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Nephite Interpretations of Zenos

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It has long been recognized that the allegory of the olive tree attributed to the ancient prophet Zenos and copied from the plates of brass into the small plates by Jacob was a source used by several Book of Mormon prophets. It is often noted that Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, and Alma seemed to be relying on the allegory at several points in the elaboration of their own visions, prophecies, and teachings. In this paper I will undertake a systematic documentation of this phenomenon, including passages that have not previously been linked to Zenos. I will also attempt to demonstrate how the interpretations of the allegory by the earliest Nephite prophets advanced distinctive concepts and language that also influenced the later prophets. Important in these interpretations is the realization that the Nephite prophets simultaneously drew on the allegory, which focuses on Israel as a nation, and other writings attributable to Zenos, which deal explicitly with the relation of the individual to God and the atonement of Jesus Christ.

LEHI

The earliest obvious reference to the Zenos allegory in the Book of Mormon occurs in Nephi's paraphrase of his father's prophecies given in connection with the initial report by Lehi of his vision of the tree of life (1 Nephi 10:11) 14). The link that led Lehi from a discussion of his own visions to Zenos' allegory was his prophecy that the gospel should be preached among the Jews in connection with the ministries of John the Baptist and the Messiah, that the Jews should dwindle in unbelief, and that after the death and resurrection of the Messiah, he "should make himself manifest, by the Holy Ghost, unto the Gentiles" (1 Nephi 10:11). While Nephi later

indicates it was "the Spirit of the Lord which was in our father" (1 Nephi 15:12) which led Lehi to go on and explain these developments in terms of an olive tree, Jacob prays for "firmness in the Spirit" to aid him as he cites the pre-existing text of Zenos in full to explain the same prophecies (Jacob 4:15, 18).

Whereas Lehi "spake much" about the Gentiles and the house of Israel, comparing them to "an olive-tree, whose branches should be broken off and . . . scattered upon all the face of the earth" (10:12), Nephi gives no further details of this speech. But he does record key points of Lehi's interpretation of this prophecy. The first conclusion drawn by Lehi was that "it must needs be that we should be led with one accord into the land of promise" (10:13), fulfilling the prophecy that they would "be scattered upon all the face of the earth." The second inference Lehi made was that the final gathering of Israel was the grafting of the natural branches back into the olive-tree (10:14) and that this gathering would consist in their coming "to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer" (10:14).

It also appears that Nephi and Lehi were drawing on their own visions and revelations in their understanding of Zenos' parable. Both the Spirit and an angel had mentioned to Nephi the "dwindling in unbelief" of the house of Israel (cf. 1 Nephi 4:13 and 1 Nephi 12:22,23). Inasmuch as the angel's prophecy of the dwindling of the descendants of Laman and Lemuel in unbelief occurs in Nephi's vision, which he received when he asked to be shown the things which his father had already seen, we can assume that Lehi had the same insight into this "dwindling in unbelief." In summarizing Lehi's speech to his sons in chapter 10 Nephi tells how the Zenos parable is invoked by Lehi to expound his own vision. In the process, we can see how aspects of Lehi's (and Nephi's) visions provide the first Book of Mormon prophets with their own interpretive approach to Zenos. The main points of his vision which make it into Nephi's summary (1 Nephi 10:11) and set up the reference to the Zenos parable are:

1. the gospel would be preached among the Jews
2. the Jews would dwindle in unbelief

3. the Messiah would be slain and then rise from the dead
4. the Messiah would manifest himself to the Gentiles by the Holy Ghost
5. the Gentiles would receive the fulness of the gospel (14)

In all of this, it would seem that Lehi and Nephi are seeing the waxing and waning of Zenos' olive tree in terms of one group or another coming "to the knowledge of the true Messiah," whether the image be one of grafting in or its opposite, dwindling in unbelief.

NEPHI

Nephi first interprets the olive allegory in his own words when, after recovering from the distress brought on by the vision of the destruction of his own descendants, his brothers ask him to interpret Lehi's reference to it: "Behold, we cannot understand the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive-tree, and also concerning the Gentiles" (1 Nephi 15:7). Just as Lehi used the allegory to expand the meaning of his vision, Nephi draws on his own version of that vision to provide an interpretation of the allegory (15:8) 19). As is clearly explained in Nephi's account, all these visions and discussions take place in a short period which does not allow him enough time for emotional adjustment. Nephi considered at that moment that his "afflictions were great above all (15:5)" because he had seen that his people would "perish and [be] lost" because of "the temptations of the devil" which harden the hearts of men (1 Nephi 12:17). His first question back to his brothers connects them up with the vision when he demands, "How is it that ye will perish, because of the hardness of your hearts (15:10)?" The antidote offered by the Lord to this kind of perishing is knowledge of these truths which comes to those who do not harden their hearts, but ask the Lord in faith and diligence in keeping the commandments (15:11). This knowledge of God's truths is the key to prospering and not perishing. Nephi goes on to explain the olive tree allegory using this same basic concept derived from his vision.

The allegory itself raises these same questions, and particularly in those passages that seem to refer directly to Lehi's seed. The natural branch planted in the good spot of ground

becomes a tree with two parts, one producing tame fruit, the other producing wild fruit (Jacob 5:25). Over time, the wild part overcame the tame, which withered and died (5:40). The Lord's servant offers an explanation: "Is it not the loftiness of thy vineyard?" The branches "grew faster than the strength of the roots, *taking strength unto themselves*" (5:48). In Nephi's vision the angel gave him a similar explanation for this development. The mists of darkness represented "the *temptations of the devil*" (1 Nephi 12:17), and the large and spacious building was "the *vain imaginations and the pride* of the children of men" (12:18). "And while the angel spake these words, I beheld and saw that the seed of my brethren did contend against my seed, . . . and because of the *pride* of my seed, and the *temptations of the devil*, I beheld that the seed of my brethren did overpower the people of my seed" (12:19).

Nephi begins by identifying Lehi's descendants as a branch of the house of Israel (the olive tree) which has been broken off (15:12). The grafting of the natural branches back into the tree described in the allegory will occur when the Gentiles bring the fulness of the gospel to Lehi's descendants in the latter days (15:13). But before this happens, the Messiah will manifest himself in the body to men (Israel), after which they will *dwindle in unbelief* for many generations. They will then be scattered by the Gentiles, because they rejected the Lord (15:17). Only then will the fulness of the gospel come to the Gentiles and set up the grafting in of the natural branches or "restoration of the Jews" (15:19).

