

September 26, 2004

The meaning of *sode* - the deliberations and decisions of the Council in Heaven - LeGrand Baker

Aaron requested that I "explain the word *sode* just a little more?" When he did, it occurred to me that even though I have done that, quite a few of you have become a part of the Project since then, and it is presumptuous of me to use words I haven't explained. Some of you understand *sode* better than I do, so you needn't read any farther. For the rest, I'll try to make sense of it.

The Hebrew word *sode* is pronounced with a long "O" as in "over." Scholars don't agree about how it can best be spelled in English. I first learned it was spelled in all caps: SOD. When the Book of Mormon Project began I spelled that way until someone told me they assumed it was an abbreviation for something, and asked me what the letters stood for. Now, since it is spelled "*sode*" in the dictionary at the back of Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, I use that spelling.

As with the Christian apostasy that occurred not long after the deaths of the apostles, it was the concept of God that was the major casualty of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. Jewish apostasy. Before that, the foundation of pre-exilic Old Testament temple theology had been their understanding of the Godhead. They taught that there was a Father of the gods, Elohim, who ruled over all things, and presided over the heavenly Council of gods. There was also Elohim's Son, Jehovah, who conducted the affairs of that Council. As such, Jehovah was the Creator God, the eternal King of Israel and of all other nations, and he was prophesied to become the Messiah. (One of the most recent scholars to discuss this is Margaret Barker. She has several excellent works on the Jewish religion before apostasy.) But apparently during, or very soon after the Babylonian exile, when the Jews had no temple and no king, both their worship services and their theology changed. While the name Elohim remained in some of the ancient Jewish scriptures, they lost an understanding of who he is. In much the same way the later Christians would lose the identity of Heavenly Father by turning into an undefinable Trinity. They merged the identities of the members of the Godhead into one undefinable god, and Judaism became monotheistic.

As one would expect, when the identities of Elohim and of Jehovah became clouded in Jewish religious thought, the Divine Council over which they presided disappeared from their understanding - and almost from their writings - so that its significance is barely visible in the post-exilic books of the Old Testament. Consequently, "Our major evidence for the council motif in the Old Testament is found primarily in Israel's pre-exilic literature, especially in the Psalms and other poetic writings..." such as Job and Isaiah. { 1 }

In those parts of the Old Testament the Council of the gods still may be seen as playing a major role, not only in the affairs of heaven, but in the affairs of men on earth. In fact, the way to identify a true prophet was that he had returned in vision to the Council, and there had learned again the covenants he made there and the message he was assigned to deliver to the people. An example is Psalm 89. Aubrey Johnson gives us his own translation of Psalm 89, and finds that:

The identity of the "Holy Ones" ... with the members of the council is explicitly noted in Ps 89:6-9:....

The heavens praise your wonders, O Yahweh,
And your truth in the council of the holy ones.
For who in the skies can compare to Yahweh?
Who is like Yahweh among the sons of god (i.e., the gods)?
A dreadful god in the council of the holy ones,
Great and terrible above all those around him.
Yahweh, god of (the heavenly) hosts, who is like you?
Mighty Yah(weh), your faithful ones surround you.

This passage vividly reveals the connection of the "Holy Ones" with the council of the gods. { 2 }

Sometimes the members of the Council are referred in the scriptures as "stars," or "the heavens." An important example of that - and also of the changes made in the scriptures by Old Testament editors - is 1 Nephi 20:11-17. On the Brass Plates this was a reference by Isaiah to a meeting of the Council, where the "heavens" met together, stood (anciently people stood to make covenants, as in 2 Kings 23:1-3), and listened to a speaker whom the Lord (Jehovah) has assigned to speak to them. In the Bible's Isaiah 48, there are a few subtle changes which make it almost impossible to see it as an account of a Council meeting.

In Mullen's *The Divine Council*, he identifies the "stars" as the members of the Divine Council, in Job 38:7, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? ... When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7) Mullen shows the members of the Council serve as God's messengers to people on the earth. { 3 }

Under the leadership of Jehovah, the members of the Council created the heavens and the earth, (Abraham 3-5), and were later responsible for directing the affairs of men - not only as messengers to Israel's the prophets and the kings, and also in person as the kings and priests - for kings and priests were foreordained and given assignments at the Council (as in Psalm 45 & 82).

The scriptures frequently tell about the activities of the members of the Council before and during the Creation, but perhaps the most significant role the members of the Council play in the scriptures is not so much what they did in their pre-mortal lives, but what they do here as prophets, political leaders, and ordinary people. The premise in the scriptures is that if one is a true prophet, the Lord will bring him back (in vision) to the Council where he will re-affirm his covenants and re-learn - in their historical context - his responsibilities to the people of his time and place. It is a prophet's returning to the Council to re-experience that foreordination and re-receive that assignment, that is the essence of a *sode* experience.

