

General Comments on Jacob 5

Contextual Sources

The source and general context of the allegory presented in this chapter is one that can be traced through the Hebrew Bible. The core source is standard covenant theology from the Law of Moses, as follows:

3 If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; 4 Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. 5 And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.... 9 For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. 10 And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new. (Lev. 26:3-10)

And also:

1 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: 2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. 3 Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. 4 Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. 5 Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. (Deut. 28:1-6)

In both cases, the Lord promises to bless Israel with prosperity in both field and family if they keep His commandments. Naturally, the prosperity of field and the prosperity of the family are related as people live off the fruit of the field. This equation is fully developed in the Psalms:

1 A Song of degrees. Blessed is every one that feareth

the LORD; that walketh in his ways. 2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. 3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. 4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. 5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. 6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel. (Ps. 128:1-6)

This symbolism is employed in the Prophetic literature, those presumably contemporary with Zenos.

1 O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.... 4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. 5 I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. 6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. 7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. (Hosea 14:1-7)

As the symbol becomes common in Hebrew scriptural literature, it is employed in other contexts as well, as in the case with Isaiah and Jeremiah.

4 And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. 5 And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim. 6 Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the LORD God of Israel. (Isa. 17:4-6, also cp. Isa. 24:1-13)

11 Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to

escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.... 13 For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal.... 16 The LORD called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. 17 For the LORD of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger in offering incense unto Baal. (Jer. 11:11-17)

Paul makes use of this symbolism to metaphorically represent Israel as an olive tree and the acceptance of the Gentiles into Israel as them being grafted into that olive tree (cf. Romans 11). Paul's metaphorical usage is quite similar to Zenos' imagery, but it is simply a metaphor while Zenos' account is a fully developed parable.

That there are considerable similarities between Zenos' and Paul's accounts shouldn't be surprising, as they had the same core symbolism to draw on and were both commenting on the same subject (a subject Isaiah commented on as well, although not using this set of symbols, cf. Isa. 56:3-8). And, given Smith's consistent use of KJV rhetoric in translating the Book of Mormon, it is likely he deliberately drew on the rhetoric of Paul's account in translating Zenos'.

See D&C 101:14-62 for a slightly different take on the olive trees in the vineyard. See also Ezek. 17 for a parable which uses transplanting of trees as a major part of its imagery.

Who is Zenos?

Zenos is referenced earlier in the Book of Mormon (cf. 1 Ne. 19), but the present text is the largest quotation of him in the Book of Mormon. Despite the repeated references, little background is given about the man. As such, the question arises, who is this Zenos person? He isn't referenced in the contemporary Old Testament. But, he is apparently documented on the Brass Plates, as Jacob makes mention of people reading from the words of Zenos in 5:1. Had he not been documented on the

plates, how would they have known about him? This suggests Zenos was a prophet associated with the Northern Ten Tribes of Israel as the Brass Plates were a record of the Josephites, cf. 1 Ne. 5:16. One could assume he was contemporary of Hosea, Amos, and Joel. But, the scant information given on the man leaves the reader speculating.

That his writings wouldn't be included in the Jewish record of prophets shouldn't be a surprise given the generally poor relations between the two groups after king Solomon's death. From what we know of his writings he was unapologetically messianic with a very direct writing style (cf. 1 Ne. 19). As such, if his writings ever even made it to Jewish audiences it is likely he would have been dismissed as an extremist messianic zealot.

Concrete versus Conceptual

It is common for readers to over-literalize parables, and in the process of doing so to miss key points. Parables rely heavily on metaphorical parallels, "The kingdom of heaven is like..." and so on. But, the reality is the kingdom of heaven isn't literally what it is being compared to. At some point, the analogy fails. If the analogy is taken too far, the result is bad parallels or mistaken conclusions. The more complicated an allegory, the more possible it is to make mistakes taking it overly literal. There is potential for such a thing with a text as long and as complicated as the present one.

For example, look at how general the interpretations given by Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob are (1 Ne. 10:12-14, 1 Ne. 15:7-20, 6:1-8). Compare these very general interpretations with the typical contemporary LDS commentator. The LDS commentator commonly draws specific parallels between the allegory and historical events, or some perceived future events. Is it just that the LDS commentator has the benefit of hindsight and can therefore make such an assignment with confidence? Or, is it a matter of interpretive approach? It is likely it is the latter. To the Semitic mind an allegory is something detached from reality, and done so deliberately so as to emphasize the qualitative nature of the matter being discussed. Westerners are generally more concrete and quantitative when it comes to such things, and the result is Western readers tend to over-literalize allegories.

