

**Enchanting the Vineyard:  
A Tolkienian Reading of Jacob 5**

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The Book of Mormon’s “Allegory of the Olive Trees” (Jacob 5) is typically read as a straightforward allegory of Israel’s apostasy and restoration; a natural reading, as its author explicitly makes this connection between Israel and olive trees at the outset of his story (v. 3). However, when read through a late modern lens, interpretations of this extended tale may lack the impact that is possible through a pre-modern framework. This sort of “enchanted” worldview sees plants and trees as living beings who exist in meaningful relationship to the rest of creation—as well as their Creator. Catholic author J.R.R. Tolkien felt a deep religious affinity for this “enchanted” worldview, and in his writings, he sought to embody this perspective and make it accessible to contemporary audiences. His impulse is particularly evident in the treatment of trees in his perennial best-selling work *The Lord of the Rings* and its related materials. My hope is that, by referencing Tolkien’s “enchanted” depiction of trees in his fiction, such elements in Jacob 5 can come to the forefront and show ways in which modern audiences may experience a sort of “re-enchantment” of Zenos’ allegory of the olive trees and the truths it may recover about humanity in general.

Contemporary discussions about an “enchanted” worldview that permeated pre-modern Western societies are largely oriented around Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*. To be offensively reductive of Taylor’s argument, the primary trait of an “enchanted” view is “an openness toward the world as a causal matrix filled with other humans, spirits, demons, and cosmic forces that

produce meaning...For this person, the meanings of things unfold in a middle space in which the self 'absorbs' the meanings that already exist in the external world."<sup>1</sup> By way of contrast, in a "disenchanted" modern Western society, there is the "loss of the idea that there is meaning in the external world that exists prior to the person. Humans make meaning in contact with the external world rather than receive meaning in communion with that world."<sup>2</sup> Tolkien recognized this distinction between pre-modern and modern Western societies and felt deeply that this shift in worldview had obscured the goodness, beauty, and truth that exists in the world.

Tolkien's personal solution to this loss of wonder, meaning, and even holiness inherent in the world was to change his audience's view of the world through his fiction. He referred to this particular restorative aspect of fiction as "enchantment."<sup>3</sup> According to Tolkien, the idea of "Recovery (which includes return and renewal of health) is a re-gaining—regaining of a clear view...[or] 'seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them'—as things apart from ourselves. We need, in any case, to clean our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity—from possessiveness."<sup>4</sup> Tolkien believed that the purpose of a literary re-enchantment of the world through fiction consisted of more than simply seeing things anew. He wrote that, "The magic [of enchantment] is not an end in itself, its virtue is in its

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2014/03/on-secularity-and-social-imaginaries>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Or sometimes "Faerie," (for Tolkien, "fairy tales" served a similar purpose for audiences in awakening them to a reality at work in the world beyond themselves).

<sup>4</sup> *Tree and Leaf*, pp. 57-58. Tolkien describes this sort of effect in the stories that Tom Bombadil tells the hobbits: "As they listened, they began to understand the lives of the Forest, apart from themselves, indeed to feel themselves as the strangers where all other things were at home" (Book 1, chapter 7).

operations...to hold communion with other living things.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, for Tolkien, re-enchantment wasn’t merely educational; it was relational.

Tolkien’s personal letters and fictional works demonstrate his own enchanted view of the natural world, especially trees.<sup>6</sup> But it is in Tolkien’s writings about the world of Middle Earth that he best demonstrates his impulse to help readers to regain a sense of wonder and awe about trees and forests. The foundational history of this world—the *Silmarillion*—actually takes its name from the jewels that held the light of the world’s first two trees, which provided illumination to the entire world.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Tolkien and Trees, p. 138.

<sup>6</sup> In fact, his most autobiographical work, the short story “Leaf by Niggle,” centers around the main character’s lifelong (and afterlife-long) mission to create works of art that capture the truth and being of trees.

