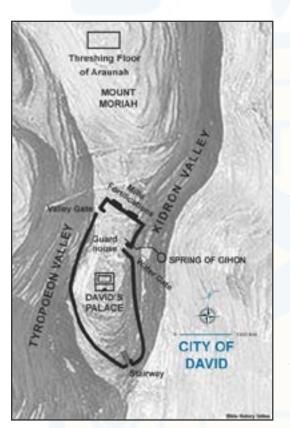
MY OLIVE TREE

HISTORY OF THE KING'S VALLEY Exploring the Mount of Olives & Kidron Valley Region in Israel

THE KINGS OF THE KING'S VALLEY

From the early days of Jerusalem, Jewish kings fought for, bought, and built the land up, bringing the barren land to life and making it a land devoted to God—a holy city.

>>>HELP US RESTORE THE KIDRON VALLEY, JERUSALEM<<<



(Image Credit: Bible History Online) City of David and the threshing floor of the Jebusite man, later the site of The Temple.

do, not what God could.

"And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, 'You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you,' thinking, 'David cannot come in here.' Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David)."—2 Samuel 5:6-7

Before David became king and conquered Jerusalem, Jerusalem was far from the city we see today. In fact, much of the site of the Temple Mount was once merely a threshing floor, to thresh the wheat and barley harvests of a Jebusite man. Yet, a threshing floor, despite its seeming humbleness, befits what the site was to become.

It is interesting to consider that the site where the Temple was built was purchased as an atonement for sin—a sin where King David had ignored the fact that he was instructed not to take a census of his people, specifically of those men throughout his kingdom who could draw a sword. By taking the census David had placed his trust in HIS own power and might... not in God's. David wanted to prove what HE could

David had angered God, had disregarded Him, and was given three options of atonement. With David's choice, a plague was to come upon the people, yet God was merciful. God's Word was dispatched to David through the prophet Gad; David was to purchase the threshing floor of a Jebusite man, as a place to build an altar to the Lord (1 Chronicles 21:18-22, 2 Samuel 24:18-20). For 600 gold shekels he bought the land, and for 50 silver shekels he bought the threshing floor and oxen for sacrifice, thus putting his trust in the Lord again and removing the plague (1 Chronicles 21:25, 2 Samuel 24:24).

As the threshing floor removes the grain from the chaff, so the threshing floor upon which an altar to God was made, removed the consequence of David's sin from the people.

2 The History of the "King's Valley"

"Now He said to me, 'It is your son Solomon who shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his Father."—1 Chronicles 28:6

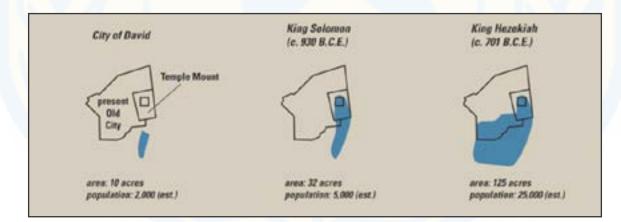
David thought to build a 'house' for the Ark of the Covenant that he had recaptured upon the purchased site, yet he had too much blood on his hands, and God instead tasked this endeavor to Solomon, David's son (1 Chronicles 28:2-6). Solomon, upon being anointed king of Israel, slowly began to not only build the Temple, but also began expanding



(Image Credit: Illustrated by Balage, Archaeology Illustrated. com) Threshing floor of Araunah/Ornan the Jebusite

and repairing the walls of Jerusalem and in cities throughout the land of Israel. He also established greater trade relations and treaties with other nations, as well as building a grand palace for himself in Jerusalem, complete with several unequalled gardens and pools of water to water them with, in and around Jerusalem.

"And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men... and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth... came to hear the wisdom of Solomon."—1 Kings 4:29-34

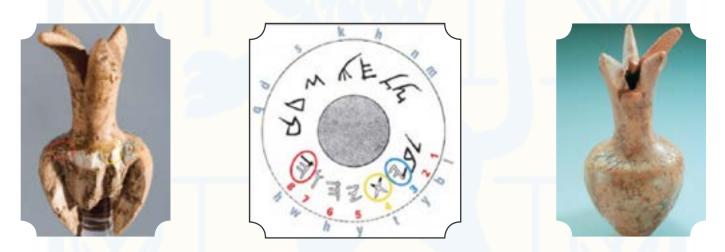


(Image Credit: The BAS Library) Areas in blue show the relative size of the walled city of Jerusalem during the reign of the three kings mentioned. Area size, population, and dates are not definitive, and many sources believe the areas to be slightly larger.

The Lord blessed Solomon with not only personal and political wisdom, but with a peace-filled land. These gifts of God not only allowed Solomon to complete the task laid down by God and his father, David in building the Temple, but to also build a stronger and more beautiful kingdom.

