

The end of the second forty-year interval brings about a total change in the nature of the book of Judges; after Samson has brought down the temple of the Philistines upon them and himself, the book switches direction, focusing on a moral atrocity that brings the nation to its knees in hypocritical outrage, culminating in civil war.

#### A few caveats

Before going too much further, a few caveats:

Psalm 83 makes mention only of the first two incidents; the other eighteen- and forty-year time

periods are suggested connections. It is unwise to try to correlate whole chunks of the Old Testament record into a last-days scenario. Also, as the psalm takes a 'snapshot', intervening time periods when the land had rest have been discounted.

Secondly, such a framework gives perfect opportunity for backwards reasoning. The temptation to examine every minute detail and endeavour to fit it into the situation is considerable. So I have limited myself to the details that do lend themselves to comparison, and with great caution at that.

[\(To be concluded\)](#)

## Exposition

# Fruit trees as symbols in Scripture

## The vine (2)

### The remedy for the distressed vine

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**T**HE GENERAL tenor of the 'vine' passages considered so far is the lack of spiritual fruit and the consequent punishment of the nation of Israel. Psalm 80 goes beyond this to consider the fruitful Son of man and the future restoration of Israel.

In an extended metaphor, this psalm summarises God's care for the Israel vine in bringing them out of Egypt and planting them in the Promised Land (vv. 8-11). Because of disobedience God removes the vine's protection and allows the wild beasts (other nations) to attack and destroy it (vv. 12,13). The psalmist then calls upon God to visit His vine and revive it (vv. 14-19). The work of redemption for God's vine is to be brought about by the man of God's right hand, the Son of man made strong:

"Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,

Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself" (v. 17, NKJV).

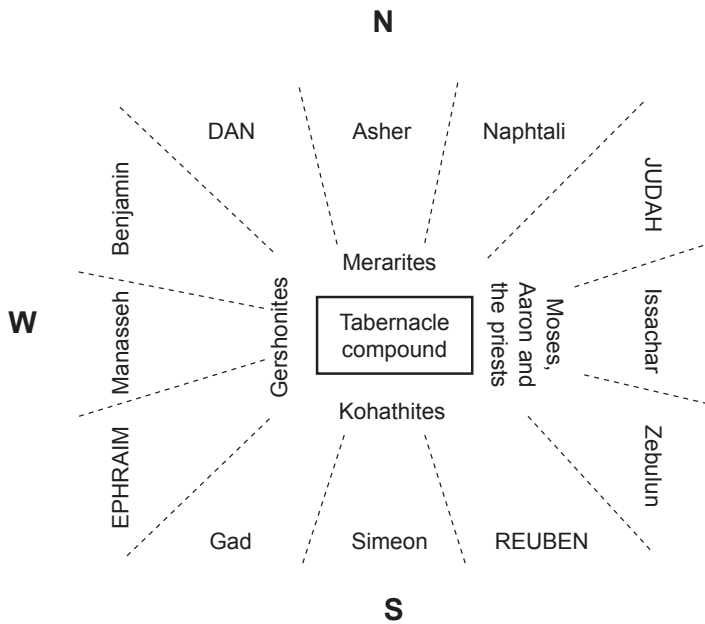
Then the Israel vine will bring forth a good crop of fruit because they will no longer be a backsliding

nation. God will put His law in their minds and write it on their hearts (Jer. 31:33):

"Then we will not turn back from You;  
Revive us, and we will call upon Your name" (Ps. 80:18, NKJV).

Psalm 80 draws our attention to the Son of man, who is at present at God's right hand but who will come in glory to revive the Israel vine so that in the coming age it is truly fruitful to God. First of all, however, the Son of man needed to show himself to be a fruitful vine by overcoming his human nature's sinful tendency and putting it to death on the cross: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (Jno. 12:24). These thoughts concerning Psalm 80 link nicely with Jesus being the "true vine", a subject considered below. First, however, it will be useful to note some other connecting links between the vine and the names in the early verses of Psalm 80.

The introductory section of this psalm (vv. 1,2) is based on the order of march of the tribal camps



“Joseph is a fruitful bough  
 [Heb. *ben* = son],  
 A fruitful bough [lit. son] by  
 a well;  
 His branches [lit. daughters]  
 run over the wall”

(Gen. 49:22, NKJV).

In this blessing, “fruitful” is a play on the names of Ephraim and Joseph, which mean ‘doubly fruitful’ and ‘increaser’<sup>2</sup> respectively. The way that the NIV paraphrases this verse is interesting:

“Joseph is a fruitful vine,  
 A fruitful vine near a spring,  
 Whose branches climb over  
 a wall”.

The other important theme in Psalm 80, that of the Son of man made strong, even the man of God’s right hand (v. 17),

links with the name Benjamin, meaning ‘son of the right hand’, and with further words in the blessing of Jacob:

“But his bow remained in strength,  
 And the arms of his hands were made strong  
 By the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob”

(Gen. 49:24, NKJV).

[Table 1](#) sets out some of the connections between the blessing of Joseph and Psalm 80.

### Jesus, the genuine vine

Jesus’ discourse on “the true vine” is recorded in John 15:1-8. The Greek word translated ‘true’ in most versions has the meaning of ‘real’, ‘ideal’ or ‘genuine’. The husbandman (vinedresser) in

of Israel in the wilderness. The children of Rachel, Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) and Benjamin, were encamped on the west side of the tabernacle under the leadership of Ephraim. When on the march they followed the tabernacle, and so were, in a sense, led by the ark of God (Num. 2:17-24).

