

## Jacob 5–7: Allegory of Olive Tree

Monte F. Shelley

### Quotes

- If everyone thinks alike, nobody thinks very much.
- If two people see eye to eye, one is not necessary.

#### 1. Mine “Errand” from the Lord (Jac 1:17; 2:1)

#### 2. What is the meaning of “keep his commandments which he has given me”? (Moro 4:3)

- Outer gospel:
- Inner gospel:

#### 3. The “Lord’s Anointed”

An angel told Jacob that Christ would be the name of the Messiah (2 Ne 10:3). Both Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) mean *anointed one*. Nephi “anointed a man to be a king” (Jac 1:9).

“Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me ... but have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which *I commanded them*.” (D&C 121:16) Judas “lifted up his heel against” (Jn 13:18) or betrayed Christ.

#### 4. Jacob 5: The Allegory of the Olive Tree

**Joseph Fielding Smith:** We have something in the Book of Mormon that, if we did not have other truth expressed in it, would be sufficient evidence of the divinity of this book. I have reference to [Jacob 5] ... I think that as many as [99 out of 100] who read the Book of Mormon, read this parable through without grasping the fullness and meaning of it. And I think this is one of the greatest passages in the Book of Mormon ... No matter how many times you have read the Book of Mormon ... take a few minutes ... and just read carefully every word in [Jacob 5] ... No greater parable was ever recorded. It is a parable of the scattering of Israel. (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:203–7)

Symbol	Interpretation (I-BofM, PYK)
Vineyard	The world
Master—servant(s)	Christ—prophets, or God—Christ
Tame olive tree	House of Israel; Lord’s covenant people
Wild olive tree	Gentiles (non-Israel)
Roots of tame olive tree	God’s covenant and teachings
Branches	Groups of people
Grafting	Being joined to covenant or Israel
Transplanting branches	Scattering of Israel
Pruning, digging, nourishing (dunging)	The Lord’s efforts to persuade his children to produce good fruit.
Fruit of the tree	Lives or works of men
Main top of the tree	Leaders of the house of Israel
Decay	Wickedness and apostasy
Last pruning & grafting	Missionary work (D&C 39:17; 95:4)
Cast branches into fire	Judgment of God

#### 5. Outline of the allegory of Zenos (PYK)

##### Founding and aging of the house of Israel (5:3)

- The tree was planted (the founding of the house of Israel) (5:3),
- The tree had grown old and parts had begun to decay (the house of Israel was old and had begun to go into apostasy) (5:3)

##### Scattering of the house of Israel (5:4–14)

- The Lord of the vineyard came to the vineyard and noticed the decay (God saw the apostasy among the house of Israel) (5:4).

- The Lord acted to stem the decay by pruning, digging about, and dunging the tree (God did what he could do to eliminate apostasy among the house of Israel) (5:4–5).
- Part of the tree recovered but the top began to perish (Some of the house of Israel began to look promising but the leadership was going bad.) (5:6).
- The Lord tried to save the tree (God scattered Israel) (5:7–14).
  - He cut out and burned the worst branches (God destroyed the more apostate parts of the house of Israel) (5:7, 9).
  - He had wild olive branches grafted into the mother tree (non-Israelites were mixed with the house of Israel) (5:7–10)
  - He had natural branches grafted in other parts of his vineyard and natural branches planted in the nethermost parts of his vineyard (some of the house of Israel were scattered among non-Israelite people and some were taken as an entity to other parts of the world) (5:8, 13–14). For example, Lehi’s family settled in the Americas where the land was cleared of previous growth (5:44).

##### Day of the former-day Saints (5:15–28)

- The Lord returns after a long time (5:15).
- The mother tree with wild branches produced good fruit (Israel with non-Israelites grafted in produced good works) (5:16–18).
- The mother tree and all the transplanted branches of the mother tree bore nothing but good fruit, except the last one, half of which bore good fruit and the other half bad fruit (scattered Israel had produced good fruit, except the Nephites and Lamanites which produced good and bad fruit) (5:19–25).
- The Lord wanted to destroy the bad part of the last planting, but the servant counseled to try one more time to save the tree (God did not give up on the Lamanites) (5:26–28).

##### Great Apostasy (5:29–49)

- After a long time, the Lord came back to the vineyard and found that the mother tree bore nothing but bad fruit (a long time after the crucifixion, God found nothing but apostasy in the Old World) (5:29–37).
- The other natural trees also bore nothing but bad fruit, and the bad part of the last transplanted tree had overcome the good part (all of scattered Israel had gone into complete apostasy, and the Lamanites had destroyed the Nephites) (5:38–49).

##### Gathering of the house of Israel (5:50–74)

- The Lord determined to make one last effort to save his trees by grafting back into the natural tree the natural branches he had grafted into the wild trees (after a long period of apostasy, God will make one last effort to gather Israel) (5:50–74).
- As the newly grafted natural branches grow strong, the Lord will cut out branches that produce wild fruit, beginning with the worst, (God will gather scattered Israel to the gospel, while those that produce evil works will be cut off) (5:57–69).
- In this last effort to produce good fruit, a few other servants will be brought into the work (as God prepares the earth for the Millennium, he will call others to help) (5:61–63, 70–71).

##### Millennium (5:74–76)

The pruning and grafting of the natural trees will continue until there is no more wild fruit on the natural trees (God will continue to work with those who have gathered to the gospel until they produce nothing but good fruit).

##### End of the world (5:77)

After a long time, the trees will again begin to produce wild fruit. When that happens, the Lord will destroy the vineyard by fire (the Millennium will end as people again begin to produce evil works; this will continue until God destroys the earth by fire).

