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The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil

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The Rod of an Almond Tree in God's Master Plan (Online Edition)

by Peter and Christie Michas

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Chapter 4

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17).

In the preceding chapters, the prophetic pattern of God's Master Plan of Redemption has been revealed to show that the site of Jerusalem was the center of the Garden of Eden. In this chapter and the next, we will show how the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden fit the prophetic pattern. We will also identify the species of each tree from clues in the Word of God, which adds to our understanding of the larger prophetic picture and how God fulfilled every detail of His plan of salvation for humanity.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN

The Word of God states that the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil grew in the middle of the Garden of Eden:

Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. **In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil** (Genesis 2:8-9, NIV, emphasis added).

As we have shown, the site of Jerusalem was the center of the Garden of Eden. Because the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge grew in the MIDDLE of the Garden of Eden, this means they were located in the CENTER of the Garden of Eden, today Jerusalem. This is of the greatest prophetic significance because Jerusalem is at the center of God’s Master Plan of Redemption. Remarkably, the specific location of each of these trees fits a detailed and precise prophetic pattern, as we will show. Even the particular species of each tree has prophetic significance, as we will also show.¹

WHY THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT WAS NOT AN APPLE

Before we can correctly identify the species of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, we need to show why it was not an apple tree:

the modern consensus seems to be that the source of this misconception is that the Latin word *mālum*, meaning “evil,” was associated with *mālum*, another Latin word, borrowed from Greek, meaning “apple.”²

With this understanding, we can see that the idea that the Tree of Knowledge was an apple tree does not come from the Bible or any other Hebraic source. Rather it originated in the ancient pagan Greek and Roman world. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the Greek goddess of wisdom, Athena (known to the Romans as Minerva), was sometimes depicted holding an apple.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO FRUIT TREES

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the Land of Israel, God specifically mentioned seven varieties of plants of agricultural importance:

¹ The prophetic pattern of God’s Master Plan of Redemption as explained in this book is based upon the research, insight and understanding of Peter Michas. The first (1994) edition of this book was written by Christie Michas (Peter’s wife) and Robert Vander Maten, based on Peter’s research. Further research and subsequent revisions of this book have been done by Christie Michas.

² “Was the Forbidden Fruit Really an Apple? On the Identity of the Tree of Knowledge”, by Yehuda Surpin. http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1982723/jewish/Was-the-Forbidden-Fruit-Really-an-Apple.htm

“For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and [date] honey” (Deuteronomy 8:7-8).

These seven plants are referred to as the Seven Species.³ Among the seven species are four fruit-bearing trees: fig, pomegranate, olive, and date. Significantly, only one of these, the fig tree, is specifically identified in the Garden of Eden.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL IDENTIFIED AS A FIG TREE

The fig tree is associated with Adam and Eve’s sin in eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil:

When the woman saw **that the tree was good for food**, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and **they sewed fig leaves together** and made themselves loin coverings (Genesis 3:6-7, emphasis added).

We do not believe this reference to the fig tree is incidental but that it actually provides a clue to identifying the Tree of Knowledge as a fig tree. This is also an opinion of rabbinic scholars:

According to the *Talmud* [*Berachos* 40a] the forbidden tree was a fig-tree, and by the very thing by which they were disgraced were they restored (*Rashi*).⁴

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they realized that they were naked. [Since the fruit that they had eaten was a fig,] they made loinclothes out of fig leaves (brackets in the original).⁵

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Species

⁴ Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz (Translator), *Genesis*, ArtScroll Tanach Series, Vol. 1(a), p. 121.

⁵ *The Torah Anthology*, Vol. 1, p. 262.

Other rabbinic sources identify wheat, grapes, nut, or etrog with the Tree of Knowledge.⁶ Wheat and grapes can be eliminated because they do not fit the Biblical description of a fruit-bearing tree. The one rabbinic opinion for a nut tree does not seem to us to fit the Biblical picture. Neither does the etrog, a type of citron, because it does not fit the Biblical description of being “good for food”:

While the lemon or orange are peeled to consume their pulpy and juicy segments, the citron's pulp is dry, containing a small quantity of insipid juice, if any. The main content of a citron fruit is the thick white rind, which adheres to the segments, and cannot be separated from them easily.

Thus, from ancient through medieval times, the citron was used mainly for medical purposes ...⁷

Considering the Biblical context and description, the one species of the Seven Species that best fits the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is the fig tree. We will also show how this fits the prophetic significance of Yeshua cursing one particular fig tree on the Mount of Olives (see below “The Fig Tree on the Mount of Olives Cursed by Yeshua”).

THE LIGHT OF GOD REMOVED, REVEALING ADAM AND EVE’S NAKEDNESS

When Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they realized that they were naked:

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and **they knew that they were naked**; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings (Genesis 3:7, emphasis added).

As a result of breaking God’s commandment not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Eve knew and understood the difference between good (obeying God) and evil (disobeying God). They realized their physical bodies were uncovered. Could it be that this was because they lost the Light of God that emanated from them, light that covered their physical nakedness?

⁶ “Was the Forbidden Fruit Really an Apple? On the Identity of the Tree of Knowledge”, by Yehuda Surpin. http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1982723/jewish/Was-the-Forbidden-Fruit-Really-an-Apple.htm

⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citron> (section “Uses”). See also <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etrog>

After being in the direct presence of God for forty days and forty nights, Moses emanated the Light of God:

So he [Moses] was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. And it came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that **the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him** [the Lord]. So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him (Exodus 34:28-30, emphasis added).

