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“CREATOR OF THE FIRST DAY”: THE GLOSSING OF *LORD OF SABAOTH* IN D&C 95:7

Matthew L. Bowen

ABSTRACT: *The calqued name-title “Lord of Sabaoth,” echoing James 5:4, occurs four times in the Doctrine and Covenants in revelations given to the prophet Joseph Smith from December 25, 1832 to August 6, 1833. Of these occurrences, only D&C 95:7 offers a gloss or interpretation for the name “the Lord of Sabaoth,” which is, by interpretation, “the creator of the first day, the beginning and the end.” Upon close inspection, this explanation makes excellent sense from an ancient Israelite etiological as well as (perhaps) an etymological standpoint. Past criticisms of the gloss in D&C 95:7 have focused on the wrongly assumed incongruity of “first day” and “Sabaoth” (“hosts”), and have neglected function of the divine name Yhwh in titles, most often represented in scripture by the term “Lord,” as in the calqued name-title Lord of Hosts. Understanding the connection between Yhwh (the form of which suggests the meaning “He creates,” “He brings into existence,” “he brings to pass”), the divine council (the “hosts”), creation (on “the first day” or “Day One”), and the underlying grammatical meaning of “Lord of Hosts” = Yhwh šēbā’ôt (i.e., “He creates the [heavenly] hosts” or “He brings to pass the [heavenly] hosts”) is crucial to understanding the calque “Lord of Sabaoth” and the explanation given in D&C 95:7. When considered in its entirety, this revealed gloss is right on target. The creation/begetting of the heavenly hosts was associated with “the first day” or “Day One” in ancient Israelite thought. They are described as “finished” or fully prepared by the end of the six creative periods (“days” in Genesis 2:1). Additionally, “Lord of Sabaoth” or Yhwh šēbā’ôt is to be understood in connection with the similarly constructed name-title Yhwh ’ēlōhīm (“He creates gods,” “he causes gods to be,” or “he brings to pass gods”). The meristic appositive title “the beginning and the end” implies that Yhwh is not only the “author”/“creator” of Israel and its salvation but the*

“finisher” thereof. Far from evidence of Joseph Smith’s lack of knowledge of Hebrew, the interpretive gloss in D&C 95:7 constitutes evidence of Joseph’s ability to obtain correct translations and interpretations through revelation.

“He Creates the (Heavenly) Hosts”: Glossing “Lord of Sabaoth”

References in the Doctrine and Covenants to cries, mourning, fasting, and especially prayers that have “come up into” (D&C 87:7; 88:2; 95:7) or “entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth” (D&C 98:2) immediately recall the language of James 5:4: “Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the *Lord of sabaoth* [Greek Κυρίου Σαβαώθ, *Kyriou Sabaōth*]” (James 5:4; emphasis in all scriptural citations is mine). On a basic level, the Greek *Kyrios Sabaōth* and its English rendering “Lord of Sabaoth” both represent a calque of the Hebrew name-title *Yhwh šēbā’ôt*, often translated “Lord of Hosts.” However, the explanation given in D&C 95:7 that “Lord of Sabaoth ... is by interpretation, *the creator* of the first day, the beginning and the end,” invites us to consider the name’s significance beyond its being a mere calque on “Lord of hosts” (i.e., Sabaoth [*šēbā’ôt*] = Hebrew “hosts”) and an allusion to James 5:4

The historical relationship between the name *Yhwh*, its shorter (older?) form *Yāh*, and the Mesopotamian god Enki’s cognomen “Ea,” remains an open question.¹ David Noel Freedman and Michael P. O’Connor conclude that “the consensus of modern scholarship supports the biblical text in associating the name Yahweh with the root ... *hāyâ* [*hāyah*].”² Within the last several decades, scholarship on the divine name *Yhwh* — often represented in English translation as “Lord” — has suggested that it is “a causative imperfect of the Canaanite-Proto-Hebrew verb *hwh/hwy* ‘to be’”³ and meant “He creates” or “He who causes to happen.”⁴ If

1 John Gee (“The Geography of Aramaean and Luwian Gods,” forthcoming) has accumulated epigraphic evidence suggesting a relationship between the divine name *Ea* and *Yāh/Yhwh*.

2 David Noel Freedman and Michael P. O’Connor, “YHWH” in *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 5:513. Hereafter cited as TDOT.

3 Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1973), 65.

4 Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 104.

so, the fuller form of the name *Yhwh*, *Yhwh šēbā'ôt* (Lord of Sabaoth [Hosts]) would mean, as Frank Moore Cross has suggested, "He creates the (divine) hosts."⁵ Although a paucity of attested causative forms of *hwh/hwy/hyy* warrants some caution,⁶ Cross's theory makes good grammatical sense of the divine name's function within its fuller title forms (especially *Yhwh šēbā'ôt* and *Yhwh 'ēlōhîm*). Margaret Barker has further argued that the heavenly "hosts" were originally identified with "the first day" of creation, or "Day One," on the basis of Jubilees 2:2, Job 38:7, Proverbs 8, Isaiah 40, and other evidence.⁷

In this short study, I will endeavor to show that the gloss offered in D&C 95:7 for *Lord of Sabaoth* (i.e., *Yhwh*) as "Creator of the first day, the beginning and the end" makes good sense in terms of ancient Israelite etiology,⁸ if not from an actual historical etymological standpoint, and represents an example of the prophet Joseph Smith's ability to obtain correct translations and explanations by revelation. *Yhwh* — or the Lord of Sabaoth — was, in fact, "the creator of the first day," or in other words, "he [who] creates the (divine) hosts" or "he who causes the (divine) hosts" to be on "Day One."

5 Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 65. Freedman and O'Connor (TDOT 5:513) argue that "In Hebrew, however, yahweh must be a causative, since the dissimilation of *yaqal* to *yiqlal* did not apply in Amorite [West Semitic], while it was obligatory in Hebrew. The name *yahweh* must therefore be a hiphil. Although the causative of *hwy* is otherwise unknown in Northwest Semitic (with the exception of Syriac, which is of little relevance here), it seems to be attested in the name of the God of Israel."

6 Cf., e.g., the causative (Aphel) form of Aramaic/Syriac *hw'/hwh*. See J. Payne Smith, ed., *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 101.

7 Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 195-201.

8 Etiology: from Greek *aitia* = "cause" + *logia*, i.e., the study of causation — how something came to be. For a brief discussion of the phenomenon of biblical etiology, see Michael H. Floyd, "Etiology" in *The New Interpreter's Bible Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon 2007), 2:352. Floyd states, "As a critical term applied to narrative, etiology refers to stories that tell how something came to be or came to have its definitive characteristics. In Scripture such stories are typically told about names of persons and places, rites and customs, ethnic identities, and natural phenomena."

Two “Yhwhs”: A Note

For my purposes here, I will acknowledge a formal distinction between two divine personages who can be called *Yhwh*:⁹ God the Father, who can be called *Yhwh šēbā’ôt* in the Latter-day Saint doctrinal sense of “Father of spirits” (Hebrews 12:9); “Father of lights” (James 1:17), or the “Father ... of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Ephesians 3:14–15); and the Son, Jesus Christ, who can be called the *Yhwh šēbā’ôt* who “brings to pass” the Father’s plan for the spirits, hosts, or family. In other words, I will distinguish here between the one with whom the “word of command” originates (the Father) as architect or source and the Son, who as executive embodies that “word of command” in “bringing to pass.”