Nephi's explanation in this chapter focuses on this restoration process. Restored knowledge is the key to that explanation. At that time, their descendants ("the remnant of our seed") will know (1) "that they are of the house of Israel," (2) "that they are the covenant people of the Lord." "Then shall they know and come to the knowledge of" (3) their forefathers, (4) their Redeemer, and (5) the gospel of their Redeemer and the "very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved" (15:14). Forms of the word "know" occur six times in this one statement.

Having been thus restored, Nephi expects their descendants then to "*rejoice* and give praise unto their everlasting God, their rock and their salvation" (15:15, cf. 2 Nephi 4:30, 35). Thus restored they will "receive the strength and nourishment from the *true vine*" and "come unto the *true fold* of God" (1 Nephi 15:15). Centuries later Alma, Amulek, and other priests began to have general success in establishing the church of Christ, even before his coming. Describing their success, Mormon appears to have drawn on Nephi's interpretation of Zenos in this chapter: "the Lord did pour out his Spirit . . . [t]hat they might not be *hardened* against the word, that they might not be *unbelieving*, and go on to *destruction*, but that they might receive the word with *joy*, and as a branch grafted into the *true vine*, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord their God" (Alma 16:16) 17).

The Old Testament definitely presents the Lord as the shepherd of his flock. But in certain later prophets the scattering, gathering, and nourishing of his flock even fits the more complex pattern set out for the Lord and his olive tree in the Zenos allegory (See Ezekiel 34 and Jeremiah 23, 31, and 50). This interesting alternative language also appears to be attributed by Nephi to Zenos: "And he gathereth his children from the *four quarters of the earth*; and he *numbereth his sheep*, and *they know him*; and there shall be *one fold* and *one shepherd*; and he *shall feed his sheep*, and *in him they shall find pasture*" (1 Nephi 22:25; cf. 1 Nephi 19:16). This may explain why Nephi so easily joins the two metaphors together in speaking of the "true vine" and the "true fold" (1 Nephi 15:15). Finally, while the angel did tell Nephi "there is one God and *one Shepherd* over all the earth" (1 Nephi 13:41), the point is somewhat different. But when Samuel the Lamanite picks it up in his address to the Nephites, he uses it in the same sense as Zenos and explicitly in the context of a reference to Zenos and his prophecies: "Yea, even if they should dwindle in unbelief the Lord shall prolong their days, until the time shall come which hath been spoken of by our fathers, and also by the prophet Zenos, and many other prophets, concerning the restoration of our brethren, the Lamanites, again to the knowledge of the truth And this is according to the prophecy, that they shall again be brought to the true

knowledge, which is knowledge of their Redeemer, and their great and true shepherd, and be numbered among his sheep

(Helaman 15:11, 13; cf. Alma 5:39, 60).

In his own vision, Nephi "beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended . . . upon the *covenant people* of the Lord, who were *scattered* upon all the face of the earth (1 Nephi 14:14)" and that "at that day, the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his *covenants*, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel (1 Nephi 14:17)." Explaining matters later to his brothers, he clarifies, Lehi's speech about the olive tree referred to "all the house of Israel" and pointed "to the *covenant* which should be fulfilled in the latter days" which "the Lord made to our *father Abraham*" that in his seed "shall *all the kindreds of the earth* be blessed" (15:18, cf. Genesis 12:3). From this point on, the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant to Israel is linked to Nephite interpretations of the Zenos allegory.

It may not have required much imagination for Lehi and Nephi to see the connection between their visions and the olive tree allegory of Zenos. Nephi's use of other excerpts from Zenos in his chapter 19 suggests that Zenos may also have been shown some of the very things they had seen, and may have made these very connections in those parts of his writings in the plates of brass which are not reproduced in the Book of Mormon. The focus on the Abrahamic covenant is one example. Nephi quotes Zenos on this topic as follows: "Nevertheless, when that day cometh, saith the prophet, that they no more turn aside their hearts against the Holy One of Israel, then will he remember the *covenants* which he made to their fathers. Yea, then will he remember *the isles of the sea*; yea, and all the people who are of the house of Israel, will I gather in, saith the Lord, according to the words of the prophet Zenos, from the *four quarters of the earth*. Yea, and *all the earth shall see the salvation of the Lord*, saith the prophet; *every nation, kindred, tongue and people shall be blessed*" (1 Nephi 19:15) 17).

It is interesting to see how Isaiah seems to have picked up this statement from Zenos and recast the first half in a way that also caught the notice of Book of Mormon writers. Isaiah introduces the metaphor of the Lord baring his holy arm which in the poetic construction is made specific in Zenos' language: "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of *all the nations*;

and all the *ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God*" (Isaiah 52:10).

Abinadi quotes the Isaianic version twice in his sermon (Mosiah 12:24; 15:31), but then immediately backs it up with a near quotation of the Zenos language (Mosiah 16:1), which would make great sense if he took Zenos to be the source which made the full meaning more clear. Nowhere does the Old Testament pick up on the second half of Zenos' formulation, that "*every nation, kindred, tongue, and people shall be blessed, except possibly Daniel 3:29, in which the meaning is unrelated. But all the Book of Mormon repetitions of this phrase from Zenos, however reformulated, convey the same meaning (1 Nephi 5:18; 11:36; 13:40; 14:11; 22:28; 2 Nephi 26:13; 30:8; Mosiah 3:13,20; 15:28; 16:1; 27:25; Alma 9:20; 37:4; 45:16; 3 Nephi 26:4; 28:29). These passages all refer to that last great grafting described in the olive allegory when the gospel will be taken to all peoples and the Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled. It is the Revelation of John in the Bible, which contains a vision (also seen by Nephi), which also uses the same phrase several times (5:9; 7:9; 13:7) and in the same sense at least once (14:6).*

In the passage discussed above, Nephi explicitly attributes to Zenos the idea that the Lord will eventually gather all people of the house of Israel in "*from the four quarters of the earth*" (1 Nephi 19:16). A variation is reflected in Isaiah's statement that the Lord will "*gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth*" (Isaiah 11:12). The Book of Mormon writers pick up Zenos' formulation repeatedly. Nephi writes, possibly excerpting more of Zenos, "*and he gathereth his children from the four quarters of the earth*" (1 Nephi 22:25). And Jacob teaches that they will "*be gathered in . . . from the four parts of the earth*" (2 Nephi 10:8; cf. 3 Nephi 5:24,26; 16:5; and Ether 13:11). While references to the four parts of the earth may be

common to other ancient writings, the Book of Mormon, following Zenos, always uses the phrase in reference to this last gathering.

