

The Tree of Life

This concept, namely the "Tree of Life" , will immediately draw any Christian's attention to Jesus/Yeshua for He Himself said: "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life" (Jn 14.6).

The Apostle John substantiates Jesus/Yeshua's words in his pastoral letter stating that "Life" is in the Son of God (1 Jn 5.12). In the Book of Revelations again, the following comes to our notice: "The angel also showed me the river of the water of life, sparkling like crystal, and coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb and flowing down the middle of the city's street. On each side of the river was the tree of life, which bears fruit twelve times a year, once each month; and its leaves are for the healing of the nations" (22.1-2).

Most of us will have no problem with Jesus/Yeshua as Healer for He was indeed the Great Physician when He walked the streets of Judea, Samaria and Galilee, breaking the bondage of sickness over those who were following Him. For this cause He was indeed sent into the world, to set man free from the power and dominion of the enemy (Acts 10).

Now, giving good consideration to the aforesaid, and without having to go into alternative meanings sometimes attached to the "Tree of Life", let's consider the Scriptures at our disposal for should we fail to apply the portrayal of the "Tree of Life" properly, then we may even end up believing all kinds of cultic ideas.

Mention is for the first-time made of the "Tree of Life" in Gen. 3.24: "And he (God) drove the man out (Adam and of course implying here both Adam and Eve, i.e. "man" or "mankind" or the two human beings who were brought forth by God in the Garden of Eden and who were appointed by God to rule God's earthly creation with divine authority) "... and stationed... the cherubim and the flaming sword, turning back and forth, to guard the way to the tree of life."

What should be clear from the aforementioned passage is the following:

(1) God Almighty decided to cast the very same ones He had created out of His Presence (=the Garden of Eden, i.e. depicting that perfect state of harmony between God and His creatures and of course also proving to us God's good intentions and his love for man right from the start). Pro. 8.22+ ("... my delights were with the sons of men" (v.31). Compare the former with Jn 1.10-14.

However, because of man's defiance of God as supreme ruler also his disobedience, God was compelled to expel man from his perfect abode. He then had to do so else He would not have resorted to this extreme form of punishment. This means that God had a very good reason to have taken such harsh measures.

Very remarkably "sin" (Hebrew "avon") also means "punishment" and "guilt" , in essence is "going the wrong way/direction". Sin therefore spells death.

Juxtaposing death and life, death would imply to be removed from the face of God whilst life again brings us directly into the Presence of God - His face shining upon us and which places man in a very favourable, beneficial situation.

The "Tree of Life" is indeed an excellent portrayal of the "radiance of God's glory" - also a connotation linked to Jesus/Yeshua (Heb. 1) for He is indeed the image of God (The Hebrew "tselem" for "image" also translates as the "likeness" of God, Co. 1.15). If we then should find the Tree of Life (or the way to the Tree of Life), we will have found LIFE IN ABUNDANCE! There is therefore a definite way we must gain knowledge of, IF we are desirous to taste of the Tree of Life.

The Apostle Paul therefore, i.e. with a definite purpose in mind, draws our attention in his letters to the severe consequence of sin and that is that "the WAGES of sin is death, but the grace of God is eternal life

through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour".

We should be able to quickly see the connection between God's punishment of Adam and Eve and our own sin, should we refuse to take heed to God's prescriptions. Should we then keep walking in disobedience, what we are then doing is to cut ourselves off from the "Tree of Life" and all its goodness.

But there is more to this brief narrative contained in Gen. 3.24 and this brings us to

(2) God stationed his cherubim (His heavenly angelic beings) in the Garden in order to guard "the way to the Tree of Life...". It should be clear that God did not find it necessary to guard the "Tree of Life" but He charged the cherubim to guard "THE WAY to the Tree of Life".

And among the cherubim was the "flaming sword" and the sword is solely carried by the Angel of the Lord, that very divine messenger of God who appeared to Balaam, also to Moses in the bramble-bush, Manoah (Samson's father), David (at the threshing floor of Aruna), and usually the prophets of old.

