to the large scene (1.75m high and 2.5m wide) that was no doubt deliberately placed at eye-level.

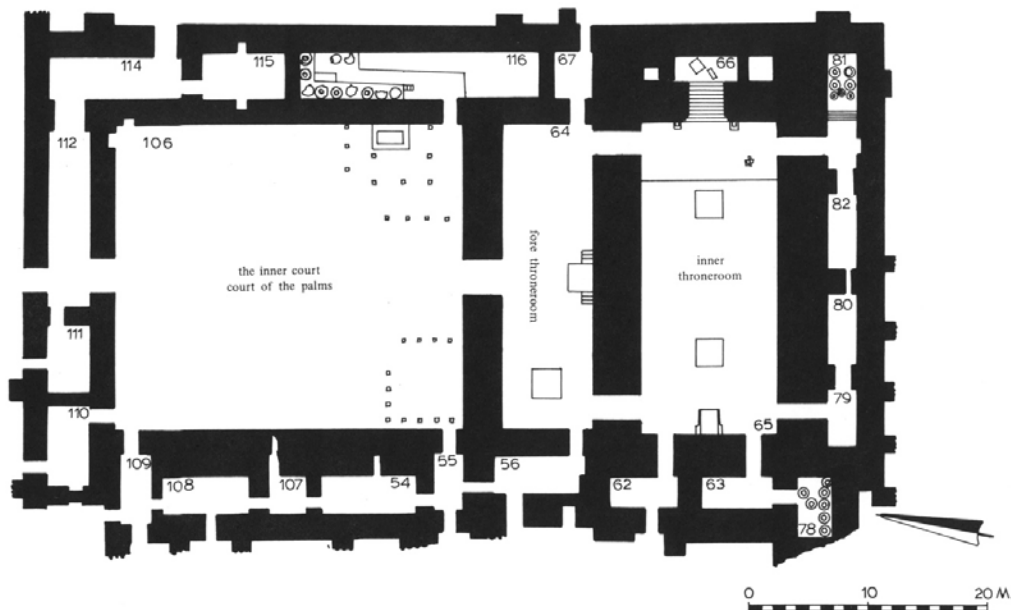


Figure 7. Al-Khalesi's view of the ritual complex, including the "Court of the Palm" proper at left with Investiture Panel on the lower portion of the right wall (106), the fore throneroom with its dais centered on the right wall (64),³⁷ the inner throneroom with another dais centered on the bottom wall (65), and the sanctuary situated at the opposite end of the inner throneroom (66).³⁸ When seated in the inner throneroom, the enthroned king faced the gods in the sanctuary, just as in the fore throneroom he faced the people in the courtyard.³⁹ Al-Khalesi adduces evidence that a woven screen, held by two large gateposts symbolizing sacred trees, partitioned the inner throneroom to create an ante-cella directly in front of sanctuary. The horizontal line shows what would have been its approximate location.

Al-Khalesi agrees with Margueron in identifying 106 as the "Court of the Palm" proper, but (unconvincingly) differs in concluding that the palms were nothing more than wall decorations, embellishing the courtyard and framing the Investiture Panel on each side.⁴⁰ From a functional perspective, he sees the fore throneroom (64), the inner throneroom (65), and the innermost sanctuary (66)—also termed a "chapel," "shrine," or "tribune-cella"—as all belonging to the same complex. A piece of palace correspondence identifies a "sanctuary [*paḥūm*]" of the Court of the Palm,⁴¹ but scholars differ as to whether this mention refers to 64, 65, 66, or to some combination of the three chambers.⁴²

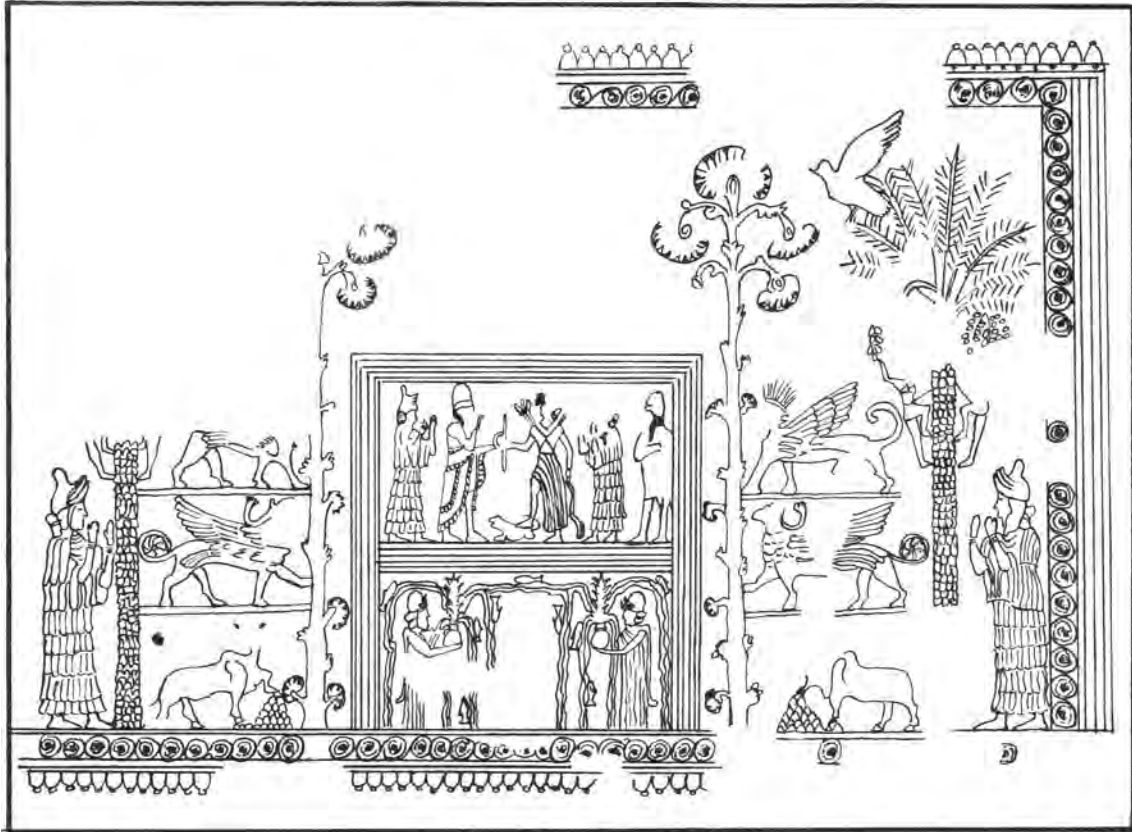


Figure 8. Line-drawing of the Mari Investiture Panel.⁴³ Note the knotted tassels on the fringes of the painting, “in imitation of textiles.”⁴⁴ The running spirals on the border resemble those decorating the podium in the fore throneroom (64).⁴⁵ Al-Khalesi suggests that the spirals symbolize water, and observes that the tassels on the border resemble the tassels adorning the robe of Idi-Illum’s statue, found at Mari.⁴⁶

3. Physical and Ritual Setting of the Investiture Panel

Dalley⁴⁷ has described some of the rituals for which we have record from Mari, rituals designed to link the chthonic with the celestial through conferral of divine authority. There were monthly festivals, visits of the statues of the gods to other towns, purification ceremonies, and, possibly, a New Year’s festival called the “Offerings of Ishtar.” Known in greater detail from later periods, the New Year’s festival represented the annual renewal of kingship. The Mari Investiture Panel may be a pictorial representation of just such a ritual.

Barrelet was the first to conjecture that the mural depicted an actual event involving the king and statues of deities.⁴⁸ Though subsequent scholarship has universally agreed with this conclusion, it has differed about the specific location for where such a ceremony would have taken place.⁴⁹ Two specific models for the relationship between the painting and the architecture of the palace have been advanced. Though acceptance of one or the other of these models is not essential to the arguments advance in this article, a brief summary may make our subsequent discussion more intelligible.

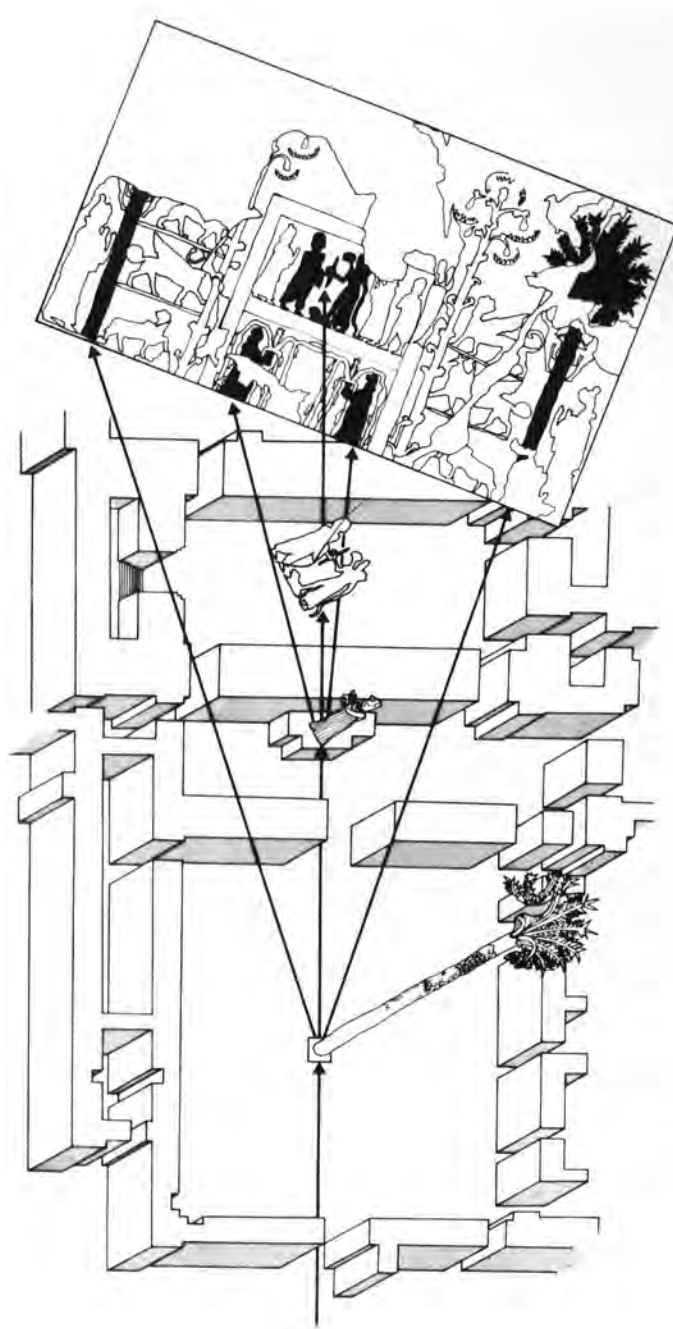


Figure 9. Margueron's spatial interpretation of the Investiture Panel.⁵⁰

In the first model, Margueron places the actual statues corresponding to the upper center portion of the Investiture Panel in the middle of room 65, as shown above.⁵¹ He explains the doubling of the palm tree and the goddesses with the flowing vases by virtue of the principle of rotation. He conjectures that this technique was used so that the statue of Ishtar, presumed to have been centrally located on the same spatial axis as the tree and the goddess statue, would have not be obscured by them in the painting.

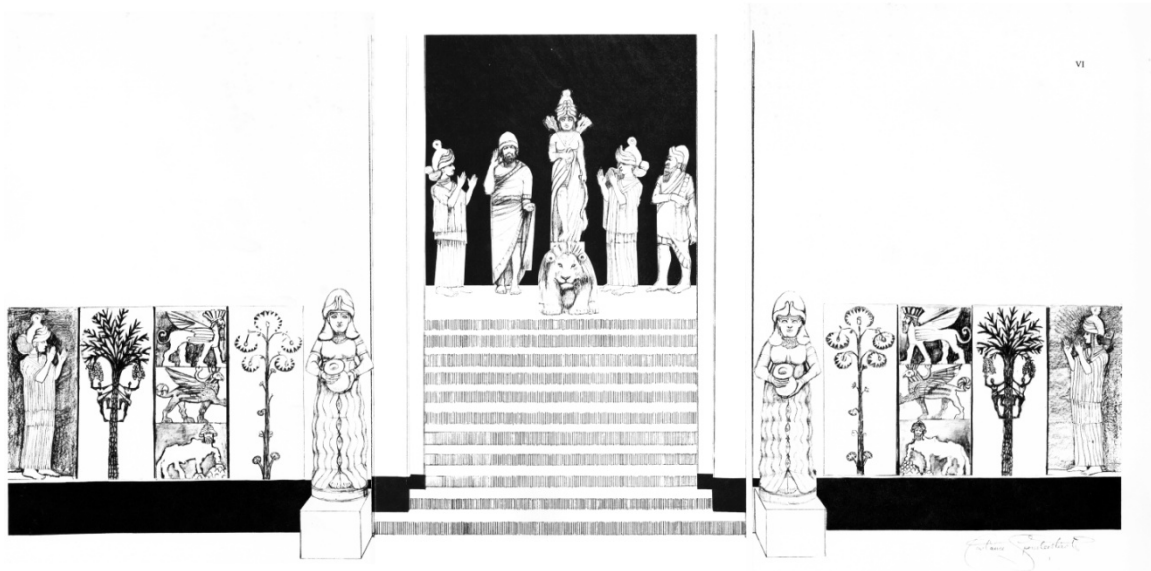
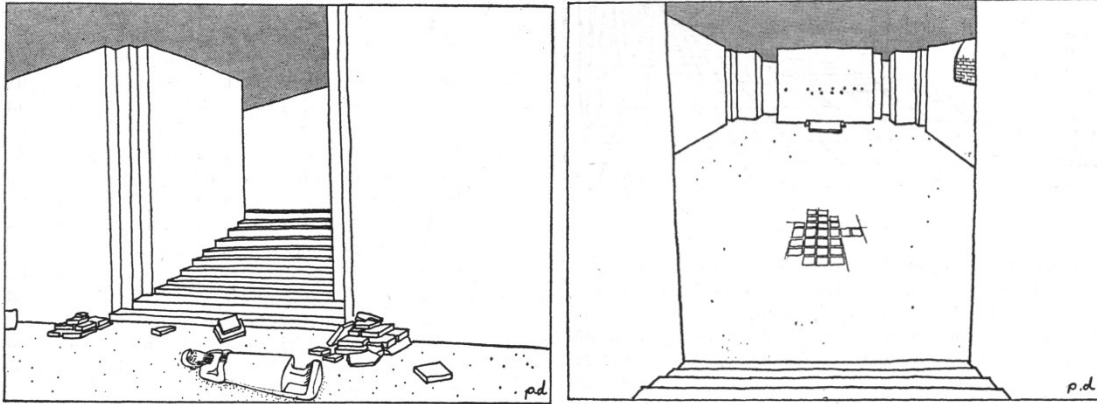


Figure 10. Al-Khalesi’s reconstruction of the innermost sanctuary (66), flanked by symmetrically-aligned statues of the goddess with the flowing vase, and framed by paintings of trees, guardians, and suppliant goddesses.⁵² Although differing with al-Khalesi about the placement of the statue of Ishtar, Margueron concedes the likelihood of ancestral images within room 66.⁵³

Al-Khalesi, on the other hand, more persuasively argues that the ceremony would have taken place within room 66. Presuming that the ritual would have been witnessed by only a few people, he concludes that “the purpose of the mural was to illustrate the actual act of the ceremony—a given moment” to those standing in courtyard 106, immediately outside the entrance to the fore throneroom (64).⁵⁴

Although not inconsistent with Margueron’s idea that a central palm may have been located in courtyard 106, al-Khalesi’s reconstruction accounts for elements of the mural not discussed by Margueron, such as the placement of the guardians and the representation of the second type of sacred tree on either side of its center portion. Moreover, al-Khalesi’s arguments for a partition in room 65 supported by a pair of these sacred trees⁵⁵ is consistent with the function of such trees in temple settings throughout the ancient Near East.⁵⁶ In addition, the two pedestals and plumbing arrangements found at the foot of the stairway to room 66 by Parrot, combined with evidence that a similar configuration at the entrance to the ante-cella of the Sin temple at Khorsabad, give some credence to al-Khalesi’s proposal that two goddesses with flowing bases were once located there.⁵⁷ Note that this proposal for the location of the goddesses is consistent with the idea that the outer-to-inner sequence of the images in the Panel is mirrored in the progression of the kingship ritual through the rooms of the sanctuary complex, as described in more detail below.



Figures 11 and 12. *Left:* Stairway leading into the innermost sanctuary (66) as Parrot found it, with matching podiums for a statue of the goddess with the flowing vase on either side of it, and a toppled statue of Ishtup-Ilum at its foot. *Right:* The inner throneroom (65), as seen from the sanctuary. The dais for the throne can be seen at the far end.⁵⁸ According to al-Khalesi, a partition would have divided this room to create an ante-cella in front of the inner throneroom.

Finally, attempting to account for yet another missing element of Margueron's reconstruction, al-Khalesi points our attention to the fact that the upper and lower parts of the mural are "horizontally divided into two parts by a band of six stripes."⁵⁹ He observes that these could be seen as a correspondence to the six top steps of a stairway⁶⁰ in the inner sanctuary entrance, effectively defining seven degrees of separation.⁶¹ Similar bands provide a vertical edge to the frame, roughly matching the stair-stepping effect on the walls at the foot of the sanctuary stairway.⁶²

In contrast to our precise knowledge about the physical setting of the painting, only the broad outline of its ritual setting can be inferred with any certainty. As witnessed by later practice throughout the ancient Near East, Mari's rites of royal investiture likely took place at the beginning of the king's reign. Thereafter, they were ritually enacted on an annual basis, probably at the festival of the Offerings of Ishtar, arguably "the most important event of the year at Mari."⁶³ The few clues in existence about this festival point to the possibility that the Offerings of Ishtar was "the equivalent at Mari of the New Year festival at Ashur a thousand years later."⁶⁴ The central scene in the Investiture Panel is consistent with what would have been the culminating moments of such a ceremony.

Though differing in important details, scholars of Mari are in general agreement that the areas in the ritual complex have been laid out so as to accommodate a ceremonial progression of the king and his entourage toward the innermost cella.⁶⁵ The sequence of movement from the more public to the most private portions of the palace complex would correspond to a stepwise movement from the outer edges of the Investiture Panel toward its center. In our own reconstruction of events, based largely on an understanding of other Mesopotamian New Year rituals, we conjecture that at the times in which kingship was to be renewed, following the king's ordeal and a recital of the events of the creation, the royal party would make its advance from the gardenlike open space in the courtyard with its central palm (106). This is consistent with a sacrificial scene painted on the walls of courtyard 106 that has been

“interpreted as representing the king... leading a ‘procession of several temple servants towards’ an enthroned god.”⁶⁶ Texts from Mari tell us that the queen was the one who furnished sacrifices for the “Lady of the Palace,”⁶⁷ presumably meaning Ishtar.



Figure 13. “Life-size diorite statue of Puzur-Ishtar of Mari. This statue was discovered in the museum of Nebucharezzar’s palace at Babylon (604-562 BC) along with a second identical statue whose head is lost. The inscription on the hem of the statue’s skirt mentions Puzur-Ishtar, *šakkanakku* of Mari, and his brother the priest Milaga. The horns on Puzur-Ishtar’s cap signify deification. Horned caps were usually limited to divine representation in Mesopotamian art but they do occur on depictions of kings during the Ur III period. The body of this statue is now in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul; its head is in the Berlin Museum.”⁶⁸

The procession must have included a statue of Ishtar as well as those of less-important deities⁶⁹ and high palace officials such as, perhaps, Puzur-Ishtar (figure 13) and Ishtup-Illum (figure 11).⁷⁰ Passing guardians at the entrance to each of the private chambers (64, 65), they would come to the inner throneroom (65). In the sanctuary at the far end of this throneroom (66), the culminating rites of investiture would likely have taken place in the presence of statuary representations of gods and divinized humans. At one or more points in the ceremony, the king would have touched or grasped the hand of the statue of Ishtar.⁷¹ A banquet would have also taken place in the inner throneroom (65).⁷²

If al-Khalesi’s interpretation of archaeological findings in the inner throneroom is correct, some or all parties in the procession, prior to the presentation of the king to Ishtar, would have stood before a woven partition that divided the inner throneroom (65) and screened the innermost sanctuary (66) from outside view. As discussed in more detail later in this article, this partition would have been flanked by two gateposts in the form of sacred trees and, perhaps also, by a final guardian or pair of guardians. Once having passed to the inner side of the partition, the paired statues of the goddesses with the flowing vases would come into view at the foot of a stairway. Finally, according to al-Khalesi, the king would have ascended the stairway for the final rites of investiture described previously.

Consistent with the reconstruction of the Mari investiture ritual just outlined, the following sections of this article—Creation, Garden, and Divine Kingship—will explore in more detail possible meanings for the prominent elements of the painting. Our conclusions draw from texts, images, and architecture from throughout the ancient Near East.



Figure 14. Central scene of a famous relief from the north palace in Nineveh (northern Iraq), showing the neo-Assyrian king Assurbanipal and his queen Assursarrat enjoying a banquet in a garden setting (ca. 645 BC).⁷³ In the ancient Near East, creation themes of luxuriance, rest, and rulership are often mixed with symbols of military victory. Immediately to the left of the scene shown here is a depiction of the head of the king’s defeated adversary, Teumman, king of Elam, hanging from a tree.⁷⁴

4. Creation

Although we know little directly about the details of the Old Babylonian investiture ritual performed at Mari, it is certain that the fourth⁷⁵ of the twelve days of the later Babylonian New Year *akitu* festival always included a rehearsal of the creation story, *Enuma Elish* (“When on high...”),⁷⁶ a story whose theological roots reach back long before the painting of the Investiture Panel, and whose principal motifs were carried forward in later texts throughout the Levant.⁷⁷ In its broad outlines, this ritual text is an account of how Marduk achieved preeminence among the gods of the heavenly council through his victorious battles against the goddess Ti’amat and her allies, and the subsequent creation of the earth and of mankind as a prelude to the building of Marduk’s temple in Babylon.⁷⁸ The epic ends with the conferral upon Marduk of fifty sacred titles, including the higher god Ea’s own name, accompanied with the declaration: “He is indeed even as I.”⁷⁹ Seen in this light, a better title for *Enuma Elish* might be “The Exaltation of Marduk.”⁸⁰

The idea that the process of creation provides both a prologue and a model for subsequent temple building and ritual⁸¹ is made explicit in Hugh Nibley's⁸² reading of the first, second, and sixth lines of *Enuma Elish*:

At once above when the heavens had not yet received their name and the earth below was not yet named... the most inner sanctuary of the temple... had not yet been built.⁸³

Explaining his unusual choice of English words for the sixth line of the story, Nibley says: "It's the *gipara*, ... the sacred holy of holies, the innermost chamber of the temple."⁸⁴ The term *gipāru* has been translated variously in this context by others as "bog," "marsh," or "reed hut." The latter term most accurately conveys the idea of an enclosure housing the sanctuary or residence of the *en(t)u* priest(ess) of the temple. In his translation, Nibley is no doubt anticipating the events that culminate in 1:77, where the term *gipāra* is used to describe the "cult hut" founded by Ea after his victory.⁸⁵ The use of the term also recalls *Egipāra*, the room or bridal chamber of Egara in Unug (biblical Erech, Semitic-Babylonian Uruk, now Warka) and of Ezagina in Aratta (e.g., as mentioned in the neo-Sumerian epic *Enmerkar and Ensuhrirana*).⁸⁶

The account goes on to tell how the god Ea founded his sanctuary,⁸⁷ naming it *Apsu* after he had "established his dwelling" (1:71), "vanquished and trodden down his foes" (1:73), and "rested" in his "sacred chamber" (1:75). Later, Marduk was granted the privilege of having his own temple built, in likeness of the temple of Ea.⁸⁸



Figure 15. King bearing building tools, from the Ur-Nammu Stela, ca. 2100 BC.⁸⁹ Significantly, the building episode follows the investiture scene shown in figure 38 below.

