

Everyday Life in Bible Times  
Chapter 3 – Vineyards and Orchards

**Lesson 3.01**  
**Introduction**

Our study about Jewish farm work has looked at animals and grain.  
Now we look at how they grew fruit.

The Bible has many verses about various fruit and how they grew.  
Grapes in vineyards.  
Olives and other fruit trees.  
etc.

Israel has rocky hills where sheep cannot graze there. That land is no good for growing grain.  
But hilly land can be cultivated for growing grapes successfully.

Often they find that the surface has many rocks. But between the rocks there are cracks that are deep, and in those cracks is good soil that grows good grapes, olive trees, and other fruit trees.  
They grow enough fruit for people that live in Israel. And they have plenty left to sell to other people in countries.

And Israel buys from those other countries metal (copper and iron), spices, and gemstones.

**STUDY QUESTION**

Read Galatians 5:22-23

What kind of “fruit” do Christians grow?

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**Lesson 3.02**  
**Vineyards**

When the Jewish people left slavery in Egypt, they came to their homeland, and they found that people there already had farms for growing various fruit. Of course, the Israelites worked those farms and they also made new vineyards. and fruit orchards.

This lesson and the next four lessons, we will focus on growing grapes.

A grape farm is called a **vineyard**.

The best place for growing grapes is at the bottom of a hill.

Soil washed down from the hill is good for growing.

That land is easy to work and irrigate (water).

They remove stones and weeds using a hoe or a mattock. On hills, they made terraces by moving stones from the hill to make a low wall, and then fill in soil behind the wall.

How did they plant grape vines. With seeds? No.

They cut a vine shoot (branch) and planted that carefully.

They fed and watered it.

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The vine grew, climbing up a low wall or fence..

Grape vines have large leaves that are good for absorbing water from the morning dew during the dry summer months.

When the farmer plants the grape vine, they let it grow for three years, then they let it grow fruit. Every year they cared for the vine. They prune it regularly.

That vine continues growing grapes for many years.

### STUDY QUESTION

Read John 15:1-6

Jesus compares the grape vine to what?

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### Lesson 3.03

#### Watchtower

Vineyards had a stone tower.

People climbed stairs and stood in the tower to watch over the vineyard.

When the fruit became ripe, a member of the family would stay day and night in the watch tower, for security against thieves.

During the hot summer, on top of the tower they built a booth made of four poles and a grass roof. Workers could take a break in the shelter that would block the sun.

Travelers that walked by, if they were hungry, they could take some grapes near the road and snack, and then continue on their journey.

The time that the grapes were ready for harvesting was in August and September. They cut the cluster off with a knife and put them in a large basket and brought them to the place called the **winepress** near the vineyard.

The winepress was a pit dug into the rock, 6 to 8 feet wide and 2 feet deep. There they crushed the grapes, and made juice.

### STUDY QUESTION

Read Matthew 21:33-46

The son in the story is compared to whom?

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**Lesson 3.04**  
**Winepress**

The grape harvesters dumped their grapes in the winepress to a depth of one foot.  
Then people jumped in and stomped, squishing the grapes.  
Grape juice ran down a trough into the lower vat.  
They dipped out juice that was collected and pour it into large jars or wineskins.

All that stomping on the grapes in the winepress was not easy work.  
It was tiring and really slippery.  
Workers needed to hold on to something so they coule keep their balance.

People worked together and they tried to have fun.  
They sang so their stomping could feel like a dance.  
They told stories and jokes trying to keep the work fun.

Another way for squeezing juice from the grapes was to put grapes in a sack.  
They fastened one end of the sack on a pole.  
They fastened the other end to a crank.  
They turned the crank.  
That twisted the bag.  
That squeezed the grapes, and juice dripped out.

The pulp that was left still had some juice in it.  
They squeezed that out. how?  
They mixed some clay in the sack.  
Then they closed the sack again and squeezed it with a large rock, plus their own weight.

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**Lesson 3.05**  
**Wine**

The grapes are harvested,  
    dumped into the wine press,  
    people stomp all over them,  
    the grapes release their juice.

The juice flows into a smaller vat.  
Then it is dipped out and poured into leather bottles or jars.  
The juice sits for several days while the solids settle and the juice becomes clear.

After about 12 days, the juice is poured into jars and the jars are sealed.  
Most is poured into leather bottles called **wineskins**.  
Those are animals skins, mostly from goats.

The animal is killed and cut open.

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All the body parts removed.  
The skin is cleaned  
    sewn up,  
    and sealed.

Juice is poured in at the neck and filled.  
Then the bottle is tied shut and hung up and left alone  
Eventually the juice becomes wine.

In that process, the wine makes gas, and that expands the bottle and the skin stretches.  
Suppose we made wine,  
    and then we poured out the wine,  
    and we drink it and serve the wine to our friends,  
    and the bottle is empty.

