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The ancient temple plays a legitimizing political role

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

Published: Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2012

Page(s): 133

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19. “The temple plays a legitimizing political role in the ancient Near East”¹¹⁹

The three dimensional temple plays such a role because of the coronation ordinances performed therein and the authority those ordinances symbolize. Coronation ceremonies in the ancient Near East were temple rites so without the symbolism of a physical temple, the legitimacy of the king, and even of his state, were called into question. This is also true of the Book of Mormon. The book itself, rather than its symbolism, plays a legitimizing role to the Kingdom of God.

To a great degree the very existence of the Book of Mormon legitimizes the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his establishment of the Kingdom of God. This is true because the translation of the Book of Mormon marked the beginning of the establishment of the Kingdom of God; because the Prophet's claim to his divine commission rests squarely on the authenticity of the Book of Mormon as ancient scripture; and because the book's power to convert has been, and continues to be, the lifespring of the growth of the kingdom. For many believers who have never had the opportunity to enjoy a one-on-one contact with a living prophet, the Book of Mormon itself is the primary tangible evidence of the legitimacy—even of the existence—of the Kingdom of God—and to a marked degree, the belief in the Book of Mormon's divinity actually defines those who belong to that kingdom and sets them apart from the rest of the world.

¹¹⁹Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 59; Lundquist, “Legitimizing Role of the Temple,” *Temples of the Ancient World*, 179-235.