



June 23, 2023

Trees, Fruit, and Planning

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Most of my life I've been a "planner". By that I mean I am one who looks ahead, prepares for the best outcome, and sometimes for many years ahead. I plan my weeks around God's weekly Sabbath. I plan my months and year around His Holy Days as well.

Having stated that, there is always the little thing that no one can prepare for, and that is unforeseen change or circumstances. God does not change, His Holy Days remain consistent, but other things do change, sometimes often.

Speaking of planning, we're busily preparing and planning with meetings and web conferences for the upcoming fall Feast Days and our Festival site in Orange Beach. The Feast of Tabernacles requires a large amount of time with preparing, but it's inspiring and encouraging to do so.

Here in the Northern hemisphere, with my wife and I heading to Minnesota and surrounding states on Sunday, I'm also reminded that it won't be long and even in the Southern part of the United States, it will soon feel a little like Autumn with the cooler nights. The leaves on some of the trees will also before too long turning color and on some trees falling. It's actually my favorite time of year. I anxiously look forward to His fall Holy Days especially! I am planning for this fall. I'm thinking about the Fall Feasts.

Recently I have again been talking about trees in my Friday evening letters. For most of my life, I've noted the condition of trees can be an indicator of seasonal changes and/or other factors. Jesus preached about the indicators of the end of the age. He used the example of a tree budding out. *"Then He spoke to them a*

parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near." (Luke 21:29-31).

In history, Abraham chose a location to set up his tent near some trees in Canaan. The Hebrew word 'elown' is translated "terebinth trees" in the NKJV of Genesis 14:13 and 18:1. The word is translated "oaks" in the ASV and RSV translations. *"Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day"* (Genesis 18:1 NKJV). Evidently the trees supplied some shade from the hot sun by their overspreading branches. There is some uncertainty about what species of tree is referred to.

Trees are also associated with blessings and even healing. The bitter waters of Marah were healed and made sweet when the LORD directed Moses to cast a tree (evidently a small one) into the pool of water (Exodus 15:23-25) *"Then the Israelites were led to an oasis called Elim which had "twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees"* (Exodus 15:27) The seventy palm trees certainly represent blessings of the location along with the wells.

God also gave special instructions concerning the planting of fruit trees and then harvesting the fruit:

"When you come into the land, and have planted all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as uncircumcised. Three years it shall be as uncircumcised to you. It shall not be eaten. But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the LORD. And in the fifth year you may eat its fruit, that it may yield to you its increase . . ." (Leviticus 19:23-25)

I found a comment in the JFB Commentary to be interesting and instructive concerning these verses:

"Every gardener will teach us not to let fruit trees bear in their earliest years, but to pluck off the blossoms: and for this reason, that they will thus thrive the better, and bear more abundantly afterwards. The very expression, "to regard them as uncircumcised," suggests the propriety of pinching them off; I do not say cutting

them off, because it is generally the hand, and not a knife, that is employed in this operation"

By removing most of the blossoms the energy of the tree will be sent to developing the trunk and branches for supporting the fruit to be born in later years. Even after the trees mature past the fourth year, the bloom and the fruit that is set needs to be thinned to cause the fruit to size up and still be supported by the branches. The fruit of the fourth year is not labeled uncircumcised and must have been removed and presented to the LORD as an offering in some way.

To produce fruit, we must plan. There's a process involved. God plans. It's not an automatic process. Even His Holy Days are often referred to as "The Plan of God".

We'll continue next time and begin with an examination of Leviticus 23:40-43.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



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