



FOUNDATION BIBLE SCHOOL ARCHIVES

TOPIC: FIG, FIG-TREE “עץ תאנה” te'enah

DATE: 16th OF JUNE, 2020.

FIG, FIG-TREE

(fig'-tre) (*te'enab*, plural *te'enim*, specially "figs"; *sukon paggim*, "green figs" only in Song 2:13; *suke*, "fig-tree," *sukon*, "fig")

FIGS



The fruit of the fig-tree is peculiar. The floral axis, instead of expanding outward, as with most flowers, closes, as the flower develops, upon the small internal flowers, leaving finally but a small opening at the apex; the axis itself becomes succulent and fruit-like. The male flowers lie around the opening, the female flowers

deeper in; fertilization is brought about by the presence of small hymenopterous insects.

There are many varieties of figs in Palestine differing in sweetness, in color and consistence; some are good and some are bad (compare Jeremiah 24:1,8; 29:17). In Palestine and other warm climates, the fig yields two crops annually—an earlier one, ripe about June, growing from the "old wood," i.e. from the midsummer sprouts of the previous year, and a second, more important one, ripe about August, which grows upon the "new wood," i.e. upon the spring shoots. By December, fig-trees in the mountainous regions of Palestine have shed all their leaves, and they remain bare until about the end of March, when they commence putting forth their tender leaf buds (Matthew 24:32; Mark 13:28,32; Luke 21:29-33), and at the same time, in the leaf axils, appear the tiny figs. The figs grow to about the size of a small cherry and then the majority fall off. They belong to the early signs of spring. (cf. the "winter fruit" of Revelation 6:13; AV "untimely figs"). Known to the Arabs as *taksh*, this underdeveloped fruit is often gathered for sale in the markets. In April and May the fig leaves develop and the fruit reaches maturity about June (cf. Isaiah 28:4; Jeremiah 24:2; Hosea 9:10), being then of delicate flavor (e.g., Micah 7:1). Frequently, ripe winter figs can be found, hidden by leaves, when the summer figs are growing in August and September.

Jerome, on Ezekiel 6 describes it as a mass of figs and rich dates, formed into the shape of bricks or tiles, and compressed in order that they may keep. Such cakes harden so as to need cutting with an axe. The fig is still extensively cultivated

the fig-tree, as repeatedly observed by the present writer in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. When the young leaves are newly appearing, in April, every fig-tree which is going to bear fruit at all will have some taksh ("immature figs") upon it, even though "the time of figs" (Mark 11:13 the King James Version), i.e. of ordinary edible figs—either early or late crop - "was not yet." This taksh is not only eaten today, but it is sure evidence, even when it falls, that the tree bearing it is not barren. This acted parable must be compared with Luke 13:6,9; now the time of judgment was surely coming, the fate of the fruitless Jewish nation was forcibly foretold.

Third Commentary

Christ's miracle (Matthew 21:18 par.) during the Passover season (about April) can be understood in the light of these observations. When the young leaves are appearing in spring, every fertile fig will have some *taksh* on it, even though the season for edible figs (Mark 11:13, AV) has not arrived. When the leaves are fully developed the fruit ought to be mature also. But if a tree with leaves has no fruit, it will be barren for the entire season. Thus the fig tree was cursed for its pretentiousness, predicting the fate of the fruitless Jewish nation (cf. W. L. Lane, *Mark* [NICNT, 1974], pp. 399f).

CONCLUSION.

The most important lesson to be learnt from the fig tree was from the occasion of Jesus seeking fruit from the leafy tree which led to the curse He laid on the tree because of its pretensions, which was as he said, as evidently witnessed by the disciples.

From the words of Christ in the gospel of John chapter 15 vs 1-8. As Christians we ought to be productive i.e. bearing fruits as we continue to live in Christ and Christ in us.

REFERENCES

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in the East, and in a dried state, strung upon cords, it forms an extensive article of commerce from Persia to India. The fig-tree, though now successfully cultivated in a great part of Europe, and probably of the Persian region, where it is most extensively cultivated. The climate there is such that the tree must necessarily be able to bear some degree of cold, and thus be fitted to travel northwards, and ripen its fruit where there is a sufficient amount and continuance of summer heat. It has a smooth stem, which is seldom quite straight, and is covered with a gray bark; the leaves are of the shape of a heart, with three or five lobes, and are indented; the upper side is rough, the lower is covered with fine hair. The fruit makes its appearance before the leaves, but not before the flowers or blossom, which lies concealed within a hollow, fleshy receptacle. The fertilization of-the blossoms is often assisted by an artificial process called *caprification*.

NATURAL HISTORY OF THE FIG-TREE

The *Ficus carica*, which produces the common fig, is a tree belonging to the Natural Order. Urticaceae, the nettle family, which includes also the banyan, the India rubber fig-tree, the sycamore fig and other useful plants. Fig-trees are cultivated all over the Holy Land, especially in the mountain regions. Wild fig-trees-usually rather shrubs than trees-occur also everywhere; they are usually barren and are described by the fellahin as "male" trees; it is generally supposed that their presence is beneficial to the cultivated variety. The immature flowers harbor small insects which convey pollen to the female flowers and by their irritating presence stimulate the growth of the fruit. Artificial fertilization has been understood since ancient times, and there may be a reference to it in Amos 7:14.