Can we use that wineskin again?  
No.  
If we pour in new juice, that will make the bottle expand more.  
But it cannot. The skin is already stretched.  
So the bottle will break and will spill out all the juice.

**STUDY QUESTION**

Read Matthew 9:17

What does this mean for us?

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**Lesson 3.06**

**Grape Juice & Raisins**

Long ago, people in Israel had two ways for saving grape juice.

- (1) They made wine.
- (2) They poured new juice in a pan and put that pan over a low fire.  
    They left the pan on the fire a long time.  
    The juice level slowly went down.  
    What was left was sticky, sweet, and strong.  
    They called it “grape honey.”  
    Or sometimes they just called it “honey.”  
    They used that like we use sugar in their cooking, to add sweetness and flavor.

Remember back when Jewish people were slaves in Egypt.  
God promised that He will bring them to “a land that flowed with milk and honey.”  
It is possible that was grape honey, because that land had plenty of grapes.  
But that land also had plenty of bees that made regular honey, too.

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The land of Israel grew grapes of various kinds and various colors.

Purple grapes.

Green grapes.

White grapes.

And of course, people liked to eat grapes straight.

Farmers sold grapes.

If they wanted to save the fruit for eating later, they made **raisins**.

How?

They had bowl filled with a chemical called **lye**.

They dipped the grapes in the bowl.

That sucked water out of the grapes.

Then they washed the grapes.

and let them dry in the sun.

Then they dipped the raisins in olive oil and let them drip dry.

Then the stored the raisins in jars.

### STUDY QUESTION

Read Ephesians 5:18

“Do not become drunk with wine.” Instead, we should be filled with what?

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### Lesson 3.07

#### Olive Trees

Israel grows a lot of olives.

When Jewish people left Egypt and arrived, the country already had many olive trees growing.

Olives grow best in soil that is sandy and dry.

Olive trees grow very slowly.

If you plant the seed and wait for it to grow into a full tree ready to pick its fruit, that will take about 30 years.

From then on, the olive tree gives its fruit continually, for a long time.

You know that during the time that Jesus lived in Israel 2,000 years ago, they had olive trees.

Many of Those trees are still growing in Israel today, still growing fruit.

Farmers take care of olive trees by pruning them.

They used a saw just like we have today.

They also used a pole that had a curved hook knife at the end.

They hooked a small branch. pulled the hook. and cut the branch off.

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Another thing that farmers did in their care for olive trees is called **grafting**. If they had a young tree and also they had an old tree of a little different kind, they cut a branch off the old tree and added it to the new tree, so the new tree grows both kinds of fruit.

Your book shows pictures and explains how the farmers did grafting.

**STUDY QUESTION**

Read Romans 11:13-24

These verses compare grafting olive trees to what?

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**Lesson 3.08**

**Harvesting and Pressing Olives**

Olive fruit is ready for harvest in the month of August.  
The olive fruit begins to become white and is still a little bit hard, not yet soft.

Farmers harvest olives, how?

They lay a large cloth on the ground under the tree.

They shake the tree. Loose olives fall onto the cloth.

Then they have sticks and they hit the tree trunk and branches. That causes more olives to fall.

Hitting hurts the tree a little. The next year, that tree will not grow much fruit.

So that second year they don't harvest from that tree. They leave it alone.

They have two groups of trees. And every year they alternate:

This year, harvest these trees.

Next year, harvest those trees.

Next year, back to harvesting these trees.

When they harvest from a tree, they did it once.

If some fruit wasn't ready and it stayed on the tree until it became ripe a few days later, they could not go back again to harvest those olives. They must leave them for poor people.

Remember God's laws about gleaning.

When the harvest was finished, what did they do with the olives?

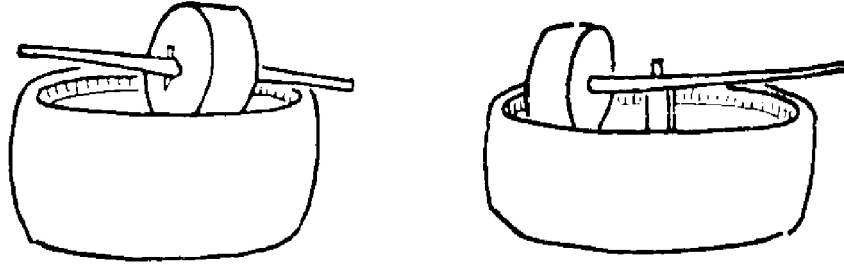
They carried them to the **olive press**.

That squeezed out the **olive oil**.

How?

They had various kinds of presses.

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One that one person worked was a round stone that they rolled over the olives.

