

## A TREE FIT FOR A KING The Cedar of Lebanon

While fruit trees flourished in the gardens and were cultivated with the help of men, the trees of the forest were truly the trees of the Lord. These trees, such as oak and *cedar*, were not generally cared for by farmers, but were dependant on God for sunlight, rain, and every needed thing. Thus the planting and subsequent growth of these types of trees became a symbol of God's power, glory, and ability to care for His creation. God said, "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, The myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine And the box tree together, That they may see and know, And consider and understand together, That the hand of the LORD has done this, And the Holy One of Israel has created it" (Is 41:19-20).

Among the trees of the Bible, there is one that often comes to mind above all the rest. It is the *cedar*. (Sometimes referred to as the *Cedar of Lebanon* for the region in which it is often found.) The cedar represented the grandest of all that was in Israel. While it does not get to be quite as tall as some of the largest trees on our continent (like the sequoia), the cedar does tend to attain a tremendous age. It does not generally grow much more than 100 feet high, but it has wide, horizontal branches and a thick trunk that sometimes reaches 18 feet in diameter (about 56 feet around).

! Look at the picture of the cedar's trunk and then read Psalm 29. Notice how the breaking of the cedar tree is used to picture the Lord's strength.



The cedar is also a majestically beautiful tree. Being the fir tree, the cedar is covered with bright green needles about ½ inch long. The trees were prized for architecture and the pleasant looking branches provided much needed shade. It's wood was used for making the masts of ships, for beams, pillars, boards, and for carving work. The Hebrew poets often referred to these appealing trees, especially the prophet Ezekiel who warned Pharaoh of his fate in terms of a fallen cedar.

(Eze 31) Now it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third month, on

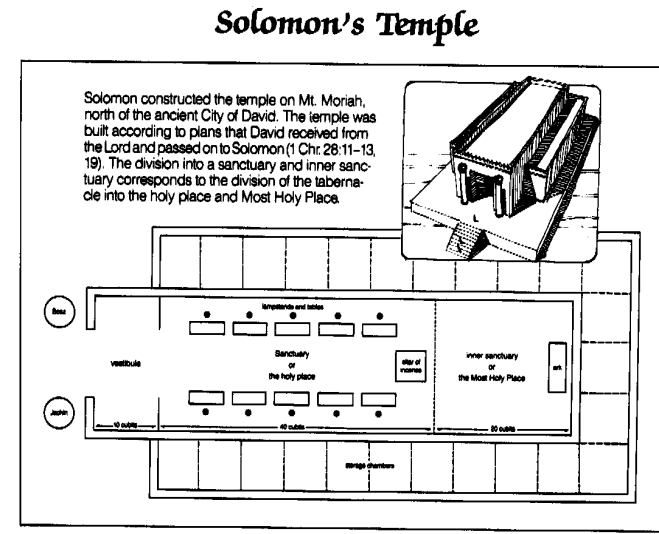


the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude: ' Whom are you like in your greatness? Indeed Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon, With fine branches that shaded the forest, And of high stature; And its top was among the thick boughs. The waters made it grow; Underground waters gave it height, With their rivers running around the place where it was planted, And sent out rivulets to all the trees of the field. ' Therefore its height was exalted above all the trees of the field; Its boughs were multiplied, And its branches became long because of the abundance of water, As it sent them out. All the birds of the

heavens made their nests in its boughs; Under its branches all the beasts of the field brought forth their young; And in its shadow all great nations made their home. ' Thus it was beautiful in greatness and in the length of its branches, Because its roots reached to abundant waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide it; The fir trees were not like its boughs, And the chestnut trees were not like its branches; No tree in the garden of God was like it in beauty. I made it beautiful with a multitude of branches, So that all the trees of Eden envied it, That were in the garden of God.' " Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ' Because you have increased in height, and it set its top among the thick boughs, and its heart was lifted up in its height, ' therefore I will deliver it into the hand of the mighty one of the nations, and he shall surely deal with it; I have driven it out for its wickedness. And aliens, the most terrible of the nations, have cut it down and left it; its branches have fallen on the mountains and in all the valleys; its boughs lie broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the peoples of the earth have gone from under its shadow and left it. On its ruin will remain

all the birds of the heavens, And all the beasts of the field will come to its branches – So that no trees by the waters may ever again exalt themselves for their height, nor set their tops among the thick boughs, that no tree which drinks water may ever be high enough to reach up to them. For they have all been delivered to death, To the depths of the earth, Among the children of men who go down to the Pit.' Thus says the Lord GOD: ' In the day when it went down to hell, I caused mourning. I covered the deep because of it. I restrained its rivers, and the great waters were held back. I caused Lebanon to mourn for it, and all the trees of the field wilted because of it. I made the nations shake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to hell together with those who descend into the Pit; and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the depths of the earth. They also went down to hell with it, with those slain by the sword; and those who were its strong arm dwelt in its shadows among the nations. To which of the trees in Eden will you then be likened in glory and greatness? Yet you shall be brought down with the trees of Eden to the depths of the earth; you shall lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude,' says the Lord GOD."

There are a few groves of cedars left in the middle east today, but not to the extent that they once existed. One of the most spectacular building projects using cedar wood was the temple which King Solomon built to the Lord. The building of this temple is described in 1 Kings 5-7. Cedar and cypress were floated in to be used in the construction.



Cedar wood, of course, has a very pleasant and familiar odor. It is used often in incense and perfumes.

The cedar of Lebanon grows well in the United States and is a relatively easy addition to a Biblical garden. The tree will survive even as far north as Boston. Small cedar plants can be obtained from most any nursery. Cedar grows very slowly, so it will be some time before a plant reaches shade-tree height. It will, however, make a nice shrub while in the early stages of its life.

In Conclusion, consider Psalm 92:12-15:

The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the LORD Shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing, To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.



**! Note the many comparisons in this section of Ezekiel that make use of the cedar tree.** First, the nation of Assyria is called a *Cedar of Lebanon*. It was once a nation as strong in the world as the cedar is strong in the forest. But as great as it was, Assyria came down just as the cedars in Eden eventually came down. So Pharaoh, strong as He was, would also fall in Egypt.