The abbreviated account of Nephi's great vision that we have was written into the small plates approximately thirty years after the vision was received and certainly after Nephi was fully aware of the writings of Zenos. In this account, Nephi again chose to use Zenos' language to future events. In his vision Nephi had seen

"a mist of darkness on the face of the land of promise; and I saw lightnings, and I heard thunderings, and earthquakes, and all manner of tumultuous noises; and I saw the earth and the rocks, that they rent; and I saw mountains tumbling into pieces; and I saw the plains of the earth, that they were broken up; and I saw many cities that they were sunk; and I saw many that they were burned with fire; and I saw many that did tumble to the earth, because of the quaking thereof. And it came to pass after I saw these things, I saw the vapor of darkness, that it passed from off the face of the earth . . . (1 Nephi 12:4) 5)."

Writing later about the crucifixion, Nephi quotes Zenock, Neum, and then Zenos who spoke of

"three days of darkness which should be a sign given of his death unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea, . . . who are of the house of Israel. For thus spake the prophet: The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day . . . with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness, and by the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up. And all these things must surely come, saith the prophet Zenos. And the rocks of the earth must rend . . . (1 Nephi 19:11) 12)."

Two concepts are given independently to Nephi in his vision and in the Zenos allegory. Speaking to Nephi of the restoration of the covenants to Israel through the Gentiles, the angel quotes the Lamb of God saying, "blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day . . . ; they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of

the Lamb" (1 Nephi 13:37). Similarly, Zenos quotes the Lord's words to those who serve him in his vineyard in that final restoration: "And blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in laboring with me in my vineyard and have kept my commandments, . . . ye shall have joy with me" (Jacob 5:75). Jacob picks the point up from Zenos (Jacob 6:3), and Mormon invokes this concept later to comment on the enormous good accomplished by Ammon and his fellow missionaries when he says, "And thus we see the great call of diligence of men to labor in the vineyards of the Lord" (Alma 28:14).

The second concept is the construction made famous in the New Testament wherein the reversal of roles of Jews and Gentiles is emphasized. The angel told Nephi that the Lamb would manifest himself first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles, but in the end to the Gentiles first, and last to the Jews, so that "the last shall be first, and the first shall be last" (1 Nephi 13:42). Similarly, speaking of the last effort to save his vineyard, the Lord commands his servants in Zenos' parable as they prune the vineyard for the last time to "begin at the last that they may be first, and that the first may be last" and to dig about the trees, "the first and the last; and the last and the first, that all may be nourished once again for the last time" (Jacob 5:63). The more complex sentence in Zenos uses *first* (or *begin*) and *last* five times each in pairings which in an unusual chiasmic ordering also match each one up with its opposite:

A	<i>begin</i>
B	at the <i>last</i>
C	that they may be <i>first</i> ,
D	and that the <i>first</i>
E	may be <i>last</i> , and dig about the trees,
F	both <i>old</i>
F*	and <i>young</i> ,
E*	the <i>first</i>
D*	and the <i>last</i> ;

to make a negative judgment against Nephi, just as Nephi had done to them earlier (1 Nephi 15:10). Throughout the Book of Mormon, writers invoke this phrase or variants thereof in one of these two ways)) to signal the independence of deity in his goodness and power or the arrogance of self-seeking men. Jacob, Nephi, and Benjamin use the phrase with its positive implications, describing the actions of God (2 Nephi 10:22, 25:22, Mosiah 7:33). Alma and Mormon, following Laman, use it to criticize proud and unrepentant human actions (Alma 4:8, 12:31, 17:20).

ZENOS AND ISAIAH

Chapter 19 of 1 Nephi contains Nephi's reflections on the process of making this record. Having reviewed what he wants to say about the technical aspects of that process, he moves on to talk about its purpose, "that perhaps I might persuade [my people] that they would remember the Lord their Redeemer" (1 Nephi 19:18). Nephi then turns first to the prophecies of the coming Christ which he heard personally from the angel and then briefly to prophecies from the plates of brass, including brief references to Zenock and Neum (19:10) and extensive quotation from Zenos (19:10) 17). This exercise leads Nephi to address all the house of Israel who might read his record (19:19) and to compare himself to the "prophets of old" (19:20), who had also been shown all things (19:21) concerning "those who are at Jerusalem." Nephi then undertakes to teach his brothers these things and to read them many things from the plates of brass (19:22). In addition to "these things," listed above, Nephi specifically read to them from the books of Moses and Isaiah (19:23), and even copied chapters 48 and 49 of Isaiah into his own record at that point (1 Nephi 20 and 21).

This movement from Zenos to Isaiah in Nephi's teaching to his brothers repeats the pattern of Chapter 15. In both cases, having used Zenos to predict the rejection of the Messiah and the scattering of the Jews, Nephi cites Isaiah "concerning the restoration of the Jews (1 Nephi 15:20)" that they and all Israel "may have hope" (1 Nephi 19:24).

After Nephi finishes reading from the plates of brass, concluding with the two Isaiah chapters, his brothers ask him the meaning of what he has read (1 Nephi 22:1). This leads Nephi into a summary of what he intended them to see in his readings, providing us with his interpretations, which in turn offer some insight into the extent to which he was relying primarily on Zenos, Isaiah, Moses, and even his own vision. While the tendency is to read this as a summary of the immediately preceding Isaiah passage, this only works well for verse 6, which speaks of Israel finally being "nursed by the Gentiles" and the Lord setting the Gentiles "up for a standard" (1 Nephi 22:6; cf. 1 Nephi 21:22) 23). The rest derives mostly from the Zenos materials or Nephi's own vision. That the house of Israel will "be scattered upon all the face of the earth, and also among all nations," and "to and from upon the isles of the sea," that they will harden their hearts against the Lord and then "be hated of all men," and that they will be restored in the last days because of the covenants of the Lord with their fathers are all more fully explained in the Zenos materials, and only mentioned in part by Isaiah (see 1 Nephi 22:3) 6).