Often they cut the stone in the shape of a wheel  
and they put a stick through the middle, like an axle.  
They held the stick on both sides, and pushed and pulled it back and forth.  
The heavy stone crushed the olives in a wide stone bowl.  
The oil drained out to a smaller bowl.

If the family regularly had a huge olive harvest, their olive press was outside.  
They put the olives in a stone basin that was several feet wide.  
Their stone rolling wheel had a pole through the middle.  
One end was pegged to the middle of the bowl.  
The other end of the pole was tied to a donkey.  
The animal walked around the bowl, rolling the stone over the olives.  
Again, the oil drained off into a smaller bowl.

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### Lesson 3.09

#### Olive Oil

Olives are crushed and the oil drains from them.  
The first oil that drains is clear.  
More crushing, more oil drains that becomes darker and darker,  
because more crushing breaks the hard seed inside the olive.  
That seed is called a **pit**.

That first oil, that is clear, they sell for profit.  
The last oil, that is dark oil, they keep and use at home.

They put the olives that have been crushed and are left into a sack and they pressed the sack in a wood frame to squeeze out the last drop of oil.

They saved oil in jars and sealed the tops.

**They used olive oil in many different ways.**

1. Cooking.  
Food made with olive oil. that was healthy.

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2. Anointing.  
When Israel had a new king or new priest, people gathered.  
Leaders prayed for that person.  
Then they poured olive oil on his head.  
Then his work officially began.
3. Grooming.  
When people bathed, they put oil on their bodies.  
They also used oil for hair grooming.
4. Medicine.  
When people had a scratch or cut, they poured oil on that wound, like medicine.  
When people were constipated, they used olive oil as a laxative.
5. Lamps.  
They used a lot of oil for burning lamps or torches.

There were many different uses for olive oil.

Shepherds carried oil for their sheep.  
They had a cow horn.  
They poured oil in the horn, capped it,  
and they hung it on their belt or with a strap over their shoulder.

Since Bible times, the branch of olive tree with its leaves has been a symbol for peace.

#### STUDY QUESTION

Read Genesis 8:11

Why is an olive branch a symbol of peace?

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### Lesson 3.10

#### Figs

The country of Israel grew various other fruits.  
One that was most common was the fig tree.

The Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament, has many stories about fig trees.  
Many chapters discuss both grapes and figs together.

Old Testament prophets often described that when the Savior comes,  
everyone will have his own fig tree,  
and he will sit under it, resting in safety.

During the winter time, the rainy season, fig tree leaves fall off.



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During the spring season the tree begins to sprout new branches.  
Old branches grow some fruit.  
That fruit is not the best, but farmers enjoy getting some early figs.

During the summer the new branches grow new leaves and more fruit.  
That is the best fruit, ready for picking in August and September.

Later, in the fall, again new branches sprout and grow a little bit more fall fruit.

After the farmers harvest the figs, they lay the figs out in the sun to dry.  
Then they put the figs in jars for storage.

Figs are sweet and sticky.  
Figs compressed into a cake is enjoyable eating.

Jewish farms grew enough figs both for the people of Israel,  
and for selling to other countries.

#### STUDY QUESTION

Read Matthew 24:32

Jesus compared the fig tree to what?

Read the rest of the chapter to find the answer.

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#### Lesson 3.11

##### Other fruit.

##### Date Palm

Another fruit that grows in Israel is the **date**.

That grows on a palm tree.

Palm trees grew wild all over Israel,  
especially near the Mediterranean Sea,  
and near the Jordan River in south.

In dry areas, any place that had a water spring, date palm trees grew there.

After they harvested the fruit, they laid it out in the sun to dry.  
They saved it and ate it during the winter times.

##### Pomegranate

Another fruit that grew plentifully in Israel was the pomegranate.

It was a large round fruit that had a blue red skin.

It was hard.  
They sliced it.  
Inside the fruit is white and sweet.

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When they squeezed the fruit, it made juice that could become wine.

The blue red skin could make red dye for coloring clothing.

The Bible Old Testament mentions the pomegranate fruit a lot.

The temple in Jerusalem had a lot of engraved pictures that show pomegranates.

**Other fruit trees**

They had apples,  
apricots,  
peaches,  
fruits the were like lemons,  
and various other fruits.

Today in Israel they grow  
apricots,  
peaches,  
oranges,  
lemons.

The Bible does not name all the fruits that grew there.

They had trees that grew nuts.  
They had almonds that flowered in spring  
During Old Testament times Israel had a lot of almond trees.

Israel had a lot of walnut trees.

Just like today, they mixed various nuts, dried fruits, like figs and raisins.  
They made trail mix.

Other trees that they had:  
oak trees.  
carob trees.

People who were not Jewish that lived in neighboring countries,  
they harvested carob pods and acorns from the oak trees.  
They fed those to pigs.

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Read chapter 4 in *Everyday Life in Bible Times*.