<sup>7</sup> All the stories of Tolkien’s world are tied up in the story of Two Trees of light, brought to life by two female gods: Yavanna and Nienna, god of wisdom and weeping: “Before its western gate there was a green mound, Ezellohar, that is named also Corollairë; and Yavanna hallowed it, and she sat there long upon the green grass and sang a song of power, in which was set all her thought of things that grow in the earth. But Nienna thought in silence, and watered the mound with tears. In that time the Valar were gathered together to hear the song of Yavanna, and they sat silent upon their thrones of council in the Máhanaxar, the Ring of Doom near to the golden gates of Valmar, and Yavanna Kementári sang before them and they watched. And as they watched, upon the mound there came forth two slender shoots; and silence was over all the world in that hour, nor was there any other sound save the chanting of Yavanna. Under her song the saplings grew and became fair and tall, and came to flower; and thus there awoke in the world the Two Trees of Valinor. Of all things which Yavanna made they have most renown, and about their fate all the tales of the Elder Days are woven” (Quenta Silmarillion, chapter 1).

This tree ties in thematically to the end of the story of the Lord of the Rings, the end of the third age: “Then Aragorn ... saw that out of the very edge of the snow there sprang a sapling tree no more than three foot high. Already it had put forth young leaves long and shapely, dark above and silver beneath, and upon its slender crown it bore one small cluster of flowers whose white petals shone like the sunlit snow. Then Aragorn cried: ‘Yé! utúvinyes! I have found it! Lo! here is a scion of the Eldest of Trees! But how comes it here? For it is not itself yet seven years old.’ And Gandalf coming looked at it, and said: ‘Verily this is a sapling of the line of Nimloth the fair; and that was a seedling of Galathilion, and that a fruit of Telperion of many names, Eldest of Trees. Who shall say how it comes here in the appointed hour? But this is an ancient hallow, and ere the kings failed or the Tree withered in the court, a fruit must have been set here. For it is said that, though the fruit of the Tree comes seldom to ripeness, yet the life within may then lie sleeping through many long years, and none can foretell the time in which it will awake. Remember this. For if ever a fruit ripens, it should be planted, lest the line die out of the world. Here it has lain. hidden on the mountain, ...Then Aragorn laid his hand gently to the sapling, and lo! it seemed to hold only lightly to the earth, and it was removed without hurt; and Aragorn bore it back to the Citadel. Then the withered tree was uprooted, but with reverence; and they did not burn it, but laid it to rest in the silence of Rath Dínen. And Aragorn planted the new tree in the court by the fountain, and swiftly and gladly it began to grow; and when the month of June entered in it was

In Tolkien's cosmogony, he describes the world as being created by a family of divine beings or "gods" who each have responsibility over a different aspect of creation. The god with stewardship over living things is referred to as "the Giver of Fruits" and "Queen of the Earth."<sup>8</sup> As creation unfolds and rational creatures begin to develop societies, she fears that they will exploit her beloved plant and animal life. When she approaches the chief god with this concern, he asks her what she holds dearest. The goddess answers, "All have their worth...and each contributes to the worth of the others. But the [animals] can flee or defend themselves, whereas the [plants] that grow cannot. And among these I hold trees dear. Long in the growing, swift shall they be in the felling, and unless they pay toll with fruit upon [their] bough [they will be] little mourned in their passing...Would that the trees might speak on behalf of all things that have roots, and punish those that wrong them!"<sup>9</sup> Moved by this plea, the chief god then announces the creation of "the Shepherds of the Trees," or the "Ents"—giant, tree-like creatures who both tend and defend the world's trees and other vegetation.

These tree-people or Ents are a striking example of how Tolkien sought to re-enchant the natural world through his fiction—to "clean [the] windows" of the modern mind's perception and to help them see the truths of their world anew. And while there are many rich *physical* descriptions

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laden with blossom. 'The sign has been given,' said Aragorn, 'and the day is not far off.'" This heralds the final visit of the elves to humanity and the wedding of one of them (Arawen) to the king (Aragorn), to which Frodo says, "'At last I understand why we have waited! This is the ending'" (Book 6, chapter 5).

<sup>8</sup> Here is how Tolkien first describes her: "She is the lover of all things that grow in the earth, and all their countless forms she holds in her mind, from the trees like towers in forests long ago to the moss upon stones or the small and secret things in the mould...In the form of a woman she is tall, and robed in green; but at times she takes other shapes. Some there are who have seen her standing like a tree under heaven, crowned with the Sun; and from all its branches there spilled a golden dew upon the barren earth, and it grew green with corn; but the roots of the tree were in the waters of [the deep], and the winds of [the heavens] spoke in its leaves...Queen of the Earth, she is surnamed in the [Elvish] tongue" (Valaquenta).