These passages raise a number of issues about the relationship of Zenos and Isaiah and the way they are used by Nephi and other Book of Mormon writers. While this is far too large a topic to be treated systematically in this paper, the present exercise has led me to the provisional conclusion that Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob rely directly on Zenos for support and illumination relative to their own revelations, and that they typically bring in Isaiah as an additional witness, but not for primary explanation. As Nephi later observes, the words of Isaiah "are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy" (2 Nephi 25:4). Because Isaiah appears to be aware of many of the concepts they draw from Zenos, but often tends to use them cryptically, as if his audience already knows how they fit together, we might reasonably conclude that Zenos preceded and influenced Isaiah, and that the Nephite prophets saw it that way. Thus, they see Isaiah like themselves, a beneficiary of Zenos' prophecies and revelations, using Zenos to help them warn that portion of a rebellious Israel they have been called to teach.

If this is correct, then it might be that "the prophet" referred to in 1 Nephi 22:2 is Zenos, just as it is in 1 Nephi 19:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 1 Nephi 22:15, 17, and 23. Certainly most of the points summarized in the following ten verses (1 Nephi 22:3) 12) are taken from Zenos.

PSALM OF NEPHI

It is generally recognized that Alma's analogy of the tree of life presented to the Zoramites in Antionum is linked to the Zenos allegory. This linkage is reinforced when Alma follows it up with a long quotation from Zenos on the subject of prayer. What has not been noticed is that this passage from Zenos appears to be the textual basis or inspiration for the so-called "Psalm of Nephi" (2 Nephi 4:17) 35) written centuries earlier and recorded by Nephi in his small plates.

While Alma quotes Zenos' prayer (Alma 33:3) 11) as proof to the Zoramites that Zenos knew about the Son of God, Nephi appears to have applied the sentiments and language of the prayer to his own trying circumstances, finding in Zenos' words a source of encouragement and faith. Nephi even ends his psalm with a prayer of approximately the same length and a similar style as the Zenos prayer text. In their respective prayers Zenos uses the invocation "O God" or "O Lord" five times; Nephi six. Nephi begins his psalm with a recognition of the Lord's great goodness in showing him "his great and marvelous works (17) in answer to Nephi's prayer (see 1 Nephi 11). Zenos also begins by acknowledging God's mercy in hearing his prayers (4). Zenos lists the many places in which the Lord heard his prayers, citing first an occasion when he was in the *wilderness*. Nephi lists many occasions when he received blessings from God in response to his cry and "mighty prayer," citing first how God supported him and led him through his "*afflictions in the wilderness*" (20). Zenos ends by emphasizing that because the Lord did hear him in his afflictions, he will continue to cry to him "in all mine *afflictions*" (11). Zenos asserts generally that God is "merciful unto [his] children when they cry unto [him] (8). Nephi knows that "God will give liberally to him that asketh" (35). Zenos believes the Lord listened to his

prayer "because of mine afflictions and my sincerity" (11). Nephi expects to be blessed "because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite" (32).

The most obvious similarity between the two texts is the emphasis on the help each writer sought in dealing with what they each refer to several times as "mine enemies." Nephi carries the external enemy problem to a higher level by also praying for help against the internal "enemy of my soul" who tempts him and destroys his peace, the "evil one" who seeks a place in his heart (27) 28), also referring to this "enemy" three times. Interestingly, Zenos may well have been the prophet that Nephi had earlier quoted to show that "the time speedily cometh that Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men" (1 Nephi 22:15, 26). While neither writer names these enemies directly, we have a clear picture from the remainder of Nephi's small plates, and the particular verses immediately following Nephi's psalm, that Nephi's external enemies include his own brothers who in their anger "did seek to take away my life" (2 Nephi 5:1) 2). While we have no background text to help us understand the excerpt from Zenos, it is possible that he had a somewhat different experience than Nephi. The Lord answered Zenos' prayer by turning his enemies to him (4). Returning to this theme later, Zenos clarifies that he had been "cast out" and "despised" by his enemies, and that upon hearing his cries the Lord was angry with them and did "visit them in [his] anger with speedy destruction" (10). Similarly, Nephi reports that the Lord "confounded mine enemies" (22). Given the extreme difficulties Nephi had suffered with his own brothers, it is easy to see how this verse from Zenos might have attracted his close attention.

Finally, both Nephi and Zenos make direct reference to the atonement of Christ and the joy they can find through it. Zenos explains God's mercy in terms of his Son and recognizes that it is "because of thy Son" that "thou hast turned thy judgments away from me" (11). Nephi asks himself why he should be depressed or feel such sorrow when "the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men in so much mercy" (26, cf. 1 Nephi 11:16ff.). Both announce the joy they receive from the Lord's mercy to them in their afflictions. Zenos ends

saying, "in thee is my joy" (11), while Nephi makes the transition from psalm to prayer enjoining his heart to rejoice and cry to the Lord, saying, "my soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation" (30).

LEHI'S FINAL BLESSINGS

The first chapters of 2 Nephi give additional evidence of Lehi's interpretations of the Zenos allegory and show how these are significantly shaped by his own revelations. The allegory tells of one branch of the olive tree being planted in "a good spot of ground (Jacob 5:25, 43)" or what is later termed "that which was *choice unto me above all other parts of the land* of my vineyard" (Jacob 5:43). We can assume that the Nephites understood this passage to refer to themselves. But for Lehi the concept has been greatly enriched and focused. The Lord has "covenanted this land" to Lehi. For him it is "a *land of promise*" and "a land which is *choice above all other lands*" (2 Nephi 1:5). Furthermore, it is a consecrated land, to be "a land of liberty" to those who serve the Lord or to be cursed "if iniquity shall abound" (2 Nephi 1:7). Nephi was already familiar with this concept, not only because the angel had told him in his vision of this choice land covenanted to his father for an inheritance (1 Nephi 13:30), but also because the first time the Lord spoke to Nephi, he promised to lead him to a "land of promise" which would be "choice above all other lands" (1 Nephi 2:20). Apparently, the choiceness of the land predated the scattering of Israel as well. The Lord used the same language in leading the Jaredites there (Ether 1:38), and Moroni's abridgment of the Jaredite record repeats it seven times (Ether 1:42; 2:7, 10, 15; 9:20; 10:28; 13:2).

