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OUT OF THE DUST: AN EXAMINATION OF NECROMANCY AS A LITERARY CONSTRUCT IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

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And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.¹ (Isaiah 29:4)

Because it is commonly interpreted as a prophecy of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, Isaiah 29:4 is a foundational scripture within the Latter-day Saint faith.² However, one exegetical interpretation of this passage suggests necromancy is a thematic literary element. The definition of ancient necromancy carries greater literary weight than normally colloquially understood by Latter-day Saints,³ and uncovering the proper context and traditions

1. Scriptures from the Hebrew Bible throughout this paper were taken from the King James Version. While the language is usually archaic for an academic study, it is here used because of the linguistic similarities between the KJV and the Book of Mormon.

2. This paper will primarily address how Isaiah 29:4 was interpreted in the Book of Mormon and the ramifications of reading necromancy into the text. I have bracketed out the topic of the historicity of the Book of Mormon, as this paper is merely a criticism of the literary aspects that allusions to necromancy would lend to certain passages' interpretations.

3. My research through commentaries on the Book of Mormon indicates a preference for an exegetical reading of Isaiah 29:4. In 1987, Joseph F. McConkie and Robert L. Millet stated that Nephi applied Isaiah 29:4 to his people who would cry from the dust and serve as a voice of warning. (Joseph F. McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987], 306.) In that same year, D. Michael Quinn discussed what "familiar spirit" meant before 1830 in *Mormonism and the Magic World View* but did not connect this to the Book of Mormon text. (Michael D. Quinn, *Mormonism and the Magic World View* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987].) Brant Gardner's 2007 multi-volume work, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, further explored the possible connection between necromancy and certain Book of Mormon passages (Brant Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon* [6 vols.; Greg Kofford Books, 2007].) In 2008, Paul Hoskisson compared 2 Nephi 26:16 and Isaiah 29:4 as a case study for differentiation between exegetical and exegetical readings of scripture (Paul Y. Hoskisson, "The 'Familiar Spirit' in 2 Nephi 26:16," *Insights* 28, no. 6 [2008]: 7.) In this, Hoskisson discussed

through a literary interpretation establishes an interesting metaphor of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Furthermore, defining the literary components harnessed by the original writers to exhibit YHWH's elevated cultic status, as compared to proclaimed "foreign" religious practices, is essential in this discussion. Finally, theorizing that these literary elements are congruous with Book of Mormon passages would suggest that a reinterpretation of scripture in Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni is requisite. Indeed, the metaphor goes far beyond the basic concept of necromancy, thus providing a new perspective on ancient traditions and concepts. These ideas include: that the text itself is purported to speak out of the ground, that the necromancer has a very specific role, and that YHWH's involvement in ancient Israelite court revelation is preeminent.

Necromancy in the Ancient Near East

A general survey of necromancy as it is portrayed within both the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near East is vital to this undertaking. Necromancy is "the practice of consulting the dead, usually with the help of a medium,"⁴ and was used "to obtain information from [the dead,] generally regarding the revelation of unknown causes or the future course of events."⁵ Therefore, ancient necromancy was an attempt to manipulate the spirits of dead ancestors⁶ into revealing information about the future, to which they had special access.⁷ The Hebrew Bible does not polemicize necromancy as frequently as the cults surrounding Baal or Asherah, probably due to a less widespread acceptance of the practice in popular Israelite religion.⁸ However, the texts dealing with necromancy clearly indicate that it occupied a definite place outside of the nation's approved religion at the time of redaction.⁹

the possible ramifications of reading necromancy into a Book of Mormon text. However, his work is by no means exhaustive on the topic.

4. Philip J. King and Larry E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 380.

5. Brian B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 11; Fred Miller, "Prophecy in Judaism and Islam," *IS* 17 (1978): 28; Edmund B. Keller, "Hebrew Thoughts on Immortality and Resurrection," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5 (1974): 20–21; Harry A. Hoffner Jr., "Second Millennium Antecedents to the Hebrew 'Öb," *JBL* 86, no. 4 (1967): 395–96.

