

~TREES (665)

[Hebrew, *'ets*, Greek, *den'dron*]

.. Figurative Use

- The great variation in the climate of Palestine and neighboring lands made possible a very diversified growth of **trees**, from the cedars of Lebanon to the date **palms** of Jericho and the broom **trees** of the desert.
- Some **30** different types of **trees** are mentioned in the Bible, and these are considered in this publication under the particular name of the **tree**.
- The problem of identifying the particular **tree** indicated by the original Hebrew or Greek word is frequently a difficult one, and in a number of cases, the identification is only tentative.
- Such identification depends upon the extent of description given in the actual Bible record as to the characteristics of the **tree**, at times indicated by the meaning of the root word from which the name is derived, and by comparison of such description with the **trees** now known to grow in Bible lands, particularly in the regions indicated in the Bible text, when these are so mentioned.
- Additional help comes from a study of cognate words, that is, words that by their form give evidence of being related and having proceeded from the same original root or source, in other languages, such as **Arabic** and **Aramaic**.
- In some cases it seems the wiser course simply to transliterate the name, as, for example, in the case of the **algum tree**.
- As **Harold and Alma Moldenke** point out in their book [**Plants of the Bible** (1952, pp. 5,6)], many of the **trees** now found in Palestine may not have been growing there in Bible times, since, as they state, **floras change**, especially in regions like **Palestine and Egypt** where man, notorious for his aptitude in upsetting the delicately adjusted balances in nature, has been most active for thousands of years. They further state:
- Many plants which grew in abundance in the Holy Land or surrounding countries in Biblical days are now no longer found there or else grow in far smaller numbers.

- **Some types have been exterminated or greatly diminished by excessive cultivation of the land or by devastation of timberlands due to the invading forces of Assyria, Babylon, on down to Rome.**
- **For this is what Yehowah of armies has said; Cut down wood and throw up against Jerusalem a siege rampart. She is the city with which an accounting must be held. She is nothing but oppression in the midst of her. ([Jeremiah 6:6](#))**
- **Because the days will come upon you when your enemies will build around you a fortification with pointed stakes and will encircle you and distress you from every side. ([Luke 19:43](#))**
- **The destruction of **trees** and **forests** has allowed the topsoil to wash away and has resulted in barrenness and desolation in many areas.**
- **As early as in Abraham's day, **trees** were listed in a contract for the transfer of property.**
- **My lord, listen to me. A land plot worth four hundred silver shekels, what is that between me and you? So bury your dead. ([Genesis 23:15](#))**
- **Accordingly Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out to Ephron the amount of silver that he had spoken in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred silver shekels current with the merchants. ([Genesis 23:16](#))**
- **Thus the field of Ephron that was in Machpelah, which is in front of Mamre, the field and the cave that was in it and all the **trees** that were in the field, which were within all its boundaries round about, became confirmed ([Genesis 23:17](#))**
- **To Abraham as his purchased property before the eyes of the sons of Heth among all those entering the gate of his city. ([Genesis 23:18](#))**
- **In the Law. Later Yehowah God brought Israel into Canaan, a land containing **trees** for food in abundance. He promised to provide the needed rain if Israel obeyed him, and he required that a tenth of the fruits be set aside for the use of the sanctuary and the priesthood.**

