

# Biblical Symbols of the Fig Tree

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**NOT COMPLETED**

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## Introduction

I was curious about the symbolism of the fig (and by extension the fig tree) that was used by Adam and Eve (Gen 3:7) after they committed the sin of eating from the fruit of the TofKofG&E<sup>a</sup>. I want to compare and contrast it to the olive tree. My thinking is that Adam and Eve sinned by not following the instructions of the

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<sup>a</sup> TofKofG&E : Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, see Gen 2:17, Gen 3:3 & Gen3:22;

Torah (symbolically the olive tree) and used their own instructions (symbolically the fig tree) to cover them up (A biblical cover up if you will).

See [Romans-11-12-36.doc](#) and possibly [Rom-11-11-How-Does-Ephraim-Provoke-Judah-to-Jealousy.doc](#) (Article #813).

**Gen 3:7 KJV** And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed **fig** *tena(h)* H8384 leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

...and they sewed <sup>H8609</sup> fig *tena(h)* H8384 leaves <sup>aleh</sup> H5929 together, and made <sup>H6213</sup> themselves aprons. <sup>chagor</sup> H2290

**Mat 21:18-22 KJV** Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. <sup>(19)</sup> And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, **Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.** And presently the fig tree withered away. <sup>(20)</sup> And when the disciples saw *it*, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! <sup>(21)</sup> Jesus answered and said unto them, **Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.** <sup>(22)</sup> And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

### Matthew 21 Outline

1-11 Jesus rides into Jerusalem upon a donkey  
12-16 drives the buyers and sellers out of the temple;  
17-22 curses the fig tree;  
23-27 puts to silence the priests and elders,  
28-32 and rebukes them by the parable of the two sons,  
33-46 and the husbandmen who slew such as were sent to them.

## Word Study

### H8384 *tenah* fig(s)

תַּנְה תַּנְה

Strong's: The second form being singular and feminine; perhaps of foreign derivation; the *fig* (tree or fruit): - fig (tree).

LXX related word(s) [G4808](#) suke [G4810](#) sukon

**K:** 40

**fig, 25** [Deu 8:7-8](#) (2), [Jdg 9:10-11](#) (2), [1Ki 4:25](#), [2Ki 18:31](#), [Psa 105:33](#), [Pro 27:18](#), [Son 2:13](#), [Isa 34:4](#) (2), [Jer 5:16-17](#) (2), [Jer 8:13](#), [Hos 2:12](#), [Hos 9:10](#), [Joe 1:7](#), [Joe 1:12](#), [Joe 2:22](#), [Amo 4:9](#), [Mic 4:4](#), [Nah 3:12](#), [Hab 3:17](#), [Hag 2:19](#), [Zec 3:10](#)

**figs, 15** [Num 13:23](#), [Num 20:5](#), [2Ki 20:7](#), [Neh 13:15](#), [Isa 38:21](#), [Jer 8:13](#), [Jer 24:1-3](#) (6), [Jer 24:5](#), [Jer 24:8](#), [Jer 29:17](#)

## H2290 *chagor chagorah* gird(le)(les), apron, armour

חגרה חגורה חגר חגור

From [H2296](#); a *belt* (for the waist): - apron, armour, gird (-le).

LXX related word(s): [G1241](#) dia zonnumi, [G2223](#) zone, [G2223](#) zone

KJC: 9

**girdle, 5** [1Sa 18:4](#), [2Sa 18:11](#), [2Sa 20:8](#), [1Ki 2:5](#), [Isa 3:24](#)

**aprons, 1** [Gen 3:7](#)

**armour, 1** [2Ki 3:21](#)

**gird, 1** [Isa 32:11](#)

**girdles, 1** [Pro 31:24](#)

## Biblical Tree References

### Jdg 9:7-15 KJV

Judges 9 Outline: Abimelech Conspires to Become King, Falls after 3 Years; Shechem; Abimelech

<sup>7</sup> And when they told *it* to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim<sup>b</sup>, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. <sup>8</sup> The **trees**<sup>H6086</sup> went forth *on a time* to anoint a king over them<sup>c</sup>; and they said unto the olive **tree**<sup>H2132</sup>, Reign thou over us. <sup>9</sup> But the olive **tree**<sup>H2132</sup> said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the **trees**?<sup>H6086</sup> <sup>10</sup> And the **trees**<sup>H6086</sup> said to the fig **tree**, Come thou, *and* reign over us. <sup>11</sup> But the fig **tree**<sup>H6086</sup> said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the **trees**? <sup>12</sup> Then said the **trees**<sup>H6086</sup> unto the vine, Come thou, *and* reign over us. <sup>13</sup> And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the **trees**? <sup>14</sup> Then said all the **trees**<sup>H6086</sup> unto the bramble, Come thou, *and* reign over us. <sup>15</sup> And the bramble said unto the trees<sup>H6086</sup>, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, *then* come *and* put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

