

Doctrine of Trees

1. Trees in Palestine, as in other countries, were objects of beauty and utility. They communicated spiritual realities.
 - *Psalms 1:3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

2. According to the Law of Moses when the Israelites initially planted fruit trees in Palestine they were to treat the fruit of every tree as uncircumcised which means they were not to eat from the trees until the fifth year.
 - *Leviticus 19:23 And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of. 24 But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the Lord withal. 25 And in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I am the Lord your God.*

"The reason for this command is not to be sought for in the fact that in the first three years fruit trees bear only a little fruit, and that somewhat insipid, and that if the blossom or fruit is broken off the first year the trees will bear all the more plentifully afterward, though this end would no doubt be thereby attained; but it rests rather upon ethical grounds. Israel was to treat the fruits of horticulture with the most careful regard as a gift of God, and sanctify the enjoyment of them by a thank offering. In the fourth year the whole of the fruit was to be a holiness of praise for Jehovah, i.e., to be offered to the Lord as a holy sacrificial gift, in praise and thanksgiving for the blessing which he had bestowed upon the fruit trees" (Keil and Delitzsch Commentary).

3. During times of war, the Jews were prohibited from destroying the fruit trees of their enemies for a practical reason. The fruit would sustain the soldiers on the field of battle by providing nourishment.
 - *Deuteronomy 20:19 When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege: 20 Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued.*

4. There are several memorable trees mentioned in Scripture.

- There is the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. *Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*
- There is the tree of Allon-bacuth where, under an oak the nurse of Rebekah was buried. *Genesis 35:8 But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth [oak of weeping].*
- There is the tamarisk tree of Gibeah in Judah where Saul gathered his forces to attack David. *1 Samuel 22:6 When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that were with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him ;)*

This tree was planted by Abraham at Beersheba when he “called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.” Because the tree enjoys a long life, is made of hard wood and has evergreen leaves, it is a fitting symbol of the enduring grace of the faithful and covenant keeping God. *Genesis 21:33 And Abraham planted a grove in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.* What a tragedy that the place of blessing had become a place of treachery.

- There is the oak in Shechem under which the law was set up by Joshua. *Joshua 24:26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.*
- There is the palm tree. *Judges 4:5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.*
- There is the tree of Calvary. There is a legend associated with the tree of Calvary. As legend has it, the cross on which Jesus was crucified was made from a dogwood tree. God decreed that the dogwood tree would from that day forth never grow large enough to be used to make a cross. Thus, the dogwood tree is a small, under story tree. The flower of the dogwood has four petals which makes the shape of a cross. The center of the flower resembles the crown of thorns with bright red, clustered fruit in the center representing the blood of Christ. The dogwood blooms in April when Easter Sunday marks the resurrection of Christ after the Crucifixion

The Legend of the Dogwood

“In Jesus time, the dogwood grew
To a stately size and a lovely hue.

'Twas strong & firm it's branches interwoven
For the cross of Christ its timbers were chosen.

Seeing the distress at this use of their wood
Christ made a promise which still holds good:

"Never again shall the dogwood grow
Large enough to be used so

Slender & twisted, it shall be
With blossoms like the cross for all to see.

As blood stains the petals marked in brown
The blossom's center wears a thorny crown.

All who see it will remember me
Crucified on a cross from the dogwood tree.

Cherished and protected this tree shall be
A reminder to all of my agony."

Author unknown



- There is the tree of life spoken of in both a literal and symbolic way.

Literally.

Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:22 And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Genesis 3:24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Symbolically.

Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Revelation 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Spiritually.

Proverbs 3:18 She [wisdom] is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

Proverbs 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

Proverbs 13:12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

Proverbs 15:4 A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

5. Among the Canaanites and other Eastern peoples, a sensual form of worship was carried on in holy groves.

6. In the absence of groves they chose green trees with thick foliage such as the mighty oak, the evergreen terebinth, and the poplar or osier, which remains green even in the heat of summer.
- *Ezekiel 6:13 Then shall ye know that I am the Lord, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols.*
 - *Ezekiel 20:28 For when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink offerings.*
 - *Isaiah 1:29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. 30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.*
 - *Isaiah 57:5 Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks?*
7. One explanation of how sensual worship and idolatry came about in the open is suggested by the words of the prophet Hosea. Simply enough, there was coolness and shade under the trees.
- *Hosea 4:13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.*