The Zenos allegory also emphasizes that this branch of Israel was *hidden* in the *last* of "the nethermost parts of the vineyard" (Jacob 5:13,14,25). Lehi explains this sense of isolation further by announcing that "there shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord" (2 Nephi 1:6) and that in the Lord's wisdom "this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations" (2 Nephi 1:8). Whereas Zenos emphasized the Lord's role in taking the broken branches of his olive to these nethermost parts of the vineyard, Lehi adds the

idea that Nephi in particular had "been an instrument in the hands of God, in bringing us forth into the land of promise" (2 Nephi 1:24).

Lehi goes on to elaborate the implications of the Lord's promise to all those he will bring out of the land of Jerusalem, using insights from the Zenos prophecies. If they will keep his commandments, they will "prosper upon the face of this land" and "dwell safely forever" (2 Nephi 1:9). But "when the time comes that they shall *dwindle in unbelief*" and "*reject . . . the true Messiah*," especially after "knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord," the just judgments of God will rest upon them, and they will "*be scattered and smitten*" (2 Nephi 1:10) 11; cf. Jacob's version at 2 Nephi 9:27 and 10:20). Lehi further expresses his fears that for "*the hardness of [their] hearts*" they will be "cut off and destroyed" or that "a cursing will come upon [them]" and they will suffer famine and sword and *be hated* (2 Nephi 1:17) 18). It requires little imagination to link the alternate cycles of productive growth and punitive pruning of the Zenos allegory to Lehi's definitive formulation of the rule governing the Lord's relationship to his branch of the house of Israel: "Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence" (2 Nephi 1:20; cf. 1 Nephi 2:20). Lehi returns to these same themes when he blesses the posterity of Laman and Lemuel, promising them that even if they are cursed, it will be answered upon their parents' heads, and the Lord "will not suffer that [they] shall *perish*" (2 Nephi 4:7). In this way, Lehi actually provides the mechanism for the future fulfillment of Zenos' prophecy that the Lord will not immediately pluck off and burn "the other part of the tree [that] has brought forth wild fruit" (Jacob 5:25) 27) but will let it grow wild even until it overcomes and displaces the good branch. Finally, this remaining branch will not be destroyed, but will be grafted back into the natural tree (restored to the knowledge of the covenants of Israel and the true Messiah) (Jacob 5:56).

Finally, Lehi interprets prophecies of Joseph in terms identical to those of the Zenos allegory, suggesting that Joseph had anciently received these same revelations and that Joseph's

account of these on the plates of brass may in turn have provided Lehi and Nephi with some guidance in their interpretations of Zenos. For "Joseph truly saw our day," and the Lord made great covenants with him that through his descendants "the Lord God would raise up a righteous *branch unto the house of Israel . . . which was to be broken off*" (2 Nephi 3:4) 5; cf. Genesis 49:22). Nevertheless, because of the Lord's covenant, he would remember to manifest the Messiah to them in the latter days (3:5). Again, Lehi (through Joseph) makes specific the prophecies of Zenos. It will be through a "choice seer" descended from Joseph that they will be brought "out of (hidden) darkness unto light" and "out of captivity unto freedom" (3:5). He will accomplish this by bringing them "*to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers*" (2 Nephi 3:7,12).

JACOB

Nephi introduces Jacob in the small plates as a teacher and interpreter of Isaiah. The sermon recorded in 2 Nephi 6 picks up on the very verses of Isaiah 49 that Nephi had used to supplement his own prophetic summaries which drew largely on Zenos (*see* Isaiah 49: 22) 26, 1 Nephi 22:6, 2 Nephi 6:6) 7). But like Nephi, Jacob supplements his account of the plates of brass prophecies with insights drawn from his own visions. For the Lord showed Jacob the captivity and eventual return of those who were at Jerusalem, as well as his own future ministry and crucifixion (2 Nephi 6:8) 9), and this "according to the words of the angel who spake it unto me."

Jacob's vision, like Nephi's before him, is reported in wording we have learned to associate primarily with Zenos. "After they have *hardened their hearts*" they will be "*smitten and afflicted*". Because of the prayers of the faithful, they will not be allowed to perish but will be *scattered, smitten, and hated*. But in the end, the Lord will be merciful so that "*when they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer*," they will be gathered, and "the Lord God "*will fulfill his covenants*" to them (2 Nephi 6:10) 12). Jacob goes on to complete the summary in mostly Isaianic terms and then to quote the next two chapters of Isaiah (50) 52:2). Again we see the

pattern established first by Nephi in which Isaiah is invoked as an additional witness and illuminator of prophecies based on Zenos and the Nephite prophets' own visions.

After the Isaiah reading, Jacob again resorts to language from Zenos in the transition to his discussion of the atonement. Because of "the *covenants of the Lord* that he has covenanted with all the house of Israel" they will "be restored to the *true church and fold* of God." In a distinctive formulation that recalls the plurality of "the nethermost parts of [the Lord's] vineyard," Jacob interprets those covenants to mean that all Israel will "be gathered home to the *lands* of their inheritance" and will "be established in all their *lands* of promise" (2 Nephi 9:1) 2). At the end of the sermon, Jacob returns to the Zenos themes of the Lord's covenants and mercy, the promise that their seed should never be utterly destroyed, but that in the future they would "become a *righteous branch* unto the *house of Israel*" (2 Nephi 9:53).

Continuing the next day, Jacob moves back to the main themes concerning the covenant history and future of the house of Israel which occupied Zenos, and specifically their own "*righteous branch*" (2 Nephi 10:1). Jacob has been shown that many of their descendants will perish "because of *unbelief*." But many will be restored by coming to "the *true knowledge* of their Redeemer" (10:2). Although after the crucifixion they will suffer famines, pestilences, and bloodshed, and those not destroyed will "be *scattered among all nations*" (10:6). But when they come to believe in Christ, God will restore them to the *lands* of their inheritance, according to his *covenant "with their fathers"* (10:7) 8). Like Nephi, Jacob also emphasizes the prominent role to be played by the Gentiles who "shall be great in the eyes" of God in carrying gathered Israel "in from their long dispersion" to "the lands of their inheritance" (2 Nephi 10:8; cf. 1 Nephi 15:13) 14,17). In closing, Jacob recognizes that this is a "*choice land*" and that they have been led there by the Lord. It is an *isle of the sea*, and (as in Zenos) there are others of "our brethren" that are *scattered upon the isles of the sea*. The Lord remembers all "who have been *broken off*" because he has led them "away from time to time from the house of Israel, *according to his will and pleasure*" (2 Nephi 10:19) 22; cf. Jacob 5:14).