**Jdg 9:46-49 KJV** And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard *that*, they entered into an hold of the house of the god Berith. <sup>(47)</sup> And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. <sup>(48)</sup> And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that *were* with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees<sup>H6086</sup>, and took it, and laid *it* on his shoulder, and said unto the people that *were* with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, *and* do as I *have done*. <sup>(49)</sup> And all the people likewise cut down every man his **bough**, *sok(ah)*<sup>H7754</sup>, and followed Abimelech, and put *them* to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.

<sup>b</sup> **Gerizim** KJC H1630, 4: Deu 11:29, Deu 27:12, Jos 8:33, Jdg 9:7

**Deu 11:29** KJV And it shall come to pass, when the LORD thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal.

<sup>c</sup> Interesting that Judges is before 1 Samuel chapter 8, a key point in history

## H2132

זית

zayith

*zah'-yith*

Probably from an unused root (akin to [H2099](#)); an *olive* (as yielding *illuminating* oil), the tree, the branch or the berry: - olive (tree, -yard), Olivet.

LXX related word(s) [G1636](#) elaiā [G1638](#) elaiōn

**Total KJV Occurrences:** 38

**olive**, 27 [Gen 8:11](#), [Exo 27:20](#), [Exo 30:24](#), [Lev 24:2](#), [Deu 6:11](#), [Deu 8:8](#), [Deu 24:20](#), [Deu 28:40](#) (2), [Jdg 9:8-9](#) (2), [2Ki 18:32](#), [1Ch 27:28](#), [Neh 8:15](#), [Job 15:33](#), [Psa 52:8](#), [Psa 128:3](#), [Isa 17:6](#), [Isa 24:13](#), [Jer 11:16](#), [Hos 14:6](#), [Amo 4:9](#), [Hab 3:17](#), [Hag 2:19](#), [Zec 4:3](#), [Zec 4:11-12](#) (2)

**oliveyards**, 5 [Jos 24:12-13](#) (2), [1Sa 8:14](#), [2Ki 5:26](#), [Neh 5:11](#), [Neh 9:25](#)

**olives**, 4 [Jdg 15:5](#), [Mic 6:15](#), [Zec 14:4](#) (2)

**olivet**, 1 [2Sa 15:30](#)

**oliveyard**, 1 [Exo 23:11](#)

**Palm Trees of Judges** <sup>H8558 *tamar* & H8560 *tomar*</sup>

[Jdg 1:16 KJV](#) And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father in law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which *lieth* in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.

[Jdg 3:13 KJV](#) And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees.

[Jdg 4:5 KJV](#) And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

**H6086 *etz* wood, tree(s), timber, stick(s), staff, stock(s),**

עץ

From [H6095](#); a *tree* (from its *firmness*); hence *wood* (plural *sticks*): - + carpenter, gallows, helve, + pine, plank, staff, stalk, stick, stock, timber, tree, wood.

KJC: 334 occurrences;

LXX related word(s)

[G1186](#) dendron

[G3585](#) xulinos

[G3586](#) xulon

[G4464](#) rhabdos

[G2748](#) kedros

# Appendix ISBE Citations

## Fig; Fig-Tree

Fig tree (תַּנְה, *tenah*, plural תַּנִּים, *tenim*, specially “figs”; פַּגִּים, *paggīm*, “green figs” only in [Son 2:13](#); סֻכָּה, *suke*, “fig-tree,” סֻכּוֹן, *sukon*, “fig”):

### 1. Fig-Trees in the Old Testament

The earliest Old Testament reference to the fig is to the leaves, which Adam and Eve converted into aprons ([Gen 3:7](#)). The promised land was described ([Deu 8:8](#)) as “a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates,” etc. The spies who visited it brought, besides the cluster of grapes, pomegranates and figs ([Num 13:23](#)). The Israelites complained that the wilderness was “no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates” ([Num 20:5](#)). When Egypt was plagued, the fig-trees were smitten ([Psa 105:33](#)); a similar punishment was threatened to unfaithful Israel ([Jer 5:17](#); [Hos 2:12](#); [Amo 4:9](#)). It is only necessary to ride a few miles among the mountain villages of Palestine, with their extensive fig gardens, to realize what a long-lasting injury would be the destruction of these slow-growing trees. Years of patient labor - such as that briefly hinted at in [Luk 13:7](#) - must pass before a newly planted group of fig-trees can bear profitably. Plenitude of fruitful vines and fig-trees, specially individual ownership, thus came to be emblematical of long-continued peace and prosperity. In the days of Solomon “Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree” ([1Ki 4:25](#)). Compare also [2Ki 18:31](#); [Isa 36:16](#); [Mic 4:4](#); [Zec 3:10](#); 1 Macc 14:12. Only a triumphal faith in Yahweh could rejoice in Him “though the fig-tree shall not flourish” ([Hab 3:17](#)).

