



UNIT 9

ZION IS REDEEMED

Isaiah 1:27-31

When all the dust settles, Zion's banner will stand as a beacon of hope. See how the Lord condemns the wicked but redeems those who seek him.



SECTION 1: REDEEMING ZION WITH JUDGMENT

For the Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

~ Isaiah (Isaiah 51:3)

Zion is the embodiment of all our hopes and dreams of future peace and safety. For thousands of years, people have looked to or yearned for Zion. Our pioneer ancestors gave everything they had, sometimes even their lives, in search for Zion. And yet it remains aloof. Isaiah prophesies that before the Lord comes again, the banners of Zion will flow in the wind calling for the scattered Israelites to return. “Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean” (Isaiah 52:1)!

#1—REDEEMING ZION

As we seek for Zion, we can hope for Isaiah’s promise that it’s ensign will be set. “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited” (Isaiah 54: 2-3).

The search for Zion is not new. Some have literally found it and were taken off the earth to live in that holy translated city. Others were able to make Zion-like societies here on earth that lasted for a time. One of those was among the Nephite and Lamanite people shortly after the visitation of the resurrected Christ. “And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift” (4 Nephi 1:3). This state of living lasted nearly 200 years before wickedness again crept in.

Zion can only be erected in God’s timeframe and through his grace. “I the Lord will hasten it in my time,” the Lord said (Isaiah 60:22). Unless the Lord puts his hand forward to redeem Zion, no attempt by any human will find success. Yet the raising of Zion will be accomplished by the weak and simple of the earth prior to the second coming of the Christ.

How is this done? Isaiah says, “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness” (Isaiah 1:27). It is redeemed through judgment (מִשְׁפָּט | mēsh-pāt’, meaning *that which just or lawful*) and righteousness (תְּשׁוּבָה | tse-dä-kä’, meaning *rightness or virtue*). The word judgment—often translated as *justice*—symbolizes our just actions to the poor and the needy, the fatherless and widows (see Isaiah 1:17). Righteousness symbolizes our virtuous rectitude before God.

Throughout Isaiah’s writings, some words symbolically personify future end-time people who will do the work of the Lord. Righteousness is one of those words. In Isaiah’s prophesy, many instances of “righteousness” refer to an end-time covenant servant of God who will help establish Zion.

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Moses 7:13-20, 62-69
- Isaiah 24:23
- Isaiah 49:13-26
- Isaiah 52:1-2
- Isaiah 54
- Isaiah 61:1-4
- Ether 13:2-12
- Matthew 5:5, 12
- Matthew 7:38
- 3 Nephi 21:22-25
- Revelation 3:11-12
- D&C 45:64-71

#2—THE PURIFICATION OF ZION

Zion and Jerusalem make a spiritual journey through Isaiah’s prophetic narrative. It symbolizes the spiritual descent and ascent in the end-days of their progression. In the beginning of his story, both Zion and Jerusalem have forsaken the Lord. Yet after being chastened, they return to the Lord. These cities represent end-time people and nations. Zion and Jerusalem are personifications of the covenant people. But do not assume that all the covenant people will return to the Lord. On the contrary, many of those covenant sons and daughters that rebel from God are severely humbled in God’s purging of the people (see Isaiah 3:16-26), and many perish. Isaiah is told that only a tenth of the people will return to the Lord.

There is a difference between those who survive end-time calamities and those who do not. The Lord humbles his people to the point of purification. Those who will not be purified cannot progress. And those who do not progress do not enter the glorified cities of Zion and Jerusalem. Isaiah says that in the end days, “He that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning” (Isaiah 4:3-4).

It is clear that only those who are holy will be able to enter into Zion in the last days. That is because it will be a holy place where the Lord will dwell. Isaiah asks, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings” (Isaiah 33:14)? This devouring fire and everlasting burning is the great and powerful presence of the Lord. God is light, power, heat, fire, and energy. To withstand that consuming fire, one has to be changed, elevated, purified, purged like silver.

Isaiah answers his own question of who can dwell there. “He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppression, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil” (Isaiah 33:15).