- And they went capturing fortified cities and a fat soil and taking in possession houses full of all good things, cisterns hewn out, vineyards and olive groves and **trees** for food in abundance, and they began to eat and to be satisfied and to grow fat and to luxuriate in your great goodness. (**Nehemiah 9:25**)
- If you continue walking in my statutes and keeping my commandments and you do carry them out. (**Leviticus 26:3**)
- I shall also certainly give your showers of rain at their proper time, and the land will indeed give its yield, and the **tree** of the field will give its fruit. (**Leviticus 26:4**)
- And every tenth part of the land, out of the seed of the land and the fruit of the **tree**, belongs to Yehowah. It is something holy to Yehowah. (**Leviticus 27:30**)
- On invading the land, the Israelites were instructed not to destroy the fruit-bearing **trees** when attacking the cities, although centuries later the kings of Judah and Israel were authorized by God to devastate the **good trees** of the kingdom of Moab.
- The reason appears to be that Moab was outside the Promised Land. It was punitive warfare against Moab, and the Israelite action was a protection against Moabite revolt or retaliation.
- In case you lay siege to a city many days by fighting against it so as to capture it, you must not ruin its **trees** by wielding an ax against them, for you should eat from them, and you must not cut them down, for is the **tree** of the field a man to be besieged by you? (**Deuteronomy 20:19**)
- Only a tree that you know is not a tree for food, it is the one you should ruin, and you must cut it down and build siegeworks against the city that is making war with you, until it falls. (**Deuteronomy 20:20**)
- And you must strike down every fortified city and every choice city, and every good tree you should fell, and all the springs of water you should stop up, and every good tract of land you should mar with stones. (**2 Kings 3:19**)
- And the cities they went throwing down, and, as for every good tract of land, they would pitch each one his stone and actually fill it, and every spring of water they would stop up, and every good

tree they would fell, until they left only the stones of Kir-hareseth remaining in it, and the slingers began going around it and striking it down. ([2 Kings 3:25](#))

- For this is what Yehowah of armies has said; Cut down wood and throw up against Jerusalem a siege rampart. She is the city with which an accounting must be held. She is nothing but oppression in the midst of her. ([Jeremiah 6:6](#))
- On planting a **tree**, the owner was not to eat of its fruit during the first three years, and in the fourth year its fruitage was to be devoted to sanctuary use.
- And in case you people come into the land, and you must plant any tree for food, you must also consider its fruitage impure as its **foreskin**. For three years it will continue uncircumcised for you. It should not be eaten. ([Leviticus 19:23](#))
- But in the fourth year all its fruit will become a holy thing of festal exultation to Yehowah. ([Leviticus 19:24](#))
- And in the fifth year you may eat its fruit in order to add its produce to yourselves. I am Yehowah your God. ([Leviticus 19:25](#))
- You must also take some of the firstfruits of all the fruitage of the soil, which you will bring in from the land of yours that Yehowah your God is giving you, and you must put them in a basket and go to the place that Yehowah your God will choose to have his name reside there. ([Deuteronomy 26:2](#))
- Thereafter the annual first ripe fruits were likewise so dedicated.
- And to bring the first ripe fruits of our ground and the first ripe fruits of all the fruitage of every sort of **tree**, year by year, to the house of Yehowah. ([Nehemiah 10:35](#))
- And the firstborn of our sons and of our domestic animals, according to what is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and of our flocks, to bring them to the house of our God, to the priests that were ministering in the house of our God. ([Nehemiah 10:36](#))
- Also, the firstfruits of our coarse meal and our contributions and

the fruitage of every sort of **tree**, new wine and oil we should bring to the priests to the dining halls of the house of our God, also the tenth from our soil to the Levites, as they, the Levites, are the ones receiving a tenth in all our agricultural cities. (**Nehemiah 10:37**)

·· **Figurative Use**

- In the garden of Eden, God employed two **trees** for symbolic purposes, the **tree of life** and the **tree of the knowledge of good and bad**. Failure to respect God's decree concerning the latter brought man's fall.
- Thus Yehowah God made to grow out of the ground every tree desirable to ones sight and good for food and also the **tree** of life in the middle of the garden and the **tree** of the knowledge of good and bad. (**Genesis 2:9**)
- And Yehowah God also laid this command upon the man; From every **tree** of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. (**Genesis 2:16**)
- But as for the **tree** of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will positively die. (**Genesis 2:17**)
- Now the serpent proved to be the most cautious of all the wild beasts of the field that Yehowah God had made. So it began to say to the woman; Is it really so that God said you must not eat from every **tree of the garden**? (**Genesis 3:1**)
- At this the woman said to the serpent; Of the fruit of the **trees** of the garden we may eat. (**Genesis 3:2**)
- But as for eating of the fruit of the **tree that is in the middle of the garden**, God has said; You must not eat from it, no, you must not touch it that you do not die. (**Genesis 3:3**)
- At this the serpent said to the woman; You positively will not die. (**Genesis 3:4**)
- For God knows that in the very day of your eating from it your eyes are bound to be opened and you are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad. (**Genesis 3:5**)