In 1 Nephi 11:6, a personage described as “the Spirit” acclaims “Hosanna, to the Lord [i.e., *Yhwh*] the most high God” and pronounces Nephi “blessed” for his faith “in the Son of the Most High God” (see also 3 Nephi 4:32). El-Elyon (*’Ēl ’elyôn*, “the most high God”) is often regarded as referring to God the Father (Deuteronomy 32:7–9; Mark 5:7; Luke 1:32), while throughout scripture, the title “Lord” (i.e., *Yhwh*) is applied often to the Son—the *Yhwh* of Deuteronomy 32:9 whose “portion” or “lot” is Israel. The name *Yhwh* (Yahweh), as used throughout this paper, will almost uniformly refer to Jesus Christ, the Son.

“He Bringeth to Pass”: The Lord — or *Yhwh* — as “Creator”

The English syntax of the calqued name-title “Lord of Sabaoth” — i.e., A of B — is clearly paralleled in the gloss “the creator of the first day.” In other words, the phrase “the creator” constitutes the intended parallel to “Lord,” and the “the first day” corresponds in some way to “Sabaoth” (see further below). The epithet “the beginning and the end” is an appositive.

Critics of the prophet Joseph Smith, in deriding the explanation for “Lord of Sabaoth” given in D&C 95:7, incorrectly assume that there is no connection at all between “Sabaoth” (“hosts”), creation, and “the first day” (“Day One”).¹⁰ Moreover, they completely overlook the importance

9 For an excellent summary of the trajectory of the “Two Yhwhs” tradition in biblical and extra-biblical literature, see David J. Larsen, “Psalm 24 and the Two YHWHs at the Gate of the Temple,” in *The Temple Ancient and Restored* (ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry; *Temple on Mount Zion* 3; Salt Lake City: Interpreter/Eborn Books, 2016), 211–34.

10 Among anti-Mormon writers who have criticized the prophet on this point, see, e.g., Latayne C. Scott (*The Mormon Mirage: A Former Member Looks at the Mormon Church Today* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009], 122–23),

of the term "Lord" — or *Yhwh* (see below) — in "Lord of Sabaoth."¹¹ All previous analyses (that I am aware of) have overlooked the fact that *Yhwh*, the Hebrew underlying the "Lord"-element, was not simply the first part of a genitive of restriction or relation construction.¹² This one follows the proposition that *Yhwh* may have originally constituted a

who posits, "*In Doctrine and Covenants* 95:7, we have another example of just how little Joseph Smith knew about Hebrew. Here he took the liberty of translating a scriptural phrase, 'Lord of Sabaoth.' He said it was 'by interpretation, the creator of the first day, the beginning and end. It is apparent that he confused this phrase with the one found in Mark 2:28, where Christ spoke of the 'Lord also of the sabbath,' which does indeed have reference to a day of the week — the seventh, not the first, day. 'Sabaoth,' in contrast, refers to God's kingly role as commander in chief [sic] of the heavenly host, and of all living things. It cannot reasonably be stretched to refer to the creation of the first day." Aside from offering no evidence whatsoever for Joseph's putative use of Mark 2:28, Scott's awareness of the ancient Israelite conception of the divine council and creation is shallow at best. Jim Whitefield (*The Mormon Delusion, Volume 5: Doctrine and Covenants — Deceptions and Concoctions* [Raleigh, NC: Lulu Press, 2012], 328) is even less charitable: "The Lord says that 'for this purpose' they must hold a solemn assembly. Their fasting and mourning can 'come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth,' ... which the Lord then informs us is 'by interpretation, the creator of the first day, the beginning and the end.' In fact 'Sabaoth' does not mean that at all. It is the Hebrew plural form of 'host' or army, so 'by interpretation' Smith should have said that it meant 'Lord of Hosts' but he just made up an alternate and completely incorrect 'translation.' I am sure the Mormon Church would argue that if Smith's Lord claimed it meant that, then it did. The problem is that it really *didn't*; Smith's Lord was *wrong*" (emphasis in original). Whitefield, like Scott, evidences only a superficial awareness of the meaning of "hosts" and the connection of the latter to the divine council and creation. Both have completely ignored the importance of the substitute title "Lord" (and implicitly the name *Yhwh*, which "Lord" represents) in evaluating the interpretation given in D&C 95:7.

11 In evaluating the meaning of a name or a gloss offered for the name, it is necessary to account for all the data. Joseph Smith's critics consistently fail to do so in their evaluations of D&C 95:7.

12 Gesenius's grammar (see Arthur E. Cowley and Emil Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd ed. [London: Oxford University Press, 1910], 403) calls "Lord of hosts" a genitive of elision, citing the examples of "Ur of the Chaldees" (Genesis 11:28) or Aram of the Two Rivers. Both of these examples, however, involve toponyms. Inscriptions like *Yhwh šmrn* and *Yhwh tmn* (see J.A. Emerton, "New Light on Israelite Religion: The Implications of the Inscriptions from Kuntilet 'Ajrud," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 94/1 [1982], 2-20) actually present a similar problem for understanding *Yhwh šēbā'ôt* solely in a construct relationship: *šēbā'ôt* is not a toponym.

verbal form, such as “he creates,”¹³ “he makes happen,”¹⁴ or “he brings to pass.”

If the ancient Israelites understood the declaration “I am the LORD” (*’ānī Yhwh* “I am Jehovah”) to mean “I am He who makes things happen”¹⁵ (or “I am He who brings [things] to pass”), we can more fully appreciate what Lehi was trying to articulate when he said that the Lord not only “hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon” but also allowed for an opposition in all things “to *bring about* his eternal purposes in the *end* of man” (2 Nephi 2:14-15). He mentions this in the context of his earlier statement that “the Holy Messiah ... [would] *bring to pass* the resurrection of the dead” (2 Nephi 2:8). Opposition and resurrection were an essential part of a planned process in which “righteousness [was] *brought to pass*” (2 Nephi 2:11), and happiness/misery and good/bad eventuated from what was originally a “compound in one.”

Abinadi alluded to Lehi’s teachings and evidently had the name *Yhwh* in mind when he declared to Noah and his priests that “God himself ... should *bring to pass* the resurrection of the dead” (Mosiah 13:34-35). As Brownlee has noted, the aforementioned phrase “I am Yahweh” often occurs “in the context of threats and promises.”¹⁶ This best explains Abinadi’s threat to the same group: “*And it shall come to pass* [Hebrew *wēhāyâ*]¹⁷ that the life of king Noah shall be valued even as a garment in a hot furnace; for he shall know that *I am the Lord* [i.e., ‘I am He who makes things happen,’ or, ‘I am He who brings things to pass’]” (Mosiah 12:3, cf. 12:34). So too one of his earliest prophetic pronouncements to Noah’s people: “*And it shall come to pass* [*wēhāyâ*] that they shall know that *I am*

13 Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 65.