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Isaiah 2:1-5
- Isaiah 4
- Isaiah 30:18-21
- Isaiah 33:13-17
- Isaiah 25:3-10
- Isaiah 51:1-3
- Isaiah 52:7-10
- Isaiah 61
- Micah 4:1-7



SECTION 2: ASHAMED OF OUR OAKS

I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

~Jehovah (Isaiah 5:1-2)

We have reviewed throughout our study of Isaiah various types of symbols he uses for describing people, characteristics, actions, states of being, organizations, nations, etc. Usually, the symbol represents a person and their state of righteousness or wickedness. Another means of symbolism is Isaiah's use of vegetation. In a parable regarding the Lord's vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7, Isaiah tells us the interpretation of some of the plants. "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant" (verse 7). Likewise, there is symbolism in the trees and gardens referenced in the final verses of Isaiah's introductory chapter, "They shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen" (Isaiah 1:29). Learning and understanding the symbolism of the various types of vegetation in Isaiah's writings will help to understand deeper meaning within his vision.

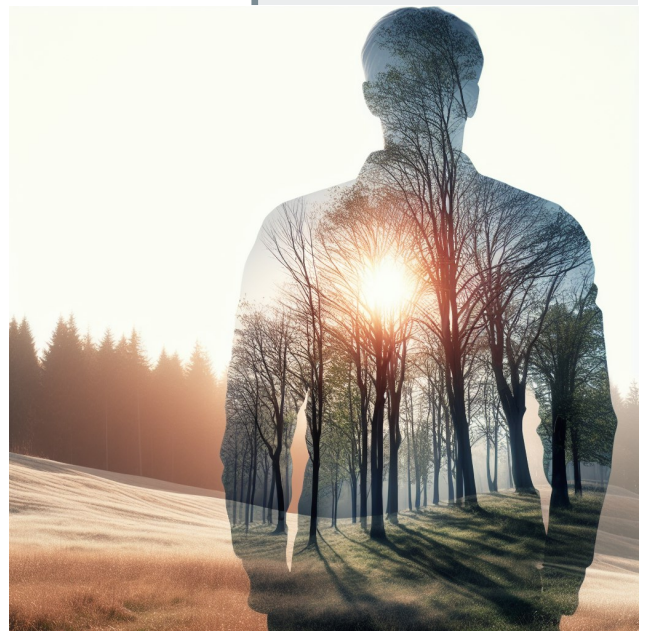
#1—SYMBOLISM IN VEGETATION: WATERING THE GARDENS

Isaiah declares, "Ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water" (Isaiah 1:30). Remember, he is not talking only to ancient Israel, but he is speaking to us in his inclusive end-time vision. We as people are like that oak with fading leaves and our churches and nation is like that garden without water. In Isaiah's writings, trees symbolize people, and forests or groves symbolize groups of people (more than one tree). As he speaks about the cutting down or the planting of trees, he is speaking about the fall or rise of wicked and righteous people.

Gardens in ancient Israel were different than a traditional garden you may imagine. Gardens were often places where pagan and idol worship were performed, sometimes in public, but more often in secret. "They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 66:17). The garden can symbolize a group of people or the organizations to which those people—oaks, in this case—belong. In our contemporary context, those gardens could mean churches or institutions. When the garden loses water, it obviously withers away and eventually dies. When a church loses its vitality of life—revelation, light, and knowledge—it will also wither and eventually become parched of truth and vitality. It will spiritually die.

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Isaiah 5:1-7
- Isaiah 10:16-19
- Isaiah 40:5-8
- Isaiah 55:12-13
- Isaiah 61:1-3
- John 15:1-11



SOME SYMBOLISM OF VEGETATION

VINEYARD

In Isaiah 5:1-7, Isaiah gives a beautiful parable of the Lord's vineyard where he defines the symbol of the vineyard in his writings. "For the **vineyard** (כֶּרֶם | ke'-rem) of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel" (Isaiah 5:7). The vineyard represents either all of or portions of the house of Israel. The branch or vine can represent a person or individual and the vineyard is the collective sum of those individuals. In the parable, the Lord looks for good grapes, but is disappointed, or in other words, he looks for righteousness but find wickedness instead.

Because of the wickedness of the people—not any ordinary people, but the choicest covenant people—the Lord proclaims judgment upon them. "The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof; for ye have eaten up the **vineyard**; and the spoil of the poor is in your houses" (Isaiah 3:14). When the Lord deals his judgment, people will grievously lament. "And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the **vineyards** there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting; the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses; I have made their vintage shouting to cease" (Isaiah 16:10).