6. For more on the connection between ancestor cults and necromancy, see Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*.

7. Theodore J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 2.

8. Phillip Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (InterVarsity Press: 2002), 153.

9. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 104, and Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 153.

The Hebrew nouns commonly associated with necromancy are *עפר*, *אורב*, and *ידעני*.¹⁰ *אורב* is usually paired with verbs that indicate inquiry for information¹¹ and seems to indicate a conscious, yet unidentifiable, being,¹² though it can refer to either the medium or ghost. The LXX translation of *אורב* is “ventriloquist,” to denote chirping or muttering, though this may not be an accurate representation of the word either, as it does not harmonize all of the word’s aspects.¹³

ידעני is often paired with *אורב*, though not always. Many commentators have also associated *ידעני* with chirping or muttering sounds either emitted from the ghost or the medium.¹⁴ *עפר* is thought to carry the sense of loose earth or dust.¹⁵ The latter often connotes mourning and self-abasement;¹⁶ however, when seen in conjunction with the words previously discussed, the context signifies the grave and netherworld. Furthermore, the inhabitants of the ancient underworld were thought to dwell in fields of dust, thereby becoming persons of dust themselves.¹⁷

Hebrew Bible Context

The Hebrew Bible verifies that necromancy was present in ancient Israel;¹⁸ however, assessing the extent of its influence over the commonwealth is difficult from the extant evidence. Textual evidence within the Hebrew Bible provides little indication that ritualistic implements, other than the enigmatic *אורב*, were necessary to practicing necromancy.¹⁹ Lack of material evidence within the archaeological record complicates both determining how widespread necromancy was in ancient Israel and whether specific tools were used.²⁰ Thus the texts that refer to necromancy become the only source of clarification on this topic.

10. For a more in-depth analysis on the word’s etymology, see Hoffner, “Second Millennium Antecedents”; and Irving L. Finkel, “Necromancy in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *AfO* 29, no. 30 (1983), 14.

11. Hugo Enrique Mendez, “Condemnations of Necromancy,” (MA thesis, University of Georgia, 2009), 5.

12. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 151.

13. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 161.

14. Mendez, “Condemnations of Necromancy,” 39.

15. Botterweck, et al., *TDOT* 11, 259, 260.

16. *Ibid.*, 263.

17. *Ibid.*, 264, 265; Keller, “Hebrew Thoughts,” 16.

18. Douglas W. Mackenzie, “Faith and Superstition,” *BW* 27, no. 6 (1906), 412.

19. It should be noted that there are ritual texts in Assyria that could possibly depict incantations of necromancy. See Finkel, “Necromancy”; and Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 97, 98.

20. For evidence of the cult of the dead, including necromancy, see Schmidt, *Israel’s Beneficent Dead*; and Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*.

The Holiness Code, of which Leviticus 19:31 is a part, condemns seeking after those who are wizards or have the voice of a ghost rather than condemning the practice itself.²¹ Following this disallowance, Leviticus 20:27 pronounces that those who practice necromancy will be put to death by stoning. This punishment indicates the seriousness of being a medium in the eyes of the state cult. Deuteronomy 18:10–12 is consistent with the previous statements in its disavowal of those who are wizards, practice necromancy, or have the voice of a ghost.²² These verses also contend that YHWH will drive out such people from the land of their inheritance, thus pitting Yahwistic prophecy against necromancy.²³ That this taboo was in place against necromancy at the time of the law's codification is also established. This information in turn provides insight into the authors'/redactors' viewpoint and can help determine how they interpreted necromancy to advance the texts in question.

These prohibitions by the Deuteronomist imply that necromancy—and other forms of divination—were at times somewhat attractive to the people of Israel. However, such behavior conflicted with YHWH's demand for complete devotion to the state cult from his adherents. This is most effectively portrayed in Saul's encounter with the witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28.