14 William H. Brownlee “The Ineffable Name of God,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 226 (1977): 45.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Cf., e.g. Genesis 4:14; 9:14; 24:43; 27:40; 46:33; 47:24; Exodus 3:21; 4:8-9; 12:25-26; 16:5; 22:27; 33:22; Numbers 17:5; 21:8; Deuteronomy 11:13, 29; 18:19; 30:1; 28:1, 63; 31:21; 1 Samuel 2:36; 10:5; 16:16; 23:23; 25:30; 1 Kings 18:12; 19:17; Isaiah 2:2; 3:24; 4:3; 7:18; 21-23; 8:21; 10:20, 27; 11:11; 14:3; 16:12; 23:15, 17; 22:7, 20; 24:18, 21; 27:12-13; 65:24; 66:23; Jeremiah 3:16; 4:9; 5:19; 12:15-16; 15:2; 16:10; 17:24; 25:12; 27:8; 31:28; 42:4; Ezekiel 38:18; 39:11; 44:17; 47:9-10, 22-23; Joel 2:28, 32; Amos 6:9; 8:9; Hosea 1:5, 10; 2:21; Micah 5:10; Nahum 3:7; Zephaniah 1:8, 10, 12; Zechariah 8:13; 12:9; 13:2-4, 8; 14:6, 13, 16; 1 Chronicles 17:11.

the Lord their God, and am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of my people" (11:22; quoting Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9; cf. Mosiah 13:13).

Lehi's and Abinadi's language was reiterated by later Book of Mormon prophets who taught that Jesus's "bring[ing] to pass the resurrection" fulfilled an important function of the Atonement (see Mosiah 18:2; Alma 12:25; 33:22; Helaman 14:15; cf. Mormon 7:7: "*he hath brought to pass the redemption of the world*").

"Let There Be ..." = "The Word of My Power"

The 1st Genesis version of the account of the creation and the fall is framed by the phrase "word of my power" (Moses 1:32, 35; 2:5)¹⁸ and the use of the solemn oath-formula: "For as I, the Lord God, liveth, even so *my words* cannot return void, for as they go forth out of my mouth they must be fulfilled" (Moses 4:30). This framework (a literary *inclusio*) gives added context to the Lord's calling this earth into existence — or organizing it — by "word" in Genesis 1/Moses 2.

God creates the world, to use the Old Latin and Vulgate's phraseology, by *fiat*:¹⁹ "let there be ..." The Hebrew expression that underlies English "let there be" and Latin *fiat* is the third person jussive form of Hebrew *hyh/hyy* (< **hwy*), *yēhî*, whence ancient Israelites derived the name *Yhwh* (see especially Exodus 3:14). The Genesis 1/Moses 2 text seems to revolve around the idea that God "causes to be what is" — the etiological meaning of the name *Yhwh*. In the language of the Psalmist, "*By the word of the Lord [bidēbar Yhwh] were the heavens made; and all the host of them [šēbā'ām] by the breath of his mouth*" (Psalm 33:6).

Referring to the Lord's declaration that he had already made Abraham a "father of many nations" (see Genesis 17:5), Paul describes the Lord as "God, who quickeneth the dead, and *calleth* those things which be not as though they were" (Romans 4:17). The logic here is that God, by word, calls into being or calls into existence. The divine word "go[es] forth out of [the Lord's] mouth" and "cannot return void" but is wholly "fulfilled" (Moses 4:30; cf. Alma 12:23). Hebrews 11:3 expresses a similar idea: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed *by the word of God*, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

18 See also D&C 29:30: "But remember that all my judgments are not given unto men; and as the words have gone forth out of my mouth even so shall they be fulfilled, that the first shall be last, and that the last shall be first in all things whatsoever I have created *by the word of my power, which is the power of my Spirit.*"

19 From Latin *fio, fieri, factus (sum)* "to become"; "to be made."

Of all the gospel writers, John is the most eager to use the “word”/“speech” imagery in describing Jesus as “creator.” John, perhaps as a response to Philo’s description of a deified Logos and *against* contemporary Gnosticism, appropriates Philo’s Logos terminology/imagery.²⁰ John situates us back on “Day One”: “In the beginning [Ἐν ἀρχῇ, *en arche*] was *the Word* [ὁ λόγος, *ho logos*], and *the Word* was with God, and *the Word* was God. The same was in the beginning with God. *All things were made by him* [πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, *panta di’ autou egeneto*] or, *all things through him came to pass* and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-13). The text emphasizes the thoroughness of the premortal Christ’s involvement in creation. The richness of this passage owes much to the range of meaning for *logos*, which, beyond “word,” denotes “thought,” “reason,”²¹ or “subject under discussion.”²² *Logos* as a “presentation of controversial subjects”²³ or “matter under discussion” (cf. Hebrew *dābār* = “word,” “matter,” “thing”)²⁴ evokes the idea of the divine council and discussion over the divine plan of salvation that had been presented — i.e., among the *’ēlōhīm* (Hebrew plural “the gods” as confirmed by the use of the plural verb *niglū*, “[they] appeared,” “were revealed”),²⁵ *bēnē* (*ha-*) *’ēlōhīm* (“sons of God”),²⁶ *’ēlīm* (Hebrew “gods,” rather than כִּנְיָ “congregation”),²⁷ *bēnē* *’ēlīm* (Hebrew “sons of god[s]” rather than “sons

20 See, e.g., Barker (*The Great High Priest*, 3) who writes: “For Philo, the yhwh of the Old Testament had been the second God of Israel, the Mediator, the Revealer, the Word, the Son of the Highest (i.e., of El Elyon).”

21 See Walter Bauer, Fredrick William Danker, William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (rev. and ed. by Fredrick William Danker; 3rd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 598–601.

22 Ibid., 600.

23 Ibid., 599.

24 Cf. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1994), 211–12.

25 Genesis 35:6–7; Psalm 82:1, 6. Cf. the plural “angels” of Genesis 28:12.

26 E.g., Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7. Genesis 6:2 and 6:4 also refer to the “sons of God,” and many interpreters have viewed these verses as referring to putatively mythological “sons of God” (i.e., heavenly beings). The JST translation of Genesis (canonized in the Book of Moses) clarifies that these “sons of God” were (or had been) covenant “sons of God” — i.e., those who had become “sons of God” by covenant.

27 Written *’ēlem* in Psalm 58:1 [MT 58:2], context requires the reading *’ēlīm*, “gods.”

of might" or "sons of the mighty"),²⁸ *ʾadat-ʾēl* ("assembly of God"),²⁹ *qēhal qēdōšim* (Hebrew "assembly of the holy ones")³⁰ *sōd qēdōšim* (Hebrew "council of the holy ones" rather than "assembly of the saints"),³¹ or the *šēbāʾ/šēbāʾôt* ("host[s]") brought forth "in the beginning" or on "Day One."