### 2. Natural History of the Fig-Tree

The *Ficus carica*, which produces the common fig, is a tree belonging to the Natural Order *Urticaceae*, the nettle family, which includes also the banyan, the India rubber fig-tree, the sycamore fig and other useful plants. Fig-trees are cultivated all over the Holy Land, especially in the mountain regions. Wild fig-trees - usually rather shrubs than trees - occur also everywhere; they are usually barren and are described by the *fellahin* as “male” trees; it is generally supposed that their presence is beneficial to the cultivated variety. The immature flowers harbor small insects which convey pollen to the female flowers and by their irritating presence stimulate the growth of the fruit. Artificial fertilization has been understood since ancient times, and there may be a reference to it in [Amo 7:14](#).

Fig-trees are usually of medium height, 10 or 15 ft. for full-grown trees, yet individual specimens sometimes attain as much as 25 ft. The summer foliage is thick and surpasses other trees of its size in its cool and dense shade. In the summer owners of such trees may be seen everywhere sitting in their shadow ([Joh 1:48](#)). Such references as Mac [Amo 4:4](#); [Zec 3:10](#), etc., probably are to this custom rather than to the not uncommon one of having a fig-tree overhanging a dwelling.

### 3. Figs

The fruit of the fig-tree is peculiar. The floral axis, instead of expanding outward, as with most flowers, closes, as the flower develops, upon the small internal flowers, leaving finally but a small opening at the apex; the axis itself becomes succulent and fruit-like. The male flowers lie around the opening, the female flowers deeper in; fertilization is brought about by the presence of small hymenopterous insects.

There are many varieties of figs in Palestine differing in sweetness, in color and consistence; some are good and some are bad (compare [Jer 24:1](#), [Jer 24:8](#); [Jer 29:17](#)). In Palestine and other warm climates the fig yields two crops annually - an earlier one, ripe about June, growing from the “old wood,” i.e. from the midsummer

sprouts of the previous year, and a second, more important one, ripe about August, which grows upon the “new wood,” i.e. upon the spring shoots. By December, fig-trees in the mountainous regions of Palestine have shed all their leaves, and they remain bare until about the end of March, when they commence putting forth their tender leaf buds ([Mat 24:32](#); [Mar 13:28](#), [Mar 13:32](#); [Luk 21:29-33](#)), and *at the same time*, in the leaf axils, appear the tiny figs. They belong to the early signs of spring:

“The voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land;

The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs” (*paggim*) - [Son 2:12](#), [Son 2:13](#).

#### 4. Early Figs

These tiny figs develop along with the leaves up to a certain point - to about the size of a small cherry - and then the great majority of them fall to the ground, carried down with every gust of wind. These are the “unripe figs” (*ólunthos*) - translated, more appropriately in the King James Version, as “untimely figs” - of [Rev 6:13](#). Compare also [Isa 34:4](#) the King James Version - in the Revised Version (British and American) “leaf” has been supplied instead of “fig.” These immature figs are known to the *fellahīn* as *taksh*, by whom they are eaten as they fall; they may even sometimes be seen exposed for sale in the markets in Jerusalem. In the case of many trees the whole of this first crop may thus abort, so that by May no figs at all are to be found on the tree, but with the best varieties of fig-trees a certain proportion of the early crop of figs remains on the tree, and this fruit reaches ripe perfection about June. Such fruit is known in Arabic as *dafūr*, or “early figs,” and in Hebrew as *bikkūrāh*, “the first-ripe” ([Isa 28:4](#); [Jer 24:2](#); [Hos 9:10](#)). They are now, as of old, esteemed for their delicate flavor ([Mic 7:1](#), etc.).