According to the text, on the eve of Saul's final battle, the king sought out the services of a necromancer. The witch of Endor was found, and through necromancy she called up the deceased prophet Samuel so Saul might plead with his deceased spiritual leader for information on the outcome of the battle of Gilboa.²⁴ Verse 15 of the chapter demonstrates Saul's fear and the circumstances that provoked his deviation from YHWH's revelatory process. It states, "And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do." According to this account, the catalyst behind Saul's actions is the terror of imminent death. It is also apparent that Saul believed the situation provided no other option for gaining mastery over the near future. Furthermore, he felt that the information was substantial enough to risk his standing before YHWH.²⁵

21. Mendez, "Condemnations of Necromancy," 4.

22. King, *Biblical Israel*, 196–98.

23. Johnathan Stökl, "How Unique Was Israelite Prophecy?," in *The Wiley-Blackwell History of Jews and Judaism* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 54.

24. Hoffner, "Second Millennium Antecedents," 396.

25. 1 Chronicles 10:13–14 states the repercussions of Saul's act of necromancy as the reason for his ultimate downfall. It reads: "So Saul died for his transgression which he

In another instance where necromancy was employed to divine the future during a period of crisis, we find that YHWH's response to the Judahite king compares the political situation to necromancy. The text presents the following circumstances: Ahaz was contemplating a confederacy in order to fend off an impending invasion, and Isaiah weighed in on behalf of YHWH. The author of the passage is found using עֵפֶר and אוֹר together in the Hebrew text, which creates a framework for reading this passage as a reference to necromancy. The verses in question read:

And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. (Isaiah 8:19–20)

The author is here commenting on the potential alliance and their allies' trust in a divinatory method, which was previously declared as unsound. Warning Judah that, despite the formidable threat the Assyrians pose, the security necromancy proffers will be of little help, clarifies the cultic political position and the preeminence of the prophet as sole diviner for YHWH.²⁶ In the same breath, the author paints necromancy as a type of the support that would be received and insinuates that any help they will provide will be of little value, just as their necromancers provide little divinatory aid.²⁷ This can also

committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; And enquired not of the Lord: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse." To the Chronicler, this foray into popular religion appears to have been Saul's culminating insult to the cult surrounding YHWH. For a literary analysis of Saul's characterization by the Deuteronomist as the prototype for kingship failure, see Matthew Michael, "The Prophet, the Witch and the Ghost: Understanding the Parody of Saul as a 'Prophet' and the Purpose of Endor in the Deuteronomistic History," *JSOT* 38, no. 3 (2014): 316–46.

26. Mendez, "Condemnations of Necromancy," 36, 42–43.

27. As a side note, in this study of sources from the Hebrew Bible, the centrality of the medium stands out as vital to the practice. In 1 Samuel 28 and Isaiah 19:23 necromancy included more than merely worshipping household gods (see, Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, 217–18). Furthermore, it is clear from the prohibition against them that mediums and those who possess familiar spirits were vital to necromancy's execution. This is further substantiated in that it was the mediums that bore the brunt of the criticism within the text, rather than the practice itself. Such a distinction intimates that without certain individuals in place to communicate with the dead, necromancy would not be able to survive. This is most clearly evident in Saul's encounter with the witch of Endor. The text reveals that Saul could not raise up Samuel's ghost by himself, nor could he at first see the spirit of Samuel. This is evidenced by the fact that Saul asked the witch what she saw. While the chapter seems to later portray Saul and Samuel having a face to face conversation, it is definite that opening communication with the dead prophet was a role unique to one who possessed a familiar spirit. From this we can gather that in a sense, the medium's position was seen as a threat to the official prophet/priest's cultic station as one who receives revelation for

be read as an attempt to curtail such popular religious activities before they could become real concerns to the cult based in Jerusalem.²⁸

Furthermore, the passage conveys that, should the country indulge in necromancy, the results would be the exact opposite from their intention. Indeed, it is indicated that rather than enlightening those who seek out information from the dead, such practices will work to their detriment, just as any alliance with Egypt would also end poorly for the people of Judah when confronted with an invasion. In the end, trusting in YHWH as Judah's best source of divination (and subtextually, political aid) is extolled,²⁹ and the nation is warned that only disappointment will result from seeking other avenues.