The Joseph Smith Translation of John 1 adds an entirely new dimension to the concept of the *logos* discussion or divine council:

In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son.
And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son,
and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God. The same
was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him;
and without him was not anything made which was made.
(JST John 1:1–3)

The "gospel" as embodiment of the "plan of salvation"³² was originally proclaimed, preached, or championed by the Son in the divine council (i.e., the premortal heavenly councils). The Son's role as creator or "maker" of "all things," including "worlds without number,"³³ is inextricably linked to his role as Redeemer — or in the language of William Tyndale, "atonemaker"³⁴ — of the entire creation, of which the temple is a "scale model."³⁵

28 Psalm 29:1; 89:6 [MT 89:7].

29 Psalm 82:1. Cf. the *ʾdt ʾilm* at Ugarit.

30 Psalm 89:6 [MT 89:5].

31 Psalm 89:7 [MT 89:8].

32 Moses 6:62; see also Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; and Alma 42:5.

33 See especially Moses 1:33: "And *worlds without number* have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten." Moses 7:30: "And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still; and yet thou art there, and thy bosom is there; and also thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever." Cf. "world without end" or "worlds without end" (*ʾad-ʾōlēmē ʾad*), Isaiah 45:17; (*tou aiōnou tōn aiōnōn*), Ephesians 3:21; D&C 76:112.

34 In commenting on 1 Timothy 2:5, William Tyndale (*An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue, The Supper of Our Lord after the True Meaning of John VI. And 1 Cor. XI., and Wm. Tracy's Testament Expounded*, ed. Henry Walter [Cambridge, MA: University Press/Parker Society, 1850], 275) rendered the Greek term μεσίτης, *mesitēs*, with "atonemaker" or "atone-maker."

35 Hugh W. Nibley, "The Meaning of the Temple," in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present* (Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 12; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 19.

John uses a distinct temple image when he describes the Son's incarnation: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt [ἐσκήνωσεν, *eskēnōsen*; literally, 'tented,'³⁶ or 'tabernacled'] among us (John 1:14; cf. Mosiah 2:5: "For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and *shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay*").³⁷ Essential to the process of bringing the human family to perfection was that "creator of the first day" would gain experience, in Alma's words, "according to the flesh," in order to know how to "succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12)³⁸ and "succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

"He Creates Gods": *Yhwh Elohim*

Recognizing that the "Lord of Sabaoth" is "the *creator* of the first day, the beginning and the *end*" (D&C 95:7) and thus "he who creates the (divine) hosts," the one who labors "to *bring about* his eternal purposes in the *end* of man" (2 Nephi 2:15), we can appreciate (on analogy) the function of the related name-title "The LORD God" (*Yhwh 'ēlōhīm*) in the Garden of Eden story. William H. Brownlee has suggested that the

36 The verb σκηνώω, *skēnoō* and its cognate σκηνή, *skēnē* ("tent"), ultimately derive from the Semitic root *škn* ("dwell," "live in a tent," likely via Phoenician). The Hebrew verb *šākan* ("dwell," "reside," etc.) and Hebrew *miškān* ("tabernacle").

37 Temple imagery is also evident in 2 Corinthians 5:1, 4; so too in 2 Peter 1:13-14: "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am *in this tabernacle*, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that *shortly I must put off this my tabernacle*, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me." Mormon's language to his son Moroni (Moroni 9:6) is similar: "And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for *we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay*, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God."

38 Alma 7:11-13: "And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; *and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.* Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me."

name-title *Yhwh 'ēlōhîm*, prominent in Genesis 2–3, means “He creates gods.”³⁹

The Genesis story culminates with the expulsion of Adam and Eve for disobedience, but the text admits the following: “And the LORD God [*Yhwh 'ēlōhîm*, ‘he creates gods’] said, Behold, the man *is become* [*hāyâ*] *as one of us* [*kě'ahad mimmennû*], to know good and evil” (Genesis 3:22; Moses 4:28). In other words. Adam and Eve had become like *'ēlōhîm*, members of the divine council, in terms of their ability to differentiate between good and evil. The pair had not yet become *'ēlōhîm* but had taken a step in that direction. They had begun to exercise the agency formally bestowed on them in Moses 3:17: “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” They had begun to “choose for themselves” and were thus “agents unto themselves” (D&C 29:39; 58:28; 104:17; Moses 6:56).

The “knowledge of good and evil” constitutes the evident point of Lehi’s instruction to Jacob. We note here Lehi’s use of the name-title “Lord God” from Genesis 2-3:

And to *bring about* his eternal purposes in the end of *man* [Hebrew *'ādām*], after he had *created* our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air ... it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter. Wherefore, the *Lord God* [*Yhwh 'ēlōhîm*] *gave unto man that he should act for himself*. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other. (2 Nephi 2:15-16)

Lehi uses the name-title *Yhwh 'ēlōhîm* twice in his words to Jacob in 2 Nephi 2 (here and in v. 21).⁴⁰ Lehi understood, and wanted Jacob to understand, that the “bring[ing] about” implicit in the name *Yhwh 'ēlōhîm* would have been frustrated (cf. Alma 12:26; 42:5) if Adam and

39 Brownlee, “Ineffable Name of God,” 39-46.

40 2 Nephi 2:21: “And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which *the Lord God* gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents.”

Eve did not act for themselves and thus learn to distinguish between good and evil through experience.

“The First Day”

The “first day” mentioned in the gloss for “Lord of Sabaoth” — i.e., in “the creator of the first day, the beginning and the end” — has a clear reference to Genesis 1:5 and the “first day” (*yôm ’eḥād*) of creation. The JST specifically connects the creative “word of my power” with Day One (see Moses 2:5). In ancient Israelite thought, however, “the first day” or “Day One” involved more than just the creative activity ascribed to it in Genesis 1. Margaret Barker has amassed evidence that “the first day”/“Day One” was specifically the “day” of the “begetting” or “creation” (or “organization”) of the “hosts” — i.e., the spirits that reside in the presence of God. She cites the extra-canonical Book of Jubilees (or “Little Genesis”):

For on the first day He created the heavens which are above and the earth and the waters and all the spirits which serve before him — the angels of the presence, and the angels of sanctification, and the angels [of the spirit of fire and the angels] of the spirit of the winds, and the angels of the spirit of the clouds, and of darkness, and of snow and of hail and of hoar frost, and the angels of the voices and of the thunder and of the lightning, and the angels of the spirits of cold and of heat, and of winter and of spring and of autumn and of summer and of all the spirits of His creatures which are in the heavens and on the earth, (He created) the abysses and the darkness, eventide (and night), and the light, dawn, and day, which He hath prepared in the knowledge of His heart. (Jubilees 2:2; R.H. Charles’ translation)

Jubilees clearly sees the creation or begetting of the angels of the divine presence or “hosts” of heaven as belonging to the “first day” or “Day One.”

It should be noted that the biblical account remarks that following the six creative periods “thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host [*šēbā’ām*] of them” (Genesis 2:1; Moses 3:1). The term “host” here refers not just to heavenly/astronomical bodies⁴¹ but also to the heavenly beings with whom astronomical bodies were often associated

41 Isaiah 34:4; Jeremiah 33:22. See also Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kings 17:16; Jeremiah 8:2; 19:13.