So what we are seeing right from the beginning, is God's ways to man - the way God dealt with man, bringing to his attention that He is the Almighty and that He made Himself known in specific ways, in other words making His counsel known to us in, and what we may call, a "mysterious way", yet which is indeed and clearly also a very direct way. ("Mysterious" is something that is brought to the attention of man and it is therefore something revealed, not forever hidden).

We can then accept that God made it clear that if we respect Him as God, then all will be well with us, however, should we reject His counsel (=despise His ways), then we ourselves are to be blamed for missing our goal (=to enjoy the goodness God has always had in store for us).

However, and as I have stated previously, God stationed His important angelic rulers (the cherubim) in the Garden to guard "the way" (!) to the Tree of Life. Should we then be able to see that nobody could touch the Tree of Life (=the pre-existent Christ) yet what could be "touched" (placed in jeopardy) was the way leading to the Tree of Life, we will soon discover God's Plan of Salvation, i.e. via the Cross and reaching out to man via this path of redemption!

And this is something of interest if we want to understand why God did not want disobedient, sinful man to know the way to the Tree of Life, i.e. at the time. They were then driven out for a definite reason. Besides they were disobedient to God and they could clearly not be trusted - the reason for their expulsion. "The way" to the Tree of Life then must have entailed something hidden that God did not want them to participate in yet.

It must then have entailed something God had decided to keep for a later point in time, and that was then something that could only have come to man via Abraham whom God had found faithful and whom He then first had to separate unto Himself and so that Abraham could also train His posterity in the knowledge of God (=in obedience and submission to the Living Most High God) i.e. before He could reveal Himself in an through one nation whom He then, as the posterity of Abraham, had separated from the other nations. Should we view things from this angle, we will be able to understand that God indeed works in wonderful ways - often in an indirect, prolonged way - to accomplish His purpose. And it is always the end-result that counts more than the beginning.

Abraham's posterity indeed tasted His glory (His Shekhina Glory or Presence), however, not yet completely as Messiah (the Tree of Life made flesh) first and foremost had to come (Phil. 2). Then only could the way to the Tree of Life be made fully known for knowledge of this particular way entailed salvation (redemption) via the blood of the Lamb first and foremost (Isa 53).

It is no wonder that Jesus/Yeshua stated so emphatically: "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life!" And discovery of the way to the Tree of Life demanded of God's creatures to believe in that very One who was indeed in the

Garden of Eden, i.e. with Adam and Eve and who is that very One who had to put on flesh in order to lead fallen man back to the Living God and true worship (Exactly what Jesus/Yeshua had done on the Cross of Calvary! - Isa. 53; Mal. 3 & Mic 5).

Paul then rightly states in his letters: "Jesus came to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1.15) and from another Pauline quotation: "He translated us from the Kingdom of Darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love."

Can we imagine what would have happened had God not guarded the way to the Tree of Life in the Garden? Satan would definitely have made a far greater mess than what was already done for he knew that man, through his innate disobedience, was an easy, pliable pawn in his hands!

We should then be able to see that unless we are willing to obey God, we will not be able to participate in redemption for redemption can only come via an obedient, repentant heart. Then only will God lead us into His storeroom of spiritual treasures, sharing His wonderful spiritual secrets with us! How privileged we are knowing Yeshua, and being able, through God's love and compassion for us, to participate in the precious fruits of the Tree of Life!

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, so that whosoever believe in Him, will not perish but will have everlasting life!" (Jn 3.16).

Note : Mainline Judaism has of course its own way of interpreting the Tree of Life. Chabad.org, e.g. may be consulted. There are of course two trees of life mentioned in the Book of Revelations (the Acopalypse), however, both clearly having a bearing on the risen, coming Jesus the Christ/Yeshua HaMaschiach. We must always keep in mind the symbolism applied in the Acopalypse.

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