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and Authorized Partnership
in Zenos's Allegory of the
Olive Tree

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Divine Council Directive Speech in Jacob 5: Collaborative Governance and Authorized Partnership in Zenos's Allegory of the Olive Tree

Stephen Kent Ehat

Abstract: *Christ the Lord—the Lord of the vineyard or the Son acting in his stead—both fulfills his promises and authorizes his servants to share in the work of saving the vineyard. Building on Brant Gardner's identification of promise/fulfillment pairs in Jacob 5, this study identifies a complementary literary-theological pattern of divine council directive speech acts. These imperatives and cohortatives ("Go and pluck," "Come, let us go down," "let us graft") not only announce divine intention but they commission, consult with, and mobilize covenant agents. Drawing on ancient Near Eastern divine council traditions, speech-act theory, and covenant formulary studies, the paper argues that the allegory presents the plan of salvation as collaborative governance rather than unilateral decree. The Lord directs, delegates, and labors alongside his servants, expanding the gathering of Israel from prophetic mission to collective effort and culminating in shared success. Jacob 5 affirms both divine reliability and covenant partnership: trust the Promisor and join the work.*

Brant Gardner's commentary on Jacob 5 has established essential literary-theological insights into the structure and function of Zenos's allegory of the olive tree. Gardner identifies what he terms "promise/fulfillment pairs" as a fundamental organizing principle throughout the chapter, observing that "the structure of the allegory creates multiple sets of promise/fulfillment pairs. The master declares

that he will take an action, then that action is accomplished."[1] This pattern, Gardner argues, serves dual purposes: it "advances the narrative" while simultaneously "emphasiz[ing] the faithfulness of Yahweh's promise/fulfillment."[2] Through repeated demonstrations that "what Yahweh says through his prophets will come to pass,"[3] the allegory establishes divine trustworthiness as its theological foundation.

Gardner explicitly highlights this structural feature at three key junctures in his commentary. First, analyzing Jacob 5:4–5, he notes the "mild emphasis in verses 4 and 5 on promise/ fulfillment. In verse 4 we have Yahweh's 'word,' the declaration of intent. In verse 5 we have the accomplishment of that intent. The explicit paralleling of intent/fulfillment highlights Yahweh's trustworthiness."[4] This micro-level correspondence — divine declaration immediately followed by realized action — establishes a pattern that resonates throughout the text.

Second, at Jacob 5:15, Gardner broadens his observation to encompass the allegory's macro-structure, noting that "the structure of the allegory creates multiple sets of promise/fulfillment pairs. The master declares that he will take an action, then that action is accomplished. The repetition of the elements not only advances the narrative but also emphasizes the faithfulness of Yahweh's promise/fulfillment."[5] Here Gardner identifies the pattern as extending beyond individual verses, in order to structure entire narrative cycles, each labor phase in the vineyard recapitulating the promise-fulfillment dynamic.

Third, though Gardner does not explicitly use the term *promise/fulfillment* in his discussion of Jacob 5:67–69, his commentary on the allegory's concluding implementation phase (verses 68–72) describes how the Lord's detailed restoration plan (verses 52–68) reaches fruition in executed action. This structural observation — that the allegory moves through declaration, planning, and implementation phases — demonstrates Gardner's recognition that narrative repetition serves theological purposes beyond mere literary ornamentation, representing what may be understood as the final major promise/fulfillment cycle.[6]

Gardner's structural analysis rests on solid foundations in ancient

1. Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 532.
2. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 532.
3. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 527.
4. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 527.
5. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 532.
6. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 548 (and generally 547–51).

Near Eastern and biblical literary scholarship. The promise/fulfillment pattern he identifies parallels what Old Testament scholars recognize in covenant formularies, where divine historical prologues (recounting fulfilled promises) establish the credibility necessary for covenant stipulations (commanding future action).[7] George E. Mendenhall's groundbreaking work on covenant forms in Israelite tradition demonstrates that ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaties[8] characteristically opened with historical prologues cataloging the suzerain's past beneficence, thereby establishing grounds for the vassal's trust in the sovereign and thus willingness to fulfill future obligations.[9] The vassal had an "obligation to *trust* in the benevolence of the sovereign."[10]

Gardner's observation that Jacob 5 employs this pattern suggests the allegory participates in broader ancient Near Eastern literary conventions. Jon D. Levenson's theological analysis of covenant relationship emphasizes that divine reliability, demonstrated through fulfilled promises, creates the conditions for human response and partnership.[11] The promise/fulfillment structure Gardner identifies thus serves not merely as literary device but also as theological argument: the Lord's demonstrated faithfulness across Israel's history (promises fulfilled) warrants trust in his future redemptive plans (promises yet to be fulfilled).

Beyond Gardner's specific contributions, scholarly work on Jacob 5 has illuminated multiple dimensions of the allegory's sophistication. Paul Y. Hoskisson's detailed analysis of the allegory's symbolic architecture argues for identifying the Lord of the vineyard as the Father and the servant as Christ, noting that "the working relationship between the Lord of the vineyard and the servant in the allegory accurately reflects the relationship between the Father and the Son, in that Christ does not act alone, but in all things follows the instructions

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7. George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (1954): 58–59; see also 63-69; Dennis J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1972), 12–13; see also 4–5 for summary of the point as made by Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament,* vol. 1 (London, 1961).

8. A *suzerainty treaty* is a treaty between two political entities (such as sovereigns or nation-states) that establishes one of the political entities as a dependent to the other.

9. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," 69; see also 58–60 and 63–64.

10. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," 56.

11. Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 132–34, 140–43.

and example of the Father."[12] While Gardner remains somewhat more agnostic about precise identifications—viewing the servant more functionally as a literary device that enables the narrative action[13]—both scholars recognize that the master-servant dynamic structures the allegory's theological vision of collaborative divine work.

Gardner has explored how grafting imagery functions covenantally, with the incorporation of wild branches representing the adoption of the gentiles "into the Abrahamic covenant."[14] These scholars have established that Jacob 5's horticultural imagery operates simultaneously on botanical, historical, and theological registers.

Botanical scholarship has confirmed the allegory's technical accuracy. Wilford M. Hess, Daniel J. Fairbanks, John W. Welch, and Jonathan K. Driggs demonstrate that practices described in Jacob 5—grafting wild olive shoots onto cultivated stock to rejuvenate roots, propagating olives from buried branches—while seemingly counterintuitive, reflect legitimate ancient oleicultural techniques.[15] This botanical plausibility, documented in ancient sources like Columella's *Rei Rusticæ*, strengthens arguments for the allegory's antiquity and suggests authorial familiarity with Mediterranean agricultural practices.[16]

The broader scholarly context for understanding Jacob 5 as participating in ancient literary traditions includes work on divine council motifs in Hebrew Bible and Second Temple literature. E. Theodore Mullen Jr.'s seminal study *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* notes that the celestial assembly "meets under the leadership of the high god" and the "lesser divinities who comprise

12. Paul Y. Hoskisson, "The Allegory of the Olive Tree in Jacob," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob* 5, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Foundation for Apologetic Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1994), 72.

13. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 524–26 (esp. 525).

14. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 529.

15. Wilford M. Hess et al., "Botanical Aspects of Olive Culture Relevant to Jacob 5," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994), 505–8.

16. Columella, Lucius Junius Moderatus, *Rei Rusticæ* [*On Agriculture*], Book 5 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954), 84–87 (ix.16 ["It happens also frequently that, though the trees are thriving well, they fail to bear fruit. It is a good plan to bore them with a Gallic auger and to put tightly into the hole a green slip taken from a wild olive-tree; the result is that the tree, being as it were impregnated with fruitful offspring, becomes more productive"]); 91 (x.6 ["A tree which is ingrafted is more fruitful than one which is not . . . ."]).

the council receive the question from the deity. In the two Hebrew accounts, a member of the assembly volunteers to carry out the decree of the high god. In Micaiah's vision, it is a member of the heavenly entourage, 'the spirit' . . ." and "in Isaiah's vision, the prophet himself is commissioned by Yahweh to deliver the message of the council. In both, the council envoy is dispatched via the imperative 'Go!' . . . ."[17] Michael S. Heiser's exhaustive examination of divine council scenes in canonical and non-canonical Second Temple texts demonstrates the pervasiveness and enduring longevity of this even earlier motif, noting that the motif reflects that Yahweh's sovereignty is expressed through — not despite — his engagement with the divine council.[18]

Identifying Divine Council Directive Speech in Jacob 5

Building upon Gardner's promise/fulfillment analysis, this study identifies a complementary but distinct literary-theological pattern: what may be termed "divine council directive speech acts" throughout Jacob 5. These utterances differ fundamentally from the future-tense declarations Gardner analyzes. Where promise/fulfillment pairs demonstrate divine reliability through declaration and realization ("I will prune it" [v. 4] followed by "he pruned it" [v. 5]), divine council directives mobilize agency through authorization and commission. They constitute speech acts in which the Lord/master explicitly (1) authorizes a subordinate to act on his behalf, or (2) invites another being into shared divine labor.

This distinction, while subtle, proves theologically significant. Future-tense declarations are *predictive* and *monologic*: the Lord announces what he will do, and his word proves true through unilateral action.[19] Divine council directives are *performative* and *dialogic*:

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17. E. Theodore Mullen Jr., *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 208–9.

18. Patrick D. Miller, "Cosmology and World Order in the Old Testament: The Divine Council as Cosmic-Political Symbol," in *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology: Collected Essays* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 431, quoted in Michael S. Heiser, *The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literatur*e (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2004), chap. 2; see also chap. 4, Yahweh's "uncompromised dominion" over other gods and whose sovereignty remains intact while mediated through a council structure; and chap. 1, chap. 2, and chap. 6, vice-regency; others operating under the authority of El.

19. In the appendix to this paper I account for all verbs in Jacob 5 (verses 1–77) that are morphologically present tense (e.g., "draweth," "cometh," "is,"

the Lord issues commands or invitations that presuppose the servant's capacity for independent or collaborative response. The former emphasizes divine sovereignty and faithfulness; the latter emphasizes covenant partnership and delegated authority.

Speech act theory, as developed by J. L. Austin and John R. Searle, provides analytical tools for distinguishing these utterance types.[20] Austin's foundational insight was that certain statements do not merely *describe* reality but *perform* actions — a judge saying "I pronounce you guilty" does not report a fact but enacts a legal reality. Searle's later work refined Austin's taxonomy of illocutionary acts. In his 1975 essay "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," Searle proposed five basic categories of illocutionary force: *representatives* (assertions, statements, and descriptions that commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition), *directives* (attempts to get the hearer to do something, including requests and commands), *commissives* (commitments to future action, such as promises and vows), *expressives* (expressions of psychological states, like thanking or apologizing), and *declarations* (utterances that bring about changes in institutional reality, such as appointing or marrying).[21] This classification system provides a more systematic framework for understanding the varieties of things we do with words, building on but significantly reorganizing Austin's original five categories of *verdictives*, *exercitives*, *commissives*, *behabitives*, and *expositives.*[22]

The allegorical discourse of Jacob 5 deploys multiple categories of illocutionary acts as defined by Searle's taxonomy. The Lord's future-tense declarations ("I will prune," "I will preserve," "I will lay up") function as commissives that commit the speaker to future action while simultaneously asserting divine intention and creating expectation of fulfillment.[23] The imperative utterances directed to the servant ("Go to,"

"bringeth," etc.), but semantically future—that is, the action they describe is not yet realized but imminent, often used in prophetic or prospective speech. This phenomenon—sometimes called the prophetic present, present of certainty, or futuristic present—is common in scriptural English modeled on the King James Bible. The appendix sets forth a list of such verbs in Jacob 5, each followed by its verse reference(s) and a brief justification showing why the verb, though grammatically present, is contextually future-oriented.

20. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 6–7.

21. John R. Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," *Language in Society* 5, no. 1 (1976): 1–23.

22. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 150–63.

