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In ancient Egypt, sitting on a chair, as opposed to sitting on the ground or on a stool used by a worker, meant you were important, because the chief role of furniture was to signify status. The chair represented nobility both in practice and in communication.

Sitting Enthroned: A Scriptural Perspective

JENNIFER C. LANE

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Putting scriptural texts into historical and cultural context has the potential to open up new insights and reveal what may have been hiding in plain sight. By allowing what might seem familiar in a modern perspective to be seen in the new light of a different cultural world, the ancient meaning can become clear.

Asking what sitting down meant in an ancient Near Eastern context provides new insights into both an important passage in the book of Isaiah as well as related sitting imagery found throughout scriptures. The verse that this background clarifies has an interesting puzzle tied to sitting. In Isaiah 52:1, the city Zion is addressed and told to “awake,” to “put on [her] strength,” and to “put on [her] beautiful garments” because there is now a special status so that “henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.” Then in verse 2 the puzzle appears: Zion/Jerusalem is told to “shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down.” On its surface, it would seem odd to be told to arise only to be told to sit down. Clearly, these directional instructions are bracketed by a change in status. Before, Zion is told to shake off the dust, then afterwards told, “Loose thyself from the bands of thy

neck, O captive daughter of Zion.” This is a very rich and symbolic passage. By digging deep into the contextual meaning of the term “sit down” in the instructions to “arise, and sit down,” both this verse and many other analogous verses become both more culturally and more doctrinally meaningful.

This paper will examine the broader cultural context of what the action of sitting and sitting on chairs meant in the ancient Near Eastern world. The focus will be on a word study of the Hebrew root *yshb*, which has a depth of meaning beyond the simple translation of “sit down” found in the King James Version of the Bible. By considering the meaning of sitting on chairs in the ancient Near East, with a particular emphasis on the Old Testament usage of this term and the implications tied to both kingly and divine enthronement as symbols of power and exaltation, the meaning of the Isaiah 52:2 passage becomes much richer.

This background clarifies not only this Isaiah text but also the significance of “sitting down” in a number of New Testament and Book of Mormon passages. The historical and cultural meaning opens up these texts as invitations to symbolically arise from the mundane and fallen world and to receive symbols of glory, rule, and divine nature. This fuller understanding of the invitation to “arise, and sit down” in Isaiah 52:2 corresponds to Isaiah 52:1, in which Zion is told to “awake,” to “put on [her] strength,” and to put on her “beautiful garments.” While this study focuses on the background of “sitting down” as a way to communicate being enthroned and receiving a new status, Isaiah’s symbolic parallelism of “sitting down” with putting on “beautiful garments” reinforces this exalted status and is seen in other scriptural passages as well, particularly in the Book of Mormon.

Context of “Sitting Down” in Hebrew and in the Old Testament World

Not all societies are chair-sitting cultures.¹ Many people worldwide are comfortable crouching down on their heels in a deep squat or kneeling while sitting on their heels. In many societies, most people have traditionally sat cross-legged on the floor. Historically, there are cultures that developed the use of chairs or borrowed the use of chairs, and, significantly, their use traditionally carried great symbolic weight.

One example that comes to mind to illustrate this point is the medieval cathedral. These large spaces that are now filled with wooden chairs were empty of furniture for the congregation when built. The congregants stood during services. There was a chair, however, from which a cathedral took its

status; the cathedral served as the *see* (from the Latin *sedes*), or “seat,” of the bishop and also expressed the scope of his ecclesiastical authority. In the cathedral, the bishop had a special seat that distinguished him and reinforced his status. This special chair with armrests, or throne, was also known as the bishop’s *cathedra* (from the Greek for “seat”).