The phrase “Shepherd of Israel” in verse 1 is taken from Jacob’s blessing for Joseph (Gen. 49:24), thus linking Shepherd and Joseph in the phrase, “O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock” (NKJV). However, another connection with the theme of a shepherd leading his flock comes from the meaning of the name Rachel, who was the mother of the tribes mentioned in the first two verses of Psalm 80, since the Hebrew for Rachel means ‘ewe’.<sup>1</sup> This word is derived from a root meaning ‘to journey’.

It would appear that the theme of the vine of Israel found in this psalm is derived, at least in part, from the words of Jacob’s blessing:

1. The Hebrew word *rachel* is translated ‘ewe’ in Genesis 31:38; 32:14.
2. Other meanings for Joseph are ‘adding’ or ‘He will add’.

Table 1	
Psalm 80	Joseph’s blessing in Genesis 49
v. 1 Shepherd of Israel	v. 24 The Shepherd, the stone of Israel
v. 11 Boughs and branches spread out from the sea (Mediterranean) to the River (Euphrates)	v. 22 Fruitful bough and branches that run over a wall
v. 15 The branch You made strong for Yourself	v. 24 The arms of his hands were made strong
v. 17 The man of Your right hand . . . the Son of man	v. 27 Benjamin = Son of the right hand

<b>Table 2</b>	
<b>The Shepherd of Israel (Ps. 80:1)</b>	<b>The Good Shepherd</b>
Joseph, the fruitful bough (v. 1; Gen. 49:22) Joseph = Added Ephraim = Doubly fruitful (v. 2)	Jesus, the true vine Much fruit (Jno. 12:24; 15:5)
Vine out of Egypt planted in the Promised Land (v. 8) Israel, "My son", called out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1)	"Out of Egypt have I called My son" (Mt. 2:15)
The vine . . . the stock . . . planted . . . son (AV branch) . . . reared for Thyself (vv. 14,15, RSV and mg.)	The root out of the dry ground (Isa. 53:2)
Punished (vv. 12,13) for lack of fruit	Suffered wrongfully to bring forth much fruit (Jno. 12:24)
Benjamin (v. 2) = Son of the right hand	The son of man made strong (Ps. 80:17)
Give us life . . . restore us . . . that we may be saved (vv. 18,19, RSV)	The resurrection of Jesus
The third day He will raise us up (Hos. 6:1,2)	Raised up the third day
Your fruit is found in Me (Hos. 14:8, NKJV)	He shall see his offspring . . . He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul (Isa. 53:10,11, RSV)

the analogy represents God (v. 1), and Jesus is the vine stock, both root and stem. The branches are the disciples, who, being in Christ (v. 5), are joined to the vine by belief and baptism. God is working through Jesus to bring forth much fruit to His glory (v. 8). Pruning or cleansing the branches (v. 2) will increase the yield of fruit. The spiritual counterpart of this is the chastening hand of the Lord developing the peaceable fruit of righteousness in the disciple's life (Heb. 12:11). Just as the branch withers and is fruitless if the sap from the stem cannot reach it (Jno. 15:6), so disciples will be fruitless if they do not hear the voice of Jesus in his words. The disciple needs to bring forth the fruits of obedience and righteousness. Those who do not do so are the branches that are cut out and are fit only for burning (*cf.* Ezek. 15:2-6). [Table 2](#) above links Psalm 80 and a number of references in Hosea to Jesus, the true vine.

### **A vineyard of red wine**

Isaiah uses an unusual description for Israel, both natural and spiritual, in the days of the restoration of the nation, calling it a "vineyard of red wine":

"In that day sing to her,  
'A vineyard of red wine!  
I, the LORD, keep it,  
I water it every moment;  
Lest any hurt it,

I keep it night and day . . .'

Those who come He shall cause to take root  
in Jacob;

Israel shall blossom and bud,

And fill the face of the world with fruit"

(Isa. 27:2,6, NKJV).

Some manuscripts read "a vineyard of delight" in place of "a vineyard of red wine". This is a song of rejoicing, in contrast to the sad song of Isaiah about the vineyard that was to be destroyed because it brought forth only wild grapes (Isa. 5). The Hebrew word translated "red wine" is the same word as is translated "wine" in Deuteronomy 32:14: "and you drank wine, the blood of the grapes" (NKJV). From this it can be seen that 'red' is implied.

### **Jacob's blessing for Judah<sup>3</sup>**

A consideration of Jacob's blessing for Judah concludes this study of the symbology of the vineyard and the vine. Interestingly, it also provides a suitable starting point for examining the related symbols of winepress, wine and cup that will be covered in [Part 3](#) of this series.

The relevant part of this blessing reads as follows:

3. Based on "Jacob's last message to his sons (6)", Michael Ashton, *Christadelphian*, Jun. 1996, p. 205.

“Binding his donkey to the vine,  
And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine,  
He washed his garments in wine,  
And his clothes in the blood of grapes”

(Gen. 49:11, NKJV).

Riding a white donkey was a privilege for persons of high rank (Judg. 5:10) and also a claim to rulership (Zech. 9:9). Taking the normal vine to represent the nation of Israel, the choice vine

would represent spiritual Israel.<sup>4</sup> So binding the donkey (AV “foal” = a young ass) to the vine is a symbolic way of saying that Shiloh (v. 10, the Peace-bringer) would become the ruler of Israel both natural and spiritual.

[\(To be concluded\)](#)

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4. Others have seen the two vines as Gentiles and Jews.