

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

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*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure  
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Macmillan Publishing Company  
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada  
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International  
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



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responsibilities of turning to the Lord and of implementing the principles inherent in the qualities described in the Beatitudes (cf. D&C 88:63–65 and 97:16, which adapt the sixth beatitude to temple worship).

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## BEEHIVE SYMBOL

Nineteenth-century leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints consciously created symbols to buttress their community. The most persistent of these pioneer symbols was the beehive.

Its origin may relate to the statement in the Book of Mormon that the JAREDITES carried "with them deseret, which, by interpretation, is a honey bee" (Ether 2:3). The *Deseret News* (Oct. 11, 1881) described the symbol of the beehive in this way: "The hive and honey bees form our communal coat of arms. . . . It is a significant representation of the industry, harmony, order and frugality of the people, and of the sweet results of their toil, union and intelligent cooperation."

Working together during this early period, individuals contributed specialized talents and skills for building an integrated and well-planned community in a hostile environment. Community, not individuality, created this persistent symbol. The beehive has appeared on public and private Mormon buildings (such as temples, tabernacles, and meetinghouses, Brigham Young's Beehive House, and the mercantile institution ZCMI) as well as in folk art and on furniture.

Today it appears as a logo of some Church-related organizations, on the seals of the state of Utah and of two universities, on Church WELFARE products, and on some commercial signs in Utah.

It links the Mormon community across time while symbolizing the Mormon pioneer past.

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## BENJAMIN

Benjamin, son of MOSIAH<sub>1</sub>, was an important king in Nephite history (d. c. 121 B.C.). His reign came at a crucial juncture in the history of the NEPHITES and was important both culturally and politically. His father, Mosiah<sub>1</sub>, "being warned of the Lord," had led the Nephites out of the land of Nephi to the land of Zarahemla (Omni 1:12, 19). Thereafter, during his own reign, Benjamin fought, as was customary for kings in the ancient world (cf. Mosiah 10:10), with his "own arm" against invading LAMANITES (W of M 1:13), keeping his people "from falling into the hands of [their] enemies" (Mosiah 2:31). He succeeded in consolidating Nephite rule over the land of Zarahemla (Omni 1:19) and reigned there "in righteousness" over his people (W of M 1:17).

Benjamin, described as a "holy man" (W of M 1:17) and "a just man before the Lord," also led his people as a prophet (Omni 1:25) and was, with the assistance of other prophets and holy men, able to overcome the contentions among his people and to "once more establish peace in the land" (W of M 1:18). Accordingly, Amaleki, who was himself "without seed," entrusted Benjamin with the record on the "small plates" (Omni 1:25). Keenly interested in the preservation of sacred records, Benjamin taught his sons "in all the language of his fathers" and "concerning the records . . . on the plates of brass" (Mosiah 1:2–3).

Mosiah 2–6 records Benjamin's farewell address, designed primarily to effect a "change in heart" in his people and to bring them to Jesus Christ. He deals with man's obligations to his fellow men and to God, punishment for rebellion against God, gratitude, faith, and service. This address is as relevant now as it was when first presented. In addition, reporting the words spoken to

him by an angel, Benjamin prophesied that “the Lord Omnipotent . . . shall come down from heaven among the children of men” as the Messiah, “working mighty miracles” (Mosiah 3:5). Further, Benjamin declared that the Messiah would “be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, . . . and his mother shall be called Mary” (3:8)—the earliest mention of her name in the Book of Mormon. Moreover, Jesus would “suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer” (3:7). After being crucified, Jesus would “rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world” (3:10). Significantly, Benjamin taught that the power of the atonement of Jesus Christ was in effect for him and his people, “as though he had already come” to earth (3:13).

The impact of Benjamin’s address on subsequent Nephite generations can be gauged by how much it is mentioned later in the Book of Mormon. Following Benjamin’s death, his son and successor, MOSIAH<sub>2</sub>, sent Ammon and fifteen other representatives from Zarahemla to the land of Nephi (Mosiah 7:1–6), where they found the Nephite king Limhi and his people in bondage to the Lamanites. After the representatives had identified themselves, Limhi caused his people to gather at the local temple, where he addressed them. Thereafter, Ammon “rehearsed unto them the last words which king Benjamin had taught them, and explained them to the people of king Limhi, so that they might understand all the words which he spake” (Mosiah 8:3). Similarly, HELAMAN<sub>2</sub> (c. 30 B.C.) admonished his sons LEHI<sub>4</sub> and NEPHI<sub>2</sub> to “remember . . . the words which king Benjamin spake unto his people; yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ” (Hel. 5:9). These words mirror one of the central themes of Benjamin’s address: “Salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ” (Mosiah 3:18–19; cf. Hel. 14:12).

After a long and prosperous reign, Benjamin died about 121 B.C. No higher tribute was paid to his greatness than that given by his son Mosiah<sub>2</sub>. In a discourse given at the end of his own reign, in which he considers the advantages and pitfalls of various forms of government, Mosiah says, “If ye could have men for your kings who would do even as my father Benjamin did for this people, . . . then

it would be expedient that ye should always have kings to rule over you” (Mosiah 29:13).

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## BENSON, EZRA TAFT

Ezra Taft Benson (1899–), thirteenth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is noted for his extensive Church service and his distinguished career in government. He served forty-two years as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and was U.S. secretary of agriculture for eight years in the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. As President of the Church, he repeatedly bore witness that the Book of Mormon is the major instrument to bring the members of the Church and the world to Christ, and he admonished the Saints to strengthen their families and to preserve their God-given freedoms.

President Benson was born August 4, 1899, in the small rural community of Whitney, Idaho, the oldest of eleven children born to George Taft Benson, Jr., and Sarah Dunkley. He was named after his great-grandfather, Ezra T. (Taft) Benson, an APOSTLE, who entered the Salt Lake Valley with the first Mormon pioneer company in July 1847. The pioneer Ezra T. was the son of John Benson, Jr., and Chloe Taft of Mendon, Massachusetts. John Benson, Sr., was an officer during the American Revolution.

Ezra Taft Benson was reared on the family farm in Whitney, driving a team of horses at the age of five, milking cows, and thinning sugar beets. He entered grade school at the age of eight. “Be as careful of the books you read as of the company you keep” was the counsel that governed his reading habits (Dew, p. 24). In addition to the scriptures, he read Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*; biographies of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Abraham Lincoln, and success stories by Horatio Alger. His grandparents gave him a two-volume set by Orison S. Marden, *Little Visits with Great Americans* (1905), which he devoured.

Increased responsibility was thrust on him as a youth when his father was called as a missionary