Fundamentally, there is a split between the conceptual and the concrete. When the Semitic author uses a literary device that is deliberately metaphorical, they are trying to detach the

audience from the concrete. Prime examples of this would be Jesus' parables. He was squaring off against a group of Pharisees who were using religion as a means of political power by making the Law completely physically literal, and as such they largely rejected the spiritual implications of the Law. So, he taught them in conceptual allegories which emphasized the spiritual over the physical, and they and their followers were left nonplused while the more spiritual Jews perceived their meaning.

In the case of Zeno's allegory, the reader needs to refrain from attempting to correlate verse X with historical event Y. Why? Because in focusing on the concrete historical aspect the reader misses the spiritual concept the author intends to deliver. We already have a detailed prediction of historical events dealing with the restoration of Natural Israel delivered to us by Nephi (cf. 1 Ne. 13-14, 2 Ne. 25-30), why repeat it again, especially when you just complained about how difficult it is to inscribe things on plates (cf. 4:1)? Jacob isn't repeating that again. He is teaching the underlying spiritual principles. If the readers focuses too much on the concrete, then they miss the concept and this becomes one long, boring, speculative, history lesson.

As an example of the lack of harmony between the concrete and the conceptual approaches, consider v. 3-14. Verses 3-6 present a tame olive tree that is dying of decay, so the owner prunes it a little and does some general maintenance on it. The tree responds by producing some new shoots, but the main portion of the old tree persists in its decay. The concrete historical interpretation on this is that it represents post-Exodus Israel up until Assyria's sack of Northern Israel.

Then with v. 7-14 the tame tree is grafted with wild branches and tame branches are grafted into other wild trees. The concrete historical reading is the grafting of the tame branches into wild trees represents the scattering of Israel, among whom the Lehtes are included. But, this is not simultaneous with the grafting of the wild branches into the tame tree. The concrete historical interpretation on grafting the wild branches into the tame tree is the gospel going to the Gentiles, which is shortly after Jesus' resurrection (cf. Acts 10). That being the case, what the allegory presents as being simultaneous (i.e., the cross grafting) occurs some 1000 years apart historically. And speaking from a particularly LDS theological perspective, you have to significantly blur the

lines between two different dispensations in order to make it fit. In this case it is clear the concrete historical interpretation has pushed the allegory too far.

Meaning of Symbols

In interpreting Zenos' allegory, the majority of the keys are provided in other BofM texts. Lehi comments on the same subject in 1 Ne. 10:12-14, then Nephi expounds upon Lehi's comments in 1 Ne. 15:7-20. Nephi might also be commenting on this in 1 Ne. 19:13-17. And, finally, after quoting the allegory, Jacob then comments on it in 6:1-8. The result is the meaning of the allegory is quite transparent. The major figures and actions in the allegory are defined by Jacob as follows:

<u>Allegory</u>	<u>Definition and Citation</u>
tame/natural tree	"the house of Israel, in the which ye likened them unto a tame olive tree" (6:1), "the house of Israel, both roots and branches" (6:4)
master/Lord	"he shall set his hand again the second time to recover his people...[via]...the servants of the Lord" (6:2), "how merciful is our God unto us" (6:4)
servants	"the servants of the Lord shall go forth in his power, to nourish and prune his vineyard" (6:2)
nourishing	"nourished by the good word of God" (6:7)
pruning	"will ye bring forth evil fruit, that ye must be hewn down and cast into the fire?" (6:7, 6:8-9 define what "cast into the fire" means)

In providing these interpretations, notice Jacob focuses squarely on the Israelites and ignores Gentiles. He doesn't even mention any of the grafting or provide an interpretation of what that represents, even though it is a major theme of the

allegory. This is because his interest in the allegory is "How will Israel, specifically Judah, be saved when they reject Christ?" per 4:17, and not the salvation of the Gentiles. Jacob's point of view is the grafting is there to save Israel, not the Gentiles. This follows with Jacob's contemporary audience, namely a group of descendants of Israel, not Gentiles. It would be curious indeed if Jacob spent significant time discussing Gentiles at all given his immediate audience.