- **Consequently the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was something to be longed for to the eyes, yes, the tree was desirable to look upon. So she began taking of its fruit and eating it. Afterward she gave some also to her husband when with her and he began eating it. ([Genesis 3:6](#))**
- **Then the eyes of both of them became opened and they began to realize that they were naked. Hence they sewed fig leaves together and made loin coverings for themselves. ([Genesis 3:7](#))**
- **Later they heard the voice of Yehowah God walking in the garden about the breezy part of the day, and the man and his wife went into hiding from the face of Yehowah God in between the **trees** of the garden. ([Genesis 3:8](#))**
- **And Yehowah God kept calling to the man and saying to him; Where are you? ([Genesis 3:9](#))**
- **Finally he said; Your voice I heard in the garden, but I was afraid because I was naked and so I hid myself. ([Genesis 3:10](#))**
- **At that he said; Who told you that you were naked? From the **tree** from which I commanded you not to eat have you eaten? ([Genesis 3:11](#))**
- **And the man went on to say; The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the **tree** and so I ate. ([Genesis 3:12](#))**
- **With that Yehowah God said to the woman; What is this you have done? To this the woman replied; The serpent, it deceived me and so I ate. ([Genesis 3:13](#))**
- **And Yehowah God proceeded to say to the serpent; Because you have done this thing, you are the cursed one out of all the domestic animals and out of all the wild beasts of the field. Upon your belly you will go and dust is what you will eat all the days of your life. ([Genesis 3:14](#))**
- **And I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel. ([Genesis 3:15](#))**

- To the woman he said; I shall greatly increase the pain of your pregnancy, in birth pangs you will bring forth children, and your craving will be for your husband, and he will dominate you. (**Genesis 3:16**)
- And to Adam he said; Because you listened to your wifes voice and took to eating from the tree concerning which I gave you this command, You must not eat from it, cursed is the ground on your account. In pain you will eat its produce all the days of your life. (**Genesis 3:17**)
- And thorns and thistles it will grow for you, and you must eat the vegetation of the field. (**Genesis 3:18**)
- In the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return. (**Genesis 3:19**)
- After this Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she had to become the mother of everyone living. (**Genesis 3:20**)
- And Yehowah God proceeded to make long garments of skin for Adam and for his wife and to clothe them. (**Genesis 3:21**)
- And Yehowah God went on to say; Here the man has become like one of us in knowing good and bad, and now in order, that he may not put his hand out and actually take fruit also from the tree of life and eat and live to time indefinite. (**Genesis 3:22**)
- With that Yehowah God put him out of the garden of Eden to cultivate the ground from which he had been taken. (**Genesis 3:23**)
- And so he drove the man out and posted at the east of the garden of Eden the cherubs and the flaming blade of a sword that was turning itself continually to guard the way to the tree of life. (**Genesis 3:24**)
- The significance of the **tree of the knowledge of good and bad** and of the restriction placed on its fruit has often been incorrectly viewed as relating to the sexual act between the first human pair. This view is contradicted by God's plain command to them as male and female to be fruitful and become many and fill the earth.

- Further, God blessed them and God said to them; Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and every living creature that is moving upon the earth. (**Genesis 1:28**)
- Rather, by standing for **the knowledge of good and bad** and by God's pronouncement decreeing it to be out-of-bounds for the human pair, the **tree** became a symbol of God's right to determine or set the standards for man as to what is **good, or approved by God**, and what is **bad, or condemned by God**.
- It thus constituted a test of man's respect for his Creator's position and his willingness to remain within the area of freedom decreed by God, an area that was by no means cramped and that allowed for the greatest enjoyment of human life.
- Therefore, to violate the boundaries of the prohibited area by eating of the **tree of the knowledge of good and bad** would be an invasion of or a revolt against God's domain and authority.

