

## A Closely Held Secret

by  
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Shhh! Don't tell anyone!

We readily ascribe an ulterior motive to the Jewish sages who chose to not include Isaiah 53 in the *Haftarah*, so what is the Christian Church's excuse for not teaching Romans 11's account of how Gentile believers in Yeshua are grafted into Israel? But that is not the secret I am shushing you for! The secret is that Messianic Judaism avoids it also! In saying this, I am exonerating Ohev Yisrael, Ahavat Yeshua, and perhaps one or two others, but in most congregations, and in Messianic Jewish literature, you will seldom find grafting spoken of or written about except as a glancing reference. Why? I think because neither the Christian Church nor the Messianic Jewish world delight in highlighting the biblical truth that Christians are covenantally connected to Jews – not only to Yeshua-believing Jews, but to all Jews, because the olive tree in Romans 11 into which they are grafted belongs to Israel. The Christian Church has had no problem teaching that Messianic Jewish believers are joined to IT, because it sees ITSELF as the *ekklesia* – the body of believers. But today's comparatively large and prestigious Gentile "Church" has not wanted to accept the biblical truth that it derives its identity from being covenantally joined to a small minority nation, and an even smaller Yeshua-believing remnant of the Jewish people called Messianic Jews.

I recently gave a short exhortation from the *bimah* suggesting that Ohev might want to adopt an annual tradition of using Christianity's season for celebrating Messiah's birth to teach on Romans 11 and on how Christian believers are grafted into Israel's olive tree. To help us think about it, I will summarize my understanding of how grafting works.

Let us begin with verses 26 and 27:

“And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this *is* My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’”

If we remember that Israel's destiny as a nation is to be saved, it helps us to understand the earlier verses 17 and 18:

“And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, *remember that* you do not support the root, but the root *supports* you.”

There is another place in Scripture that speaks of an olive tree with broken branches, and that is Jeremiah 11:16, words spoken to Israel:

“The LORD called your name, Green Olive Tree, Lovely *and* of Good Fruit. With the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are broken.”

So it is fair to conclude that the Romans olive tree represents Israel, and Gentiles who are originally part of a wild olive tree become grafted into Israel's tree at the raw places where Jewish branches have been broken off due to their unbelief. The Gentile branches do not become Jewish when they join the tree, but they do become part of Israel, nourished by the tree's root. Now Ephesians 2, verses 11-13 and 19 speak of Gentile believers being brought near and becoming fellow citizens with Jews in a "Commonwealth of Israel:"

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh-- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands -- that at that time you were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Messiah Yeshua you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Messiah."

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ..."

It is clear to me that the olive tree's trunk is metaphorically the commonwealth of Israel – elsewhere referred to as the *ekklesia* or the body of believers that consists of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles. But the trunk and its branches are nourished by the root which is a Jewish root consisting of all Israel – those who believe and those who do not. Stated another way, the tree is wholly Jewish-owned, but the branches that reside on it consist of only believers in Yeshua (both Jewish and non-Jewish). It is important that Christians know that they are covenantally joined to Israel – all Israel – not to just the believing Jewish remnant.

Gentile believers' grafted citizenship in Israel is being kept secret and it should not be, and that is why I am suggesting that there be a set time each year when the Romans 11 message is focused upon and taught. Christmas is a time when the Christian world celebrates the birth of Yeshua and recalls the meaning of all that He brought to the world. What better time is there than that?

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