

March 16-22, 2020

## Jacob 5–7

“THE LORD LABORS WITH US”

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**Summary:** *Jacob quotes Zenos relative to the allegory of the tame and wild olive trees—They are a likeness of Israel and the Gentiles—The scattering and gathering of Israel are prefigured—Allusions are made to the Nephites and Lamanites and all the house of Israel—The Gentiles will be grafted into Israel—Eventually the vineyard will be burned. [About 544–421 B.C.]*

*The Lord will recover Israel in the last days—The world will be burned with fire—Men must follow Christ to avoid the lake of fire and brimstone. [About 544–421 B.C.]*

*Sherem denies Christ, contends with Jacob, demands a sign, and is smitten of God—All of the prophets have spoken of Christ and His Atonement—The Nephites lived out their days as wanderers, born in tribulation, and hated by the Lamanites. [About 544–421 B.C.]*

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### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

#### What could be the reasons for the olive tree to become the allegory theme?

The symbol of olive trees has been used throughout the scriptures. Consider the following descriptions of olives and olive trees while you are accessing the wonderful imagery of God's chosen people, their diversity and their effect on the rest of God's children. The olive branch has long been a symbol of peace, and the silvery-leaved olive tree has been considered sacred from at least as far back as the 17th century B.C. Native to the Mediterranean area, the olive is a small, oily fruit that contains a pit. It is grown both for its fruit and its oil in subtropical zones including the United States (Arizona, California and New Mexico), Latin America and throughout the Mediterranean. Olive varieties number in the dozens and vary in size and flavor. All fresh olives are bitter, and the final flavor of the fruit greatly depends on how ripe it is when picked and the processing it receives. Like the olives that originate in the Mediterranean area and spread throughout the world, so also did the Children of Israel originate in the

Mediterranean and proliferate throughout the world. As olives vary in size and flavor, the Children of Israel grew to include many ethnic backgrounds. The olives must be ripened and processed, the Children of Israel were given time to mature and prove their worthiness to be the covenant people.

#### How were olives used in the Bible?

“The olives, so plentiful in Erez Israel, were beaten down from the trees with poles and pounded into pulp. The pulp was placed in a wicker basket from which the lightest and finest oil could easily run off. This grade of oil, known as beaten oil, is mentioned five times in the Bible. It served as fuel for the *Menorah* (lamp) in the Tabernacle and as an element in the obligatory daily meal offerings. After the removal of the beaten oil, a second grade was produced by heating and further pressing the pulp.” “Oil was used in burnt offerings and was considered a symbol of honor, joy and favor. Therefore, it was to be avoided in times of mourning or sorrow.” “Anointing with oil was symbolic of change in a person's status. Thus, for example, Aaron was anointed with oil before becoming a priest. Kings were anointed before taking the throne and

even brides were anointed with oil before marriage. A person cured of leprosy had to go through a whole purification ritual involving the sprinkling and anointing with oil.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

### **What simple, repeated theme is imbedded in this allegory?**

To understand the simplicity of Jacob’s allegory of the olive trees in the Book of Mormon, let me suggest the following verses about “first” and “last” as guidelines. The allegory also speaks of planting, scattering, gathering and an ultimate harvest. “Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.” ([Isaiah 48:12](#)) “But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.” ([Matthew 19:30](#)) “So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.” ([Matthew 20:16](#)) “And the time cometh that he shall manifest himself unto all nations, both unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles; and after he has manifested himself unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles, then he shall manifest himself unto the Gentiles and also unto the Jews, and the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.” ([1 Nephi 13:42](#)) “And when these things come, bringeth to pass the scripture which saith, there are they who were first, who shall be last; and there are they who were last, who shall be first.” ([Ether 13:12](#)) “But remember that all my judgments are not given unto men; and as the words have gone forth out of my mouth even so shall they be fulfilled, that the first shall be last, and that the last shall be first in all things whatsoever I have created by the word of my power, which is the power of my Spirit.” ([D&C 29:30](#)) “I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.” ([D&C 110:4](#))

### **How did our family become a symbol for being chosen?**

In a very simple sense, Jacob’s use of the allegory of the olive tree portrays the children of Israel, genetically and spiritually set apart to be a covenant nation in a land of everlasting hills. The lessons of scattering and gathering span millennia yet the principles are the same. “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” ([Deuteronomy 7:6-8](#))