This special role of the chair in medieval society existed in other areas besides church. Throughout the Middle Ages, chairs were used by kings and nobles. It was not until the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Europe that chairs became commonly owned by ordinary people other than nobles, and this change became a significant marker of rising status among the increasing middle class.² Before that, the “ordinary folk mostly [sat] on whatever [was] at hand: stools, chests, upturned buckets, or just the ground.”³

This pattern of chairs having a special role to designate social status can be clearly traced back to the Egyptians and their influence on Mediterranean culture. In both medieval European and ancient Egyptian cultures, “if you were entitled to sit on a chair it meant you were important, because the chief role of furniture was to signify status.”⁴ The Egyptians were very influential in their chair design and usage.⁵ For the Egyptians, “sitting on a chair was associated with ceremonies, and it was likely the need for a portable throne that resulted in the ingenious folding stool.”⁶ This folding stool was influential throughout the Mediterranean, and their “thronelike armchairs” were also adopted by the Greeks.⁷ In ancient Egypt, stools were used by common people, but “unlike stools, chairs appear to have been reserved for the exclusive use of important personages.”⁸ The cultural meaning of sitting on a chair, as opposed to sitting on the ground or on a stool used by a worker, was literally inscribed into the linguistic code. “The Egyptian hieroglyph for ‘revered person’ depicted a noble seated in a chair.”⁹ The chair represented nobility both in practice and in communication.¹⁰

Yashab and Cognates in the Ancient Near East

The special status of being seated can be seen in the languages of the ancient Near East, and these languages provide additional cultural context to the meaning of being seated in Hebrew culture and the Hebrew Bible. In a variety of Semitic languages, the root *yshb* can be translated as “sit down,” but it also points to both a special status and a broader concept of dwelling or residing.

In Middle and Late Babylonian, the central concept is that of “enduring presence,” which can be translated into “the basic meanings ‘sit down,’ ‘reside

and live somewhere,' and 'be settled.'"11 The related "semantic nuance of 'sitting on a throne'" is "used primarily of kings and gods."¹² In Ugaritic, a language very close to Hebrew, the root *ytb* can mean "sit," and also "be enthroned" when "used of a king or a god."¹³ In Ugaritic texts, the Canaanite God "Ba'al . . . is said to 'sit enthroned.' Ba'al can also perform the act of *ytb lks3*, 'sitting down on the throne.'"14 In the conceptual and linguistic world of the Israelites' neighbors, "sitting" could often be read as "being enthroned."

***Yashab* in the Old Testament**

The term *yashab* has been counted as having 1,090 occurrences in the Old Testament.¹⁵ While the Hebrew word means the physical act of sitting, this word's meaning is not limited to one act. The range of meaning of the Hebrew root includes "to sit," "to dwell," and "to remain."¹⁶ Beyond the human activity of sitting, the verb *yashab* conveys the idea of dwelling in a place, "emphasizing the stability and duration of residence in contrast to [the other Hebrew verbs, such as] *nwh*, reach the goal of the journey, rest . . . , or *skn*, dwell temporarily."¹⁷

The sense of permanence in dwelling or remaining was, for the Israelites, a fundamentally religious concept. Görg has observed that in ancient Israel "dwelling safely' must be guaranteed by Yahweh. Any *yshb* is therefore bound to fail if it is based on injustice . . . or contradicts Yahweh's direct command."¹⁸ Not having Yahweh's promise results in the opposite of dwelling in a condition of stability and permanence: uninhabited desolation.¹⁹ The connection of the promise of "having rest" and "dwelling in safety" with being in a faithful relationship with the Lord is found in Deuteronomy 12:10: "But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell [*yshb*] in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell [*yshb*] in safety."

This semantic multivalence of *yashab* can add complexity, but it can also add depth. When the root *yshb* appears, it may literally be describing sitting, and yet the resonance of the word conveys additional layers of meaning.²⁰ Students of the root meaning of this Hebrew term have suggested that *yshb* "probably lies in the realm of change of location, especially in the case of persons. Shift to a lasting or even permanent state appears to be in the foreground."²¹ This idea of a change of permanent or lasting state is a key concept that more fully uncovers the meaning of "arise, and sit down" in Isaiah 52:2. There is still more to explore of what sitting would mean in this context, but

it is clear that when the Lord invites the "captive daughter of Zion" to "shake [herself] from the dust," to "arise *and sit down*," and to "loose [herself] from the bands of [her] neck," the resultant profound change in state can be permanent because the change is being made by the intervention of the Lord of Israel (emphasis added).