NEPHI'S CONCLUSIONS

After inserting many more chapters of Isaiah, Nephi assembles a long summary of prophecies and teachings for his descendants (2 Nephi 25:7) 8). This is the fourth time Nephi has undertaken this exercise, and we may assume that this occurs near the end of his life, while the other efforts were during his youth. In this summary, we find Nephi drawing on all the same sources, but in a way that tends to emphasize his own visions and, to some extent, the prophecies of Isaiah. Still, some of the distinctive Zenos material shows up, especially in its interpreted forms, in what is a simplified and homogenized product. Some phrases from Zenos appear for the first time, and in ways that show they have been fully incorporated into Nephi's own normal speech.

Nephi begins by referring to the recurring destruction of the Jews because of their iniquities and the *hardening of their hearts* (2 Nephi 25:9) 10). Nephi knows they will be carried captive and restored to the land of their inheritance (11). But when the Only Begotten manifests himself to them, *they will reject him*, because of the *hardness of their hearts*, and crucify him (12) 13). For this the Jews will "*scattered among all nations'* and scourged by other nations until the come "*to believe in Christ*" (14) 16). The Lord will eventually restore his words to them to convince "*them of the true Messiah, who was rejected by them*" (18). Nephi's writings and others will be preserved and handed down, so that the seed of Joseph should "*never perish*", "*according to the will and pleasure of God*" (21) 22).

Nephi returns to a specific account of what will happen when the Messiah comes to the Nephites. His appearance will be preceded by calamities marking his death, as described by Zenos (2 Nephi 26:3) 6; cf. 1 Nephi 19:10) 12). But even though three righteous generations will result from his visit, the fourth will "yield to the devil" and go down to destruction. Nephi shares his personal response to this, using the exact phrase that Zenos attributes to the Lord each time he had to destroy the corrupt branches: "*this grieveth my soul*" (2 Nephi 26:11; cf. Jacob

5:7,11,13,32,46,47,51, and 66). But even after they "*have dwindled in unbelief*," the Lord will not forget them (2 Nephi 26:15) 16).

Chapter 29 records a revelation that Nephi seems almost to be receiving at the moment he is writing. This revelation picks up and develops much further familiar concepts from both Isaiah and Zenos. The Lord will "*remember [his] covenants*" and will send the words of the Nephite prophets "to the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel" (2 Nephi 29:1) 2). The Gentiles do not appreciate God's "*ancient covenant people*," the Jews, who have given them the Bible. Rather they have cursed and *hated them* (4) 5). Putting the divine perspective on the Zenos allegory, the Lord asks the Gentiles if there are not more nations than one. He created all men; he remembers those on the *isles of the sea*; and he will bring his word forth to "*all the nations of the earth*" (7). The Lord speaks "*according to his own pleasure*," and his "*work is not yet finished*" (9). And finally, his people, "*which are of the house of Israel*, shall be *gathered* home unto the *lands of their possessions*," and he will show the world that he "*covenanted with Abraham* that [he] *would remember* his seed forever" (14).

Nephi goes on to explain how the Gentiles can become part of the house of Israel. In Zenos this is the grafting in of the wild branches. Nephi says, "as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the *covenant people* of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be *cast off*," for the Lord will only covenant "with them that repent and believe in his Son (2 Nephi 30:2). The gospel of Jesus Christ will come forth to the Gentiles and then to the remnant of Lehi, through the book Nephi has described (3) 5). Thus will they be "*restored unto the knowledge of their fathers* and also to the *knowledge of Jesus Christ*, which was had among their fathers." They will rejoice and become a "*delightful people*." And the scattered Jews will also begin to believe in Christ and be gathered and become a "*delightful people*" (6) 7). The emphasis on delightful people reminds us of the Lord's delight or *joy* in the precious natural fruit (which these believing Israelites are) in Zenos' allegory (Jacob 5:71,75). The connection is picked up and repeated by Mormon who prays that his brethren "*may once again come to the knowledge of*

God, yea, the redemption of Christ; that they may once again be a delightful people" (Words of Mormon 1:8). Nephi foresees that the Lord will "commence his work *among all nations, kindreds, tongues and people* (8). At the end, the Lord will "cause a great division among the people, and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked *by fire*" (10). This is a neat paraphrase of the final verse of the Zenos allegory (Jacob 5:77). At that day, Nephi informs us, "*Satan shall have power over the hearts of the children of men no more*" (2 Nephi 30:18), another point taken from Zenos (1 Nephi 22:15,26).

JACOB PRESENTS THE ALLEGORY

What begins as an explanation of the present record (Jacob 4:1) turns quickly into a reaffirmation of the coming Christ and a warning to Jacob's people to be humble and accepting of this truth. We know that Jacob encountered a great deal of opposition from those who thought the law of Moses was all they needed (Jacob 4:5, 7:6) 7). It appears that part of his problem is that the writings of the Jews are not as plain in this regard as the revelations he and Nephi and Lehi have received (Jacob 4:14), and so he undertakes to explain scripturally how the Jews who do not accept the revelations about Christ will stumble and fall. He refers them to Isaiah's statements that the Lord would be a stone of stumbling to both houses of Israel, as they would fail to see him as their only sure foundation (Isaiah 8:14; 28:16). Following the pattern we have seen earlier, Jacob looks to Zenos for the explanation of things stated too cryptically or mysteriously in Isaiah (Jacob 4:18). Zenos comes naturally to mind in this passage as Jacob has been speaking of "the perfect knowledge of [Christ]" as the means by which one can benefit from the atonement and of the expectation that the Jews "will *reject* the stone upon which they might build" (Jacob 4:12,15). It may be worth noting that he is urging them to come to Christ that they might qualify to "be presented as the *first-fruits* of Christ unto God" (11).

