

April 8-14, 2024

Jacob 5–7

“THE LORD LABORS WITH US”

Summary: *Jacob 5. 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.*

Jacob 6. 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.

Jacob 7. 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.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What are the physical characteristics of olives and olive trees?

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. (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) Olives are mashed, and the mash is

pressed with the resulting liquid settling with the lighter weight oil rising to the top. If an olive is ripe, a darker or colored liquid is produced, sometimes appearing as a darker red shade. Most olives are pressed while they are still green, and the colors of oil are the typical shades of green apparent in most containers of olive oil. The popular religious notion that olives pressed – produce a blood-red color, hence, a relationship to Jesus’ Mount of Olives Gethsemane bleeding experience, is limited to its ripeness.

How symbolically similar are the Children of Israel and olives?

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. “The olives, so plentiful in *Erez* (land of) 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.](#))

How do better understandings come from “simplifying?”

To understand the simplicity of Jacob’s allegory of the olive trees in the Book of Mormon, let me suggest the following verses as guidelines. The allegory 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](#)) 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.

How is “scattering” and “gathering” a metaphor of “life, death, and resurrection?”

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](#)) Due to lack of faith, followed by disobedience, they begin to apostatize, (**resulting in a scattering**). 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) Non-Israelites (Gentiles) 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 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) (resulting in a gathering). “. . . 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) An even greater meaning of scattering and gathering is revealed by the prophet Ezekiel, (Ezekiel 37) as he parallels the account of "dry bones" with "sticks." Three elements are identified in his vision of bones, flesh/skin and the breath. The bones are brought back together, they are covered with flesh and skin and then the breath of life brings them alive. The imagery is likened to the gathering of Israel, recognizing "I AM" who opens graves and then it leads into the "two sticks" vision. The second vision is a double emphasis of the first. The Hebrew

word for breath, wind and spirit are the same (*Ruach*). The Hebrew word for sticks or wood is "ETZ." The word for bones, "ETZEMOT" could be considered the plural of "ETZ," or in other words, the sticks of the body. It is likely that Ezekiel wants you to consider the ancient body of true religion as having died, leaving a skeleton – the "sticks" of the body. Judaism with its "Old Testament," is what is left, the stick of Judah, the skeleton of true religion. The old covenant was true and yet it died. In latter-days the skeleton is clothed with a new body, the Book of Mormon, and breath (the Spirit of the Lord) is restored so that the true religion is resurrected. The body is alive again, never to die. The covenant is restored anew, never to die again, "a New and Everlasting Covenant," (Ezekiel 37:1-28) (resulting in salvation)!

In what ways does the desert blossom as a rose?

Lehi, Nephi, and those who left Jerusalem about 600 B.C. were scattered or 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.

How do old roots still produce new branches?

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. 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) 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 bringing health and strength . . . connecting with our ancient roots and bringing life back to the old tree, teaching the restored ancient true covenants.

How personal can the “Allegory” be seen?

Allow me to share a personal reflection on how the “Allegory” affects my life. This is a short biography as it appears in the book, (*Israel Revealed, Discovering Mormon and Jewish Insights in The Holy Land*).

“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.

“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.

“Daniel and his father moved to Salt Lake City where Daniel grew up as a Mormon, but still keeping his Jewish identity. After serving a successful mission in 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.

"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.

"New immigrants to Israel usually get some kind of financial aid, but someone had told the immigration authorities that Daniel's association with Mormons somehow "negated his genes" which meant he was not 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.

"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 is still the only LDS licensed guide and tour operator in Israel.

"He has also created a major television production of six half-hour programs that highlight the beauty, geography, history, and most important, 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, and other activities in harmony with its mission. Daniel and his wife and children make their home in Jerusalem.”

Who is my “Gardner?”

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 be gathered home and know the Lord! “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)**