(see Job 38:7 [below]; Abraham 3; etc.). One way of understanding the term *finished* with respect to the *host[s]* here is that they were "ready" or "prepared."⁴²

In the Book of Job, which itself can be viewed as a temple text that imparts esoteric temple teaching through Job's experience,⁴³ *Yhwh* asks Job where he was ("where wast thou ...?" *'êpôh hâyîtâ*) on Day One, "when I laid the foundations of the earth [*bēyosdî-`āreš*]" and "when the morning stars [*kôkēbê bôqer*] sang together, and all the sons of God [*bēnê `ēlôhîm*] shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4, 7). The begetting or "organizing" of the children of God, the *bēnê `ēlôhîm*, happened on Day One, "the first day." Writes Barker:

In Job 38.7, however, we still read of the sons of God who shouted for joy on the first day of creation when the foundations of the earth were laid, and *sons of God* implies that they were begotten, not created. The rest of Job 38 describes the works of Day One: the boundary for the waters, the gates of deep darkness, the storehouses of snow and hail, wind, rain, and ice, the pattern of the stars. And the point of all this is to ask Job: "Where were you when all this was done?", a strange question for the Lord to ask Job unless there was a known tradition of someone who witnessed the work of creation and thus became wise.⁴⁴

The creation language of Isaiah 40 may also reflect the esoterica of the ancient Jerusalem temple and its symbols.⁴⁵ The text begins in the divine council with the voices of two personages speaking: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem,

42 Joseph F. Smith associated the "host" with the premortal spirit children of God and similarly defined "finished" as "in preparation": "The Lord informed Abraham that he had chosen rulers from among the intelligences that were organized, to be given in various capacities down the ages; and Abraham was one of these who was so chosen [see Abraham 3:22–23]. It is reasonable to believe that in the beginning, before the earth was prepared, the Lord would have all things organized from the beginning to the end of time. It is written in the scriptures: 'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the hosts of them.' This is equivalent to the Lord's saying that everything was in preparation to be placed on the earth in its due course when mankind should be placed upon it" (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp., Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [1957–66], 5:182).

43 Mack C. Stirling, "Job: An LDS Reading," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 12 (2014): 127–81.

44 Barker, *The Great High Priest*, 196.

45 *Ibid.*, 200.

and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. ... The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness" (Isaiah 40:1-3); "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry?" (Isaiah 40:6). This scene resembles the Jerusalem temple and divine council (i.e., holy of holies)⁴⁶ setting of Isaiah 6 and the council discussion: "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8; cf. especially Abraham 3:27). Isaiah was a temple priest — perhaps even a high priest — who was called to prophesy and preach repentance (see especially Alma 13).

The expression "foundations of the earth" ("Have ye not understood from the foundations [*môsēdôt*] of the earth?") also situates the creation language of Isaiah 40) in Holy of Holies⁴⁷ of the temple — the temple itself being a "scale model" of creation.⁴⁸ The "foundation of the world" was especially associated with the divine council (the premortal council[s] in heaven).⁴⁹ In other words, the *sôd* (plan, council) was at the *mûsād* / *yēsôd* ("foundation").⁵⁰ The temple-building imagery here is evident:

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out [tikkēn] heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel,⁵¹ and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Nibley, "Meaning of the Temple," 19.

49 See Matthew 13:35; 25:34; John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8; 17:8; 1 Nephi 10:18; 2 Nephi 9:18; 2 Nephi 27:10; Mosiah 4:6–7; 15:19; 18:13; Alma 12:25, 30; 13:3–7; 18:39; 22:13; 42:26; Helaman 5:47; 3 Nephi 1:14; Ether 4:14–19; Moroni 8:12; D&C 29:46; 35:18; 124:33, 41; 127:2; 128:5, 8, 18; 132:5, 63; cf. Luke 11:50; Hebrews 4:3; 9:26; Moses 5:57; 6:54; 7:47

50 Matthew L. Bowen, "I Have Done According to My Will": Reading Jacob 5 as a Temple Text" in *The Temple Ancient and Restored* (ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry; *Temple on Mount Zion* 3; Salt Lake City: Interpreter/Eborn Books, 2016), 238–40.

51 Cf. Jacob 5:22.

him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is *he that sitteth upon* [*hayyōšēb 'al*, the one enthroned over/above] *the circle of the earth* [*hûg hā'āreš*], and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; *that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain* [*dōq*; LXX *kamaran* = "vaulted chamber"], *and spreadeth them out as a tent* [*'ōhel*] *to dwell in*: That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. *Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created* [*bārā'*] *these things, that bringeth out their host* [*šēbā'ām*] *by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.* (Isaiah 40:12-26)

As Barker notes, the Targum of Isaiah 40:21 expressly identifies this text as a "revelation of the process of creation:⁵² "the work/service of the orders of 'in-the-beginning'/creation [*'wbd sdry bryšyt*]." Not only does this text use temple-building imagery, but it describes *Yhwh* himself as "sitting" or enthroned above "the circle of the earth" in the celestial world (i.e., the Holy of Holies). Like Lehi when he experienced a throne vision at his call to be a prophet, the recipients of the message in Isaiah 40 are commanded to "lift up your eyes on high" and to "behold" or "look upon" the creator and the heavenly hosts (Isaiah 40:26). *Yhwh's* throne and his heavenly attendants were depicted in remarkably vivid ways in both the tabernacle and the temple.

52 Barker, *The Great High Priest*, 200.

Whether the *dōq* mentioned in Isaiah 40:22 represents a “curtain” (as it is usually rendered English) or a dome or vaulted chamber as suggested in the LXX, we are dealing with temple/building imagery.

Isaiah further mentions that *Yhwh* “bring[s] out [the] host” of the heavens “by number” and by “name” (Isaiah 40:26). We are reminded here how Enoch describes the Lord’s creation to the Lord himself: “And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still” (Moses 7:30); and of the Lord’s statement to Moses, “For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them. . . . The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine” (Moses 1:35, 37). Isaiah’s use of the image of “tent,” moreover, evokes the *’ōhel mō’ēd*, the “tent of the meeting” (or KJV “the tabernacle of the congregation”), which was revealed to Moses. Isaiah uses this temple image elsewhere to describe the house of Israel (see especially Isaiah 33:20; 54:2).

Last, the divine council scenes presented in Isaiah 6, Isaiah 40, and Job 38 are similar in content to Abraham’s vision of the premortal existence and the spirits or intelligences that stood in the divine presence “in the beginning” or on “Day One.” Abraham’s vision notes the “organiz[ing]” or begetting of the premortal hosts of the human family, which he learned differ from each other in their degree of “intelligence,” the hosts of astronomical bodies (the “stars”) differ from one another in glory (Abraham 3:16–19). He records,

I [the Lord] dwell in the midst of them all [i.e., the spirits or hosts]; I now, therefore, have come down unto thee to declare unto thee the works which my hands have made, wherein my wisdom excelleth them all, for I rule in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, in all wisdom and prudence, over *all the intelligences* thine eyes have seen from the beginning; I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen. Now *the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was* [i.e., as a part of Day One]; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that

were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: *Abraham, thou art one of them*; thou wast chosen before thou wast born. And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and *he said unto those who were with him* [i.e., the hosts]: *We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.* And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first. And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him. (Abraham 3:21–28)

The mention of “intelligences that were organized before the world was” evokes, in a dramatic way, the preexistent “wisdom” (*hokmâ*) described in Proverbs 8. This preexistent wisdom “was there ... when [Yhwh] appointed [decreed] the *foundations of the earth* [*môsdê ’āreš*]” (Proverbs 8:27, 29). It/she was at that time “by him” in the “habitable part of his earth” and whose “delights were with the sons of men”⁵³ (i.e., the premortal host⁵⁴ of human beings). In other words, “in the beginning”⁵⁵ or on “Day One” Wisdom delighted in the premortal “sons of men” as “intelligence” (hence, they constituted “intelligences”). Indeed, as described elsewhere, “man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29).