<sup>9</sup> Quenta Silmarillion, chapter 2.

of these “Shepherds of the Trees” in *The Lord of the Rings* which I don’t have enough time to survey here,<sup>10</sup> it is important to note that Tolkien also uses his enchanted prose to recover the *essential truth* of trees. We see this in one hobbit’s first impression of looking into an Ent’s eyes: “One felt as if there was an enormous well behind them, filled up with ages of memory and long, slow, steady thinking; but their surface was sparkling with the present: like sun shimmering on the outer leaves of a vast tree, or on the ripples of a very deep lake. I don't know but it felt as if something that grew in the ground-asleep, you might say, or just feeling itself as something between roof-tip and leaf-tip, between deep earth and sky had suddenly waked up, and was considering you with the same slow care that it had given to its own inside affairs for endless years.”<sup>11</sup>

Tolkien’s enchantment of trees extended far beyond the Ents. Like the Ents, trees in general are depicted as complex living organisms—with different degrees of self-awareness—who react to other living things in their environment. The oldest Ent explained that when some trees become more aware of themselves, “you find that some have bad hearts. Nothing to do with their wood: I do not mean that. Why, I knew some good old willows...They were quite hollow, indeed they were falling all to pieces, but as quiet and sweet-spoken as a young leaf. And then there are some trees in the valleys under the mountains, sound as a bell, and bad right through.” Thus, according to Tolkien, a tree’s appearance did not indicate whether it was “good” or “bad.” Tolkien also never describes any genus of tree as either essentially “good” or “bad”—he describes each as having its

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<sup>10</sup> See especially Book 3, chapter 4.

<sup>11</sup> Book 3, chapter 4.

own volition, though entire forests are sometimes depicted as falling under the same evil influences.

Generally speaking, by the period of time described in *The Lord of the Rings*, trees and the forests they belong to no longer have a positive relationship with other living creatures, especially not humans.<sup>12</sup> These trees are depicted as dynamic, living entities capable of both good and bad and subject to the same declining world as humans. There are “forest[s] of dark fir, where the trees strive one against another and their branches rot and wither.”<sup>13</sup> Travelers through these woods report that “the dark and unknown forest, so near at hand, made itself felt as a great brooding presence, full of secret purpose,”<sup>14</sup> and those moving through them have an “uncomfortable feeling that they were being watched with disapproval, deepening to dislike and even enmity.”<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere, it is said that “The countless years had filled [a certain forest] with pride and rooted

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<sup>12</sup> “Lothlórien is beautiful because there the trees are loved; elsewhere forests are represented as awakening to consciousness of themselves. The Old Forest was hostile to two-legged creatures because of the memory of many injuries. Fangorn Forest was old and beautiful, but at the time of the story tense with hostility because it was threatened by a machine-loving enemy. Mirkwood had fallen under the dominion of a Power that hated all living things but was restored to beauty and became Greenwood the Great before the end of the story” (Tolkien, Letters: 419–20).

<sup>13</sup> Book 2, chapter 6.

<sup>14</sup> Book 3, chapter 2). Another passage details the malicious actions these trees would take against intruders: “But the Forest is queer. Everything in it is very much more alive, more aware of what is going on, so to speak, than things are in the Shire. And the trees do not like strangers. They watch you. They are usually content merely to watch you, as long as daylight lasts, and don’t do much. Occasionally the most unfriendly ones may drop a branch, or stick a root out, or grasp at you with a long trailer. But at night things can be most alarming, or so I am told. I have only once or twice been in here after dark, and then only near the hedge. I thought all the trees were whispering to each other, passing news and plots along in an unintelligible language; and the branches swayed and groped without any wind. They do say the trees do actually move, and can surround strangers and hem them in” (Book 1, chapter 6).

