

amount of alcohol in wine and beer is normally less than 10 percent because fermentation stops when the ethyl alcohol concentration reaches this level. In modern times, however, the amount in alcoholic beverages has been increased by distillation.

The availability of beverages with higher concentrations of alcohol has increased the number of social and medical problems associated with ingesting it. Some conditions that are increased among those who use alcohol include cancers of the oral cavity, larynx, and esophagus; cirrhosis of the liver; degenerative diseases of the central nervous system; and higher accidental death rates (both automobile and pedestrian accidents).

The proscription on alcohol ingestion has reduced the incidence of all of these conditions among Latter-day Saints. The number of alcoholics in any population is usually estimated from the number of deaths caused by cirrhosis of the liver. An unpublished study conducted at the University of Utah in 1978 found that the number of deaths from alcoholic cirrhosis of the liver among LDS people was about half that of the non-LDS in Utah and other areas of the United States. This suggests that while the Word of Wisdom does not prevent alcoholism entirely, it has been effective in reducing its incidence.

[See also Social Services.]

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## ALLEGORY OF ZENOS

The Allegory of Zenos (Jacob 5) is a lengthy, prophetic declaration made by ZENOS, a Hebrew prophet, about the destiny of the house of ISRAEL. Evidently copied directly from the plates of brass into the Book of Mormon record by JACOB, it was intended (1) to reinforce Jacob's own teachings both about Jesus Christ ("We knew of Christ, and

we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming"—Jacob 4:4) and about the house of Israel's anticipated unresponsiveness toward the coming Redeemer ("I perceive . . . they will reject the stone upon which they might build and have safe foundation"—Jacob 4:15), and (2) to instruct his people about the promised future re-gathering of Israel, to which Jacob's people belonged.

Framed in the tradition of parables, the allegory "likens" the house of Israel to an olive tree whose owner struggles to keep it from dying. The comparison figuratively illustrates God's bond with his chosen people and with the Gentiles, and underscores the lesson that through patience and compassion God will save and preserve the compliant and obedient.

The narrative contains seventy-six verses, divisible into five parts, all tied together by an overarching theme of good winning over bad, of life triumphing over death. In the first part, an alarmed owner, recognizing threatening signs of death (age and decay) in a beloved tree of superior quality, immediately tries to nurse it back to health (verses 4–5). Even though new growth appears, his ministering does not fully heal the tree; and so, with a servant's help, he removes and destroys waning parts and in their place grafts limbs from a "wild" tree. At the same time, he detaches the old tree's "young and tender" new growth for planting in secluded areas of his property. Though disappointed, he resolves to save his beloved tree (verses 6–14).

Second, following a lengthy interval of conscientious care, the owner's labor is rewarded with a generous harvest of choice fruit, not only from the newly grafted limbs on his old tree but also from the new growth that he planted around the property. These latter trees, however, have produced unequally: the two trees with least natural advantages have the highest, positive yield; while the most advantaged tree's production is only half good, compelling removal of its unprofitable parts. Even so, the owner continues an all-out effort on every tree, even this last one (verses 15–28).

In the third part, a long time passes. The owner and the servant return again to measure and evaluate the fruit, only to learn the worst: the old tree, though healthy, has produced a completely worthless crop; and it is the same for the other trees. Distressed, the owner orders all the trees destroyed. His assistant pleads for him to forbear a

little longer. In the fourth segment, the “grieved” owner, accompanied by the servant and other workers, carefully tries again in one last effort. Together they reverse the previous implantation (the “young and tender” plants are returned to the old tree) and splice other old tree limbs into the previously selected trees, appropriately pruning, cultivating, and nurturing each tree as required (verses 29–73). This particular operation of mixing and blending, mingling and merging all the trees together, meets with success in replicating the superior quality crop of “natural fruit” everywhere on his property. Elated, he promises his helpers a share (“joy”) in the harvest for as long as it lasts. But he also pledges destruction of all the trees if and when their capacity for a positive yield wanes again (verses 73–77).

In the subsequent chapter Jacob renders a brief interpretation (6:1–4). Conscious that his people, the Nephites, branched from the house of Israel, he is particularly anxious to redirect their increasingly errant behavior, and therefore reads into the allegory a sober caution of repentance for these impenitent New World Israelites: “How merciful is our God unto us, for he remembereth the house of Israel, both roots and branches; and he stretches forth his hands unto them all the day long; . . . but as many as will not harden their hearts shall be saved in the kingdom of God” (6:4).

Modern interpretations of the allegory have emphasized its universality. Accordingly, readers have explored its application to the house of Israel and the stretch of covenant time, that is, beginning with God’s pact with Abraham and finishing with the Millennium and the ending of the earth; its doctrinal connection to the ages of spiritual apostasy, the latter-day Restoration, Church membership, present global proselytizing, the return of the Jews, and the final judgment. Other studies have begun to explore its literary and textual correspondences with ancient documents (Hymns from Qumran) and with the Old (Genesis, Isaiah, Jeremiah) and New Testaments (Romans 11:16–24); and even its association with the known laws of botany. Some scholars have declared it one of the most demanding and engaging of all scriptural allegories, if not the most important one.

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## ALMA<sub>1</sub>

Alma<sub>1</sub> (c. 174–92 B.C.) was the first of two Almas in the Book of Mormon. He was a descendant of NEPHI<sub>1</sub>, son of LEHI, and was the young priest in the court of king Noah who attempted a peaceful release of the prophet ABINADI. For that action, Alma incurred royal vengeance, banishment, and threats upon his life. He had been impressed by Abinadi’s accusations of immorality and abuses within the government and society and by his testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mosiah 17:2). Subsequently forced underground, Alma wrote out Abinadi’s teachings, then shared them with others, attracting sufficient adherents—450—to organize a society of believers, or a church. The believers assembled in a remote, undeveloped area called Mormon. Participants in the church pledged to “bear one another’s burdens,” “mourn with those that mourn,” “comfort those that stand in need of comfort,” and “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things” (Mosiah 18:8–9). This pledge was then sealed by BAPTISM, which was considered “a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him [Almighty God] until you are dead as to the mortal body” (verse 13). Believers called themselves “the church of God, or the church of Christ, from that time forward” (verse 17).

Alma’s leadership included ordaining lay priests—one for every fifty members—whom he instructed to labor for their own support, and to limit their sermons to his teachings and the doctrine “spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets . . . nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord” (Mosiah 18:19–20). Alma also required that there be faithful observance of the SABBATH, daily expressions of gratitude to God, and no CONTENTION, “having their hearts knit together in unity and in love” (18:21–23). The priests assembled with and taught the people in a worship meet-