

His Grace still amazes me

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;
planted in the house of the LORD,
they will flourish in the courts of our God.
They will still bear fruit in old age,
they will stay fresh and green,
proclaiming, "The LORD is upright;
He is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in Him."
Psalm 92:12-15



The Lebanese cedar tree is symbolic of strength, stability and endurance.

<http://suzanneelyse.blogspot.ca/2015/06/cedar-of-lebanon.html>

When He found **Israel**, it was like finding grapes in the desert. God added, "When I saw your fathers, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree" (**Hosea 9:10**). He was delighted! In a world, again full of rebellion, He found hope to seed a royal kingdom of priests to teach the nations the way back to Almighty God. So, He made an unconditional covenant with Abraham "**to be his God and the God of his descendants after him**"—forever (Genesis 17:7).

"For Israel and Judah have not been forsaken by their God, the LORD Almighty, though there is **full of guilt** before the Holy One of Israel" (Jeremiah 51:5).

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The nations of the world were given to the sons of God in His holy council as an inheritance at the time of Babel. They were trained in God's way and were involved in making judgments with God. "**God presides in the great assembly;** he gives judgment among the 'gods'" (Psalm 82:1).

The people of Jacob belong to God Almighty; they are His inheritance.

"When the Most High assigned lands to the nations, when he divided up the human race, he established the boundaries of the peoples **according to the number in his heavenly court.** But **the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.** He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of a wilderness; **He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye**" (New Living Translation Deuteronomy 32:8-10).

The most powerful of the sons of God in His holy council became proud. One had great height and another claimed to be the creator—of the Nile. Eventually, all of them in God's holy court

turned against Him. To the son who was so cherished and well-respected, God said, “The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it... no tree in the garden of God could match its beauty (Ezekiel 31:8-9). “I made it beautiful,” says the Almighty God. The prince, who inherited Assyria, became proud of his height and he fell (Ezekiel 31:10). God cast him aside and he went down to the pit (Ezekiel 31:10, 14). Then all of the sons of God who were given rulership over the nations, fell—God’s choicest and best fell (Ezekiel 31:16). The knowledge of the Almighty God and His way of love dried up and a desert of great magnitude formed creeping across the planet, preying on the souls of men.

So, God chose a shoot from the very top of a cedar in His garden and He planted it [Christ] in the mountain heights of Israel and it became a splendid cedar (Ezekiel 17:22-23).

God continued to work with the descendants of Israel for He vowed to Abraham to be a God to his descendants forever, but their love for Him was like the morning dew. “What can I do with you, **Ephraim**? What can I do with you, **Judah**? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that **disappears**” (Hosea 6:4).

They saw what the pagan nations around them had and **they craved it**. The pagan nations lived according to the teachings of the rebellious, rogue sons of God who taught the nations to worship them and follow their ways, holidays, and practices in exchange for: power under them, self-glory, a sense of self-reliance and self-determination. “But of Israel God says, ‘All day long I have held out my hands to a **disobedient and contrary people**’” (Romans 10:21, Isaiah 65:2). “All day long **they insult me to my face by worshiping idols in their sacred gardens. They burn incense on pagan altars**” (Isaiah 65:3).

The house of Israel craved to be like the nations. They saw the might of Egypt, the power of Assyria, and the glory of Babylon and they wanted it. Like all nations today, they craved superpower status. “**We want to be like the nations, like the peoples of the world, who serve wood and stone**” (Ezekiel 20:32). Serving wood and stone was not what they craved; **they craved what was promised by the rogue gods by worshiping idols made in images of them**. They promised power and self glory, stature and self-determination, all designed to turn mankind against their Creator.

God is building a **royal kingdom of humble priests**. This was not appealing to the house of Israel. God is patient and long-suffering. He said, “Go and serve your idols, everyone of you! But afterward you will surely listen to me and no longer profane my holy name with your gifts and idols” (Ezekiel 20:39).

So, the two houses: Israel and Judah went out. The house of Israel first and Judah followed later. They embraced the ways of the nations. They practiced deceit (Hosea 7:1); they delighted the king with their wickedness, the princes with their lies; all their kings fall, and none of them call on God (Hosea 7:7). Ephraim mixed with the nations... foreigners sapped his strength, but he did not realize it (Hosea 7:8-9). Ephraim was and continues to be easily deceived and senseless. Israel’s arrogance testified against him, but despite all this he did not return to the LORD God or search for him (Hosea 7:11, 10). They sank deep into corruption (Hosea 9:9); all their leaders were and continue to be rebellious; Ephraim became blighted and their heart

deceitful (Hosea 9:15, 16). "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit" (Jeremiah 6:13).