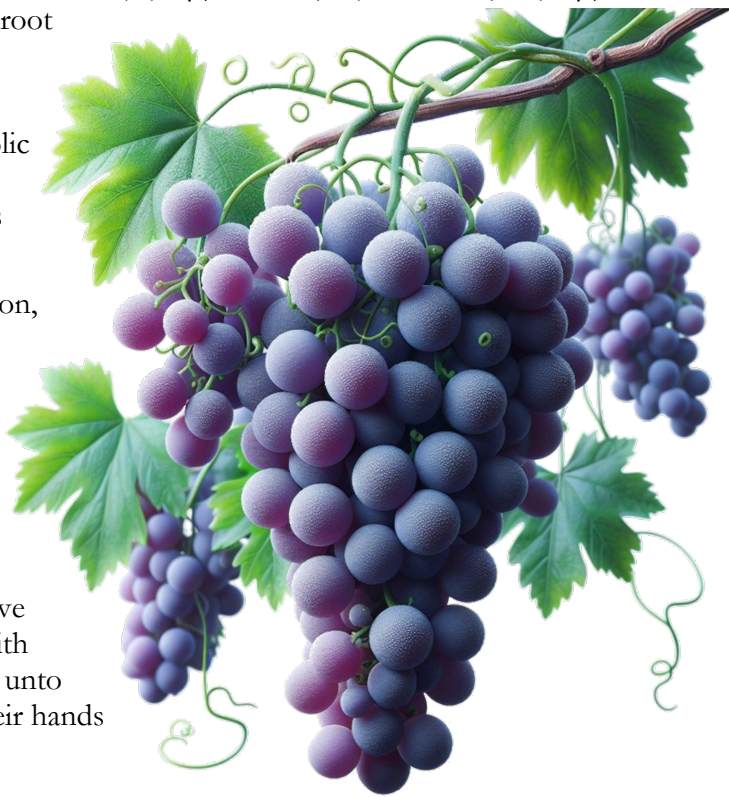
FRUIT

There are various fruits that Isaiah references in his writing, but most occurrence do not mention a specific fruit. The most common symbolic idea to fruit is offspring. "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with **fruit** (תְּנוּבָה | tē-nü-vä)" (Isaiah 27:6). תְּנוּבָה | tē-nü-vä' is used only once in Isaiah's writings and comes from a root word meaning *to germinate*.

Most other references to fruit come from the word פְּרִי | pē-rē', which literally means *fruit*, but has a symbolic meaning of *offspring* or of *results* or *consequences*. In this case, the symbolism is very clear of either 1) the fruits of actions, or 2) the fruit of posterity.

Each individual will be accountable for their own action, and fruit is often the results or consequences of one's actions. In a parable Isaiah gives about the vineyard of the Lord, the Lord "looked that it should bring forth **grapes**, and it brought forth **wild grapes**." Because of this wickedness, he sends the Assyrian tyrant to humble the rebellious covenant people.

Not all are wicked. Those who are righteous can look forward to peace, but those who are wicked will receive their reward. "Say unto the righteous, that it is well with them; for they shall eat the **fruit** of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! for they shall perish; for the reward of their hands shall be upon them" (Isaiah 3:10-11).



BOUGH/BRANCH

Parts of trees represent different aspects of people. Roots can symbolize ancestry while branches can represent posterity, and the tree itself representing the person. The fruits of the branches can represent the good or bad actions or character of men and women, or even their posterity. There are many Hebrew words that are translated into English as bough or branch. Not all of these carry symbolic meaning, but many do, depending on the context.