23. Jacob 5:4, 5:7, 5:8, 5:11, 5:28, 5:50, 5:69, 5:71. On *commissives* as

"Wherefore, go to," "Go and pluck") function as directives that attempt to get the hearer to perform specific horticultural actions.[24] The cohortative constructions ("Come, let us go down," "let us go to") also function as directives but employ a more inclusive first-person plural form that invites collaborative action rather than commanding unilateral obedience.[25] The Lord's evaluative statements ("it grieveth me," "the tree profiteth me nothing") function as expressives that articulate psychological states of disappointment or satisfaction with the vineyard's condition.[26] Together, these varied speech acts create a discourse that is simultaneously descriptive (reporting the state of the vineyard), directive (commanding remedial action), commissive (pledging future intervention), and expressive (revealing divine pathos).

Table 1 catalogs all divine council directive speech acts in Jacob 5, excluding statements that merely announce future divine action without directing another agent.

Table 1. Divine council directive speech acts in Jacob 5.

Verse	Directive (Quotation)	Type	Agent(s) Addressed	Nature and Function
5:7	"*Go and pluck* the branches from a wild olive-tree, and *bring* them hither unto me"	Imperative commission	The Servant	Direct command from the master to the servant to act on divine authority — classic commissioning formula.[27]

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commitments to future action, see Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," 11–12.

24. Jacob 5:8, 5:27, 5:62, 5:63. On *directives* as attempts to get the hearer to do something, see Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," 13–14.

25. Jacob 5:27, 5:29, 5:47, 5:62. The *cohortative* differs from the *imperative* in presupposing shared agency; see Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 572–75.

26. Jacob 5:7, 5:11, 5:32, 5:46, 5:47, 5:51. On *expressives* as articulations of psychological states, see Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," 15.

27. Norman Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 77 (1965): 297–323.

Verse	Directive (Quotation)	Type	Agent(s) Addressed	Nature and Function
5:7	"and *we will pluck* off those main branches. . . and *we will cast* them into the fire"	Cohortative council summons	The Servant (joint action)	Following the lone commission, the Lord invites the servant to participate collaboratively in removing corrupted branches, establishing a bilateral partnership model.[28]
5:9	"*Take thou* the branches of the wild olive-tree, and *graft* them in"	Imperative commission	The Servant	Authorizes the servant to perform covenantal grafting; divine power delegated.[29]
5:12	"*Go thy way; watch* the tree, and *nourish* it, according to my words"	Imperative commission	The Servant	Ongoing stewardship order; parallels prophetic watchman commissions (cf. Ezek 3:17).[30]
5:15	"*Come, let us go down* into the vineyard, that *we may labor* in the vineyard"	Cohortative council summons	The Servant (joint action)	Invitation to joint descent and labor, identical to the divine-council plural of Gen 11:7 "let us go down."[31]
5:19	"*Come, let us go* to the nethermost part of the vineyard, and *behold . . .*"	Cohortative council summons	The Servant (joint action)	Joint investigative mission; inspection as shared divine work.[32]
5:29	"*Come, let us go down* into the vineyard, that *we may labor* again in the vineyard"	Cohortative council summons	The Servant (joint action)	Eschatological repetition of the council descent formula.[33]

28. Compare this with Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 141.

29. Moshe Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90 (1970): 184–203, wit-resources.s3.amazonaws.com/Grants-and-covenant.pdf.

30. Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, Anchor Bible 22 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 78–79.

31. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 49–50.

32. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch, eds., *The Allegory of the Olive Tree* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994), 11–14.

33. Welch, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God," 6–8.

Verse	Directive (Quotation)	Type	Agent(s) Addressed	Nature and Function
5:33	"*What shall we do unto the tree, that I may preserve again good fruit thereof unto mine own self?*"	Deliberative council inquiry	The Servant	The Lord invites counsel from his servant — true deliberative speech within a divine assembly.[34]
5:38	"*Let us go down into the nethermost parts of the vineyard, and behold . . .*"	Cohortative council summons	The Servant (joint action)	Renewed joint investigation; further council participation. [35]
5:49	"*Let us go to and hew down the trees . . . and cast them into the fire*"	Cohortative council summons (judgment)	The Servant (joint action)	Proposal of shared execution of judgment, subsequently negotiated by the servant.[36]
5:50–51	"*Spare it a little longer.*" / "Yea, *I will spare it . . .*"	Intercessory petition + ratified directive	The Servant petitions; the Lord issues a decree of stay	The servant petitions; the Lord issues a decree of stay — paralleling intercessory negotiation scenes (Gen 18).[37]
5:52	"*let us take of the branches . . . and let us graft them . . . and let us pluck . . .*"	Cohortative council summons (restoration)	The Servant (joint action)	Collaborative restoration plan — joint action framed from the outset.[38]
5:57	"*Ye shall graft according to that which I have said*"	Imperative commission to plural agents	The Servant (and implied additional servants)	Expands delegated authority to plural servants — divine labor bureaucratized.[39]
5:61	"*Go to, and call servants, that we may labor diligently . . . that we may prepare the way*"	Imperative + cohortative	The Servant → recruiting additional laborers	Recruitment directive initiating final cooperative phase.[40]

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34. Heiser, *Divine Council*, 170–74.

35. Ricks and Welch, *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 16–18.

36. Ricks and Welch, *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 19–21.

37. Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 68–71.

38. Szink and Welch, "Zenos and the Allegory," 783–85.

39. Welch, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God," 12–14.

40. Welch, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God," 14–16.

Verse	Directive (Quotation)	Type	Agent(s) Addressed	Nature and Function
5:62	"*Let us go to* and *labor* with our might this last time"	Cohortative council summons	The Servant and servants (plural)	Final collective descent; climactic "last-time" council action.[41]
5:63	"*Graft in* the branches; *begin* at the last . . . and *dig about* the trees . . ."	Imperative commission to plural agents	Servants (plural)	Technical directions for restorative labor.[42]
5:64	"*Dig about* them, and *prune* them, and *dung* them once more"	Imperative commission	Servants (plural)	Final cultivation order anticipating imminent harvest.[43]
5:65	"*Ye shall clear away* the branches which bring forth bitter fruit . . . *ye shall not clear away* the bad . . . all at once"	Imperative commis-sion with restriction	Servants (plural)	Conditional pruning instructions — governing how subordinates must act.[44]
5:66	"*Ye shall clear away* the bad according as the good shall grow . . ."	Imperative commission	Servants (plural)	Final operational order completing delegated purgation.
5:71	"*Go to, and labor* in the vineyard, with your might."	Imperative commission	Servants (plural)	Broad authorization of many laborers — culminating council deployment.[45]

Table 1 demonstrates that across Jacob 5's 77 verses, at least twenty distinct instances of divine council directive speech punctuate the narrative, creating what may be termed a "working divine council," dramatized through horticultural allegory. These directives fall into two primary grammatical-theological categories:

Imperative Commissions (entries 1, 3, 4, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20): The Lord issues direct commands to the servant or servants, typically using second-person imperatives ("Go," "Take," "Graft," "Dig"). These utterances authorize specific agents to perform specific tasks, establishing hierarchical delegation. They parallel biblical commissioning narratives where Yahweh dispatches prophets or angels:

41. Welch, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God," 14–16.

42. Ricks and Welch, *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 27–29.

43. Ricks and Welch, *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 29–31.

44. Ricks and Welch, *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 29–31.

45. Welch, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God," 14–16.

Isaiah's "Go, and tell this people" (Isa 6:9), or angelic missions throughout Scripture.[46] The imperative mode asserts divine sovereignty while simultaneously empowering human agency—the servant acts *because* commanded, yet acts with genuine delegated authority.

Cohortative Council Summonses (entries 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15): The Lord invites joint action using first-person plural cohortatives ("Come, let us go down," "let us graft"). These utterances presuppose shared participation rather than unilateral command. Ancient Near Eastern and biblical scholars have long recognized cohortative plurals as characteristic of divine council scenes—Genesis 1:26 ("Let us make man in our image"), Genesis 11:7 ("Come, let us go down and confound their language")—where deity addresses heavenly assembly or angelic retinue.[47] While monotheistic reinterpretation often understands such plurals as "deliberative" (God consulting with himself) or as addressing angels, the grammatical structure preserves earlier polytheistic patterns of divine assembly deliberation.[48]

Jacob 5 consistently employs this cohortative formula at narrative turning points: the initial descent for labor (v. 15), the subsequent inspection tours (vv. 19, 29, 38), the crisis-point deliberation over judgment (v. 49), and the climactic restoration planning (v. 52). The repetition creates a narrative rhythm: divine descent → inspection → deliberation → renewed action. This rhythm mirrors divine council patterns documented in texts, such as 1 Kings 22:19–22, where Yahweh consults his heavenly assembly about how to accomplish a divine purpose, receives proposals, and dispatches a spirit to execute the decision.[49]

The single deliberative inquiry (entry 8)—"What shall we do unto the tree?"—represents the most explicit instance of council consultation. The Lord does not rhetorically ask himself but genuinely invites the servant's counsel. That the servant responds with analysis (vv. 34, 48) and that the Lord modifies his initial judgment accordingly (vv. 50–51) demonstrates functional rather than merely formal consultation. This pattern finds biblical parallel in Genesis 18:23–33, where Abraham negotiates with Yahweh over Sodom's fate, and Exodus 32:9–14, where Moses persuades Yahweh to relent from destroying Israel.[50]

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46. Norman Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 77 (1965): 297–323.

47. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 47–52; Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 25–28.

48. Heiser, *Divine Council*, 43–44.

49. Heiser, *Divine Council*, 170–74.

50. See Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 68–71.

These "intercession" scenes troubled later theological interpreters who emphasized divine immutability, but they preserve ancient covenant theology's assumption that divine governance involves genuine responsiveness to righteous intercession.[51]

The intercessory sequence in verses 50–51 warrants particular attention. When the Lord proposes wholesale destruction ("Let us go to and hew down the trees," v. 49), the servant petitions for delay ("Spare it a little longer," v. 50), and the Lord consents ("Yea, I will spare it a little longer," v. 51). This exchange exhibits classic intercessory structure: (1) divine judgment announced, (2) subordinate plea for mercy, (3) divine relenting. The servant's successful intercession demonstrates that divine council participation involves more than mechanical execution of commands — it includes advocacy, counsel, and partnership in shaping (not merely implementing) divine policy. Walter Brueggemann's analysis of prophetic intercession emphasizes that such scenes dramatize covenant relationship as "dialogic rather than unilateral," with divine sovereignty expressed through responsiveness rather than rigidity.[52]

Theological Function: Divine Council Directives and Collaborative Salvation

The twenty divine council directive speech acts identified above perform multiple theological functions within Jacob 5's allegorical architecture:

Revelation of collaborative governance

Unlike future-tense declarations that assert *what* God will unilaterally accomplish, these directives reveal *how* God chooses to accomplish his purposes — through authorized partnership. The Lord of the vineyard possesses absolute sovereignty; he could theoretically execute all vineyard work himself. Yet repeatedly he commissions ("Go and pluck"), invites ("Come, let us go down"), consults ("What shall we do?"), and delegates ("Ye shall graft"). This pattern presents divine governance as hierarchical yet collaborative, sovereign yet relational.

God is willing to fulfill his covenant through interdependent collaborative labor, reflecting a theology of covenant participation; his

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51. Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 45–59.
52. Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 68–71.

children are invited to become laborers with him (1 Corinthians 3:9). His sons and daughters participate genuinely (not merely symbolically) in redemptive work. The divine council directives in Jacob 5 narratively enact this theology: servants are not passive recipients of salvation, but active participants in its administration.