Thus, Abraham’s account of his vision describes the premortal “intelligences” — the “hosts” (cf. *šēbā’ôt*, “Sabaoth”) — as being “organized” and “good” (i.e., morally good and ready for mortality). Some of them are already described as “Gods” (Abraham 4:1 and following). It clearly delineates their *raison d’être*: to be “proven” or tested as to their

53 Proverbs 8:30–31.

54 Cf. Moses 6:44: “The heavens he made; the earth is his footstool; and the foundation thereof is his. Behold, he laid it, *an host of men* hath he brought in upon the face thereof.”

55 Proverbs 8:22–26.

willingness to obey all divine commandments, and having proven true and faithful in all things, to “have glory added upon their heads forever” as gods (Abraham 3:26; cf. *Yhwh* *’ēlōhīm*, “He creates/brings to pass gods”).

All of this stands as a preface to the “Gods” going down in Abraham 4:1–4 and completing the work of “Day One,” the “first day” or “the first, or beginning, of that which they called day and night” (Abraham 4:5). As a whole, Abraham 3:11–4:1, perhaps constitutes the best possible articulation of the long-term purpose of the creative activity implicitly ascribed to the “Lord of Sabaoth” as “the creator of the first day” in D&C 95:7. It is within the long-range conceptual framework of eternal salvation, that is, the Lord’s covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and his subsequent “creation” of Israel (see especially Jacob 5).

“I AM”: The “Creator” of Israel

When he initially commissioned Moses as the prophet to gather,⁵⁶ organize,⁵⁷ or “create”⁵⁸ Israel as a people, *Yhwh* (Yahweh/Jehovah) gave Moses a special name as a sign or token that he really had been sent by *Yhwh*: “And God said unto Moses, **I AM THAT I AM** [*’ehyeh ’āšer ’ehyeh*]; and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, **I AM** [*’ehyeh*] hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14). Like Genesis 1–3, the language of Exodus 3:14 seeks meaning for the name *Yhwh* in terms of the verb *hyh/hyy* (“to be” or “to become”).

The meanings of *’ehyeh ’āšer ’ehyeh* (unvowelized *’hyh ’šr ’hyh*) and *’ehyeh* (*’hyh*) are ambiguous — probably deliberately ambiguous. There has been no shortage of controversy and debate regarding possible meaning. Douglas K. Stuart suggests that “what the NIV necessarily translates as ‘I AM WHO I AM’ probably was actually heard by Moses as ‘I CAUSE TO BE because I cause to be.’”⁵⁹ The expression *’ehyeh ’āšer ’ehyeh* is markedly alliterative, and the first letter in all three words is

56 Exodus 3:16: “Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt.” See also Isaiah 49:5; D&C 110:11.

57 Cf. the Lord’s “organiz[ing] his forces” among the dead in D&C 138:30.

58 See, e.g., Isaiah 43:1: “But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.”

59 Douglas K. Stuart, “Exodus” in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 121.

aleph, the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet, further emphasizing that *Yhwh/’ehyeh* is the beginning.⁶⁰

The name-title *’ehyeh* (or “I AM”) is invoked later in Hosea 1:9, when *Yhwh* temporarily repudiates the apostate Israelites of the northern kingdom: “Then said *God*, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and *I will not be your God*” (KJV), or rendered better, “I am not *’ehyeh* to you”; that is, “I am not your *’ehyeh*” (“I am not your I AM”). As Freedman and O’Connor note, “This word is commonly understood as a first person singular imperfect. There is some evidence, however, that this may be a popular interpretation and that the form may in fact be identical with *yahweh* with the shift *y > ’*.”⁶¹ In support of this, they cite the shift evident in Western Semitic (“Amorite”) names.⁶² “Thus,” they conclude, “the form *’ehyeh* might be equivalent to *yahweh*” — i.e., a causative form.⁶³ All of this suggests that *Yhwh*’s declaration in Exodus 3:14, *’hyh šr ’hyh*, could be taken to mean “I will bring to pass what I cause to be.”

At the Jerusalem temple during the Feast of the Tabernacles, Jesus clearly identifies himself as *Yhwh* or *’ehyeh* in “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, *I am*” (Greek *egō eimi*, John 8:58). Jesus was identifying himself with the one who revealed himself to Moses (LXX Exodus 3:14, *egō eimi ho ōn*) and the one who called the promise that Abraham would become “a father of many nations” as though it had already happened (Genesis 17:5; Romans 4:17).

The text of D&C 38:1 connects the name-titles “the Lord” (i.e., *Yhwh/Jehovah*), “I AM,” “Alpha and Omega” with the heavenly “hosts” or spirit children of God:

Thus saith the Lord [*Yhwh*] your God, even Jesus Christ, the Great I Am [i.e., the great *’ehyeh*], Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the same which looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made. (D&C 38:1)

60 Cf. the epithets in Revelation 3:14: “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.”

61 Freedman and O’Connor, TDOT, 5:513.

62 Ibid. E.g., names *a-bu-um-ya-qar*, *a-bi-e-qar* and the normalizing of *e-wi-ma-lik* as *’ehwi-malik* (“the [divine] king is at hand”).

63 Ibid. Freedman and O’Connor moreover note: “If, however, *yahweh* is a hiphil form, then *’hyh* might represent a parallel aphel formation. The form could also be a 1st person imperfect hiphil or even a noun formation with a prosthetic aleph.”

Yhwh's "creating," or "begetting," Israel in the wilderness was, in a sense, a replication or reenactment of "the first day" or "Day One" when Jacob became *Yhwh*'s "portion" and the "lot of his inheritance" (see especially Deuteronomy 32:8-10, 18).⁶⁴ The subsequent revelation and building of the tabernacle in seven days mirrored the creation that began on and followed "Day One."⁶⁵

The term *šābā'šēbā'ôt* "hosts" is repeatedly associated with the creation of Israel as a nation. *Yhwh*'s first act in "creating" Israel was to bring them through the Re[e]d Sea and out of Egypt. The text of Exodus 6 notes, "the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a

64 See, e.g., Deuteronomy 32:8-10, 18: "When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel [LXX: *angelōn theou* = 'angels of God,' probably originally 'sons of God']. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. ... Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee." See further Deuteronomy 1:31: "And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee [i.e., carried thee], as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place." Isaiah 63:8-16: "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name. Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting."