The best academic discussion I know about the principle that a prophet must re-visit his calling at the Council is Raymond E. Brown's *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament*. In it he writes,

We may begin with the Hebrew word "sod" a word the word has a wide semantic area: confidential talk, a circle of people in council, secrets....When we approach the early biblical uses of "sod" with the idea of "council" or 'assembly' in mind, we find that this meaning particularly fits the passages dealing with the heavenly "sod" in biblical references to the heavenly council of God and his angels....Amos (3:7) announces almost as a proverb that God will surely not do anything "until he has revealed his 'sod' to his servants the prophets."...In the Hebrew represented by Proverbs, Sirach, and Qumran, 'sod' is used simply for secrets or mysteries { 4 }

In many places in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *sode* refers to the decisions of the Council of the gods. As Amos insists, the Lord will not do anything in this world until after the presiding prophet returns in vision to the Council, where he will be shown the covenants and assignments he accepted in conjunction with the decisions made by the Council, as those decisions related to the prophet's time and place on the earth. Thus, a true prophet is one who does and says on earth what he covenanted he would do and say while he was at the Council. A "sode experience" is one's returning to the Council and receiving those instructions. (Psalm 25 uses the word *sode* (translated "secret") to describe a "meek" person as one who keeps those pre-mortal covenants.)

H. Wheeler Robinson wrote that there was a close relationship between the *sode* experience (which he spells *sodh*), and with the appointment of a prophet. He quotes Jeremiah 23:18, 21-22; Psalms 89: 7; Job 38:4-7; and Genesis 1:26 as instances of the Divine Council, and writes that the prophet's being able to speak in behalf of the Council gave the prophets a "sense of 'corporate personality' with the council of Yahweh, and through it with Yahweh Himself, as His adopted representative." { 5 }

The Jeremiah passage is extremely important. It defines a prophet as one who has had a *sode* experience - and conversely, a false prophet as one who presumes to speak for God without having had a *sode* experience.

This is God speaking:

18 For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD [had a *sode* experience], and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? [At the Council, one revisits ones covenants and learns what one must say]

19 Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.

20 The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

21 I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. [There is the Lord's definition of a false prophet - then he gave evidence to prove they are false.]

22 But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. (Jeremiah 23:18-23.)

One of the most fun stories in the Old Testament is about the feisty prophet Micaiah, when Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, went to the king of Israel to negotiate about an alliance. They planned to go to war against Syria, but wanted the approbation of the gods in their enterprise. The king of Israel called about four hundred prophets of Baal who all prophesied exactly what the kings wanted to hear. "And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. Then Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord [Jehovah] besides, that we might enquire of him?"

8 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

So they sent for Micaiah. While the messengers were gone "all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the king's hand."

When the messenger from the kings got to Micaiah, he told Micaiah what the prophets of Baal had said, and advised, "pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good."

14 And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.

When he came to the king, he warned him he would be killed, and asserted the validity of his message by saying " Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left." (1 Kings 22)

That story is one of the best examples in the Old Testament that the people understood that the true test of a prophet was whether he had had a *sode* experience.

Still, as late as New Testament times, that criterion was understood. It is apparent to me that Nicodemus understood that a true prophet must have a *sode* experience. This is evinced by how the Saviour explained himself to the learned leader of the Jews. We have only a very cryptic account of their conversation, but it is enough for us to understand what Jesus was saying:

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not ["Ye" is plural. Jesus is referring to the Jewish leadership, not to Nicodemus personally.], how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even

the Son of man which is in heaven. (John 3:11-13.)

When Paul described the covenantal relationship we have with Heavenly Father, in Ephesians 1, he wrote of the Father,

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: (Ephesians 1: 9)

Brown demonstrates that the Greek *mysterion* (translated "mystery") has the same significance in the New Testament as *sode* does in the Old Testament. { 6 }

So Paul's phrase, "the mystery of his will" is a reference to the decisions and assignments made at the Council. If that criterion was the standard by which a prophet was judged in the Bible, then it must also be the standard in other times and places as well. And - as one has come to expect - the Book of Mormon and the Prophet Joseph get it right every time.

In the Book of Mormon, as soon as Nephi begins to write, he introduces both himself and his father as true prophets by using the only criterion that is valid: they have both had a *sode* experience:

I, Nephi, ... having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries [that would have been the Hebrew *sode* rather than the Greek *mysterion*.] of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.

and

[Lehi] was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God. [and then he received his assignment from Jehovah.]

Alma the younger also had a *sode* experience. He tells us he saw God, but gives us few details about what happened after that.

