

~OIL TREE (95)

[Hebrew, *'ets she'men*]

- The identification of this tree is doubtful. The Hebrew expression indicates a, **fatwood tree**, rich in **oil** or similar substance. It has long been considered to be the **oleaster**, *Elaeagnus angustifolia*, which is a small tree or shrub common in Palestine, bearing gray-green leaves similar to those of the olive tree and producing a fruit from which an **oil** is obtained, much inferior to the **oil** of the olive.
- While its wood is hard and fine-grained, making it suitable for carving, it hardly seems to fit the description given of the **oil tree** at;
- Further, he made in the innermost room two cherubs of **oil-tree wood**, ten cubits being the height of each one. (1 Kings 6:23)
- And the entrance of the innermost room he made with doors of **oil-tree wood**, side pillars, doorposts and a fifth. (1 Kings 6:31)
- And the two doors were of **oil-tree wood**, and he carved upon them carvings of cherubs and palm-tree figures and the engravings of blossoms, and he overlaid them with gold, and he proceeded to beat the gold down upon the cherubs and the palm-tree figures. (1 Kings 6:32)
- And that was the way he made for the entrance of the temple, the doorposts of **oil-tree wood**, foursquare. (1 Kings 6:33)
- There it is stated that, in the temple construction, the two cherubs, each standing 4.5 meters (14.6 feet) tall, as well as the doors to the Most Holy and the foursquare doorposts for the main entrance to the temple, were made of the wood of the **oil tree**. The **oleaster** seems **much too small a plant to fit these requirements** adequately.
- The **King James Version** and **Revised Standard Version** refer to wood of the **olive tree** at;
- Further, he made in the innermost room two cherubs of **oil-tree wood**, ten cubits being the height of each one. (1 Kings 6:23)
- And it is suggested that the cherubs may have been constructed of several pieces joined together, since the olives short trunk does not

provide timbers of great lengths. Still, the fact that the olive tree is alluded to as distinct from the **oil tree** at;

- And that they should make proclamation and cause a call to pass throughout all their cities and throughout Jerusalem, saying; Go out to the mountainous region and bring in olive leaves and the leaves of **oil trees** and myrtle leaves and palm leaves and the leaves of branchy trees to make booths, according to what is written. (**Nehemiah 8:15**)
- Would seem to rule out this suggestion.
- For this reason some scholars recommend the **Aleppo pine**, *Pinus halepensis*, which they believe could have been called the **oil tree** because of its producing **tar** and **turpentine**.
- This lofty pine is one of the most common evergreens in Palestine, and there is evidence to show that the region around Jerusalem once had a sizable forest of it.
- It grows up to 20 meters (66 feet) tall, with smooth gray bark, light-green needles, and reddish-brown cones. Its wood is said to be of a quality approaching that of the cedar.
- This tree could, therefore, fit the requirements for the temple building, however, in view of the lack of positive evidence, the **New World Translation** renders the **Hebrew** expression simply as, **oil tree**.
- Branches of the **oil tree**, along with those of the olive, myrtle, and palm, were used in Jerusalem at the Festival of Booths.
- And that they should make proclamation and cause a call to pass throughout all their cities and throughout Jerusalem, saying; Go out to the mountainous region and bring in olive leaves and the leaves of **oil trees** and myrtle leaves and palm leaves and the leaves of branchy trees to make booths, according to what is written. (**Nehemiah 8:15**)

The **oil tree** is also one of the trees foretold to grace the wilderness, in Isaiah's restoration prophecy.

- In the wilderness I shall set the cedar tree, the acacia and the myrtle and the **oil tree**. In the desert plain I shall place the juniper tree, the ash and the cypress at the same time. (**Isaiah**

41:19)