
Jacob 5 — The Allegory of the Olive Tree — Zenos on the Lord's Vineyard, the Wild Branches, and the Final Harvest

The BoM's longest chapter; Brass-Plates-prophet Zenos' allegory of multi-millennial Israel; five visits; c. 544 BC.

The chapter is the BoM's longest chapter and one of the most-extensive allegories in all of scripture. Jacob answers ch. 4:17's puzzle by quoting Zenos — a Brass-Plates-prophet whose words the OT-canon lost — in the longest sustained allegory in the BoM. Five visits trace the Lord's-multi-millennial-labor over the House of Israel: (1) first decay + first grafting (vv. 3–14); (2) long time passing + multiple branches (vv. 15–28); (3) third visit — all corrupt, the Lord weeps (vv. 29–49); (4) fourth visit — great-and-last grafting (vv. 50–74); (5) harvest and burning (vv. 75–77). Theological center: vv. 41, 47 — *the Lord wept... what could I have done more for my vineyard?* (Isa. 5:4 verbatim).

Ten Insights

- 1. Israel as the tame olive-tree (v. 3).** *I will liken thee, O house of Israel, like unto a tame olive-tree.* Same OT-similitude as Jer. 11:16 (a green olive tree) and Hos. 14:6 (his beauty shall be as the olive tree); same NT-grammar as Rom. 11:17–24.
- 2. First visit — prune, dig, nourish (v. 4).** *I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it.* The Lord's-response to decay is intensive-cultivation, not abandonment (Lk. 13:6–9 — leave it this year).
- 3. Wild branches grafted in (v. 7).** *Go and pluck the branches from a wild olive-tree, and bring them hither.* Pre-Pauline articulation of Rom. 11:17–18 — the Gentile-Christian-Church grafted onto the OT-Israelite-root.
- 4. Scattering as preservation (v. 8).** *I take away many of these young and tender branches, and I will graft them whithersoever I will... I may preserve the fruit thereof.* The scattering of Israel is a preservation-strategy (Amos 9:9). The Lehi-branch is one such grafting.
- 5. Poor spot of ground produced fruit (vv. 21–22).** *This spot of ground was poorer than the first... nevertheless... it hath brought forth much fruit.* The Lord's-grace overcomes geographical-disadvantage (1 Cor. 1:26–29) — the Lehi-promised-land in scope.
- 6. Long time passing (vv. 15, 29).** *A long time passed away.* The Lord's-cultivation operates on millennial-timescales (2 Pet. 3:8 — one day with the Lord as a thousand years). Divine-millennial-patience.
- 7. The Lord wept (v. 41).** *And the Lord of the vineyard wept, and said unto the servant: What could I have done more for my vineyard?* One of the BoM's-most-Christological-revealing texts (Jn. 11:35; Moses 7:28). Cites Isa. 5:4 verbatim.
- 8. Stretched forth mine hand all the day long (v. 47).** *I have stretched forth mine hand almost all the day long.* Pre-Pauline articulation of Rom. 10:21 — all day long I have stretched forth my hands.
- 9. Spare it a little longer (v. 50).** *The servant said unto the Lord of the vineyard: Spare it a little longer.* The prophetic-servant intercedes — same intercession-grammar as Lk. 13:8 (let it alone this year also); Gen. 18:23–33 (Abraham for Sodom).
- 10. They became like unto one body; fruits equal (v. 74).** *They became like unto one body; and the fruits were equal.* Pre-Johannine articulation of Jn. 17:21 — that they all may be one. The Millennial-condition of unity-and-equality (4 Ne. 1:3).