Obviously, the temple of Marduk was not to be built directly by divine hands, but rather by the king, on behalf of the gods, as one of his central duties.⁹⁰ In return for his fealty, the fruits of the victory won by the gods were transmitted to the new king,⁹¹ both through divine sanction for his kingship—expressed explicitly in the rituals of investiture—and also through the commission given him to build a royal palace of his own, its function paralleling in the

secular world that of the temple in the religious domain.⁹² More than “merely the royal residence,” the palace became “the center from which rule is exercised and in which the state is run.”⁹³

Of course, none of the Mesopotamian creation themes of victory over one’s adversaries, temple and palace construction, and rest will be unfamiliar to students of the Bible. Indeed, John Walton correctly observes that “the ideology of the temple is not noticeably different in Israel than it is in the ancient Near East. The difference is in the God, not in the way the temple functions in relation to the God.”⁹⁴

Although careful research has rightfully dampened the excessive enthusiasm of past claims that the early chapters of the biblical book of Genesis were derived from Mesopotamian texts such as *Enuma Elish*, current scholarship is returning to an understanding of motifs that seem to reflect a common background in these accounts. A biblical analogue to the function of *Enuma Elish* in Mesopotamian ritual is also found in the proposal that Genesis 1 may have been used as part of Israelite temple liturgy.⁹⁵ Moreover, some scholars find parallels to Babylonian accounts of the primeval battle between the central god and his adversaries echoed in the biblical description of the subduing of the powers of watery chaos prior to creation.⁹⁶ Scattered in fragmentary form throughout the historical, prophetic, poetic, apocalyptic, and wisdom literature of the Bible are other possible allusions to primordial combat scenes.⁹⁷ Many Old Testament passages go further to equate the mortal king’s political enemies with God’s cosmic ones. For example, it has been argued that the “enthronement aspect of the [Feast of the Tabernacles] is reflected in numerous psalms containing the motif of Yahweh’s battle, often in the storm, against the cosmic enemies.”⁹⁸ Certain aspects of the Israelite Day of Atonement rite in Leviticus 16 also “seem to mimic”⁹⁹ events of the Mesopotamian *akitu* festival. In line with creation themes linking divine rulership with the origins of human kingship are Jewish, Christian, and Islamic texts that tell of Adam’s royal investiture in the Garden of Eden¹⁰⁰ and of the kingship of Noah.¹⁰¹ The idea of mankind being created “in” or “as”¹⁰² the “image of God”¹⁰³ parallels the practice of ancient kings who were seen as having been created as living images of the gods, and who, themselves, “placed statues (images) of themselves in far corners of their kingdom to proclaim, ‘This is mine.’ Humans were God’s images to represent to all creatures God’s rule over the earth.”¹⁰⁴

Perhaps the most important area of comparative study for Mesopotamian and biblical creation accounts is the increasingly-accepted idea that, just as the story of creation in *Enuma Elish* culminates in the founding of Marduk’s sanctuary, so the architecture of the tabernacle of ancient Israel is a physical representation of the Israelite creation narrative.¹⁰⁵ According to this view, the results of each day of creation are symbolically reflected in tabernacle furnishings.¹⁰⁶ Carrying this theme forward to a later epoch, Exodus 40:33 describes how Moses completed the tabernacle. The Hebrew text exactly parallels the account of how God finished creation.¹⁰⁷ Speaking for God, *Genesis Rabbah* comments: “It is as if, on that day [i.e., the day the tabernacle was raised in the wilderness], I actually created the world.”¹⁰⁸ With this idea in mind, Hugh Nibley has famously called the temple “a scale-model of the universe.”¹⁰⁹

In the biblical account, as in *Enuma Elish* (1:75), God rests when His work is finished. And when He does so, taking His place in the midst of Creation and ascending to His throne, the cosmic temple comes into its full existence as a functional sanctuary.¹¹⁰ This current scholarly

understanding of the process explained in Genesis 1 as being the organization¹¹¹ of a world fit to serve as God's dwelling place is in contrast to the now scientifically¹¹² and theologically discredited¹¹³ traditional view that this chapter merely describes, in poetic terms, the discrete steps of an ex nihilo material creation followed by a simple cessation of activity. Instead, from this updated perspective, we can regard the seventh day of creation as the enthronement of God in His heavenly temple and the culmination of all prior creation events. Walton writes:¹¹⁴

In the traditional view that Genesis 1 is an account of material origins, day seven is mystifying. It appears to be nothing more than an afterthought with theological concerns about Israelites observing the sabbath—an appendix, a postscript, a tack on.

In contrast, a reader from the ancient world would know immediately what was going on and recognize the role of day seven. Without hesitation the ancient reader would conclude that this is a temple text and that day seven is the most important of the seven days. In a material account day seven would have little role, but in a functional account, ... it is the true climax without which nothing else would make any sense or have any meaning.

How could reactions be so different? The difference is the piece of information that everyone knew in the ancient world and to which most modern readers are totally oblivious: Deity rests in a temple and only a temple. That is what temples were built for. We might even say that this is what a temple is—a place for divine rest...¹¹⁵

What does divine rest entail? Most of us think of rest as disengagement from the cares, worries, and tasks of life. What comes to mind is sleeping in or taking an afternoon nap. But in the ancient world rest is what results when a crisis has been resolved or when stability has been achieved, when things have "settled down." Consequently normal routines can be established and enjoyed. For deity this means that the normal operations of the cosmos can be undertaken. This is more a matter of engagement without obstacles than disengagement without responsibilities....

The role of the temple in the ancient world is not primarily a place for people to gather in worship like modern churches. It is a place for the deity—sacred space. It is his home, but more importantly his headquarters—the control room. When the deity rests in the temple it means that he is taking command, that he is mounting to his throne to assume his rightful place and his proper role.

God's instructions to mankind to "dress and keep" the Garden, are nothing more nor less than an outline of the specific "temple" duties being given to Adam, as the archetypal Levite in God's newly-created sanctuary.¹¹⁶ In contrast to *Enuma Elish* and *Atrahasis*, where "the high gods create lesser beings to do work for them so that *they* can rest,"¹¹⁷ Genesis emphasizes that the first couple was meant to *share* the divine pattern of sacred "rest" that followed the triumphant end of Creation, paralleling in a general way mankind's later weekly Sabbath-keeping.¹¹⁸

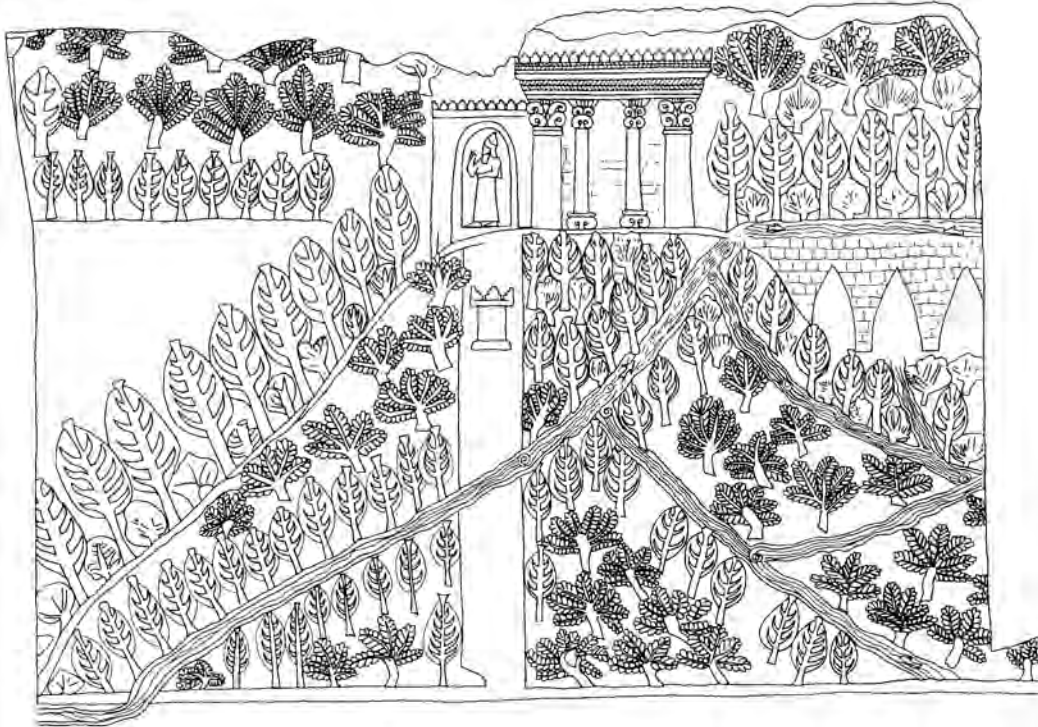


Figure 16. Sennacherib’s Garden at Nineveh, evoking conjectured garden-like settings within the great palace of Mari. The image is drawn from a fragment of relief sculpture of Assurbanipal (668-627 BC), now in the British Museum. Dalley has identified this site as the famed but misnamed “Hanging Gardens of Babylon,” one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.¹¹⁹

5. Garden

Attesting both the significance and ubiquity of gardens in ancient Mesopotamia, Dalley writes: “The Babylonians and Assyrians planted gardens in cities, palace courtyards, and temples, in which trees with fragrance and edible fruits were prominent for re-creating their concept of Paradise.”¹²⁰ A tree, either real or artificial, typically took the central position in palace courtyards,¹²¹ recalling the biblical account of the tree “in the midst” (literally “in the center”) of the Garden of Eden.¹²² Margueron convincingly argues that the correspondence between central location of the palm with respect to the courtyard and the central placement of the goddess Ishtar in the Investiture Panel is no coincidence.¹²³

Given texts and architectural remains from Ugarit suggesting that palace courtyards “served for the remembrance of dead ancestors,” Dalley asks whether “the tree planted in the center of the courtyard thus symbolize[s] regeneration in a very direct way, the family tree in every sense?”¹²⁴

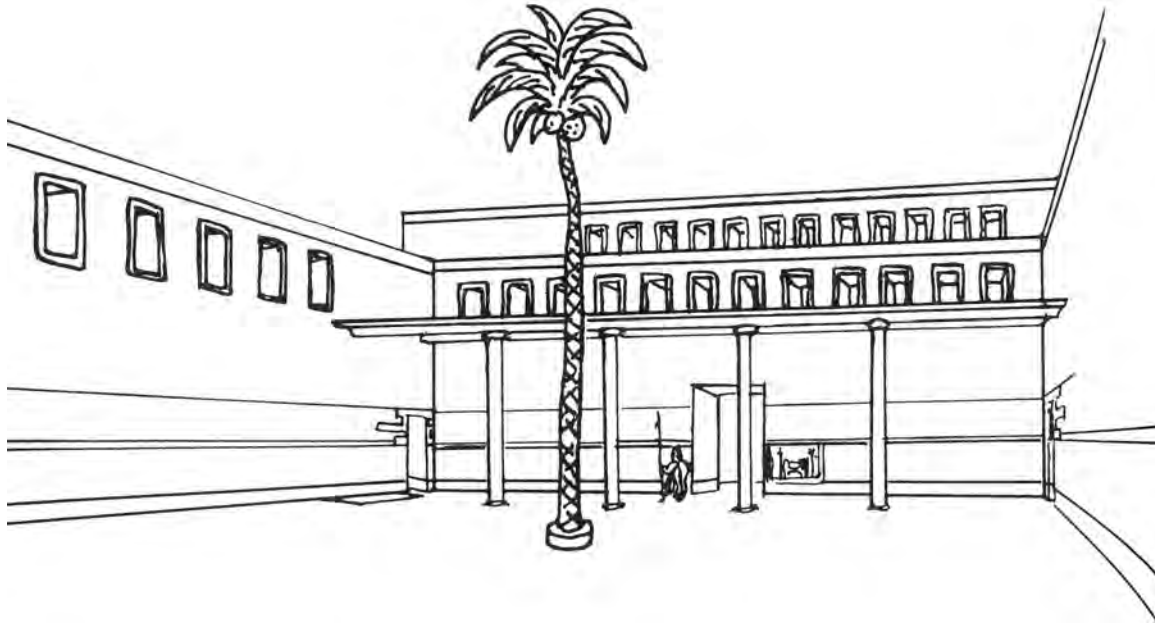
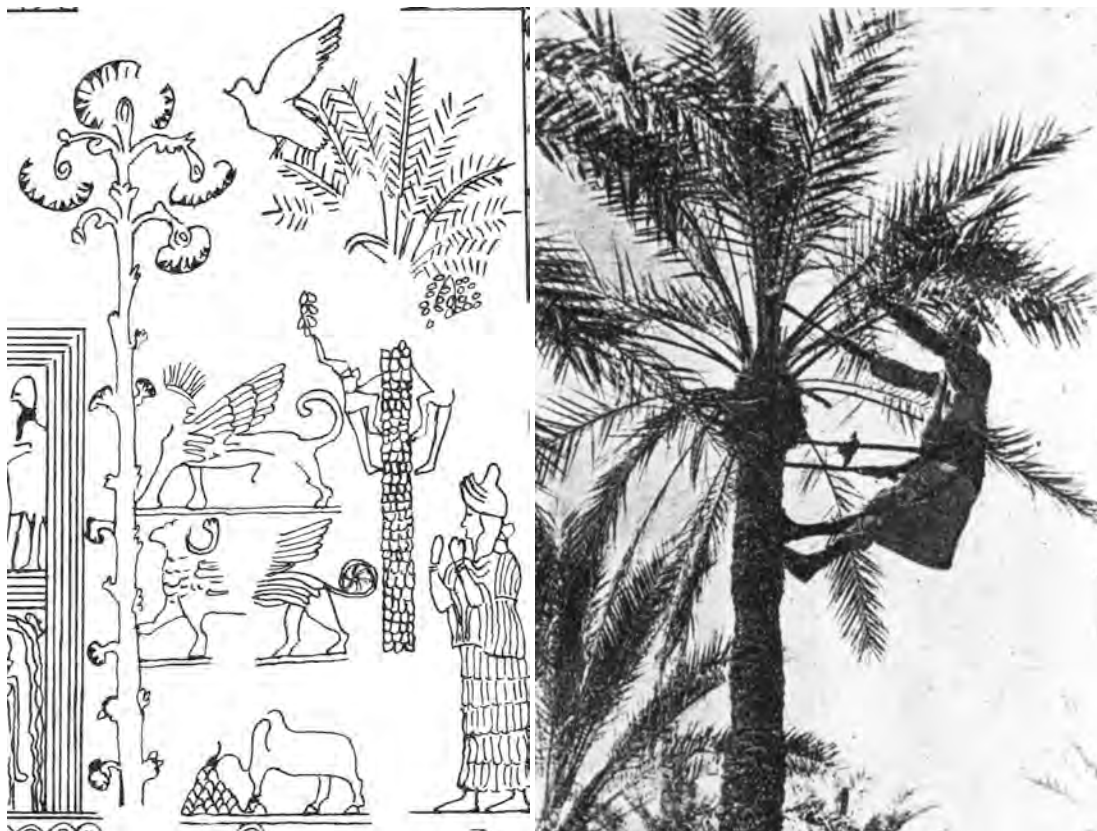


Figure 17. Margueron’s reconstruction of the Court of the Palm with an artificial tree¹²⁵ in the “exact center”¹²⁶ of the open air space (106).¹²⁷ The Investiture Panel is shown just to the right of the entry to the fore throneroom (64). Though the central palm no doubt dominated the courtyard symbolically and visually, the courtyard might also have been filled with potted trees and plants to create a luxurious garden.

The Investiture Panel displays many of the features of ritual gardens, including striking parallels with the biblical Garden of Eden.¹²⁸ We examine these features in more detail below.



Figures 18 and 19. *Left:* Details of the garden scene on the right side of the Investiture Panel.¹²⁹ *Right:* A man climbs a palm tree with a fertilization bag, Baghdad, 1918.¹³⁰

5.1. First Type of Sacred Tree

In the symmetrical side panels at the far left and right of the mural, two men climb a date palm, either to fertilize it or to pick its fruit.¹³¹ A single date palm tree “often yielded more than one hundred pounds of fruit per year over a productive lifetime of one hundred years or more. Akkadian synonyms for ‘date palm’ included ‘tree of abundance’ (*iṣu mašrû*) and ‘tree of riches’ (*iṣu rāšû*)—appropriate names for the vehicle of agricultural success and richness.”¹³²

It is reasonable to suppose that, in the context of investiture ritual at Mari, the fruits of the palm “might be offered to the goddess [Ishtar] who, moreover, according to Sumerian texts, had not the least distaste for date wine.”¹³³ Indeed, the strong association of the palm tree with Ishtar, goddess of sexual fertility, “is reflected, for example, in grave goods found near the precincts of the Middle Assyrian Ishtar temple at Assur that are decorated with various images of the goddess and date palm trees, in a later Neo-Assyrian seal showing Ishtar standing on her heraldic lion before a date palm, and in documents such as the Late Assyrian hymn to Ishtar that addresses her as ‘palm tree, daughter of Nineveh, stag of the lands.’”¹³⁴

The motif of eating sacred fruit is also preserved in the Sumerian myth of *Enki and Ninhursag*, where Enki was cursed because he ate the carefully nurtured plants of Ninhursag, the mother-goddess.¹³⁵ However, according to both early Mesopotamian and later Palestinian

texts, date palms were not only a source of sweet fruit but also they sometimes were climbed to obtain access to a source of wisdom or warning that was termed “the conversation of palm trees.”¹³⁶ The action of sweet fruit or honey from such a tree was associated in the Bible with the “opening of the eyes” and the attainment of “supernatural vision.”¹³⁷ More generally in the ancient Near East, sacred trees were seen as a source of energy, grace, and power.¹³⁸



Figure 20. Bird harbored in the palm tree.¹³⁹

The tree on the right of the Investiture Panel can be seen clearly as harboring a bird. The bird, originally painted in blue, has been identified by some as the “hunter of Africa,” a species that was seen over the ruins of Mari on at least one occasion in 1951.¹⁴⁰ Others have identified it instead as a dove, a symbol associated with Ishtar.¹⁴¹ Although we have no explanation for the symbolism of the bird at the top of a sacred tree in a Babylonian setting, we know its general meaning in Egyptian, Jewish, and Christian sources, where it represents the theme of sacred communication from the heavenly sphere.¹⁴² Such symbolism would be in harmony with the presumption that access to divine wisdom may have been among the motivations of the two tree climbers, as described above.

We also observe that in ancient Near East traditions from Ugarit and Israel, sacred trees are sometimes identified with a human king,¹⁴³ or with the mother of a king, whether human or divine.¹⁴⁴ Consistent with these ideas, Giovino concludes that ancient Mesopotamian cult objects resembling sacred trees “were possibly considered as substitutes for gods” and “may have received sacrifices and prayers and undergone purification rituals.”¹⁴⁵ Such an idea seems apparent in the Mari Investiture Panel. In likeness of the two goddesses witnessing the investiture in the inner sanctuary, a pair of similar goddesses near the date palms raise their hands in supplication,¹⁴⁶ suggesting a parallel between the tree and the king himself, “as the gods’ regent on earth, the conduit through whose actions their gift of abundance could reach [the kingdom] and her empire.”¹⁴⁷ Like the palm tree, the king is an “archetypal receiver and distributor of divine blessing.”¹⁴⁸

We have already compared the central palm tree in Mari courtyard 106 to the Genesis motif of the tree “in the midst” of the Garden of Eden. Also suggesting the date palm as a representation of the Tree of Life are the Book of Mormon accounts of the visions of Lehi and Nephi. Lehi contrasts the fruit of the Tree of Life to the fruit of the forbidden tree: “the one being sweet and the other bitter.”¹⁴⁹ The fruit of the date palm—often described as “white” in its most desirable varieties,¹⁵⁰ well-known to Lehi’s family, and likely available in the Valley of Lemuel where the family was camped at the time of the visions—would have provided a more fitting analogue¹⁵¹ than the traditional tree-of-life proposal of the olive to the love of God that was “sweet above all that is sweet.”¹⁵²



Figure 21. Juan Bautista Villalpando, 1594-1605: *Holy of Holies*.

A number of scholars have found parallels in the layout of the trees in the Garden of Eden and certain features of Israelite sanctuaries.¹⁵³ Significantly, the holiest places within the temples of Solomon and of Ezekiel’s vision were decorated with palms.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, the Holy of Holies in Solomon’s temple contained not only one, but many palm trees and pillars which Stordalen says can be seen as representing “a kind of stylized forest.”¹⁵⁵ The angels on its walls may have represented God’s heavenly council,¹⁵⁶ mirrored on earth by those who have attained “angelic” status through the rites of investiture. Such an interpretation recalls the statues of gods mingling with divinized kings in the innermost sanctuary of the Mari palace.¹⁵⁷ Borrowing Christian imagery of the righteous on earth being “partakers of the divine nature,”¹⁵⁸ we might see the eating of the fruit of a sacred tree as prelude to actually becoming a divine provider of such fruit oneself. The relevance of this imagery for the idea of kingship is discussed in more detail later in this article.

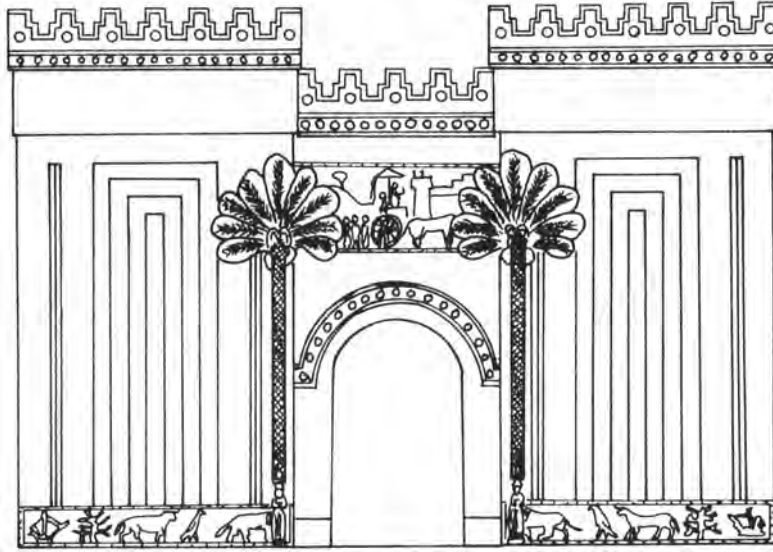


Figure 22. Façade of the temple of the Moon-god Sin at Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad), built by Sargon II in ca. 706 BC.¹⁵⁹ This structure was first studied in relation to the Investiture Panel of Mari by Barrelet.¹⁶⁰ Parrot cites the prominent trees, the pair of gods with flowing vases beneath them, and the procession of symbolic animals on either side of the portal as “absolutely convincing” evidence for Barrelet’s hypothesis of a correlation between the Mari mural and the architectural features of the setting in which investiture took place.¹⁶¹

5.2. Guardians and Sacred Names

In the Investiture Panel, a second type of sacred tree is guarded by mythical winged animals who, according to al-Khalesi, would be responsible for “the introduction of worshippers to the presence of a god.”¹⁶² Architecturally, he sees these animals being represented as wall reliefs, covered with metal or other precious materials, like those shown in figure 20.¹⁶³

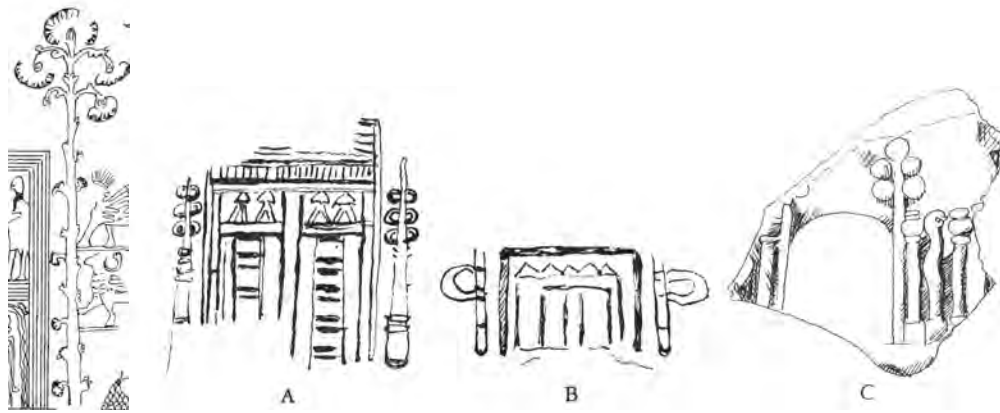
However, it is not unreasonable to suppose that these animals might have additionally been represented as actual metal-plated statues placed at each of the entrances to the private areas of the Court of the Palms complex, as one sometimes sees at the entrances to temples in Mari¹⁶⁴ and elsewhere throughout the ancient world. Indeed, Barrelet—citing texts associated with Gudea, a ruler of the city of southern city of Lagash, ca. 2144-2124 BC—conjectures that the three composite animals in the Investiture Panel symbolize the three major areas of the ritual complex where the investiture took place.¹⁶⁵ In Babylonia, as in Jerusalem, “different temple gates had names indicating the blessing received when entering: ‘the gate of grace,’ ‘the gate of salvation,’ ‘the gate of life’ and so on,”¹⁶⁶ as well as signifying “the fitness, through due preparation, which entrants should have in order to pass through [each of] the gates.”¹⁶⁷ In Jerusalem, the final “gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter,”¹⁶⁸ very likely referred to “the innermost temple gate”¹⁶⁹ where those seeking the face of the God of Jacob¹⁷⁰ would find the fulfillment of their temple pilgrimage. Note that the middle guardian in the painting is pictured with one foot propped up against the tree, suggesting a possible correspondence to guardians that might have been placed at the gateposts of the innermost sanctuary partition. Such guardians would find their likeness in the position and function of biblical cherubim whose depiction appeared on the veil of the Jerusalem temple.¹⁷¹