"The **house of Israel** and the **house of Judah** have been **utterly unfaithful to me,**' declares the LORD" (Jeremiah 5:11).

God vowed to Abraham that He would be a God to Abraham's descendants forever. He will not break His vow. He will continue to chastise them until both houses repent, for He loves Israel and has never stopped loving His people.

"**I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness**" (Jeremiah 31:3). Who could be so lucky to have a God whose love runs wider, deeper, longer, and higher than the rivers on earth or in the heavens? "And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, **how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is**" (Ephesians 3:18).

His deep love is a mystery.

Moses warned them. "**When you are in distress** and all these things have come upon you, **in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice**" (Deuteronomy 4:30).

"Afterward **the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king.** They **will come trembling to the LORD** and to his blessings **in the last days**" (Hosea 3:5).

A time is soon coming, just on the horizon—a time of great trouble. The two houses of Israel will cry out to their God in deep repentance—and God will hear them. "In those days, at that time, the **people of Israel** and the **people of Judah TOGETHER** will go **in tears to seek the LORD their God.** They will ask the way to Zion and turn their faces toward it. They will come and bind themselves to the Lord in an **everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten**" (Jeremiah 50:4-5).

During that time of great trouble, the wickedness and deceitfulness of the rulers, powers, and authorities in the heavenly realm ruling through the beast on earth will become evident to the people of the houses of Israel and Judah. They will no longer crave to be like the nations. The truth will be out. The nations were lied to by rogue gods and the promise of power and glory was a self-destructive mechanism that brought the fall of the best and choicest of God's sons in His holy council and the fall of nations throughout time. The descendants of Israel will turn to their God for help, re-pledge their allegiance to their **loving** God who happens to also be, the **all powerful God**, fortunate for them. He will rescue them from their captors.

"Since **you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you,** I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life... I will say to **the north, 'Give them up!**' and to **the south, 'Do not hold them back'**" (Isaiah 43:4-6). The two raging powers in the latter days will be the king of the north and the king of the south (Daniel 11).

The captors won't let them go. As Israel was treated harshly by the Pharaoh of Egypt those many years ago, so will the 21st century captors tighten the tether and refuse to let them go. But, the Almighty God of Israel is strong. Who can fight against Him and win? "The **people of Israel** are oppressed, and the **people of Judah** as well. **All their captors hold them fast, refusing to let them go. Yet THE REDEEMER IS STRONG; Yahuah Almighty is his name.** He will vigorously defend their cause so that he may bring rest to their land, but unrest to those who live in Babylon" (Jeremiah 50:33-34).

In God's great love and amazing grace, He will "put His law in their minds and write it on their hearts. **He will be their God and they will be His people. He will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. The descendants of Israel will never cease!**" (Jeremiah 31:36).

Ephraim will say, "You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the LORD **my** God. After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth" (Jeremiah 31:18-20).

God will respond, "Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore, **my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him.** Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take. **Return, O Virgin Israel!**" (Jeremiah 31:20-21).

God will punish 21st century nations of Israel for their sins, though it brings Him great pain to see them suffer. "**O Israel,** for a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion **I will bring you back.** In a surge of anger, I hid my face from you for a moment, but with **everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you.** To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the water of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now **I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again.** Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet **my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed.** All **your sons will be taught by the Lord,** and great will be your children's peace. In righteousness you will be established" (Isaiah 54:6-13).

When God's anger toward the sins of the descendants of Israel is relinquished, He will heal their waywardness and love them freely (Hosea 14:4). He will be like the dew and Israel will blossom like a regal lily, tall and gracious. The best and choicest cedars in God's garden of Eden were brought down. **In their place** in God's garden, **a new cedar grows.** "His **splendor will be like an olive tree** [a producer of light on truth], **his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon** [a stable, strong and enduring leader full of justice and righteousness] and **his fame will be like wine from Lebanon** [maturity reached and wisdom acquired from listening and obeying to God] (Hosea 14:5-7).

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Compiled by Janette Andrejowich