### **What happened when we “forgot” our responsibility?**

Due to lack of faith, followed by disobedience, they begin to apostatize. Prophets are sent to teach them. “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets . . . the Lord GOD hath spoken . . . Publish in the palaces . . . Assemble yourselves . . . For they know not to do right, saith the LORD . . . An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall . . . bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.” ([Amos 3:7-11](#))

### **How, like in the allegory, were others chosen?**

Now, when there were not enough faithful “chosen” Israelites, God would choose non-Israelites (Gentiles) who were brought in, and parts of the original

“chosen” were cut off. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10) At times, young, tender and yet strong enough members were sent elsewhere to the nethermost part of the world. “Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.” (Isaiah 23:7) “And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.” (Isaiah 66:19) “. . . O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea:” (Psalms 65:5)

### **How can opposition and contrast emphasize “being chosen?”**

Lehi, Nephi, and those who left Jerusalem about 600 B.C. were sent to the “ends of the earth.” Their prophets continued teaching the same truths that were given in the original vineyard. What they recorded as their scriptures became an even clearer source of teaching materials for later generations. Even in the distant or “poorest” spot of land, the truths thrived and the righteous created a “genetic imprint” of true dealings with God. As an additional example of poor land producing fruit, let me remind you that returning Jews are making the wilderness “blossom as a rose.” More roses are exported from Israel than any country in the world. They are growing in the desolate Jordan valley where the rainfall has been recorded at one inch or less per year. With the vast flower farms and date groves, the rainfall

has increased to six or seven inches per year in the new agricultural areas. Israel’s genetic engineering has taken the genetic structures of date palms which grow well in depleted or poor soil and placed them into other domestic crop structures. This means that elsewhere in the world, the poor spot of land can also become fruitful. Even though, ethnically, Israel looks like a tossed salad of mixed fruit, the roots still bear the genetic imprints of the original House of Israel. Connecting to those roots will trigger a recollection of the covenants made of old. So, when the fruit in the nethermost part of the vineyard becomes apostate, there still is a root connection to the old tree.

### **What brings the “old” and “new” family together?**

It is touching to hear the servant of the landlord pleading to preserve the old and the new trees. Our prophets have and still do plead for us. Our Lord pleads for us. Hold on! There is a recollection that will bring our families back together. “. . . the book of life is the record of the acts of men as such record is written in their own bodies. It is the record engraven on the very bones, sinews, and flesh of the mortal body. That is, every thought, word, and deed has an affect on the human body; all these leave their marks, marks which can be read by Him who is Eternal as easily as the words in a book can be read.” (Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, Pg.97)

### **How can we remember?**

“There is something in man, an essential part of his mind, which recalls the events of the past . . . May I say to you that in reality a man cannot forget anything? He may have a lapse of memory; he may not be able to recall at the moment a thing that he knows, or words that he has spoken; he may not have the power at his will to call up these events and words; but let God Almighty touch the mainspring of

the memory, and awaken recollection, and you will find then that you have not even forgotten a single idle word that you have spoken.” (Joseph F. Smith, **Gospel Doctrine, Page 311**)

### **How did one family live the allegory?**

I believe that the experiences of my forefathers have blessed my life today. I know that they were believers and that many were faithful in following the Lord, before his mortal ministry, others during his mortality and now my family follows him in the latter-days. In a very real sense, my family is another example of the allegory of the olive tree. I was born in Israel. At the tender age of five years old, I was plucked out of the old decaying tree and brought to the “nethermost part” of the vineyard. My father and I were introduced to the restoration of God’s ancient covenant. Now, I have returned to my homeland and in a very real sense have been grafted back into the old tree. My family and I are committed to bring health and strength . . . connecting with our ancient roots and bringing life back to the old tree, re-infusing the restored ancient true covenants to an ancient “chosen people.”

### **How does a modern “Olive Tree Allegory” read?**

Daniel Rona was born in 1941 in Israel. His German-Jewish parents separately fled the Holocaust, then met and married in the British Mandate of Palestine where Daniel was born. Daniel spent his first years in Israel then later went to New York City with his father. As a child, Daniel was brought up with Jewish traditions and holiday keeping. Daniel's grandparents were killed at Auschwitz.