The CES Institute manual for the BofM has a good graphical representation of the various stages of the olive tree and grafts and so on. I would defer to that rather than attempt to redo it, as if I did it would be pretty much the same.

Structure of the Text

The text of ch. 5 is in four conceptual blocks based upon how the olive trees are doing and the management practice subsequently applied to them:

i (v. 3-14) A cherished tame olive tree is dying from decay (v. 3-6), grafts from a wild olive tree are introduced to the tame tree and grafts from the tame tree are introduced to wild trees (v. 7-14).

ii (v. 15-28) Time passes and the wild grafts into the tame tree save the tree and produce good fruit (v. 15-18), then three of the four tame grafts into wild trees on poor ground produce good fruit (v. 19-24), but the fourth tame graft into a wild tree on good ground has produced mixed fruit (v. 25). The lord decides to prune and burn the bad branches off this last tree, but relents at the servant's request and they go ahead and nourish a little longer to see how it does (v. 26-28).

iii (v. 29-72) Time passes (v. 29) and all of the fruit of all of the trees goes bad (v. 30-46). The tame tree with wild grafts (v. 30-37) has produced bad fruit, but at least the roots of the tame tree are still alive (v. 34-36). The wild trees with tame grafts are producing bad fruit (v. 38-46) because the grafted branches have taken strength to themselves and overpowered the roots (v. 47-48). In his anger, the lord again wants to prune and burn, but again relents because of the servant's request and because he

doesn't want to lose the vineyard (v. 49-51). Instead, the lord determines to graft the tame branches back into the tame tree by gradually pruning out the worst wild branches (v. 52-64). In doing the pruning gradually the strength of the root and the strength of the branches will be matched such that the good overcomes the bad (v. 65-69). The lord determines it is the last time they will do this, and so some few additional servants are called (v. 70-72).

iv (v. 73-76) Time passes and good fruit is again found in the vineyard. The wild branches are pruned out and replaced with tame branches, with the root and branches kept in balance so both prosper. The result is the vineyard is no longer corrupt, and the Lord gathers up the good fruit.

Note the third section is substantially longer, and therefore emphasized by the author. This is the most complicated section as far as what the lord and servants have to do in order to reverse the corruption of the vineyard. It is also the section wherein the lord expresses the most angst and unhappiness (e.g., v. 41) over the condition of the vineyard, given the entirely bad condition of all the fruit.

Also note the four sections follow an antithetical A-B-B-A pattern, as follows:

- A - Tame tree is dying of decay
 - B - Mixed tame and wild trees mostly do well
 - B - Mixed tame and wild trees all go bad
- A - Tame tree is doing well and producing good fruit

The lord's initial desire is to have the cherished tame tree in the first A produce good fruit, and this is ultimately accomplished in the second A, but not without the intervening B's. The intervening B's are messy and require a lot of work and end up producing a lot of bad fruit, but in doing this the ultimate goal of preserving the tame tree is accomplished. This is the central thesis of the allegory. In order to save Israel the Lord must do a great deal of work involving the Gentiles that will initially result in the whole lot going bad, but ultimately result in a prosperous Israel.

And thus the concept of how Israel will be saved despite their general rejection of Christ. They will be scattered among the Gentiles, which will initially be a benefit to the Gentiles

as they receive the Lord in the process. But, after all go bad, the best of both Israel and the Gentiles will be selectively pulled out from the rest to form the Lord's people once again. The final result will be only the best quality from both Israel and Gentiles forming the core of the Lord's people.

Comments on Jacob 5

1 Behold, my brethren, do ye not remember to have read the words of the prophet Zenos, which he spake unto the house of Israel, saying: 2 Hearken, O ye house of Israel, and hear the words of me, a prophet of the Lord.

v1-2 Jacob introduces the subject of his sermon, the words of Zenos, a prophet of the Lord who spoke to the house of Israel.

3 For behold, thus saith the Lord, I will liken thee, O house of Israel, like unto a tame olive-tree, which a man took and nourished in his vineyard; and it grew, and waxed old, and began to decay. 4 And it came to pass that the master of the vineyard went forth, and he saw that his olive-tree began to decay; and he said: I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it, that perhaps it may shoot forth young and tender branches, and it perish not. 5 And it came to pass that he pruned it, and digged about it, and nourished it according to his word. 6 And it came to pass that after many days it began to put forth somewhat a little, young and tender branches; but behold, the main top thereof began to perish.