See Also SOVEREIGNTY

- **Trees** were also used to **symbolize individuals, rulers, and kingdoms**, as in the prophecy likening the fall of Pharaoh and his crowd to the cutting down of a lofty cedar (**Ezekiel Chapter 31**), as well as in Daniel's prophecy regarding the mighty **tree** representing dominion in the kingdom of mankind.
- Now the visions of my head upon my bed I happened to be beholding, and, look! A **tree** in the midst of the earth, the height of which was immense. (**Daniel 4:10**)
- The **tree** grew up and became strong, and its very height finally reached the heavens, and it was visible to the extremity of the whole earth. (**Daniel 4:11**)
- Its foliage was fair, and its fruit was abundant, and there was food for all on it. Under it the beast of the field would seek shade, and on its boughs the birds of the heavens would dwell, and from it all flesh would feed itself. (**Daniel 4:12**)
- I continued beholding in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, look! A watcher, even a holy one, coming down from the

heavens themselves. (**Daniel 4:13**)

- He was calling out loudly, and this is what he was saying; **Chop the tree down**, and cut off its boughs. Shake off its foliage, and scatter its fruitage. Let the beast flee from under it, and the birds from its boughs. (**Daniel 4:14**)
- However, leave its rootstock itself in the earth, even with a banding of iron and of copper, among the grass of the field, and with the dew of the heavens let it be wet, and with the beast let its portion be among the vegetation of the earth. (**Daniel 4:15**)
- Let its heart be changed from that of mankind, and let the heart of a beast be given to it, and let seven times pass over it. (**Daniel 4:16**)
- By the decree of watchers the thing is, and by the saying of holy ones the request is, to the intent that people living may know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind and that to the one whom he wants to, he gives it and he sets up over it even the lowliest one of mankind. (**Daniel 4:17**)
- This was the dream that I myself, King Nebuchadnezzar, beheld, and you yourself, O Belteshazzar, say what the interpretation is, forasmuch as all the other wise men of my kingdom are unable to make known to me the interpretation itself. But you are competent, because the spirit of holy gods is in you. (**Daniel 4:18**)
- At that time Daniel himself, whose name is Belteshazzar, was astonished for a moment, and his very thoughts began to frighten him. The king was answering and saying; O Belteshazzar, do not let the dream and the interpretation themselves frighten you. Belteshazzar was answering and saying; O my lord, may the dream apply to those hating you, and its interpretation to your adversaries. (**Daniel 4:19**)
- The tree that you beheld, that grew great and became strong and the height of which finally reached the heavens and which was visible to all the earth. (**Daniel 4:20**)
- And the foliage of which was fair, and the fruit of which was abundant, and on which there was food for all, under which the beasts of the field would dwell, and on the boughs of which the

birds of the heavens would reside. ([Daniel 4:21](#))

- It is you, O king, because you have grown great and become strong, and your grandeur has grown great and reached to the heavens, and your rulership to the extremity of the earth. ([Daniel 4:22](#))
- And because the king beheld a watcher, even a holy one, coming down from the heavens, who was also saying; **Chop the tree down, and ruin it.** However, leave its **rootstock** itself in the earth, but with a banding of iron and of copper, among the grass of the field, and with the dew of the heavens let it become wet, and with the beasts of the field let its portion be until seven times themselves pass over it. ([Daniel 4:23](#))
- This is the interpretation, O king, and the decree of the Most High is that which must befall my lord the king. ([Daniel 4:24](#))
- And you they will be driving away from men, and with the beasts of the field your dwelling will come to be, and the vegetation is what they will give even to you to eat just like bulls, and with the dew of the heavens you yourself will be getting wet, and seven times themselves will pass over you, until you know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind, and that to the one whom he wants to he gives it. ([Daniel 4:25](#))
- And because they said to leave the **rootstock** of the **tree**, your kingdom will be sure to you after you know that the heavens are ruling. ([Daniel 4:26](#))
- The righteous man is likened to a **tree** planted by streams of water.
- And he will certainly become **like a tree planted by streams of water**, that gives its own fruit in its season and the foliage of which does not wither, and everything he does will succeed. ([Psalms 1:3](#))
- Whose foliage is luxuriant and whose fruit continues to grow even in drought.
- And he will certainly become like a **tree** planted by the waters, that sends out its roots right by the watercourse, and he will not see when heat comes, but his foliage will actually prove to be