Solomon was a lover of God's gifts of the vine, branch, and earth, building gardens in and around Jerusalem. Solomon's songs and proverbs often speak of plants and wildlife. The importance of this love of God's creation is seen not only in acts such as the Temple's firstfruit offerings, sin offerings, and burnt offerings, but in the very ornaments that adorn the House of God. Pomegranates were carved in ivory, bronze, and gold for priestly articles, and Solomon for the Temple had *"made one hundred pomegranates, and put them on the wreaths of chainwork"* (2 Chronicles 3:16; see images below).

While also in the Temple two cherubim of olivewood would stand side-by-side, and all forms of palm trees and plants would decorate vessels, implements, and pillars. "Belonging to the Tem[ple of Yahwe]h, holy to the priests."



(Image Credit: Israel Museum, Jerusalem) Ivory pomegranate believed to be the top of a scepter used in The Temple built by King Solomon. The inscription while legible does have portions missing, it reads: Iby[t yhw]h qdsû khnm which when translated reads "Belonging to the Tem[ple of Yahwe]h, holy to the priests."

"Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."—Proverbs 3:9-10

From the threshing floor to the Temple of God, we see a continual strand of God's blessings and forgiveness. Wheat, barley, pomegranates, olives, and many others of the seven species all play their role in this beautiful relationship between God and man. So much so, that the kings of Judea, used these plants not only in the Holy Places, but also in their currencies, homes, and even their gardens.

"I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself water pools

from which to water the growing trees of the grove."—Ecclesiastes 2:4-6

While no physical proof currently exists, many believe that it may have been King Solomon himself who was responsible for the creation of the king's garden (King's Valley garden) mentioned throughout the Bible. Not only does Solomon speak of his love for gardens throughout his biblical writings, but there is also mention of the garden existing during King Hezekiah's lifetime (2 Kings 25:4, Jeremiah 39:4, Nehemiah 3:15). Additionally, Solomon was known for crafting pools to water gardens and groves, and such an irrigation system would have been required for the King's Valley garden to flourish.

In the <u>King's Valley</u> garden, as in many of Solomon's gardens, would have resided the seven species—wheat, barley, grapes, pomegranates, figs, date palms, and olives—in addition to flowers such as lilies, hennas, and roses, many of which Solomon spoke of in his proverbs and songs...

"The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!"—Song of Solomon 2:13

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(Image Credit: https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2017/07/ updated-chart-of-israels-and-judahs-kings-and-prophets/) Dates given are approximate and many historians will give similar but not identical dates. Additional scriptures can be found for some of the kings and/or prophets.

As Solomon's reign ended, so did the unification of the twelve tribes. Solomon's son Rehoboam, residing in the City of Jerusalem, became king of the southern kingdom, Judah, which consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; Judah including the line of David, and Benjamin including the line of Saul. The ten remaining tribes were of the northern kingdom, Israel. With the northern kingdom ruler's lack of observance of God's laws, Israel did not remain a kingdom for much more than 200 years. Meanwhile, the southern kingdom of Judah, more faithful to God's commandments, remained for nearly 150 years more—until Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians.

Rehoboam, and the following kings of Judah ruled with varying degrees of observance

toward God, yet only a small portion of kings remained truly faithful to God throughout their lives and reigns. Asa, Jehoshaphat, and many other kings did much to please the Lord and help their people through their years of kingship. Yet, Hezekiah was the first king after the split of the twelve tribes, who followed the will of God with such stanch devotion, and in turn built up the kingdom of Judah.

Hezekiah was not only devoted to the Lord and responsible for much improvement to the kingdom of Judah, but he was also one of the only kings whose name has been specifically found within the archaeological record. Not only did the Assyrian king Sennacherib bring mention of Hezekiah in his annals, but also a seal, or bulla, of Hezekiah was found by archaeologists in Jerusalem bearing the inscription, 'Belonging to Hezekiah, (son of) Ahaz, King of Judah' (see image below). This seal is a physical