65 See, e.g., Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Structure of P," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38 (1976): 275-92; Peter J. Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Ex 25-40," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89 (1977): 375-87.

charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 6:13). There follows an enumeration of the heads of the tribal families (6:14-25), following which the text states, "These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom the Lord said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies [*šib'ôtām*, 'hosts']" (Exodus 6:26). Regarding Israel's exodus from Egypt and entry into the wilderness, Exodus 12:41 reads: "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that *all the hosts of the Lord* [*šib'ôt Yhwh*] went out from the land of Egypt." Israel as the "hosts of the Lord" represented an earthly version of the "host" or "hosts of heaven" (1 Kings 22:19; D&C 38:1, 11; 88:112; cf. 29:36) and its "captain."⁶⁶

"The Beginning and the End"

In the Hebrew Bible, the idea that *Yhwh* is "the beginning and the end" becomes prominent in Isaiah: 'I the Lord [*ʾānî Yhwh*], *the first* [*ri'šôn*], *and with the last* [*wə'et-ʾaḥrônîm*]; I am he [*ʾānî hû*']" (Isaiah 41:4); "*I am the first* [*ʾānî ri'šôn*], and *I am the last* [*wa'ānî ʾaḥrôn*]; and beside me there is no God" (44:6); "*I am he* [*ʾānî hû*']; *I am the first* [*ʾānî ri'šôn*], *I also am the last* [*ʾānî ʾaḥrôn*]" (48:12). These same collocations could be rendered, in essence, "I am the beginning and the end."⁶⁷

The name-title "the beginning and the end" constitutes what is sometimes called a *merismus*,⁶⁸ which can take the form of "a doublet of a special kind, in which a pair of polarized concepts represents inclusiveness."⁶⁹ An oft-cited example of merismus is the pair *heaven and earth*, which denotes everything. Another example is the Egyptian

66 In later years, "captain of the host(s) of Israel" became the title of the most important military leader in Israel. Abner and Amasa are both described as "captains of the hosts of Israel" (*šib'ôt yiśrā'ēl*, 1 Kings 2:5). In later verses in 1 Kings 2:32, the former is described as "captain of the host of Israel" and the latter as "captain of the host of Judah." 2 Samuel 20:23 describes Joab as being "over all the host of Israel." Earlier, Gideon is described as a leader of "the host of Israel" (Judges 7:15). Regarding the phrase "hosts of Israel," see also Mosiah 8:8.

67 In addition to D&C 95:7, see, e.g., Revelation 21:6; 22:13; Alma 11:39; 3 Nephi 9:18; D&C 19:1; 35:1; 38:1; 45:7; 49:12; 54:1; 61:1; 84:120; Moses 2:1.

68 Earl R. Anderson, *A Grammar of Iconism* (Madison, WI/Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1998), 270.

69 Ibid.

expression for “everything,” *ntt ’iwtt* (“what is and is not”),⁷⁰ which, as Nibley put it, essentially means “everything I know and everything I don’t know.”⁷¹ In other words, the true sum of reality — the real “everything.” How does all of this correlate with “the Lord of Sabaoth” being “the creator of the first day, the beginning and the end”? To say that *Yhwh* is “the beginning and the end” is to say that his creative role in commencing creation and bringing it to completion is both circumscribing and thoroughgoing.

Perhaps the best summation of the meaning of titles *Yhwh*, “I Am,” Lord of Sabaoth (“He creates/brings to pass the [heavenly] hosts,” “He creates gods,” etc.) is to be found in the preface to Doctrine and Covenants 38:

Thus saith *the Lord* [*Yhwh*] your God, even Jesus Christ, the Great I Am [i.e., the *’ehyeh*], Alpha and Omega, *the beginning and the end, the same which looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven*, before the world was made [i.e., on Day One]. (D&C 38:1)

The creation of the divine “hosts” involved more than simply bringing spirits into existence (the Father’s unique role), but “bringing to pass” or “making” every stage of their development “happen,” including their mortality and resurrection from the dead. This was (and is) the responsibility of the one designated “*Yhwh*” from “the beginning” all the way to the “end.”

Yhwh’s “bringing to pass” or “making happen” is not said to end there. Since the heavenly “hosts” also refers to stars and planetary bodies, the name-title “Lord of Hosts” or “Lord of Sabaoth” also refers to *Yhwh*’s bringing worlds in and out of existence:

For behold, there are many worlds that have *passed away by the word of my power*. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them (Moses 1:35):

And *the Lord God* [*Yhwh ’ēlōhīm*] spake unto Moses, saying:
The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered
unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine.

70 Alan Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar: Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs*. 3rd ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute), 576 under (entry for *nty*); see also Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute/Ashmolean Museum, 1999), 14.

71 Nibley, “The Meaning of the Temple,” 7.

And as one earth shall *pass away*, and the heavens thereof *even so shall another come*; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words. (Moses 1:37–38)

That “the creator of the first day, the beginning and the end” is the one who “causes to happen” — creating worlds and causing them to pass away “by the word of his power” (Moses 1:35) — is key to understanding Christ’s role in “bring[ing] to pass the resurrection of the dead” (2 Nephi 2:8, etc.).

“The Author and Finisher”

The epithets “the beginning and the end” (D&C 95:7), “the first and the last,” “Alpha and Omega,” etc., suggest both the idea of the one who commences creation but also the one that brings it to completion. The author of Hebrews appeals to this idea in describing Jesus’s role in the salvation of the human family: “Looking unto Jesus *the author and finisher* [ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν, *archēgon kai teleiōtēn*] of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). In the language of Peter in Acts 3:15, Jesus was the *archēgon tēs zōēs*, the “prince” or “author of life” — i.e., the “author of eternal life.”

Earlier in Hebrews, the same word-pair — forms of *archēgos* and *teleiōtēs* — describe Jesus, the *archēgos* undergoing his own process of perfection, completion, or full ritual initiation: “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the *captain* [ἀρχηγὸν, *archēgon*] of their salvation *perfect* [τελειῶσαι, *teleiōsai*] through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10). In the twofold use of this word-pair, perhaps there is an orthographic pun on *aleph* (cf. “a”) and *tav/tau* (“t”), the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet (cf. the name-title “Alpha and Omega”), *aleph* deriving from an ox’s head, and the Greek *tau* (τ, “t”) deriving from the Semitic (Phoenician) *taw*, whence the Hebrew *taw* also derives. In at least one important passage in the Hebrew Bible, the *taw* itself serves as a marker or “seal”⁷² identifying those in Jerusalem who were devoted to, and thus truly belonged to *Yhwh* vis-à-vis those idolaters who do not:

And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, *and set a mark* [wēhitēwītā *tāw*, literally, and *taw* a *taw*] upon the foreheads of the men

72 See especially Revelation 7:3; D&C 77:9; 132:19.

that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. (Ezekiel 9:4)

But come ny man upon whom is the mark [*hattāw*, literally, the *taw/tav*]; and begin at my sanctuary. (Ezekiel 9:6)

The “mark” or “taw” mentioned by the Lord here is undoubtedly the “X”-shaped taw of the paleo-Hebrew script. In other words, those who had been “sealed” or “marked,” bore an “X”-shaped mark on their countenance. Alma’s the Younger’s questions “Have ye received his image in your countenances?” (Alma 5:14) and “can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances” (Alma 5:19) express a related idea — i.e., being sealed with *Yhwh*’s distinguishing mark.⁷³ Thus are you “finished,” “fully initiated” or “perfect in Christ” the Finisher (Moroni 10:33–34). It is further possible that Alma is using the same idea when he exhorts his son Corianton: “Now my son, I would that ye should repent and forsake your sins, and go no more after the *lusts* [Hebrew, cf. the Kibroth-hattaavah, ‘graves of lust’] of your eyes, *but cross yourself* [i.e., put on the ‘taw’/‘tav’ “taw” yourself; cf. *hitēwītā tāw/hattāw*] in all these things; for except ye do this ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Oh, remember, and *take it upon you, and cross yourself* in these things” (Alma 39:9). If so, Alma has deployed a sublime wordplay.