#### 5. The Cursing of the Barren Fig-Tree

The miracle of our Lord ([Mat 21:18-20](#); [Mar 11:12](#), [Mar 11:13](#), [Mar 11:10](#), [Mar 11:21](#)) which occurred in the Passover season, about April, will be understood (as far as the natural phenomena are concerned) by the account given above of the fruiting of the fig-tree, as repeatedly observed by the present writer in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. When the young leaves are newly appearing, in April, every fig-tree which is going to bear fruit at all will have some *taksh* (“immature figs”) upon it, even though “the time of figs” ([Mar 11:13](#) the King James Version), i.e. of ordinary edible figs - either early or late crop - “was not yet.” This *taksh* is not only eaten today, but it is sure evidence, even when it falls, that the tree bearing it is not barren. This acted parable must be compared with [Luk 13:6](#), [Luk 13:9](#); *now* the time of judgment was surely coming, the fate of the fruitless Jewish nation was forcibly foretold.

#### 6. Dried Figs

While fresh figs have always been an important article of diet in their season ([Neh 13:15](#)) the dried form is even more used. They are today dried in the sun and threaded on strings (like long necklaces) for convenience of carriage. A “cake of figs” (*ḍ'bhēlāh*, literally, “pressed together”) is mentioned ([1Sa 30:12](#)); Abigail gave 200 such cakes of figs to David ([1Sa 25:18](#)); the people of North Israel sent, with other things, “cakes of figs” as a present to the newly-crowned David ([1Ch 12:40](#)). Such masses of figs are much used today - they can be cut into slices with a knife like cheese. Such a mass was used externally for Hezekiah's “boil” ([Isa 38:21](#); [2Ki 20:7](#)); it was a remedy familiar to early medical writers.

## Olive Tree

ol'iv trē (אֵיל זַיִת, *zayith*, a word occurring also in Aramaic, Ethiopic and Arabic; in the last it means “olive oil,” and *zaitūn*, “the olive tree”; *ἐλαία*, *elaía*):

### 1. The Olive Tree:

The olive tree has all through history been one of the most characteristic, most valued and most useful of trees in Palestine. It is only right that it is the first named “king” of the trees ([Jdg 9:8](#), [Jdg 9:9](#)). When the children of Israel came to the land they acquired olive trees which they planted not ([Deu 6:11](#); compare [Jos 24:13](#)). The cultivation of the olive goes back to the earliest times in Canaan. The frequent references in the Bible, the evidences (see 4 below) from archaeology and the important place the product of this tree has held in the economy of the inhabitants of Syria make it highly probable that this land is the actual home of the cultivated olive. The wild olive is indigenous there. The most fruitful trees are the product of bare and rocky ground (compare [Deu 32:13](#)) situated preferably at no great distance from the sea. The terraced hills of Palestine, where the earth lies never many inches above the limestone rocks, the long rainless summer of unbroken sunshine, and the heavy “clews” of the autumn afford conditions which are extraordinarily favorable to at least the indigenous olive.

The olive, *Olea Europaea* (Natural Order *Oleaceae*), is a slow-growing tree, requiring years of patient labor before reaching full fruitfulness. Its growth implies a certain degree of settlement and peace, for a hostile army can in a few days destroy the patient work of two generations. Possibly this may have something to do with its being the emblem of peace. Enemies of a village or of an individual often today carry out revenge by cutting away a ring of bark from the trunks of the olives, thus killing the trees in a few months. The beauty of this tree is referred to in [Jer 11:16](#); [Hos 14:6](#), and its fruitfulness in [Psa 128:3](#). The characteristic olive-green of its foliage, frosted silver below and the twisted and gnarled trunks - often hollow in the center - are some of the most picturesque and constant signs of settled habitations. In some parts of the land large plantations occur: the famous olive grove near Beirut is 5 miles square; there are also fine, ancient trees in great numbers near Bethlehem.

In starting an **oliveyard** the *fellah* not infrequently plants young wild olive trees which grow plentifully over many parts of the land, or he may grow from cuttings. When the young trees are 3 years old they are grafted from a choice stock and after another three or four years they may commence to bear fruit, but they take quite a decade more before reaching full fruition. Much attention is, however, required. The soil around the trees must be frequently plowed and broken up; water must be conducted to the roots from the earliest rain, and the soil must be freely enriched with a kind of marl known in Arabic as *ḥuwwārāh*. If neglected, the older trees soon send up a great many shoots from the roots all around the parent stem (perhaps the idea in [Psa 128:3](#)); these must be pruned away, although, should the parent stem decay, some of these may be capable of taking its place. Being, however, from the root, below the original point of grafting, they are of the wild olive type - with smaller, stiffer leaves and prickly stem - and need grafting before they are of use. The olive tree furnishes a wood valuable for many forms of carpentry, and in modern Palestine is extensively burnt as fuel.