We know nothing directly about the possibility or function of gatekeepers in Old Babylonian rites of investiture. However, the ritual theme of “getting past the gatekeeper” has a “long history” in Egyptian ritual¹⁷² that arguably can be related to later Jewish and Christian initiation texts. It should be remembered that *Enuma Elish* both “begins and ends with concepts of naming,” and that, in this context, “the name, properly understood [by the informed], discloses the significance of the created thing.”¹⁷³ If it is reasonable to suppose that the function of knowledge of sacred names in initiation ritual elsewhere in the ancient Near East might be extended by analogy to Old Babylonian investiture liturgy, we might see in the account of the fifty names given to Marduk at the end of *Enuma Elish* a description of his procession through the ritual complex in which he took upon himself the personal attributes represented by those names one by one.¹⁷⁴ Ultimately, one might suppose, he would have passed the guardians of the sanctuary gate to reach the throne of Ea where, as also related in the account, he finally received the god’s own name and identity.¹⁷⁵ Plausibly, this was done in the same manner that divine words were “transmitted to the hero [of Mesopotamian flood stories] through a screen or partition made of matting, a *kikkisu*, such as was ritually used in temples.”¹⁷⁶

By way of comparison, the biblical book of Genesis relates how Adam was commanded by God to give names to the animals in the Garden of Eden.¹⁷⁷ Although the standard explanation for this elliptically-described incident is that it gives Adam an opportunity to display his god-like dominion over the animals,¹⁷⁸ recent scholarship suggests that the story of Adam and Eve, like the biblical creation account, may have functioned as a temple text¹⁷⁹ and, in that light, that there may be more in the story than first meets the eye.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, a context of initiation is apparent in the intriguing version of this episode that appears in the *Qur’an*.¹⁸¹ While omitting the biblical account where the animals were named, the *Qur’an* relates in its place the story of how Adam—before the Fall and after having been instructed by God—was directed to recite a series of secret names to the angels in order to convince them that he was worthy of the elevated status of priest and king that had been conferred upon him.¹⁸² Alusi concludes that Adam’s saying of these names is “in the end, like saying the names of God, for power concerns God Himself in His ruling of the world.”¹⁸³

5.1. Second Type of Sacred Tree

Scholars contrast the realism in the Investiture Panel depiction of the date palm to the representation of the second type of “Sacred Tree,” which seems to be “imaginary” in kind.¹⁸⁴ Though no plausible candidate in nature has been found for this tree with its prominent blossoms, Barrelet nonetheless was convinced that it represented an actual object in the architecture of the ritual complex,¹⁸⁵ “just as we have reason to believe that standards positioned on either side of temple entrances depicted on seals were actual objects. Furthermore, Barrelet saw both a formal and functional relation between such standards and the artificial trees associated with temples.”¹⁸⁶



Figures 23 and 24. *Left:* The rightmost of the two “imaginary” sacred trees that stand on either side of the inner compartment represented at the center of the Investiture Panel. *Right:* Three depictions of stylized “trees” flanking the doors of Mesopotamian temples. A: Cylinder Seal of Tell Billa; B: Cylinder Seal of Tell Agrab; C: Stela of Gudea.¹⁸⁷

Barrelet was especially struck by the similarity between the five circular blossoms of the tree portrayed as standing on either side of the temple portal on the Stela of Gudea (figure 23c) and the position and appearance of the corresponding tree in the Investiture Panel. Intriguingly, three smaller shapes are positioned next to Gudea’s tree, just as three guardians stand beside the tree in the Investiture Panel.¹⁸⁸ The five circular blossoms suggest an explanation for the mystery of the analogous seven “balls” or “dots” often found at the top of staffs held by divinities on Mesopotamian cylinder seals.¹⁸⁹

As to the specific function of the second type of sacred tree depicted in the Investiture Panel, al-Khalesi concludes that it was “meant to symbolize a door-post.”¹⁹⁰ From archaeological evidence, he conjectures that such posts could have provided supporting infrastructure for a partition made of “ornamented woven material.”¹⁹¹ This recalls the *kikkisu*, a woven reed partition ritually used in temples through which the Mesopotamian flood hero received divine instruction.¹⁹² Just as Margueron interpreted findings of perforated paving stones from courtyard 106 as evidence for an artificial palm in its center,¹⁹³ al-Khalesi cites the presence of a rectangular chink in the pavement of inner throneroom 65 as evidence for the presence of tree-like gatepost.¹⁹⁴ He conjectures that such posts could have provided supporting infrastructure for a partition made of “ornamented woven material.” If symmetrically placed, the gateposts would have defined a portal of about two meters in width, their placement roughly corresponding to the horizontal line dividing areas 65 and 66 in figure 7 above.¹⁹⁵ The neo-Hittite temple at ‘Ain Dara provides a parallel to such an arrangement in its screened-off podium shrine located at the far end of its main hall.¹⁹⁶

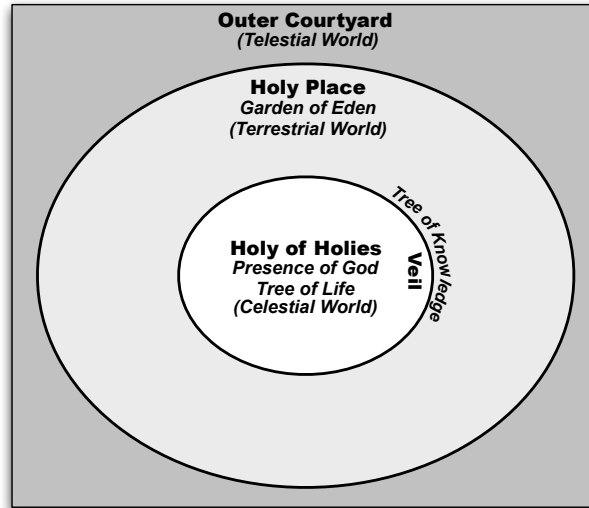


Figure 25. Zones of sacredness in the Garden of Eden and in the Israelite temple, including LDS terminology for the same.¹⁹⁷

Whether or not such a woven screen existed at Mari, there is abundant evidence from elsewhere in the ancient Near East about the function of sacred trees placed at sanctuary entrances.¹⁹⁸ By way of analogy, Egyptian, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic literature alludes to a secondary paradisiacal tree as a symbol for the veil of the temple sanctuary¹⁹⁹ and for the theme of death and rebirth.²⁰⁰ Perhaps the most interesting biblical tradition about the placement of the two special trees in the Garden of Eden is the Jewish idea that the foliage of the Tree of Knowledge hid the Tree of Life from direct view, and that “God did not specifically prohibit eating from the Tree of Life because the Tree of Knowledge formed a hedge around it; only after one had partaken of the latter and cleared a path for himself could one come close to the Tree of Life.”²⁰¹

It is in this same sense that the fourth-century Christian, Ephrem the Syrian, could call the Tree of Knowledge “the veil for the sanctuary.”²⁰² He pictured Paradise as a great mountain, with the Tree of Knowledge providing a boundary partway up the slopes. The Tree of Knowledge, Ephrem concludes, “acts as a sanctuary curtain [i.e., veil] hiding the Holy of Holies which is the Tree of Life higher up.”²⁰³ In addition to this inner boundary, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sources sometimes speak of a “wall” surrounding the whole of the Garden, separating it from the “outer courtyard” of the mortal world.²⁰⁴ Recurring throughout the Old Testament are echoes of such a layout of sacred spaces and the accounts of dire consequences for those who attempt unauthorized entry through the veil into the innermost sanctuary.²⁰⁵

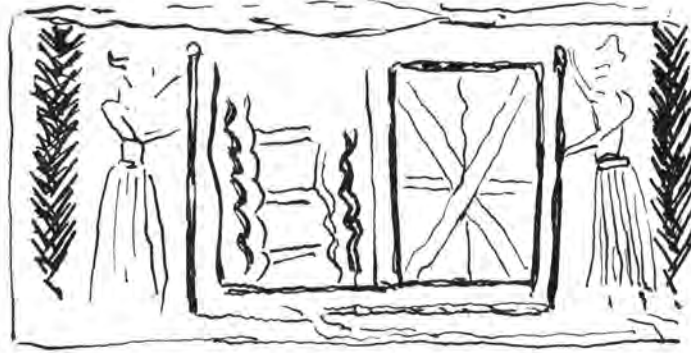


Figure 26. Temple mosaic from Khirbet Samara²⁰⁶

One example of an architectural parallel to the idea of the Mari sanctuary partition hanging between two artificial trees is this depiction of Solomon's Temple that shows the veil being suspended from two columns whose tree-like appearance is highlighted in some accounts.²⁰⁷ Moreover, as Rennaker notes,²⁰⁸ each gate in Ezekiel's visionary temple is decorated with palm trees.²⁰⁹ In parallel investiture depictions from early and later Babylonia, the tree(s)²⁰⁹ (figure 38) or tree-like column(s)²¹⁰ (figure 37) standing immediately in front of the throne of the god demonstrate the strong association between the symbolism of the veil and the flanking arboreal doorposts in ancient Mesopotamia.



A



B

Figure 27. Guardians of the gate with trees rising up immediately behind them.²¹¹ The central figure in 28a is the standing god.

In ancient Mesopotamia, a personification of a tree as a god with the power of human speech “guarded the gate of heaven.”²¹² In a variation on the same theme, Barrelet describes evidence that gatepost guardians sometimes may have been represented in human form:²¹³

Found on many cylinder seals from different eras is a rectangular frame used to suggest a temple. In two of these documents (Cylinders of Tell Billa, Tell Agrab), the rectangle is flanked by posts and even, in a third (Cylinder of Ischali), by trees. E. D. van Buren, in a recent study on “Guardians of the Gate,” observes that certain of these guardians are frequently shown between the gate they are commissioned to guard and the trees that rise up immediately behind them. This provides additional proof that the “gate” of the divine dwelling is flanked by posts, or by artificial trees that stand there.

Scenes that depict the king passing by such doorpost guardians and entering through the gate for presentation to the god and royal investiture are described below.

5.2. Presentation Scenes

With respect to king’s passage through the final portal to enter into the presence of the god, Parrot²¹⁴ finds it “significant that following the representation of combats between beasts and savages, the battles of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, endless scenes of *presentation* have been reproduced” on ancient Mesopotamian cylinder seals. Consistent with their function as instruments of authentication, such seals were used to confirm the legitimate status of their bearer²¹⁵ and “may have been understood in [their] own time to represent the very moment of the conferring of that status.”²¹⁶



Figure 28. Mesopotamian cylinder seals showing a “first presentation” scene.²¹⁷

Parrot classes presentation seals into two types, corresponding to a first and a second presentation of the worshiper to the god. Those depicting a first presentation:

... always include at least three personages, invariably in the same order: higher god, mediating god, and worshiper. The higher god is usually seated. The mediating god, with rare exception, is always a woman—and this is worthy of reflection. As for the worshiper, he approaches the throne of grace in the prescribed fashion of ritual: bare head, face clean-shaven, and dressed in a long robe with a fringed shawl.

The mediating goddess grasps the right hand of the worshiper as she approaches with a raised left arm, while the higher god stretches out his right hand in welcome.²¹⁸



Figure 29. Mesopotamian cylinder seal showing a “second presentation” scene.²¹⁹

Parrot contrasts this first type of scene with what he takes to be that of a second presentation of the worshiper:²²⁰

The personages are doubtless the same (higher god, worshiper, helping god), but they do not show up in the same order, nor do they take the same attitude: the worshiper is standing, hands folded or raised, while behind him the helping god intercedes.²²¹ Perhaps this can be seen as a second *presentation*: the worshiper, who has already been introduced, now relates his request, while the mediating god continues to intercede on his behalf, supporting the request of the worshiper through prayer. More rarely, the worshiper is portrayed as alone before his god. The god may be either seated or standing.

In light of these explanations, these scenes might be better characterized as requests or petitions than as mere presentations. Whereas the first scene is consistent with the idea of the introduction of the king at the entrance to the final temple portal described above in the previous section, the second scene corresponds to the depiction of the actual investiture in the upper register of the central scene of the Panel discussed below.

6. Divine Kingship

Having left the garden areas and now, at last, being within the inner sanctuary, the king of Mari's journey to the celestial realm was complete and he was (re-)endowed with kingship. Such a ritual journey was not unique to Mari. Wyatt summarizes a wide range of evidence indicating "a broad continuity of culture throughout the Levant"²²² wherein the candidate for kingship underwent a ritual journey intended to confer a divine status as a son of God²²³ and allowing him "*ex officio*, direct access to the gods. All other priests were strictly deputies."²²⁴

Scholars have long debated the meaning of scattered fragments of rituals of sacral kingship in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms, but over time have increasingly found evidence of parallels with Mesopotamian investiture traditions.²²⁵ In this regard, one of the most significant of these is Psalm 110, an unquestionably royal and—for Christians—messianic passage.²²⁶

- 1 A word of the Lord for my lord: Sit at my right hand,
till I make your enemies a stool for your feet
- 2 The Lord shall extend the sceptre of your power from Zion,
so that you rule in the midst of your enemies.
- 3 Royal grace is with you on this day of your birth,
in holy majesty from the womb of the dawn;
upon you is the dew of your new life.
- 4 The Lord has sworn and will not go back:
You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.
- 5 The Lord at your right hand
will smite down kings in the day of his wrath.
- 6 In full majesty he will judge among the nations,
smiting heads across the wide earth.
- 7 He who drinks from the brook by the way
shall therefore lift high his head.

A well-known scholar of the Psalms, John Eaton,²²⁷ summarizes the import and setting of these verses as part of:

... the ceremonies enacting the installation of the Davidic king in Jerusalem. The prophetic singer announces two oracles of the Lord for the new king (vv. 1, 4) and fills them out with less direct prophecy (vv. 2-3, 5-7). Items of enthronement ceremonial seem reflected: ascension to the throne, bestowal of the sceptre, anointing and baptism signifying new birth as the Lord's son (v. 3²²⁸), appointment to royal priesthood,²²⁹ symbolic defeat of foes, the drink of life-giving water. As [in Psalms] 2, 18, 89, [and] 101, the rites may have involved a sacred drama and been repeated in commemorations,

perhaps annually in conjunction with the celebration of God's kingship, for which the Davidic ruler was chief "servant."

As with the investiture rites of ancient Israel, our knowledge of Mesopotamian ceremonies is limited, due to secrecy, the tradition of oral transmission, and the fragmentary nature of the texts.²³⁰ However, their wide dissemination in the ancient world gives assurance of their broad outlines. Our reconstruction of the culminating rites, as depicted in the Panel, are described below.

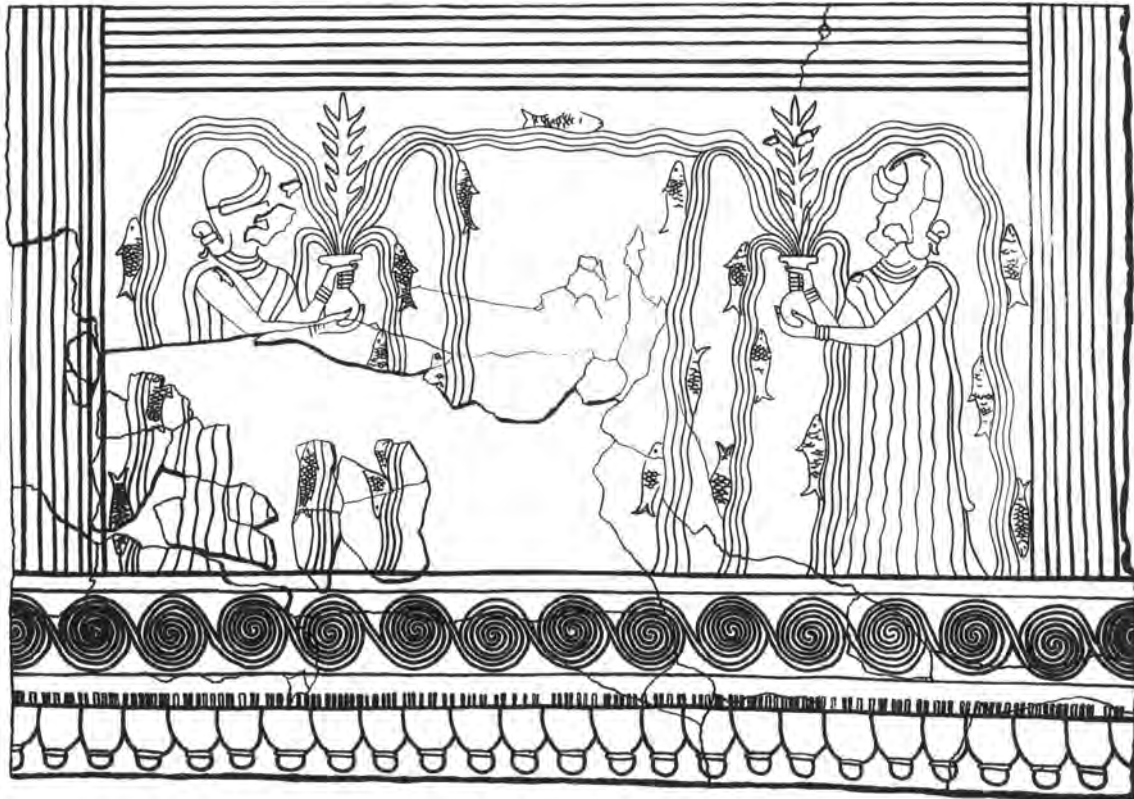


Figure 30. The lower register of the central portion of the Investiture Panel, containing two goddesses holding jars with a seedling and four flowing streams.²³¹

6.1. Flowing Water

In the lower half of the central register of the Investiture Panel, we see female figures holding jars from which flow four streams, recalling the four rivers that flowed out from underneath the Tree of Life in the biblical Garden of Eden and also from the Israelite temple mount.²³² A seedling²³³ grows out of the middle of the streams, which brings to mind the Book of Mormon account of Nephi's dream where he saw the "Tree of Life" sharing the same location as the "fountain of living waters."²³⁴ In a 13th-century BC ivory inlay from Assur, four streams flow out into water jars from a god at the top of a mountain, who stands between two sacred trees guarded by a pair of winged bulls.²³⁵



Figure 31. Statue of a goddess with a flowing vase found in the Mari Court of the Palm complex.²³⁶

Al-Khalesi proposed that these goddesses correspond architecturally to two identical statues with flowing vases that once flanked the bottom of the stairway to the sanctuary (66). One such statue was found within the Court of the Palm complex in the Mari palace (figure 31). Careful examination of the statue “shows that actual water streamed out of the vase.”²³⁷ As evidence for a symmetric placement of two such statues at the foot of the sanctuary stairway, al-Khalesi cites the finding of waterproof building material and drainage installations in each of the corresponding locations.²³⁸ A placement of two statues of gods with flowing vases likewise is found on either side of the façade of the temple of Sin at Khorsabad (see figure 22).

By way of analogy to kingship rituals elsewhere in the ancient Near East, the streams in the Mari palace could be seen as suggesting a final ritual washing and/or libation²³⁹—or perhaps instead a “drink of life-giving water”²⁴⁰—as a prelude to the final rites of royal investiture. The four streams recall the Jewish and Christian descriptions of the four-fold river of the Garden of Eden.²⁴¹

An additional striking parallel to the presumed positioning and function of the Mari female statuary pair can be found in Egyptian ritual literature in connection with the role of the ladies Edjo and Nekhbed, often identified with the better known pair of Isis and Nephthys, who each possess waterpots.²⁴² In the “dramatized ritual presentation”²⁴³ described in the Egyptian Papyrus Bremner-Rhind, the ladies hail the king as “the newborn Horus, and as ‘Sprout,’ the green and growing one,”²⁴⁴ recalling the seedling that springs up from the vase in the Investiture Panel and further confirming the tree as a symbol of kingship.



Figures 32 and 33. *Left:* Impression of seal of Gudea, Tello, Iraq, ca. 2150 BC.²⁴⁵ *Right:* The Sumerian prince Gudea holding a vase of flowing water, ca. 2150 BC.²⁴⁶

Plausible meanings of the sprout and the flowing water are also made apparent in a seal of Gudea. At left, the bareheaded and nearly-naked Gudea is introduced by a mediating deity to a seated god. The mediating god presents a vase featuring a seedling and flowing water to the god. Water flows from the seated god himself into flowing vases, no doubt anticipating the sprouting of future seedlings that have yet to appear. The scene suggested is one of rebirth and transformation: drawing on the phraseology of the gospel of John we might say that having been “born of water,”²⁴⁷ the king, in likeness both of the sprout within the flowing vase and of the god to which he is being introduced, is also to become a “well of water springing up into everlasting life.”²⁴⁸ The sculpture at right attests just such an interpretation, where Gudea himself is shown with his head covered and holding a vase of flowing water.

6.2. General Descriptions of the Investiture Ceremony

The Babylonian king, as part of the ceremonies of the *akītu* festival, was required to submit to a royal ordeal involving an initial period of suffering and ritual death. Once this phase was complete, the king washed his hands and entered the temple for the rites of (re)investiture, as described in Black’s reconstruction of events:²⁴⁹

The *šešgallu*, who is in the sanctuary, comes out and divests the king of his staff of office, ring, mace, and crown.²⁵⁰ These insignia he takes into the sanctuary and places on a seat. Coming out again, he strikes the king across the face. He now leads him into the sanctuary and pulling him by the ears, forces him to kneel before the god. The king utters the formula:

*I have not sinned, Lord of the lands,
I have not been negligent of your godhead.
I have not destroyed Babylon,
I have not ordered her to be dispersed.
I have not made Esagil quake,
I have not forgotten its rites.
I have not struck the privileged citizens in the faces,*

*I have not humiliated them.
I have paid attention to Babylon,
I have not destroyed her walls...*

He leaves the sanctuary. The *šešgallu* replies to this with an assurance of Bel’s favor and indulgence towards the king: “He will destroy your enemies, defeat your adversaries,” and the king regains the customary composure of his expression and is reinvested with his insignia, fetched by the *šešgallu* from within the sanctuary. Once more he strikes the king across the face, for an omen: if the king’s tears flow, Bel is favorably disposed; if not, he is angry.