7 And it came to pass that the master of the vineyard saw it, and he said unto his servant: It grieveth me that I should lose this tree; wherefore, go and pluck the branches from a wild olive-tree, and bring them hither unto me; and we will pluck off those main branches which are beginning to wither away, and we will cast them into the fire that they may be burned. 8 And behold, saith the Lord of the vineyard, I take away many of these young and tender branches, and I will graft them whithersoever I will; and it mattereth not that if it so be that the root of this tree will perish, I may preserve the fruit thereof unto myself; wherefore, I will take these young and tender branches, and I will graft them whithersoever I will. 9 Take thou the branches of the wild olive-tree, and graft them in, in the stead thereof; and these which I have plucked off I will cast into the fire and burn them, that they may not cumber the ground of my vineyard.

10 And it came to pass that the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did according to the word of the Lord of the vineyard, and grafted in the branches of the wild olive-tree. 11 And the Lord of the vineyard caused that it should be digged about, and pruned, and nourished, saying unto his servant: It grieveth me that I should lose this tree; wherefore, that perhaps I might preserve the roots thereof that they perish not, that I might preserve them unto myself, I have done this thing. 12 Wherefore, go thy way; watch the tree, and nourish it, according to my words.

13 And these will I place in the nethermost part of my vineyard, whithersoever I will, it mattereth not unto thee; and I do it that I may preserve unto myself the natural branches of the tree; and also, that I may lay up fruit thereof against the season, unto myself; for it grieveth me that I should lose this tree and the fruit thereof. 14 And it came to pass that the Lord of the

vineyard went his way, and hid the natural branches of the tame olive-tree in the nethermost parts of the vineyard, some in one and some in another, according to his will and pleasure.

v3-14 A cherished tame olive tree is dying from decay (v. 3-6). The lord of the vineyard deliberates over what to do and then decides the course of action (v. 7-9). Grafts from a wild olive tree are introduced to the tame tree (v. 10-12) and grafts from the tame tree are introduced to various wild trees (v. 13-14).

15 And it came to pass that a long time passed away, and the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: Come, let us go down into the vineyard, that we may labor in the vineyard. 16 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard, and also the servant, went down into the vineyard to labor. And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: Behold, look here; behold the tree. 17 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard looked and beheld the tree in the which the wild olive branches had been grafted; and it had sprung forth and begun to bear fruit. And he beheld that it was good; and the fruit thereof was like unto the natural fruit. 18 And he said unto the servant: Behold, the branches of the wild tree have taken hold of the moisture of the root thereof, that the root thereof hath brought forth much strength; and because of the much strength of the root thereof the wild branches have brought forth tame fruit. Now, if we had not grafted in these branches, the tree thereof would have perished. And now, behold, I shall lay up much fruit, which the tree thereof hath brought forth; and the fruit thereof I shall lay up against the season, unto mine own self.

19 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Come, let us go to the nethermost part of the vineyard, and behold if the natural branches of the tree have not brought forth much fruit also, that I may lay up of the fruit thereof against the season, unto mine own self. 20 And it came to pass that they went forth whither the master had hid the natural branches of the tree, and he said unto the servant: Behold these; and he beheld the first that it had brought forth much fruit; and he beheld also that it was good. And he said unto the servant: Take of the fruit thereof, and lay it up against the season, that I may preserve it unto mine own self; for behold, said he, this long time have I nourished it, and it hath brought forth much fruit. 21 And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: How comest thou hither to plant this tree, or this branch of the tree? For behold, it was the poorest spot in all the land of thy vineyard. 22 And the Lord of the vineyard said unto him: Counsel me not; I knew that it was a poor spot of ground; wherefore, I said unto thee, I have nourished it this long time, and thou beholdest that it hath brought forth much fruit. 23 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: Look hither; behold I have planted another branch of the tree also; and thou knowest that this spot of ground was poorer than the first. But, behold the tree. I have nourished it this long time, and it hath brought forth much fruit; therefore, gather it, and lay it up against the season, that I may preserve it unto mine own self. 24 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said again unto his servant: Look hither, and behold another branch also, which I have planted; behold that I have nourished it also, and it hath brought forth fruit.