In addition to this more metaphorical sense of "sitting" as "dwelling," a quick survey provides a sense of the practical ways in which the verb is used in the Old Testament. People are "sitting on a chair or throne (2 Kings 11:19; Jeremiah 33:17), on the ground (Isaiah 3:26; Jer 48:18; Ezek 26:16), in the dust (Isa 47:1), on a bed (1 Sam 28:23), or in an assembly (Ps 1:1)." ²² In addition to having a descriptive function to document human motion, the verb was also used metaphorically in a variety of settings that did not include royalty: "1) military encampment . . . ; 2) ambush—human and animal . . . ; 3) metaphorical 'sitting on the ground' (Isa 3:26, Jerusalem; Isaiah 47:1, virgin daughter of Babylon); 4) remaining at home . . . ; 5) 'living' under various conditions."²³ Quite a variety of uses are possible with this handy verb.

So the 1,090 occurrences of *yshb* in the Old Testament are clearly not all religious in nature. This is a practical verb that describes a practical reality of human existence. But to more fully understand how *yshb* is being used in Isaiah 52:2, it is essential to consider a more exalted role of sitting that was hinted at more broadly in its cultural usage in the ancient Near East. The practical reality is that people are not invited to arise from the dust simply to be told to sit down again on the ground. Something far more significant is happening here, and it is made clear by examining the kingly and divine ways of "sitting down."

Kings and "Sitting Enthroned"

Just as the cathedral is the "seat," or *see*, of the medieval bishop, the seat of a king is more than just a piece of furniture. Even in modern-day English, the phrase "to take the throne" is another way to say that someone becomes a king. The same was true in biblical Hebrew.²⁴ The parallelism is clear in 1 Kings where Bathsheba says to David: "My lord, thou swarest by the LORD thy God unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon [*yshb*] my throne" (1 Kings 1:17; see also 1:13). As Görg observes, "Enthronement and sovereignty surely are more than just 'aspects' of kingship."²⁵ In the context of the Old Testament, this special status of being on the throne as a way to express reigning was not only used to