Darkened forests like these create a darkened ecosphere. For example: “‘Is it only the trees that are dangerous?’ asked Pippin. ‘There are various queer things living deep in the Forest, and on the far side,’ said Merry, ‘or at least I have heard so; but I have never seen any of them. But something makes paths. Whenever one comes inside one finds open tracks; but they seem to shift and change from time to time in a queer fashion.’” (Book 1, Ch. 6) “Many [trees] were cast down in ruin, but many more replaced them, and Orcs sprang up them like apes in the dark forests of the South” (Book 3, chapter 5).

<sup>15</sup> Book 1, chapter 6.

wisdom, and with malice.”<sup>16</sup> While not inherently evil, the trees and forests of Tolkien’s world could certainly become hostile to outsiders and cause serious injury.<sup>17</sup> The oldest Ent was afraid that this signaled the ultimate destruction of all trees: “But it seems that the wind is setting East, and the withering of all woods may be drawing near. There is naught that an old Ent can do to hold back that storm: he must weather it or crack.”<sup>18</sup> However, at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, the future of forests and their trees is left uncertain.

Turning now to Jacob 5, the prophet Zenos’ allegory of the olive trees follows the lord of an expansive olive vineyard and his servants as they carefully cultivate a number of trees over a long period of time. Different types of olive trees—both “tame” and “wild”—are grafted into one another, in the hopes that all will produce good fruit that can be stored for later use. Those trees and branches that do not produce such fruit are ultimately cut down and burned. As I’ve just demonstrated, Tolkien’s literary work sometimes anthropomorphizes trees for the purposes of re-enchanting the natural world and revealing its deep truths. Throughout the allegory in Jacob 5, the prophet Zenos could be seen as *dendromorphizing* humans to recover truths about the nature of humanity and their future as it relates to their relationship with God. In other words, Zenos’ use of trees can be seen as approaching enchantment from the opposite direction of Tolkien; instead of

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<sup>16</sup> Book 1, chapter 7. Perhaps the best depiction of a corrupted tree is Old Man Willow, who attacked the protagonists while travelling through his forest: “But none were more dangerous than the Great Willow: his heart was rotten, but his strength was green; and he was cunning, and a master of winds, and his song and thought ran through the woods on both sides of the river. His grey thirsty spirit drew power out of the earth and spread like fine root-threads in the ground, and invisible twig-fingers in the air, till it had under its dominion nearly all the trees of the Forest from the Hedge to the Downs” (Book 1, chapter 7).

<sup>17</sup> Following this “fallen” trajectory further, Tolkien expressed his concern that humanity’s industrial developments would lead to the diminishment—if not elimination—of forests. The oldest Ent says, “it seems that the wind is setting East, and the withering of all woods may be drawing near. There is naught that an old Ent can do to hold back that storm: he must weather it or crack” (Book 3, chapter 4). But all is not doomed—in Tolkien’s enchanted world of Middle Earth, there will come a time at the end of days when “the world is [finally] mended” (Book 1, chapter 7).

<sup>18</sup> Book 3, chapter 4.

recovering the human-like attributes of trees, Zenos recovers the tree-like attributes of humans. Nevertheless, Tolkien's literary combination of human and vegetable natures in his writings can help readers to appreciate the enchanted dimensions of Zenos' story. An "enchanted" reading of this allegory would go *beyond* finding one-to-one correspondences between individual trees and historical groups or pinpointing different eras in human history. To use Tolkien's language, Zenos' allegory may *also* serve the purpose of "clean[ing] our windows" so that modern audiences "may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity" of humanity itself. In what follows, I will suggest a few ways in which Zenos' story about trees may be seen as creatively sensitizing audiences to truths about the nature of humanity and God.

### The Nature of Trees / Humanity

First, the nature of trees, or, the nature of humanity seen through the enchanted lens of trees, is set forth at the outset of the allegory. Here, there is a significant, but instructive difference between Zenos' trees and Tolkien's trees. For Zenos, each tree represents an entire people or community (6:1). This stands in contrast to Tolkien's depiction of "enchanted" trees discussed earlier, which are largely described as individual entities with self-contained personalities.<sup>19</sup> Zenos' association of individual trees with entire groups of people emphasizes the interconnectedness of human communities and the socio-religious ecosystems that each creates. However, even within this particular allegorical association, separate parts of each tree have the ability to act in different ways, as seen in the case of the vineyard's first tree, which was planted in a good spot of ground (v. 25)—"only a part of the tree" brings forth "tame fruit," while the rest