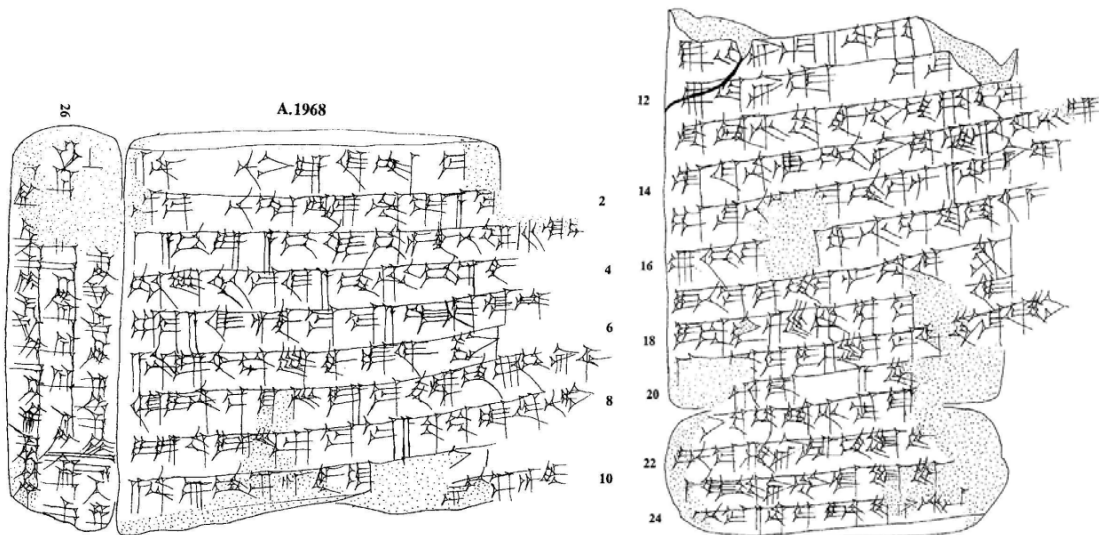


Figure 34. Reproduction of the cuneiform tablet containing the god Adad’s oracle to King Zimri-Lim (ARM A 1968).²⁵¹

Regarding the specifics of the Mari ceremony from an earlier time, the following excerpt from an oracle of the god Adad to King Zimri-Lim is understood by Wyatt as an allusion to established rites of royal investiture:²⁵²

Thus speaks Adad: ... I have given all the land to Yahdun-Lim and, thanks to my arms, he has had no equal in combat...

I have brought you back to the throne of your father, and have given you the arms with which I fought against Ti’amat [literally tâmtum]. I have anointed you with the oil of my victory, and no one has withstood you.

Based on this and other fragmentary textual evidence, Wyatt²⁵³ conjectures three events that would have taken place during the ritual of investiture at Mari:

Firstly, the king is escorted by the god to the throne of his father, where he presumably takes his seat. This suggests that he approaches the throne accompanied by the image of the god, perhaps holding his hand;

Secondly, he is given the “divine weapons,” which are identified as those used by the god in the mythical *Chaoskampf* [i.e., the primeval battle between the central god and his adversaries].²⁵⁴ Something of their power and efficacy is evidently to be transmitted to the king;

Thirdly, he is anointed, in the first extra-biblical allusion to the anointing of a king. This most distinctive of Israelite and Judahite rites is now given a pedigree going back a millennium. This is thus the formal inauguration of [the king’s] reign...

Note that, in Israelite practice, the moment of investiture would not necessarily have been the time of the king’s first anointing. The culminating anointing of the king that corresponds to his definite investiture was, at least sometimes, preceded by a prior princely anointing. Baker and Ricks describe “several incidents in the Old Testament where a prince was first anointed to become king, and later, after he had proven himself, was anointed again—this time as actual king.”²⁵⁵

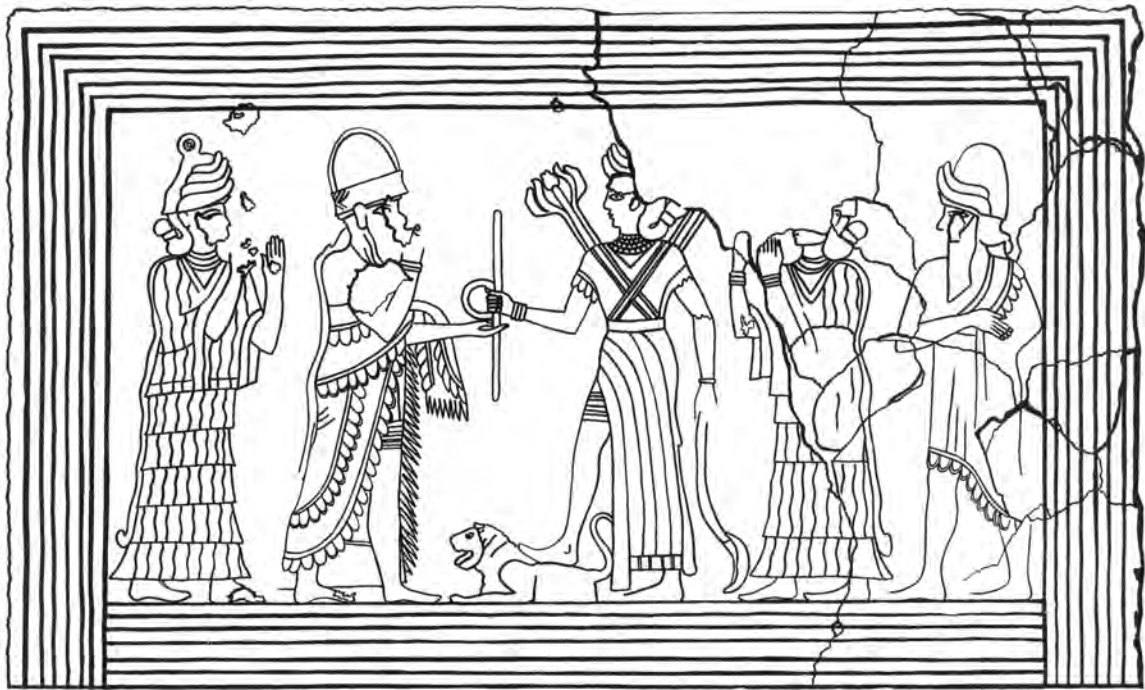


Figure 35. The upper register of the central portion of the Investiture Panel, showing the king being invested by the victorious Ishtar in the presence of intercessory goddesses and a divinized royal figure (at right).²⁵⁶

6.3. *The Hand Ceremony*

With regard to events on the seventh or eighth day of the *akītu* festival, Black writes:²⁵⁷

The king, “taking Bel by the hand,” brought him out into the courtyard where he was enthroned among the hanging curtains of a canopy. This “taking by the hand” anticipates the principal “taking by the hand” which later inaugurates the grand procession. The phrase is often used in chronicles as a shorthand to refer to the whole *akītu* festival. Thus we read: “13th year, Sargon took Bel by the hand.” The “taking by the hand” was not a

ceremony in itself, as was suggested by some commentators who saw it as a ritual of royal investiture. It constitutes in the present context no more than an invitation to depart.

Others see references to a hand ceremony differently. For example, Wyatt connects it with the moment when royal insignia were conferred.²⁵⁸

The actual handing over of the weapons (taken by the king from the hands of the divine image?) indicates a process of direct transmission by touch, comparable to rites of laying of hands, as in investitures, and enthronement rites in which kings sit on the divine throne.

Comparing the function of the Mesopotamian *akītu* hand ceremony to Jewish, Mandaean, and Manichaean handclasp rites, Drower sees the “yearly placing of the king’s hand into the hand of the god as a kind of pact: the king swore fealty to his divinity; the god engaged himself to protect king and people. The handclasp appears on ancient Persian coins as an emblem of peace and alliance.”²⁵⁹

In an Old Testament context, Matthew B. Brown²⁶⁰ notes a depiction of a handclasp in a “first presentation” scene involving “the Israelite king standing at the veiled door of the Jerusalem Temple and being admitted by the Lord into an assembly.”²⁶¹ He also notes important allusions in the Psalms. For example:

It is curious that in the King James translation of the Psalm 89 coronation text it is said that the Lord’s right hand will be established with the king²⁶²... Eaton renders this passage with these words (with the Lord speaking): “My hand shall hold him fast.”²⁶³ This suggests a handclasp between the Heavenly King and His earthly vice-regent. Indeed, [Kraus and Anderson] state outright that a right-handed clasp between God and the king belonged to the Israelite enthronement ritual.²⁶⁴

At least one traditional Jewish exegete, ibn Ezra, recognized “similar mechanisms of human ascent” in Psalm 73:23-24: “for I am always with You; you grasped my right hand [and] led me into your [council], and afterwards granted me glory.”²⁶⁵

6.4. The Oath

Within the Panel’s culminating scene of royal investiture, we take the king’s raised right hand as representing the gesture of an oath.²⁶⁶ His outstretched left arm receives the ring and staff of his office, symbols of divine power that are discussed in more detail below.²⁶⁷ Note the identical posture of the solitary king of Nineveh, as depicted in the top center portion of figure 16.

In his study of the *nīšum* oath at Mari, Paul Hoskisson conjectured that the course of the Ishtar festival—plausibly the event at which kingship was renewed—may have provided an occasion for the king to swear the oath of the gods.²⁶⁸ He described the words and gestures associated with the oath ceremony as follows:²⁶⁹

This spoken element of the oath could have reference to god and/or kings as the object, literally, “by the life of” god and/or king... In addition to the verbal element, there was also a “ritual gesture,” presumably of the hand or hands, associated with the oath....

While the exact denotation of these phrases remains elusive, they no doubt refer to touching or seizing the throat (AHw 535a), and connote the seriousness of the commitment undertaken by reciting the oath.

Conditional self-cursing was a standard part of covenant-making elsewhere in the ancient Near East,²⁷⁰ and is indeed implied by the grammar of oaths in Akkadian where the oath is introduced by the protasis, “If I do not ... [then].” Ziegler examines the biblical use of variations of the oath formula: “So may God do to me and more...”²⁷¹ He notes that the allusive nature of this phrase:²⁷²

... may suggest that this oath formula was accompanied by an act, speech, or gesture that suggested the manner of punishment in case of violation of this oath. In speculating on the nature of this act, scholars offer various possibilities: it is a verbal enumeration of punishments that would occur in case of its violation; a symbolic gesture or act intended to clarify the implied punishment in case of violation, such as an index finger moving across the throat²⁷³ or another gesture of threatened punishment; or a ritual act involving the slaughter of animals. In this situation, the slaughtered animal would represent the punishment which God is invoked to execute against the violator of the oath.

An oath made by God Himself, accompanying investiture with the royal priesthood in Israel, is attested by Psalm 110:4. Here the Lord confirms His intent by “an oath which he will never revoke. It appoints the king to be God’s priest forever.”²⁷⁴ This same concept is invoked in the book of Hebrews²⁷⁵ and in the explanation of the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood given in the Doctrine and Covenants.²⁷⁶

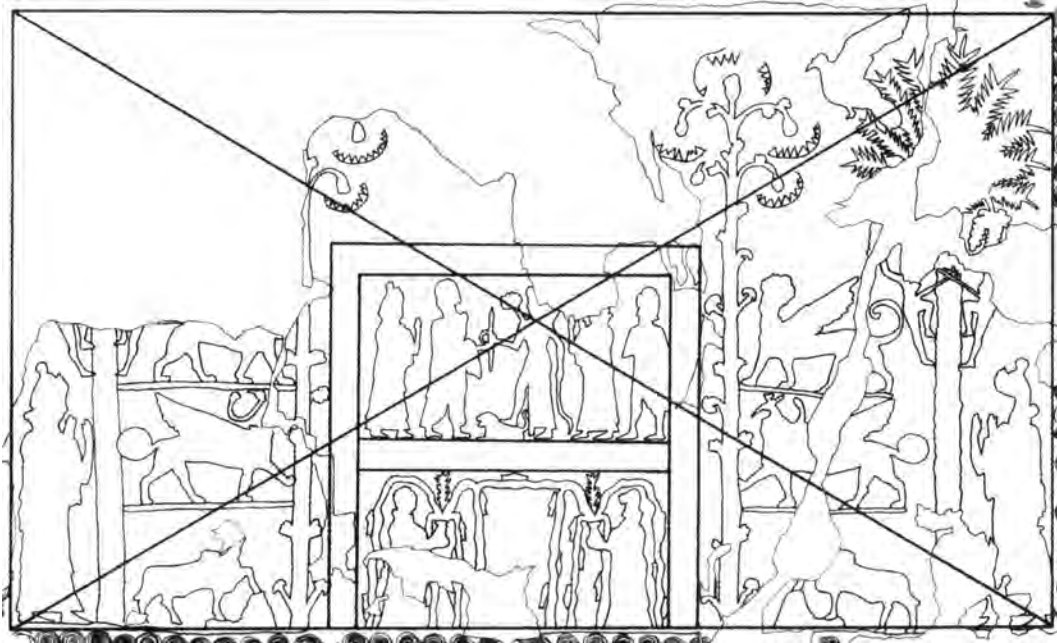


Figure 36. The diagonals of the painting cross the statue of Ishtar conferring royal insignia on the king, highlighting the central importance of this event in the ritual of kingship at Mari.²⁷⁷

6.5. The Conferral of Royal Insignia

We have now worked our way from the outermost edges of the Investiture Mural to its exact center, where is depicted the conferral of royal insignia on the king by the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar.

Among other identifying conventions for Ishtar, note the lion under her foot, consistent with the *Chaoskampf* creation theme of triumph over one’s adversaries.²⁷⁸ The picture of Ishtar’s foot on the lion recalls the *protoevangelium*: “he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”²⁷⁹

With respect to the royal insignia, there is no question that Ishtar is holding out the well-known Mesopotamian “rod and ring” that, according to the most recent major study of the subject, by Slanski, was “employed for almost 2,000 years, in both Babylonian and Assyrian royal monuments and in non-royal works.” And yet, as she also points out, researchers have heretofore been unable to propose “a convincing explanation for what the objects, the ‘rod’ and the ‘ring,’ are, and what meaning or meanings their representation was intended to convey.”²⁸⁰

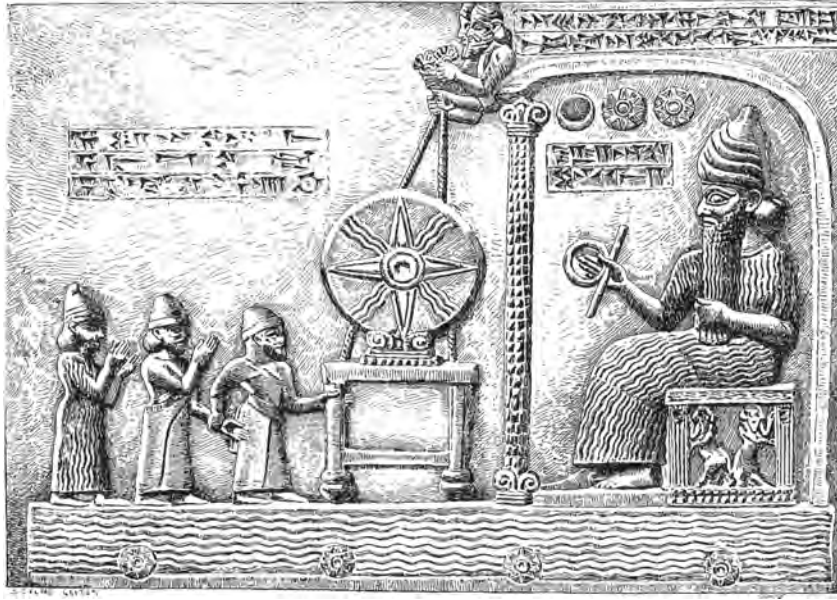


Figure 37. The Sippar Shamash Tablet, from the reign of the Babylonian king Nabu-apla-iddina, ca. 900 BC.²⁸¹ Shamash holds out a staff and what appears to be a solid ring. Note that the column(s) supporting the throne canopy feature a tree-like trunk.



Figure 38. Investiture scene from the Ur-Nammu Stela, ca. 2100 BC.²⁸² The god holds out a staff and a coiled and looped rope. Note that a tree stands immediately in front of the divine throne.

The seated figures in the two scenes above, more than a thousand years apart in age, hold out similar “rod and ring” symbols to the approaching king as we find in the Mari Investiture Panel. Closer inspection, however, reveals that whereas the “ring” in the more recent scene (figure 37) appears to be solid—thus resembling the corresponding Mari emblem and perhaps more consistent with its interpretation as a “divine weapon”²⁸³ or perhaps even a “crown,”²⁸⁴ the “ring” of the older depiction (figure 38), more contemporary with the Mari palace, is formed by a coiled rope, suggesting a measuring cord. Which is it to be?

According to Jacobsen, the both the rod (which he calls a “yardstick”) and the looped rope (which he calls a “measuring coil”), held in the right hand of the deity in both the Ur-Nammu stela and the Mari Investiture Panel, are implements associated with the building of temples. On the other hand, the battle-axe, hanging down idly from the left hand of the deity in both depictions, is a deadly instrument of war. Insightfully, Jacobsen observes that in the stela, as in the Investiture Panel, it is the rod and ring, rather than:²⁸⁵

... the weapon that he hands to Ur-Nammu, thus entrusting him with works of peace rather than war, for the task of building temples could be done only in peacetime. Thus the yardstick and measuring coil symbolize peace, and[, in the related story of the *Descent of Inanna*,] Inanna holds them²⁸⁶ because, as goddess of war, she clearly controls also the absence of war, peace.²⁸⁷

Further confirming this interpretation is the fact that in the Mari painting,, the only such depiction known that (still) shows color, the “rod’ is painted white and the ‘ring’ is red.”²⁸⁸ From both linguistic and archaeological evidence (e.g., “traces of red discovered in excavation of the ziggurat of Anu in Uruk”), Slanski concludes that the “ring” in the hand of Ishtar could well be an ancient chalk line.²⁸⁹ As emblems that symbolically conjoin the acts of measurement and temple foundation-laying with the processes of cosmic creation, the Mesopotamian rod and ring can be profitably compared to temple surveying instruments in the biblical book of Ezekiel²⁹⁰ as well as to the analogous figures of the square and circle (or compass).²⁹¹

With respect to the role of these emblems as symbols of the just rulership of the king, Slanski’s overall conclusions are worth quoting directly:²⁹²

The suggestion proposed here, then, is that the “rod and ring,” depicted clearly as coiled rope on the Ur-Nammu Stela, are surveying tools for laying straight lines. Of course, they would also be used for measuring; such tools, after all, serve both interrelated purposes even today. But my emphasis here is on the use of these instruments to lay straight foundations, a visual metaphor that arose in the realm of physical building and construction to be employed as an expression signaling righteous royal leadership. In the imagery of Ur-Nammu’s stela, the symbol is to be connected with the building activity portrayed in the registers below, and in Hammurabi’s stela with that king’s memorialization of himself as *šar mēšarim*, the “just king.” That the “rod and ring” is held out to the king by the divinity in this and similar scenes, and not held by the king himself, may express the understanding that while the god may show or reveal to the ruler the means for making foundations or guiding people “straight,” justice and the tools for establishing justice remain firmly in the hands of the gods.

What of the preponderance of the depictions which do not clearly show the “ring” as rope or cord? Here I follow Frankfort and Cooper, who proposed that visual representation of the symbols “metamorphose” later into—or are interpreted later as—the more familiar “rod and ring,” such as that seen on the Hammurabi Law Stela and the Sippar Shamash Tablet from southern Mesopotamia, the Assyrian representations from northern Mesopotamia, and the royal stela from Elam.

How do we then explain Wyatt’s previously mentioned reference in the message from the god Adad to the king of Mari that tells of how, in the midst of what seems to be a ceremony of kingship, he had given him “the arms with which I fought against Ti’amat”?²⁹³ Since there is no explicit link between the Mari Investiture Panel and this oracle, we are free to conjecture that, just as the painting seems to depict an established rite involving the “rod and ring” that authorized the

king to build a palace and establish his just rule, so there may have been an analogous ceremony to which the message of Adad alludes, where the god would stretch out his battle-axe to the king in preparation for war.

A biblical parallel to the dichotomy between the commission to build and the commission to wage war can be found in the story of King David, who was forbidden by God from constructing a temple because of his career as a fighter. Instead, David's son Solomon, a "man of rest," was eventually given the commission to build the earthly House of God. Speaking to David, the Lord said:²⁹⁴

8 ... Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name...

9 Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.

Citing Moses as the prototype of king, priest, and prophet in the Old Testament, Widengren notes his possession of three objects as emblems of these respective offices: the verdant rod or staff,²⁹⁵ the manna,²⁹⁶ and the tablets of law.²⁹⁷ The first and third of these can be compared to the cedar staff and the Tablets of Destiny²⁹⁸ that the Mesopotamian king Enmeduranki received at his enthronement.²⁹⁹ These tangible "tokens of the covenant,"³⁰⁰ emblems of Moses' threefold office that were provided in each case by God Himself, seem to have been the very objects that were later transferred to the temple Ark,³⁰¹ whose symbolism was carried forward in early Christian sacramental altars as fragments of the wooden cross of Christ, crumbs of the bread of the Eucharist and associated grains of frankincense, and the bone relics of the saints into whose very selves was written the law of the new covenant.³⁰² A copy of the Gospels, the "New Law," was also sometimes kept on the altar during the Eucharist. It is not without significance that Eastern Christians also called their sanctuary altar a throne.³⁰³

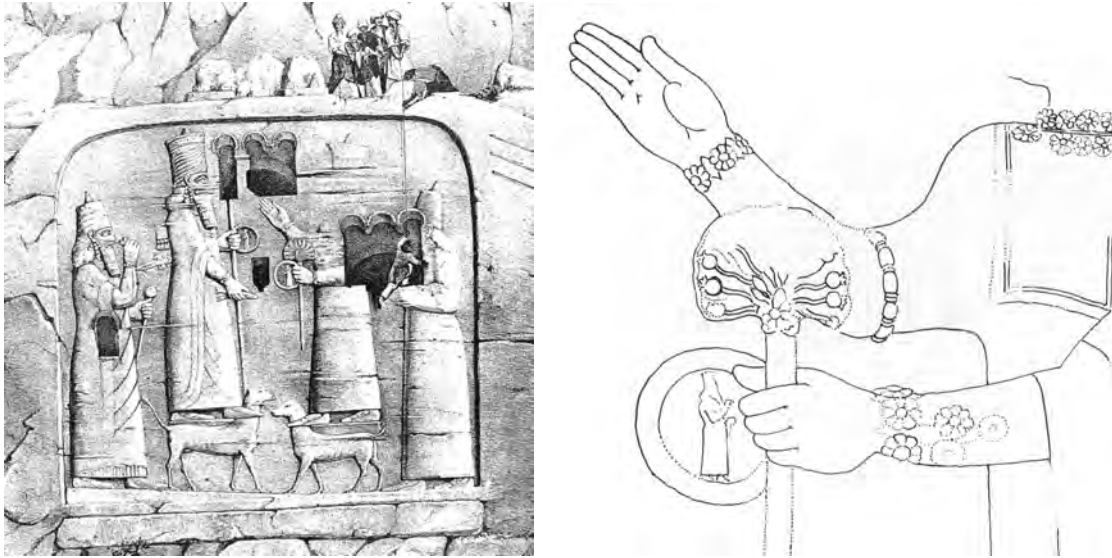


Figure 39. The gigantic Khinnis-Bavian rock relief at Malatya (ca. 700 BC) shows the Assyrian king, Sennacherib (doubled at the far left and far right) praying to a god or gods or making an oath with raised right arm in their presence.³⁰⁴ Each of the middle figures holds a staff and a ring. The detail on the right shows that the staff is topped by branches ending in pomegranates and that that the ring contains the image of the king.³⁰⁵

It is not surprising to find evidence that the royal staff was, at least sometimes, linked to the imagery of a sacred tree. Near Mosul in Northern Iraq, about thirty miles northeast of the ancient Assyrian capitol of Nineveh, is the site of a gigantic rock relief overlooking the Gomal River that depicts the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, praying to or performing an oath of allegiance to the gods. The staves held in the hands of the gods are topped by branches ending with pomegranates. Of relevance are Jewish and Christian traditions that relate the ancient origins of such a staff to the trees of the Garden of Eden.³⁰⁶

7. Concluding Remarks

The Mari Investiture Panel depicts the endowment of the king of Mari with the divine right to rule. That it represents an actual ceremony that took place in the inner sanctum of the palace, perhaps annually, is almost certain. The exact details of the ceremony are difficult to reconstruct, but it is hoped that comparison with propinquitous rites from elsewhere in the ancient Near East provide a plausible interpretation of the panel and also a link with the religious practices of the Israelites with which Latter-day Saints are familiar and with which they feel a ritual kinship.