Next, Isaiah 19:3 demonstrates the political connotation necromancy and other divining methods had in the ancient Near East. It states, "And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards." This proto-apocalyptic prophecy, which foretells the political ruin Egypt will experience by the hand of the Assyrians because of YHWH's wrath, plainly identifies the consequences that the text's compilers attributed to practicing necromancy. It affirms that when Egypt would look to their necromancers and familiar spirits for guidance in the ensuing fallout, the revelatory power such sources possessed would be negated, thus proving to the people of Judah that YHWH is the only deity with revelatory license.³⁰ The text also casts Egypt as foreign and highlights its people's indifference toward YHWH, because they did not adhere to the god³¹ of Israel's sanctioned method of divination.³²

Isaiah 29:4 is a compelling passage concerning necromancy in Isaiah, especially when viewed within the parameters of Latter-day Saint interpretation. The verse in question states, "And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech

YHWH, thereby threatening the state cult as a whole. This perspective would have heightened its illegality in the eyes of the biblical authors, thus creating a cause for strict prohibitions and later literary negativity toward the practice.

28. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 130.

29. Mendez, "Condemnations of Necromancy," 20.

30. Christopher B. Hays, "The Covenant with Mut: A New Interpretation of Isaiah 28:1–22," *VT* 60, no. 2 (2010): 234. Mendez, "Condemnations of Necromancy," 45–46.

31. While I am aware that translating אֱלֹהִים as "god" may be problematic as Samuel's ghost is so designated in 1 Samuel 28, I feel that this translation provides overall clarity for my topic. As I do not discuss the ramifications of its placement within said pericope, I have chosen this common translation.

32. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 55; while Hays, "Covenant with Mut," 232, specifically discusses Isaiah 28, the methodology behind the text also proves true in this case.

shall whisper out of the dust.” Once again, the Hebrew words that are translated here as “one that hath a familiar spirit” (NRSV “voice of a ghost”),³³ along with words such as “dust” and “out of the ground,” are indicative of necromancy.³⁴

Historically, the entire pericope’s *sitz im leben* is part of an oracle of war written to Ariel that reflects Sennacherib’s 701 BCE campaign against Judah, specifically Jerusalem.³⁵ When juxtaposed against all of the passages that have heretofore been discussed, the rhetoric of Isaiah 29:4 appears to be completely out of character for the book. To compare YHWH’s city with an אוב seems incongruous for the author; therefore, there must be an underlying facet of the prophecy of Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside that necromancy uniquely stresses.

There are several points worthy of consideration from the verse above. First, the author “sought to demonstrate that the preferred source of revelation is Yahwistic prophecy. . . . [This passage] portrays the cessation of Yahwistic prophecy as coincident with the adoption of necromancy.”³⁶ In other words, the author sought to juxtapose the validity of Yahwistic prophecy with the knowledge gained from necromancy and utilized it to illustrate that the city would be as a familiar spirit until YHWH delivered them through the state cult religious practices.³⁷ The city’s status as a familiar spirit could be realized in several ways. One possible interpretation suggests a demolition of the city so complete that its inhabitants’ only recourse is to communicate with future generations through a practice such as necromancy.³⁸

Another viewpoint is introduced when verse four is taken in conjunction with verse ten, which promulgates YHWH’s control over the situation. Verse ten explains that YHWH had placed the people of Judah and their prophets to sleep and covered the seers. This is a commentary on the king’s advisors and prophets who were not speaking the word of YHWH. Comparing the inhabitants of Jerusalem to an illegitimate revelatory operation is not entirely

33. Hoffner, “Second Millennium Antecedents,” 398.

34. Finkel, “Necromancy,” 15; Hoffner, “Second Millennium Antecedents,” 386.

35. For a discussion on the evidence for Sennacherib’s influence in Isaiah, see Routledge, “The siege and deliverance of the city of David in Isaiah 29:1–8,” *TynBul* 43 (1992).