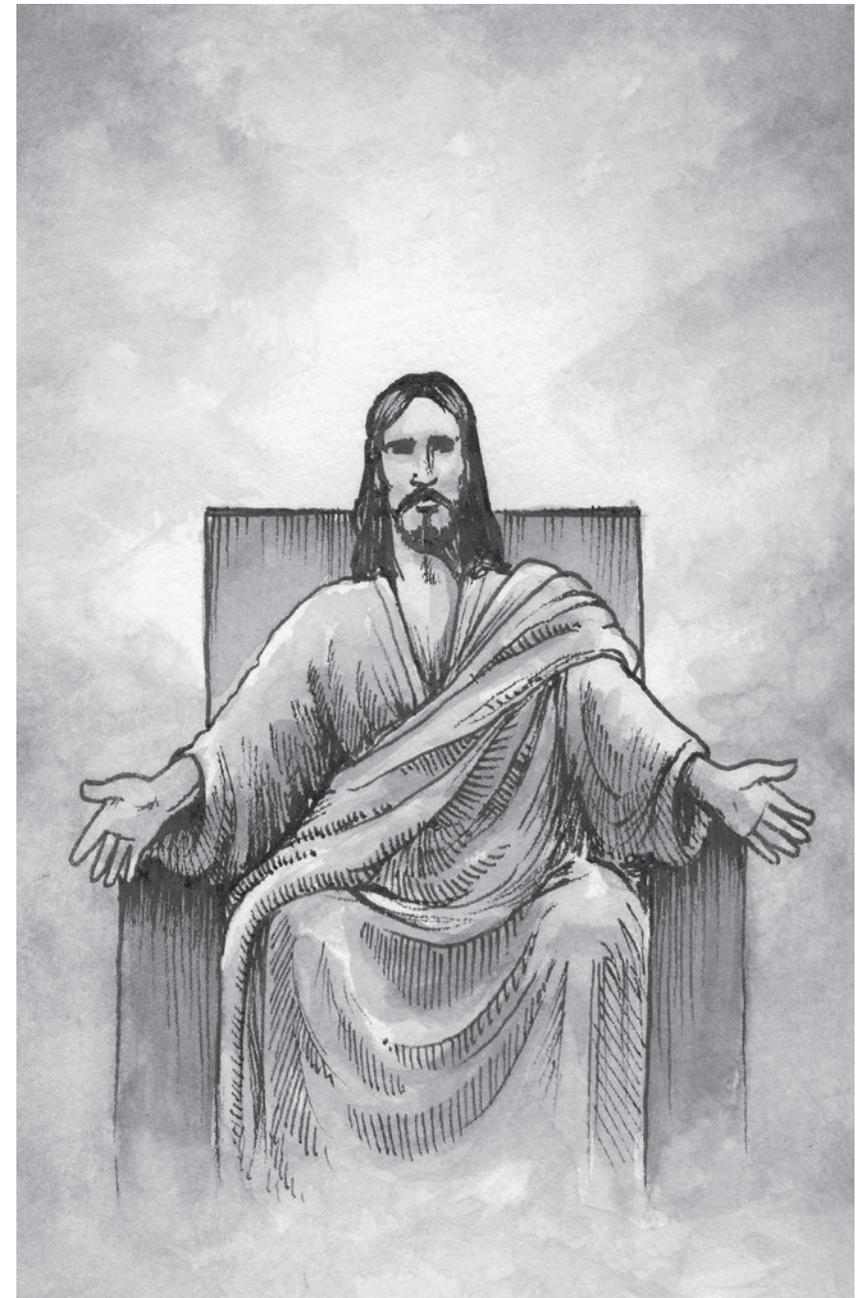
describe ruling in Israel but was also used for the rule of Pharaoh. At the time of the destroying angel in the last of the ten plagues, “at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh *that sat [yshb] on his throne* unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon” (Exodus 12:29; emphasis added).

Of course, as seen before, the king of Egypt had a physical throne as a marker of his status, and that was also true in Israel. Solomon had a particularly ostentatious throne made, which is described in 1 Kings 10:18–20: “Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays [armrests] on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom.” A throne like that is certainly meant to communicate a message.

While physical thrones could be seen in Israel, Egypt, and throughout the ancient Near East, much like the religious connection in which dwelling in permanence was seen as dependent on Yahweh, “the *yshb* of a king takes on a special dimension when it is associated with the presence of Yahweh or even defined as being fundamentally dependent on Yahweh.”²⁶ Görg notes that 1 Kings 2:24 illustrates how “Yahweh is the authentic initiator and guarantor of enthronement.”²⁷ Solomon’s claim to the throne is tied to the Lord having established his reign: “Now therefore, as the Lord liveth, which hath established me, and *set me on the throne of David my father*, and who hath made me an house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day” (1 Kings 2:24; emphasis added). Likewise, in Psalm 110:1, the king (“my lord”) is told by Yahweh, “Sit . . . at my right hand”—an image tied not just to an earthly throne room but to the heavenly one as well.²⁸

Jehovah “Sitting Enthroned”

In Israel, the kingship that a person could hold was clearly an earthly type and shadow of the true King of Israel, the Lord Jehovah. The imagery of the heavenly throne room and the Holy of Holies as the Lord’s throne room on earth is central to how his status and presence were understood throughout the Old Testament. This imagery is particularly pronounced in the Psalms. “The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD’s throne is in heaven” (Psalm 111:4). “For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness”



Gene Ploss, 123 RF.

