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The Newsletter of
the Foundation for
Ancient Research
and Mormon Studies

INSIGHTS

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

October 1999

"by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118)

Jacob 5, Romans 11: A Common Textual Tradition?

Readers who are currently studying the letters of Paul will find an article by James E. Faulconer to be of interest. In "The Olive Tree and the Work of God: Jacob 5 and Romans 11," published in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree*, he suggests that the olive tree passages in Jacob 5 and Romans 11 are connected by a common text. He first discusses differences between the two passages, noting that they seem to show that the passages simply share a common rhetorical tradition. However, Faulconer goes on to consider that other linguistic evidence "suggests the possibility of a stronger connection between the Romans and Jacob passages."

For example, though there are significant differences in the context in which Jacob and Paul introduce their references to the olive tree, it is also

rated: Paul specifically mentions killing the prophets (Romans 11:3), the blindness of Israel (11:7, 8, 10), and their stumbling (11:9, 11), and he refers to the consequence as their fall (11:11). Paul attributes the agency of these events to God ("God hath given them the spirit of slumber," Romans 11:8), just as Jacob does ("God hath done it," that is, "delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand," Jacob 4:14).

Faulconer notes that nowhere but in Jacob and Romans do we find this close conjunction of the themes of killing the prophets, blindness, stumbling, and apostasy, as well as an element in both texts associating those events with the act of God. In both cases the conjunction of these themes is followed by the use of the olive tree metaphor.

Join us in celebrating FARMS's 20th anniversary at a banquet on 5 November 1999

FEATURED SPEAKER: TRUMAN G. MADSEN

See the order form for ticket information

And attend the free symposium on 6 November featuring James E. Faulconer

true that they both do so in response to the same problem, namely, the apostasy of Israel. In Jacob 4:14, Jacob says that Israel "killed the prophets. . . . Wherefore, because of their blindness, . . . they must needs fall; . . . and because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble." The same accusations and claims introduce the metaphor of the olive tree in Romans 11, and in virtually the same order, although more widely sepa-

These factors point to the possibility that the text of Zenos's parable or a variation of that text, such as perhaps the work of Kenas, is a direct connection between Romans 11 and Jacob 5. Indeed, the warnings to Israel in the Kenas text state that Israel has "destroyed its own fruit" and "sinned against" God, and ask, "Will the shepherd destroy his flock?" Like Romans 11:1—which begins with

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The Foundation for
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FARMS UPDATE

A Report on Research in Progress

Number 130

Three Trees in the Book of Mormon

The tree is a primary symbol in three Book of Mormon texts: Zenos's allegory of the olive tree (Jacob 5), Lehi's dream of the tree of life (1 Nephi 8), and Alma's discourse on the seed of faith (Alma 32). Interestingly, these three symbolic uses of the tree reflect a shifting emphasis from one era to the next.¹

Zenos lived in ancient Israel. In his day, prophetic leaders emphasized collective salvation. For example, in order for God to march at the head of the armies of Israel, the camp as a whole needed to be pure (see Joshua 7:12–13).

Accordingly, in Zenos's allegory the tame olive tree symbol-

izes the house of Israel as a whole, and the well-being of the whole is paramount. Main groups of people are seen as branches of the tree, while individuals are little more than leaves or olives. When a branch decays or bears bad fruit, it is cut out to save or improve the tree. Collectively speaking, the Lord does all he can to save his beloved tree—pruning, dunging, grafting, and burning as he deems best for the whole.

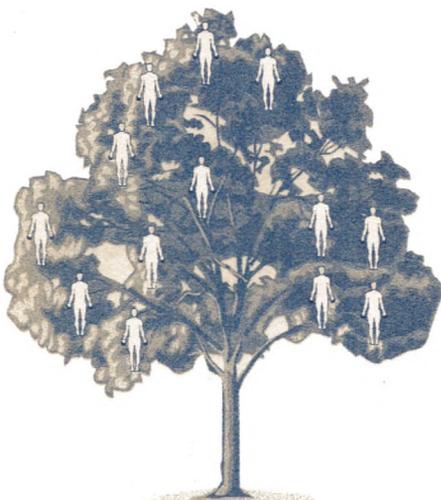
Lehi lived after Zenos. When Lehi and his family were physically separated from the house of Israel, the model of salvation shifted, for he knew that salvation was not to be found in the

body politic of Jerusalem.

