

## Isaiah 65:22 – 66:2, 4-5, 10-11

The Haftarahs return again and again to these chapters in Isaiah - five times so far.

This reading begins with a reference to the long passage on "uncircumcised" trees in **Leviticus 19:23-25**.

### As the Days of a Tree

**Isaiah 65:22** - "They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands."

Targum of Jonathan and the Septuagint renders: "as the days of the tree of life" i.e. as long as the tree bears fruit, you will partake of it.

- **Revelation 22:2** - "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse..."

- **Proverbs 3:18** - in reference to Wisdom: "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her."

- **Revelation 2:7** - "To the one who is victorious, I will grant the right to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God."

Septuagint: "For the works of their labors shall become old, or of long continuance"

### Trees

The life-cycle of some trees points to eternal life. Evergreen trees naturally seem to never die even in winter. I've seen the Tule cypress tree near Oaxaca, Mexico, that is about 2,000 years old. We also saw bristlecone pines in Utah that are more than 1,600 years old. Bristlecones can live up to 4,000 years.

This is promising that the curse of **Deuteronomy 28** - "if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God" - will not come upon them:

- **Deuteronomy 28:33-34** - "The fruit of thy land, and all thy labors, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed alway, So that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."

The Promised Land was to be a land of fig trees and olive trees (**Deuteronomy 8:8**).

Fig trees are slow growing and require careful attention. A land full of fig trees reflect a

time of peace and prosperity that allowed them to grow and mature. If fruitful, fig trees take three to five years to bear mature fruit.

Jesus told a parable about fig trees in which He expressed great mercy and patience. The vineyard was the Promised Land and the fig tree was the Jewish people in it. The owner of the vineyard wanted to cut it down.

The dresser of the vineyard objected:

- **Luke 13:8-9** - "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

Spiritually, "digging" is God's attempt to uncover what is hidden that might be blocking the tree's fruitfulness. "Dunging" as fertilizer is added to supply missing nutrients that are lacking. Preaching of the gospel and prophesy provide both these.

### **Cutting Down Trees**

- **Deuteronomy 20:19-20** - During a siege, "thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege. Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued."

The Mishnah expands on this:

"Whoever cuts down a tree for meat, by way of destroying it, is to be beaten; but they may cut it down if it hurts other trees, or because it hurts in the field others, or because its price is dear; the law does not forbid, but by way of destroying. Every barren tree it is lawful to cut down, even though a man hath no need of it; and so a tree for meat, which does hurt, and does not produce but little fruit, and it is not worth while to labour about it, it is lawful to cut it down: and how much may an olive tree produce, and it may not be cut down? the fourth part of a "Kab" of olives; and a palm tree which yields a "Kab" of dates, may not be cut down." (Maimon. Hilch. Melacim, c. 6. sect. 8, 9.)

A parable similar to Jesus' is mentioned in the Mishnah about a King who planted a vineyard that produced sour grapes, so he orders the vine cut down. The gardener responds:

"My lord, the king, what expense hast thou been at with this vineyard before it was raised? and now thou seekest to cut it down; and shouldst thou say because its wine turns sour; the reason is, because it is young, therefore its wine turns sour, and it does not produce good wine: so when Israel did that work (of the golden calf), the holy blessed God sought to consume them; said Moses, Lord of the world, hast thou not brought them out of Egypt from a place of idolatry, and now they are young, or children, as it is said, (Hosea 11:1) 'wait a little for them, and go with them, and they will do good

works in thy presence." (Shemot Rabba, sect. 43. fol. 141. 2.)

- **Matthew 7:15** - "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

But there is another option that Jesus provides:

Matthew 12:33 - "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit."

"make" = *poiéō* - can mean do, make or create, but specifically here it means to "declare to be"

The digging and dunging of the tree can effect a transformation - one that we can "speak into existence" even against the facts. We reckon ourselves dead to sin but alive to Christ to "make" the tree good. We are a new creation, and despite being a corrupt tree with bad fruit, the Spirit of God brings forth good fruit from within us - something that would have been impossible.

This could be behind the verse in **Habbakuk 3:17** - "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

**Isaiah 65:23** - "They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring (will remain) with them."

Septuagint: "Nor shall they bring forth children for a curse."

Targum: "a seed whom the Lord hath blessed"

**Isaiah 65:24-25** - "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD."

God anticipates and acts before we even voice our prayers.

- **Matthew 6:8** - "...for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."

"The wolf and the lamb shall feed together" - "as one" as if they were of the same kind and nature, and lived upon the same food.

- **Matthew 22:10** - "So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests."

Rashi - "the lion shall eat straw like the bullock" - Those tribes that were compared to a lion, such as Judah and Dan, or like Joseph, who was compared to an ox, shall devour Esau who was compared to straw. (Obadiah 18): "The house of Esau shall become stubble, and the house of Joseph a flame"

"and dust shall be the serpent's meat" - he shall not be able to bite the saints, being instead bruised under their feet.

Compare **Hosea 2:18** - "And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely."

### **But it can all go wrong if you cease to be contrite and broken before Me:**

Verse 1 is not part of the reading:

**Isaiah 66:1** - "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? "

**Isaiah 66:2** - "For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look (have regard), even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

poor = *`aniy* - depressed, in mind or circumstances, afflicted, humble, lowly, needy, poor, meek

contrite = *nakeh* - stricken, smitten, maimed and thus dejected, contrite

"This man" is first and foremost Christ:

- **Zechariah 9:9** - "...behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly (*`aniy*), and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

The reading skips verse 3.

**Isaiah 66:4** - "I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not."

"delusions" - childish follies, the acts of a petulant child.

"They chose that in which I delighted not"; therefore, "I will choose" that in which they delight not, the "calamities" and "fears" which they were most anxious to avert.

-- *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*

**Isaiah 66:5** - "Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed."

Rashi - Your brethren, the Children of Esau, Who said to you (**Lamentations 4:15**), "Turn away, unclean one."

- **John 16:2** - "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."

Christ was "cast out" supposedly for "my name's sake" - i.e. his Jewish brethren claimed they were doing this in God's name - and sent Him to the cross. But he shall appear to your joy! And they shall "look on him whom they have pierced" and mourn for him. (**Zechariah 12:10; John 19:37**)

"He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed" -

- **Hebrews 9:28** - "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

- **Revelation 1:7** - "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

**Isaiah 66:10-11** - "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: That you may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that you may milk out (suck), and be delighted with the abundance of her glory."

"glory" = *kabowd* - usually "glory" but here with the idea of weightiness, her breast.

- **1 Peter 2:2** - "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

It is the New Jerusalem that has brought forth the Church.

"her breasts of consolation" - Christ and the Holy Spirit, or the Old and New Covenants...

Simeon was "waiting for the consolation of Israel" when he came upon the baby Jesus

in the Temple (**Luke 2:25**).

The pure milk of the Word gives glory or clarity to our comprehension of Christ.