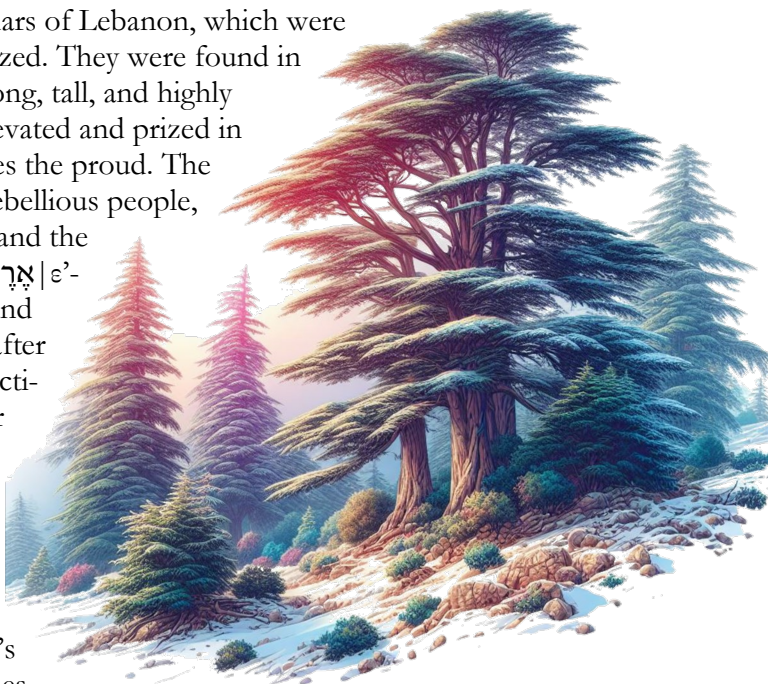
TREES & FORESTS

Trees are a very common symbol that Isaiah uses to symbolize people. Thus, forests would symbolize many people, or even nations. This symbolic representation become very clear as he describes the fear that comes into the hearts of the Israelites as Syria and Ephraim threaten to invade. "And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria

is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the **trees** of the **wood** are moved with the wind” (Isaiah 7:2). The people had right to be afraid, for the Lord does threaten to send against them an invading nation to punish them for their rebellion from God, but it won’t be Syria or Ephraim. The Assyrian will punish the wickedness of the world and the covenant breakers. “And he shall cut down the **thickets** of the **forest** with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one” (Isaiah 10:34).

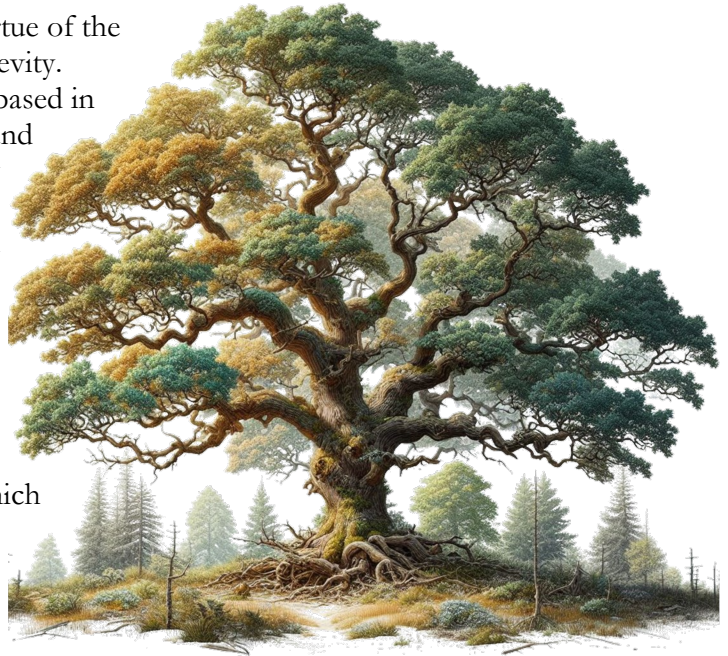
Isaiah uses various trees as symbols within his writings. Some of them have clear symbolic intent, others have less obvious symbolic interpretations. Specific trees he mentions (in the King James’ version) include the following:

- **ASH:** אֶרֶךְ | ʾō-ʾren is translated as “ash,” but scholars don’t know what this tree really is. Some say it is probably some species of pine, others some hardwood. It is the name of a tree from which wood is carved for idols. This word comes from a root word meaning *to creak* and suggests it is a very tall tree that makes a creaking sound when it sways. Some believe it is an ash or elder tree because of the sounds. Isaiah only uses this word once in conjunction with the creation of idols.
- **BOX TREE:** It is likely also not a correct translation. תְּאֵשֶׁר | tē-āsh-shūr’ is a type of evergreen tree. It gets its name from the erectness and straightness of the tree. In both instances of Isaiah’s use of this tree, it is in reference to the Lord’s replanting of trees, suggesting that this tree symbolizes a righteous individual.
- **CEDAR:** This tree is often associated with the cedars of Lebanon, which were part of a forest of cedar trees that were highly prized. They were found in the white mountains in Lebanon. These were strong, tall, and highly prized trees, and symbolized people who were elevated and prized in society. These represented the elite and sometimes the proud. The Lord foretold the destruction of the proud and rebellious people, particularly the covenant children of God. “Yea, and the day of the Lord shall come upon all the **cedars** (רְקִיעַ | ʾe-ʾrez) of Lebanon, for they are high and lifted up; and upon all the oaks of Bashan” (2:13). Eventually, after the rebellious sons of God are chastened and sanctified, even those who are represented by the cedar trees will be blessed again by the Lord. “I will plant in the wilderness the **cedar** the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together” (Isaiah 41:19).
- **CYPRUS:** תְּרִזָּה | tēr-zā’ is used only once in Isaiah’s writings and is translated as a cypress tree. It comes from a root word meaning *to emaciate*, and may refer to a thin tree. It is also suspected to be a species of oak and from its context is a strong or hard tree. Isaiah only uses this word in conjunction with the creation of idols. Trees symbolize people. Isaiah could be using this symbolism as our idolizing people or other manmade creations.
- **FIG:** The fig fruit or fig tree may not have a significant symbolic meaning in Isaiah’s writings. Though, it may carry a symbolic idea of health and providence. When Hezekiah was sick, Isaiah instructed his servants on how to heal him with a lump of figs. In addition, in the same timeframe, Rabshakeh tries to entice the people to surrender and he would ensure that their continued livelihood. “come out to me; and eat ye everyone of his vine, and everyone of his **fig tree** (תְּאֵנָה | tē-ā-nā’), and drink ye everyone the waters of his own cistern; Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards” (Isaiah 36:16-17).
- **FIR:** In Isaiah’s writings, the fir trees (possibly a cypress) are often referenced with the cedar. And like the cedars, they represent strong, proud, and beautiful trees. According to the Assyrians, the firs were “choice” trees sought as bounty as enemies besieged Jerusalem. Trees represent people, and the fir and cedar trees are likely representations of choice covenant people. Yet when the covenant people rebel and become proud, they are



chastened. Eventually, after the rebellious sons of God are chastened and sanctified, even those who are represented by the fir trees will be blessed again by the Lord.

- **MYRTLE:** If the myrtle tree Isaiah intends is the same known today, it is a dwarf evergreen tree that produces white flowers in the mid summers. Isaiah references this tree twice, both in positive examples, suggesting that this tree symbolizes a righteous individual. “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the **myrtle tree** (מִדְּבַר | hā-dās); and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off” (Isaiah 55:13). The imagery is beautiful using a flowering evergreen as a symbol of perpetual prosperity.
- **OAK OR TEIL:** The oak is a symbol of strength by virtue of the hardness and sturdiness of the tree, as well as its longevity. There are multiple words that can translate into oak, based in the same root word. אֵיל | ä'-ēl means *strong* or *mighty*, and can represent anything that is strong, whether literally or figuratively. This word most often refers to a “ram,” because of its strength, but occasionally Isaiah uses it to describe a hardy tree, thus symbolizing also a mighty or powerful person. אֵלָה | ā-lā' has a similar connotation of strength and can be translated as *oak* or *teil*. Isaiah paints a picture of the end-time events where people will idolize those mighty and powerful men. These will be humbled and ashamed at their adoration. “For they shall be ashamed of the **oaks** which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen, for ye shall be as an **oak** whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water” (Isaiah 1:29).



The people and their idols will be judged of the Lord for the works that they do. And even those we deem mighty and powerful will feel the wrath of God. “Yea, and the day of the Lord shall come upon all the cedars of Lebanon, for they are high and lifted up; and upon all the **oaks** of Bashan” (Isaiah 2:13). Yet even though they are chastened by the Lord, there will yet be some who will rise out of the ashes to serve the Lord. At the end of his book, Isaiah uses the oak to describe righteous mighty individuals who will arise after those idol oaks we worshipped in the gardens are destroyed, “that they might be called **trees** (אֵיל | ä'-ēl) of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified” (Isaiah 61:3).