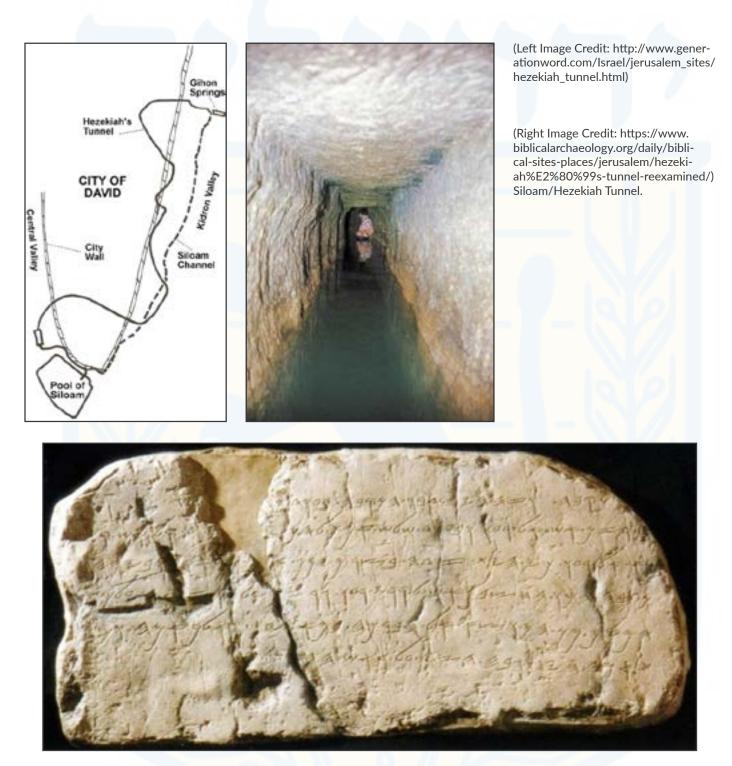
(Image Credit: Dr. Eilat Mazar, photo by Ouria Tadmor) Royal seal or bulla of Hezekiah with an inscription that translates to: "Belonging to Hezekiah, (son of) Ahaz, King of Judah." reminder of a king who followed the Lord, and it was found mere meters away from the southern wall of the Temple Mount the very location of the threshing floor made Holy.

In the Word it is said of Hezekiah that: "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses. The Lord was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him" (2 Kings 18:5-7).

The Assyrian king, Sennacherib was the main threat to Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time. Yet, he did not prevail. Hezekiah

built up walls and towers of protection for his people, and he turned the people back to God, smashing false idols and keeping his people from false worship (2 Kings 18:4, 2 Chronicles 31:1-21).

Hezekiah also fought against the Assyrians by hiding or closing off the water sources outside the city of Jerusalem, so no invading force would have easy access to water (2 Chronicles 32). The Siloam, or Hezekiah tunnel, built in place of the previous water



(Image Credit: http://www.biblicalarchaeologytruth.com/hezekiahs-tunnel.html) Siloam/Hezekiah Tunnel inscription. Translation; "This is the story of the boring through: whilst [the tunnellers lifted] the pick each towards his fellows and whilst three cubits [yet remained] to be bored [through, there was heard] the voice of a man calling his fellow, for there was a split in the rock on the right hand and on [the left hand]. And on the day of the boring through, the tunnellers struck, each in the direction of his fellow, pick against pick. And the water started to flow from the source of the pool, twelve hundred cubits. A hundred cubits was the height of the rock above the level of the tunnellers." channel to hide and bring water from the Spring Gihon, to this day is still a functioning example of Hezekiah's water solutions.

According to an inscription found within the tunnel two teams of men with picks, one from the south and one from the north, began tunneling from both ends until their picks met in the middle (see images above). Methods such as these kept Hezekiah's people, as well as many generations to come, safe during times of warfare.

Actions such as building towers and hiding water sources were not the only measures Hezekiah took in order to keep his people safe... no, indeed, for he went before the Lord in His Temple and sought Him in prayer...

"Then Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said: 'O Lord God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God."-2 Kings 19:15-16

"Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard."—2 Kings 19:20

The Lord answered Hezekiah's prayers, first defeating 185,000 Assyrians with one angel of the Lord, then removing Sennacherib who returned to Ninevah and met his end at the hands of his son(s) (2 Kings 19:35-37; Babylonian Chronicle; Ninevah Prism of Esarhaddon).

After this, Isaiah the prophet came to Hezekiah telling him that his life was about to end. Yet Hezekiah turned to the Lord again in prayer and the Lord extended his life by fifteen years (2 Kings 20:1-7). Indeed not only did the Lord heal Hezekiah, but he turned back the shadow ten degrees as a sign to Hezekiah that His promises would be fulfilled and that Hezekiah would go to the house of the Lord on the third day (2 Kings 20:8-11). "And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered."—2 Chronicles 31:21

While Hezekiah is not likely to have crafted the <u>King's Valley</u> garden due to his attentions being taken by the threats to Jerusalem, his health, and the return to following God, the garden would have still been present during his lifetime. Situated in the <u>Kidron Valley</u> between the Temple and the Mount of Olives, the <u>King's Valley</u> garden would have been filled with the seven species, which graced not only the garden, but the Temple. In fact, not only would they have been seen in the Temple and the <u>King's</u> <u>Valley</u> garden, but in the Temple offerings as once again the people turned back to the Lord and away from false worship.

Therefore, we see that while Hezekiah ruled during a time of trouble, he was greatly blessed by God. Hezekiah's prayers were answered repeatedly, he was wealthy with not only gold and gems, but with wheat and barley for eating and sacrifices, grapes for wine, and olives for oil, and the people of Jerusalem were spared from captivity during his lifetime (2 Chronicles 32:27-30, 2 Kings 19).

"Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah—all his might, and how he made a pool and a tunnel and brought water into the city—are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?"—2 Kings 20:20

Solomon being a king of a peace-filled nation that followed God and was financially sound is more likely to have had the time and resources to build the <u>King's</u> <u>Valley</u> garden. Additionally Solomon was an avid crafter of gardens and pools—both



(Image Credit: https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/artifacts-and-the-bible/the-tel-dan-inscription-thefirst-historical-evidence-of-the-king-david-bible-story/) Tel Dan, or the House of David inscription. The inscription commemorates the victory of an Aramean king over his two southern neighbors: the 'king of Israel' and the 'king of the House of David.' This is one of the only known ancient references to the House of David, and therefore King David.

for beauty and use for crops and irrigation. His father David's warfare allowed for Jerusalem and all of Israel to live in a period of peace, building the Temple through Solomon, and creating a city most holy. After Solomon's death the split of the tribes caused the peace to end, yet, Jerusalem managed to grow. By the end of Hezekiah's lifetime, the City of God had grown at least ten times the size of David's Jerusalem.

Only a small number of kings reigned in Judah after Hezekiah, and most of them reigned with little hope of a long independent future. The last, king Zedekiah, was no more than a showpiece, as the Babylonians were already beginning to take over—destroying the Temple as God had told Isaiah and Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:16-18). Yet, God made many promises regarding His people and Jerusalem—they would endure.

"I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."—Genesis 17:6-8

"...the Lord had said, 'In Jerusalem I will put My name."—2 Kings 21:4

Therefore even as the City of Jerusalem and her people were taken captive, God's promises endured, as they do to this very day.

The City of Jerusalem and the <u>King's Valley</u> have been awaiting the fulfillment of God's promises; of not only the renewal of the city, valley, and people, but also the ultimate coming of Messiah. Today, we are working to fulfill these promises in the <u>My Olive Tree</u>, <u>King's Valley</u> Seven Species Project. Through the planting of the seven species the city is being renewed, the valley is being restored, the people are seeing the love of Messiah, and the land is being prepared for His coming.

Messiah will walk through the valley and up to the City of Jerusalem, passing by the stalk, branch, and vine planted. Just as the ancient kings of Jerusalem built up the <u>King's</u> <u>Valley</u> garden, so we are rebuilding it, as a sign of love and faith to our Father. Loving His gifts, His words, believing AND doing all He said.

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."—Revelation 22:7

DISCOVERING THE SEVEN SPECIES THROUGH ISRAEL'S ANCIENT PAST



(Image Credit http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/ coins-from-the-second-revolt) This coin dates to 134/135CE. 18-21mm. Bronze. "For the Freedom of Jerusalem" is inscribed on one side.

For thousands of years the offspring of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have lived in the land of Israel, and have loved the City of Jerusalem, just as God has. Ancient kings built magnificent gardens in and around her walls. King Solomon himself was actually quite well known for crafting of such grandiose gardens in Jerusalem and beyond. As we read in Ecclesiastes 2:5-6, *"I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself water pools from which to*

water the growing trees of the grove." These gardens would have held many species of plants, almost certainly including the seven species known to reside in the <u>King's Valley</u> of old—the <u>Kidron Valley</u> in Jerusalem—where Yeshua is prophesied to pass through on His way up to and through the ancient Golden Gate.

These seven species were found to be important not only to the kings of old, but to the people as well. They were also important enough to be found written throughout the words of biblical prophecy. Today, that same importance can still be found in those currently living in and around the City of Jerusalem, and into all corners of Israel.

Through artifacts recovered from our distant past—from mosaics in synagogues, to coins from our Jewish brothers—they all tell the tale of this love of God's handiwork and His

promises through the fruit of the vine... wheat, barley, grapes, olives, pomegranates, date palms, and figs. These were all so important to the children of Israel as we find that unlike the Roman coinage found from their occupation of Judea, the Maccabeans in the Bar-Kokhba revolts did not use the face of a man upon their coins, but images of the Temple, and even more commonly, many of the seven species.

One such coin from the Bar-Kokhba revolts, found repeated for years with only minor alterations, had upon one side a cluster of grapes, and upon the other a date palm full of dates. This coin is often found saying inscribed in Hebrew, "For the Freedom of

Jerusalem!" With this hope of freedom they decided upon the use of a date palm and grapes... no depiction of a leader, no grand display of splendor, simply a hope in God's gifts and promises—the fruit of the vine.