### **How can tragedy become a blessing?**

Daniel's father was searching for answers to the reason six-million Jews could have been allowed to perish without, at least, a warning from God. He found the profound

message of living prophets at an LDS Ward which was meeting in a synagogue in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in Manhattan. He was impressed that becoming an LDS member was a fulfilling step in his Jewish life.

### **How do old-chosen and new-chosen, reconnect?**

Daniel and his father moved to Salt Lake City where Daniel grew up as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but still keeping his Jewish identity. After serving a successful mission in, of all places, Germany, Daniel had the opportunity to visit his mother, Kitty, and stepfather, Zvi Tohar, in Israel. Captain Tohar was famous because he was the Israeli pilot who flew Adolph Eichman, the Holocaust war criminal, to Israel for trial. Apostle Ezra Taft Benson asked Daniel to report on his mission and, more important, his Israel experiences at LDS Headquarters in Salt Lake City. After his mission, Daniel met Marilyn Minardi (who had also accepted the gospel). They married and now have five children, three born in the U.S. and two born in Israel.

### **What brought a branch from the nethermost part of the vineyard back to the old tree?**

Daniel began a successful career in broadcasting the U.S. In 1967 the "Six-Day War" in Israel had a great emotional impact on Daniel; and in 1973, when the "Yom Kippur War" broke out, Daniel still avoided contact with any news media because he found it hard to deal with the "pull to return to Israel." But the "pull" came anyway! Marilyn was supportive. It wasn't easy, but by August 1974, they had moved their family to Israel.

### **How do obstacles need to be overcome?**

New immigrants to Israel usually get some kind of financial aid, but someone had reported to the immigration

authorities that Daniel's association with Latter-day Saints had somehow "negated his genes" which created an obstacle to be accepted as a returning citizen of Israel. This meant that he couldn't be employed in Israel and receive the usual government support for immigrants. Luckily, Daniel had packed tools, paint brushes and rollers in his suitcases. Daniel worked at odd jobs and was able to support his family without any governmental assistance. Eventually, he was accepted as a returning Jew and a full Israeli Citizen.

### **How did the “allegory-part of reaching-back” manifest itself again?**

Daniel saw that Latter-day Saint tourists coming to Israel desired to experience the spirit of the land and learn more of the cultures and traditions of their brothers and sisters of the House of Israel. Unfortunately, they were often disappointed. They often sought Daniel's insights because he is a native Jew and a Mormon. These experiences prompted Daniel to become serious about providing a professional, as well as spiritually oriented, touring experience for Latter-day Saints and others. This career change came, along with a 'peace of mind and heart,' as he was accepted by the Ministry of Tourism Course for Guides at the Hebrew University. After two years of study and training Daniel became the first, and now his son, Steven, the second Jewish-and-LDS licensed guides and tour operators in Israel.

### **What else is going on?**

He has also created a major television production of six half-hour programs that highlight the beauty, geography, history, and more importantly, the spirit of Israel. Daniel has had many responsibilities as teacher, counselor and in various presidencies in the Jerusalem Branch and District. He has founded the Ensign

Foundation, a charitable, nonprofit organization that fosters bridges of understanding and exchanges of science and technologies as well as cultural and religious ideas between Israel and other nations and peoples. This foundation, among other things, is funding Daniel's various speaking engagements throughout the world. The foundation has also been involved in archeological digs, scientific and medical research, supporting the “Statue of Responsibility,” producing documentary films and other activities in harmony with its mission. Daniel and his wife and children made their home in Jerusalem for more than thirty-years, they now are serving their eighth year as Service Missionaries in the Church History Department, Salt Lake City.

### **What are the “last days” going to be like?**

The gathering of Israel is happening. To many, their gathering starts even before they know the Lord. On the other hand, our family is truly blessed to know the Lord, and be gathered home! “And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.” (**Zechariah 6:15**) The allegory concludes with another lesson for the future: prepare for one last millennium – and then Satan will be loosed for a little season. “And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.” (**Revelation 20:2-3**)