It is my personal belief that the First Vision was a *sode* experience. Joseph saw a pillar of light (Shechinah), saw the Father who introduced the Son; then received his instructions from the Saviour. In one account he adds, "I saw many angels in this vision." { 7 }

As is typical of the Prophet Joseph, even though he used the words "mysteries" and "secret" with their correct meaning, he never boasted about it out to anyone. He just knew and wrote what he knew. Notice how he uses those words in section 76, and the later poetic version.

5 For thus saith the Lord-I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

6 Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

7 And to them will I reveal all mysteries [*mysterion*], yea, all the hidden mysteries [*mysterion*] of my kingdom from days of old [the Council], and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.

8 Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

9 And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

10 For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets [*sode*] my will-yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.

And

22 And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

23 For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father-

24 That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.

Ten years after Joseph and Sidney Rigdon received that vision, Joseph published his own account. Only this one is much more personal. This is how he wrote it then.

For thus saith the Lord, in the spirit of truth,
I am merciful, gracious, and good unto those
That fear me, and live for the life that's to come:
My delight is to honour the Saints with repose,

That serve me in righteousness true to the end;
Eternal's their glory and great their reward.
I'll surely reveal all my myst'ries [*mysterion*] to them --
The great hidden myst'ries [*mysterion*] in my kingdom stor'd;

From the council in Kolob, to time on the earth,
And for ages to come unto them I will show
My pleasure and will, what the kingdom will do
Eternity's wonders they truly shall know.

Great things of the future I'll show unto them,

Yea, things of the vast generations to rise;
For their wisdom and glory shall be very great,
And their pure understanding extend to the skies.

And before them the wisdom of wise men shall cease,
And the nice understanding of prudent ones fail!
For the light of my spirit shall light mine elect,
And the truth is so mighty 'twill ever prevail.

And the secrets [*sode*] and plans of my will I'll reveal,
The sanctifi'd pleasures when earth is renew'd;
What the eye hath not seen, nor the ear hath yet heard,
Nor the heart of the natural man ever view'd. { 8 }

Then he describes his own *sode* experience - somewhat similar, but yet different from the one in Section 76.

I, Joseph, the prophet, in spirit beheld,
And the eyes of the inner man truly did see
Eternity sketch'd in a vision from God,
Of what was, and now is, and yet is to be.

Those things which the Father ordained of old,
Before the world was or a system had run;
Through Jesus, the Maker and Saviour of all--
The only begotten (Messiah) his son.

Of whom I bear record, as all prophets have,
And the record I bear is the fulness -- yea, even
The truth of the gospel of Jesus -- *the Christ*,
With whom I convers'd in the vision of heav'n,
....

Hosanna, for ever! They open'd anon,
And the glory of God shone around where I was;
And there was the Son at the Father's right hand,
In a fulness of glory and holy applause.

I beheld round the throne holy angels and hosts,
And sanctified beings from worlds that have been,
In holiness worshiping God and the Lamb,
For ever and ever. Amen and amen.

And now after all of the proofs made of him,
By witnesses truly, by whom he was known,
This is mine, last of all, that he lives; yea, he lives!

And sits at the right hand of God on his throne.

And I heard a great voice bearing record from heav'n,
He's the Saviour and only begotten of God;
By him, of him, and through him, the worlds were all made,
Even all that career in the heavens so broad.

Whose inhabitants, too, from the first to the last,
Are sav'd by the very same Saviour of ours;
And, of course, are begotten God's daughters and sons
By the very same truths and the very same powers.

In that poem, the time and place where the Council in Heaven met is clearly identified as in Kolob.

The most detailed account in the Bible of a *sode* experience is Isaiah 6, so I think we should discuss that one in some detail then compare the others to it.

I was happy to learn that part of its translation is apparently misleading. The pattern of a *sode* experience, as far as I can tell, is the one given by Nephi when he said his father, Lehi, saw God [Elohim] sitting on his throne; "surrounded with numberless concourses of angels [the Council]; but actually received his instructions - including the words he should speak - from Jehovah. (1 Nephi 1:8-11) That pattern seems consistent, and is the essence of a *sode* experience. However, the problem with Isaiah 6 is that the vision begins "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne." That use of "Lord" doesn't fit the pattern, because "Lord" is usually translated from "Jehovah." So I checked Strong and found that in this instance "Lord" is not "Jehovah" but "Adonay," a word "used as the proper name of God only." So even though it doesn't actually say "Elohim," it comes as close as it needs to, to imply that it was the Father whom Isaiah saw sitting on his throne - and that fits the pattern.

Isaiah 6

1 In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord [Adonay] sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

2 Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." (The Tanakh reads, "Seraphs stood in attendance on him." { 9 })

Cherubim and seraphim are symbolic representations of heavenly creatures (probably of persons) who attend God at his throne, and who are characterized as having the ultimate powers known to mankind, as one scholar explained.