Fig-trees are usually of medium height, 10 or 15 ft. for full-grown trees, yet individual specimens sometimes attain as much as 25 ft. The summer foliage is thick and surpasses other trees of its size in its cool and dense shade. In the summer, owners of such trees may be seen everywhere sitting in their shadow (John 1:48). Such references as Zechariah 3:10, etc., probably are to this custom rather than to the not uncommon one of having a fig-tree overhanging a dwelling.

ACCORDING TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

The common fig, *Ficus carica* L., mentioned nearly sixty times in Scripture, is one of the most important Bible plants and was cultivated throughout Palestine, particularly in the mountainous regions. The wild fig was also commonly found as a shrub, but was generally barren. The earliest Old Testament reference to the fig is to the leaves, which Adam and Eve converted into aprons (Genesis 3:7). The promised land was described (Deuteronomy 8:8)

as "a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates," etc. The spies who were sent from wilderness of Paran brought back from the brook of Eshcol clusters of grapes, pomegranates, and figs. The Israelites complained that the wilderness was "no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates" (Numbers 20:5).

Olivet was famous for its fig-trees in ancient times, and they are still found there. When Egypt was plagued, the fig-trees were smitten (Psalms 105:33); a similar punishment was threatened to unfaithful Israel (Jeremiah 5:17; Hosea 2:12; Amos 4:9). It is only necessary to ride a few miles among the mountain villages of Palestine, with their extensive fig gardens, to realize what a long-lasting injury would be the destruction of these slow-growing trees. Years of patient labor-such as that briefly hinted at in Luke 13:7 - must pass before a newly planted group of fig-trees can bear profitably. Plenitude of fruitful vines and fig-trees, especially individual ownership, thus came to be emblematical of long-continued peace and prosperity. In the days of Solomon "Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree" (1 Kings 4:25). Only a triumphal faith in Yahweh could rejoice in Him "though the fig-tree shall not flourish" (Habakkuk 3:17).

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FIG TREE

- Why is the usage common in the bible?
- What does it symbolize?
- What kind of fruit does it produce? Also, is it edible?
- Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?
- What lesson are we to learn from the fig tree?
- How does it differ from other trees?

THE FRUIT OF THE FIG TREE



The fig-tree of Palestine (*Ficus carica*) produces two and sometimes three crops of figs in a year:

- The bikkurah, or "early-ripe fig" (Micah 7:1; Isaiah 28:4; Hosea 9:10, R.V.), which is ripe about the end of June, dropping off as soon as it is ripe (Nahum 3:12).
- The kermus, or "summer fig," then begins to be formed, and is ripe about August.
- The pag (plural "green figs," Song of Solomon 2:13; Gr. *olyntbos*, Revelation 6:13, "the untimely fig"), or "winter fig," which ripens in sheltered spots in spring.

WHAT IS THE FIG USED FOR?

- Sewing or Pinning leaves together is very common in the East even in the present day, and baskets, dishes, and umbrellas are made of leaves so pinned or sewn together. (First mentioned in Genesis 3:7 as the coverings of ADAM AND EVE).
- "Cakes" as articles of diet (1 Sam 30:12; Jeremiah 24:2).
- Medicine (2 Kings 20:7).

WHY IS THE USAGE COMMON IN THE BIBLE?

The fig-tree is mentioned (Deuteronomy 8:8) as one of the VALUABLE PRODUCTS OF PALESTINE. It is also commonly grown in this area.

WHAT THE FIG TREE SYMBOLIZES.

- It was a sign of peace and prosperity (1 Kings 4:25; Micah 4:4; Zechariah 3:10).
- The failure of this fruit is likewise noted as a sign of affliction (Ps 105:33).

JESUS AND THE FIG TREE

First Commentary: Jesus at the fig tree.

Our Lord's cursing the fig-tree near Bethany (Mark 11:13) has occasioned much perplexity from the circumstance, as mentioned by the evangelist, that "the time of figs was not yet." The explanation of the words, however, lies in the simple fact that the fruit of the fig-tree appears before the leaves, and hence that if the tree produced leaves it ought also to have had fruit. It ought to have had fruit if it had been true to its "pretensions," in showing its leaves at this particular season. "This tree, so to speak, vaunted itself to be in advance of all the other trees, challenged the passer-by that he should come and refresh himself with its fruit. Yet when the Lord accepted its challenge and drew near, it proved to be but as the others, without fruit as they; for indeed, as the evangelist observes, the time of figs had not yet arrived. Its fault, if one may use the word, lay in its pretensions, in its making a show to run before the rest when it did not so indeed" (Trench, Miracles).

Second Commentary



The Cursing of the Barren Fig-Tree: The miracle of Our Lord (Matthew 21:18-20; Mark 11:12-13,20-21) which occurred in the Passover season, about April, will be understood (as far as the natural phenomena are concerned) by the account given above of the fruiting of