This theological vision contrasts with certain streams of Christian soteriology, emphasizing monergistic salvation (God alone acts) versus synergistic salvation (God and humans cooperate). Jacob 5's allegory clearly operates within a synergistic framework, but of a distinctive kind. The Lord initiates, authorizes, provides resources, and guides; the servant(s) cannot act except as commissioned. Yet within that commission, servants exercise genuine agency — they inspect, report, counsel, intercede, and labor. The pattern resonates with covenant theology's emphasis on conditionality: God's promises are sure, but their realization involves human response and participation.[53]

Structuring of the plan of salvation through directive cycles

The divine council directives structure the allegory's temporal progression, marking distinct dispensational phases:

- **Phase 1: Crisis Intervention (vv. 7–12)**: Early directives focus on emergency measures — grafting, pruning, nourishing. The imperative commissions predominate, while also establishing the servant's authorized role.
- **Phase 2: Inspection and Assessment (vv. 15, 19, 29, 38)**: Cohortative summonses ("Come, let us go down") initiate repeated inspection tours. These "descent" formulas mark temporal progression ("a long time passed away," v. 15; "a long time had passed away," v. 29) while maintaining divine-human partnership throughout.
- **Phase 3: Crisis and Intercession (vv. 33, 49–51)**: Deliberative inquiry and intercessory petition occur at narrative crisis, when universal corruption threatens universal destruction. The Lord's receptivity to the servant's plea preserves possibility for Phase 4.
- **Phase 4: Eschatological Restoration (vv. 52, 61–71)**: Restoration planning (v. 52's triple cohortative: "let us take . . . let us graft . . . let us pluck") expands into recruitment

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53. Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 157–78.

of additional servants (v. 61) and culminates in collective deployment (vv. 62, 71). The expansion from singular servant to plural servants signals eschatological intensification — the "last time" requires mobilization of many laborers.

This four-phase structure maps onto salvation-historical periodization: (1) prophetic ministry addressing apostasy, (2) patient divine oversight across dispensations, (3) pivotal intercession preventing premature judgment, (4) eschatological gathering and final harvest. Each phase employs distinctive directive speech patterns, suggesting that the mode of divine-human interaction adapts to covenantal circumstances.

The repeated "Come, let us go down" formula (vv. 15, 19, 29, 38) deserves particular attention. In Genesis 11:7, Yahweh says "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language" — a statement traditionally understood as divine address to the heavenly court.[54] The verbal parallel between Genesis 11:7 and Jacob 5's repeated descents invites reading Jacob 5's master-servant relationship through the lens of divine council theology. Just as Yahweh descends with angelic retinue to execute judgment at Babel, so the Lord of the vineyard descends with his servant to execute salvific labor in the vineyard.

This "descent" motif carries rich theological freight. In the Hebrew Bible, divine descent often signals theophanic intervention — Yahweh descends at Sinai (Exod 19:18–20), descends to investigate Sodom (Gen 18:21), descends to see Babel's tower (Gen 11:5). Descent bridges transcendence and immanence, signaling divine engagement with earthly affairs. Jacob 5's reiterated descents present the plan of salvation as repeated divine interventions, each requiring the Lord's personal engagement with his vineyard's condition. Yet unlike Genesis's solitary or angel-accompanied descents, Jacob 5's descents are consistently collaborative: "Come, let us. . . ." The servant is not merely witness but partner in investigative and redemptive labor.

Modeling of authorized ministry and delegated priesthood

The progressive expansion of authorized agents — from singular servant (vv. 7–40) to recruited plural servants (vv. 61, 70–71) — models the nature of authorized ministry. John W. Welch observes that the multiplication of servants in the allegory's climactic phase typologically prefigures latter-day missionary expansion: "These are the missionaries

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54. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 49–50.

[in] the latter day, both those called formally and those whose efforts effect missionary work without the formal calling."[55] The transition from one servant to many servants narratively enacts the democratization of covenant responsibility in the "last time" (vv. 62-64, 71, 75-76).

Yet this expansion operates under strict divine authorization. The servants in verse 61 are not self-appointed volunteers, but divinely summoned ("call servants") and divinely commissioned ("Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might," v. 71). The Lord retains supervisory authority—"the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them" (v. 72)—even as he multiplies laborers. This balance between delegation and divine oversight models priesthood theology: authority to act derives from commission, not from inherent human capacity, yet commissioned servants genuinely participate in (not merely symbolically represent) divine work.

The allegory thus presents what might be termed "concentric authorization": the Lord authorizes the servant, who recruits additional servants (v. 70: "the servant went and did as the Lord had commanded him, and brought other servants"), who labor under both the servant's and the Lord's direction. This multi-tiered structure parallels hierarchical priesthood organization, where authority flows from God through prophetic leadership to local ministers, all working collaboratively toward common purposes.

The promise of shared joy in harvest (v. 75: "behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard") confirms that the servants' labor is not merely instrumental but genuinely covenantal—they become partners, not just employees, entitled to share in salvific success. This eschatological vision of shared divine joy recalls Jesus's parable of laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16), where all receive full reward regardless of hours worked, and echoes the promise that "if it so be that you should labor all your days . . . and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:15–16). The theological principle is consistent: those whom God commissions to participate in redemptive labor share in redemptive joy.

Dramatization of divine patience and responsive judgment

The interplay between the Lord's judgmental impulses and the servant's intercessory pleas (most explicit in vv. 26–27, 49–51) dramatizes

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55. Welch, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God," 14–16.

divine patience as dialogically constituted. When the Lord proposes destroying unfruitful branches (v. 26: "Pluck off the branches that have not brought forth good fruit, and cast them into the fire"), the servant pleads for delay (v. 27: "Let us prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it a little longer"), and the Lord consents (v. 28: "the Lord of the vineyard and the servant . . . did nourish all the fruit of the vineyard"). The pattern repeats at the allegory's crisis: proposed destruction (v. 49), intercessory petition (v. 50), and divine relenting (v. 51).

This recurring pattern cannot be dismissed as mere literary device. As Gardner himself acknowledges, while the Lord/servant relationship functions as a literary mechanism in the allegory, it nevertheless communicates theological truth about the way the Lord works with his children.[56] The literary structure encodes theological conviction: divine judgment is not mechanical nor inevitable, but responsive to righteous intercession. This accords with broader biblical patterns of prophetic intercession, where Abraham, Moses, and others successfully petition God to relent from judgment (Genesis 18:23–33; Exodus 32:9–14). Walter Brueggemann's analysis of prophetic imagination emphasizes that intercessory scenes reveal God's responsiveness to persuasion as a feature rather than weakness of covenant relationship. According to Brueggemann, the prophet's capacity to intercede demonstrates God's covenantal commitments to engage in genuine dialogue with covenant partners, rather than exercising dictatorial control.[57] Jacob 5's repeated intercessions narratively enact this theology, presenting divine patience as emerging from divine-human dialogue rather than as unilateral divine attribute.

The allegory thus answers potential theodicy questions. Why does God permit evil to persist? Why does judgment delay? The narrative answer: because authorized servants petition for mercy, and the Lord honors covenant partnership sufficiently to grant delay. This theological vision resonates with 2 Peter 3:9's claim that "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise; but is longsuffering . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Jacob 5 dramatizes longsuffering as partly (though not entirely) constituted through responsive engagement with intercessory agents.

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56. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 525–26, 548–49.
57. Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 68–71.

Comparison with Gardner's Promise/Fulfillment Analysis

Gardner's identification of promise/fulfillment pairs and the present identification of divine council directive speech acts represent complementary analyses illuminating different facets of Jacob 5's literary-theological architecture. Both patterns structure the narrative; both reinforce covenant theology; but they operate on different axes and emphasize different aspects of divine character and human role.

Similarities

Gardner's pattern and my pattern feature four similarities:

- **Identification of Structural Repetition as Theologically Significant.** Gardner observes that the repetition of the promise/fulfillment pairs "not only advances the narrative but also emphasizes the faithfulness of Yahweh's promise/fulfillment," offering theological truths about divine faithfulness.[58] Similarly, divine council directives structure narrative progression while modeling collaborative governance. Both analyses resist treating repetition as mere stylistic flourish, instead recognizing it as theological argument.

- **Emphasis on Divine Reliability.** Gardner's pattern demonstrates that "what Yahweh says through his prophets will come to pass."[59] Divine council directives similarly demonstrate reliability — not of prediction, but of authorization. When the Lord commands "Go and pluck" (v. 7), the servant obeys and the action occurs (v. 10). When the Lord invites "Come, let us go down" (v. 15), the collaborative descent occurs (v. 16). Both patterns establish that divine word — whether declarative or directive — proves efficacious.

- **Operation Across the Allegory's Temporal Expanse.** Gardner notes promise/fulfillment pairs occurring at multiple scales — from immediate verse-to-verse correspondence (vv. 4–5) to multi-verse narrative arcs (vv. 8–9, 35–36, 75). Divine council directives similarly span the allegory, from early crisis intervention (v. 7) through repeated inspection tours (vv. 15, 29, 38) to eschatological mobilization (vv. 61–71). Both patterns structure not just isolated passages but the allegory's comprehensive narrative architecture.

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58. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 532.
59. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 527.

- **Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Literary Conventions.** Gardner's pattern parallels covenant formulary structures where suzerain's past actions (historical prologue) warrant future obligations (stipulations).[60] Divine council directives parallel ancient Near Eastern divine assembly texts where supreme deity consults subordinate divine beings before dispatching them to execute divine will.[61] Both patterns suggest Jacob 5 participates in broader ancient literary traditions.

Differences

Gardner's pattern and my pattern feature five differences:

- **Declarative vs. Directive Speech.** Gardner's pattern focuses on statements about what God *will* do and observations that God *did* it — declarative speech about divine action. Divine council directives are not declarations but commands or invitations — directive speech mobilizing others' action. The difference is between "I will prune" (declaration) and "Go and pluck" (directive), between promise and commission.
- **Monergistic vs. Synergistic Emphasis.** Gardner's pattern emphasizes divine monergism — God's capacity to unilaterally fulfill what he promises. "What the Lord says through his prophets will come to pass," primarily through divine action. Divine council directives emphasize synergism — God's choice to accomplish purposes through commissioned partnership. The theological emphasis shifts from "God is faithful to act" to "God authorizes others to act with him."
- **Reliability vs. Relationality.** Gardner's pattern establishes divine trustworthiness through fulfilled predictions — proving God reliable. Divine council directives establish covenant partnership through shared labor — proving God relational. Both are covenantal virtues, but they address different aspects of divine character: faithfulness (God does what he says) versus condescension or cooperation (God works with others rather than alone).

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60. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," 58–59, see also 64 and 69; McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant*, 12–13.
61. Mullen, *Divine Council*, 209–41; Heiser, *Divine Council*, 41–48.

- **Temporal Orientation.** Promise/fulfillment pairs orient temporally around the promise-to-fulfillment arc, emphasizing the future's conformity to announced divine intention. Divine council directives orient around the authorization-to-execution arc, emphasizing present empowerment for immediate obedience. Promise/fulfillment looks forward; directive/execution looks to responsive action.
- **Human Agency.** In promise/fulfillment pairs, human agency is not thematized — God announces, God fulfills, emphasis falls on divine sovereignty. In divine council directives, human agency becomes essential — servants must respond to commission, exercise judgment in execution, and even counsel the Lord. The servant becomes active covenant partner rather than passive beneficiary of divine promise.

Integrated reading

These patterns function hierarchically: Gardner's promise/fulfillment structure establishes the theological foundation (divine reliability through fulfilled declarations), upon which the divine council directive structure builds the ecclesiological and soteriological superstructure (authorized human participation in divine work). The Lord's fulfilled promises create conditions of trust necessary for servants to respond confidently to directives. This integration reflects what Old Testament scholars identify in covenant formularies, where divine historical prologue (recounting fulfilled promises) precedes stipulations (commanding future action).[62]

Consider Jacob 5:4–5 through both lenses. Gardner reads verse 4's "I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it" (promise) as being fulfilled in verse 5's "he pruned it, and digged about it, and nourished it" (fulfillment), thus demonstrating divine reliability. Reading through the directive lens adds dimension: verse 4's declaration of intent creates the context for verse 12's subsequent directive to the servant: "go thy way; watch the tree, and nourish it, according to my words." The Lord's demonstrated capacity to nurture the tree (promise fulfilled, vv. 4–5) authorizes the servant to continue that nurturing

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62. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," 50–76; McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant*, 27–51.

work (directive given, v. 12). Divine reliability (Gardner's emphasis) grounds delegated authority (present emphasis).