Other coins from such revolts, and even from peaceful times, were often replete with depictions of many of the seven species. Olive branches and olives were used as borders on many coins, as were Temple oil vessels that depicted holy and anointed olive oil that was



(Image Credit: Katelyn Rae Cribbs) Bar-Kokhba revolts coins featuring the palm on one side and grapes or a grape leaf on the reverse. Bronze.

to be used in the great seven-branched Temple menorah. Wheat and barley were often shown in groupings of three stalks on one side of a coin, or sometimes seen as single stalks or tied bundles. Three pomegranates growing from a single branch were shown on others. Occasionally a single grape leaf was used instead of a grape cluster, as can be seen on the reverse side of a coin featuring the date palm tree. Even today we see these ancient images, such as pomegranates, olive branches, and date palms used in Israel's modern-day currency.

All of these coins display God's love through His creation, and His covenants to His people. As with Abraham... Jerusalem, Israel, and all her people, would be fruitful in the land. They would be like the very vegetation, multiplying and bringing forth good and sweet things (see Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:4, Numbers 10:29).

The very fact that the children of Israel used many of the seven species for everyday items such as coins, as a reminder of hope, is quite astounding. Yet, they went beyond that. They also used images of the seven species in mosaics—often gracing their synagogues. The visual representation was not only an everyday reminder through the currency used, but also a holy one found in their synagogues on the Sabbath, and High Holy days.

Pomegranates, grapes, and dates are among the most frequently seen of the seven species in mosaic form. Yet, all the species are still found (see images below).



(Image Credit: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/coins-from-the-second-revolt) Bar-Kokhba revolt, 133/134 CE. Bronze. Olive branch wreath and Temple vessel for oil.



(Image Credit: daydreamtourist.com/2014/05/27/sepphoris-israel/) Mosaic from a synagogue in Sepphoris, Israel, depicting the giving of first fruits.

In a synagogue located in Sepphoris, Israel or Tzippori-there is a certain mosaic that depicts grapes, pomegranates, figs and dates in a basket, ready to be given as a firstfruits offering to God (see Exodus 34:26, Ezekiel 44:30, Deut. 26:2, Prov. 3:9, etc.). Additionally, another mosaic in that same synagogue depicts wheat or barley being cut with a sickle and sheathed as the grain is ready to be harvested-prior to a portion to be given as a firstfruits offering. The elders and leaders of the synagogue, along with the rabbis and priests deemed these species so important that they specifically instructed and oversaw craftsmen as they laid the mosaic tiles into the very synagogue floors where they and the people came together before the Lord.

The fact that those who love God should love the fruit of the vine, the branch, and the earth enough to place these images ever before their eyes, gives us a mere glimpse into the importance of these blessings from God. Because the Word of God speaks repeatedly of giving firstfruits to Him, and blessing ourselves through remembering

that He first blessed us, then indeed they must be important. So it was with God's people in the days of old, as the seven species were seemingly the most important of these firstfruits.

Many ancient synagogues throughout the land of Israel may not retain images of the giving of firstfruits, yet, many even today show us God's gifts of the earth. Through wheat and barley, and again the fruit of the vine and branch, we see the importance of the seven species that filled the Valley of the Kings. Today, as in days of old, we are witnessing this importance, not only in Jerusalem, but also throughout the Promised Land.



(Image Credit: http://magazine.baruchhaba.com/bethlehem-of-galilee-cana-tsippori/) Mosaic from a synagogue in Sepphoris, Israel.

Throughout all of these examples we see the love of the people of Israel for God through the

seven species. From Jerusalem where the coins of the land were chosen to depict these



(Image Credit: http://www.israelandyou.com/maon-synagogue/) Maon synagogue mosaic. Depicting grapes, date palms, etc



(Image Credit: BiblePlaces.com) Jericho synagogue mosaic depicting date palm branch, menorah, and rams horn.

species and were subsequently struck, to their usage throughout Jerusalem and Israel, to mosaics in synagogues reaching from Jerusalem to all of Israel, their importance is continually seen.

The people of Israel loved the seven species, not only because of their taste, resilience and appearance, but because they loved them as a sign of God's promises and hope. They loved them because they were a gift from God... a fulfillment of His Word.



(Image Credit: BiblePlaces.com) Tiberias synagogue mosaic depicting Sukkot items, citron and Iulav... the Iulav includes the date palm.



Image Credit: https://sites.duke.edu/hla2013/, photographer Bailey Sincox) Beit-Alpha synagogue mosaic. Depicting olives, palm branches, etc.

Thousands of years ago the <u>Kidron Valley</u>—the Valley of the Kings—was filled with the fruit, branch, and stalk seen and loved throughout Jerusalem and all of Israel. Today, we are once again fulfilling Bible prophecy by bringing back the promise and hope to Jerusalem and Israel. Through the <u>King's Valley</u> Seven Species Project, <u>My Olive Tree</u> is not only fulfilling Deuteronomy 8:7-8, but we are taking history itself from the images of the land and planting them into the ground... a living reminder of God's goodness—His covenant fulfillment.

