

# Selah



## A Tree Grows in Israel...

Now, I know that we're approaching the season of Shavuot, which is a wonderful holiday. But earlier this year another holiday was observed, which is seldom mentioned: the holiday of Tu B'Shvat –also known as the New Year for trees. I wonder how many of you have ever even heard of it! This year, it took place on February 11th. Perhaps we will take a closer look at this holiday another time, but for now, let's just say that I have been thinking about trees a lot, recently.

In the Bible, there are three trees that represent Israel. They are: **The Vine, the Olive and the Fig.**

When reading the Bible, it is unfortunate that people sometimes confuse these three trees, lumping them all together, instead of allowing their respective symbolism to reveal God's instruction. In fact, I remember – many years ago – a lovely song whose lyrics described believers as 'being grafted into the Vine'. This concept does not appear in Scripture. However, being grafted into the Olive Tree DOES appear in Scripture, with deep spiritual significance (see Romans 11: 17-22). So let us take a brief look at the symbolism and meaning of each of these trees.



### The VINE:

The vine is the *symbol of humility and servant-hood*. In Isaiah 3:14&15 we read, 'the Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of His people, and with princes thereof: "for ye have eaten

up the **vineyard**; the spoil of the **poor** is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat **my people** to pieces, and grind the faces of the **poor**?" saith the Lord God of hosts.'

Here, we have a lovely example of Hebrew poetry, called 'parallelism', where a statement is made, then a re-statement, using synonyms. In this way, the synonyms define each other: vineyard/God's people = poor. In Hebrew, as in English, the word 'poor' can also mean 'humble' (the phrase 'humble circumstances' is another way of saying that someone is poor).

In applying that symbol to Himself, Yeshua (Jesus) tells his disciples that He is the True Vine, in John 15. As a symbol of servant-hood, Jesus says to His disciples, in Luke

*continued from page 1*

22:24-27, that He is among them 'as one who serves' (the context in both places is a Passover Seder – all about slavery, servanthood - and in John 13 – Jesus washes the disciples' feet, as a slave would do).

Psalms 80:8, which describes the Exodus, reads, 'Thou has brought a VINE out of Egypt (again, Passover theme); Thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it.' And Isaiah 5:7 - The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel.

There are many other Scriptures that express this, but in brief, *Israel's national calling and purpose was to serve and worship God in humility*. Jesus was the ultimate type when He declared that He was 'the true vine.'

### **The OLIVE:**

Again briefly, Zechariah 4: 1-6 describes a vision of a golden menorah, with two olive trees on either side of it. When Zechariah asked the angel what it meant, he was told the word of the Lord: 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of



Hosts.'

I'm sure that many other references come to mind, when thinking about the olive tree and the Holy Spirit (remember the dove with the olive leaf in her beak, after the flood, in Genesis 8:11, as well as the Romans passage quoted earlier). Simply, *the Olive tree represents the Holy Spirit and things of the Spirit*.

### **The FIG:**

In the following references, we see examples of Hebrew poetry again, which help us to understand the symbolism of this tree:



Proverbs 27:18 – 'Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof; so he that waiteth on

his master shall be honoured.' The master = the fig tree.

Hosea 9:10 – 'I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time.' Here again, 'fathers' = first-ripe fig.

Figs either bear good fruit or bad fruit:

In Jeremiah 24: 1-10, we read about good figs and bad figs. The figs represented the King, his princes and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as the capital city. Whether they were judged as good or bad, depended upon their obedience to God's Word. The essence of the symbol, however, is that the *fig represents national government, the seat of government, authority and leadership*.

Jeremiah 29:16,17 says that God will judge the king that sits on the throne, and *all that dwell in Jerusalem* (as the seat of government), making them like 'vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.'

Remembering that the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, Jesus tells a parable, in Luke 13:6-8, of a fig tree in a vineyard. There was no fruit on this fig tree. This is a parable about the government/ leadership of Israel, set in the midst of the nation at large, like the reference from Hosea, above.

In Matt 24: 32, Yeshua (Jesus) says, 'Now **learn a parable of the fig tree**; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh.'

The Hebrew word for 'summer' is the same word as 'summer fruit'. 'Summer Fruit' is another word for figs! 'Summer' (Heb. 'Kayitz') comes from the Hebrew word 'End' (Ketz).

So Jesus is telling us to learn this lesson: that when the nation of Israel is beginning to grow again (with a Jewish government and a Jewish capital, in the same geographical location as before), know that the *end* is near!

But in another Gospel, we find Jesus saying these things a bit more specifically:

Luke 21: 25-33 reads: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves

roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And He spake to them a parable; "Behold the fig tree and *all the trees*; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now right at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away."

This phrase 'and all the trees' is what has been coming into my mind, over and over again, in recent times. It would certainly seem to be a guide to what has been happening since Brexit! All the 'trees' seem to be 'shooting forth', or attempting to! Nation after nation appears to want to exert a nationalism, instead of a globalism. Consider these following headlines (for the sake of space, here is only a stripped-down list, with no references, but many such recent headlines can easily be found online):

**Reflections: Europe can save or kill globalisation?**

**How do we explain the rise of anti-globalization?**

**G20 Summit to deal with rising anti-globalization sentiment**

**World Bank, IMF challenged by anti-globalisation wave**

**Anti-globalisation feeling growing stronger**

**Is Nationalism on the Rise Globally?**

**Witnessing The Birth Of A New Nationalist World Order**

In January 2016, the first congress of the Europe of Nations and Freedom brought together Romania's Laurentiu Rebeca, Britain's Janice Atkinson, Holland's Marcel De Graaf, Japan's Tomio Okamura, Italy's Northern League leader Matteo Salvini, French National Front president Marine

Le Pen, Firebrand Dutch lawmaker Geert Wilders, Austria's Heinz Christian Strache, Holland's Marcel De Graaf. It would seem that with these things, and the Brexit and US election results last year, we could be seeing an early stirring of 'global nationalism'.

This April, the Radio 4 'Westminster Hour' programme began an 8-part series with Nick Robinson to discuss whether globalism is in retreat.

In 1948, Israel – the fig tree – was re-born as a nation, with a Jewish government. Israel is a geopolitical nation again, with Jerusalem as its capital. It's a physical, geographical reality; a fulfilment of Bible prophecy, not a political accident. That being the case, the prophetic clock began to count down from that time. The Fig Tree began to shoot forth, and I wonder if we are now seeing '*all the trees*' do likewise, as Jesus prophesied. We know that the Jewish calendar is not just an annual time-keeper, but it is prophetic.

If some of the things in this article are true, then, dear reader, it is time to consider them – and everything else that the Scriptures say about Jesus! Just as holiday observances require advance preparation, how much more must we prepare ourselves for Jesus' return!

Yeshua (Jesus) is coming back as Righteous King, at the end, to rule and reign from Jerusalem. He is the final, good fruit as Messiah, King of the Jews, King of Kings, Lord of Lords and Judge of the whole earth. May we learn from this parable to discern the signs of the times and get right with God, by putting our trust in Jesus, as Messiah and Redeemer of Israel.

Chrissy Rodgers