Similarly, the allegory's climactic restoration phase (vv. 52–74) exhibits both patterns. The Lord announces restoration plans (promise: "let us take of the branches . . . and let us graft them," vv. 52–54), which are then executed (fulfillment: "they took from the natural tree . . . and grafted," vv. 55–56). This exemplifies Gardner's pattern. But the execution occurs through commissioned servants' labor (directive: "Graft in the branches . . . dig about the trees," v. 63; "Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might," v. 71; fulfillment: "the servants did go and labor with their mights," v. 72). The Lord's reliable word (promise/fulfillment) is enacted through authorized partnership (directive/execution).

The two patterns thus present complementary dimensions of covenant theology. Gardner's promise/fulfillment pairs demonstrate *that* God is trustworthy—what he says will occur, does occur. Divine council directives demonstrate *how* God proves trustworthy—often by empowering servants to participate in fulfilling divine purposes. Together they yield a comprehensive model of divine-human relationship balancing sovereignty and partnership, monergism and synergism, declaration and authorization.

This integrated reading illuminates Jacob 5's answer to Jacob's originating question (Jacob 4:17): "how is it possible that these, after having rejected the sure foundation, can ever build upon it, that it may become the head of their corner?" The answer emerges through both patterns. Promise/fulfillment demonstrates God's unwavering commitment across Israel's apostasy cycles—patient persistence guarantees eventual restoration. Divine council directives demonstrate the mechanism of restoration—through authorized servants (prophets, missionaries, covenant Israel) who labor under commission to gather scattered branches. Rejection becomes redeemed not through divine fiat alone but through divinely authorized human participation in gathering, grafting, and nurturing work.

Divine Council Motifs in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Context

Understanding divine council directive speech in Jacob 5 requires situating it within broader ancient Near Eastern and biblical divine council traditions. The concept of a divine assembly where supreme deity presides over subordinate divine beings is well-attested across

ancient Near Eastern cultures and appears in adapted forms throughout Hebrew Bible and First Temple and Second Temple literature. The most ancient and explicit examples come from Ugaritic mythology of the late Bronze Age, where the god El, the benevolent and patriarchal "Father of Years," presides over a council of lesser deities, the *bn ʾil* or "sons of God."[63] This council was familial, juridical, and administrative: El is portrayed as an aged patriarch and judge, seated amid the gods, who deliberate on matters of cosmic order, kingship, and destiny.[64] From his cosmic mountain palace, the divine king issued decrees with global effect—"From his mountain, the god issued imperatives, instructions, and judgments"—enforced through heavenly messengers.[65] This model presumes a fully polytheistic cosmos composed of a senior high god, his consort (Athirat/Asherah[66]), and a retinue of subordinate gods, providing the essential cultural and literary backdrop against which the earliest Israelite conceptions of Yahweh must be understood.[67]

Ugaritic and Canaanite divine council traditions

Ancient Ugaritic literature from Late Bronze Age Syria (ca. 1400–1200 BCE) preserves the earliest known texts that explicitly portray a heavenly council of gods. These tablets describe *El* presiding over an assembly of divine beings—called *bn ilm* ("sons of El") or *pḫr mˁd* ("assembly of the council")—who deliberate, decree, and dispatch

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63. Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 44.

64. Mullen, *Divine Council*, 217.

65. John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 119.

66. Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 194–200; Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt, "'His Secret is with the Righteous': Instructional Wisdom in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 66 (2025): 437–86, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/his-secret-is-with-the-righteous-instructional-wisdom-in-the-book-of-mormon; Samuel Zinner, "'Zion; and 'Jerusalem' as Lady Wisdom in Moses 7 and Nephi's Tree of Life Vision," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 12 (2014): 281–323, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/zion-and-jerusalem-as-lady-wisdom-in-moses-7-and-nephis-tree-of-life-vision.

67. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 52.

messengers to carry out divine decisions.[68] In the *Baal Cycle*, the council authorizes Baal's kingship and commissions divine envoys to implement its decrees — a sequence of assembly → deliberation → decree → dispatch.[69] E. Theodore Mullen's foundational monograph synthesizes this technical vocabulary across Ugaritic and Hebrew sources, while Mark S. Smith's editions of the *Baal Cycle* highlight the same narrative logic: the high god convenes the council, deliberates policy, and then sends agents to execute the decision.[70]

Latter-day Saint thought does not view the Ugaritic material as the source of the biblical council, but as an ancient witness of a premortal, revealed reality. Joseph Smith taught of a "council of the Gods" that deliberated "before the world was."[71] The Book of Abraham describes "the noble and great ones" assembling in the premortal realm and participating in decisions regarding the Creation (Abraham 3:22–28). Doctrine and Covenants 121:32 likewise refers to decrees issued "in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was." Thus, LDS theology does not deny the comparative evidence; it instead explains why divine council ideology appears in disparate ancient cultures at all — as fragmentary memory of an actual premortal council.

The Divine Council in the Hebrew Bible

Biblical writers preserve the council structure but reconfigure its content, centering Yahweh as sole sovereign. Mark S. Smith notes that Israelite religion functioned much like a typical West Semitic religion, while gradually reinterpreting its inherited divine council language through the lens of exclusive Yahwistic worship.[72] Psalm 82 depicts Yahweh presiding in a divine assembly: "God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment."[73] Other psalms refer to the *běnê ʾēlîm* ("sons of gods," Psalms 29:1; 89:7) and the "assembly of the holy ones" (Psalm 89:6), terms interpreted by

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68. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 48–54.

69. Mullen, *Divine Council*, 209–26; Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), introduction to KTU/CAT 1.3–1.4.

70. Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vols. 1–2 (Leiden: Brill, 1994–2009).

71. Joseph Smith, *King Follett Discourse*, April 7, 1844, josephsmithpapers .org/site/accounts-of-the-king-follett-sermon.

72. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 150.

73. Psalm 82:1. See also Heiser, "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature," 38.

scholars as referring to heavenly beings with divine status.[74] Patrick D. Miller identifies consistent elements matching the Ugaritic pattern: Yahweh enthroned, heavenly beings present, deliberation over earthly affairs, decree, and commissioning.[75]

Several biblical texts mirror the council pattern:

- **Genesis 1:26.** "Let *us* make man in *our* image." The plural is best read as Yahweh addressing his heavenly council.[76] Smith argues that while the Priestly source is monotheistic, it "acknowledges the heavenly host without compromising monotheism."[77]
- **Genesis 11:7.** "Come, let *us* go down . . ." Yahweh addresses assembled divine beings before dispersing nations.
- **1 Kings 22:19–22.** Micaiah sees Yahweh enthroned, asking, "Who will entice Ahab?" A spirit proposes a plan; Yahweh approves and sends him. This is the clearest biblical deliberation → proposal → commissioning narrative.[78]
- **Isaiah 6:8.** "Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us*?" A council setting frames Isaiah's prophetic commissioning.
- **Job 1–2.** The *bĕnê ʾelohim* present themselves before Yahweh. A council member proposes a test; Yahweh authorizes execution with limits.[79]

Textual criticism reveals that these council passages sometimes underwent later **monotheizing revision**. Deuteronomy 32:8, in its oldest form (Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint), states that Elyon ("the Most High") divided the nations according to the "sons of God"—a tiered council—later altered in the Masoretic Text to "sons of Israel."[80]

LDS scholarship affirms the scholarly consensus on the divine council and insists that biblical depictions are genuine windows into

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74. Charles John Ellicott, *An Old Testament Commentary for English Readers* (London: Cassell, 1882), 126; Patrick D. Miller, "The Divine Council and the Prophetic Call to War," *Vetus Testamentum* 18, no. 1 (1968): 102.

75. Miller, "Cosmology and World Order," 430–33.

76. Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 41–43, 52, 56, 62, 112, 233n1.

77. Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 25–28.

78. Miller, "Cosmology and World Order," 430–33.

79. Miller, "Cosmology and World Order," 430–33.

80. Michael S. Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (2001): 60–65; Julie Faith Parker, "Deuteronomy 32:8–9 and the Sons of God," in *My So-Called Biblical Life* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 52.

premortal heavenly governance. Smoot frames Israelite religion as monolatrous — one God worshiped, but a real plurality acknowledged.[81] Bokovoy argues that biblical council scenes match the premortal council described in Restoration scripture.[82] Thus, Ugarit → Bible continuity is accepted, but LDS theology clarifies that the council did not originate in Canaanite polytheism — rather, Canaanite texts reflect a shared, older, revealed pattern.

Divine Council and covenant administration (Jacob 5)

Mullen identifies five structural elements of the ANE council: (1) supreme deity enthroned, (2) assembled subordinates, (3) deliberation over a problem, (4) decree or decision, and (5) dispatch or commissioning.[83] Jacob 5 preserves elements 2–5. Although the allegory omits explicit throne imagery, the servant(s) are already present with the Lord and are consulted before action, functionally corresponding to the "assembled subordinates" of classical council scenes. The Lord then engages in deliberation, often expressed through deliberative inquiry ("What shall we do unto the tree?," v. 33), issues a shared decree ("let us graft . . . let us take," v. 52), and finally commissions action ("they went down," vv. 38–39). The questions in Jacob 5 are therefore not a separate structural element but rhetorical markers of the deliberative phase itself.

Jacob 5 therefore functions as a divine-council narrative, portraying the servant not as a rival god but as a covenant partner. Jon D. Levenson argues that covenant in the Hebrew Bible involves divine self-limitation and genuine reciprocity — God binds himself to respond to his partner.[84] Covenant thus creates a bilateral relationship of mutual obligation.[85] Jacob 5 dramatizes that reality: the Lord proposes destroying the vineyard (v. 49), the servant petitions mercy, and

81. Stephen O. Smoot, "The Divine Council in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 27 (2017) 1–4, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-divine-council-in-the-hebrew-bible-and-the-book-of-mormon.

82. David E. Bokovoy, "'Ye Really *Are* Gods': A Response to Michael Heiser concerning the LDS Use of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 19, no. 1 (2007), scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol19/iss1/15/.

83. Mullen, *Divine Council*, 205–7, 226–33.

84. Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 140–41.

85. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 121–48.

the Lord relents (v. 50). Thus, the servant's counsel — and the Lord's acceptance of the counsel — changes the outcome. The Book of Mormon stands out as an ancient scripture in which a divine council narrative unfolds around covenant administration, and Jacob 5 aligns naturally with the ancient premortal-council model: the Lord (Jehovah/ Christ) consults a servant who represents premortal agents commissioned to enact divine work.[86] Council structure becomes covenantal partnership. This makes Jacob 5 not merely a vineyard allegory but a window into how God governs: through council, collaboration, and covenant.

Speech Act Theory and Directive Discourse

Analyzing divine council directives in Jacob 5 benefits from speech act theory's analytical categories. J. L. Austin's foundational *How to Do Things with Words* distinguishes *constative* utterances (describing states of affairs) from *performative* utterances (enacting realities through speech itself).[87] Austin's student John R. Searle refines this taxonomy, proposing five categories of speech acts: *representatives* (assertions), *directives* (attempts to get hearer to do something), *commissives* (commitments to future action), *expressives* (expressing psychological states), and *declarations* (bringing about correspondence between propositional content and reality).[88]

Divine council directives in Jacob 5 function primarily as directives in Searle's taxonomy — illocutionary acts whose "point or purpose is to get the hearer to do something."[89] The *imperative commissions* ("Go and pluck," "Take thou," "Graft in") explicitly aim to produce servant action. The *cohortative summonses* ("Come, let us go down") invite collaborative action. In both cases, the speech act's *success conditions* (what Searle terms "felicity conditions") include: (1) speaker has authority to issue directive, (2) hearer has capacity to perform action, and (3) hearer recognizes directive and responds accordingly.[90]

Jacob 5 consistently fulfills these so-called "felicity conditions." The Lord possesses unquestioned authority to command the servant; the servant has capacity to perform directed actions (plucking, grafting, nourishing); the servant recognizes directives as such and responds

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86. Bokovoy, "Ye Really *Are* Gods," 5–7.
87. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 6–7.
88. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 33–36.
89. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 66.
90. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 57–61.

with obedience ("the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did according to the word of the Lord," v. 10; "the servants did go and labor with their mights," v. 72). The perlocutionary effect — servant action following directive — demonstrates successful directive speech acts.