### 2. The Fruit:

The olive is in flower about May; it produces clusters of small white flowers, springing from the axils of the leaves, which fall as showers to the ground ([Job 15:33](#)). The first olives mature as early as September in some places, but, in the mountain districts, the olive harvest is not till November or even December. Much of the earliest fruit falls to the ground and is left by the owner ungathered until the harvest. The trees are beaten with long sticks ([Deu 24:20](#)), the young folks often climbing into the branches to reach the highest fruit, while the women and older girls gather up the fruit from the ground. The immature fruit left after such an ingathering is described graphically in [Isa 17:6](#): “There shall be left therein gleanings, as the shaking (margin “beating”) of

an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost branches of a fruitful tree.” Such gleanings belonged to the poor ([Deu 24:20](#)), as is the case today. Modern villages in Palestine allow the poor of even neighboring villages to glean the olives. The yield of an olive tree is very uncertain; a year of great fruitfulness may be followed by a very scanty crop or by a succession of such.

The olive is an important article of diet in Palestine. Some are gathered green and pickled in brine, after slight bruising, and others, the “black” olives, are gathered quite ripe and are either packed in salt or in brine. In both cases the salt modifies the bitter taste. They are eaten with bread.

More important commercially is the oil. This is sometimes extracted in a primitive way by crushing a few berries by hand in the hollow of a stone (compare [Exo 27:20](#)), from which a shallow channel runs for the oil. It is an old custom to tread them by foot ([Mic 6:15](#)).

### 3. Olive Oil:

Oil is obtained on a larger scale in one of the many varieties of oil mills. The berries are carried in baskets, by donkeys, to the mill, and they are crushed by heavy weights. A better class of oil can be obtained by collecting the first oil to come off separately, but not much attention is given to this in Palestine, and usually the berries are crushed, stones and all, by a circular millstone revolving upright round a central pivot. A plenteous harvest of oil was looked upon as one of God's blessings ([Joe 2:24](#); [Joe 3:13](#)). That the “labor of the olive” should fail was one of the trials to faith in Yahweh ([Hab 3:17](#)). Olive oil is extensively used as food, morsels of bread being dipped into it in eating; also medicinally ([Luk 10:34](#); [Jam 5:14](#)). In ancient times it was greatly used for anointing the person ([Psa 23:5](#); [Mat 6:17](#)). In Rome's days of luxury it was a common maxim that a long and pleasant life depended upon two fluids - “wine within and oil without.” In modern times this use of oil for the person is replaced by the employment of soap, which in Palestine is made from olive oil. In all ages this oil has been used for illumination ([Mat 25:3](#)).

### 4. Greater Plenty of Olive Trees in Ancient Times:

Comparatively plentiful as olive trees are today in Palestine, there is abundant evidence that the cultivation was once much more extensive. “The countless rock-cut oil-presses and wine-presses, both within and without the walls of the city (of Gezer), show that the cultivation of the olive and vine was of much greater importance than it is anywhere in Palestine today.... Excessive taxation has made olive culture unprofitable” (“Gezer Mem,” *PEF*, II, 23). A further evidence of this is seen today in many now deserted sites which are covered with wild olive trees, descendants of large plantations of the cultivated tree which have quite disappeared.

### 5. Wild Olives:

Many of these spring from the old roots; others are from the fallen drupes. Isolated trees scattered over many parts of the land, especially in Galilee, are sown by the birds. As a rule the wild olive is but a shrub, with small leaves, a stem more or less prickly, and a small, hard drupe with but little or no oil. That a wild olive branch should be grafted into a fruitful tree would be a proceeding useless and contrary to Nature ([Rom 11:17](#), [Rom 11:24](#)). On the mention of “branches of wild olive” in [Neh 8:15](#), see OIL TREE.



## H7753

שׁוּךְ

śûk

*sook*

A primitive root; to *entwine*, that is, *shut* in (for formation, protection or restraint): - fence. (make an) hedge (up).

**Total KJV Occurrences:** 3

**hedge, 2**

[Job\\_1:10](#), [Hos\\_2:6](#)

**fenced, 1**

[Job\\_10:11](#)

## H7754

שׁוּכָה שׁוּךְ

śôk śôkâh

*soke, so-kaw'*

The second form being feminine; from [H7753](#); a *branch* (as *interleaved*): - bough.

**Total KJV Occurrences:** 2

**bough, 2**

[Jdg\\_9:48-49](#) (2)

## Fig Tree