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<sup>19</sup> E.g. Treebeard, Quickbeam, and Old Man Willow. However, in the *Lord of the Rings*, some negative influences can affect entire forests equally, e.g. The "shadow" that transformed an entire forest: "Their own accounts speak of the multiplying of Men in the land, and of a shadow that fell on the forest, so that it became darkened and its new name was Mirkwood" (Prologue).



produces “wild fruit.” In other words, the trees in the allegory of the olive trees do not represent monolithic, undivided communities, since they are often described as struggling within themselves to determine what type of fruit to produce. Nevertheless, these trees are always described as corporate entities, which may be inviting readers to view humanity in the same way, and to contextualize individual actions within the wider scope of the communities to which they belong.

Zenos implies that each tree in his allegory is capable of bringing forth good or bad fruit, which, according to the prophet Jacob’s brief remarks afterward, represent good and bad actions (6:7-9). Given the time and energy required to grow fruit, this suggests that the types of actions described in this allegory are those that are sustained over a period of time and which come at a cost. According to Zenos’ story, the impulse to produce good fruit and bad fruit exist within each tree as independent elements (v. 59), and are both capable of overcoming one other.<sup>20</sup> That being said, the nature of trees’ goodness is described as having a significant longevity and happens beneath the surface, in the roots (v. 34). Speaking to the lord of the vineyard, his servant observes that all of the trees “are alive and...have not perished; wherefore thou beholdest that they are yet good” (v. 34). Thus, the continued life of trees is evidence that good is present to some degree within these trees, and would also be true of humanity—where life is present, goodness is also present, though it may be hidden deep beneath the surface. And while the story does not explicitly

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<sup>20</sup> However, if enough evil fruit is produced, the entire tree begins to perish (v. 37), or sometimes, only individual branches (v. 40). Ultimately, the lord of vineyard commits to “sweep away the bad out of my vineyard” (v. 66). His strategy for doing this involves promoting the growth of the good when it is seen in individual trees (v. 66), with the end goal being to encourage all trees to grow good fruit and gradually weed out the evil. This is only possible because the trees are able to change themselves, and can do so in spite of external conditions—the lord of the vineyard must go to see “if the natural branches...have not brought forth much fruit” (v. 19). When the lord asks “who has corrupted my vineyard?” (v. 48) the servant argues that it was the fault of the trees themselves and their “loftiness” (especially the branches). In spite of their ability to change, the lord and his servant decide to eliminate “those branches whose fruit is most bitter” (v. 52), suggesting a sort of knowledge that goes beyond simply assessing the fruit by its appearance. I’ll return to this later.

state whether *all* of the trees in the vineyard were originally created in a state of “tame-ness” or “goodness,” the fruits of the last standing trees in the vineyard are described as being “good, even like as it was in the beginning” (v. 75). Similarly, this may suggest that, through the various exchanges made between these human communities across the world, it appears that, as a whole and all together, human communities are capable of transmitting or preserving a generative element of goodness from the beginning of humanity, until the very end of their collective story.

### Trees / Humanity and Time

Second, Zenos’ allegory deals with how trees inhabit time. The trees in this story can decay (v. 3), as well “grow and thrive exceedingly” (v. 73), processes which both require a significant amount of time. This principle of the length of trees’ life and development is underlined in Jacob 5 by the phrase “a long time,” which is repeated on nine occasions (vv. 15, 20, 22, 23, 25, 29, 31, 76). It is worth noting that Tolkien similarly emphasizes the span of time along which trees extend.<sup>21</sup> The thoughts of the Ents are described as covering lengthy stretches of time—as seen in the evocative phrases “that thought has long been growing in our hearts” and “our hearts did not go on growing in the same way.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the very language of the Ents requires a long time to communicate and to comprehend, as the oldest Ent explains: “To tell you my name...would take a long while: my name is growing all the time, and I've lived a very long, long time; so my name is like a story. Real names tell you the story of the things they belong to in my language...It is a

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<sup>21</sup> When one long-established questions the old and largely forgotten stories of Ents, the future king of humanity says, “Nay...it is otherwise: to them you are but the passing tale; all the years from Eorl the Young to Théoden the Old are of little count to them; and all the deeds of your house but a small matter” (Book 3, chapter 8).