The practical reality is that people are not invited to arise from the dust simply to be told to sit down again on the ground. Something far more significant is happening here, and it is made clear by examining the kingly and divine ways of “sitting down.”

(Psalm 47:7–8). “The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all” (Psalm 103:19). In addition to the Psalms, another important example of how the heavenly presence of the Lord is understood as a throne room is found in Isaiah’s theophany:

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

Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. (Isaiah 6:1–4)

Just like the inherent rule of a king implies sitting upon a throne, often the term *throne* does not even appear when describing the Lord sitting, but the verb *yashab* alone is understood to convey sitting on a throne, as in Psalm 123:1, where we read, “Yahweh sits [*yshb*] in the heavens (‘enthroned’).”²⁹ An interesting passage in Psalm 29:10 has a “double use of the root” *yshb* in which “Yahweh ‘sits enthroned [*yshb*] over the flood’ and he ‘sits enthroned [*yshb*] as king forever.”³⁰

While the Lord Jehovah is usually described as “sitting enthroned” or “dwelling” (*yshb*) in the heavens, the temple and Zion can also be places where he “sits enthroned.” Wilson observes that a “special use of [*yshb*] describes Yahweh as sitting enthroned ‘between the cherubim’ above the Ark of the Covenant (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:15; 1 Chron 13:16; Isa 37:16; Ps 99:1) or in Zion (Ps 9:11).”³¹ In Psalm 132:13, a variation on *yshb*, *moshab*, meaning “seat” or “dwelling place,” is used to describe Zion: “For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation [*moshab*].” That there are places on earth in which *yshb* can be used with reference to Jehovah is significant because in referring to the divine, the verb “normally indicates heaven rather than earth as the place of God’s dwelling. . . . The use of *yshb* to describe Yahweh’s dwelling in heaven stresses the stability and duration of his residence there, in contrast to the human experience of God on the earth where, for the most part, Yahweh is said to *shkn*, dwell, emphasizing the temporary nature of his manifestations.”³²

It is critical to recognize that with reference to both kings and the Lord Jehovah, the verb *yshb* can be read as “sit enthroned,” even when the noun for *throne* is not present. It is the essence of their condition that they reign, and so “sitting” is not a pedestrian activity for them but a synonym for their

status and a condition of rulership. How then can this inform our reading of Isaiah 52:2 in which Zion or Jerusalem is told to “arise and *yashab*”? To understand the passage in Isaiah 52:2, it is important to recognize that the Lord’s status as the King of Israel and the King of the whole earth puts him in a position to change the status of human beings, even to the point of setting them upon a throne. A very moving and beautiful example of how the Lord can lift someone from the dust to a throne is found in Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2:7–8: “The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s, and he hath set the world upon them” (emphasis added).

This doctrinal insight, that with the intervention of the Lord even the poor and beggars can be “set among princes” and “made to inherit the throne of glory,” can open our eyes to the meaning of Isaiah 52:2 and to the imagery of sitting down as a symbol for being exalted to a new condition by the power of God. The King James Version does not do much with the verb *yshb* in its translation and therefore leaves out layers of meaning in this passage: “Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down [*yshb*], O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.”

Other translations have attempted to bring in more of the contextually informed meaning that is under consideration. The New International Version reads: “Shake off your dust; rise up, *sit enthroned* [*yshb*], Jerusalem. Free yourself from the chains on your neck, Daughter Zion, now a captive” (emphasis added). The International Standard Version takes a similar approach: “Shake yourself from the dust and arise, and *sit on your throne* [*yshb*], O Jerusalem! Loosen the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion” (emphasis added). Blenkinsopp translates it: “Arise, shake yourself free of the dust. / Jerusalem, *ascend your throne* [*yshb*]; / loose the bonds from your neck, / captive daughter Zion!”³³ Longman reads it: “Shake off your dust; / rise up, *sit enthroned* [*yshb*], O Jerusalem. / Free yourself from the chains on your neck, / O captive Daughter of Zion.”³⁴ Lest one think that reading “sitting down upon a throne” into *yshb* is a modern phenomenon, it is fascinating to note that the Targum of Isaiah 52:2 reads the passage as “*tyby 'l kvsy yqr*,” ‘sit on your glorious throne.’”³⁵