It should be further noted here that the Greek term rendered “author” in Hebrews 12:2 and as “captain” earlier in Hebrews 2:10 is *archēgos*; “In the Septuagint, the word *archēgos* is used for political or military leaders of Israel.”⁷⁴ The author of Hebrews’ use of this image harks back to Joshua 5 and the theophany in which Joshua sees “the captain of *Yhwh*’s host”:

And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood *a man* [’iš] over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as *captain of the host of the Lord* [Hebrew *śar šēbā’ Yhwh* (cf. *Yhwh šēbā’ ôṭ*); Greek ἀρχιστράτηγος δυνάμεως κυρίου = *archistratēgos dynameōs kyriou*] am I now come. And Joshua *fell on his face to the earth, and did worship*, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? *And the captain of the Lord’s host* [*śar šēbā’ Yhwh, archistratēgos kyriou*] said unto Joshua,

73 Mosiah 5:15.

74 Brenda B. Colijn, *Images of Salvation of the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 297.

Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so. (Joshua 5:13-15)

Joshua's *proskynesis* ("Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship")⁷⁵ before this divine being suggests that the "captain of the host of the Lord" was none other than the Lord himself. This is further suggested by the Captain's command that Joshua "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy." The echo of Moses in *Yhwh*'s presence is unmistakable.⁷⁶

The shared root word *archē* - in *archēgos* and *archistratēgos* deserves additional attention. The invocation of *archē* inevitably echoed the first phrase of Genesis 1 in the Septuagint and its description of creation ἐν ἀρχῇ (*en archē*) — in the beginning — the same phrase invoked by John in the prologue to his gospel.

The idea of *Yhwh* as "author" and "finisher" was important to the Nephites to the end as evident in Moroni's description of church members as "relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the *author* and the *finisher* of their faith" (Moroni 6:4). *Yhwh*'s "work and [his] glory" or "work to [his] glory" (Moses 1:39),⁷⁷ is "to *bring about* his eternal purposes in the end of man" (2 Nephi 2:15) — i.e., "to *bring to pass*"⁷⁸ their "immortal and eternal life" (Moses 1:39).

The "finishing" was accomplished through the atonement. As Jesus stated prior to his atonement, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to *finish* [τελειώσω, *teleiōsō*] his work" (John 4:34). In the intercessory prayer, prior to his suffering in Gethsemane, Jesus reported to his Father that he had "*finished* [τελειώσας/ἐτελείωσα, *teleiōsas/eteleiōsa*] the work which thou gavest me to do." From the cross he declared, "*It is finished!* [Τετέλεσται, *Tetelestai*]" (John 19:30); or, as JST Matthew 27:54 reports it, "Father, *it is finished*, thy will is done."

75 On the significance of *proskynesis*, see Matthew L. Bowen, "'They Came and Held Him by the Feet and Worshipped Him': Proskynesis before Jesus in Its Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Context," *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 5 (2013): 63–89.

76 Exodus 3:5: "And he [God] said, Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

77 In the original manuscript of the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis, Moses 1:39 originally read: "behold this is my work to my glory to the immortality & the eternal life of man." Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2004), 86.

78 The meaning of what is now Moses 1:39 was clarified with the addition of the phrase "bring to pass" (see *ibid.*, 594).

In a later description of how his atonement “finishes” the divine will, the Savior (as *Yhwh* or “I AM”) declared:

I AM Alpha and Omega, Christ the Lord; yea, even I am he, the beginning and the end, the Redeemer of the world. I, *having accomplished and finished the will of him whose I am*, even the Father, concerning me — having done this that I might subdue all things unto myself — *retaining all power, even to the destroying of Satan and his works at the end of the world, and the last great day of judgment, which I shall pass upon the inhabitants thereof*, judging every man according to his works and the deeds which he hath done. (D&C 19:1-3)

This text also describes how *Yhwh* is the “end” in the title “the beginning and the end”: he will make a complete end of Satan and his works at the “end” of the world. Such an end would not have been nor would be possible without the atonement and the resurrection (see especially 2 Nephi 9). Reflecting back on just what “finishing the will” of the Father cost him, the Lord declared:

Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit — and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink — Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and *I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men*. (D&C 19:18-19)

As Paul stated twice to the Corinthians, “ye are bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). Christ partook and “finished [his] preparations” in order to “finish” and “prepare” the human family for the eternities and to exalt as many of the spirit children of God as are willing to be exalted, into the kingdom of God.

Although the ultimate realization of the “finishing” blessings of Jesus Christ’s atonement has not yet taken place, the faithful can look forward to the time described in Doctrine and Covenants 88: “And again, another angel shall sound his trump, which is the seventh angel, saying: *It is finished; it is finished!* The Lamb of God hath overcome and trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God” (D&C 88:106). The Lord Jesus Christ — *Yhwh* — will “[make] a full end of all nations” (D&C 87:6), so “that the cry of the saints, and of the blood of the saints, *shall cease* to come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth” (D&C 87:7) — i.e., “the beginning and *the end*” (D&C 95:7). If we are to be “perfect” (“finished”) like the Father

(Matthew 5:48) and the Son (3 Nephi 12:48), we must do — and accede to — the divine will (see Matthew 7:21).

Conclusion

The glossing of the calqued name-title "Lord of Sabaoth" "the Creator of the first day, the beginning and the end," makes very good sense from an etiological, and possibly an historical, etymological standpoint ("he creates the [heavenly] hosts"). We have noted that the creation or begetting of the heavenly hosts was closely associated with "the first day" or "Day One." Thus, D&C 95:7 constitutes yet another example of a revelation given through the prophet Joseph Smith "getting it right"; the defect may not be in the interpretive gloss on "Lord of Sabaoth" offered there but in the knowledge of Joseph Smith's would-be interpreters.

The interpretive gloss on "Lord of Sabaoth" or *Yhwh šēbā'ôt* in D&C 95:7 takes the long view of the "creative" process that began "in the beginning" on "the first day" (or "Day One"), with the begetting of the angels of the divine presence — the spirit sons and daughters of God. It can be further connected with the name-title "Lord God" or *Yhwh 'ēlōhîm*, "he creates gods" or "he brings to pass gods" in the story of Adam and Eve and the Fall. Fall and mortal life are necessary for the full "finishing" of the heavenly hosts during the millennial day (the seventh "day"; cf. Genesis 2:1; Moses 3:1). The "Lord of Sabaoth" or "Lord of Hosts" himself worked out the infinite atonement so "that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being *the first* that should rise" (2 Nephi 2:8; see also Mosiah 13:35; Alma 12:25; 33:22; Helaman 14:15), thus "bringing to pass" every promise in the "covenant of the Father" (see Moroni 10:32–33), and finishing the heavenly "hosts," at least those who are true and faithful in all things, as "gods."

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