Importantly, speech act theory distinguishes between direct and indirect directives. Direct directives use imperative mood or explicit performative verbs ("I command you to . . ."). Indirect directives use interrogatives or declaratives that function directively ("Can you close the door?" functions as request, though grammatically a question).[91] Jacob 5's deliberative inquiry in verse 33 ("What shall we do unto the tree?") functions as indirect directive. Though grammatically interrogative, it illocutionarily invites the servant's counsel and perlocutionarily produces the servant's analytical response (vv. 34, 48). The interrogative form signals consultative rather than dictatorial governance, inviting genuine dialogue within hierarchical relationship.

The cohortative formulas ("let us . . .") represent a distinctive directive type — what might be termed "inclusive directives," where speaker includes self in directed action. These differ from standard imperatives where speaker commands hearer to act alone. Inclusive directives presume joint action, modeling collaborative rather than merely delegative governance. The repeated "Come, let us go down into the vineyard, that we may labor" (vv. 15, 29) not only directs the servant to accompany the Lord, but the Lord commits himself to laboring alongside the servant. This speech pattern encodes theology: salvation is not delegated to human agents while God remains distant, but involves God's ongoing participation in work he authorizes servants to share.

Eschatological Expansion: From Singular to Plural Servants

One of Jacob 5's most significant narrative progressions involves the multiplication of authorized agents. The early allegory (vv. 3–40) consistently refers to "the servant" (singular). Beginning in verse 61, this expands: "go to, and call servants" (v. 61); "the servant . . . brought other servants; and they were few" (v. 70); "the Lord of the vineyard said unto them: Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might" (v. 71). The transition from singular to plural and from "the servant" to "servants," signals eschatological intensification — the "last time" (vv. 62, 71, 75–76) requires an expanded labor force.

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91. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 30–33, 70–71.

This narrative progression models what might be termed *democratic authorization:* the servant (perhaps representing prophetic/priestly leadership) recruits additional servants (perhaps representing a broader covenant community), all working under divine commission. Gardner identifies this expansion as typologically significant: "These are the latter-day missionaries, both those called formally and those whose informal efforts draw others to salvation."[92] The multiplication of servants represents the dispensational widening of authorized ministry from singular prophetic figure to collective covenant community.

Yet this democratization preserves hierarchy. The additional servants are not self-appointed, but divinely summoned through an authorized intermediary ("the servant . . . brought other servants," v. 70). They labor under both the servant's and the Lord's direction ("the servants did go and labor with their mights; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them," v. 72). The structure models concentric authorization: Lord → servant → servants, with authority flowing from center outward, while the center (the Lord) continues participating directly in the work.

The promise of shared joy confirms the genuine divine partnership: "blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in laboring with me in my vineyard, and have kept my commandments . . . behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard" (v. 75). The preposition *with* recurs: "laboring with me," "joy with me." Servants are not merely *for* the Lord, but *with* the Lord — genuine covenant partners entitled to share in covenant blessings, including eschatological joy in salvific success.

This eschatological vision resonates with other scriptural expansions of authorized ministry. Joel 2:28–29 prophesies, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." Acts 2:16–18 places the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy in the "last days." Similarly, Jacob 5's multiplication of servants from one to many models dispensational progression toward ever-widening covenant participation.

The allegory's temporal markers reinforce this eschatological reading. Verse 29: "the time draweth near, and the end soon cometh." Verse 62: "this is for the last time that I shall prune my vineyard."

92. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 546.

Verse 71: "the end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh." Verse 76: "for the last time have I nourished my vineyard." These temporal references cluster in the section describing servant multiplication (vv. 61–72), suggesting that the expansion from singular to plural servants is specifically an eschatological phenomenon. The "last time" is characterized not by solitary prophetic ministry, but by collective mobilized covenant community laboring under divine commission.

Contrast with Future-Tense Declarations and Predictive Prophecy

Having identified divine council directive speech acts, it is essential to clarify what they are not. Several statement types in Jacob 5 superficially resemble directives but function differently:

- **Future-Tense Self-Declarations.** "I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it" (v. 4); "I will take these young and tender branches, and I will graft them whithersoever I will" (v. 8); "And this will I do that the tree may not perish" (v. 53). These statements declare divine intention but do not commission another agent. They are self-directed commissives (in Searle's taxonomy) rather than directives addressed to others. They contribute to Gardner's promise/fulfillment pattern but not to divine council directive pattern.

- **Inclusive Future-Tense Statements.** "And we will nourish again the trees of the vineyard, and we will trim up the branches thereof" (v. 58). While using first-person plural like cohortatives, these statements describe future joint action without the invitational structure of "Come, let us . . . ." They announce what "we will" do rather than invite "let us" do. They are collective commissives rather than cohortative summonses.

- **Narrative Fulfillment Reports.** "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" (v. 10). These third-person narrative reports describe directive execution but are not themselves directives. They fulfill directives rather than issue them. They constitute the "fulfillment" half of the "promise/fulfillment" formula identified by Gardner.

- **Deliberative Soliloquy.** "What could I have done more

for my vineyard?" (vv. 41, 47, 49). While interrogative, these questions are rhetorical self-reflection, not genuine deliberative inquiry inviting response. They differ from verse 33's "What shall we do unto the tree?" which explicitly invites the servant's counsel and receives substantive response (vv. 34, 48–51). These rhetorical questions eloquently express divine lament.

The critical distinction is between statements *about* future action (predictions, intentions, descriptions) and statements *authorizing*, *commissioning*, *directing*, or *inviting* action (directives, commissions, invitations). The former emphasize divine sovereignty and reliability; the latter emphasize covenant partnership and delegated authority. Both are essential to Jacob 5's theology, but they serve different rhetorical-theological functions and should not be conflated.

Literary and Theological Synthesis

The twenty divine council directive speech acts identified in Jacob 5, when analyzed alongside Gardner's promise/fulfillment pairs, reveal a sophisticated literary-theological architecture. The allegory does not merely narrate covenant history (though it does that); it dramatizes covenant governance as collaborative process involving genuine divine-human partnership.

Narrative structure through directive cycles

The allegory's narrative progression is structured by directive speech initiating action phases. Each phase is initiated by directive speech, proceeds through authorized labor, and concludes with assessment, leading to the next directive cycle. This structure presents the plan of salvation not as linear divine decree progressively realized, but as spiral of crisis → commission → labor → assessment → renewed crisis → renewed commission, and so on, culminating finally in eschatological resolution. This table breaks down the narrative into its constituent cycles, explicitly showing a "spiral" pattern of crisis → commission → labor → assessment.

Table 2 shows a spiral model, where a crisis is a problem that demands a new commission. Each crisis is a negative condition revealed by a prior assessment.

Table 2. Spiral Model of the Plan of Salvation in Jacob 5.

Cycle	Narrative Trigger / Preceding State	Crisis (Revealed by Assessment)	Commission / Directive	Labor	Assessment / Result
Initial (vv. 3–14)	(Allegory begins)	**Tree is decaying** (vv. 3–4)	"I will prune . . ." (v. 4); "go and pluck . . ." (v. 7); "Take thou . . . graft . . ." (v. 9); "go thy way; watch" (v. 12)	Pruning, grafting, hiding branches (vv. 5, 10, 14)	Tree puts forth, but **main top begins to perish** (v. 6)
First Inspection (vv. 15–28)	A long time passed; let us go labor (v. 15)	**(Revealed) One branch has mixed fruit** (v. 25)	"Pluck off the branches . . ." (v. 26) > Countered by "Let us prune . . ." (v. 27)	They nourish it (v. 28)	(Deferred; outcome unknown)
Sub-Assessment 2a (vv. 16–18)	(They go to labor)	(None — Positive) Grafted tree is good (vv. 17–18)	(None — Positive assessment)	(None)	(Confirms previous work)
Sub-Assessment 2b (vv. 19–24)	(They check other branches)	(None — Positive) Natural branches are good (vv. 20, 23–24)	(None — Positive assessment)	(None)	(Confirms previous work)
Second Inspection & Universal Crisis (vv. 29–51)	A long time passed; end is near; let us go labor (v. 29)	**(Revealed) Universal Corruption:** 1. Grafted tree has all bad fruit (vv. 30–32). 2. Natural branches are also corrupt (v. 39).	"What shall we do?" (v. 33); "Let us go to and hew down . . ." (v. 49) > Countered by "Spare it . . ." (v. 50)	(Deliberation, no physical labor)	Lord weeps, assesses his efforts (vv. 41–47); Servant analyzes cause (v. 48). Lord relents: "I will spare it . . ." (v. 51)
Eschatological Restoration (vv. 52–77)	The decision to spare the vineyard (v. 51)	**Imminent loss of the entire vineyard** (stated in v. 51)	"let us take . . . let us graft . . ." (v. 52); "go to, and call servants" (v. 61); "let us go to and labor" (v. 62); "Graft in . . . dig about . . ." (vv. 63–66)	Massive, collective labor by the Lord and many servants (vv. 55–56, 70–72)	**Success:** Natural fruit is restored; vineyard is no longer corrupt (vv. 73–75)

Linear progression of directive cycles in Jacob 5

The progression of directive cycles in Jacob 5 can be represented in a linear flow of the narrative, where each assessment reveals a crisis (a condition that needs divine intervention), prompts a subsequent commission adapted to meet the need, and leads to labor to satisfy the need. The cycles are represented by crisis → commission → labor → assessment → (if needed) deliberation/judgment → resolution/next cycle. Every cycle begins with a crisis and a commission arising from the previous cycle's assessment and ends with a new assessment that determines whether another intervention is required, and if so, leads to the identification of the next crisis and the next commission.