Without the abstract tools of philosophical theory, ancient man expressed concepts like omnipotence and omniscience, as well as the Divine Presence, in concrete forms and symbols. One of these was the cherub, combining strength, procreative power, swiftness and wisdom.

{10}

We learn in D&C 77 that the wings are symbolic of their ability to move rather than an actual physical description. { 11 }

Isaiah 6 continues:

v. 3 And one cried unto another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.

v. 4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Some have suggested the smoke was incense smoke, but it is more likely that it is the Shechinah - the "light," "fire" or "cloud of light" which precedes and testifies of the presence of God. (See LDS Bible dictionary)

There is a quality of almost homespun honesty about Isaiah which is simply loveable. Others who tell this same story, such as Daniel, Enoch, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, tell how they fell on their faces in reverence. (King James translators used the word "fear.") But Isaiah tells us how he felt, rather than what he did:

v. 5 Then said I: Wo is unto me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.

v. 6 Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar;

v. 7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said: Lo, this has touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

From the accounts of others, one would gather that Isaiah's experience with the burning coal was a two part ordinance. The first part was a ceremonial cleansing of his lips. The second was placing the Lord's words in Isaiah's mouth, thus making Isaiah's words also the words of the Lord. Other accounts which are different in detail, but apparently symbolically the same, are:

Enoch in the Pearl of Great Price

And it came to pass that I turned and went up on the mount; and as I stood upon the mount, I beheld the heaven open, and I was clothed upon with glory. And I saw the Lord; and he stood before my face, and he talked with me, even as a man talketh one with another, face to face; ... And the Lord said unto me: Prophecy; and I prophesied... And the Lord said unto me: Go to this people, and say unto them ... and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him." (Moses 7:3-4, 7, 10, 13.)

Jeremiah

Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth, And the Lord said unto me,

Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations...." (Jeremiah 1:9-10)

Ezekiel

The Lord said "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words....And thou shalt speak my words unto them open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat the roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. (Ezekiel 2:6 to 3:4)

Lehi

and the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read. And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord. And he read saying...." (1 Ne. 1:11-13)

John

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings. (Revelation 10:7-11)

We learn from the Prophet Joseph that John's receiving and eating this book was "a mission, and an ordinance." Presumably the ordinance he received in this life was a reaffirmation of the ordinance John received in Council. The Prophet Joseph wrote,

Q. What are we to understand by the little book which was eaten by John, as mentioned in the 10th chapter of Revelation? A. We are to understand that it was a mission, and an ordinance, for him to gather the tribes of Israel; behold, this is Elias, who, as it is written, must come and restore all things. (D&C 77:14)

Given the above versions of what appear to be essentially the same story, the coal which touched Isaiah lips was the same in its symbolism as the finger, the books, and the scroll which touched the mouths and delivered the words of the Lord to the other prophets. If so, then the light which

touched Isaiah's lips was also an ordinance associated with Isaiah's assigned mission.

In the next verse, Isaiah brings us to the deliberations of the Council itself. One imagines the conversation at the Council going something like this: "In about 720 BC, we are going to have a lot of trouble with the king of Assyria and we need someone who will take care of that."

v. 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?

The "us" is plural. So it is not only a reference to God but also to the other members of the Council who were present during these deliberations. Isaiah then volunteered for that assignment. He reports,

Then I said: Here am I; send me.

v. 9 And he [the Lord] said: Go and tell this people - Hear ye indeed, but they understood not; and see ye indeed, but they perceived not.

v. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes - lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted and be healed. {12}

Isaiah's assignment was not significantly different from Lehi's: The prophet is to teach and to warn, even though God and the prophet knew the people would neither listen nor heed the warning.

Isaiah's assignment was going to be a very heavy one. Not only was he going to have to stand off the Assyrian army, but he was also going to have to watch as the Jewish state, which he would save, officially turn away from Jehovah and adopt the worship of Baal. In the "Martyrdom of Isaiah" one reads how, after Isaiah's friend, king Hezekiah, died, Hezekiah's son Manasseh became king and made the worship of Baal the national religion, persecuting all who continued to worship Jehovah. The story concludes,

And they seized and sawed in sunder Isaiah, the son of Amoz, with a wood-saw. And Manasseh and Balchira [a priest of Baal] and the false prophets and princes and the people and all stood looking on. And to the prophets [fellow worshipers of Jehovah] who were with him [Isaiah] he said before he had been sawn in sunder: 'Go ye to the region of Tyre and Sidon; for me only hath God mingled the cup.' And when Isaiah was being sawn in sunder, he neither cried aloud nor wept, but his lips spake with the Holy Spirit until he was sawn in twain. { 13 }

Given Isaiah's assignment, and the sorrow associated with it, it is little wonder that when he learned of it, he replied to the Lord,

v. 11 Then said I: Lord, how long?