"For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey."—Deuteronomy 8:7-8

EARLY AGRICULTURE AND CULTURE

Why is agriculture important to the culture of the Jews and Jerusalem? The answer has a long history. Even before David conquered the City of Jerusalem, agriculture played an important role, not only for those engaged in farming, but also for every descendent of Abraham. The far reaching nature of crops is something many of us today take for www.myolivetree.com The History of the "King's Valley" 15 granted with access to supermarkets and grocery stores, where virtually every food we could want can be found, yet, it wasn't long ago that this luxury didn't exist.

Before Israel was a nation, the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worked the land. Even the sons of Jacob, who would become the twelve tribes of Israel, worked the land of their father, growing grain crops and harvesting the land, in addition to shepherding their father's flocks.



(Image Credit: The Bridgeman Art Library) Painting. Jerusalem from Job's wall.below.]

"There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."—Genesis 37:7

Yet, as Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:1, "To everything there is a season," and the people of Jerusalem and Israel knew this. There were times and seasons to bring offerings to the Lord, and times and seasons to prepare, sow, and harvest crops.

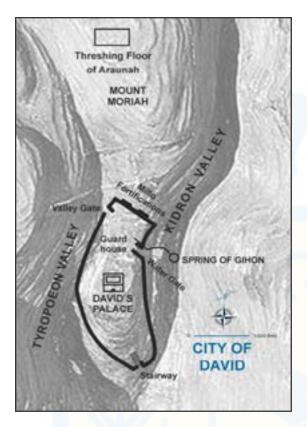
Some twenty miles west-northwest of Jerusalem, in the town of Gezer, a calendar was found from the tenth century BC. The calendar tells of the planting, harvesting, and pruning cycles of not only the seven species—wheat, barley, pomegranates, figs, dates, olives, and grapes—but likely of all the crops the ancient Jews would have grown. It gives the seasons for God's people.

Through the Gezer calendar we see not only times for those engaged in agriculture, but for those selling and buying, and more importantly, for those keeping the commands of the Lord—such as the giving of firstfruits.

"'Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread... and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field."—Exodus 23:14-16

Still, the Gezer calendar does not mention the Sabbath year, as it is something no ancient Jew could have easily forgotten. They would till, sow, and reap, prune and gather fruit from the vine and branch, for six years. Then, on the seventh, they would refrain from such, allowing their fields and groves to regain necessary nutrients, while remembering that the God of all took the first Sabbath.

"Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather



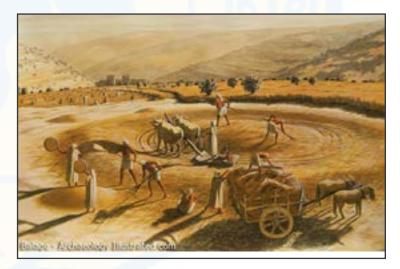
(Image Credit: https://bleon1.wordpress.com/ category/old-testament/; Photo By: Leon Mauldin) Gezer Calendar found in 1908. Inscription in ancient Hebrew giving the seasons for crops; lower left-hand corner has the name of the scribe, Abijah. [Translation and additional information found in Gezer Calendar Inscription table]

For those who didn't farm the land, they still knew the seasons and honored God's gifts of the earth throughout their lives. This can be seen both through the Word, and through the archaeological record.

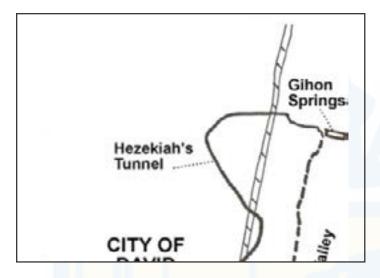
One common example can be found written on ostraca—inscribed potshards—which allow us to see everyday uses of certain agricultural products. The most commonly mentioned products were olive oil and wine, but we also see mention of flour from grains such as wheat and barley. And, it wasn't only the farmers and even royal gardens and plots sending out their products, but traders, priests, and even

its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the Lord. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land."—Leviticus 25:3-5

Gezer Calendar Inscription	Gregorian Month Equivalents
Two Months of Ingathering	Sept. through Oct. (grains, grapes, pomegranates, olives, etc.)
Two Months of Sowing	Nov. through Dec. (grains)
Two Months of Late Sowing	Jan. through Feb.
Month of Pulling Flax	March (flax pulled or harvested)
Month of Barley Harvest	April
Month When Everything [else] is Harvested	May
[Two Months of Pruning [vines]	June through July
Month of Sumer Fruit	August (mostly figs, also dates, etc.)



(Image Credit: http://www.womeninthebible.net/bible-paintings/ ruth-naomi/; Painting by: James Tissot) James Tissot's 1896 watercolor entitled "Ruth Gleaning"



(Image Credit: https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ ancient-cultures/daily-life-and-practice/ancient-aramaicbusiness-records/) Ostraca recording the delivery of barley and wheat. 4th century BC. 40 miles southwest of Jerusalem.