1. **CYCLE 1 (Initial Crisis, vv. 3–14)**
   - **Crisis:** The tame olive tree begins to decay (v. 3)
   - **Commission:** "Prune it, dig about it, and nourish it" (vv. 4–5)
   - **Labor:** Grafting wild branches into the mother tree and removing/taking natural branches to plant elsewhere (vv. 6–14)
   - **Assessment:** The purpose is stated, though the assessment is implicit — "that I may preserve . . . the roots" (v. 13)

2. **CYCLE 2 (Second Visit / First Full Inspection, vv. 15–28)**
   - **Narrative trigger:** "After a long time had passed away" (v. 15)
   - **Commission:** "Let us go down . . . that we may labor again" (v. 15)
   - **Labor:** Inspection of the mother tree (vv. 16–18) and then inspection of the scattered branches (vv. 19–26)
   - **Assessment:** Mixed outcomes:
     » Tame fruit on the mother tree (vv. 17–18)
     » Tame fruit on scattered branches (vv. 20–24)
     » Mixed fruit on the tree in the "good spot of ground" (v. 25)
   - **Sub-cycle (nested directive):** "Let us prune it . . . let us nourish it" (vv. 26–28) — the Master directs specialized labor to address the mixed fruit

3. **CYCLE 3 (Great Apostasy / Deliberation & Judgment, vv. 29–51)**
   - **Narrative trigger:** "After a long time . . . the end soon cometh" (v. 29)
   - **Commission:** "Let us go down . . . that we may labor again" (v. 29)
   - **Labor:** Thorough inspection of all trees and all branches (vv. 30–39)
   - **Assessment:** Universal failure — "They have all become corrupted," "all sorts of bad fruit" (vv. 32, 39–40)
   - **Crisis / Judgment declaration:** "Let us hew down the trees of the vineyard" (v. 49)
   - **Counter-proposal / Deliberation:** The servant pleads — "Spare it a little longer" (vv. 50–51)

4. **CYCLE 4 (Final Restoration / Last Commission, vv. 52–77)**
   - **Crisis:** Imminent loss — destruction is the logical next step (v. 51)
   - **Commission:** Full restoration plan — gather servants, return natural branches to the mother tree, and nourish all parts together (vv. 52–66)
   - **Labor:** Collective, coordinated labor; multiple servants work together (vv. 67–72)
   - **Assessment:** Success — good fruit returns and the bad is removed (vv. 73–75)
   - **FINAL RESOLUTION (two-stage outcome):**
     » **Good fruit gathered and laid up** (v. 76)
     » **Vineyard burned / end of the history** (v. 77)

Spiral progression of directive cycles in Jacob 5

The flowchart in figures 1–4 maps the spiral progression of directive cycles in Jacob 5, visually representing the recursive, non-linear nature of the narrative, where each assessment leads directly to a new crisis and a subsequent, adapted commission. The recursive spiral structure of the allegory shows how assessments lead to new crises and how one cycle nests within another in Cycle 2.
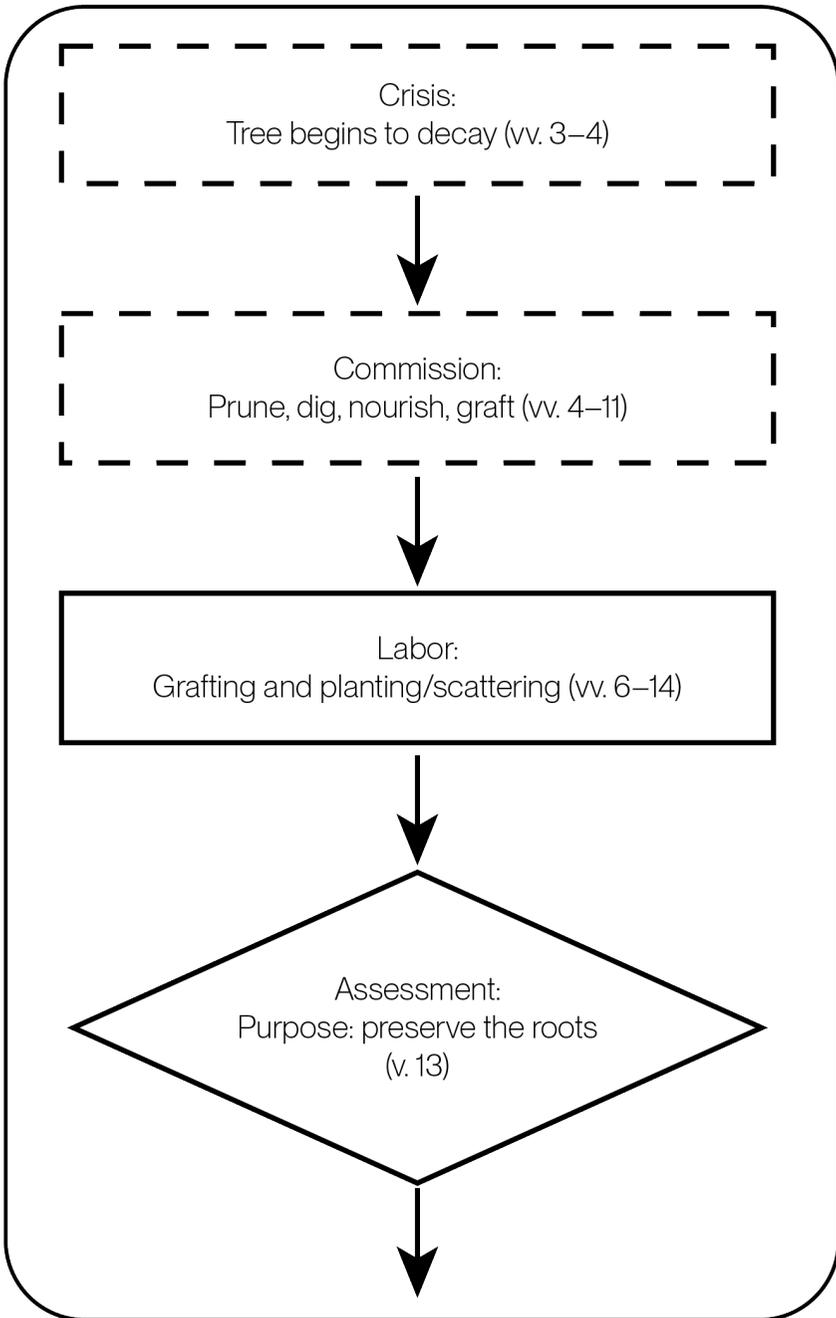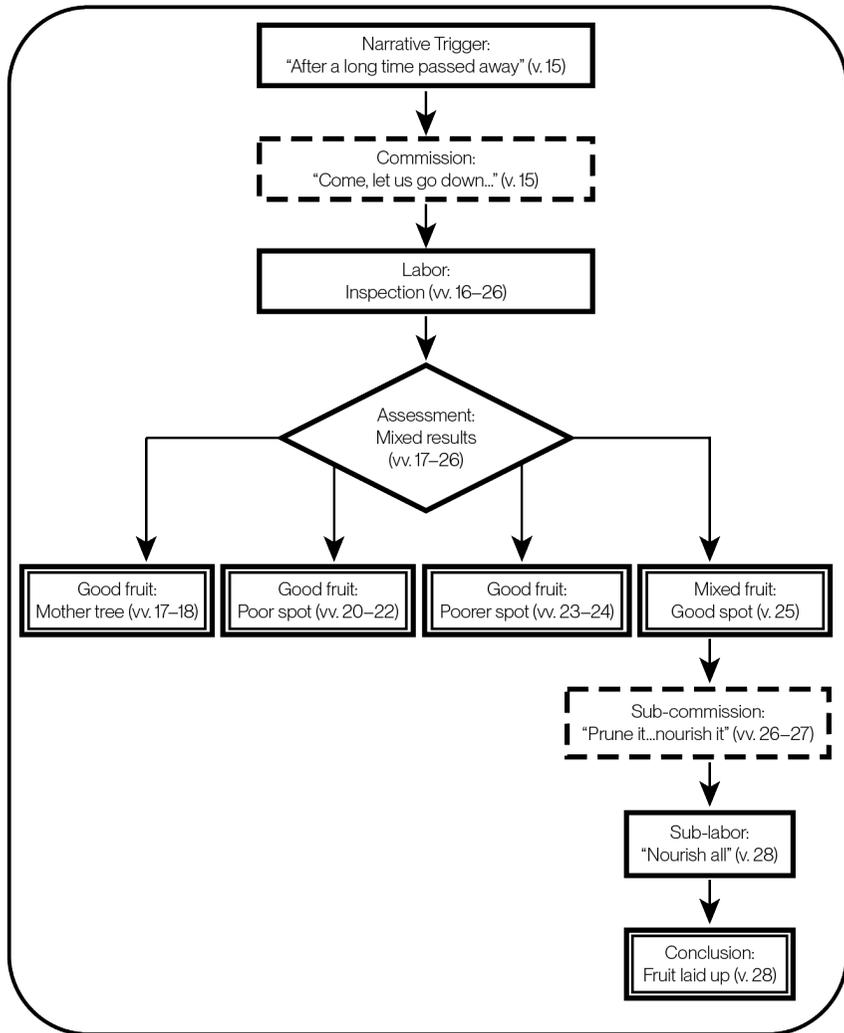
Figure 1. Cycle 1: Initial crisis (vv. 3–14).

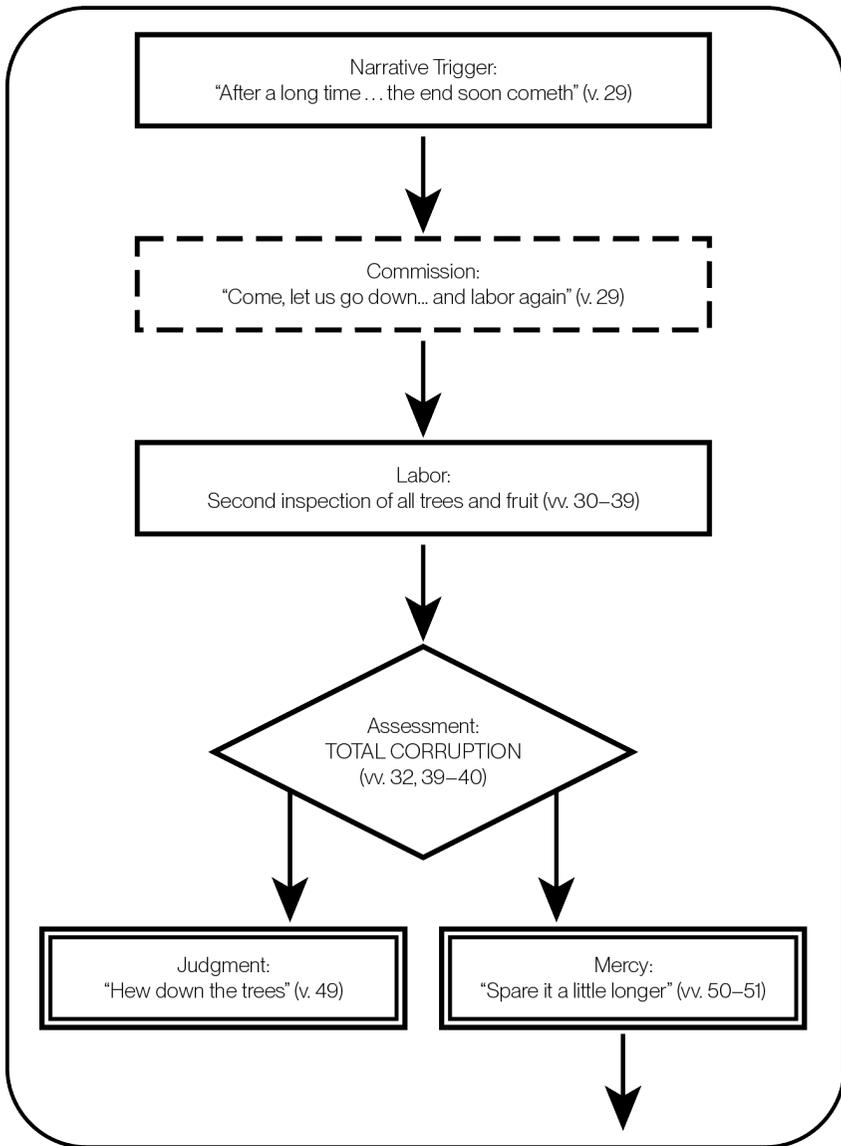**Figure 2.** Cycle 2: Second visit / first full inspection (vv. 15–28).