<sup>22</sup> Book 3, chapter 4.

lovely language, but it takes a very long time to say anything in it, because we do not say anything in it, unless it is worth taking a long time to say, and to listen to.”<sup>23</sup>

Along similar lines, time is an important element in Zenos’ allegory. The relative length of the story itself and the scale of time described therein may suggest to the audience that they take a commensurate long view of humanity and its individual communities—good and evil thoughts and actions may be seen as developing gradually and requiring a significant length of time to manifest themselves fully. As the servant to the lord of the vineyard suggests, the audience should consider waiting “a little longer” (vv. 27, 50) before passing judgement on the nature and potential of human communities.<sup>24</sup>

### Fruits / Deeds and “Tasting”

Finally, in Zenos’ allegory, the primary way that trees act is by “bring[ing] forth” fruit (v. 18) of different kinds. Typically, these fruits are described as being “tame” or “wild.” In v. 30, the trees are actually depicted as producing “all sorts of fruit.” However, this variety of fruit is only explicitly applied to the “wild” fruit in v. 32. According to v. 74, the end goal of the lord of the vineyard is to have all of the fruits to be equally good. This seems to suggest that, while evil actions can manifest themselves in myriad forms, there is something fundamentally similar about good actions—though neither the allegory nor Jacob’s remarks afterward elaborate on this point.

Throughout the allegory, the fruit is described as being “tame” or “natural”—which is equivalent to “good”—and “wild”—which is equivalent to “evil.” But at one point, the lord and

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<sup>23</sup> Book 3, chapter 4.

<sup>24</sup> Additionally, each tree in the allegory is compatible with the others and can give life (though the quality of that life may differ). In other words, the trees are all part of the same genus / family.

his servant decide to eliminate “those branches whose fruit is most bitter” (v. 52). The word “bitter” suggests a different type of apprehension. Here, the lord of the vineyard is not simply judging the trees by the visual presentation or manifestation of their fruits. Rather, the lord *tastes* the fruit—and in one instance, tastes *all* of the fruit at a given time in the vineyard (v. 31). This “tasting” of fruits suggests close, immediate contact between the lord and the trees during the process of harvesting the fruit. But it also results in an even more intimate knowledge of each tree and its essence by taking the time and dedicating the attention necessary to taste that fruit. Tasting may also imply ingestion, which would suggest a sort of incorporation of the that fruit (or deeds)—both tame and wild, good and evil—into the lord’s own body. In any case, the idea that God is somehow experiencing the collective (and individual) actions of human communities may serve to make the audience pause and consider carefully the ways in which their own roles affect the actions of their communities and how those actions, in turn, can be seen as affecting God.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, while my purpose here was to highlight how Zenos’ allegory of the olive trees can provide the sort of “enchantment” of humanity that Tolkien achieved in his writings about trees, a longer comparative study of how the two tales depict and understand trees would include several additional topics: the purpose of trees,<sup>25</sup> the ways in which trees are acted upon by external

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<sup>25</sup> Throughout the allegory, the lord of the vineyard reminds the servant that his purpose in caring for these trees is to preserve fruit for himself (e.g. 5:23). This appears to be primarily an economical decision, at least, during the first two thirds of the story (the lord describes his purposes in the vineyard as storing / laying up fruit in vv. 13, 18, 19, 20, 23, 27, 29, 71, 76); though there are brief references to the lord expecting to receive “glory” (v. 54) and “joy” (vv. 60, 71, 75) from the fruit or deeds. Otherwise, the trees are not being kept for their aesthetic value or due to the fact that they are living entities capable of growth. Instead, for the lord in this allegory, their value lies in their ability to produce fruit and for the potential of the trees to produce good fruit or deeds.

forces,<sup>26</sup> and the nature of those who care for trees in Zenos' and Tolkien's works—in this last case, *both* writings contain vivid references to weeping gods and mourning caretakers who develop a deeply emotional relationship with their vegetative charges.<sup>27</sup>

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This is another difference between the trees in Tolkien and Jacob 5. Tolkien's trees are natural / wild and exist for the beautifying of the world—those individuals who see trees only as means to their ends are depicted as the evil ones (“[Saruman] has a mind of metal and wheels; and he does not care for growing things, except as far as they serve him for the moment” – Book 3, chapter 4). In Zenos's allegory, however, the prophet deals specifically with cultivated trees—trees that must be cared for in a particular way and with the explicit aim of producing good fruit for the lord to store and, presumably, to be eaten at a later time. This concern with storing up the good fruit or good works of the trees may signal a divine need for some kind of sustenance at an anticipated period far in the future, but this purpose is never given within the allegory or Jacob's commentary.