36. Schmidt, *Beneficent Dead*, 164.

37. Jonathan Stökl’s words on another pericope in Isaiah provide another interesting nuance to how we might be able to harmonize why Isaiah’s literary usage of necromancy is not an outright condemnation of the practice. It reads, “it is easier to assume that idioms from the polytheistic past are still being used in a monotheistic environment.” Jonathan Stökl, “Divination as Warfare: The Use of Divination Across Borders,” in *Divination, Politics and Ancient Near Eastern Empires*, eds. J. Stökl and A. Lenzi, *Ancient Near Eastern Monographs 7* (Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature), 61.

38. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 111.

far-fetched when viewed in this context. Overall, the underlying message of the pericope is that YHWH controlled Judah's fate, even if the court sought to replace his preeminence by discounting the message of his true prophet.³⁹ Harmonizing this chapter with previous scripture on the topic appears challenging at first glance, but when approached literarily, communicating with the dead as a sign of the spiritual state of the city at the time of the siege can be interpreted in line with the sentiment expressed elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

Necromancy in the Book of Mormon

Scriptures in Nephi

Almost from the outset of Mormonism's doctrinal history, Isaiah 29:4 was associated with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. In fact, the text itself connects the book's coming forth from the "grave" to its writers/redactors speaking from the dust. Second Nephi 3:19–20 adds Lehi's insight into how necromancy can be read into the events surrounding the discovery and translation of the Book of Mormon. It states, "And it shall be as if the fruit of thy loins had cried unto them from the dust; for I know their faith. And they shall cry from the dust; yea, even repentance unto their brethren, even after many generations have gone by them. And it shall come to pass that their cry shall go, even according to the simpleness of their words."

Second Nephi 26:15–16 is a fairly obvious commentary on Isaiah 29:4 as much of the structuring in the latter half of the verse is parallel to it. As is so often Nephi's *modus operandi*, he appears to have taken a scripture in Isaiah and reinterpreted it for his own prophetic purposes. The latter end of the verse prophesies, "For those who shall be destroyed shall speak unto them out of the ground, and their speech shall be low out of the dust, and their voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit; for the Lord God will give unto him power, that he may whisper concerning them, even as it were out of the ground; and their speech shall whisper out of the dust."

Nephi finishes his account by connecting his words to one crying from the dust in 2 Nephi 33:13, which states: "And now, my beloved brethren, all those who are of the house of Israel, and all ye ends of the earth, I speak unto you as the voice of one crying from the dust: Farewell until that great day shall come."

Second Nephi 3:19–20 and 2 Nephi 33:13 fit into the greater literary tradition of the book as the dying testaments of patriarchs. Earlier in the chapter, Lehi quotes a prophecy from Joseph of Egypt that a righteous seer would be

39. Mendez, "Condemnations of Necromancy," 60.

raised up and bring forth God's word, so those who had died would be able to cry from the dust. The one who is to be, as it were, a spokesman for the dead could thus be interpreted as the medium that facilitates contact between the spirits and those they warn.

Nephi picks up the Isaiah 29:4 theme in 2 Nephi 26 and reinterprets it in order to support his prophecy of the ultimate destruction of his people. He then exploits the language of Isaiah to prophesy that those who were destroyed will speak to a mysterious character identified as "him" and it is implied that "he" will then spread these whisperings to others. While the male character is not established within the pericope, it can be inferred from the previous passage that Nephi is here alluding to a redactor or translator. Nephi seems to be building off of both Isaiah and his father's interpretation and further connects the ultimate destruction of his people and the translation of his words to the whole. It is also worth noting that because this people would not heed the prophet's revelation from YHWH, they would suffer similar consequences to those predicted by the prophet in Isaiah 29. This reiterates that the sole way the people's history could be discovered is through their dead souls speaking from out of the ground.

Nephi again refers to this scripture in 2 Nephi 33. The text connects Nephi himself as one of the prophesied individuals who will cry from the dust. This poignant chapter appears to link the idea of necromancy to the influence the deceased Book of Mormon prophets believed they would hold over their descendants who read their words. The chapter also perpetuates the idea that voices from the dust play an imperative role within the necromancy metaphor as they are the ones who beg that their writings will be able to reach into and affect significant change upon the future.