“Sitting Enthroned”: Implications beyond the Old Testament

What are the doctrinal implications from such a small variation in translation? This culturally and contextually informed reading of *ysbb* in Isaiah 52:2 has relevance beyond this verse alone. It gives us tools to think more deeply about places in which humans are lifted up from dust to glory, places where individuals are exalted and invited to sit down upon a throne. Rather than merely being the reversal of a negative situation (dust and captivity)—a reversal that is perhaps symbolic of justification and leaving sin—here “sitting down” points instead to being added upon and entering into a glorious new situation of enthronement and exaltation.

Thinking symbolically about Zion or Jerusalem being brought up from the dust and captivity provides symbols for achieving exaltation and becoming joint heirs with Christ, because he also sat down in the kingdom at the right hand of the Father. In Revelation 3:21, Christ promises that “to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” The breadth of this invitation is captured in Matthew 8:11, where the Savior explains that “many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”³⁶ Once one understands “sitting down in the kingdom of heaven” in the cultural context of God sitting enthroned in the heavens, the promise of Revelation 3:21 takes on a very tangible form of expressing the assurance of exaltation through Jesus Christ.

In Isaiah 52:2, Zion/Jerusalem is in a lowly state, captive and sitting in the dust. It was not its own glory that brought it to an exalted throne but accepting the Redeemer’s invitation to arise and sit enthroned. As Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2:7–8 emphasizes, being lifted up to a glorified state shows the glory of the Deliverer rather than human merit: “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory” (emphasis added). Understanding the broader cultural and doctrinal meaning of being brought to sit down in the presence of God gives additional insight into why celestial rooms have chairs.

The passages that come to life with a more deeply contextual understanding of *ysbb* in Isaiah 52:2 are not only these passages in the book of Revelation and Matthew 8, but many doctrinally significant passages in the Book of Mormon. Armed with this contextually informed sense of the meaning of “sitting down” in the presence of God, new insights open up. In these texts,

“sitting down” is tied to images of being with and like God—being in the presence of the patriarchs, at the right hand of God; having white and spotless garments; and living in a condition of peace. One can also see the sense of *ysbb*, which conveys permanence of condition and of residence. Without having to argue that *ysbb* lies behind “sitting down” in the Book of Mormon, the depth and breadth of its usage in the Old Testament clearly informs the meaning of “sitting down” in the kingdom of heaven. Another close connection we see with Isaiah 52 in these Book of Mormon passages is the symbolic parallelism between putting on “beautiful garments” and sitting down enthroned.

Alma poses the following question to the people of Zarahemla: “Do ye suppose that [the unrepentant] can have a *place to sit down in the kingdom of God*, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and also all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white?” (Alma 5:24; emphasis added). In Gideon, Alma has more comforting words for a more righteous people: “And may the Lord bless you, and keep your garments spotless, that ye may at last be *brought to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, and the holy prophets who have been ever since the world began, having your garments spotless even as their garments are spotless, in the kingdom of heaven to go no more out” (Alma 7:25; emphasis added). Alma’s prayer for all those who have accepted the invitation to repent demonstrates his confidence that they have spiritually arisen from the dust. He prays, “May God grant unto these, my brethren, *that they may sit down in the kingdom of God*; yea, and also all those who are the fruit of their labors that they may go no more out, but that they may praise him forever” (Alma 29:17; emphasis added). The sense of permanence in staying and remaining in this new and exalted condition that is central to *ysbb* is very clear in these passages.