It is also of some interest that it is in this chapter, which speaks of the Jews rejecting the perfect knowledge of Christ, that Jacob develops his teaching that men should "seek not to

counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand" (Jacob 4:10). The teaching appears to be linked to the Lord's injunction to his servant in the olive allegory, which Jacob reads next, when he says, "counsel me not; I knew that it was a poor spot of ground; wherefore, I said unto thee, I have nourished it this long time, and thou beholdest that it hath brought forth much fruit" (Jacob 5:22). But because the wording Jacob uses to develop the concept (Jacob 5:8) 10) is so similar to Paul's treatment of the same subject (Romans 11:33) 36) in conjunction with his own reflections on the olive allegory (Romans 11:14) 25), one is led to wonder whether both might not be drawing on a more extended statement by Zenos not preserved in either the Bible or the Book of Mormon. Both passages refer to the creation, to the greatness of God's *wisdom* and the fact that his *ways* are not known to man, and that his judgments or the depths of his mysteries are *unsearchable*. While there are some similarities between Romans 11 and some of Isaiah's references to the counsel of the Lord (see especially Isaiah 11:2 and 28:9), none of these reflect the broad similarities found in the comparison with Jacob, again, in double connection with the Zenos allegory.

After reading the full allegory to his brethren, Jacob turns immediately to an extended interpretation in the form of a prophecy of his own (Jacob 6:1). Unlike the more historically oriented interpretations of Lehi and Nephi, Jacob moves directly to the implications for individuals. Jacob notes first how blessed those will be who *labor diligently in the vineyard* (3) and how cursed those who will be *cast out*. The world is the vineyard, and "will be burned with fire." For Jacob, the mercy of God is evidenced in the way he *remembers the house of Israel*, both roots and branches (4). All who "*will not harden their hearts* shall be saved in the kingdom of God." The allegory is a parable of salvation for individuals as well as for peoples. Thus, Jacob calls individuals to repent and come to God (5): "Hear his voice," and "harden not your hearts" (6). Returning to the language of the allegory, Jacob identifies the nourishment given to the tree as "the good word of God" and reminds his hearers that if they bring forth evil fruit, they will "be hewn down and cast into the fire" (7). To reject that nourishment is to "reject the words

of the prophets . . . concerning Christ" (8). It is to "deny the good word of Christ, and the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost." It is to "quench the Holy Spirit" and to "make a mock of the great plan of redemption." The burning awaiting those who do this is "that lake of fire and brimstone" which is "endless torment" (10).

Zenos ended his allegory with the statement that at the end the bad fruit would be "*cast away into its own place*" (Jacob 5:77). Jacob emphasizes the magnitude of this penalty as it will impact wicked individuals saying, "how cursed are they who shall be *cast out into their own place*" (Jacob 6:3). He then clarifies that because "justice cannot be denied" these offenders "*must go away* into that lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever, which lake of fire and brimstone is endless torment" (Jacob 6:10). Jacob's direct linking of this notion, which only occurs biblically in the Revelation of John (Revelation 19:20; 20:14, 15, 20), to the Zenos allegory helps us to see that Nephi was making the same link when he said of the wicked at the judgment that from there "*they must go into the place prepared for them*, even a lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment" (2 Nephi 28:23). Inasmuch as Nephi saw the vision recorded by John, it may well be that he was the source of this language for Book of Mormon peoples (1 Nephi 14:24) 28; cf. Jacob 3:11, Mosiah 2:37) 39; Alma 12:17; 14:14). Alternatively, Zenos might be the source in all cases.

There is one other major element shared between the visions of John and Nephi, which Nephi brings into his prophetic summaries and which explains a major development in Zenos' allegory. The similarities between the great beast in the Revelation of John and the great and abominable church in Nephi's vision are obvious (cf. 1 Nephi 13, 14 and Revelation 13, 17). But Nephi's account very clearly answers two questions that arise in the Zenos allegory. What causes the wild branches grafted in to go wild after first producing good fruit? And, what accounts for the success of the final grafting? Nephi saw that the demise of the early Gentile church was due to the "formation of a great church," that the devil was its founder, and that it would bind, torture, and slay the saints of God, or "bring them down into captivity" (1 Nephi 13:4) 6). Furthermore,

it would take away "from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants" (1 Nephi 13:26) which would lead the Gentiles to stumble, allowing Satan to get "great power over them" (1 Nephi 13:29). The restoration of the covenants would then occur as the Lord in his mercy would bring forth to the Gentiles the record of Nephi and his descendants (1 Nephi 13:33) 42; 14:5) 7). And at such time as that great and abominable church would seek to destroy the saints of God, the Lord would pour it his wrath upon them and the power of God would descend upon the saints of the Lamb in all parts of the earth (1 Nephi 14:11) 17). Nephi and Jacob draw on this vision several times and at great length to explain the olive allegory (1 Nephi 15:13; 22:12) 14; 2 Nephi 10:15) 16; 2 Nephi 26:15) 27:11; 28:1) 16).

BENJAMIN

King Benjamin provides a good example of a later prophet who picks up the language of Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob in their interpretations of Zenos. Following Jacob, he warns his people that if they transgress and "withdraw [them]selves from the Spirit of the Lord" they cannot be "blessed, prospered, and preserved" (Mosiah 2:36; cf. Jacob 6:8). Benjamin pushes the understanding of the fate of the wicked one level higher than Jacob and Nephi, saying that it will be the guilt of the wicked that will "fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever" which is a "never-ending torment" (Mosiah 2:38) 39; cf. Jacob 6:10 and 2 Nephi 28:23). Moving on to prophecy, Mosiah echoes Zenos and his Nephite interpreters: "the time shall come when *the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people*" (Mosiah 3:20). Turning again to the fate of the wicked, he says they "are *consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations,*" a state of "endless torment" which "is as *a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever*" (Mosiah 3:25,27). Applying all this to his people, Benjamin shows them the consequences of having "*come to a knowledge of the goodness of God*" which will bring them salvation if they continue in faith to the end of their lives (Mosiah 4:5,6). With this knowledge they cannot dwindle in unbelief, but

rather must "believe in God; believe that he is, . . . and again, believe that ye must repent" (Mosiah 4:9) 10).