- **OIL:** The oil tree most likely represents the oil from the olive. The Hebrew word שֶׁמֶן | she'-men means *fat* or it can mean *oil* or *ointment* and often refers to the oils used in anointings.
- **OLIVE:** Used as a symbol of scarcity, the olive tree is used to compare how few people will survive tribulations in both its uses. It may also be a representation of the few survivors who will escape those tribulations.
- **PINE:** Another tree that is unclearly translated is תְּדֵרָה | tēd-hār', which is translated as “pine tree.” This word means *a firm enduring tree*. Some believe it to be a pine, others an oak or elm. Either way, Isaiah references this tree twice, both in positive examples, suggesting that this tree symbolizes a righteous individual who is likely firm and enduring. Isaiah may use these evergreen trees to suggest that the covenant is everlasting.
- **SHITTAH:** The word שִׁטָּה | shēt-tā' is only used once in Isaiah’s writings and is most likely an acacia tree. Just like the box, pine, and myrtle trees, this tree is used in reference to the Lord establishing his trees, or his righteous people, again upon the earth after the tribulations of the last days.
- **SYCAMORE:** שִׁלְמָה | shēk-mā' is used only one time and in reference to rebellious Israel stating in the stoutness of their hearts that they will rebuild after being attacked by their enemy. In this context, the sycamore is cut down by the enemy, which may represent rebellious individuals, yet the symbolic meaning—if there is any in this instance—is unclear. Whatever the symbolism, they intend to replant cedars in the place of the fallen sycamores.

mores. An interesting point is that after the 9/11 attacks in New York, there was a Sycamore tree damaged at ground zero which was replaced by a spruce.

BRIER & THORNS

Briers and thorns are almost always used referenced together, though there are exceptions. שְׁמִיר | shā-mēr' is translated as "brier" and means *a thorn* or *thorn bush*. תְּשִׁי | shā'-yēth also means *thorn* or *thorn hedge*. Symbolically, these thorny bushes or hedges are not ones cultivated by God, but come up by themselves. They are untamed and wild in contrast to the tamed a cultivated vineyards of the Lord. As the Lord comes to deal judgement out to the wicked and to gather those scattered Israelites, he will deal with those rebellious and wild bramble. "Fury is not in me; who would set the **brier** and **thorns** against me in battle; I would go through them, I would burn them together" (Isaiah 27:4). It will be the light and righteousness of God and his people that will cause the briers and thorns to be symbolically consumed.

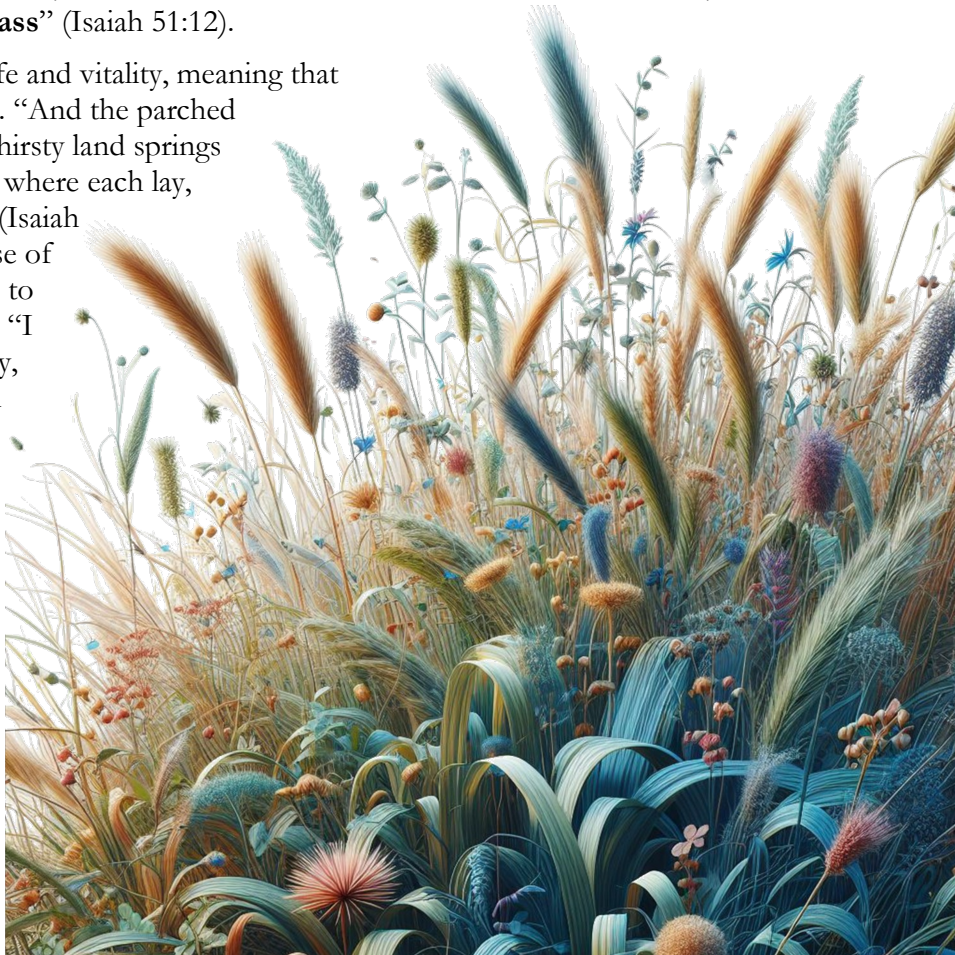
After the events of the last days, those wild and rebellious thorns and briers will not be found. "And on all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of **brier** and **thorns**; but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle" (Isaiah 7:25). Instead of those thorns or briers that come up as wild and untamed individuals, the Lord will instead plant again trees of righteousness, or righteous individuals before the Lord.