Although there is little indication in the Old Testament that these Israelite rituals were given to anyone besides the king, there is significant non-scriptural evidence from later times that rites with a similar function were made available to others. For example, we have already noted the role of priests as religious deputies to the king. Later, when the “active monarchy fell into abeyance, it was crucial that [the king’s] mediatorial role be perpetuated by his deputies, and so the priesthood itself took on a quasi-royal status.”³⁰⁷ Moreover, findings at

Qumran and Dura Europos suggest that in at least some strands of Jewish tradition these rituals of royal priesthood were democratized, enabling members of the community, and not just its ruler, to participate in what Fletcher-Louis calls an “angelomorphic priesthood” and a routinized form of transformational worship that ritually brought them into the presence of God³⁰⁸—what might aptly be called a “performative deification.”³⁰⁹ Indeed, a precursor of this tradition is evident in the account of God’s promise to Israel that, if they kept His covenant, not just a select few but all of them would have the privilege of becoming part of “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”³¹⁰ Going back to the beginning of the Bible, scholars have concluded that the statement that Adam and Eve were created in the “image of God”³¹¹ is meant to convey the idea that “each person bears the stamp of royalty.”³¹² As an example from the New Testament, note that similar blessings, echoing temple themes and intended for the whole community of the faithful, are enumerated in statements found in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation.³¹³ In the most direct of these statements, Revelation 3:21 declares: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” Similarly, in 1 Peter 2:9, the faithful are identified as members of a “royal priesthood.”

The Mesopotamian rituals of sacral kingship may seem in some respects far removed from current LDS teachings and ritual practices. However, what resemblances exist, particularly in light of their Israelite and Christian analogues, may be of significance to a people who claim that divine revelation about the ordinances go back to the beginning of mankind. Antedating, as they do, scriptural records of temple rituals by more than a millennium, Madsen notes that while such resemblances may be “an embarrassment to exclusivistic readings of religion,” they represent, to Mormons, “a kind of confirmation and vindication.”³¹⁴ Whether or not scholarship sustains the suggestion of common origins for certain elements of ancient and modern temple practices, one thing seems evident: the rites of the Restoration speak to ageless human yearnings for the divine.

True it is that some may find little of direct interest in the innumerable shifting *mythologies* of the ancient Near East. However, what is important to note about many of the myths, as Robertson observes, is that they are “closely tied to ritual. A myth was told to explain a rite, and at the end of the telling the rite was held up as proof that the myth had happened so.” Though myths naturally “moved away from their original setting, ... the ritual always continued as before (that is the nature of ritual) and was familiar to everyone (similar festivals were celebrated in every city). It gave rise to new stories, or to variations of the old.”³¹⁵ The primacy of ritual should have been “clear from the outset,” Nibley affirms, “since myths and legends are innumerable while the rites and ordinances found throughout the world are surprisingly few and uniform, making it apparent that it is the stories that are invented—the rites are always there.”³¹⁶

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Endnotes

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- 1 "Kingship itself was described as descending from heaven and thus divinely sanctioned" (S. Pollock, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, p. 191).
- 2 See *Sumerian King List* (W-B 444), lines 1 and 41, in M. W. Chavalas, *Ancient Near East*, p. 82; and *The Sumerian Flood Story* (CBS 10673), line 88, cited in Y. S. Chen, *Major Literary*. Chen constructs a rationale for why kingship was said to have been restored twice in the former account, and only once in the latter.
- 3 Photograph from J. M. Renger, *Hammurabi*.
- 4 Photograph from S. Dalley, *Mari and Karana*, p. 4.
- 5 J. M. Sasson, *King and I*, p. 453. Hamblin (W. J. Hamblin, *Warfare*, pp. 260-261) aptly describes the physical setting of Mari as:
- ... a strategic juncture between four ecological, cultural, and political zones: Babylon and Sumer to the southeast, Asshur to the northeast, Syria to the northwest, and the nomadic steppe and desert to the southwest. Its strategic location was both a blessing and a curse: it brought wealth as a trading center, but also frequent invasion as a crossroad between Mesopotamia and Syria. In classical times the strategic and economic functions of Mari were transferred to the nearby Roman city of Dura-Europos, which served as a major Roman frontier fortress against the Persians until it was destroyed by a siege of the Sasanid king Shapur in 256 CE.
- 6 S. Bourke, *Middle East*, p. 80.
- 7 Photograph from A. Parrot, *Mari Fabuleuse*, Plate II:2.
- 8 At that time, the name was read as Lamgi-Mari.
- 9 S. Dalley, *Mari and Karana*, p. 10; W. Hempel, *Letters*, p. 3.
- 10 A. Parrot, *Mari Fabuleuse*, p.16. The account of the find given here is adapted from *ibid.*, pp. 11-16; cf. A. Parrot, *Mari Ville Perdue*, pp. 17ff.. All translations from classical and modern languages are by the first author, unless otherwise noted.

11 M.-H. Gates, *Palace*, p. 71.

12 J. M. Sasson, *King and I*, p. 458.

13 J.-C. Margueron, *Mari Métropole*, p. 509. In another place, Margueron further described the unique nature of the painting (J.-C. Margueron, *La Peinture: Rhythme*, p. 103):

It has always been seen as exceptional, not only for its aesthetic qualities, but also because its composition can appeal to no parallels: it remains unique—in the full sense of the word—because no other work can be compared to it. Up to now, studies have only been able to probe similarities in iconographic details, but never resemblances to the arrangement as a whole.

14 For an engaging overview of ongoing scholarship on the life and career of Zimri-Lim as reconstructed from the Mari archives, see J. M. Sasson, *King and I*. Colorfully characterizing the area surrounding Mari during the reign of Zimri-Lim, Sasson writes that it was “a world full of Saddam Husseins and his charming kinfolk... [The] shifts in leadership seem excessive even when measured by Italian standards” (*ibid.*, p. 458).

One of the remarkable aspects of Mari is the extensiveness of its cuneiform archives, enabling a level of daily detail in the primary sources for Zimri-Lim’s life that would be envied by biographers of many modern figures. Hempel’s overview of the major events of Zimri-Lim’s twelve-year reign occupies 121 pages of a large volume (W. Hempel, *Letters*, pp. 42-163), while his translation of correspondence from just the last three years of this period fills 348 pages (*ibid.*, pp. 173-521).

15 J.-C. Margueron, *La Peinture et l’Histoire*, p. 23.

16 I.e., Yakhdun-Lim (= Yahdun-Lim) (*ibid.*, p. 23). However, Charpin and Durand have more recently proposed that Zimri-Lim’s father was instead Hadni-Addu, possibly a brother of Yakhdun-Lim (cited in J. M. Sasson, *King and I*, p. 458). Sasson, on the other hand, proposes that both these names might refer to the same person (J. M. Sasson, *Thoughts*, p. 116 n. 1). He also notes recent evidence that has “suggested that Mari reached the apogee of its influence during Yasmakh-Adad’s reign and was actually entering a period of decadence when Zimri-Lim lost power” (*ibid.*, p. 117 n. 6). See *ibid.*, pp. 117-118 for a translation of a letter by Yakhdun-Lim where he boasts of his military and city-building accomplishments.

17 The painting was restored in 2002-2003 and is currently displayed in room 3, on the ground floor of the Richelieu Wing. Photograph from J.-C. Margueron, *Mari Métropole*, p. 424.

18 M.-H. Gates, *Palace*, p. 72. “Archaeology has shown that the destruction of Mari [by Hammurabi] was unusually deliberate. The palace was emptied and set on fire. After it was burnt, whatever remained standing was methodically torn down, so that no one could think of living there, even as a squatter” (J. M. Sasson, *King and I*, p. 460). The final destruction, however, occurred two years later, after Hammurabi had already cleared Mari of its treasures and its people. In textual allusions to these events, Hammurabi seems proud of the peaceful transfer of Mari’s people to a new location and, “in fact, no human remains were found in the palace” (*ibid.*, p. 461). For a succinct summary of the military history of Mari, see W. J. Hamblin, *Warfare*, p. 260-263.

As to the final end of Zimri-Lim and his people following the destruction of Mari, Sasson writes (J. M. Sasson, *Thoughts*, p. 115):

The fate of Zimri-Lim is unknown, but it could not have been enviable. Shiptu and the other women from Mari were probably taken to Hammurabi's palace—entered into the Babylonian's harem, handed over to musicians for dancing instruction, or assigned to weaving establishments. The male population was not left on the site; the men were probably distributed among Hammurabi, his allies, and his officers. Those entering the palace as Hammurabi's private share from the Mari spoils were probably given tasks commensurate with their training, with the majority likely assigned as palace and temple menials. No doubt a few were sold by Hammurabi's merchants as slaves to foreigners.

19 A. Parrot, *Mari Fabuleuse*, p. 121.

20 J. R. Porter, *Guide*, p. 28.

21 The final years of Mari are contemporaneous with the rough period assigned by some scholars to the era of Abraham. Moreover, by the most widely-accepted reckonings of his father Terah's journey from Ur to Haran, the region of Mari would have been directly en route (K. A. Kitchen, *Reliability*, p. 316; A. Parrot, *Abraham*, pp. 39-40; J. Van Seters, *Abraham*, pp. 23-26, but see P. Y. Hoskisson, *Where Was Ur* for an alternative view). Thus, Parrot's assertion that "it would not be surprising if, someday, were discovered in the archives of Mari a record of a request... from Terah for permission to pass through [the king of Mari's] territories!" (A. Parrot, *Mari Ville Perdue*, p. 209; cf. citation by H. W. Nibley, *Epic Milieu*, p. 381).

Nibley confidently calls Mari "a city of Abraham" (H. W. Nibley, *Drama*, p. 3). Moreover, though dates for Abraham's life have been omitted from the most recent version of the LDS Bible Dictionary chronology, the assumption of an early second-millennium BCE setting for the patriarch pervades Church literature. However, by way of contrast to Sir Leonard Woolley's assured assertions about Abraham's birthplace and movements, modern scholarship lacks "any agreed opinion on the existence of Abraham himself, on his social and ethnic origins, on his history and chronology, above all on his relationship to the enigmatic chapter 14 of Genesis" (P. R. S. Moorey, *Ur*, p. 9). Thus, for example, P. R. S. Moorey, the editor of an update to Woolley's *Excavations at Ur*, diligently "edited out" the numerous biblical allusions that Woolley had made in his original work (*ibid.*, p. 8).

A watershed of sorts in scholarly opinion was reached in 1975 with the publication of Van Seters' influential work (J. Van Seters, *Abraham*), which aimed to "question any attempt to reconstruct and date a 'Patriarchal Age' to the second millennium BCE" and to thus end the search for a historical Abraham. While conclusions in line with those of Van Seters have are now accepted by most scholars, others have thrown doubt on some of his assumptions and have continued to discover new grounds for belief in the plausibility of an ancient Abraham (see e.g., A. R. Millard *et al.*, *Essays*; E. M. Yamauchi, *Current State*). Kenneth Kitchen provides perhaps the most detailed and sustained reexamination of the evidence for the historicity of the patriarchal age (K. A. Kitchen, *Reliability*, pp. 313-372), including conjectures about a set of affinities between the account of a battle by the nineteenth-century Yakh-dun-Lim of Mari and the basics of Abraham's narrative in Genesis 14 (*ibid.*, pp. 320-322).

22 See, e.g., P. Y. Hoskisson, Emar. See also M. W. Chavalas *et al.*, Mesopotamia. Disavowing the necessity of finding evidence showing direct exchange of documents in order to account for similarities, Peter Enns (P. Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, p. 41, see also pp. 39-43) makes the important point that any “similarity [between Genesis and other documents from the Ancient Near East] derives from a shared culture—in this case the dominant culture—and direct literary dependence is not required to produce these similarities. The Genesis account cries out to be understood in its ancient context, and stories like *Enuma Elish* give us a brief but important glimpse at what that context is. *Enuma Elish* helps us calibrate the genre of Genesis 1.”

23 M.-T. Barrelet, Peinture.

24 While comparative analysis of religious traditions in the ancient Near East has fallen in and out of fashion, especially as regards Old Testament study, it is currently again on the upswing (see, e.g., P. R. S. Moorey, *Idols*, p. 3), even in conservative biblical scholarship (see, e.g., J. H. Walton, *Ancient*).

Wyatt reminds us that, although “full recognition of its historical context” is ultimately a requirement for the “legitimate use of the comparative approach,” there is much more of a “recognizable continuity” in the religious cultures of earlier ages than we find in our own (N. Wyatt, *Significance of Spn*, pp. 117-118). Indeed, he writes, “given the huge weight of tradition as observed in the ancient world, the further back we go, the more conservative do we find cultural forms” (N. Wyatt, *Water*, p. 220).

25 Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Hymns* (1985), O my Father, #292. For a general description of related LDS rites, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, especially pp. 53-58.

26 Translation of a cuneiform tablet from Mari’s archives by Georges Dossin, 1937, as cited in M.-H. Gates, *Palace*, p. 70. Dossin demonstrated that the Hammurabi who wrote this letter was the ruler of Aleppo, not the more famous ruler of Babylon (*ibid.*, p. 86 n. 1).

27 See suggestions of additional possible motives in, e.g., J.-C. Margueron, *Mari*, p. 885.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 885. In his landmark study of Mesopotamian palaces of the Bronze Age, Margueron was at pains to emphasize his view that the Mari palace “is not, as some would have us believe, the jewel of the East, but rather one palace among several others, some of which are even more important than it is” (J.-C. Margueron, *Recherches*, p. 380).

29 W. Hempel, *Letters*, p. 4. Note that a second, smaller palace has also been found at Mari. Though secondary temples dedicated to specific gods such as Ishtar, Dagan, Ninhursag, and Shamash have been also been discovered, the main temple probably lies underneath a large mound called “le massif rouge” (i.e., the red mound) that has never been excavated (S. Dalley, *Mari and Karana*, p. 116).

For an in-depth survey of Mesopotamian palaces, see J.-C. Margueron, *Recherches*. Useful briefer descriptions focusing on Mari can be found in J.-C. Margueron, *Mari*; J. N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, pp. 141-153.

30 From M.-H. Gates, *Palace*, p. 73, after A. Parrot, *Palais*, Architecture Volume, foldout.

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- 31 Formerly known as the “Court of the Palms” (plural). See B. Muller, *Aspects*, p. 138.
- 32 Differing with Parrot, Margueron called this room a chapel of Ishtar (J.-C. Margueron, *Mari*, p. 891).
- 33 A. Parrot, *Mari Fabuleuse*, p. 115.
- 34 B. Muller, *Aspects*, p. 138.
- 35 J.-C. Margueron, *Mari*, pp. 892-893. See also J.-C. Margueron, *La Peinture: Rythme*.
- 36 A. Parrot, *Mari Fabuleuse*, p. 118 figure 68.
- 37 Margueron argues instead that this is a statue pedestal for a single goddess with a flowing vase (J.-C. Margueron, *Mari Métropole*, p. 477).
- 38 Image from Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, plate II.
- 39 See N. Marinatos, *Minoan Harem*, pp. 41-44 for a discussion of parallels with Mari in the layout and function of the throneroom suite at Knossos. Among other similarities, she observes images (*ibid.*, pp. 42-43):
- Both at Mari and Knossos the Throne Rooms comprise entire suites surrounded by service sections. Both suites open to an interior court. Both have an ante-room and a more secluded, inner Throne Room. Most importantly: both inner thronerooms include *a shrine situated across from the throne*. At Mari it is an elevated niche in which were placed either a cult statue of Ishtar [and/or] ancestral images.
- 40 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 10.
- 41 ARMT IX, 236, cited in *ibid.*, p. 23.
- 42 For brief catalogues of the various views, see *ibid.*, pp. 23-25; J.-C. Margueron, *Mari Métropole*, p. 464. See also the extensive discussion by Ron Glaeseman in Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, pp. 71-81.
- 43 Drawing from J. R. Porter, *Guide*, p. 28.
- 44 J. N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 144 caption to figure 7:5. See also A. Parrot, *Palais, Peintures murales*, p. 53 n. 2.
- 45 A. Parrot, *Palais, Peintures murales*, p. 64.
- 46 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 38.
- 47 S. Dalley, *Mari and Karana*, p. 134.
- 48 M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, pp. 29-30.
- 49 Strengthening the argument for the locating the events of the Investiture Panel within the ritual complex shown in figure 3, Margueron has shown that the geometric proportions of the

Panel follow the same rules that he has found in the overall architectural plan of the complex, and in other ancient palaces in the region (J.-C. Margueron, *La Peinture: Rythme*, pp. 105-106).

50 J.-C. Margueron, *Mari Métropole*, p. 511 figure 499.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 511 figure 499. See also J.-C. Margueron, *La Peinture: Rythme*.

52 Image from Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, plate VI. Gates notes that this figure incorrectly shows the statues standing directly on the platform rather than on top of stone bases (M.-H. Gates, *Palace*, p. 66).

53 Cited in B. Muller, *Aspects*, p. 138.

54 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 61.

55 *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

56 Discussed in more detail below.

57 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, pp. 23-24, 41-42, 43-45.

58 Drawings from A. Parrot, *Mari Fabuleuse*, p. 117 figure 66 (left) and *ibid.*, p. 166 figure 65 (right).

59 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 38.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 42. Cf. 1 Kings 10:19, which mentions six steps that ascended to Solomon's throne. The Holy of Holies in the Salt Lake Temple is likewise reached by a flight of six steps inside the sliding doors connecting it to the celestial room (see J. E. Talmage, *House of the Lord* (1912), pp. 192, 295).

61 The idea of seven degrees of separation is reinforced by the six painted bands on the three other sides of the cella depiction in the mural, paralleling the recessed door jambs at the entrance of the sanctuary" (Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, pp. 38, 40). Other elements of the painting's style also evidence "three dimensional elements represented in the linear perspective" (*ibid.*, p. 43).

Note that Jewish, early Christian, and Islamic sources often mention a cosmology of seven heavens relating to the purported layout of the heavenly temple (see, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, p. 38, 39, 63; J. M. Bradshaw, *Ezekiel Mural*, p. 22).

62 Multiply-recessed doorframes of this sort were not uncommon in luxurious Mesopotamian structures (J. Monson, *New 'Ain Dara Temple*).

63 S. Dalley, *Mari and Karana*, p. 134. Dalley cites an inscription describing the responsibility for the palace kitchens to provide "420 liters of sweet *alappanum*-beer, the meal of the king and men on the occasion of offerings to Ishtar, in the garden of the king" (*ibid.*, p. 134). Two additional inscriptions connect the "entry of Ishtar into the palace" and "Ishtar of the Palace" with a little-understood religious festival called *zurayum* (Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, pp. 59, 62-63, 65, 69).

64 S. Dalley, *Mari and Karana*, p. 136; cf. J. A. Black, *New Year*, p. 40. For a detailed description of the Babylonian New Year ceremonies, see *ibid.*.

65 Scholars agreeing on this general interpretation include Barrelet, Parrot, Margueron, Muller, and al-Khalesi. See, e.g., Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, pp. 61-65; B. Muller, *Aspects*, p. 138 note 24. While some of our specific conclusions and comparisons are unique to the present study, our overall interpretation follows most closely that of al-Khalesi.

66 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 63, citing a study by Moortgat.

67 Durand, cited in N. Marinatos, *Minoan Harem*, p. 43. Marinatos sees it as no coincidence that the women's apartments at Mari were not far from the Throne Room suite, where the sacrificial banquet would have taken place (*ibid.*, p. 44).

68 M.-H. Gates, *Palace*, p. 85.

69 Pollock describes the preparation and care which such statues underwent:

The deity was considered to be present in the cult statue once it had been properly fashioned and consecrated... The statue underwent mouth- and eye-opening rituals in order to make it animate. After these rituals were performed, it was clothed in luxurious garments and jewelry, fed, and brought into the temple, where it was placed on a pedestal in the inner sanctuary. It was fed every day with foods such as bread, beer, meat, fish, milk, cheese, butter, honey, and dates, and at various times, especially during festivals, it was taken out of the temple and paraded through the city and countryside (S. Pollock, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, pp. 186-187; see also J. N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, pp. 117-124)

70 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 65. The statues in the Mari procession would have functioned similarly to the ark in corresponding Jerusalem temple rites. For example, Eaton (J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, pp. 125-126; cf. S. Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1:177-180) describes how Psalm 24 convincingly depicts:

... a procession that ascended the sacred hill and entered the gates of the Lord's house. Moreover, it all signified the procession and entry of God Himself, and so probably involved the transporting of the ark, symbol of the divine presence and glory (cf. [Psalms] 47, 68, and 132). From the opening and closing themes it may be deduced that this grand procession was part of the ceremonies of the chief festival, at the turn of the year in autumn. With conquering power over the primeval waters, the Creator has secured the living world. The original event has, as it were, been relived in the drama of the festival, which also emphasized that this King of all was none other than Yahweh, God of Jacob/Israel, requiring faithfulness and truth from his worshippers. The greater part of the psalm, vv. 3-10, is made up of questions and responses, a lively liturgical dialogue. Such psalms were thus not mere songs incidental to the ceremonies, but texts which carried the worship forward and unfolded the meaning of the rites.

Stager further describes this procession as follows (L. E. Stager, *Jerusalem*):

As the priests bearing the Ark pass through the outer gates of the walled precinct, the personified gates are implored to lift their heads (that is, the lintels) high so that the great king and warrior Yahweh can pass through. From there the procession advances toward the Temple itself. They climb the monumental stairway that leads through heaven's gate, the portico supported by the great bronze columns named Jachin and Boaz. They carry

the Ark through the central hall, which is decorated with the flora and fauna of Eden: palmette trees, colocynths (a kind of gourd), rosettes and cherubim (winged sphinxes). Finally the Ark is deposited in the throne room (the holy of holies), where the invisible deity “sits enthroned upon the cherubim” with the Ark as “footstool” (Psalm 99:1–5, 132:7; 1 Chronicles 28:2).

Gates (M.-H. Gates, *Palace*, p. 86) concludes that the statue of Puzur-Istar is a candidate for the figure on the far right of the upper central register of the Investiture Panel because of the horns on his cap. Of course, it is possible that in Zimri-Lim’s time there were other statues placed in the innermost sanctuary (e.g., Ishtup-Ilum’s statue, found at the bottom of the stairway to 66—see figure 11) that were not explicitly shown in the Panel or that were added after the painting was made.

71 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, pp. 60-61.

72 B. Muller, *Aspects*, p. 138; O. Rouault, *Religion*, pp. 222-223.

73 Photograph from M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, figure 29. Regarding the setting of the relief, some scholars have questioned whether date palms can fruit at such a far north location (*ibid.*, pp. 95-96).

74 The Garden Party Relief, Garden Party.

75 Although the *akītu* festival was very often held on the New Year, particularly for national deities such as Marduk or Assur, it could be “observed at various times of the year, depending on the deity and city... As in ancient Israel, the Mesopotamians maintained two calendars—civil and religious—and as a result, it turns out that first-millennium Babylon actually held two *akītus*, a primary one during Nisanu 1-12 (the first civil month) and another during Tashritu 1-12 (the seventh civil month, the first religious month). The two months obviously corresponded to the vernal equinox and the autumnal equinox, underscoring the solar and, by implication, agricultural dimensions of the rituals” (K. L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, p. 166).

76 E. A. Speiser, *Creation Epic*.

77 Consistent with Lambert’s earlier findings, Yingling adduces internal evidence relating to the role of Marduk that *Enuma Elish* in its current form can be dated to no earlier than 1126–1105 BC (E. O. Yingling, *Give Me*). However, speaking of the late and varied primary texts that provide ritual prescriptions for *akītu* rites, Sparks writes: “[O]ur image of the *akītu* is a composite result of dovetailing disparate sources, but the image is essentially a valid one. Scholars are also quite certain that these late copies of the *akītu* reflect much older ritual traditions” (K. L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, p. 167). For example, Howard Jacobson cites Sumerian elements in the introductory theogony that harken back to the great god list *An* and additional echoes of the Ninurta myth *Lugal-e*. He also refers to what may be allusions to early Akkadian and Old Babylonian themes. A later Assyrian version of the tale finds the name of Marduk replaced by that of the god Ashur, and in Ugarit we find the motif of the battle between the storm god and the sea in the story of Ba’al and Yam (see H. Jacobson, *Pseudo-Philo*, pp. 167-168). See N. Wyatt, *Arms* for an extensive discussion and a collection of relevant texts from across the Levant that serve to set the major themes of *Enuma Elish* in a context stretching back to at least the third millennium BC.

Thorkild Jacobsen reminds us of how the interpretation of the stories may change even when the stories themselves remain relatively intact (T. Jacobsen, *Treasures*, pp. 19-20):

It is not only that older elements disappear and are replaced with new; often the old elements are retained and exist side by side with the new; and often too, these older elements, though seemingly unchanged, have in fact come to mean something quite different, have been reinterpreted to fit into a new system of meanings. To illustrate with an example from our own Western cultural tradition, the story of Adam and Eve is retained unchanged since Old Testament times, but the [first chapters] of Genesis [have] been progressively reinterpreted by St. Paul, by St. Augustine, and by Milton (not to speak of modern theologians) so that [they have] come to carry a wealth of theological and anthropological meaning related to the essential nature of man, very different from what the story could possibly have meant in its earlier... cultural setting.