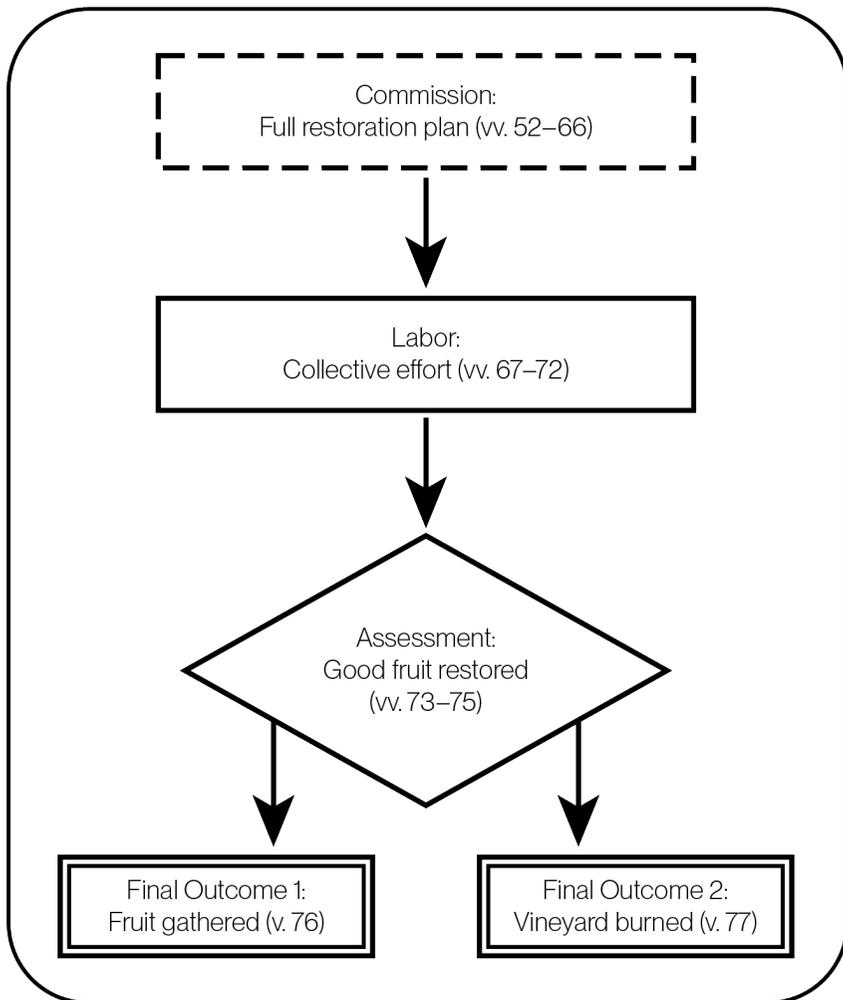**Figure 3.** Cycle 3: Major crisis and turning point (vv. 29–51).

Figure 4. Cycle 4: Final restoration (vv. 52–77).

Theological motifs

Three interlocking theological motifs emerge through divine council directive analysis:

- **Divine Sovereignty Through Partnership.** The Lord retains ultimate authority — he initiates all directives, sets all parameters, supervises all labor. Yet he consistently chooses to exercise sovereignty through partnership. The theological claim is that divine power is expressed through (not compromised by) collaborative governance. This

resonates with Latter-day Saint theological emphasis on divine-human cooperation in salvation.[93]

- **Authorized Agency and Covenant Responsibility.** Servants act *because* they are authorized, not from inherent capacity. Yet within authorization, they exercise genuine agency — inspecting, reporting, counseling, interceding, judging within parameters. The allegory models priesthood theology: authority flows from God through delegation, but delegated authority is genuine authority, not merely symbolic representation.

- **Eschatological Intensification and Democratic Authorization.** The progression from singular servant to plural servants, and from elite prophetic ministry to collective covenant community, models dispensational trajectory. The "last time" is characterized by mobilized, authorized, collaborative labor of many — not hierarchical command structure with passive laity, but council structure with active covenant partners.

Jacob 5 as Divine Council allegory

Synthesizing these observations, Jacob 5 may be understood as ancient Israel's most extensive divine council allegory, transposed from cosmic to covenantal register. Rather than supreme deity consulting heavenly assembly about ordering cosmos (Ugaritic/Canaanite pattern) or judging nations (Hebrew Bible pattern; such as 1 Kings 22), Jacob 5 presents supreme deity consulting authorized servant(s) about preserving covenant relationship with Israel. The focus shifts from cosmology to soteriology, from divine beings to human agents, but the governmental structure — hierarchical yet deliberative, sovereign yet consultative — remains recognizably continuous with broader divine council traditions.

This reading illuminates why Jacob employs Zenos's allegory to answer his question about how rejected Messiah becomes triumphant Messiah (Jacob 4:17). The answer is not simply that God remains faithful despite human faithlessness (though true). The answer is that God works *through* faithful remnant, authorized servants, commissioned laborers across dispensations, to preserve covenant relationship

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93. Terryl L. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 86.

until eschatological restoration. The rejected Christ becomes triumphant Christ not through divine fiat overriding human rejection, but through divinely authorized human participation (prophets, apostles, missionaries, saints) in gathering scattered Israel. Divine council directive speech is the literary-theological mechanism dramatizing this salvation-through-authorized-partnership.

Conclusion: Toward a Fuller Reading of Jacob 5

This study has identified and analyzed divine council directive speech acts in Jacob 5 as a pattern complementing and extending Brant Gardner's promise/fulfillment analysis. Where Gardner illuminates divine reliability through fulfilled declarations, divine council directives illuminate covenant partnership through authorized collaboration. Together these patterns present a comprehensive theology of divine governance: God is faithful (promise/fulfillment) and God is relational (directive/participation); God acts (monergism) and God empowers others to act with him (synergism); God declares future (prophecy) and God authorizes present action (commission).

The twenty divine council directives identified span the allegory's narrative arc, structuring temporal progression while modeling covenant relationship as hierarchical yet collaborative, sovereign yet consultative. The pattern resonates with ancient Near Eastern divine council traditions, adapted through Israelite covenant theology to emphasize human rather than divine council members, covenant preservation rather than cosmic ordering, and eschatological gathering rather than immediate judgment.

Jacob 5 thus emerges not merely as horticultural allegory or historical outline but as dramatized divine council in action—a working assembly where the Lord consults authorized servants, invites their counsel, commissions their labor, honors their intercession, and shares eschatological joy in salvific success. This reading enriches understanding of the allegory's answer to Jacob's question (4:17): the rejected Christ becomes triumphant through patient divine persistence (promise/fulfillment) enacted through authorized servant partnership (directive/collaboration) across dispensations, until eschatological consummation.

Future research might profitably explore: (1) comparative analysis of directive speech in other Book of Mormon texts (particularly Nephi's temple vision in 1 Nephi 11–14, which shares council-vision structure); (2) examination of Zenos's other recorded prophecies for similar

patterns; (3) analysis of Joseph Smith's revelations in Doctrine and Covenants using divine council directive framework (many revelations employ directive speech: "Go to," "Let us reason together," and so forth); (4) theological implications for Latter-day Saint priesthood and missionary theology; (5) liturgical implications for understanding temple covenant language as directive speech authorizing salvific labor.

Gardner's foundational identification of promise/fulfillment structure opened scholarly understanding of Jacob 5's literary sophistication. Recognizing the complementary divine council directive pattern deepens that understanding, revealing an allegory that not only chronicles the plan of salvation but dramatizes its governance structure — a structure inviting covenant partners to labor with God in the vineyard until the eschatological harvest, when servants share divine joy in salvific work accomplished together.

Gardner's identification of the promise/fulfillment structure in Jacob 5 remains a cornerstone of the allegory's interpretation, effectively highlighting the unwavering faithfulness of the Lord of the vineyard. This paper has sought to expand this foundational work by illuminating a parallel and interwoven literary-theological pattern: the divine council directive. Cataloging the imperative commissions and cohortative summonses that permeate the text hopefully has demonstrated how the allegory dramatizes the collaborative character of covenant governance. The Lord not only declares his will but actively enlists, authorizes, and deliberates with his servants to bring it to pass.

This synthesis of Gardner's promise/fulfillment model with the council-directive pattern seeks an integrated understanding of Jacob 5. God is not only perfectly reliable in his word but also profoundly relational in his methods, governing his vineyard through a divine council. He elevates his servants to become genuine partners in the work of salvation. This reading hopefully deepens our appreciation of the allegory's complexity and its powerful message about the collaborative nature of the covenant, a work where divine fidelity and human agency are inextricably linked in the great endeavor of bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

Appendix

In this appendix, following a brief explanatory note, I account for all verbs in Jacob 5 (verses 1–77) that are morphologically present tense (e.g., "draweth," "cometh," "is," "bringeth," etc.), but semantically

future — that is, the action they describe is not yet realized but imminent, often used in prophetic or prospective speech. This phenomenon — sometimes called the prophetic present, present of certainty, or futuristic present — is common in scriptural English modeled on the King James Bible. Below is a list of such verbs in Jacob 5, each followed by its verse reference(s) and a brief justification showing why the verb, though grammatically present, is contextually future-oriented.

Brief explanatory note concerning the tense known as the *prophetic present*, *present of certainty*, or *futuristic present*

Verbs or phrases expressing future or potential action generally include *will*, *shall*, *may*, *might*, *should*, *could*, *canst*, and so forth, and yet others exhibit what is called the *prophetic present*, which are ones where certainty of fulfillment licenses a present-tense form to stand for a future event. This is consistent with both Biblical Hebrew's perfect-of-certainty and King James English prophetic idiom. Thus, even though "draweth nigh," "cometh," and a few related verbs, for example (as discussed below) look present in morphology, they function as future-tense equivalents in the rhetoric of divine decree and prophecy.

Form vs. meaning

For example, grammatically the verb *draweth* is the present tense of draw, with the third-person singular ending "-eth" (as in "he draweth," "she goeth," etc.). However, tense and aspect do not always align with temporal reference in Early Modern or biblical English. Context often determines whether a present-tense verb denotes:

- a habitual or current action ("He draweth water daily"),
- or a near-future event ("The hour cometh, and now is" — John 4:23).

Thus, in some contexts the form is present while the sense can be future.

Context in Jacob 5

When the Lord of the vineyard says, "For behold, the time draweth nigh, and the end soon cometh," the phrase describes an event not yet fully realized — the "end" has not yet arrived but is approaching. So, semantically, "draweth nigh" carries prospective or imminent future meaning. It is akin to saying, "The time is drawing near" or "The

time will soon be at hand." In modern English, we would usually treat that as a future-oriented statement, even though the original verb form is morphologically present.

Biblical parallels

This use is entirely conventional in scriptural diction:

- "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2) — grammatically present, semantically future.
- "The hour cometh, and now is" (John 4:23) — "cometh" = present form, future sense.
- "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7).

In all such cases, "is at hand," "cometh," or "draweth nigh" are prophetic present-tense idioms — signaling certain and imminent future events.

In Jacob 5, "draweth nigh" is not grammatically a future verb but semantically it is

Grammatically "draweth nigh" is present tense but semantically future tense, because it functions as a future-oriented verb indicating something about to occur. Thus, "draweth nigh" in Jacob 5, along with the will/shall/may constructions, expresses future imminence rather than present state.

Listing of prophetic present or futuristic present verbs in Jacob 5

"Draweth nigh" (vv. 29, 47, 62, 64)

> "The time draweth nigh, and the end soon cometh."
> "The end draweth nigh."
> "The end draweth nigh."
> "For the end draweth nigh."

> Morphological present (*draweth*).

> Semantic value: future-imminent; signals that the eschatological "end" is about to occur.

"Cometh" (vv. 29, 47, 62, 71, 76, 77)

> "The end soon cometh."
> "The end draweth nigh, . . ." (paired with "cometh").
> "The end draweth nigh, . . ."
> "The season speedily cometh."
> "Which speedily cometh."

> "When the time cometh . . . and the end; and my vineyard will I cause to be burned."

> Formally present; idiomatically used in scripture for impending events ("The day cometh, that shall burn as an oven," Malachi 4:1).

"Is at hand" / "Is nigh at hand" (implied by v. 71)

> "For the end is nigh at hand."

> "Is" is morphologically present but expresses proximity in time, functioning as future-in-progress ("The hour *is* at hand," Matthew 26:45).

"Shall again come" (note "cometh" in v. 77)

> "When the time cometh that evil fruit shall again come . . ."

> The first *cometh* (present form) marks future arrival, parallel to the auxiliary "shall" following it.

"Behold" (when introducing forthcoming events; multiple occurrences throughout)

> e.g., v. 3, v. 8, v. 29, v. 37, v. 47, v. 68.