GRASS

This is one of the clearest symbolic representations Isaiah makes. He says, "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is **grass** (רְחִיב | ḥā-tsēr)", and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field; the **grass** withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is **grass**. The **grass** withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever" (Isaiah 40:6-8). In this symbolic analogy, he makes it is clear that people are grass, and that people are fallible and mortal. He uses this analogy to compare the weakness of humanity to the divinity and everlasting nature of God and his word. "I am he, yea, I am he that comforteth you; behold, who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as **grass**" (Isaiah 51:12).

Isaiah also uses grass as a symbol of life and vitality, meaning that when the grass is growing, life is good. "And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be **grass** with reeds and rushes" (Isaiah 35:7). When the Lord calls to the house of Israel, "whom I have chosen," he says to those that will repent and turn to him, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the **grass**, as willows by the watercourses" (Isaiah 44:1, 3-4).

The opposite will be true for those who rebel against God. To the proud people of Moab, Isaiah predicted their desolate and deprived state, where no green thing grows. "The waters of Nimrim shall be desolate; for the **hay** is withered away, the **grass** faileth, there is no green thing" (Isaiah 15:6)



#2—ASHAMED FOR THE OAKS WHICH YOU COVETED

The worship of oaks and in gardens paints a picture of the ancient pagan worship in the days of Isaiah. Yet in Isaiah's writings, all things are symbolic creatin gone grand end-time vision. Trees symbolize people and groves or forests symbolize groups of people large or small. Since the oak portrays a sense of strength and sturdiness, oaks symbolize those we feel are the pillars of our society, whether in government, religion, ecclesiastics, entertainment, athletics, or anywhere else. We often look at our elite or our celebrities as those pillars of our beliefs or admirations.

Not only can things be idols, but people can also become idols. We even use the word "idolize" when we envy or venerate our celebrities, our athletes, and yes, even our spiritual or political leaders. Throughout Isaiah's writings are word-links that create an interwoven tapestry of meaning related to the idolizing of mankind, and often it is in reference to our idolizing—or worshiping—of our leaders, those who appear to be most holy and righteous. We may feel like they most closely emulate what we think Jesus Christ would be like. Yet instead of Jesus Christ being the centerpiece of our worship, sometimes we place our leaders at the center. We will often blindly follow our spiritual leaders believing they speak for God without going to God ourselves to validate those statements. We should seek guidance directly from God through the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Exodus 20:4-6
- Exodus 32:1-6
- Leviticus 19:1-5
- Isaiah 2:6-22
- Isaiah 3:12-15
- Isaiah 6:12-13
- Isaiah 28:7-8
- Isaiah 31:6-9
- Isaiah 44:9-20
- Isaiah 56:10-12
- Isaiah 65:1-7
- Isaiah 66:15-18
- Ezekiel 6:13-14
- Ezekiel 31:10-14
- Matthew 6:19-21
- Matthew 24:24
- D&C 84:50-53