25 And he said unto the servant: Look hither and behold the last. Behold, this have I planted in a good spot of ground; and I have nourished it this long time, and only a part of the tree hath brought forth tame fruit, and the other part of the tree hath brought forth wild fruit;

behold, I have nourished this tree like unto the others.

26 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Pluck off the branches that have not brought forth good fruit, and cast them into the fire. 27 But behold, the servant said unto him: Let us prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it a little longer, that perhaps it may bring forth good fruit unto thee, that thou canst lay it up against the season. 28 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard and the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did nourish all the fruit of the vineyard.

v15-28 Time passes and the wild grafts in the tame tree save the tree and produce good fruit (v. 15-18), then three of the four tame grafts into wild trees produce good fruit (v. 19-24), but the fourth tame graft into a wild tree on good ground has produced mixed fruit (v. 25). The lord decides to prune and burn the bad branches off this last tree, but relents at the servant's request and they go ahead and nourish a little longer to see how it does (v. 26-28).

v19-25 The lord determines to go and check locations where tame branches were grafted into wild trees (v. 19). They then visit four locations. The first is in poor ground, but produces much good fruit (v. 20-22). The second is in even poorer ground still, but produces much good fruit (v. 23). The third is in nondescript ground, and produces good fruit (v. 24). The fourth is a branch planted in good ground and nourished just as the others, yet it produces mixed fruit (v. 25).

The first three represent the 1st, 2nd, ...Nth grafted tame branches in poor ground, and the 4th is the one branch placed in the best possible location. Those that are planted in poor ground thrive despite the adversity, because of careful cultivating, and the one in the good ground, the most choice ground available according to v. 43-44, ends up not producing as well. The moral? Adversity with careful nurturing produces more good fruit.

29 And it came to pass that a long time had passed away, and the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: Come, let us go down into the vineyard, that we may labor again in the vineyard. For behold, the time draweth near, and the end soon cometh; wherefore, I must lay up fruit against the season, unto mine own self.

30 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard and the servant went down into the vineyard; and they came to the tree whose natural branches had been broken off, and the wild branches had been grafted in; and behold all sorts of fruit did cumber the tree. 31 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard did taste of the fruit, every sort according to its number. And the Lord of the vineyard said: Behold, this long time have we nourished this tree, and I have laid up unto myself against the season much fruit. 32 But behold, this time it hath brought forth much

fruit, and there is none of it which is good. And behold, there are all kinds of bad fruit; and it profiteth me nothing, notwithstanding all our labor; and now it grieveth me that I should lose this tree.

33 And the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: What shall we do unto the tree, that I may preserve again good fruit thereof unto mine own self? 34 And the servant said unto his master: Behold, because thou didst graft in the branches of the wild olive-tree they have nourished the roots, that they are alive and they have not perished; wherefore thou beholdest that they are yet good. 35 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: The tree profiteth me nothing, and the roots thereof profit me nothing so long as it shall bring forth evil fruit. 36 Nevertheless, I know that the roots are good, and for mine own purpose I have preserved them; and because of their much strength they have hitherto brought forth, from the wild branches, good fruit. 37 But behold, the wild branches have grown and have overrun the roots thereof; and because that the wild branches have overcome the roots thereof it hath brought forth much evil fruit; and because that it hath brought forth so much evil fruit thou beholdest that it beginneth to perish; and it will soon become ripened, that it may be cast into the fire, except we should do something for it to preserve it.