That simple question: How long do I have to do this? strikes me as being one of the most honest and straight forward questions reported in the scriptures. Isaiah is willing to take the assignment, but not with a whole lot of enthusiasm. (I suspect that was true of many other members of the Council also. Abinadi couldn't have been very eager to live through the prospects of his.) The Lord then explained:

And he said: Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate;

v. 12 And the Lord have removed men far away, for there shall be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

v. 13 But yet there shall be a tenth, and they shall return, and shall be eaten, as a teil-tree, and as an oak whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

These last three verses might be read in two different ways. One way is to say that Isaiah's assignment was to continue until the Assyrians wasted the cities of the Jews (except for Jerusalem itself). But that interpretation leaves a void in the latter part of Isaiah's mission, and I don't think it is correct.

The other way to read those three verses is that the Lord told Isaiah his responsibility as a prophet to these people was to continue, even after death, until the end of the world. I presume that is what is meant by, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." { 14 } If that is so, then Isaiah's mission and responsibility was to work with those same wayward people - the ones who lived in Judea about 720 BC - throughout his lifetime here on earth, then to continue working with them in the spirit world after his and their deaths. In the world of the spirits, they would wait until the Saviour came to institute missionary work among the dead. When that time did arrive (as is reported in D&C 138) Isaiah is mentioned in verse 42 as being among those present at that great meeting when the Lord came and delivered the keys for the salvation of the dead to the prophets who were also dead. (Isaiah 61 is the prophecy, and D&C 138 is the fulfillment). I would suppose after that meeting in the spirit world, Isaiah went back to those who had once rejected him, who were still under his stewardship, and preached the gospel to them again. That, at least, is the way I read the assignment given in the last 3 verses of Isaiah 6.

Characteristics of the *sode* experience

The ancients believed that a true prophet must have a *sode* experience, or he could not speak and act for God with God's authority. They also believed their kings had to have been foreordained at the Council or they could not be legitimate kings. Their ancient temple rites were a kind of re-enactment of a *sode* experience. During those rites they depicted the activities of the Council where kings, priests, and prophets were chosen (Psalms 45, 82); the creation of the world and the Adam and Eve story; the trials of this earthly existence and the need for a Saviour; and the necessary preparations for one to return to the presence of God. Mowinckel, Aubrey Johnson and others have shown that the Psalms which were the text of the ancient temple ceremonies, and the

last half of Isaiah, which is a commentary on those ceremonies, are important tools by which one can discover the ancient understanding and significance of a *sode* experience.

The following is a partial catalog of characteristics of the *sode* experience as reported by various prophets. My comments are in brackets. This is certainly not an exhaustive list of people in the scriptures who report having had a *sode* experience. It does not mention Nephi, Moroni, the brother of Jared, or a number of other important examples, but it is complete enough to describe what a *sode* experience is.

ADAM AND OTHERS, in D&C 107:53-56

They saw the Lord - the Lord appeared unto them, They understood Adam's role in the Council - “and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel.” [They acknowledged, perhaps because they had seen, his role as Michael at the Council.]

The Lord defines Adam's Mission - “And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever.”

ENOCH, Moses 7:2-69

Enoch is on the Mountain - “And it came to pass that I turned and went up on the mount; and as I stood upon the mount, I beheld the heavens open, “

Enoch is clothed - “and I was clothed upon with glory;”

Enoch saw the Lord - “And I saw the Lord; and he stood before my face, and he talked with me, even as a man talketh one with another, face to face;”

The Lord explains Enoch's mission - “and he said unto me: Look, and I will show unto thee the world for the space of many generations. And the Lord said unto me: Prophecy; ... And the Lord said unto me: Go to this people, and say unto them Repent, ...”

Enoch receives the Lord's words - “And so great was the faith of Enoch, that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him. ...”

Enoch testifies of the Saviour - “And again Enoch wept and cried unto the Lord, saying: When shall the earth rest? And Enoch beheld the Son of Man ascend up unto the Father; and he called unto the Lord, saying: Wilt thou not come again upon the earth? Forasmuch as thou art God, and I know thee, and thou hast sworn unto me, and commanded me that I

should ask in the name of thine Only Begotten; thou hast made me, and given unto me a right to thy throne, and not of myself, but through thine own grace; wherefore, I ask thee if thou wilt not come again on the earth....”

ABRAHAM, Abraham 3:22-4:1

Abraham identifies the members of the Council - “Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;”

God makes assignments to the members of the Council - “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.”