luxuriant. And in the year of drought he will not become anxious, nor will he leave off from producing fruit. (**Jeremiah 17:8**)

- The promise that the days of God's restored people will be like those of a **tree**.
- They will not build and someone else have occupancy, they will not plant and someone else do the eating. For like the days of a **tree** will the days of my people be, and the work of their own hands my chosen ones will use to the full. (**Isaiah 65:22**)
- Is made more meaningful by the fact that some **trees** of Palestine live for centuries, even up to a thousand years or more. In Ezekiel's vision a stream flowing from the visionary temple was lined with fruitful **trees** of healing foliage, and a similar vision is presented in the book of Revelation.
- When I returned, why, look! On the bank of the torrent there were very many **trees**, on this side and on that side. (**Ezekiel 47:7**)
- And alongside the torrent there will come up, along its bank on this side and on that side, all sorts of **trees** for food. Their leafage will not wither, nor will their fruitage be consumed. In their months they will bear new fruit, because the water for them, it is coming forth from the very sanctuary. And their fruitage must prove to be for food and their leafage for healing. (**Ezekiel 47:12**)
- Down the middle of its broad way. And on this side of the river and on that side there were **trees** of life producing twelve crops of fruit, yielding their fruits each month. And the leaves of the trees were for the curing of the nations. (**Revelation 22:2**)
- Happy are those who wash their robes, that the authority to go to the **trees** of life may be theirs and that they may gain entrance into the city by its gates. (**Revelation 22:14**)
- The expression, **tree of life**, is used with regard to true wisdom, the fruitage of the righteous, the realization of a thing desired, and calmness of the tongue, it is also associated with the crown of life.
- It is a **tree of life** to those taking hold of it, and those keeping

- fast hold of it are to be called happy. (**Proverbs 3:18**)
- The fruitage of the righteous one is a **tree of life**, and he that is winning souls is wise. (**Proverbs 11:30**)
 - Expectation postponed is making the heart sick, but the thing desired is a **tree of life** when it does come. (**Proverbs 13:12**)
 - The calmness of the tongue is a **tree of life**, but distortion in it means a breaking down in the spirit. (**Proverbs 15:4**)
 - Let the one who has an ear hear what the spirit says to the congregations; To him that conquers I will grant to eat of the **tree of life**, which is in the paradise of God. (**Revelation 2:7**)
 - Do not be afraid of the things you are about to suffer. Look! The Devil will keep on throwing some of you into prison that you may be fully put to the test, and that you may have tribulation ten days. Prove yourself faithful even to death, and I will give you the **crown of life**. (**Revelation 2:10**)
 - **Trees** are mentioned in association with the fruitful, peaceful, and joyful conditions resulting from Yehowah's kingship and the restoration of his people.
 - At the same time let the **trees** of the forest break out joyfully on account of Yehowah, for he has come to judge the earth. (**1 Chronicles 16:33**)
 - Let the open field exult and all that is in it. At the same time let all the **trees** of the forest break out joyfully (**Psalms 96:12**)
 - You mountains and all you hills, you fruit **trees** and all you cedars. (**Psalms 148:9**)
 - For with rejoicing you people will go forth, and with peace you will be brought in. The mountains and the hills themselves will become cheerful before you with a joyful outcry, and the very **trees** of the field will all clap their hands. (**Isaiah 55:12**)
 - And the tree of the field must give its fruitage, and the land itself will give its yield, and they will actually prove to be on their soil in security. And they will have to know that I am Yehowah when I break the bars of their yoke and I have delivered them out of

the hand of those who had been using them as slaves. (**Ezekiel 34:27**)

