

## ~FOREST (318)

[Hebrew, *ya'`ar*]

### .. Symbolic Use

- The **Hebrew** term for a wooded tract is *ya'`ar*, rendered woods.
- Or when he goes with his fellowman into the **woods** to gather **wood**, and his hand has been raised to strike with the ax to cut the tree, and the iron has slipped off from the wooden handle, and it has hit his fellowman and he has died, he himself should flee to one of these cities and must live. (**Deuteronomy 19:5**)
- And all those of the land came into the **woods**, when honey happened to be over all the surface of the field. (**1 Samuel 14:25**)
- **Forest**
- At this Joshua said to them; If you are a numerous people, go your way up to the **forest**, and you must cut it down for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim, because the mountainous region of Ephraim has become too narrow for you. (**Joshua 17:15**)
- At one time the land of Palestine had abundant **forests** with trees of many types. The Scriptural references to **forests** and **woodlands** and to the use of wood materials make it evident that trees were then much more common there than at present, despite the reforestation efforts in recent years.
- And cities he built in the mountainous region of Judah, and in the woodlands he built fortified places and towers. (**2 Chronicles 27:4**)
- At that Abimelech went up Mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him. Abimelech now took an ax in his hand and cut down a branch of the trees and lifted it up and put it on his shoulder and said to the people that were with him: What you have seen me do, hurry up, do like me! (**Judges 9:48**)
- So all the people cut down also each one a branch for himself and went following Abimelech. Then they put them against the vault, and over them they set the vault on fire, so that all the men of

the tower of Shechem died too, about a thousand men and women. (**Judges 9:49**)

- This is also made certain from the description of wild animal life, showing that the **forests** were able to provide adequate cover and habitation for bears.
- And he proceeded to go up from there to Bethel. As he was going up on the way, there were small boys that came out from the city and began to jeer him and that kept saying to him; Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead! (**2 Kings 2:23**)
- Finally he turned behind him and saw them and called down evil upon them in the name of Yehowah. Then two she-bears came out from the woods and went tearing to pieces forty-two children of their number. (**2 Kings 2:24**)
- **Lions**
- And David went on to say to Saul; Your servant became a shepherd of his father among the flock, and there came a lion, and also a bear, and each carried off a sheep from the drove. (**1 Samuel 17:34**)
- As for Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, who did many deeds in Kabzeel, he himself struck down the two sons of Ariel of Moab, and he himself descended and struck down a lion inside a waterpit in the day of snowfall. (**1 Chronicles 11:22**)
- **Other forms of animal life.**
- And I will conclude with them a covenant of peace, and I shall certainly cause the injurious wild beast to cease out of the land, and they will actually dwell in the wilderness in security and sleep in the **forests**. (**Ezekiel 34:25**)
- But **deforestation** of large areas has come about because of the devastation of war, the extensive use of timber with no accompanying effort to replenish the **forests**, and uncontrolled grazing in which the young shoots of new trees have been eaten by goats and other animals.
- **Denis Baly**, in his book **The Geography of the Bible** (1974, pp. 77,115,116), speaks of centuries of neglect, which has resulted in the disappearance

of many **woodlands** and the loss of as much as 2 meters (6.5 feet) of fertile soil, leaving much of the land rocky and barren.

- Certain **forests** are specifically mentioned in the Bible. The **forests** of Lebanon, now reduced to a few small groves, were outstanding for their splendid tree growth
- In turn Solomon sent to Hiram, saying; (**1 Kings 5:2**)
- You yourself well know that David my father was not able to build a house to the name of Yehowah his God because of the warfare with which they surrounded him, until Yehowah put them under the soles of his feet. (**1 Kings 5:3**)
- And now Yehowah my God has given me rest all around. There is no resister, and there is nothing bad happening. (**1 Kings 5:4**)
- And here I am thinking of building a house to the name of Yehowah my God, just as Yehowah promised to David my father, saying; Your son whom I shall put upon your throne in place of you, he is the one that will build the house to my name. (**1 Kings 5:5**)
- And now command that they cut for me cedars from Lebanon, and my servants themselves will prove to be with your servants, and the wages of your servants I shall give to you according to all that you may say, for you yourself well know that there is among us no one knowing how to cut trees like the Sidonians. (**1 Kings 5:6**)
- And it came about that as soon as Hiram heard the words of Solomon, he began to rejoice greatly, and he went on to say; Blessed is Yehowah today in that he has given David a wise son over this numerous people! (**1 Kings 5:7**)
- Accordingly Hiram sent to Solomon, saying; I have heard what you sent to me. For my part, I shall do all your delight in the matter of timbers of cedar trees and timbers of juniper trees. (**1 Kings 5:8**)
- My servants themselves will bring them down out of Lebanon to the sea, and I, for my part, shall put them in log rafts to go by sea clear to the place that you will send me notice of, and I shall certainly have them broken up there, and you, for your part, will

carry them, and you, for your part, will do my delight by giving the food for my household. (1 Kings 5:9)