Proposal for the creation - “And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: 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.”

Implementation of the Plan - “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.”

Satan expelled from the Council - “And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him.”

The Council creates the earth - “And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth.” { 15 }

MOSES, Exodus 3:1-15 (See also the first chapter of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price.)

Moses experiences the Tree of Life (?) - “And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.”

Moses hears the voice of the Lord - “And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.”

Moses' mountain is a temple - “And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

Moses hears the voice of the Saviour - “Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

Moses' expression of reverence - “And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.”

The Lord explains the reason for Moses' assignment - “And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; ...”

Moses receives the name of the Lord - “And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”

Moses receives his assignment - “And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.”

Moses receives words from the Lord - “And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. [This may not mean that Moses can't speak well, it may only mean that Moses, who was reared and educated in the house of the Pharaoh, cannot speak the language of the slaves.] And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.”

Moses receives priesthood powers and keys - “And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs. ...”

ISAIAH, Isaiah 6:1-13)

[As I observed above, Isaiah 6 is an extremely important part of this series, but since we just discussed it in some detail, I'll not repeat that here.]

JEREMIAH - Jeremiah 1:1-2:37

Jeremiah received the words of the Lord - “The words of Jeremiah ... To whom the word of the Lord came...”

Jeremiah told of his call in the Council - “Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”

Jeremiah's expression of reverence - “Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.”

Jeremiah receives the Lord's words - “But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.”

The Lord explains Jeremiah's call - “See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.”

LEHI - 1 Nephi 1:6-12

Pillar of fire - “And it came to pass as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he saw and heard much;”

Lehi's reverence - “and because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and tremble exceedingly. ... being overcome with the Spirit and the things which he had seen.”

Lehi visits the Heavens - “And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open;”

Lehi sees God on his throne - “and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne;”

Lehi sees the members of the Council - “surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.”

Lehi's testimony of Christ - “And it came to pass that he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noonday. And

he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament. And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth;”

Lehi receives the words of God, and with it, his own assignment - “and the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read. And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord. And he read, saying ...”

EZEKIEL - Ezekiel 1:1-3:24

The Lord's hand upon Ezekiel - “The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him.”

Ezekiel's description of the pillar of fire - “And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.”

Ezekiel's description of the cherubim and the origins of creation - “Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning. Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the

wheels. And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above. And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies. And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings. And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.”

Ezekiel's description of the throne - “And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone.”

Ezekiel's description of God on his throne - “and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.”

Ezekiel's expression of reverence - “And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.”

The Lord gives Ezekiel his assignment - “And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. ... And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.”

Ezekiel receives God's words - “And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.”

Ezekiel receives his assignment - “And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. ...”

ABINADI - Mosiah 12:3-4

Abinadi was acting according to a covenant with the Father - "Touch me not, for God [Elohim] shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, ... neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell; therefore, God [Elohim] will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time."

Abinadi had received his assignment from Jehovah - "for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver;"

Abinadi had received the "words" he was to speak - "And again, because I have spoken the word of God ye have judged me that I am mad."

ALMA - Alma 36:15-20

Alma speaks of inexpressible joy - "there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy."

Alma saw God on his throne - "Yea, methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne,"

Alma saw members of the Council - "surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God;"

Alma is adopted as a "son" - "I had been born of God."

JOHN - John 1:1-14, 29-34

John testifies of the Saviour's role in the Council, the creation, and as the source of all life - "In the beginning was the Word, 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; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. ... That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

John testifies of the Saviour - "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

John describes their respective places in the Council - "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me."

John describes his instructions ("He that sent me...the same said unto me...") - "And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

JOHN'S TESTIMONY AS RECORDED IN D&C 93: 1-17

The Saviour's introduction - "Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am; And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; And that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one- The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men. I was in the world and received of my Father, and the works of him were plainly manifest."

John's testimony - "And John saw and bore record of the fulness of my glory, and the fulness of John's record is hereafter to be revealed."

John saw the Saviour in Council - "And he bore record, saying: I saw his glory, that he was in the beginning, before the world was; Therefore, in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation- The light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men. The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him."

John testifies of the Saviour - "And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us. And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace; And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness; And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at the first. And I, John, bear record, and lo, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove, and sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven saying: This is my beloved Son. And I, John, bear record that he received a fulness of the glory of the Father; And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him. [It is possible that is a reference to John's seeing the Saviour's coronation at the Council.]"