38 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: Let us go down into the nethermost parts of the vineyard, and behold if the natural branches have also brought forth evil fruit. 39 And it came to pass that they went down into the nethermost parts of the vineyard. And it came to pass that they beheld that the fruit of the natural branches had become corrupt also; yea, the first and the second and also the last; and they had all become corrupt. 40 And the wild fruit of the last had overcome that part of the tree which brought forth good fruit, even that the branch had withered away and died. 41 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard wept, and said unto the servant: What could I have done more for my vineyard? 42 Behold, I knew that all the fruit of the vineyard, save it were these, had become corrupted. And now these which have once brought forth good fruit have also become corrupted; and now all the trees of my vineyard are good for nothing save it be to be hewn down and cast into the fire. 43 And behold this last, whose branch hath withered away, I did plant in a good spot of ground; yea, even that which was choice unto me above all other parts of the land of my vineyard. 44 And thou beheldest that I also cut down that which cumbered this spot of ground, that I might plant this tree in the stead thereof. 45 And thou beheldest that a part thereof brought forth good fruit, and a part thereof brought forth wild fruit; and because I plucked not the branches thereof and cast them into the fire, behold, they have overcome the good branch that it hath withered away. 46 And now, behold, notwithstanding all the care which we have taken of my vineyard, the trees thereof have become corrupted, that they bring forth no good fruit; and these I had hoped to preserve, to have laid up fruit thereof against the season, unto mine own self. But, behold, they have become like unto the wild olive-tree, and they are of no worth but to be hewn down and cast into the fire; and it grieveth me that I should lose them.

47 But what could I have done more in my vineyard? Have I slackened mine hand, that I have not nourished it? Nay, I have nourished it, and I have digged about it, and I have pruned it, and I have dunged it; and I have stretched forth mine hand almost all the day long, and the end draweth nigh. And it grieveth me that I should hew down all the trees of my vineyard, and cast them into the fire that they should be burned. Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard? 48 And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: Is it not the loftiness of thy vineyard--have

not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good? And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, taking strength unto themselves. Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have become corrupted?

49 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Let us go to and hew down the trees of the vineyard and cast them into the fire, that they shall not cumber the ground of my vineyard, for I have done all. What could I have done more for my vineyard? 50 But, behold, the servant said unto the Lord of the vineyard: Spare it a little longer. 51 And the Lord said: Yea, I will spare it a little longer, for it grieveth me that I should lose the trees of my vineyard. 52 Wherefore, let us take of the branches of these which I have planted in the nethermost parts of my vineyard, and let us graft them into the tree from whence they came; and let us pluck from the tree those branches whose fruit is most bitter, and graft in the natural branches of the tree in the stead thereof. 53 And this will I do that the tree may not perish, that, perhaps, I may preserve unto myself the roots thereof for mine own purpose. 54 And, behold, the roots of the natural branches of the tree which I planted whithersoever I would are yet alive; wherefore, that I may preserve them also for mine own purpose, I will take of the branches of this tree, and I will graft them in unto them. Yea, I will graft in unto them the branches of their mother tree, that I may preserve the roots also unto mine own self, that when they shall be sufficiently strong perhaps they may bring forth good fruit unto me, and I may yet have glory in the fruit of my vineyard.

55 And it came to pass that they took from the natural tree which had become wild, and grafted in unto the natural trees, which also had become wild. 56 And they also took of the natural trees which had become wild, and grafted into their mother tree. 57 And the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Pluck not the wild branches from the trees, save it be those which are most bitter; and in them ye shall graft according to that which I have said. 58 And we will nourish again the trees of the vineyard, and we will trim up the branches thereof; and we will pluck from the trees those branches which are ripened, that must perish, and cast them into the fire. 59 And this I do that, perhaps, the roots thereof may take strength because of their goodness; and because of the change of the branches, that the good may overcome the evil. 60 And because that I have preserved the natural branches and the roots thereof, and that I have grafted in the natural branches again into their mother tree, and have preserved the roots of their mother tree, that, perhaps, the trees of my vineyard may bring forth again good fruit and that I may have joy again in the fruit of my vineyard, and, perhaps, that I may rejoice exceedingly that I have preserved the roots and the branches of the first fruit-- 61 Wherefore, go to, and call servants, that we may labor diligently with our might in the vineyard, that we may prepare the way, that I may bring forth again the natural fruit, which natural fruit is good and the most precious above all other fruit. 62 Wherefore, let us go to and labor with our might this last time, for behold the end draweth nigh, and this is for the last time that I shall prune my vineyard. 63 Graft in the branches; begin at the last that they may be first, and that the first may be last, and dig about the trees, both old and young, the first and the last; and the last and the first, that all may be nourished once again for the last time. 64 Wherefore, dig about them, and prune them, and dung them once more, for the last time, for the end draweth nigh. And if it be so that these last grafts shall grow, and bring forth the natural fruit, then shall ye prepare the way for them, that they may grow. 65 And as they begin to grow ye shall clear away the branches which bring forth bitter