In approaching ancient Mesopotamian materials, it should be kept in mind that the older elements of culture survive, and that they may be reinterpreted over and over; for we find among these materials religious documents, myths, epics, laments, which have been handed down almost unchanged in copy after copy for as much as a thousand or fifteen hundred years, and it is often difficult to say with certainty whether a document originated in the period from which it seems to come, or whether it was in fact from earlier times.

78 Marduk's life is, of course, a recapitulation of events from the story of the god Ea. It is quite possible that the version of the creation story told at Mari featured Ishtar rather than Marduk as its principal character—see S. Dalley, *Esther's Revenge*, p. 148.

79 E. A. Speiser, *Creation Epic*, 7:140, p. 72. Philippe Talon observes (P. Talon, *Enūma Eliš*, p. 266):

Everything Ea... accomplished [was] later accomplished by Marduk, on a grander scale. Apsū and Mummu announce Tiamat and Kingu and they are vanquished in the same way, by magic. Ea has created his dwelling with the body of Apsū as Marduk will create the intelligible world with the body of Tiamat, the exact correspondence of the Apsū being the Ešarra. The deeds of Ea are thus a prefiguration of the great deeds of Marduk, who will receive as his last name the name of his father in Tablet VII.

Continuing his exploration of the means by which it seems possible that “something of the original Mesopotamian concept of the divine left its mark in the Western mind” (*ibid.*, p. 277), Talon writes (*ibid.*, p. 276):

The Chaldaean doctrine does not directly reflect Mesopotamian cosmology in itself, but is rather like an echo. Fragment 7 of the Oracles says: “Because the Father created everything in perfection and gave it to the second Intellect, whom you call the first, all of you, human race.” On which Psellus comments: “After having worked the whole creation, the first Father of the Triad gave it to the Intellect, the one that the human race, ignorant of the preeminence of the Father, calls the first God.” Psellus, being of Christian faith, is here linking the Oracle with his own doctrine and he adds: “Because in the book of Moses, the Father gives the Son the idea of the production of creatures, and the Son becomes the artisan of creation.” This agrees with the role of Marduk in the Babylonian myth if we see him as the Demiurge, the Twice-Beyond who created the universe, distinct from Aššur/ Marduk, the One from which the other gods

emanate in the diagram elaborated by S. Parpola. It also agrees well with *Enuma Elish*, if we understand the Father as Ea and the son, the Creator, as Marduk. It is Ea who advises his son and gives him the plan, the idea, leading to his victory over Tiamat. Later, at the end of the myth, Marduk eventually assumes the name of his Father, Ea, and thus all of his powers.

80 R. J. Clifford, *Creation*, p. 93. Rennaker laments that “in spite of the fact that it was one of the few texts that we know was read in public each year (especially during the years of the Jewish Babylonian Exile), [*Enuma Elish*] hasn’t received an incredible amount of scholarly attention since... the early 1900s... When it has been examined, almost all of the scholarly focus is on Marduk, with its temple imagery being treated only secondarily” (J. Rennaker, February 24 2012).

Eaton finds it notable that “the story does not contain any death and resurrection of Marduk, nor a union with his consort” (J. H. Eaton, *Kingship*, p. 91). However, this does not mean that these ideas were not widespread in Old Babylonian culture. Regarding the notion of life after death in Mesopotamia, Lapinkivi writes:

[T]he widespread scholarly notion that belief in a resurrection did not exist in Mesopotamia but that all dead human souls stayed eternally in the Netherworld is contradicted by the Mesopotamian texts themselves: for instance, the kings Sulgi and Isbi-Erra ascended to heaven after death; Dumuzi died only temporarily and, according to one tradition, ascended to the highest heaven to be its gatekeeper. Ascent to heaven is the central theme in the Etana and Adapa myths. Utnapistim, the sage of the *Gilgamesh Epic*, was made divine and granted eternal life after the Flood. In the poem *Ludlul bel nemeqi* (“I will praise the lord of wisdom [i.e., Marduk]”) from the Kassite period (ca. 1595-1155 BC), the righteous sufferer pairs descent to the Netherworld with ascent to heaven, implying that both ideas were familiar to him (II 46-47): “In prosperity they speak of going up to heaven, under adversity they complain of going down to the Netherworld.” Later in the text (IV 33-36), the sufferer claims that only Marduk (the divine king) and Zarpanitu (= Ishtar of Babylon) can *restore the dead to life* or grant life. In short, the evidence indicates that the Mesopotamians believed humans had souls that were separate from the body because they were able to leave the body in dreams or ecstatic experiences. The soul survived after death and continued its existence in the Netherworld or in heaven.

In this context, it should be kept in mind that, while the human soul, according to the Hebrew Bible—as in Mesopotamia—generally ended up in the Netherworld, a different fate was reserved for select individuals such as Enoch and Elijah... According to Josephus’ (ca. 38-101 CE) *Discourse to the Greeks concerning Hades*:

The souls of all men are confined [in the Netherworld] until a proper season, which God has determined, when he will make a resurrection of all men from the dead, ... raising again those very bodies, ... giving justly to those who have done well an everlasting fruition, but allotting to the lovers of wicked works eternal punishment [cf. John 5:28-29; Alma 40:11-26].

On various forms of sacred marriage in Mesopotamia, see P. Lapinkivi, *Sumerian*; B. Pongratz-Leisten, *Sacred Marriage*.

81 H. W. Nibley, *Return*, pp. 71-73.

82 H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, 10, p. 122.

83 Cf. E. A. Speiser, *Creation Epic*, 1:1, 2, 6b, pp. 60-61.

84 H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, 10, p. 122.

85 See E. A. Speiser, *Creation Epic*, p. 61 n. 4.

86 H. Vanstiphout, *Epics*, 1:139, pp. 36-37.

87 See V. Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, pp. 332-334 for examples of references in the Bible and in the ancient Near East to gods as builders of temples and cities.

88 See H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, 10, pp. 126-127.

89 Image from J. V. Canby, *Ur-Nammu*, frontispiece.

90 Writes Pollock: "Kings claimed to rule by divine sanction, but they were also in the service of the gods. Rulers were expected to (re)build temples of the gods, often enlarging or otherwise elaborating them in the process" (S. Pollock, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, p. 188). As Postgate observes (J. N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, pp. 263-264):

The majority of the formal inscriptions of Mesopotamian rulers result from [a substantial] activity on behalf of the gods, the building of temples. That it was an important part of the ruler's role cannot be doubted, if one looks at the images of Ur-Nanse carrying the basket of earth... or Ur-Nammu with the builder's tools over his shoulder, or reads of Gudea's commission from the gods to rebuild the Eninnu, and of his part in molding the first brick.

91 N. Wyatt, *Arms*, p. 181.

92 "It is almost axiomatic that the separation of secular from religious authority would have required the construction of a ruler's palace independent of the temple" (J. N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 137). However, it should be remembered that, in the ancient world, secular and religious activities were not so neatly divided as they are in our own (I. J. Winter, *King*, p. 253).

93 I. J. Winter, *Seat*, p. 27.

94 J. H. Walton, *Ancient*, p. 129.

95 E.g., P. J. Kearney, *Creation*; J. Morrow, *Creation*; S. D. Ricks, *Liturgy*; M. Weinfeld, *Sabbath*, pp. 508-510.

96 See Genesis 1:2, 6-10 and, e. g., N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, pp. 3, 6. The Pearl of Great Price reflects these primeval traditions in its stories of Satan's rebellion in the premortal existence, and of his dramatic confrontation with Moses (Moses 1:12-22, 4:1-4; Abraham 3:27-28; cf. Moses 1:25 and J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, 1:25-e, pp. 60-61). Lending credence to an association between Genesis 1:2 and the Babylonian creation account were early arguments for an etymological relationship between the term for the god Ti'amat in *Enuma Elish* and the Hebrew *tehom*, which is translated as "deep" in this verse (cf. Genesis 49:25; Deuteronomy 33:13; Habakkuk 3:10; Isaiah 51:10). Note that English translations typically add a definite article to *tehom* (i.e., "the deep")

which does not appear in Hebrew, thus masking its character as a proper noun and obscuring the possible allusion to Babylonian concepts.

On the other hand, in contrast to the view that there is a thematic connection with Babylonian accounts, some have interpreted this verse as a polemic deliberately intended to rule out any such affinities (see, e.g., V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, pp. 110-111; C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, pp. 104-106)—though this view is now in decline (B. T. Arnold, *Genesis 2009*, p. 38). Regardless of one's opinion on these possible correspondences, Wenham points out that the “sovereignty of God in Genesis give reports of his deeds quite a different quality from the myths of ancient polytheism” (ibid., pp. 31-32; G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 52). In this respect at least, more convincing resemblances to the Genesis creation story perhaps can be seen in the Egyptian Memphite Theology than in *Enuma Elish* (J. D. Currid, *Egypt*, pp. 63-64).

New Testament parallels to this motif have been noted to Jesus' stilling of the storm (Mark 4:35-41) and walking on the water (Mark 6:45-51), symbolically crushing it beneath his heel (J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, 4:21-d, pp. 266-267; N. Wyatt, *Space*, pp. 95-120). A related idea is found in Orthodox tradition, which holds that the serpent's head was crushed in the River Jordan at the time that Jesus was baptized (J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, 1:1-b, p. 42, 4:31-d, p. 281; V. Nersessian, *Treasures*, p. 71). D&C 61:17-19 speaks of the cursing of the waters in the last days, and warns that “the destroyer rideth upon the face thereof” (M. Zlotowitz *et al.*, *Bereishis*, p. 230 fn. 1). “In the New Jerusalem, where evil is vanquished, there is no sea (Revelation 21:1)” (T. L. Brodie, *Dialogue*, p. 133). See also, e.g., Revelation 12:1-12.

97 E.g., Exodus 15:1-18; Job 9:5-14; 26:5-14; 38:8-11; Psalms 18:5-18; 24:1-2; 29; 33:7-8; 44:19; 46; 65:6-8; 72:8; 74:12-17; 77:17-20; 87:4; 89:10-14, 25; 93; 104:1-9, 25-26; 106:9; 110; 144:5-7; Proverbs 8:22-33; Isaiah 8:5-8; 14:4-23; 17:12-14; 27:1; 51:9-11; Jeremiah 5:22; 31:35; 51:34; Ezekiel 28:2-23; 29:3-5; 32:2-8; Jonah 2; Nahum 1:3-6; Habakkuk 3:8-15. See also, e.g., J. Day, *God's Conflict*; M. Fishbane, *Myth*, pp. 37-92; N. Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, pp. 117-126, 158-218.

98 M. S. Smith, *Early History*, p. 98. Discussing biblical parallels with texts from Ugarit, Mari, and Babylon, Smith writes (ibid., pp. 98-99, 100-101):

The background for the equation of political enemies with cosmic ones may perhaps be located in the parallelism between the enemies of the god and king, illustrated in Israelite tradition by Psalm 18 (2 Samuel 22):17-18 and in earlier West Semitic tradition in the Mari letter.

In view of the political background for motifs associated with the storm-god at Ugarit, Mari, Babylon, and Israel, scholarly reconstructions for the setting of the language describing Yahweh's storm theophany deserve some further consideration. Some scholars have argued that the Feast of Tabernacles every fall (Exodus 23:15; 34:22) included the enthronement of Yahweh. According to S. Mowinckel, the theory's most vigorous proponent, the enthronement aspect of the festival is reflected in numerous psalms containing the motif of Yahweh's battle, often in the storm, against the cosmic enemies. These texts include Psalms 65, 93, and 96-99. The burden of proof for this theory has fallen largely on two pieces of data. The superscription of Psalm 29 in the *Septuagint* associates this psalm with the Feast of tabernacles. Zechariah 14:16-17 specifically refers to the celebration of Yahweh's kingship in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles.... While some psalms celebrating Yahweh's kingship may not belong to this setting, and although too much has been made of the theory

of the New Year festival, the Feast of Tabernacles perhaps included some celebration of divine kingship manifest in the divine climatic weaponry that subdues the cosmic waters....

The Mari letter and Psalm 89 illustrate the connection between the human and divine levels of the West Semitic storm imagery, and it may be that the enthronement psalms and the Baal cycle likewise presupposed the human as well as the divine level of kingship. The two levels of kingship may have been celebrated in ancient Israel at the one time of the year when the storm deity appeared most strongly, in the early fall. Moreover, the intertwined nature of divine and human kingship in compositions during the period of the monarchy suggest that the Tabernacles festival would have served as an appropriate occasion for communicating the relationship between divine and human kings. In short, the storm imagery associated with Baal in Canaanite texts and Yahweh in Israelite tradition exhibited a political function. The martial imagery of the goddess Anat may have exercised a similar role.

For discussions of the Israelite festival contexts for King Benjamin's discourse in the Book of Mormon, see T. L. Szink *et al.*, King Benjamin's Speech; J. A. Tvedtnes, King Benjamin. For a comprehensive discussion of kingship and coronation in Mosiah 1-6, see S. D. Ricks, Kingship.

99 K. L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, p. 167.

100 This helps make the linkage between Adam and the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28 intelligible. Arguing against the idea that certain Mesopotamian texts described an earthly historical (vs., possibly, a heavenly or cultic paradise), Batto concludes that a major thrust of these accounts is the "sorry condition" and "subhuman character" of primeval mankind "prior to the time when the wise gods gave [them] the various institutions of civilization... , including kingship, through which humans truly became human" (B. F. Batto, *Paradise*, p. 46). In a similar vein, emphasizing in particular the institution of record-keeping, Nibley saw the story of Adam as including the motif of how he became different from any previous creature under heaven (H. W. Nibley, *Before Adam*, p. 83):

Adam becomes Adam, a hominid becomes a man, when he starts keeping a record. What kind of record? A record of his ancestors—the family line that sets him off from all other creatures... That gap between the record keeper and all the other creatures we know anything about is so unimaginably enormous and yet so neat and abrupt that we can only be dealing with another sort of being, a quantum leap from one world to another. Here is something not derivative from anything that has gone before on the local scene, even though they all share the same atoms.

For references to Adam's kingship in the Bible and the *Qur'an*, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, p. 314, Endnote 4-58, and pp. 433-434, Endnote 5-10.

101 See, e.g., N. Wyatt, *Water*, pp. 206-207. J. R. Davila, *Flood Hero* finds the evidence for Noah's kingship more ambivalent than does Wyatt. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *Ark and Tent*.

102 Taking the *bet* as a *bet essentiae*. See M. D. Litwa, *We Are Being*, p. 109.

103 Genesis 1:26.

104 P. Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, p. 139.

105 M. Barker, *Revelation*, pp. 24-25; M. Barker, *Hidden*, p. 18. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 146-149. Of course, the temple-centric view of the Pentateuch is not the *exclusive* model of Creation presented in the Bible, as scholars such as Brown and Smith explain (W. P. Brown, *Seven Pillars*; M. S. Smith, *Priestly Vision*). Moreover, a conclusion that the texts we have in Genesis and the book of Moses stress temple parallels does not negate the value of the unique perspectives provided by other creation accounts (e.g., in the book of Abraham and modern LDS temples) that may have been deliberately shaped to serve different pedagogical purposes (see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, p. 85).

106 L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:51. See also W. P. Brown, *Seven Pillars*, pp. 40-41; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Cosmology of P*, pp. 10-11; P. J. Kearney, *Creation*. According to Walton, “the courtyard represented the cosmic spheres outside of the organized cosmos (sea and pillars). The antechamber held the representations of lights and food. The veil separated the heavens and earth—the place of God’s presence from the place of human habitation” (J. H. Walton, *Lost World*, p. 82).

Note that in this conception of creation the focus is not on the origins of the raw materials used to make the universe, but rather their fashioning into a structure providing a useful purpose. The key insight, according to Walton, is that: “people in the ancient world believed that something existed not by virtue of its material proportion, *but by virtue of its having a function in an ordered system...* Consequently, something could be manufactured physically but still not ‘exist’ if it has not become functional.... The ancient world viewed the cosmos more like a company or kingdom” that comes into existence at the moment it is organized, not when the people who participate in it were created materially (*ibid.*, pp. 26, 35; cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 5 January 1841, p. 181, *Abraham 4:1*).

Walton continues (J. H. Walton, *Lost World*, pp. 43-44, 53):

It has long been observed that in the contexts of *bara'* [the Hebrew term translated “create”] no materials for the creative act are ever mentioned, and an investigation of all the passages mentioned above substantiate that claim. How interesting it is that these scholars then draw the conclusion that *bara'* implies creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). One can see with a moment of thought that such a conclusion assumes that “create” is a material activity. To expand their reasoning for clarity’s sake here: Since “create” is a material activity (assumed on their part), and since the contexts never mention the materials used (as demonstrated by the evidence), then the material object must have been brought into existence without using other materials (i.e., out of nothing). But one can see that the whole line of reasoning only works if one can assume that *bara'* is a material activity. In contrast, if, as the analysis of objects presented above suggests, *bara'* is a functional activity, it would be ludicrous to expect that materials are being used in the activity. In other words, the absence of reference to materials, rather than suggesting material creation out of nothing, is better explained as indication that *bara'* is not a material activity but a functional one....

In summary, the evidence... from the Old Testament as well as from the ancient Near East suggests that both defined the pre-creation state in similar terms and as featuring an absence of functions rather than an absence of material. Such information supports the idea that their concept of existence was linked to functionality and that creation was an activity of bringing functionality to a nonfunctional condition rather than bringing material substance to a

situation in which matter was absent. The evidence of matter (the waters of the deep in Genesis 1:2) in the precreation state then supports this view.

107 Moses 3:1. See A. C. Leder, *Coherence*, p. 267; J. D. Levenson, *Temple and World*, p. 287; J. Morrow, *Creation*. Levenson also cites Blenkinsopp's thesis of a triadic structure in the priestly concept of world history that described the "creation of the world," the "construction of the sanctuary," and "the establishment of the sanctuary in the land and the distribution of the land among the tribes" in similar, and sometimes identical language. Thus, as Polen reminds us, "the purpose of the Exodus from Egypt is not so that the Israelites could enter the Promised Land, as many other biblical passages have it. Rather it is theocentric: so that God might abide with Israel... This limns a narrative arc whose apogee is reached not in the entry into Canaan at the end of Deuteronomy and the beginning of Joshua, but in the dedication day of the Tabernacle (Leviticus 9-10) when God's Glory—manifest Presence—makes an eruptive appearance to the people (Leviticus 9:23-24)" (N. Polen, *Leviticus*, p. 216).

In another correspondence, Smith notes a variation on the first Hebrew word of Genesis (*bereshit*) and the description used in Ezekiel 45:18 for the first month of a priestly offering (*barishon*) (M. S. Smith, *Priestly Vision*, p. 47):

"Thus said the Lord: 'In the beginning (month) on the first (day) of the month, you shall take a bull of the herd without blemish, and you shall cleanse the sanctuary.' What makes this verse particularly relevant for our discussion of *bereshit* is that *ri'shon* occurs in close proximity to *'ehad*, which contextually designates "(day) one" that is "the first day" of the month. This combination of "in the beginning" (*barishon*) with "day one" (*yom 'ehad*) is reminiscent of "in beginning of" (*bereshit*) in Genesis 1:1 and "day one" (*yom 'ehad*) in Genesis 1:5.

108 J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah* 1, 3:9, p. 35.

109 H. W. Nibley, *Meaning of Temple*, pp. 14-15; cf. T. D. Alexander, *From Eden*, pp. 37-42; H. W. Nibley, *Greatness*, p. 301. Speaking of the temple and its furnishings, Josephus wrote that each item was "made in way of imitation and representation of the universe" (F. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 3:7:7, p. 75).

Levenson has suggested that the temple in Jerusalem may have been called by the name "Heaven and Earth" (cf. Moses 2:1), paralleling similar names given to other Near East temples (see J. H. Walton, *Lost World*, pp. 180-181 n. 12). For examples of biblical and Ancient Near East texts describing the cosmic dimensions of cities and temples, see V. Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, pp. 335-337.

Hahn notes the same correspondences to the creation of the cosmos in the building of Solomon's Temple (S. W. Hahn, *Christ, Kingdom*, pp. 176-177; cf. M. Barker, *Hidden*, p. 18; M. Barker, *Christmas*, pp. 3-4; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Glory*, pp. 62-65; V. Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, p. 94; J. D. Levenson, *Temple and World*, pp. 283-284; J. Morrow, *Creation*; H. W. Nibley, *Meaning of Temple*, pp. 14-15; H. W. Nibley, *Greatness*, p. 301; M. Weinfeld, *Sabbath*, pp. 506, 508):

As creation takes seven days, the Temple takes seven years to build (1 Kings 6:38). It is dedicated during the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles (1 Kings 8:2), and Solomon's solemn dedication speech is built on seven petitions (1 Kings 8:31-53). As God capped creation by

“resting” on the seventh day, the Temple is built by a “man of rest” (1 Chronicles 22:9) to be a “house of rest” for the Ark, the presence of the Lord (1 Chronicles 28:2; 2 Chronicles 6:41; Psalm 132:8, 13-14; Isaiah 66:1).

When the Temple is consecrated, the furnishings of the older Tabernacle are brought inside it. (R. E. Friedman suggests the entire Tabernacle was brought inside). This represents the fact that all the Tabernacle was, the Temple has become. Just as the construction of the Tabernacle of the Sinai covenant had once recapitulated creation, now the Temple of the Davidic covenant recapitulated the same. The Temple is a microcosm of creation, the creation a macro-temple.

See V. Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, pp. 56-57 for parallels between the structure of the Gudea cylinders and the structure of the story about the building of Solomon’s temple.

110 J. H. Walton, *Lost World*, pp. 84, 88; cf. T. D. Alexander, *From Eden* pp. 34-37; J. D. Levenson, *Temple and World*, pp. 287-294.

111 In his descriptions of the process of creation, the Prophet Joseph Smith favored the verb “organize” to translate the Hebrew term *bārā* (see, e.g., <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Parallel/1844/7Apr44.html>; cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 5 January 1841, p. 181, 7 April 1844, pp. 350-351). See also Abraham 4:1. Consistent with this biblical perspective, Teppo describes the “central theme” of *Enuma Elish* as being “organizing, putting things in their correct places” (S. Teppo, *Sacred Marriage*, p. 90).

112 See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, p. 538.

113 See *ibid.*, 2:1f, pp. 94-95.

114 J. H. Walton, *Lost World*, pp. 72-73, 75.

115 See, e.g., Psalm 132:7-8, 13-14.

116 For more on this topic, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, pp. 173-183. The Hebrew terms in Genesis for “to dress” (*ābad*) and “to keep” (*šāmar*) respectively connote to “work, serve, till” (F. Brown *et al.*, *Lexicon*, pp. 712b-713c) and “keep, watch (guard), preserve” (*ibid.*, p. 1036b). Recall the temple-like layout of the Garden of Eden (J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, pp. 146-149) and the parallel description of duties in Numbers 3:8. There it says that the Levites “shall keep (*šāmar*) all the instruments of the Tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service (*ābad*) of the Tabernacle.”

117 P. Enns, *Evolution of Adam*, p. 73, emphasis in original. For a discussion of different aspects of the motif of “rest” as it relates to creation, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Ark and Tent*.

118 For a more detailed discussion of these topics, see J. D. Levenson, *Creation*, pp. 100-120.

119 Drawn by Stephanie Dalley, from S. Dalley, *Mesopotamian Gardens*, p. 10 figure 2.

120 *Ibid.*, p. 1. Dalley further elaborates (*ibid.*, p. 6):

Major temples in ancient Mesopotamia have been found decorated with semi-engaged columns imitating the trunks of date palms and the spiral-patterned trunks of a palm with

inedible fruit, perhaps *Chamaerops humilis*. The façade of the temple to the Sun God at Larsa, for instance, was adorned in this baroque fashion. The temple of the New Year Festival at Assur... stood in a grove of trees. We can deduce that some of the urban and suburban temples were given an architectural form and decoration symbolic of a setting in a sacred grove, in the garden of paradise.