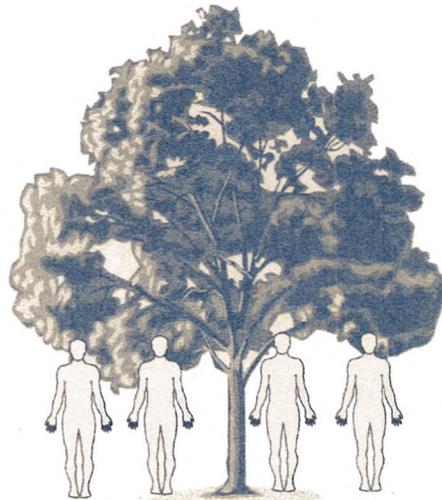
Instead, Lehi took a step away from the old image. Now he depicted salvation as a tree to which individuals have to come. In Lehi's dream, instead of being small parts of a collective tree, each individual is invited to come take a place in relation to the tree and to partake of its sweet, white, desirable fruit (see 1 Nephi 8:11).

Alma lived 500 years after Lehi. Society in Alma's day was pluralistically divided into groups containing all kinds of individuals. As he dealt with Zoramites, Nephites, Ammonihahites, and Gideonites, Alma knew that salvation was heavily a matter of personal choice (see Alma 5).

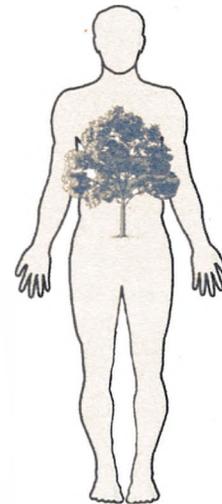
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Zenos's Olive Tree
The House of Israel
Collective Salvation



Lehi's Tree of Life
The Love of God
Blessedness



Alma's Tree of Righteousness
Personal Righteousness
and Testimony

Three Trees in the Book of Mormon (continued from page 2)

In this light, the imagery shifted once again. Alma radically individualized the tree, comparing the word of God "unto a seed" and promising that if one would plant and internalize it, the seed would grow inside the person to become a tree "springing up unto everlasting life," bearing that same sweet,

white fruit that Lehi saw (see Alma 32:28, 41–42).

These trees progressively served the particular needs of the prophets who used them. In their times, each tree illustrated an important truth about the Atonement. Behind them all, of course, stands the unifying reality that the Son of God would be

raised up on yet another tree, that through him all might have eternal life, collectively, relationally, and individually.

NOTE

1. See John W. Welch and J. Gregory Welch, *Charting the Book of Mormon: Visual Aids for Personal Study and Teaching* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), chart no. 95.

By John W. Welch

Grammar and the Book of Mormon

In a discourse delivered at the Old Tabernacle in Salt Lake City on 15 November 1863, President George A. Smith addressed a criticism that is repeated today by detractors of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon:

"It was no sooner noised abroad that Joseph Smith was preaching the Gospel in its purity and administering its ordinances than a howl went up from all the world that he was an impostor, an ignorant fellow, a man without education, and the Book of Mormon was denounced as ungrammatical. An

argument was raised that if it had been translated by the gift and power of God it would have been strictly grammatical. Now so far as grammar is concerned we have King James' Bible before us which was translated two hundred and fifty years ago, by a large number of the most learned men that could be found in Great Britain, and it was put into the best language of that time; but since that day the English language has undergone so many changes and improvements that societies have been formed in various countries for the express purpose of re-translating

the Bible so as to make it in accordance with the modern usages of our language. When the Lord reveals anything to men He reveals it in language that accords with their own. If any of you were to converse with an angel, and you used strictly grammatical language he would do the same. But if you used two negatives in a sentence the heavenly messenger would use language to correspond with your understanding, and this very objection to the Book of Mormon is an evidence in its favor" (quoted from *Journal of Discourses*, 12:335).