- And I shall certainly make the fruitage of the tree abound, and the produce of the field, in order, that you may no more receive among the nations the reproach of famine. (**Ezekiel 36:30**)
- Jesus used **trees** in some of his illustrations stressing the need for fruitfulness in true righteousness, as John the Baptizer had done before him.
- Already the ax is lying at the root of the **trees**, every tree, then, that does not produce fine fruit is to be cut down and thrown into the fire. (**Matthew 3:10**)
- Be on the watch for the false prophets that come to you in sheeps covering, but inside they are ravenous wolves. (**Matthew 7:15**)
- By their fruits you will recognize them. Never do people gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles, do they? (**Matthew 7:16**)
- Likewise every good tree produces fine fruit, but every rotten tree produces worthless fruit. (**Matthew 7:17**)
- A good **tree** cannot bear worthless fruit, neither can a rotten tree produce fine fruit. (**Matthew 7:18**)
- Every **tree** not producing fine fruit gets cut down and thrown into the fire. (**Matthew 7:19**)
- Really, then, by their fruits you will recognize those men. (**Matthew 7:20**)
- Since fruit **trees** were taxed in Palestine in that time, an unproductive **tree**, as good as dead, was an undesirable burden to the owner and, hence, a **tree** to be chopped down and destroyed.
- Then he went on to tell this illustration; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it, but found none. (**Luke 13:6**)
- Then he said to the vinedresser, Here it is three years that I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, but have found none. Cut

it down! Why really should it keep the ground useless? (**Luke 13:7**)

- In reply he said to him, Master, let it alone also this year, until I dig around it and put on manure. (**Luke 13:8**)
- And if then it produces fruit in the future, well and good, but if not, you shall cut it down. (**Luke 13:9**)
- These are the rocks hidden below water in your love feasts while they feast with you, shepherds that feed themselves without fear, waterless clouds carried this way and that by winds, **trees** in late autumn, but fruitless, having died twice, having been uprooted. (**Jude 1:12**)
- Immoral persons who infiltrate the Christian congregation are likened to fruitless **trees** in autumn time that have died twice. Their being described as **twice dead** may be an emphatic way of expressing that they are completely dead.
- Or, it could signify that they are dead from two viewpoints. They are,
 - (1) barren or fruitless
 - (2) literally dead, possessing no vitality.
- The **Hebrew** word for **tree** is also used with regard to the stake or post on which a body was hung.
- In three days from now Pharaoh will lift up your head from off you and will certainly hang you upon a stake, and the fowls will certainly eat your flesh from off you. (**Genesis 40:19**)
- And in case there comes to be in a man a sin deserving the sentence of death, and he has been put to death, and you have hung him upon a stake. (**Deuteronomy 21:22**)
- His dead body should not stay all night on the stake, but you should by all means bury him on that day, because something accursed of God is the one hung up, and you must not defile your soil, which Yehowah your God is giving you as an inheritance. (**Deuteronomy 21:23**)

- And he hanged the king of Ai upon a stake until the evening time, and as the sun was about to set Joshua gave the command, and then they took his dead body down from the stake and pitched it at the entrance of the gate of the city and raised up a great pile of stones over him, down to this day. (**Joshua 8:29**)
- So the matter was sought out and eventually found out, and both of them got to be hanged on a stake, after which it was written in the book of the affairs of the days before the king. (**Esther 2:23**)
- In applying;
- His dead body should not stay all night on the stake, but you should by all means bury him on that day, because something accursed of God is the one hung up, and you must not defile your soil, which Yehowah your God is giving you as an inheritance. (**Deuteronomy 21:23**)
- The apostle Paul used the **Greek** word *xy'lon*, **wood**.
- Christ by purchase released us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse instead of us, because it is written: Accursed is every man hanged upon a **stake**. (**Galatians 3:13**)

See Also TORTURE STAKE