fruit, according to the strength of the good and the size thereof; and ye shall not clear away the bad thereof all at once, lest the roots thereof should be too strong for the graft, and the graft thereof shall perish, and I lose the trees of my vineyard. 66 For it grieveth me that I should lose the trees of my vineyard; wherefore ye shall clear away the bad according as the good shall grow, that the root and the top may be equal in strength, until the good shall overcome the bad, and the bad be hewn down and cast into the fire, that they cumber not the ground of my vineyard; and thus will I sweep away the bad out of my vineyard. 67 And the branches of the natural tree will I graft in again into the natural tree; 68 And the branches of the natural tree will I graft into the natural branches of the tree; and thus will I bring them together again, that they shall bring forth the natural fruit, and they shall be one. 69 And the bad shall be cast away, yea, even out of all the land of my vineyard; for behold, only this once will I prune my vineyard.

70 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard sent his servant; and the servant went and did as the Lord had commanded him, and brought other servants; and they were few. 71 And the Lord of the vineyard said unto them: Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might. For behold, this is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard; for the end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh; and if ye labor with your might with me ye shall have joy in the fruit which I shall lay up unto myself against the time which will soon come. 72 And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their might; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them; and they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard in all things.

v29-72 Time passes (v. 29) and all of the fruit of all of the trees goes bad (v. 30-46). The tame tree with wild grafts (v. 30-37) has produced bad fruit, but at least the roots of the tame tree are still alive (v. 34-36). The wild trees with tame grafts are producing bad fruit (v. 38-46) because the grafted branches have taken strength to themselves and overpowered the roots (v. 47-48). In his anger, the lord again wants to prune and burn, but again relents because of the servant's request and because he doesn't want to lose the vineyard (v. 49-51). Instead, the lord determines to graft the tame branches back into the tame tree by gradually pruning out the worst wild branches (v. 52-64). In doing the pruning gradually the strength of the root and the strength of the branches will be matched such that the good overcomes the bad (v. 65-69). The lord determines it is the last time they will do this, and so some few additional servants are called (v. 70-72).

v67-68 These two verses seem to repeat themselves, but note the first verse has the branches being grafted into the tree while the second verse has the branches being grafted into branches. What does this mean? More branches came back than went out, and the root is stronger than it started out initially, strong enough to support grafts upon grafts. Israel is stronger for

the exercise and has picked up some productive Gentiles as well.

73 And there began to be the natural fruit again in the vineyard; and the natural branches began to grow and thrive exceedingly; and the wild branches began to be plucked off and to be cast away; and they did keep the root and the top thereof equal, according to the strength thereof.

74 And thus they labored, with all diligence, according to the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard, even until the bad had been cast away out of the vineyard, and the Lord had preserved unto himself that the trees had become again the natural fruit; and they became like unto one body; and the fruits were equal; and the Lord of the vineyard had preserved unto himself the natural fruit, which was most precious unto him from the beginning.

75 And it came to pass that when the Lord of the vineyard saw that his fruit was good, and that his vineyard was no more corrupt, he called up his servants, and said unto them: Behold, for this last time have we nourished my vineyard; and thou beholdest that I have done according to my will; and I have preserved the natural fruit, that it is good, even like as it was in the beginning. And blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in laboring with me in my vineyard, and have kept my commandments, and have brought unto me again the natural fruit, that my vineyard is no more corrupted, and the bad is cast away, behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard.

76 For behold, for a long time will I lay up of the fruit of my vineyard unto mine own self against the season, which speedily cometh; and for the last time have I nourished my vineyard, and pruned it, and dug about it, and dunged it; wherefore I will lay up unto mine own self of the fruit, for a long time, according to that which I have spoken. 77 And when the time cometh that evil fruit shall again come into my vineyard, then will I cause the good and the bad to be gathered; and the good will I preserve unto myself, and the bad will I cast away into its own place. And then cometh the season and the end; and my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire.

v73-76 Time passes and good fruit is again found in the vineyard. The wild branches are pruned out and replaced with tame branches, with the root and branches kept in balance so both prosper. The result is the vineyard is no longer corrupt, and the Lord gathers up the good fruit.

v76-77 apparently make reference to the Millennial era (v. 76) and then the final conflict afterwards of Gog and Magog (cf. Rev. 20) prior to the end of the earth's telestial existence (v. 77).

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