<sup>26</sup> While the trees themselves appear to be largely responsible for producing either good or wild fruit, they are not described as being completely responsible for doing so. The focus of this extended allegory seems to be on the trees regulating their own ability to produce good fruit, which requires maintaining a balance between roots and branches – wild branches can “overcome” the roots (v. 37), and vice versa (v. 59). However, the agency of the lord of vineyard in this process of producing good or evil fruit (or deeds) is highlighted when Zenos describes him as feeling responsible for not acting sooner and therefore letting the wild branches overcome the trees (v. 45). However, just two verses later, the lord also seems to express he did everything he could (v. 47 – “what could I have done more in my vineyard?”). The implied response is, “nothing,” and so the initial lamentation that the lord did not do enough appears, rather, to reflect a deep sense of loss and a wish that things could be otherwise.

Externally, the trees are only acted upon by lord of the vineyard and servant(s); no other living beings or even the weather is mentioned. Throughout the story, the lord of the vineyard and his servants are actively, physically shaping the trees and their environments. The lord and his servants nourish all trees (v. 28), as well as dung and prune them. These acts of gardening are not constant or even regular—rather, they occur at different periods and are spread out over a long time (v. 29). This may suggest that, while observable (or, at least, recognizable) divine interaction with a community may not be constant, it nevertheless occurs and is quite real.

However, in spite of this physical upkeep from exterior forces, the element of agency within the trees is always foregrounded. The servant goes to observe the various locations the lord hid the natural branches of the tree and is surprised that they bring forth “much fruit” because of the location's poor soil. The lord answers that he knew it was poor, but because he “nourished it this long time,” it had an opportunity to “[bring] forth much fruit,” and chose to do so (5:22). This same scenario unfolds in an even poorer spot of ground (5:23), suggesting that the ground a community is planted in does not ultimately determine the quality of their life together.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. Varda weeping over death of Valinor tree and lord of the vineyard weeping over death of trees (mourning for living entities). This is similar to Treebeard sorrowing over fallen trees: “Curse him, root and branch! Many of those trees were my friends creatures I had known from nut and acorn; many had voices of their own that are lost for ever now. And there are wastes of stump and bramble where once there were singing groves. I have been idle. I have let things slip. It must stop!” (Book 3, chapter 4). Other Ents are also remembered as being sorrowful: 'A legend of Rohan!' cried Legolas. 'Nay, every Elf in Wilderland has sung songs of the old Onodrim and their long sorrow. (Book 3, chapter 5). In Zenos' story, the lord of the vineyard grieves and weeps (v. 41), but is also sometimes ruthless and quick to want to destroy the trees that aren't providing him with what he wants (5:26), and is only dissuaded by his servant (5:27). Lastly, the Lord of the vineyard is described as “grieving” frequently at the idea of losing any of his trees (vv. 7, 11, 13, 32, 46, 47, 51, 66).

In writing about the importance of “enchantment” to the modern mind, Tolkien wrote: “This compound – of awareness of a limitless world outside our domestic parish; a love ... for the things in it; and a desire for wonder, marvels, both perceived and conceived – this ‘enchantment’ is as necessary for the health and complete functioning of the Human as is sunlight for physical life.”<sup>28</sup> In viewing the allegory of the olive trees in Jacob 5 through Tolkien’s lens of “enchantment,” this same story may help modern audiences to “clean their [perceptual] windows” to see truths in the world around them—to better understand humanity and enter into more meaningful relationships within their communities, humanity in general, and with the God who both created the world, and enchanted it.

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<sup>28</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, *Smith of Wootton Major* (1967; London: HarperCollins, 2005), 10.