> While *behold* is imperative in form, in prophetic diction it often frames events about to happen, so its performative function has future orientation (less a verb of sight, more a "see-what-will-happen" marker).

"Cumber" (vv. 49, 66)

> ". . . that they shall not cumber . . ."
> ". . . that they cumber not . . ."

> In both clauses the governing auxiliaries ("shall not," "may not") make *cumber* morphologically present infinitive, but semantically future, describing what will *soon* no longer happen.

"Become" (vv. 37, 39, 46, 74)

> "It will soon become ripened."
> "They . . . had become corrupt."
> "The trees . . . have become corrupted."
> "The trees . . . had become again the natural fruit."

> Although past forms occur, *become* occasionally functions in a progressive future sense ("will soon become

ripened") — morphologically infinitive or participial but conceptually anticipatory.

"Is" (v. 75)

"... it is good ..."

In 5:75–76 the Lord states "that it is good" not as a present observation only, but as a culminated future result following the vineyard's purification — a prophetic perfect, semantically future outcome described as present.

"Bringeth forth" / "Bring forth" — when used in conditional prophecy (e.g., vv. 64–65)

"If it be so that these last grafts shall grow, and bring forth the natural fruit ..."
"Ye shall clear away ... lest ... the graft thereof shall perish."

Bring forth is present in form, but in conditional-prophetic usage it functions as prospective.

"Groweth" / "Grow" (vv. 64–65)

"That they may grow." / "As they begin to grow ye shall clear away ... lest ... the graft ... shall perish."

The growth has not yet happened; *grow* is morphologically present but expresses future contingent development.

"Causeth" / "Cause" (vv. 77)

"... and my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire."

Here "cause" is infinitive, but if expressed independently ("the Lord causeth"), the same construction would be a prophetic present of divine agency.

"Is cast away" (vv. 69, 75)

"... the bad is cast away ..."

Grammatically perfect/passive, but semantically futuristic perfect — the text speaks of an event that *will* have occurred when the prophecy is fulfilled.

   With that explanation, table 3 shows each prophetic present, present of certainty, or futuristic present verb within its full verse clause. The parallel table is ordered in ascending verse order (Jacob 5:1–77), showing each verb or phrase that is grammatically present tense but

semantically future-oriented ("prophetic present"). Note the sharp increase in the cluster of prophetic presents from verse 29 onward.

Table 3. Prophetic or futuristic presents in Jacob 5, ordered by verse.

Verb / Phrase	Verse	Full Clause or Line (KJV-style wording)	Why Future-Oriented
behold (performative)	3	"For behold, thus saith the Lord, I will liken thee . . ."	Imperative form introducing a coming divine act — functions as "see what will occur."
behold (performative)	8	"And behold, saith the Lord of the vineyard, I take away . . ."	Announces a divine action about to happen.
behold (performative)	29	"For behold, the time draweth nigh . . ."	Signals impending fulfillment.
draweth nigh	29	"For behold, the time draweth nigh, and the end soon cometh."	Present form marking the approach of a future event.
cometh	29	". . . and the end soon cometh."	Future arrival of "the end."
become (ripened)	37	". . . and it will soon become ripened, that it may be cast into the fire . . ."	Change not yet complete → near future.
behold (performative)	37	". . . and because that it hath brought forth so much evil fruit thou beholdest that it beginneth to perish . . ."	Perception verb introducing an unfolding (future) condition.
draweth nigh	47	". . . and I have stretched forth mine hand almost all the day long, and the end draweth nigh."	Eschatological "end" is approaching.
Cometh	47	(implicit in parallel "draweth nigh")	Same imminent future sense.
cumber (not)	49	". . . and cast them into the fire, that they shall not cumber the ground of my vineyard . . ."	Prevents a future state; proleptic prohibition.
draweth nigh	62	". . . for behold the end draweth nigh, and this is for the last time . . ."	Marks approaching consummation.
Cometh	62	". . . for behold the end draweth nigh . . ."	Paired with draweth nigh — future arrival.
Grow	64	". . . then shall ye prepare the way for them, that they may grow."	Expected development → future.

Verb / Phrase	Verse	Full Clause or Line (KJV-style wording)	Why Future-Oriented
draweth nigh	64	"... for the end draweth nigh. And if it be so that these last grafts shall grow ..."	Immediate future frame.
begin to grow	65	"And as they begin to grow, ye shall clear away the branches ..."	Growth has not yet occurred → near future.
bring forth	64–65	"... if it be so that these last grafts shall grow, and bring forth the natural fruit ..."	Conditional future yield.
cumber not	66	"... that they cumber not the ground of my vineyard ..."	Describes a future cleansed state.
draweth nigh	64 (reiterated)	"... for the end draweth nigh ..."	Reemphasizes imminence of closure.
Behold	68 (performative)	"... and thus will I bring them together again, that they shall bring forth the natural fruit, and they shall be one." (The preceding imperative *behold* introduces this yet-future act.)	Transitional marker of imminent unity.
is cast away	69	"... and the bad is cast away, yea, even out of all the land of my vineyard ..."	Prophetic perfect—a future result spoken as if accomplished.
is nigh at hand	71	"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 ..."	"Is" expresses temporal proximity → future imminence.
Cometh	71	"... and the season speedily cometh ..."	Future arrival of season of harvest.
is cast away	75	"... that my vineyard is no more corrupted, and the bad is cast away ..."	Future completion depicted as present state of purity.
Cometh	76	"... for a long time will I lay up ... against the season, which speedily cometh ..."	Approaching season—future.
Cometh	77	"And when the time cometh that evil fruit shall again come into my vineyard ..."	Introduces event not yet arrived.

Verb / Phrase	Verse	Full Clause or Line (KJV-style wording)	Why Future-Oriented
cause (to be burned)	77	"… and my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire."	Decretive divine action — prophetic certainty of future judgment.

Observations

The prophetic and futuristic presents in Jacob 5 itemized in table 3 above satisfy four important criteria or characteristics of chiastic texts:

- **Density.** The cluster of prophetic presents increases sharply from verses 29 onward — precisely where Jacob 5 transitions into eschatological and redemptive prophecy. This is consistent with the observation of Arthur Henry King[94] who provides a statistical and rhetorical basis for a clean bipartite division of Jacob 5 at that point in the text. It also is consistent with my preliminary view (offered elsewhere) that Jacob 5 is structured as a thematic chiasm, with the divine lament beginning at that very point in the text, truly a "turning point" in the structure of the text, which scholars observe is characteristic of chiastic texts, as noted, for example, by Lund and Welch.[95]
- **Dominant idioms.** *draweth nigh* (4 ×) and *cometh* (6 ×) are the canonical King-James-type future presents.
- **Function.** Each asserts inevitability rather than prediction — what *will* happen is described as if *already in motion*.
- **Literary effect.** The use fuses divine timelessness with human temporality, a hallmark of Hebraic prophetic diction translated into early modern English idiom.

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94. Arthur Henry King, "Language Themes in Jacob 5," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 67-70.
95. Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 40–41 ("The centre is always the turning point") and John W. Welch, "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4, no.2 (1995): 8 ("The crux of a chiasm is generally its central turning point" and "without a well-defined centerpiece or distinct crossing effect, there is little reason for seeing chiasmus.")

Critical commentary: The prophetic present and its Hebrew and English roots

Following is a critical commentary linking this pattern to (a) the Hebrew prophetic perfect and (b) the King James translators' corresponding English tense practice:

The prophetic or futuristic present in Jacob 5 — verbs such as *draweth nigh*, *cometh*, *is nigh at hand*, and *is cast away* — reflects a well-attested feature of biblical Hebrew verbal aspect known as the prophetic perfect (or *perfectum confidentiae*). In Hebrew, a speaker frequently employs the perfect (morphologically a past form) to describe a future act conceived as certain, especially in divine oracles.[96] The grammatical "completion" implied by the perfect does not mark past time but rather the assured realization of the event. Classical examples include Isaiah 9:6 ("For unto us a child is born") and Isaiah 53:4 ("Surely he hath borne our griefs"), both clearly messianic prophecies set in a future horizon, yet expressed as accomplished facts.[97]

When the King James translators encountered such Hebrew constructions, they typically rendered them in English present tense rather than employing "shall" or "will," thereby preserving the prophetic immediacy and performative certainty of the source text.[98] This explains the recurrent idiom "The day cometh that shall burn as an oven" (Malachi 4:1) and "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7). The same stylistic register governs Jacob 5, where divine discourse likewise collapses temporal distance in time. The Lord's decrees are not portrayed as pending intentions, but as acts already unfolding within divine time — what may be called a realis aspect of prophecy, grammatically present yet eschatologically future.

Thus, the prophetic presents of Jacob 5 operate as translated

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96. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, 2nd English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), §106n–o; Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, rev. ed. (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2006), §112 k–l; Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §30.5.1–2.

97. See also Moshe Greenberg, "The Hebrew Perfect Tense and the Future," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 73 (1954): 43–47.

98. David Norton, *A Textual History of the King James Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 81–82; see also Robert Alter, *The Art of Bible Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 68–70, on the translators' deliberate retention of Hebraic temporal ambiguity.

Hebraisms, mediated through Early Modern English sacred diction. They merge temporal imminence with ontological certainty, portraying covenantal history — apostasy, redemption, and restoration — as so assured by divine will that these events can grammatically stand in the present tense. Hence the repeated refrain "the time draweth nigh" or "the end cometh" is not mere prediction, but a performative declaration: in prophetic perspective the decreed future already exists. This convergence of Hebrew aspect and English tense yields the distinctive temporal texture of Jacob 5, where divine speech sounds as though time itself has begun to yield to the certainty of fulfillment.[99]

Numerous studies of the Book of Mormon's verbal system show that Joseph Smith's dictated language preserves Early Modern English morphology and aspectual usage — including the historic-present and prophetic-present forms typical of the KJV.[100] Expressions such as "the day cometh," "the time draweth near," and "the end is at hand" occur in both corpora and reflect the translators' effort to reproduce Hebrew-style temporal semantics through the English verbal system of the seventeenth century. Modern English would express these ideas with will or shall, but the Book of Mormon's deliberate archaism allows the reader to sense that divine acts are not merely foreseen, but already in motion.

Consequently, Book of Mormon English functions not as imitation but as continuation of biblical register — an idiom that fuses Hebraic aspect with English present morphology to convey theological certainty. When the Lord of the vineyard declares that "the time draweth

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99. For the theological implications of the prophetic present as realized eschatology, compare James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 136–39; and Ernst Jenni*, Das hebräische Perfektum: Syntax und Semantik* (Zürich: EVZ Verlag, 1978), 178–85.

100. Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209–62, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/a-look-at-some-nonstandard-book-of-mormon-grammar; Stanford Carmack, "The More Part of the Book of Mormon Is Early Modern English," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 40, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-more-part-of-the-book-of-mormon-is-early-modern-english; Stanford Carmack, "Is the Book of Mormon a Pseudo-Archaic Text?," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 28 (2018): 177–232, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/is-the-book-of-mormon-a-pseudo-archaic-text; Royal Skousen, "Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1990): 41–69, byustudies.byu.edu/article/towards-a-critical-edition-of-the-book-of-mormon; Royal Skousen, "Changes in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 161–76, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/changes-in-the-book-of-mormon.

nigh" or that "the end cometh," the grammar itself enacts divine inevitability. In this way, the Book's translation style aligns with the prophetic-perfect logic of the Hebrew Bible and the prophetic present of the King James Version, situating Jacob 5 firmly within the same sacred-linguistic continuum that joins ancient aspect, early modern tense, and eschatological assurance.[101]

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101. Royal Skousen, *The King James Quotations in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2019), 22–27; and Nicholas J. Frederick, *The Bible, Mormon Scripture, and the Rhetoric of Allusion* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2016), 95–97, on the translation's retention of biblical temporal idioms.