

~FLAX (84)

[Hebrew, *pe'sheth, pish-tah'*, Greek, *li'non*]

- A plant that has been cultivated from ancient times, the fibers of which were, as now, commonly made into linen. **Flax**, *Linum usitatissimum*, may grow from 0.3 to 1.2 meters (1 to 4 feet) in height.
- The slender stalk of the plant, with its pale-green linear leaves, branches out only at the top. Each branch or branchlet terminates in a deep or pale-blue or rarely white, five-petal flower.
- When the **flax** had flower buds, it was ready for harvesting.
- As it was, the **flax** and the barley had been struck, because the barley was in the ear and the **flax** had flower buds. (**Exodus 9:31**)
- Which was done by pulling or hoeing it up. The **flax** was then dried. Likely the stalks of **flax** on the roof of Rahab's house at Jericho had been laid there for this purpose.
- She, though, had taken them up to the roof, and she kept them out of sight among stalks of **flax** laid in rows for her upon the roof. (**Joshua 2:6**)
- The method employed by the Hebrews in processing **flax** probably corresponded to the description given by **Pliny the Elder** of the **First Century C.E.** in his **Natural History [XIX, III, 17,18]** and to the ancient pictorial representation preserved at Beni Hasan in Egypt.
- After the seedpods had been removed, the stalks of **flax** were completely submerged in water and weighted down with stones to prevent them from floating. As the **flax** soaked in water, the woody part rotted, freeing the fibers.
- After the exterior part, or rind, of the stalks became loose, the stalks were taken out of the water and were repeatedly turned over in the sun until completely dry.
- The **flax** was thereafter beaten with mallets on stone slabs, and the fibers were separated and cleansed by combing. The inferior fibers next to the rind were used for lampwicks.

- No crushed reed will he break, and as for a dim **flaxen** wick, he will not extinguish it. In trueness he will bring forth justice. (**Isaiah 42:3**)
- The One bringing forth the war chariot and the horse, the military force and the strong ones at the same time. They will lie down. They will not get up. They will certainly be extinguished. Like a **flaxen** wick they must be put out. (**Isaiah 43:17**)
- No bruised reed will he crush, and no smoldering **flaxen** wick will he extinguish, until he sends out justice with success. (**Matthew 12:20**)
- Whereas the interior fibers, whiter and of a finer quality, were made into yarn that was polished by striking it again and again on a hard stone.
- Low ground and alluvial soil, so characteristic of Egypt, are said to be especially suited for the cultivation of **flax**. In the ancient world this country was famous for its fine linen. Thus the divinely sent plague of hail, which ruined the **flax** and the barley, was a severe blow to the economy of Egypt.
- So Moses stretched out his rod toward the heavens, and Yehowah gave thunders and hail, and fire would run down to the earth, and Yehowah kept making it rain down hail upon the land of Egypt. (**Exodus 9:23**)
- As it was, the **flax** and the barley had been struck, because the barley was in the ear and the **flax** had flower buds. (**Exodus 9:31**)
- Later, the pronouncement against Egypt, recorded by;
- And the workers in carded flax must become ashamed, also the loom workers on white fabrics. (**Isaiah 19:9**)
- Included the workers in carded **flax** among those who would become ashamed.

See Also LINEN