- So Hiram became a giver of timbers of cedar trees and timbers of juniper trees to Solomon according to all his delight. (1 Kings 5:10)
- And King Solomon kept bringing up those conscripted for forced labor out of all Israel, and those conscripted for forced labor amounted to thirty thousand men. (1 Kings 5:13)
- And he would send them to Lebanon in shifts of ten thousand a month. For a month they would continue in Lebanon, for two months at their homes, and Adoniram was over those conscripted for forced labor. (1 Kings 5:14)
- And Solomon came to have seventy thousand burden bearers and eighty thousand cutters in the mountain. (1 Kings 5:15)
- Besides Solomon's princely deputies who were over the work, three thousand three hundred foremen over the people who were active in the work. (1 Kings 5:16)
- Accordingly the king commanded that they should quarry great stones, expensive stones, to lay the foundation of the house with hewn stones. (1 Kings 5:17)
- So Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders and the Gebalites did the cutting, and they kept preparing the timbers and the stones to build the house. (1 Kings 5:18)
- By means of your messengers you have taunted Yehowah and you say; With the multitude of my war chariots I myself, I shall certainly ascend the height of mountainous regions, the remotest parts of Lebanon, and I shall cut down its lofty cedars, its choice juniper trees. And I will enter its final lodging place, the forest of its orchard. (2 Kings 19:23)
- With great quantities of cedar, juniper, cypress, and other trees. The forest of Ephraim, perhaps forest of Mahanaim, in which Absalom met disaster, may have been located East of the Jordan River near Mahanaim, and appears to have been of considerable density.
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- And Saul began to be very angry, and this saying was bad from his viewpoint, so that he said; They have given David tens of thousands, but to me they have given the thousands, and there is yet only the kingship to give him! (**1 Samuel 18:8**)
- Finally Saul said to David; Here is my oldest daughter Merab. She is the one that I shall give you as a wife. Only prove yourself a valiant person to me and fight the wars of Yehowah. But as for Saul, he said to himself; Do not let my hand come to be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines come to be upon him. (**1 Samuel 18:17**)
- The **forest** of Hereth was in Judah. (**1 Samuel 22:5**)
- Additionally, the region of Gilead was famous for its **woodlands** and balsam trees, while Bashan to the North was noted for its massive trees, apparently including the oak.
- And upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up and upon all the massive trees of Bashan. (**Isaiah 2:13**)
- Howl, O juniper tree, for the cedar has fallen, because the majestic ones themselves have been despoiled! Howl, you massive trees of Bashan, for the impenetrable **forest** has come down! (**Zechariah 11:2**)
- In the days of David and Solomon, sycamore trees grew in abundance in the Shephelah lowland.
- And the king came to make the silver in Jerusalem like the stones, and cedarwood he made like the sycamore trees that are

in the Shephelah for great quantity. (**1 Kings 10:27**)

- And over the olive groves and the sycamore trees that were in the Shephelah there was Baal-hanan the Gederite, and over the oil supplies there was Joash. (**1 Chronicles 27:28**)
- And the king came to make the silver and the gold in Jerusalem like the stones, and cedarwood he made like the sycamore trees that are in the Shephelah for great quantity. (**2 Chronicles 1:15**)
- Furthermore, the king made the silver in Jerusalem like the stones, and cedarwood he made like the sycamore trees that are in the Shephelah for abundance. (**2 Chronicles 9:27**)
- The Jordan Valley had a thick growth of tamarisks and willows, where lions lurked.
- Because with footmen you have run, and they would tire you out, how, then, can you run a race with horses? And in the land of peace are you confident? So how will you act among the **proud thickets along the Jordan**? (**Jeremiah 12:5**)
- Listen! The howling of shepherds, for their majesty has been despoiled. Listen! The roaring of maned young lions, for the proud thickets along the Jordan have been despoiled. (**Zechariah 11:3**)

## .. Symbolic Use

- Even as trees are used to symbolize individual persons and rulers, so the Bible uses **forests symbolically for peoples or nations** and their rulers. The wickedness of apostate Judah was like a flame to burn up her people
- For wickedness has become aflame just like a fire, thornbushes and weeds it will eat up. And it will catch fire in the thickets of the **forest**, and they will be borne aloft as the billowing of smoke. (**Isaiah 9:18**)
- Yehowah's anger would burn up the southern kingdom of Judah with an inextinguishable flame.
- Son of man, set your face in the direction of the southern quarter and drip words to the south, and prophesy to the **forest of the**

**field of the south (Ezekiel 20:46)**

- And you must say to the **forest of the south**, Hear the word of Yehowah. This is what the Sovereign Lord Yehowah has said, Here I am setting a fire ablaze against you, and it must devour in you every still-moist tree and every dry tree. The kindling flame will not be extinguished, and by it all faces must be scorched from the south to the north. (**Ezekiel 20:47**)
- And all those of flesh must see that I myself, Yehowah, have set it afire, so that it will not be extinguished. (**Ezekiel 20:48**)
- Similar prophecies are given against pagan nations, enemies of God's people. The Assyrian warriors would be cut down and thinned out like trees of a **forest**.
- Like a fire that burns up the **forest** and like a flame that scorches the mountains. (**Psalms 83:14**)
- In just that way may you pursue them with your tempest and may you disturb them with your own storm wind. (**Psalms 83:15**)
- Her voice is like that of a serpent that goes along, for with vital energy men will go, and with axes they will actually come in to her, like those who are gathering pieces of wood. (**Jeremiah 46:22**)
- They will certainly cut down her **forest**, is the utterance of Yehowah, for it could not be penetrated. For they have become more numerous than the locust, and they are without number. (**Jeremiah 46:23**)
- And the rest of the trees of his **forest**, they will become such a number that a mere boy will be able to write them down. (**Isaiah 10:19**)
- And he has struck down the thickets of the **forest** with an iron tool, and by a powerful one Lebanon itself will fall. (**Isaiah 10:34**)