PAUL - 2 Corinthians 12:1-5

Paul sees the Celestial world - "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come

to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.” (2 Corinthians 12:1-5)

“Murray-Jones suggests this is Paul's account of his own visit to the Holy of Holies of the celestial temple.” { 16 }

The Prophet Joseph explained,

“The more sure word of prophecy means a man's knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the holy priesthood. It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance. Paul saw the third heavens, and I more. Peter penned the most sublime language of any of the apostles.” { 17 }

JOSEPH SMITH - Joseph Smith-History 1:15-20

Joseph sees the pillar of light - “...just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.”

Joseph saw the Father and the Son - “It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other -This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!”

Joseph receives his assignment - “My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)-and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: "They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.”

Joseph's expression of reverence - “When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven. When the light had departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree, I went home.”

Joseph's only indication that he saw the Council at that time is in a different account -
“Another personage soon appeared like unto the first: he said unto me thy sins are forgiven thee. He testified also unto me that Jesus Christ is the son of God. I saw many angels in this vision.” { 18 }

JOSEPH F. SMITH - D&C 138:55-56

Joseph F. Smith "observed" the members of the Council - “I observed that they were also among the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning to be rulers in the Church of God. Even before they were born, they, with many others, received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men.”

There are also two excellent non-canonical accounts of *sode* experiences. They are of Enoch and Levi. Those accounts follow:

THE TESTAMENT OF LEVI 5: 1-3, 8: 1-17

And thereupon the angel opened to me the gates of heaven, and I saw the holy temple, and upon a throne of glory the Most High. And He said to me: Levi, I have given thee the blessings of the priesthood until I come and sojourn in the midst of Israel. (5: 1-3)

And I saw seven men in white raiment saying unto me: Arise, put on the robe of the priesthood, and the crown of righteousness, and the breastplate of understanding, and the garment of truth, and the plate of faith, and the turban of the head, and the ephod of prophecy.

And they severally carried (these things) and put (them) on me, and said unto me: From henceforth become a priest of the Lord, thou and thy seed for ever. And the first anointed me with holy oil, and gave to me the staff of judgement. The second washed me with pure water, and fed me with bread and wine (even) the most holy things, and clad me with a holy and glorious robe. The third clothed me with a linen vestment like an ephod. The fourth put round me a girdle like unto purple. The fifth gave me a branch of rich olive. The sixth placed a crown on my head. The seventh placed on my head a diadem of priesthood, and filled my hands with incense, that I might serve as priest to the Lord God. And they said to me: Levi, thy seed shall be divided into three offices, for a sign of the glory of the Lord who is to come. And the first portion shall be great; yea, greater than it shall none be. The second shall be in the priesthood. And the third shall be called by a new name, because a king shall arise in Judah, and shall establish a new priesthood, after the fashion of the Gentiles [to all the Gentiles]. And His presence is beloved, as a prophet of the Most High, of the seed of Abraham our father. Therefore, every desirable thing in Israel shall be for thee and for thy seed, And ye shall eat everything fair to look upon, And the table of the food shall thy seed apportion. And some of them shall be high priests, and judges, and scribes; For by their mouth shall the holy place be guarded. (8:1-17) { 19 }

The statement "The fifth gave me a branch of rich olive" is probably a reference to his receiving a royal scepter which was a symbol of kingship. If that is so, then Levi was both sacral king and high priest. { 20 }

THE BOOK OF THE SECRETS OF ENOCH

22: 1 On the tenth Heaven, Aravoth, I saw the appearance of the Lord's face, like iron made to glow in fire, and brought out, emitting sparks, and it burns. Thus I saw the Lord's face, but the Lord's face is ineffable, marvelous and very awful, and very, very terrible.

2 And who am I to tell of the Lord's unspeakable being, and of his very wonderful face? and I cannot tell the quantity of his many instructions, and various voices, the Lord's throne very great and not made with hands, nor the quantity of those standing round him, troops of cherubim and

3 seraphim, nor their incessant singing, of his immutable beauty, and who shall tell of the ineffable greatness of his glory?

4 And I fell prone and bowed down to the Lord,

5 and the Lord with his lips said to me: 'Have courage, Enoch, do not fear, arise and stand before my face into eternity.'

6 And the archistratege Michael lifted me up, and led me to before the Lord's face.

7 And the Lord said to his servants tempting them: 'Let Enoch stand before my face into eternity,' and the glorious ones bowed down to the Lord, and said: 'Let Enoch go according to Thy word.'

8 And the Lord said to Michael: 'Go and take Enoch from out his earthly garments, and anoint him with my sweet ointment, [Charles' footnote reads: "oil"] and put him into the garments of My glory.'

9 And Michael did thus, as the Lord told him. He anointed me, and dressed me, and the appearance of that ointment is more than the great light, and his ointment is like sweet dew, and its'

10 smell mild, shining like the sun's ray, and I looked at myself, and was like one of his glorious ones.