In Alma 34:35–36, Amulek uses similar imagery of permanence and sitting down regarding those who have not procrastinated the day of their repentance. Those who do delay repentance will find that “the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from [them], and hath no place in [them] . . . because the Lord hath said he dwelleth not in unholy temples, but in the hearts of the righteous doth he dwell; yea, and he has also said that *the righteous shall sit down in his kingdom, to go no more out*; but their garments should be made white through the blood of the Lamb” (emphasis added). Alma echoes this hope for his son Shiblon in Alma 38:15: “And may the Lord bless your soul, and receive you at the last day into his kingdom, *to sit down in peace*” (emphasis added). Mormon likewise uses “sitting down” and the permanence of this

state to frame his promise that “the Lord is merciful unto all who will, in the sincerity of their hearts, call upon his holy name” (Helaman 3:27). This gives hope that even when captive and in the dust, all can choose to “believe on the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God,” and thereby receive the power of his deliverance and the power of his exaltation, which can exalt to a higher status. “Lay[ing] hold upon the word of God” proves to be “quick and powerful” to lead God’s children across the “everlasting gulf of misery” and to “land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven, *to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and with Jacob, and with all our holy fathers, to go no more out*” (Helaman 3:28–30; emphasis added).

In the Savior’s visit to the Americas, he actually quotes Isaiah 52:2 in describing his redemption of Jerusalem and promises that it “shall be brought to pass that which is written” (3 Nephi 20:36): “Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion” (3 Nephi 20:37). Later in his visit the Savior uses the same imagery of “sitting down” to describe the full change of status and condition of the Three Nephites, who were translated: “And for this cause ye shall have fulness of joy; and *ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father*; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one” (3 Nephi 28:10; emphasis added). The promise of becoming “even as [Christ is]” and “even as the Father” is, is the fullest possible sense of being exalted, or lifted up, to a new status. While it is not clear that the term *yshb* lies behind the text in the Book of Mormon, “sitting down” in this passage captures the root concept of this verb, which “probably lies in the realm of change of location, especially in the case of persons. Shift to a lasting or even permanent state appears to be in the foreground.”³⁷

Obtaining this exalted and divine state and condition depends on our being filled with charity and taking on the divine nature. This is clearly taught in the Lord’s promise to Moroni. Moroni first acknowledges that “except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father” (Ether 12:34). Then the Lord proceeds to console Moroni in the face of others’ weakness by using both the imagery of clean garments and of sitting down: “And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong, *even unto the sitting down in the place*

which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father” (Ether 12:37; emphasis added). Here it is even more explicit that the throne of glory to which we are being invited is a way of being as much as a place to be.

Conclusion

Being exalted to sit upon the throne requires leaving behind the captivity and dust of sin but also putting on the beautiful garments of righteousness and sitting down upon the throne of God’s glorious and godly nature. In Isaiah 52:1–3, this invitation is modeled with the invitation made to Zion: “Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.”³⁸

We all find ourselves captive, having sold ourselves for naught. Our Redeemer invites us to “arise from the dust” (2 Nephi 1:14) and to “shake off the awful chains by which [we] are bound” (2 Nephi 1:13). But in addition to liberating us from the bondage of sin, he also invites us to sanctify ourselves, to “put on [our] beautiful garments” and to sit down upon the throne of godliness and righteousness (see Isaiah 52:1–2). As we become like him and take on the divine nature, we prepare ourselves to fulfill Christ’s injunction: “*Sit down in the kingdom of my Father*; . . . and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one” (3 Nephi 28:10; emphasis added).