(Image Credit: the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University, and the Israel Antiquities Authority) Ostraca from Tel Arad Fortress. Estimated 7th century BC.

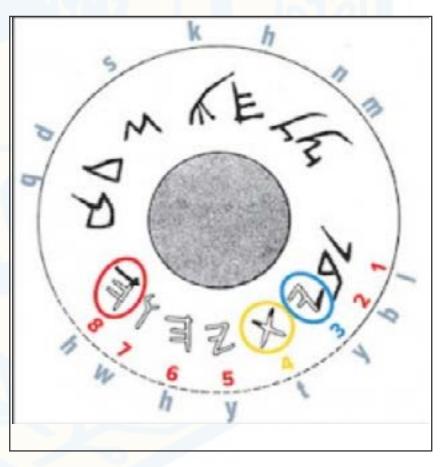
military personnel who owned, transferred, or requested these items.

The Tel Arad fortress, which would have protected the land of Judah and Jerusalem

from whatever military threats that may have risen, includes many ostraca. One ostraca from Tel Arad reads, "To Eliashib: And now, give the Kittiym three baths of wine, and

write the name of the day. And from the rest of the first flour, send one homer in order to make bread for them. Give them the wine from the aganoth vessels." This inscription shows us not only an everyday use, but also a vital one for the protection of the land and people.

Other examples of everyday uses and depictions of agricultural products—specifically of the seven species found in the King's Valley of Jerusalem—include bulla or seals, and coins (see images below). Yet, religious uses were most certainly found daily, be they in the form of ornamentation, oil for lamps or anointing, or even sacrifices and offerings.



(Image Credit: Tel Aviv University/Michael Kordonsky, Israel Antiquities Authority) Inscriptions on ostraca in ancient Hebrew dating back 2,500 years, discovered near Arad.



(Image Credit: bible.ca/bulla) Bulla aka seal reading: 'Ihnnyhw bn'zryhw' or '(belonging) to Hananiah, son (of) Azariah.' Found in Jerusalem. Pos. referencing the false prophet in Jer. 28:1-7.



(Image Credit: http://lila.sns.it/mnamon/index. php?page=Esempi&id=8&lang=en) Bar-Kokhba revolt, second year of the revolt, 67-68 AD. Inscription reading: 'Half Shekel Year Two; Holy Jerusalem.' The coin features a chalice, likely from the Temple on one side, and three pomegranates on the reverse.

The Temple in Jerusalem was replete with agricultural species depictions. Pomegranates were carved in ivory, bronze, and gold for priestly articles, and King Solomon for the Temple had "made one hundred pomegranates, and put them on the wreaths of chainwork"

(2 Chronicles 3:16). Date palms, lilies, and various other plants would grace religious implements, vessels, and pillars. While, even the two massive cherubim within the temple were made of olivewood. Indeed, by this alone we can see the importance of God's gifts of the earth within the very heart of the culture—their relationship with God. Yet, it does not stop there.

For the feasts, for sacrificial offerings, burnt offerings... in all of these we again see the significance of agriculture in the culture. At the Temple in Jerusalem, the people of Judah would bring their 'gifts' to God. Offerings of firstfruits such as wheat and barley, would be waved before the Lord by the Temple priests (Leviticus 23:9-14). Additionally the oil to light the lamps of the Temple and the holy anointing oil, were made of the purest olive oil.

"And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually."—Exodus 27:20

"Also take for yourself quality spices—five hundred shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much sweet-smelling cinnamon... of sweet-smelling cane, five hundred shekels of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. And you shall make from these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil."—Exodus 30:23-25 Through the act of farming the land, of trading, of using the crops to feed the military protecting Judah and Jerusalem, of the everyday reminders, of the very Temple of the Lord... again and again the agriculture of Judah creates a beautiful pattern. God's gifts of the earth showed the people His love, and they in-turn not only cherished it in their daily lives, but also returned a portion of God's gifts as an offering, as a pleasing



(Image Credit: http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/archaeology/.premium-1.632310; Photo By: Israel Antiquities Authority) 8,000 year old clay vessel containing traces of olive oil. Vessel found at Ein Zippori.

fragrance, causing an outpouring of God's love within their hearts.

"...You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over."—Psalm 23:5

Yes, God's gifts of the earth were poured out upon His people, and this act of lovingkindness affected their lives, their actions, and their culture. Therefore, even before Israel and Jerusalem existed, even before God called Jacob, Israel, Jacob acknowledged God's holiness on earth by using God's gifts. Twice, Jacob set a stone upright and poured oil upon it, as an acknowledgment of holiness—that the place was a 'Temple,' a ladder to God (Genesis 28:12). Jacob used God's gifts to remember Him and His power; as did the generations to follow.