Cross-References

Gen. 12:3 (in thee shall all families be blessed); Gen. 18:23–33 (Abraham intercedes — direct parallel v. 50); Gen. 49:22 (Joseph is a fruitful bough); Ex. 32:11–14 (Moses intercedes — direct parallel v. 50); Deut. 32:9 (Lord's portion is his people); Judg. 9:8–15 (Jotham's parable of the trees); Ps. 1:3 (tree planted by rivers of water); Ps. 80:8–16 (vineyard-song — direct parallel ch. 5); Prov. 11:30 (fruit of the righteous is a tree of life); Isa. 5:1–7 (vineyard-song — direct parallel vv. 47, 49); Isa. 11:1 (rod out of the stem of Jesse); Isa. 11:11–12 (set hand again the second time); Isa. 27:2–6 (vineyard of red wine — direct parallel ch. 5); Isa. 41:8 (Israel, my servant); Isa. 49:22 (lift up mine hand to the Gentiles); Isa. 60:21 (the branch of my planting); Isa. 65:2 (stretched out my hands — direct parallel v. 47); Jer. 2:21 (yet I had planted thee a noble vine); Jer. 11:16 (a green olive tree — direct parallel v. 3); Ezek. 15:1–8 (vine wood); Ezek. 17:1–10 (eagles and cedar — direct genre-parallel); Ezek. 36:24 (gather you out of all countries); Ezek. 37:21 (take the children of Israel from among the heathen); Hos. 14:5–8 (his branches shall spread — direct parallel v. 3); Joel 1:7 (he hath laid my vine waste); Amos 9:9 (sift the house of Israel — direct parallel v. 8); Matt. 3:10 (axe laid unto the root); Matt. 13:24–30 (wheat and tares — direct parallel v. 77); Matt. 15:13 (every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted); Matt. 20:1–16 (laborers in the vineyard); Matt. 21:33–46 (vineyard-tenants — direct parallel ch. 5); Matt. 23:37 (how often would I have gathered — direct parallel v. 47); Matt. 25:21 (well done — direct parallel v. 75); Mk. 12:1–12 (vineyard-tenants); Lk. 13:6–9 (fig tree, dig and dung — direct parallel v. 4); Lk. 13:8 (spare it a little longer — direct parallel v. 50); Lk. 19:41 (Jesus wept — direct parallel v. 41); Lk. 20:9–18 (vineyard-tenants); Jn. 11:35 (Jesus wept — direct parallel v. 41); Jn. 15:1–8 (I am the true vine — direct genre-parallel); Jn. 17:21 (that they all may be one — direct parallel v. 74); Rom. 9:6–8 (not all Israel which are of Israel); Rom. 10:21 (stretched forth my hands — direct parallel v. 47); Rom. 11:1–32 (olive tree-grafting — direct extended-parallel ch. 5); 1 Cor. 3:6–9 (Paul planted, Apollos watered — direct parallel v. 72); 2 Cor. 6:1 (workers together with him); Gal. 3:7–9 (children of Abraham); Eph. 2:13 (made nigh by the blood of Christ); Eph. 3:6 (Gentiles fellowheirs); Jas. 5:7 (the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit — direct parallel vv. 15, 29); 2 Pet. 3:8 (one day as a thousand years — direct parallel vv. 15, 29); Rev. 11:4 (two olive trees — direct parallel v. 3); Rev. 14:14–20 (harvest of the earth — direct parallel v. 77); Rev. 20:1–10 (Satan bound, then loosed — direct parallel vv. 76–77); 1 Ne. 10:12 (likened to a tame olive-tree); 1 Ne. 15:12 (olive tree — direct precursor v. 3); 1 Ne. 19:10 (Zenos cited); 1 Ne. 22:8–9 (Marvelous Work); 2 Ne. 6:6 (nursing-fathers); 2 Ne. 29:14 (records grow together); 2 Ne. 30 (Gentile-Lamanite-Jew gathering — direct parallel vv. 50–74); Jacob 4 (looking beyond the mark — direct context); Jacob 6 (Jacob's exhortation — direct sequel); Hel. 8:19 (Zenos cited); 3 Ne. 10:16 (Zenos cited); 3 Ne. 16:4–15 (other sheep); 4 Ne. 1:1–3 (no rich and poor — direct parallel v. 74); D&C 27:5 (Joseph and Judah); D&C 49:24 (Lamanites shall blossom — direct parallel vv. 73–74); D&C 86:1–11 (parable of the vineyard explained — direct interpretation key); D&C 101:43–62 (nobleman's vineyard); D&C 110:11 (keys of the gathering); D&C 113:1–6 (rod, root, stem of Jesse); D&C 133:7–14 (gathering); Moses 7:28 (heavens weep — direct parallel v. 41); Articles of Faith 10 (literal gathering of Israel — direct parallel vv. 50–74).

Apocryphal Correlations

1 Enoch 89–90 (Animal Apocalypse). Israel's history as a flock of sheep among predators — direct extended dispensational-allegory parallel.

4 Ezra 9:30–37. Israel as planted-vineyard — direct vv. 3–9 vineyard-planting parallel.

2 Baruch 36–37 (vine-and-cedar). Vine and cedar represent rival kingdoms — direct extended-allegory parallel.

Sirach 24:13–17. Wisdom planted as a tree; her branches spread — direct vv. 17, 25 fruit-planting parallel.

Wisdom 12:8–11. God's gradual-cultivation of the wicked Canaanites — direct vv. 47, 49 patience parallel.

Damascus Doc (CD) 1:7–8. God caused a plant-root to grow from Israel and Aaron — direct vv. 3, 25 parallel.

1QH 16:5–11. Thou hast planted a tree of life — direct v. 3 tree-of-life parallel.

Psalms of Solomon 14:1–10. The Lord is faithful — direct vv. 4, 51 faithful-Lord parallel.

Hebrew Word Studies

zayit (זַיִת, olive tree) — v. 3. The OT's-Israel-tree (Jer. 11:16; Hos. 14:6); Zech. 4:3's two-olive-trees flanking the menorah.

kerem (כֶּרֶם, vineyard) — vv. 3–4. The OT's-Israel-cultivation (Isa. 5:1–7; Ps. 80:8–16).

bachah (בָּכָה, to weep) — vv. 41, 47. The verb of Joseph's weeping over his brothers (Gen. 45:14); the Lord-of-the-vineyard's bachah.

shalach yad (שָׁלַח יָד, stretch out the hand) — v. 47. Isa. 65:2 — I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people.

shoresh ve-anaf (שָׂרֵשׁ וְעֵנָף, **root and branch**) — vv. 11, 60. The chapter's-master-pairing — root-and-top equilibrium = Millennial-condition.

peri tov (פֶּרִי טוֹב, **good fruit**) — vv. 17, 73. The harvest-noun; tov-creation grammar of Gen. 1.

Personal Application

Three practices. First, trust the long-time-passing of the Lord's cultivation. Do not despair when the Lord seems silent; the long-time-passing is the Lord's-cultivation-rhythm (2 Pet. 3:8). Patience is the disciple's-Lord-of-the-vineyard-grammar. Second, labor with the Lord-of-the-vineyard. Whatever your stewardship — family, ministering, missionary-effort, professional-service — labor as if the Lord-of-the-vineyard is laboring beside you, because He is (1 Cor. 3:9). Third, bring the natural-fruit back to the original-tree. Participate in the gathering — by inviting friends to come unto Christ, by indexing-and-temple-work for the dead, by walking the covenant-path with your own family (D&C 18:15). The gathering is happening now.