121 Ibid., p. 2.

122 Moses 3:9; cf. Revelation 22:1-2; Ezekiel 47:1, where the source of these waters is respectively identified as the “throne of God” and the temple. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 167-168; J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, pp. 69-89 for more on this motif.

123 J.-C. Margueron, *La Peinture: Rythme*, pp. 106-107.

124 S. Dalley, *Mesopotamian Gardens*, p. 3. Dalley is referring to the memorial feast of *kispum*, in which the living king dined with his dead ancestors and invoked their blessing. It seems that this ceremony was celebrated annually in the inner throneroom of the palace (65) and that its tribune (66) contained at least one statue of a royal ancestor, perhaps represented by the rightmost figure in the Investiture Panel (B. Muller, *Aspects*, p. 138; O. Rouault, *Religion*, pp. 222-223).

125 Providing evidence for artificial palm trees at Mari is a “stone column base... cut in imitation of palm scales,” suggesting that “columns resembling palm-tree trunks would have been quite at home here,” and the fact that the left side of the doorway into the Dagan temple seems to have been decorated with palm trunks (Harvey Weiss, cited in M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, p. 187).

126 J.-C. Margueron, *La Peinture: Rythme*, p. 106. Cf. J.-C. Margueron, *Mari Métropole*, p. 511 figure 499; B. Muller, *Aspects*, p. 138. Margueron qualifies this conclusion, stating that the tree was “almost in the center of the courtyard” (J.-C. Margueron, *Mari*, p. 892).

127 Image from J.-C. Margueron, *Mari*, p. 892. Muller, agreeing with Margueron, accounted for the seeming discrepancy between the single palm tree of the palace and the symmetric doubling of the palm tree in the Investiture Panel by citing rotation and flattening as principles of artistic perspective in the ancient Near East (B. Muller, *Aspects*, pp. 135, 138). Differing from al-Khalesi, however, they applied this same principle to the statue of the goddess with the flowing vase and concluded that there was only one such statue, rather than two, and that it stood on a pedestal within room 64, facing the opening from courtyard 106 (J.-C. Margueron, *Mari Métropole*, pp. 508, 511 figure 499; B. Muller, *Aspects*, p. 138).

128 J. R. Porter, *Guide*, p. 28.

129 Image from Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, plate IV.

130 Photograph from M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, figure 36.

131 A. Parrot, *Palais, Peintures murales*, p. 60 and p. 60-61 n. 3. See also M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, *passim*; B. N. Porter, *Date Palms*.

132 T. Stordalen, *Echoes*, p. 82; cf. B. N. Porter, *Date Palms*, p. 134.

133 B. Muller, *Aspects*, p. 136; cf. M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, p. 24.

134 B. N. Porter, *Date Palms*, p. 138.

135 J. B. Pritchard, *ANET*, 197-219, p. 40.

136 B. L. Visotzky, *Conversation*. According to Dalley, the “tree was so important in ancient Mesopotamia that it was personified as a god, Nin-Gishzida, ‘trusty tree,’ and had the power of human speech” (S. Dalley, *Mesopotamian Gardens*, p. 2). Indeed, one of the most popular pieces of Old Babylonian literature was the debate between the tamarisk and the date palm, which king planted in his courtyard after a heavenly council had granted the first kingship to men at the beginning (W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom*, pp. 151-164). The shade of the tamarisk is the setting for a king’s banquet, and at Mari we are, of course, not surprised to find evidence that “the king and his entourage often ate their meals in the garden” (S. Dalley, *Mesopotamian Gardens*, p. 2; see depiction of such an event in M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, figure 29).

Such traditions continued into later times. Notes Visotzky (B. L. Visotzky, *Conversation*, p. 212; cf. H. W. Nibley, *Message* 2005, p. 288):

For a period of close to five hundred years, stories from Semitic religious communities preserved (in Palestinian Aramaic, *koine* Greek, and rabbinic Hebrew) snatches of the conversation of palm trees. The palms speak in dreams to one another and in broad daylight to those who would transgress against them. What seems to bind the dialogues together is that in every case, the ultimate hearer is a towering religious figure.

An example of the theme of warning is illustrated in the *Genesis Apocryphon*, a Jewish text from Qumran where we find Abram dreaming of a cedar and a date palm, representing himself and his wife Sarai. It is only through the pleadings of the palm tree that the cedar is spared from the axes of the woodcutters (F. G. Martinez, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 19:14-17, p. 232). A similar theme is found in the later biography of Mani, where Elchasai the Baptist climbs a date palm and is apparently warned that he should not cut it down for wood (R. Cameron *et al.*, *CMC*, pp. 11, 13.). The theme persists centuries later in the Persian *Shahnama* epic (A. Ferdowsi, *Shahnama* (1905-1925), pp. 517-519), where a talking tree rebukes Alexander the Great “for his lust of conquest and prophesies his death in a distant land” (E. Edson *et al.*, *Cosmos*, p. 55, caption to Figure 29).

On the other hand, the function of the trees as a source of wisdom is shown in the *Pistis Sophia*, which reports that God spoke “mysteries” to Enoch “out of the Tree of Gnosis [Knowledge] and out of the Tree of Life in the paradise of Adam” (G. R. S. Mead, *Pistis*, 2:246, p. 205; C. Schmidt, *Pistis*, 2:99, p. 495).

137 See, e.g., E. A. S. Butterworth, *Tree*, p. 74, see also pp. 75, 78. Butterworth discusses this idea in the context of Genesis 3:6-7, 21:19; Numbers 24:3-4; 1 Samuel 14:25-29; and 2 Kings 6:17-20.

138 See the conclusions of Albenda, as cited in M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, pp. 172-173.

139 Photograph from A. Feyerick *et al.*, *Genesis*, p. 74.

140 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 11.

141 M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, p. 24. On the symbolism of birds, especially doves, in sacred trees in Jewish and Christian contexts, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, pp. 42-43, 166, 209, 246, 247-248, 473, 506-507, 654.

142 See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, pp 42-43, 247-248; H. W. Nibley, *New Look*, July 1969, p. 109.

143 Cf. Daniel 4:20, 22: "The tree... is thou, O king." See also Judges 9:7-21, E. D. Clark, *Cedars*; T. Stordalen, *Echoes*, pp. 89-92, 100-101, 291; G. Widengren, *King and Tree of Life*, pp. 42-50.

144 N. Wyatt, *Space*, p. 170; cf. 1 Nephi 11:8-22, M. Barker, *Joseph Smith*, p. 76; M. Cazenave, *Encyclopédie*, p. 44; D. C. Peterson, *Asherah* 1998; D. C. Peterson, *Asherah* 2000 H. Schwartz, *Tree*, p. 50. See also Qur'an 19:23-26, A. a.-S. M. H. at-Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizan*, 6:146.

145 M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, p. 201.

146 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, pp. 45, 54; J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, pp. 355-356. Al-Khalesi concludes that this supplication "was on behalf of the worshipper" (Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 15).

147 B. N. Porter, *Date Palms*, p. 139.

148 T. Stordalen, *Echoes*, p. 101. Margueron concludes similarly, stating that the central feature of the Court of the Palm "reminded all that the land's wealth—the abundance of food, vitality, and fecundity—were guaranteed by the king, who was at the same time their dispenser and protector" (J.-C. Margueron, *Mari*, p. 892; cf. B. Muller, *Aspects*, p. 136; B. N. Porter, *Date Palms*).

149 2 Nephi 2:15.

150 Personal communication to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw from Faisal S. al-Zamil, 25 May 2006.

151 J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, pp. 65-67.

152 Alma 32:42.

153 E.g., G. K. Beale, *Temple*, pp. 66-80; R. N. Holzapfel *et al.*, *Father's House*, pp. 17-19; J. M. Lundquist, *Reality*; J. Morrow, *Creation*; D. W. Parry, *Garden*; J. A. Parry *et al.*, *Temple in Heaven*; T. Stordalen, *Echoes*, pp. 112-116, 308-309; G. J. Wenham, *Sanctuary Symbolism*. The imagery of the Garden of Eden as a prototype sanctuary is not incompatible with views that relate the symbolism of the Creation of the cosmos to the temple, as discussed above (see, e.g., W. P. Brown, *Seven Pillars*, pp. 33-77; J. D. Levenson, *Temple and World*; M. S. Smith, *Priestly Vision*; J. H. Walton, *Genesis*, pp. 10-31; J. H. Walton, *Lost World*). See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, pp. 146-149.

154 1 Kings 6:29, 32, 35, 7:36; 2 Chronicles 3:5; Ezekiel 40:16, 22, 26, 31, 34, 37; 41:18-20, 25-26.

155 T. Stordalen, *Echoes*, p. 122. A Christianized version of such imagery is suggested by the Chapter House in Worcester Cathedral, England, with "traces of painted drapery and angels in the bays and remains of a Tree of Jesse curling around the central pillar" (R. Rosewell, *Paintings*, p. 37, caption to Figure 39).

156 M. B. Brown, *Gate*, p. 113.

157 E.g., "Gudea was received among the gods" (van Buren, cited in V. Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, p. 45 n. 1).

That sacred trees or the divinities that they represent are encountered both at the beginning of the ritual and at its culmination might be taken as suggesting that in the ascent of the king to his throne he is not going to meet the gods for the first time, but rather returning to the place he started, now having demonstrated his fitness for the throne. As Howard poetically described (T. Howard, Dove, p. 47: “The place where we all started, of course, is Eden... And, ironically, ‘the last of earth left to discover / Is that which was the beginning’ (T. S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*, 5:244-245, p. 59. See also 5:239-242, p. 59).”

158 2 Peter 1:4. For recent exegesis of this phrase, see J. Starr, *Partakers*.

159 Image from Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 42.

160 See M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, pp. 24-25, 33.

161 A. Parrot, *Palais*, *Peintures murales*, p. 62.

162 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 67.

163 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

164 See, e.g., the lion from the Temple of Dagan (A. Parrot, *Mari Fabuleuse*, Plate 22).

165 “Gudea... makes several allusions to imaginary beings (or to animals who have a counterpart in reality) that correspond to a given part of the temple” (M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, p. 24. See *The Cylinders of Gudea*, Cylinder A 24-28, in T. Jacobsen, *Harps*, pp. 419-424). In addition, Barrelet describes evidence that gatepost guardians sometimes may have been represented in human form (M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, p. 27).

166 S. Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1:181 n. 191.

167 J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, 118:19-22, p. 405. See also Psalm 24:3-4.

168 Psalm 118:20.

169 S. Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1:180.

170 Psalm 24:6. Parry sees an allusion to a prayer circle in this verse (D. W. Parry, *Psalm 24*).

171 2 Chronicles 3:14.

172 J. Gee, *Keeper*, p. 235. Egyptian ritual, once thought of as only intended for the dead, has increasingly been studied in terms of its use as an initiation of transfiguration for the living (see, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, p. 702 n. E-1, p. 720 n. E-63; M.-C. Lavie, *Fêtes*; H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*; J. H. Taylor, *Judgment*, pp. 208-209).

173 B. R. Foster, *Before*, pp. 437-438.

174 Talon elaborates (P. Talon, *Enūma Eliš*, p. 275):

The importance of the names is not to be understressed. One of the preserved Chaldaean Oracles says: “Never change the Barbarian names” and in his commentary Psellus (in the 11th century) adds “This means: there are among the peoples names given by God, which have a

particular power in the rites. Do not transpose them in Greek.” A god may also have more than one name, even if this seems to introduce a difficult element of confusion, at least for us. We can think, for example, of Marduk, who is equated with Aššur and thus named in many texts (especially Assyrian texts written for a Babylonian audience). He then assumes either the aspect of the One himself or the aspect of only an emanation of the One. The same occurs when Aššur replaces Marduk in the Assyrian version of *Enuma Elish*.

175 “He is indeed even as I” (E. A. Speiser, *Creation Epic*, 7:140, p. 72). Foster elaborates (B. R. Foster, *Before*, pp. 437-438):

The poem begins and ends with concepts of naming. The poet evidently considers naming both an act of creation and an explanation of something already brought into being. For the poet, the name, properly understood, discloses the significance of the created thing. Semantic and phonological analysis of names could lead to understanding of the things named. Names, for this poet, are a text to be read by the informed, and bear the same intimate and revealing relationship to what they signify as this text does to the events it narrates. In a remarkable passage at the end, the poet presents his text as the capstone of creation in that it was bearer of creation’s significance to humankind.

Of possible relevance is the suggestion in P. Talon, *Enūma Eliš*, pp. 269-270 that the successive mention of the nine gods in the first sixteen lines of *Enuma Elish* might be read with the Assyrian Tree of Life diagram in mind. Talon also observes that the description in Tablet VI of the feast involving the fifty great gods and the seven gods of destinies, wherein the seven assign the place of Ishtar as the daughter of Anu, might be seen as bringing their number to nine and, thus, the diagram to completion.

176 H. W. Nibley, *Babylonian Background*, p. 362.

177 Moses 3:19. For other accounts of the ritual uses of naming in the Old Testament, see D. Calabro, *Giving of New Names*.

178 See, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, 3:19b, p. 177.

179 See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 342-344; J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, pp. 204-206.

180 See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, 3:19b, pp. 177-179; J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, pp. 91-94.

181 J.-L. Monneret, *Grands*, p. 481 n. 12; cf. M. i. A. A. al-Kisa'i, *Tales*, p. 28; al-Tabari, *Creation*, 1:94-97, pp. 266-269; G. Weil, *Legends*, p. 22. In a reversal of previous opinions, scholars have become increasingly convinced that the *Qur'an* contains material of direct relevance for the study of ancient Near East traditions, especially canonical and non-canonical writings relating to the Hebrew Bible (see, e.g., T. Khalidi, *Muslim Jesus*, pp. 7-9, 16-17; J. C. Reeves, *Flowing Stream*; S. M. Wasserstrom, *Muslim Literature*, p. 100).

182 *Qur'an* 2:30-33; cf. the idea of the naming as a test for Adam (vs. Satan) in al-Tabari, *Creation*, 1:97, p. 269; M. J. B. bin Gorion *et al.*, *Mimekor*, 3, 1:6-7; L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:62-64, 5:84-86 n. 35; E. G. Mathews, Jr., *Armenian*, p. 148 and n. 35; J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah 1*, 17:4:2, p. 183; M.-A. Ouaknin *et al.*, *Rabbi Éliézer*, 13, pp. 87-88.

183 Cited in I. Zilio-Grandi, *Paradise*, pp. 86-87.

184 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, pp. 11, 43; cf. Barrelet's "*arbres fictifs*" (M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, pp. 12, 27; cf. Parrot "*arbre stylisé*" (A. Parrot, *Palais, Peintures murales*, p. 59). Giovino refutes arguments by scholars who frequently conflate this second type of sacred tree with the date palm. Among other evidence, she includes several examples where, as in the Mari Panel, both kinds of trees appear together (see, e.g., M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, pp. 113-128 and figures 58-60).

185 M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, p. 12.

186 M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, pp. 195-196; see M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, p. 25. In her detailed study of the Assyrian Sacred Tree, Giovino surveys a wide array of evidence for the placement of artificial trees in and around Mesopotamian temples, including the use of trees to flank their entrances. See M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, pp. 177-196. "The idea of placing artificial trees or tree-like poles at temple entrances (such as at the Sin temple at Khorsabad), or placing artificial trees across the façade of a temple (such as at the Inshushinak temple at Susa), appears to have had a history extending from the third millennium BC in Mesopotamia. Several examples from the third to second millennium BC serve to illustrate this tradition" (*ibid.*, p. 182).

187 Images from M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, p. 12.

188 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

189 Widengren discusses this unexplained phenomenon in relation to the seven-branched tree of life and its analogue in the Jewish menorah (G. Widengren, *King and Tree of Life*, pp. 62-63).

190 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 18; cf. M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, pp. 26-27; M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, pp. 195-196. See also T. D. Alexander, *From Eden*, p. 22 n. 20.

191 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 18; cf. M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, pp. 26-27; M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, pp. 195-196.

192 H. W. Nibley, *Lehi 1988*, p. 362.

193 B. Muller, *Aspects*, p. 138.

194 As evidence for one of the gateposts, al-Khalesi cites a drawing in a study by Parrot that includes a tiny rectangular chink (approximately 12 cm. wide and 25 cm. long) in the pavement at a distance of 4.80 m. from the northern wall of the room (the wall between Rooms 64 and 65). A gatepost at a similar distance from the opposite wall would have defined an opening of about 2 m. that was centered in the room. Al-Khalesi also observes that pieces of wooden beams lying on the floor that Parrot identified as part of the roofing beams of the room could have also been part of the partition structure (Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 57).

195 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

196 J. Monson, *New 'Ain Dara Temple*.

197 Image from J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, p. 77, figure 6-8.

198 As a potential Egyptian analogue to this idea that might be further investigated, consider

the funerary papyrus of Nakht (ca. 1350 BC), where the deceased, led by Anubis, approaches a tree that stands before the “false door,” representing the entrance to the “Other World.” To reach that door, they must in fact pass by that tree, a symbol that is frequently associated, like the door itself, with the “horizon,” the meeting place between heaven and earth (ibid., p. 116 figure 8-9). A subsequent scene of afterlife paradise from the same text prominently displays an instance of the same type of tree beside a single palm tree standing immediately in front of the entrance of the home of Nakht and his wife in the hereafter (J. H. Taylor, *Perfect Afterlife*, pp. 250-251 figure 128).

199 See J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, pp. 77-87; J. M. Bradshaw, *Tree of Knowledge*.

200 See J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, pp. 109-126.

201 M. Zlotowitz *et al.*, *Bereishis*, p. 101, cf. p. 96. See also L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:70, 5:91 n. 50. For more on this theme as it relates to the biblical story of Adam and Eve, see J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *Mormonism's Satan*.

202 Ephrem the Syrian, *Paradise*, 3:5, p. 92. Note that the phrase “in the midst” was used both to describe the location of the two special trees of the Garden of Eden and also for the heavenly veil in the creation account (Moses 2:6).

203 Brock in *ibid.*, p. 52. See also Murray’s discussion of whether Ephrem’s imagery was influenced by the steps of the ziggurats (R. Murray, *Symbols*, pp. 309-310).

204 E.g., G. A. Anderson *et al.*, *Synopsis*, 19:1a-19:1d, pp. 56E-57E; M. Herbert *et al.*, *Irish Apocrypha*, p. 2; G. Weil, *Legends*, p. 53 (“wall of red gold”). In at least one version of the story, Eve’s transgression of the boundary God had set in the midst of the Garden had been preceded by her deliberate opening of the gate to let the serpent enter the Garden’s outer wall (G. A. Anderson *et al.*, *Synopsis*, 19:1a-19:1d, pp. 56E-57E).

205 See J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, pp. 77-87, 119-124.

206 Image from W. J. Hamblin, *Temple Mosaic*.

207 See T. D. Alexander, *From Eden*, p. 22 n. 20 for a discussion of the treelike appearance of the columns in Solomon’s temple. For an example of such a tree placed before the door to the “other world” in Egyptian literature, see R. O. Faulkner *et al.*, *Book of the Dead*, pp. 8, 9, 112-113.

208 J. Rennaker, *Up, Up*, p. 21.

209 Ezekiel 40:16, 22, 26, 31, 34.

210 Giovino (M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, p. 178) cites the arguments of Perrot and Chipiez that:

... the column(s) supporting the canopy were made of wood and covered in a casing of bronze embossed with palm trunk imbrications. The bronze covering would have protected the wooden posts, and the imitation of palm tree bark would have been both decorative and appropriate in a temple setting. The voluted base and capital, according to Perrot and Chipiez, must also have been wrought in metal. Their interpretation provides an alternate

reconstruction to Place's idea that bronze palm trees stood on either side of the entrance to the Sin temple at Khorsabad.

211 Image from M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, p. 27 figure 11.

212 S. Dalley, *Mesopotamian Gardens*, p. 2.

213 M.-T. Barrelet, *Peinture*, p. 26-27.

214 A. Parrot, *Abraham*, pp. 27-28.

215 Winter observes: "That the 'presentation scene' occurs on cylinder seals which are themselves official tokens of legitimacy and authority within the state system should be our primary clue to its meaning" (I. J. Winter, *King*, p. 265).

216 *Ibid.*, p. 264. Though writing about presentation seals showing the seated king, rather than a god, as the one granting authority, Winter highlights the functional identity between the two kinds of scenes:

The parallel positions of seated kings and seated gods on presentation scene seals... seem best understood as parallel statements of authority and effectiveness, united by identical concepts. They neither represent two different and opposed settings, the one secular and the other sacred; nor do they both represent the same, limited sphere of the religious alone. Rather, both are manifestations, albeit on different planes, of the same, joint concepts of receipt-of-address and responsive action. In "royal" presentation scenes, the king is represented in the position of the god, and sometimes with attributes appropriate to the gods, evidence of the principles manifest within and to him. Yet he is most frequently shown, especially in the Ur III period, with his own canonical set of attributes—royal throne, royal dress, royal headgear—to make it clear that he exercises these principles in his own realm.

One might compare this Mesopotamian idea with visionary Jewish description of heavenly ascent, where the narrator encounters divine "princes" that sit on thrones at the gate or sanctuary of each heaven. For example, Larsen observes that "in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, each of these princes apparently rides in his own chariot-throne similar to God's own. It seems to me that the earthly king is meant to be considered one of these princes ruling over his own God-given dominion" (D. J. Larsen, November 16 2010).

217 A. Parrot, *Abraham*, Plate II.

218 This type of scene might be compared to Egyptian images of Anubis leading the one to be judged to the seat of Osiris or to facsimile 3 of the book of Abraham. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, p. 230 figure 4-11; J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, p. 116.

219 A. Parrot, *Abraham*, Plate II.

220 *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

221 Commenting on the question of whether the raised hands represent a gesture of worship or one of greeting and respect appropriate to an audience, Winter writes (I. J. Winter, *King*, p. 263):

I would suggest that the line between audience and ritual service is one which was never drawn in Mesopotamia as we would today. Rather, the two are inexorably linked, and ideally would result in the deity's or the king's positive response to the individual. There are two primary ways in which this positive response may be formulated: by rendering favorable judgment or granting petition, on the one hand; and by conferring authority on the other. But in both cases, since the king's authority comes from the realm of the divine... then however "secular" the judgments he may render or the authority he may confer, he does so within an administrative system that was in no way separate from the "sacred" (as church and state are kept today)...

222 N. Wyatt, *Degrees*, p. 192.

223 *Ibid.*. Postgate further explains (J. N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, pp. 266-267):

A ruler's claim to divinity can be expressed in three ways: his name may be preceded by the cuneiform sign for god, in the same way as other deities' names are, his headdress may be represented with horns, the mark of a god in the iconography, and in a variety of ways evidence may be seen that he was worshipped by the population in a cult of his own... Another, attractive, hypothesis is that any rulers who were offspring of a sacred marriage could legitimately claim both divine and royal parentage. Gudea, for instance, says that he had no mother and no father and was the son of the goddess of Lagas, Garumdug; however, elsewhere he also states that he is the son of Ninsun, of Bau and of Nanse, which makes it hard to be sure of the implications of such statements. He, however, did not lay claim to divinity.

The seeming contradiction in Gudea's claimed parentage might be explained by analogy to JST Hebrews 7:3 ("which order was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life"), where the parallel sense is that although Melchizedek certainly had been born to earthly parents, he later had been reborn as a "Son of God" through priesthood ordinances (see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 53-54, 60-62, 169-170 nn. 313-314).

224 N. Wyatt, *Degrees*, p. 220; cf. Eaton, commenting on Psalm 110:4: "He will be priest-king, the supreme figure for whom all the other personnel of the temple were only assistants" (J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, p. 385). Nibley, commenting on Egyptian kingship: "kings must be priests, and candidates to immortality must be both priests and kings" (H. W. Nibley, *Message* 2005, p. 353).

225 Some well-known studies relating to this long research tradition include J. H. Eaton, *Kingship*; A. M. Hocart, *Kingship*; S. H. Hooke, *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*; E. O. James, *Initiatory*; A. R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*; H. P. L'Orange, *Cosmic Kingship*; S. Mowinckel, *Psalms*; G. Widengren, *King and Tree of Life*; G. Widengren, *King and Covenant*.