Scriptures in Mormon and Moroni

After a silence on the subject, the theme is again picked up in Mormon 8:23⁴⁰ where it proclaims, "Search the prophecies of Isaiah. Behold, I cannot write them. Yea, behold I say unto you, that those saints who have gone before me, who have possessed this land, shall cry, yea, even from the dust will they cry unto the Lord; and as the Lord liveth he will remember the covenant which he hath made with them."

Finally, Moroni 10:27 employs crying from the dust imagery in the concluding chapter of the Book of Mormon: "And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye

40. Moroni is most likely quoting Nephi's Isaiah and its context, rather than the original Isaiah 29:4. See Gardner, *Second Witness*.

shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?"

Moroni seeks to contextualize the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in terms of speaking from the dust, which is synonymized with speaking from the dead in this verse. As Mormon 8:23 begins with the command to study the words of Isaiah, it is fairly certain that Isaiah 29:4 is the basis for Moroni's interpretation. This verse states that the saints will cry unto God from the grave for the fulfillment of his covenant with them. This statement adds a certain nuance to the prophecy, as YHWH is now an active participant in the act, thereby placing the metaphor under divine sanction. YHWH's fulfillment of his original promise to the dead establishes him as an integral member in the necromancy metaphor. Because YHWH heard the dead prophets' pleas for their covenant with him to be fulfilled, he would later direct a translator of the plates, at which point the dead would then be allowed to share their insights on the future with the people of the modern era.⁴¹ It is therefore plausible that Moroni is building off of Lehi and Nephi's interpretation to further proclaim the ultimate purpose of the Book of Mormon.⁴²

Finally, Moroni 10:27 concludes the references of necromancy within the Book of Mormon along with the record itself. Moroni here transfers necromancy into a face-to-face meeting where deity, the dead, and those they warned all come together at YHWH's judgment bar. This scene places the responsibility of acting on the dead's directives upon those who read the Book of Mormon. Thus, the role of the hearers is elevated from mere receivers of prophetic information to active participants who, once supplied with such knowledge, must then employ it or risk divine judgment from not only YHWH, but also Moroni as the text's redactor, who supplied the information in the first place.

The Book of Mormon's interpretation of necromancy can be accorded a similar function to that of its Hebrew Bible counterpart. These scriptures, while employing necromancy as a metaphor to discuss the discovery and translation of the Book of Mormon, also repeatedly remind the reader of the fact that God is the one who allows these events to take place. Thus, just as in the Hebrew Bible, we see the state cult's prophets employing the principles of necromancy to remind the people that their God is the acting force behind all revelation given to man. This is evidenced in each of the scriptures discussed above: Lehi presents the Book of Mormon as possessing the spirit of one who is departed

41. Quinn, *Mormonism*, 152–53.

42. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 418–19.

and states that YHWH will give power to the necromancer to interpret the voices of the dead. Nephi expands the idea by framing his last testament within the language of necromancy. Finally, Moroni concludes by naming YHWH as the deity who has orchestrated these proceedings. While necromancy was an outlying practice from Israelite religion and religion as recorded in the Book of Mormon, it was nevertheless employed as a metaphor for YHWH's relationship with his covenant people as illustrated in the Hebrew Bible as well as the fulfillment of his covenant to bring forth the Book of Mormon.

Conclusion

The Hebrew Bible contains numerous references to the ancient art of divination through communing with the dead, and the Book of Mormon elaborates upon this concept. Though there are many harsh proscriptions against the practice in the Hebrew Bible, many passages reference necromancy and its connected imagery literarily. The authors specifically employed the imagery in order to further promote the idea that YHWH could control the revelatory practices of not only Israel, but the entire world, according to the faithfulness of the people. This argument is also applied by Book of Mormon prophets to the book's discovery and translation. Despite the different focus of the Book of Mormon references, the idea that YHWH is the omniscient source for information about the future is still clearly present in each passage. Additionally, the imagery necromancy conjures in these passages is both rooted in the actual practice and transmits these concepts through metaphor to juxtapose YHWH against popular religion and its practices.