Jacob 5, Romans 11 (continued from page 1)

the question "Hath God cast away his people?"—Kenas also answers that God will spare Israel "according to the abundance of his mercy." Thus, the best explanation is, Faulconer believes, that a third text or texts stood between Zenos and Paul. That text could have been a paraphrase or synopsis of Zenos's work, or perhaps a text on which Zenos's parable itself depended.

In spite of the difficulties associated with assuming that Paul

had access to Zenos's parable, Faulconer concludes that the best explanation of the coincidence of Romans 11:3–11 and Jacob 4:8–18, and of the fact that in each the image of the olive tree is used immediately afterward to illustrate God's power to save Israel, is that Paul had available a text with the same features found in Zenos's text. Perhaps that text was a précis of Zenos's parable or a quotation of it. Perhaps it was an earlier text

on which Zenos also relied. Whatever the case, there is reasonable evidence for more than a coincidental relationship between the texts of Romans 11 and Jacob 5. —Adapted from James E. Faulconer, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God: Jacob 5 and Romans 11," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 347–66.

Upcoming events

When FARMS presented the Book of Abraham lecture series in March and April of this year, the support was overwhelming. Due to popular demand, the series is being repeated in Salt Lake City. The first two lectures were held in late September and early October. The three remaining lectures will be held on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 P.M. at the locations given below.

- **13 October**, John Gee, assistant professor at FARMS, will discuss "The Original Owners of the Joseph Smith Papyri." Location: LDS institute of religion at the University of Utah, 1800 E. South Campus Dr.; parking is available in the lot directly east of the institute building.
 - **20 October**, Michael Lyon, independent illustrator and researcher, will discuss "Appreciating Hypocephali as Works of Art and Faith." Location: same as above.
 - **28 October**, Hugh W. Nibley, emeritus professor of ancient scripture at BYU, will discuss "Abraham's Creation Drama." Location: Assembly Hall on Temple Square.
- 16 October**, "The Book of Abraham: Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant," a scholarly conference featuring papers on astronomy in the Book of Abraham, the Abrahamic covenant, and related topics that will appear in an upcoming FARMS publication. This FARMS-sponsored conference will be held from 9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. in room 151 of the Tanner Building on the BYU campus. Admission is free and the public is welcome, but not all papers will cater to a general audience.
- 5 November**, FARMS 20th Anniversary Banquet, Wilkinson Student Center, BYU. Tickets are required (see order form).
- 6 November**, "We Follow the Admonition of Paul: The Apostle and the Latter-day Saints," a symposium at BYU featuring lectures by James E. Faulconer and John W. Welch and four respondents from the BYU faculty: Richard L. Anderson, emeritus professor of ancient scripture; John F. Hall, professor of classics; Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, assistant professor of Church history; and Frank Judd, instructor of ancient scripture. Faulconer, professor of philosophy and dean of general education and honors at BYU, will present material from his forthcoming book, *Romans 1: Notes and Reflections*. Welch, who is Robert K. Thomas Professor of Law at BYU and editor in chief of *BYU Studies*, will base his lecture on his new book, *An Epistle from the New Testament Apostles* (see the order form). He will also narrate a detailed slide presentation of sites visited by the apostle Paul during his various missionary journeys.
- 4 December**, "Temples through the Ages," a FARMS conference featuring papers being prepared for a forthcoming volume. The keynote speaker will be Elder Hugh W. Pinnock. Dr. Hugh Nibley and other BYU scholars will also participate. The conference will be held from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. in room 151 of the Tanner Building on the BYU campus.

INSIGHTS

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The Purpose of FARMS

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) encourages and supports research about the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ and other ancient scriptures. It also works to preserve ancient religious documents.

FARMS is a nonprofit educational foundation affiliated with Brigham Young University. Its main research interests include ancient history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to the scriptures. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of the scriptures, solid research and academic perspectives alone can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about the scriptures.

The Foundation works to make interim and final reports about this research available widely, promptly, and economically. These publications are peer reviewed to ensure scholarly standards are met. The proceeds from the sale of these publications, including most royalties, are used to support further research and publications on the scriptures. As a service to teachers and students of the scriptures, research results are distributed in both scholarly and popular formats.

It is hoped that this information will help all interested people to "come unto Christ" (Jacob 1:7) and to understand and take more seriously these ancient witnesses of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.