11 And the Lord summoned one of his archangels by name Pravuil, whose knowledge was quicker in wisdom than the other archangels, who wrote all the deeds of the Lord ; and the

12 Lord said to Pravuil: 'Bring out the books from my store-houses, and a reed of quick-writing, and give it to Enoch, and deliver to him the choice and comforting books out of

thy hand.'

Enoch then describes the creation of all things, from "before the very beginning."

Conclusion: So, what is a sode experience?

The Hebrew word *sode* as it is used in many parts of the Old Testament is a reference to the secret deliberations and decisions of the Council in Heaven. They were not secret before we came to this earth, but because we have lost our memory of them, they are secret now.

A "*sode* experience" is when one is called, in vision, back to the Council to review one's covenants and assignment. The shortest versions, like Abinadi's (and I think, Joseph's First Vision) simply say one saw Heavenly Father and received an assignment from the Saviour. Versions that are a bit longer, like Lehi's, include some statement about the members of the Council. Relatively complete versions also include part of creation story (such as the books of Abraham and Moses in the Pearl of Great Price) and sometimes part of the story of human history which is the context of the assignment into which the prophet's mission fits (such as the book of Revelation in the Bible) Apparently very few full accounts have been written. I know of only two: The revelation to the brother of Jared that are in the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon plates, and the revelation to Enoch, which survives only in fragments.

The ancient Israelite temple rites were a kind of stage performance of a *sode* experience that assured all the participants that they had been foreordained in the Council in Heaven. It was designed to teach them how to fulfill the covenants they had made then, so that after this life they could return again to their Father in Heaven.

ENDNOTES

{1} E. Theodore Mullen, Jr. *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, California, Scholars Press, 1980), 116, 285-311.

Some other places where one can find discussions of the Council in Heaven are:

Cross, Frank M. Jr., "The Council of Yahweh," *Journal of Theological Studies*, (vol. 45, 1946) 151-157.

Cross, "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah," in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* (12, January - October, 1953), 274-275.

Kingsbury, Edwin C., "The Prophets and the Council of Yahweh," *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, v. Lxxxiii, 1964, p. 279-286.

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{2} Aubrey R. Johnson, "The Role of the King in the Jerusalem Cultus," in S. H. Hooke, ed., *The Labyrinth* (London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1935), p. 77-80.

{3} E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, California, Scholars Press, 1980), 196, see also pages 186-187.

{4} Raymond E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1968), p. 2-6.

{5} H. Wheeler Robinson, *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1946) 167-170. The quote is from pages 169-170.

{6} Raymond E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1968).

{7} Dean C. Jessee, "The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," *BYU Studies*, Spring 1969, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 284.

{8} The Prophet Joseph Smith, "A Vision," *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1843, and republished in the *Millennial Star*, August, 1843.

{9} Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures, The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text (The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, Jerusalem, 1985) The Tanakh is the official English translation of the Jewish Bible.

{10} Eli Borowski, "Cherubim: God's Throne?" in *Biblical Archaeology Review* (21/4, July/August, 1995), 37.

{11} "And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings." (Ezekiel 1:6-28) The statement in the D&C is about a reference in Revelation, rather than about Ezekiel, but the comparison is appropriate. "And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." (Revelation 4:8) "Q. What are we to understand by the eyes and wings, which the beasts had? A. Their eyes are a representation of light and knowledge, that is, they are full of knowledge; and their wings are a representation of power, to move, to act, etc.(D&C:77:4)

{12} "...lest they see...hear...understand...and be converted and be healed" seems to imply that Isaiah was supposed to teach them so they would not understand. I don't think that's what it means. But the fact is, they were not converted, and eventually they murdered Isaiah. So what I

think it means is "so they will have no excuse when they chose to not see, hear, or understand."

{13} "The Martyrdom of Isaiah," 3:11-14, in R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. II, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976), 2:162.

{14} Another interpretation would be that the Lord was talking about the Assyrian invasion. If that were so, then the prophecy was only partially fulfilled. Jerusalem was not destroyed, and the land was not left utterly desolate.

{15} "the Gods" are the members of the Council. As such, the word "god" is usually not capitalized. The footnote reads: "TG Jesus Christ, Creator," so I presume the editors capitalized it because the Saviour was one of them.

{16} C. R. A. Morray-Jones "Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1-12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate Part 2: Paul's Heavenly Ascent and its Significance," *Harvard Theological Review*, 86:3 (1993) 265-292.

{17} *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 301

{18} Dean C. Jessee, "The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," *BYU Studies*, Spring, 1969, p. 284.

{19} "The Testament of Levi," in R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. II, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976), 2:307-309. The brackets [] are in Charles' original.

{20} See: Widengren, Geo, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion* (Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift, 1951).