

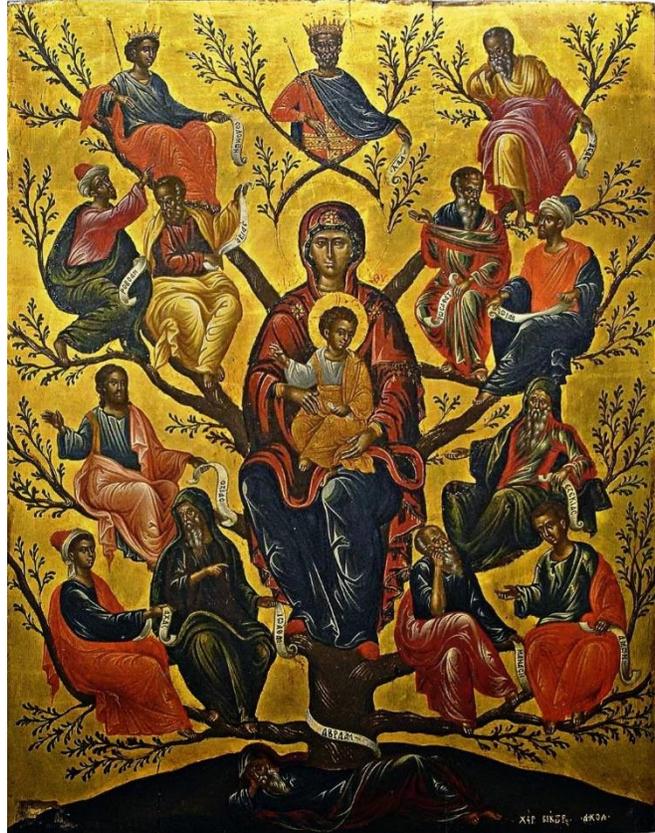
## Down to the Roots

In the Bible, the only thing we ever learn about the person Jesse is that he was the father of David, who would become Israel's greatest king. Nothing else is recorded about him.

In 1 Samuel 16: 1-13, God tells the prophet Samuel, *"Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. For I am sending you to Jesse in Bethlehem, for I have chosen my ruler from among his children... You are to anoint for me my selection."*

When Samuel arrives at Bethlehem, he invites Jesse and his family to a sacrificial feast. Jesse brings with him his seven elder sons. David, the youngest, is left behind to tend the sheep. Each of the seven sons are presented to Samuel, but all seven are rejected by God. *"Are these all the sons you have?"* asks Samuel. When David is sent for and announced, God says, *"Rise and anoint this one."*

In the "root of Jesse" (Isaiah 11:10), the prophet Isaiah traces the lineage of the Messiah who is to be born through the "seed of David" (Romans 1:3).



Using the term, the "stump of Jesse," Isaiah prophesies the future of the nation Israel. God had chosen Israel to be God's own people. Because Israel rejected God's ways and refused to repent, God allowed Assyria to destroy and enslave God's chosen people. In exile away from the land, Israel became a broken and devastated people. Nevertheless, even in this despair, Israel was called to hope - for "a shoot would grow from the stump of Jesse and from his roots a branch would bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1). Though the great blossoming of the Davidic kings had been cut down to a mere stump in exile, a shoot was to survive, and from the lineage of Jesse and David, the chosen Messiah would bring the People of Israel back into the graces of God.

### Isaiah 11:1-10

On that day, a shoot will sprout from the stump of Jesse; from Jesse's roots, a bud will blossom.

The Spirit of YHWH will rest upon you - a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and reverence for YHWH.

You will delight in obeying YHWH, and you won't judge by appearances or make decisions by hearsay.

You will judge the poor with justice and will uphold the rights of the land's afflicted.

With a single word, you will strike down tyrants;

with your decrees you will slay the wicked.

Justice will be a belt around your waist - faithfulness will gird you up.

Then the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat; the calf and the lion cub will graze together, and a little child will lead them.

The cow will feed with the bear, their young will rest together;

the lion will eat hay like the ox, the baby will play next to the den of the cobra,

and the toddler will dance over the viper's nest.

There will be no harm or destruction on all my holy mountain;

for as the water fills the sea, so the land will be filled with the knowledge of YHWH.

On that day, the root of Jesse will serve as a symbol to the peoples of the world - nations will flock to you, and your dwelling will be glorious.

## FOR REFLECTION

1. As you reflect on the story of David's anointing and the metaphor of the "stump of Jesse," can you recall an incident in your life as an LGBTQ person or ally where you were chosen against all odds, or survived when forces tried to cut you down? How did God ensure your prosperity? If you can't think of an example in your life, can you think of one in the life of another LGBTQ person or ally?
2. Two scriptural titles given to the Messiah are "Root of Jesse" and "Heir of David." Through your LGBTQ/ally story, what title would best describe your relationship to your family of origin? How would this title reflect not only your genealogy, but your history and vocation?
3. Through the first coming of Jesus, the following promises have been fulfilled: adoption as LGBTQ children of God, forgiveness of sin, and salvation. How does your life of faith and worship reflect these blessings? What prevents you from owning these graces?
4. As you "delight in obeying YHWH," how do you challenge not only yourself, but also your family, church, and LGBTQ community to bear good fruit? Where do you see repentance and where do you encounter defiance?
5. The second half of the reading from Isaiah lists the coming together of unlikely pairs - wolf/lamb, calf/lion, cow/bear. Who do you see yourself, or the LGBTQ community, being matched up with, in a future free from "harm or destruction?" Why?

6. "God will judge the poor with justice and uphold the rights of the land's afflicted." How would you define justice for you (or for those who are LGBTQ)? Who can you name from the LGBTQ/ally community that would benefit from some form of justice, prayer, a word of comfort, or healing? How will you reach out or help to effect justice?

PRAYER of David ben-Jesse

**Psalm 72: 1-2, 7-8, 12-14, 17**

O God, give your anointed one your judgment -  
and your justice.  
Teach your chosen one  
to govern your people rightly  
and bring justice to the oppressed.



Justice will flower through the days,  
and profound peace, until the moon is no more.  
Your anointed one will rule from sea to sea,  
and from the Euphrates river to the ends of the earth.

Your anointed one will rescue the poor when they cry out,  
and the oppressed when there is no one to help them.  
Your chosen one will take pity on the lowly and the poor, and will save their lives.  
Your chosen one will rescue them from violence and oppression,  
and will treat their blood as precious.

May the name of your anointed one endure forever, and continue as long as the sun.  
In your chosen one the nations of the earth will be blessed,  
and they will bless the anointed in return.