## 6. What was the question?

**Joseph:** I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or ... the parable? (*TPJS* 276–7)

**Jacob's Second Question:** How is it possible that these [Jews], after having rejected the sure foundation, can ever build upon it, that it may become the head of their corner? Behold ... I will unfold this mystery unto you. (*Jac* 4:17–18)

## 7. How does the allegory answer the question? (6:2–3)

### 8. Jacob's First Question

“Be reconciled unto [God] through the *atonement* of Christ ... and ye may obtain a resurrection, and be presented as the first-fruits of Christ unto God. ... Why not speak of the *atonement* of Christ, and attain to a perfect knowledge of him?” (*Jac* 4:11–12)

## 9. What do we learn about God and Atonement? (MCT)

God

Atonement:

1. Grafting:
2. Digging :
3. Nourishing:
4. Pruning:

How does this apply to us?

## 10. Jacob's Application to Individuals (*Jac* 6:4–7)

How merciful is our God unto us, for he remembereth the house of Israel, both roots and branches; and he stretches forth his hands unto them all the day long; and they are a stiffnecked ... people; but as many as will not *harden their hearts* shall be saved. ... Wherefore, ... repent, and come with full purpose of heart, and cleave unto God *as he cleaveth unto you*. ... For ... ye have been nourished by the good word of God all the day long.

## 11. How does one *harden* his or her heart?

### 12. Olive Tree and Tree of Life in Lehi's Dream

The fruit of each tree is “*most precious ... above all other fruits*” (1 Ne 15:36; *Jac* 5:61). People “receive strength and nourishment from the *true vine*” or when they are “grafted ... into the *true olive tree*” (1 Ne 15:15–16) “or come to the knowledge of the true Messiah” (1 Ne 10:12–14).

### 13. Book of Mormon Evidences

In *Jacob* 5 “there are many detailed horticultural practices and procedures that were not likely known by an untrained person, and may not have been fully appreciated by professional botanists or horticulturalists at the time the Book of Mormon was translated.” (*Allegory*, 552; 520–523, 530)

**Digging:** “It is necessary to loosen the soil to make nutrients and moisture available to the roots. Because the upper layers of soil tend to tie up phosphates and potash, they often do not reach the feeder roots unless the soil is disturbed. ... Shallow working of the soil ... forms an insulating layer, which prevents evaporation of water, increases permeability of the soil, kills weeds, and aerates the soil, increasing nitrification and root development.”

**Pruning:** “All of the fruit of the olive is borne on second-year wood and the same wood does not bear again. For this reason a new crop of shoots each year is necessary for fruit to set. ... Obtaining a new tree from a sprout takes from [3 to 8] years.”

**Transplanting:** “The olive tree is one of the few fruit trees that can be propagated by taking a branch of a tree and burying it in the ground.”

**Prophecy:** Joseph Fielding Smith said, “Joseph Smith did not write [*Jacob* 5]. That was written by the inspiration of the Almighty ... That tells you of history. Are we going to preach the gospel in Korea, in Japan, in China? Yes, we are. Why? Because the blood of Israel is there. And the Lord did just what he said he would do with Abraham and his posterity. He scattered them over the whole face of the earth. So now the Gentiles are sanctified by the blood of Abraham.” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:203–7)

## 14. Sherem and Jacob (*Jacob* 7)

<sup>6</sup> *Brother* Jacob, ... thou goest about c, preaching that which ye call the gospel, or the doctrine of Christ.

**Other gods:** “the prophet ... that shall speak in the name of other gods, ... shall die.” (*Deut* 18:20)

<sup>7</sup> And ye have led away much of this people that they pervert the right way of God, and keep not the *law of Moses* which is the right way; and convert the law of Moses into the worship of a being which ye say shall come many hundred years hence.

**Apostasy:** If one says “let us ... serve other gods, which ye have not known ... thou shalt surely kill him” (*Deut* 13:2–13)

And ... I, Sherem, declare unto you that this is blasphemy;

**Blasphemy** included insolent or seditious speech against God, king, man, holy places or things, including the law. (*JWW*) One who blasphemed was put to death (*Ex* 20:7; *Lev* 24:10–16).

for *no man knoweth of such things; for he cannot tell of things to come*.

**False prophecy:** “If the thing followeth not, nor come to pass” “that prophet shall die.” (*Deut* 18:20–22)

<sup>13</sup> And ... [*Sherem*] said ...: *Show me a sign ...* <sup>15</sup> the power of the Lord came upon him, ... [and] he fell to the earth. ... [After he confessed to the people,] he gave up the ghost. <sup>21</sup> And ... they were astonished exceedingly; insomuch that the power of God came down upon them, and ... they fell to the earth.

**False witness:** “if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother ... And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.” (*Deut* 19:18–19)

## 15. Endure to the End

Repent ye, and *enter in at the strait gate*, and *continue in the way which is narrow*, until ye shall obtain eternal life. (*Jac* 6:11)

We labored diligently ... that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God, that they might *enter into his rest* (*Jac* 1:7) “which rest is the *fulness of his glory*” (*D&C* 84:24). See *TPJS* 149–151 (on last handout).

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### Quotes

**Jeffrey R. Holland:** There is much more here than simply the unraveling of convoluted Israelite history. Of greater significance in this allegory is the benevolent view of God that it provides. He is portrayed here as one who repeatedly, painstakingly, endlessly tries to save the work of His hands and in moments of greatest disappointment holds His head in His hands and weeps, ‘What could I have done more for my vineyard?’ (*Jac* 5:41, 47, 49) This allegory is a declaration of divine love, of God’s unceasing effort as a father laboring on behalf of His children. As one writer has noted, ‘Zenos’s allegory ought to take its place beside the parable of the prodigal son. Both stories make the Lord’s mercy so movingly memorable.’ (*Heroes from the Book of Mormon*, 37)