Just as we are invited to put on “robes of righteousness,” external representations of an internal state, so the “throne” upon which God sits and reigns is the throne of his righteousness and holiness.³⁹ The Psalmist taught that “righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne” (Psalm 97:2) and that “God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness” (Psalm 47:8). As we overcome the natural man, leaving behind the dust and captivity of sin, and are lifted up to become righteous and holy through faith and repentance, we can receive the Christ’s exalted promise to us: “Sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21). **RE**

Notes

1. For a discussion of sitting in different cultures, see Witold Rybczynski, *Now I Sit Me Down: From Klismos to Plastic Chair: A Natural History* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), 39–56. See also Gordon W. Hewes, “World Distribution of Certain Postural Habits,” *American Anthropologist* 57, no. 2 (April 1955): 231–44. I am grateful to my colleague Matthew Bowen for his linguistic insights and his encouragement of my work on sitting enthroned.
2. Rybczynski, *Now I Sit Me Down*, 63–65.
3. Rybczynski, *Now I Sit Me Down*, 62–63.
4. Rybczynski, *Now I Sit Me Down*, 62.
5. For more details on the influence of Egyptian thrones on Greek furniture, see G. M. A. Richter, *The Furniture of the Greeks, Etruscans and Romans* (London: Phaidon Press, 1966), 15–23.
6. Rybczynski, *Now I Sit Me Down*, 16.
7. Rybczynski, *Now I Sit Me Down*, 59.
8. Rybczynski, *Now I Sit Me Down*, 16.
9. Rybczynski, *Now I Sit Me Down*, 17. See also Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar: Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 440.
10. The Egyptian *hmst* has the same range of meaning as the Hebrew term for “sit down.” The form *hmst* indicates “seat” in the sense of “rank, position.” Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962), 170.
11. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 6:421.
12. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 421.
13. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 421–22.
14. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 422. “One new development is that when [Ugaritic] *yṯb* or Akkadian *wasbu* appear with *kussi* ‘throne,’ the verb yields the sense of ‘ascending the throne’ (e.g. 1 Kgs 1:46).” R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, “שָׁבַי” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Bible Press, 1980), 1:411; hereafter cited as *TWOT*.
15. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 423; *TWOT*, 411. Lawlor counts it as 1,088. John I. Lawlor, “Sit, Dwell,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 5, S–Z (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 295.
16. Lawlor, “Sit, Dwell,” 295.
17. Gerald H. Wilson, “Yashab,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: 1997), 2:550.
18. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 429.
19. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 429.
20. Lawlor, “Sit, Dwell,” 295.
21. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 421.
22. Wilson, “Yashab,” 550.
23. Lawlor, “Sit, Dwell,” 296.
24. Given the usage of throne with reigning, “it is therefore not surprising that *yṯb* by itself can have the meaning ‘be king, reign.” Görg, “שָׁבַי yāšab; mōšab,” 430.
25. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 430. “The ‘throne’ is undoubtedly ‘the most important symbol of royal authority’; at the same time, ‘the expression ‘to sit on the throne’ signifies ‘to become king.’” Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 430.

26. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 430.
27. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 431.
28. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 431.
29. Lawlor, “Sit, Dwell,” 296. “In places where the Lord is said to dwell in heaven or in Zion, the thought is that he is enthroned.” *TWOT*, 411–12.
30. Lawlor, “Sit, Dwell,” 296.
31. Wilson, “Yashab,” 551.
32. Wilson, “Yashab,” 551.
33. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 19a:340; emphasis added.
34. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 6, Proverbs–Isaiah, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 788; emphasis added.
35. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 19a:340. See also *The Bible in Aramaic Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts*, ed. Alexander Sperber (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 106.
36. The Greek term in Matthew 8:11 is “recline,” rather than “sit down.” The implication may be more sitting at a table than a throne, but it certainly suggests feeling settled, dwelling, and being at rest.
37. Görg, “שבִּי, yāšab; mōšab,” 421.
38. The mercy of the Lord’s redemption, which makes available our new seat and status, is beautifully captured by Paul in Ephesians 2:4–7: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and *made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (emphasis added). The New American Standard Bible translates verse six as follows: “And raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” It is beyond the scope of this paper, but the Hebrew term for “arise,” *qum*, in Isaiah 52:2 also has connections to the Resurrection and ties in well with the idea of celestial glory.
39. See, for example, Isaiah 61:10: “My soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.” See also 2 Nephi 9:14: “The righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness.”