While many of the specific criticisms of research in this tradition are well deserved, no better explanation yet has been attempted for the evidence as a whole. For example, having reviewed nearly a century of criticisms relating to Mowinckel's theory of an Israelite enthronement festival, Roberts finds that a modified version of this idea still offers "the most adequate interpretive context for understanding both the classical enthronement Psalms and a large number of other Psalms" (J. J. M. Roberts, *Mowinckel's Enthronement Festival*, pp. 113-114). Likewise, Wyatt

insightfully critiques the earlier literature on this topic, but ends up making a strong case for the continuity of divine kingship traditions throughout the ancient Near East (N. Wyatt, *Myths of Power*; N. Wyatt, *There's Such Divinity*). Baker and Ricks have studied temple and coronation themes in the Psalms from an LDS perspective (L. L. Baker *et al.*, *Who Shall Ascend*). See other studies by Ricks for overviews of coronation themes in the Book of Mormon (S. D. Ricks, *Coronation*; S. D. Ricks, *Kingship*). For a description of similar themes in the Qumran literature, see D. J. Larsen, *Themes of the Royal Cult*.

226 Translation in J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, p. 384.

227 *Ibid.*, pp. 384-385. See also discussion of these verses by Margaret Barker, cited in J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 759-760 Endnote E-229.

228 Cf. Psalm 2:7, 1 Chronicles 17:13. . See also M. Barker, *Who was Melchizedek*; M. Barker, *Christmas*, pp. 104-106.

229 Commenting further on this royal priesthood, Eaton writes (J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, p. 385):

He will be priest-king, the supreme figure for whom all the other personnel of the temple were only assistants. It was a role of the highest significance in the ancient societies, treasured by the great kings of Egypt and Mesopotamia under their respective deities. There are indications in the historical sources that the role was indeed held by David and his successors, though opposed and obscured in the records by priestly clans after the end of the monarchy. The oracle gives a special aspect to the priesthood by linking it to the pre-Israelite king of Jerusalem, Melchizedek. David's dynasty are here recognized as heirs of Melchizedek, who was remembered in tradition as priest and king of *El Elyon*, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 14:18f.). As Israel's God took the title of the Creator as worshipped in old Jerusalem (*El Elyon*), so David took over the city-kingdom and royal priesthood of the old dynasty.

230 For example, describing these limitations, Sparks writes (K. L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, p. 167):

First, the texts do not provide detailed prescriptions for the rites but depend instead on the priests' previous knowledge of the rites and incantations. This reminds us that most of the ancient priestly lore was perpetuated not in writing but rather through the oral traditions of the temple cult. Second, the colophons of the texts warn that only priestly scribes should read and copy their secret knowledge. It is difficult to say how carefully the priests followed this directive in any given historical period, but it appears that rites of the *akītu* were widely known in the ancient world.

231 Image from J.-C. Margueron, *Mari Métropole*, p. 477.

232 On the streams of Eden, see Moses 3:10, 1 Nephi 11:25. See also, e.g., D. C. Matt, *Zohar 1, Be-Reshit 1:35b*, p. 224; Revelation 22:1-2. On the streams flowing from underneath the Jerusalem temple mount, see Psalm 36:8-9; Ezekiel 47:1; Joel 3:18; Zechariah 14:8.

233 See Alma 32:41-42.

234 1 Nephi 11:25.

235 L. E. Stager, Jerusalem.

236 Photograph from M.-H. Gates, Palace, p. 71.

237 Y. M. al-Khalesi, Palms, p. 43.

238 Ibid., pp. 43-45.

239 Perhaps resembling the description given by Black of a ritual celebration at Uruk for An and Ishtar, seen as paralleling some of the events of the seventh and eighth days of the *akitu* festival (J. A. Black, New Year, p 45):

Someone, probably the priest, offered the god holy water and then sprinkled it over the king and people. The priest, or according to one text from Uruk, the king, went into the sanctuary and poured a libation.

240 J. H. Eaton, Psalms Commentary, p. 384, commenting on Psalm 110:7; cf. John 4:6-15, 7:38; Revelation 21:6. The Sumerian ruler Gudea is depicted as receiving a drink from the gods, “representing supernatural life” (J. H. Eaton, Kingship, p. 96). Similarly, in Israel, “a cup of life and salvation [was] given to the king from the Gihon source” (J. H. Eaton, Psalms Commentary, p. 386) so that he might be “purified and strengthened” as part of the “procession from the brook to the king’s palace” (S. Mowinckel, Psalms, 1:64). Note that in Genesis 2:13, Gihon is named as one of the rivers of Eden.

241 Moses 3:10.

242 H. W. Nibley, Message 2005, pp. 152-153, 161-164.

243 Ibid., p. 164. Lichtheim says that “[t]his work, dating to the fourth century BC, was clearly designed for performance in the temples of Osiris on certain feast days” (M. Lichtheim, Lamentations, p. 116). Describing the dramatic aspects of a related text, *The Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys* (Papyrus Berlin 3008), she writes: “The text ends with instructions for its use, which show that the lamentations were to be recited by two women impersonating the two goddesses. A rough sketch on the bottom margin of column 5 shows the two women seated on the ground, each holding a vase and an offering loaf.” Summarizing, she concludes:

The two texts should... be seen in conjunction with a group of texts embodying the Osiris ritual... They reenact the life, death, and resurrection of the god; they record the lengthy laments over his death; and they dwell on the elaborate protection which the gods give to Osiris, who... [is] resurrected, vindicated, and worshiped as a cosmic ruler.

244 H. W. Nibley, Message 2005, p. 163.

245 Image in J. V. Canby, Ur-Nammu, Plate 14a.

246 Image in V. Schomp, Ancient Mesopotamia, p. 21.

247 John 3:5. See H. W. Nibley, Message 2005, p. 164.

248 John 4:14.

249 J. A. Black, *New Year*, pp. 44-45.

250 See below for more about these insignia.

251 Image from J.-M. Durand, *Mythologème*, p. 44.

252 *Ibid.*, p. 45. Second paragraph is from Wyatt's translation of the French (N. Wyatt, *Arms*, p. 159).

253 N. Wyatt, *Arms*, pp. 159-160.

254 Scholarly consensus on the symbolic meaning of the insignia conferred on Mesopotamian kings in artistic representations has been elusive. The debate concerns whether they are to be seen as weapons or as implements of building construction. See more on these two views below.

255 L. L. Baker *et al.*, *Who Shall Ascend*, p. 353; cf., e.g., 1 Samuel 10:1, 15:17, 16:23; 2 Samuel 2:4, 5:3; 1 Kings 1:39; 1 Chronicles 29:22 and additional discussion on pp. 354-358. Compare J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 519-523.

256 Image in J.-C. Margueron, *Mari Métropole*, p. 478.

257 J. A. Black, *New Year*, p. 45.

258 N. Wyatt, *Arms*, p. 160 n. 28.

259 E. S. Drower, *Water*, p. 102 n. 1. Cf. J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 681-686, 871-873.

260 .

261 See Psalm 27; cf. D&C 76:67. See M. B. Brown, *Israelite Temple*.

262 Psalm 89:13, 21.

263 J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, p. 317.

264 A. A. Anderson, *Psalms*, p. 535; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms*, p. 173.

265 J. C. Reeves, *Heralds*, p. 123; cf. p. 137 n. 80.

266 See S. D. Ricks, *Oaths*, pp. 49-50.

267 Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, p. 58. On the clothing of divine figures, see A. L. Oppenheim, *Golden Garments*.

268 P. Y. Hoskisson, *Nišum Oath*, p. 208. Hoskisson further observes: "This might explain ARM HC AREP = Dossin (1938a) 117:22, in which Zimri-Lim had invited (subservient?) kings to come to the *niquum*-sacrifice of Ishtar" (*ibid.*, p. 208). Thus, regular occasions when the gods renewed the divine powers delegated to the king might also become events for the making of or reaffirmation of treaties among allied kingdoms.

Greengus summarizes important elements of such treaty-making at Mari (S. Greengus, *Redefining*, p. 135):

Treaty partners can be described by the terms “father” or “brother, and the status of solidarity and friendship between the parties is the goal... [T]reaty formation... takes place through a variety of related activities. These activities include drawing up documents listing names of the gods by whom parties swear and texts of the agreements reached; symbolic acts such as “touching the throat,” “raising the hand,” sacrifice of an ass, drinking the cup. The phrase *riksatam sakanum*, “to make a treaty,” embraces all of the symbolic elements and actions which went into forming the treaty and the new relationships and responsibilities that were thereby created.

At Mari and elsewhere in Old Babylon, the standard practice of treaty-making involved the assembling of the symbols or images of the gods of the two ruling parties so they could be physically present during the ceremonies (S. W. Holloway, *Assur*, pp. 173-176).

An important study by Charpin found differences between treaty-making procedures made face-to-face and those concluded at a distance. “In the former cases, the proceedings prominently included the famous ritual slaughter of a sacrificial animal, mostly a donkey foal. In the latter cases a crucial component was the ritual known as *lipit napistim*, the ‘touching of the throat’... In a broader perspective, however, it is important to note that the two different procedures were strictly parallel” (see D. Charpin, *Une alliance contre l’Élam et la rituel du lipit napistim*. In F. Vallat (ed.), *Contribution à l’histoire de l’Iran [Mélanges Perrot]*. Paris, France, ERC, 190, 109-118, cited in E. Jesper, Jean-Marie, p. 296. See also N. Weeks, *Admonition*, pp. 25-26).

269 P. Y. Hoskisson, *Nišum Oath*, p. 204.

270 In the performance of such covenants, writes Westermann (C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, p. 225; cf., e.g., V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, pp. 430-433):

Words and actions are part of the oath. There can be the raising of the hand or some other action(s). A standard form which is very common is the conditional self-cursing (e.g., *Genesis 15:9ff.*)... The one who passes between the divided halves of the slain animals invokes death upon himself should he break the word by which he has bound himself in the oath.

Another example appears in the Aramaic Sefire Treaty from northern Syria: “As this calf is cut up, thus Matti’el... shall be cut up” (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, pp. 114-115; cf., e.g., *Alma 46:20-21*; D. R. Seely, *Genesis 15*, pp. 356-357).

271 Ziegler finds twelve such instances in the Bible: 1 Samuel 3:17, 14:44, 20:13, 25:22; 2 Samuel 3:9, 3:35, 19:14; 1 Kings 2:23, 19:2, 20:10; 2 Kings 6:31; Ruth 1:17.

272 Y. Ziegler, *So Shall*, pp. 62-63.

273 Cf. *Moses 5:29*. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 377-378 n. 5:29b.

274 J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, p. 385, commenting on *Psalm 110:4*.

275 *Hebrews 6:13-20, 7:15-28*.

276 *D&C 84:32-48*. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 60-62.

277 Image from J.-C. Margueron, *Mari Métropole*, p. 510.

278 See Y. M. al-Khalesi, *Palms*, pp. 58-60 for arguments in favor of the identification of this goddess with Ishtar.

Eaton observes: “Exalted thrones always had a footstool, and there are Egyptian examples of such stools formed or decorated to symbolize subjected foes” (J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, p. 385, commenting on Psalm 110:1}). By way of contrast to the cat being underfoot in the Investiture Panel, the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* shows that “the cat who split the *ished-tree* and released the god also beheads the god’s mortal enemy, the *Apophis* serpent, beneath the same *ished-tree*,” its paw resting heavily on the head of the serpent in accompanying illustrations (H. W. Nibley, *Message* 2005, pp. 311-312). For related motifs in Jewish and Christian sources, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, pp. 266-267.

279 Moses 4:21. Christians have traditionally interpreted this as a prophecy of Jesus Christ. However, in LDS thought, this interpretation is ultimately extended to each of the faithful. Just as Jesus Christ will put all enemies beneath his feet (1 Corinthians 15:25-26), so the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that each person who would be saved must also, with His help, gain the power needed to “triumph over all [their] enemies and put them under [their] feet” (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 14 May 1843, p. 297. See also 17 May 1843, p. 301; 21 May 1843, p. 305), possessing the “glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses” (Dahl, 1990 #623, 7:9, p. 98}. See also 7:16, p. 101. Note that authorship of the *Lectures* is uncertain, though traditionally ascribed to Joseph Smith). To the many references in the New Testament and early Christian literature relating to these themes, the LDS canon of scripture adds the stories of how Satan was cast down as part of his premortal rebellion (Moses 4:1-4) and how Moses triumphed over Satan in one scene of his panoramic vision of eternity (Moses 1:12-23).

280 K. E. Slanski, *Rod and Ring*, p. 38. Postgate gives the following general overview of symbols associated with Mesopotamian kingship (J. N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, pp. 260-262):

There is general agreement from a variety of different sources on the rituals accompanying the installation of a ruler, although they differ in detail. After the Flood, the Sumerian epic tells us that kingship was brought to earth, represented by three symbols: a hat, a stick and a stool (or, to give them the names they have acquired in this context in English, the “crown,” the “sceptre,” and the “throne”), and these recur time and again in the hymns addressed to kings, along with other royal insignia... In the iconography, too, we see the ruler identified by certain symbols: even in the Uruk period there is one figure who wears a flat cap and a “net skirt,” who wields authority. Later, in Neo-Sumerian art, the ruler alone is depicted with a close-fitting hat with a turned up band... When shown seated on a stool cushioned with a fleecy rug, he is presumably on his “throne,” and sometimes holds a mace, just as the foremen of groups of workers or soldiers hold a stick. Official literature tells us that the rulers were solemnly invested with these symbols of their office in the temples..., and that these events really took place is known from administrative documents recording sacrifices made on the occasion of the coronation of the Ur III kings.

As a specific example, Postgate cites a hymn to Rim-Sin, King of Larsa (after Charpin, cited in *ibid.*, p. 261 Text 14:1):

At Larsa... where the *mes* of rulership have been cast, you have been chosen rightly for the shepherdship of Sumer and Akkad,
May An fix the holy crown upon your head,

May he install you grandly on the throne of life,
May he fill your hands with the sceptre of justice,
May he bind to your body the mace which controls the people,
May he make you grasp the mace which multiplies the people,
May he open for you the shining udder of heaven, and rain down for you the rains of heaven.

281 Image from M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, Plate 77. See also *ibid.*, p. 178.

282 Image from J. V. Canby, *Ur-Nammu*, Plate 33.

283 See N. Wyatt, *Arms*, p. 160.

284 See R. Giorgi, *Anges*, p. 281; L. M. Hilton, *Hand*.

285 Thorkild Jacobsen, cited in K. E. Slanski, *Rod and Ring*, p. 45.

286 See Inanna's Descent 14-19, 102-107, 134-135, in T. Jacobsen, *Harps*, pp. 207, 212, 213. For an Old Babylonian depiction of Inanna in the Underworld holding a "yardstick and measuring coil" in each hand, see J. A. Black *et al.*, *Literature of Ancient Sumer*, p. 70.

287 The difference in attitude manifested by the rod and ring vs. the battle-axe can be compared to the contrasting Egyptian kingship symbols of the shepherd's crook vs. the flail.

288 K. E. Slanski, *Rod and Ring*, p. 44.

289 See *ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

290 D. I. Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, pp. 512, 515. Thanks to Matthew B. Brown for pointing our attention to Block.

291 H. W. Nibley, *Circle*. See also, e.g., M. B. Brown, *Cube*. Copy of the manuscript in the possession of Jeffrey M. Bradshaw.

292 K. E. Slanski, *Rod and Ring*, p. 51. Black agrees with Slanski's interpretation, stating that the "rod and ring" are "thought to depict a pair of measuring instruments, a rule and a tape, taken as symbolic of divine justice" (J. A. Black *et al.*, *Gods*, p. 156).

293 J.-M. Durand, *Mythologème*, p. 45, from Wyatt's translation of the French (N. Wyatt, *Arms*, p. 159).

294 1 Chronicles 22:8-9.

295 Exodus 4:17—used anciently as a weapon and corresponding to the later symbol of a sword.

296 Exodus 16:33-34—perhaps relating to the shewbread that only the priests were to eat (cf. Matthew 12:4; Mark 2:26; Luke 6:4).

297 Exodus 31:18.

298 A Mesopotamian myth recounts the time when the Tablet of Destinies was stolen from the god Enlil by the Anzû bird, thus plunging the cosmos into chaos (J. A. Black *et al.*, *Gods*, s.v. Tablet of Destinies). The Tablet of Destinies conferred divine authority on its holder; in the

Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish*, Marduk's status as king of the gods is legitimized by his ownership of the tablet. Bottéro has described how this image of royal power "was the foundation of cosmogony and anthropogony" in ancient Mesopotamia, one transposed into the mortal realm via human kings (J. Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*, p. 224).

299 G. Widengren, *King and Tree of Life*, pp. 39-40, 60-61. Cf. G. Widengren, *Ascension*, pp. 25ff. For a more recent comparative view, see C. Van Dam, *Urim and Thummim*, pp. 45-63; N. Wyatt, *Hollow Crown*, pp. 43-46.

300 H. W. Attridge *et al.*, *Hebrews*, p. 236. For more about the symbolism of these and other ancient temple objects as they related to the higher priesthood, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 658-660, 679-681; J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 39-41.

301 Hebrews 9:4. Contrast Exodus 25:16, which seems to be arguing polemically against anything other than the Tablets being in the Ark (J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 680-681).

302 *Ibid.*, pp. 658, 679-681; cf. Jeremiah 31:33; Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25.

303 It is interesting that Joseph Smith was given possession of what could be taken as Nephite royal insignia at the time he removed the record of the Book of Mormon from the Hill Cumorah: the sword of Laban, the prophecies and records of the Nephites, and seerstones fastened in a breastplate—all contained in a stone box (cf. Mosiah 1:15-16 where the Liahona was used instead of the breastplate as the corresponding instrument of seership—see T. R. Kerr, *Ancient Aspects*; S. D. Ricks, *Coronation*, pp. 124-125). On the sword of Laban, see B. L. Holbrook, *Sword of Laban*; D. N. Rolph, *Prophets*; J. A. Tvedtnes, *Rod and Sword*; J. A. Tvedtnes, *Workmanship*).

Relating to the theme of the lost and recovery of divine relics is the narrative found on the Sippar Shamash Tablet (K. E. Slanski, *Rod and Ring*, p. 54):

According to the narrative, during years of foreign invasions and internal chaos, the divine image of Shamash disappeared from its sanctuary in his main cult center, the Ebabbar temple in the city of Sippar. After frustrating attempts to locate and restore the image, a sun-disc, a symbolic representation of the god, was erected in the temple, and the cult was restored but on a limited basis—without the (anthropomorphic) image, performance of the full repertoire of rituals was impossible. Years later, a certain Nabu-apla-iddina came to the throne, drove out the invaders, and set about restoring cult centers and practices throughout Babylonia. At that time, Shamash relented in his anger and abandonment of the land, and allowed a "copy" of his divine image to be discovered. When Nabu-nadin-shumi, *sangu*-priest of Sippar and diviner, showed to Nabu-apla-iddina the newly found copy of the divine image, the king's face rejoiced and his heart exulted. Nabu-nadin-shumi, the priest, then undertook responsibility for fashioning the new image and presided over *nus pi*-rituals for its vivification and installation. In recognition of the priest's role, the inscription implies, Nabu-apla-iddina rewarded him with the prebend, one that, commemorated by the monument, would last in perpetuity and could be passed on to the descendants of Nabu-nadin-shumi.

The connection between such stories and the Old Testament festal drama of the Ark that represented God's presence, alluded to in Psalm 132 and elsewhere, has not been lost on scholars.

According to Eaton's interpretation, in verse six (J. H. Eaton, *Kingship*, p. 126; see also J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, pp. 444-445; S. Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1:6, 129, 174-177):

... we would hear a voice or choir, representing David's men, declare that they heard news of the Ark when they were in Bethlehem, then took possession of it in Kiriath Jearim. The implication is that not only did David need to secure a site; he also had to seek out the Ark, and this, as now announced in the re-enactment, has been accomplished. The text has not spelled out the full story, because in the context of the sacred drama the matter was sufficiently clear. This reconstruction might be supported by the studies of Bentzen and Porter, which claim affinity of the story of the Ark in 1 Samuel 4-7 [and] 2 Samuel 6 with foreign cult-myths of finding and reinstating a god's image.

Tvedtnes gives several additional examples where hidden relics and writings from the temple were hidden away to be found at a later time (J. A. Tvedtnes, *Hidden Books*, pp. 119-123).

304 Typically taken to be Ashur and/or Enlil. However, Giovino (mistakenly?) describes the figure at right as a "female deity" (M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, p. 194). Black remarks that, on these reliefs, "male deities carry a 'rod and ring,' female deities a ring without rod, perhaps a chaplet of beads" (J. A. Black *et al.*, *Gods*, p. 156).

305 Images from M. Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*, figure 105. The pomegranate feature is discussed in *ibid.*, p. 194. Already badly worn by age, the relief is now suffering serious damage from people, "including visitors having chipped off pieces from the rock carvings [and] bullet holes, indicating that the reliefs have been used for target practice" (L. Söderlindh, *Priceless*).

306 J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 748-740 n. E-180.

307 N. Wyatt, *Degrees*, p. 220. Cf. Widengren's comparative analysis of Akkadian and West Semitic literature showing "that the sacral garment of the High priest, including his pectoral with the urim and tummim, was adopted from the king" (G. Widengren, *Ascension*, p. 25).

308 See C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Glory*, pp. 56, 212-13, 476). See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 663-675; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Religious Experience*, pp. 132-133. Larsen provides a detailed discussion of evidence for such worship from Qumran texts in D. J. Larsen, *Themes of the Royal Cult.*, especially chapter 5. For a comparative LDS perspective relating to these themes, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 97-107. Regarding the possibility of such forms of worship at Dura Europos, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Ezekiel Mural*.

309 Larsen attributes this felicitous term to James Davila (D. J. Larsen, November 16 2010).

310 Exodus 19:6. Kugel explains (J. L. Kugel, *How to Read*, p. 242):

To understand the second half of this promise [i.e., Exodus 19:6], it is essential to know that throughout the ancient Near East, the priests of any given people were the ones who were uniquely privileged to be in touch with their gods. The priests' job consisted of caring for the god's house (that is, his temple), offering sacrifices in front of his image, and in general serving him in the place where he was deemed to reside. By saying that Israel would become a *kingdom of priests*, God seemed to be bypassing this common arrangement. He was saying, in effect: You will *all* be My intimates—just keep the simple rules that make up My covenant with you.

311 Genesis 1:26-27.

312 Sarna's full explanation reads as follows (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 12. See also R. E. Friedman, *Commentary*, p. 30; M. D. Litwa, *We Are Being*, pp. 109-115; N. M. Sarna, *Mists*, p. 51):

The words used here to convey these ideas can be better understood in the light of a phenomenon registered in both Mesopotamia and Egypt where the ruling monarch is described as "the image" or "the likeness" of a god... Without doubt, the terminology employed in Genesis 1:26 is derived from regal vocabulary, which serves to elevate the king above the ordinary run of men. In the Bible this idea has become democratized. All human beings are created "in the image of God"; each person bears the stamp of royalty.

Hendel sees this as an explicit deprecation of Mesopotamian theology (R. S. Hendel, *Genesis 1-11 and Its Mesopotamian Problem*, p. 27):

In Genesis 1 all humans are created in the "image of God," and as such have the authority and duty to rule the world. As commentators have noted, this move effects a democratization of Mesopotamian royal ideology, raising humans as a whole to the status previously reserved for the king.

313 Revelation 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 20-21.

314 T. G. Madsen, *Essay*, p. xvii.

315 N. Robertson, *Orphic Mysteries*, p. 220; cf. H. W. Nibley, *Greatness*, pp. 294-295. This observation, of course, needs to be qualified. Oden notes that what is important in order to avoid the excesses of some of the early proponents of myth-ritual theory (e.g., William Robertson Smith) is to reject the generalization that *all* myths originated as rituals and to focus on the evidence for specific cases, as we have tried to do here. In addition, Oden writes that what is important in any argument that a particular myth arose as part of ritual is "an adequate explanation of the specific ritual alleged to accompany the myth." If such an explanation, accompanied with "an adequate theory of ritual," is forthcoming, and "if it is then combined with those cases where myths and rituals do appear to be inextricably linked, then the myth-ritual position might prove to be most useful" (see R. A. Oden, Jr., *Bible without Theology*, pp. 65, 69).

316 H. W. Nibley, *Myths*, p. 42; cf. R. Guénon, *Symboles*, p. 210; H. W. Nibley, *Sacred*, pp. 591-593. See N. Wyatt, *Arms*, pp. 155-189 for an example of how this generalization applies with respect to the *Chaoskampf* myth.