ALMA

While Alma sometimes borrows from Zenos directly, even quoting from the plates of brass, his sermons are not so dominated by Zenos' prophecies and allegory as were those of Nephi and Jacob. He concludes his great Zarahemla sermon with the warning that "every tree that bringeth not forth *good fruit* shall be hewn down and *cast into the fire*, . . . even an *unquenchable fire*" (Alma 5:52,56). This is his warning to the Nephites who are "puffed up in the *pride of [their] hearts*" (Alma 5:53). In his final appeal to the people of Zarahemla, he explained how the Nephites have received the "tidings of great joy" in plainness "in *all parts of our vineyard*," and that it has been declared among all the Lord's people "that are *scattered abroad upon the face of the earth*" (Alma 13:22) 23). Describing the mission of Alma and Amulek, Mormon draws even more directly on Zenos, explaining how the Lord prepared the hearts and minds of the people by pouring his Spirit out on them, "that they might be *hardened against the word*, that they *might not be unbelieving*, and go on to *destruction*, but that they might *receive the word with joy*, and as *a branch be grafted into the true vine*" (Alma 16:16) 17). And Ammon rejoices that God "has been *mindful of this people*, who are *a branch of the tree of Israel*, and has been *lost from its body in a strange land*" (Alma 27:36; cf. Alma 13:23).

It is in the mission to the Zoramites that Alma turns so extensively to Zenos as a source of his teachings. Not only does he quote the prayer of Zenos to show how people can pray without access to a synagogue (Alma 33:2) 11), he goes on to point out that Zenos was a witness of "the Son of God" through whom redemption would come (Alma 33:13) 14; 34:7). But perhaps the most impressive is the allegory of the tree of life advanced by Alma (Alma 32:28) 43). In this passage Alma uses much of the language of the Zenos allegory to create an allegory for salvation of the individual rather than the house of Israel, in much the same way that the vision of the tree of life seen by Lehi and Nephi functioned.

Alma invites his hearers to plant the word as a seed in their hearts and not to "*cast it out by [their] unbelief*" (Alma 32:28). The sprouting and growing of the seed then gives the experimenter *knowledge that it is a good thing* (33) 35). As it grows one must "*nourish it with great care*" and not let it *wither away* so that it must be *plucked up and cast out* (37) 38). But if one will "*nourish the word*" with "*great diligence*" he will be able to harvest the *fruit* "*which is most precious*" (41) 42).

SAMUEL

In prophesying to the Nephites from the Zarahemla city wall, the Lamanite prophet Samuel explicitly cites Zenos "concerning the restoration of our brethren, the Lamanites, again to the knowledge of the truth" (Helaman 15:11). For "even if they should *dwindle in unbelief*," the Lord will "prolong their days." For "in the latter times *the promises of the Lord*" will be extended to them (15:12). And even though "they shall be *driven to and fro*" and "*smitten and scattered abroad*," the Lord will be merciful. All this is "according to the prophecy" that they will again "be brought to the *true knowledge*, which is the *knowledge of their Redeemer*, and their great and *true shepherd*, and be *numbered among his sheep*" (15:13). And just as Lehi had blessed them, because their *dwindling in unbelief* was caused by the *traditions of their fathers*, the Lord "will not utterly destroy them (15:15) 16).

MORMON AND MORONI

That the language and concepts of Zenos were remembered and used by Book of Mormon writers down to the end of Nephite history is evident in the ways they are invoked by Mormon in his condensation of the records. Mormon's final appeal to the future descendants of the Lamanites who will read this record is couched at least partially in language that we have seen is derived from Zenos. Mormon informs them that they are a "remnant of the House of Israel" (Mormon 7:1), that they must repent and "*come to the knowledge of [their] fathers*," and "*believe in Jesus Christ*" (7:4). Through Mormon's record they will come to know that they "are a remnant of the seed of Jacob," and that they "are numbered among the *people of the first*

covenant" (7:10). *Believing in Christ* will be the first step in preparing them to be in good standing at the day of judgment.

Moroni's report of the prophecy of Ether also bears the signs of Zenos' influence on Nephite writers. While Ether's prophecy featured the discussion of a New Jerusalem not otherwise associated with Zenos materials, Moroni notes that Ether also saw this land as a land choice "*above all other lands*" (Ether 13:2). Furthermore, Ether had seen that the seed of Joseph would be brought to this land "that they should *perish* not" (13:7). Eventually the blessings of the New Jerusalem would come to "the remnant of the seed of Joseph, who were of the house of Israel" (10). And the rest of Israel who "were *scattered and gathered*" from "the *four quarters of the earth*" would partake in the fulfillment of "the *covenant* which God made with their *father, Abraham*" (11), bringing to pass the scripture which says, "there are they *who were first, who shall be last*; and there are they *who were last, who shall be first*" (12). It may be worth noting in passing that the vision of Enoch revealed to Joseph Smith may provide a source older than both Zenos and the Jaredite records which links some key Zenos phrases to the New Jerusalem:

"And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and *truth* will I send forth out of the earth, to bear *testimony of mine Only Begotten*; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and *truth* will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the *four quarters of the earth*, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that *my people* may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called *Zion, a New Jerusalem* (Moses 7:62).

CONCLUSIONS

It is inherent in this kind of study, because of the assumptions that must be made in linking texts, that few conclusions can be beyond doubt. Assuming that Zenos was a prophet to Israel before the time of Isaiah and that his writings were available to the Nephites in the plates of brass, we can trace out a number of probable connections to those writings in Nephite

prophecy. The general patterns of Nephite reliance on Zenos seem to have been established early as Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob each borrowed language and images from Zenos in the exposition of their own revelations. The language and phraseology of these interpretations show up repeatedly in the writings of these and later Nephite prophets and appear to be textually dependent on these early passages. The early Nephite prophets also seemed to have seen Isaiah doing the same thing, assuming Zenos as a basic, shared text, and using his references to Zenos' prophecies as further witnesses of their own revelations and interpretations of Zenos. Though this is quite tentative, it is easiest to make sense of the complex relationships between these materials by assuming that Zenos was prior to and known by Isaiah. Although Nephite reliance on Zenos is most intense in the earliest generation, it continues to the end of Nephite prophecy with Mormon and Moroni.

Nephite use of Zenos was far from being limited to the olive allegory, but relied simultaneously on this and other Zenos sources, which in some cases are quoted at length. While the olive allegory treats the house of Israel as an entity that bears fruit for its lord (precious individuals), other Zenos references focus on individuals who can inherit the precious fruit of the tree of life, which is eternal life, as suggested in the tree of life allegories of Lehi and Nephi on the one hand and Alma on the other. The individual and group aspects of God's teaching and covenant with Israel and all his children are present in all these related writings from the beginning of the Book of Mormon and persist through to the end.