"...'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.' And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!' Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it."—Genesis 28:16-18

"Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him. So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it."—Genesis 35:13-14

<u>My Olive Tree</u> is—through your support—replanting the seven species in the <u>King's Valley</u>, as in the days of the first King's of Jerusalem. We are also planting olive groves and <u>vineyards</u> throughout Israel, within the <u>deserts</u> of the land, thereby making the desert bloom. And we are <u>replicating the holy anointing oil described in Exodus 30</u>; fulfilling through all of these, God's Word, and remembering His loving-kindness and tender mercies.

Yet, it is true that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and His blessings and gifts are still at work—just as they have always been. Jews and Gentiles alike who see God at work today are touched deeply within their souls, crying out at the joy and beauty of God's handiwork.

The remains of the past bring God's blessings to light in new ways, and the renewing of the land today brings God's continual goodness to the forefront of our hearts. In fact, we can even see the modern day fulfillment of the Lord's Word through the testimony of a group of Believers, who brought with them a glimpse of God's love from Israel.

A SPECIAL TREE PLANTING IN THE KIDRON VALLEY

Recently, <u>My Olive Tree</u> had the privilege to be in the Holy Land once again. Anytime we gear up to cross international waters it is an uphill battle—leaving behind our routine



First day of the journey awaking to a sunrise on the Dead Sea.

and everyday conveniences is always hard. The question is... Is it worth it?

Last year we were honored to bring one hundred eighteen people together with us to tour the Holy Land. People from across the globe joined us on this very special trip—each one chosen by God for this time, at this very unique place.

Once we arrived, our first stop was the Dead Sea. Exhausted after almost twenty-four or more hours of travel, many of us were quick to fall into bed headfirst before the first day of touring finally began.

The following morning was a very special day for <u>My Olive Tree</u>, as we were all welcomed by

Israeli Defense Forces soldiers to plant trees on a very strategic army base in the Negev <u>Desert</u>. Eight hundred trees were scheduled for planting at this location alone. Our group planted over one hundred trees during our short time there, with the morning excursion brought to a close with a ceremony of recognition for all that <u>My Olive Tree</u> has done throughout the land of Israel.

We were incredibly humbled by this show of solidarity, and we so wished that each one of our generous supporters, families like yours, could have been there to receive the award with us. It is because of your financial gifts that opportunities like this one are made possible.

It was a tremendous day—one that we will never forget.

The tour went on for several days before we had our next <u>My Olive Tree</u> planting opportunity. On our way, we spent time at Masada, as well as time enjoying the capital city of Israel, Jerusalem. While there we spent time on the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Garden Tomb, and finally the <u>King's Valley</u>.

As you know the <u>King's Valley</u> is one of our favorite spots for planting in all of Israel. What makes the King's Valley so unique is that it is located between Mount of Olives, which stands



Planting 800 trees at a very strategic army base in the Negev Desert.

just above it to the East, and to the West is the Eastern gate of Jerusalem's Old City. Ezekiel and Zechariah prophesied that the coming Messiah would one day rest His feet once again on the Mount of Olives:

"And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south."— Zechariah 14:4

"Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw—like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. And the glory of the Lord came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east."—Ezekiel 43:1-4

"Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And the Lord said to me, 'This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. As for the prince, because he is the prince, he may sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way."—Ezekiel 44:1-3



Curt Landry (Founder of My Olive Tree), Megann Marcellino and Paul Marcellino, with daughter Ariebella planting a tree in the King's Valley.

So as one hundred eighteen of us stood in that valley, it was humbling to say the least. Over the last few years, the City of Jerusalem has made a very special request, inviting us to restore the <u>King's Valley</u> into the lush garden it once was during the times of the ancient kings of Israel. Young and mature olive trees alike have been planted, with greater plans to plant fruit trees, <u>vineyards</u>, and grains, as well. Just that alone is an incredible opportunity.

But then, to consider, that one day Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah) will return once again to the nation of Israel, resting His feet on the Mount of Olives. Wow! Then He will walk down into the <u>King's Valley</u> below, walking past the very vegetation that you and I have planted there, ushering in His return as He makes His way to the Eastern Gates... Incredible!



We share all that to express just a fraction of our own personal excitement as we placed our hands in the dirt, and walked where Jesus will soon walk again.

Our journey ended as we spent the remaining days of our tour near the Sea of Galilee. February is the early part of the Israeli growing season, and the trees were alive with blossoms and the hills were

covered in green, green grass.

It was a spectacular trip. One filled with hope for all that is coming in the future. We give the Lord ALL of the praise for the work that is being completed in the Holy Land.

EVERY PURCHASE YOU MAKE, IS JUST ANOTHER OPPURTUNITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN ISRAEL!

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