Adam and Eve lived continuously in the direct presence of God before they sinned. In the same way that the face of Moses shone with the Light of God, their bodies surely could have shone with the Light of God. However, after they disobeyed God, they became spiritually separated from God and the light that had clothed them, covering their physical bodies, would have diminished until it had totally disappeared, revealing their nakedness.

ADAM AND EVE EXPELLED EAST OF THE GARDEN – EAST OF THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

After Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, God expelled them from the Garden of Eden:

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” — therefore **the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden**, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So **He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim**, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:22-24, emphasis added).

The direction Adam and Eve were sent was EAST of the Garden of Eden, and cherubim (winged angels) were placed at the eastern entrance to the Garden of Eden to prevent them from having access to the Tree of Life.

Understanding that the center of the Garden of Eden was located at the site of Jerusalem, with Mount Moriah (Temple Mount) being the center location of God's dwelling place, the direction of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden can be precisely located EAST of Mount Moriah. According to this prophetic picture, Adam and Eve were placed outside of the Garden of Eden east of the summit of the Mount of Olives. Significantly, east of the Mount of Olives the land becomes barren.

THE PATTERN OF THE TABERNACLE AND THE GARDEN OF EDEN

The Word of God reveals specific and detailed prophetic patterns that show God's Master Plan of Redemption. The purpose of the Tabernacle, the sacrificial system, and the Appointed Times of the Lord (Exodus 25–30; Leviticus 23) is to teach us God's way of salvation for humanity.

The pattern of the Tabernacle reveals God's Master Plan of Redemption in a masterful way, clearly showing the ONE AND ONLY WAY of salvation that God has made for all human beings through Messiah Yeshua's all sufficient and complete sin-atonement sacrifice.⁸

For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua], who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

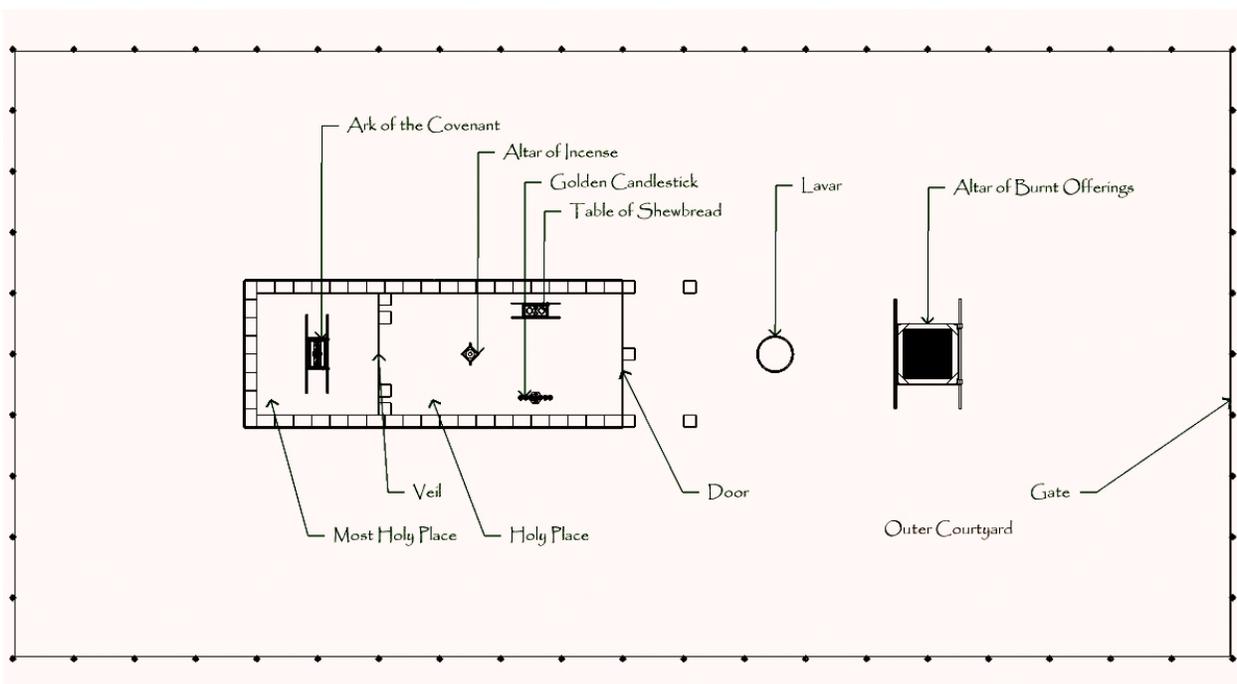
The Tabernacle was the portable sanctuary containing the Ark of the Covenant during the time the Israelites were in the wilderness. The Temple, patterned after the Tabernacle, was later built on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem as the permanent sanctuary. God revealed the specific and detailed pattern of the Tabernacle to Moses:

“According to all that I am going to show you, as **the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture**, just so you shall construct it” (Exodus 25:9, emphasis added).

⁸ The Tabernacle was the portable sanctuary from the time of the Exodus from Egypt through the conquering of the land of Canaan. Later, the Temple, the permanent sanctuary based on the same pattern, was built on the Temple Mount. For an excellent detailed study of the Tabernacle, see Kevin J. Conner's book, *The Tabernacle of Moses* (Portland, Oregon: Bible Temple Publishing, 1975). See also Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabernacle>

In his studies, Peter Michas came to see and understand that the pattern of the Tabernacle fits the pattern of the Garden of Eden in a prophetically meaningful way. To see how, we first need to describe the main features of the Tabernacle.

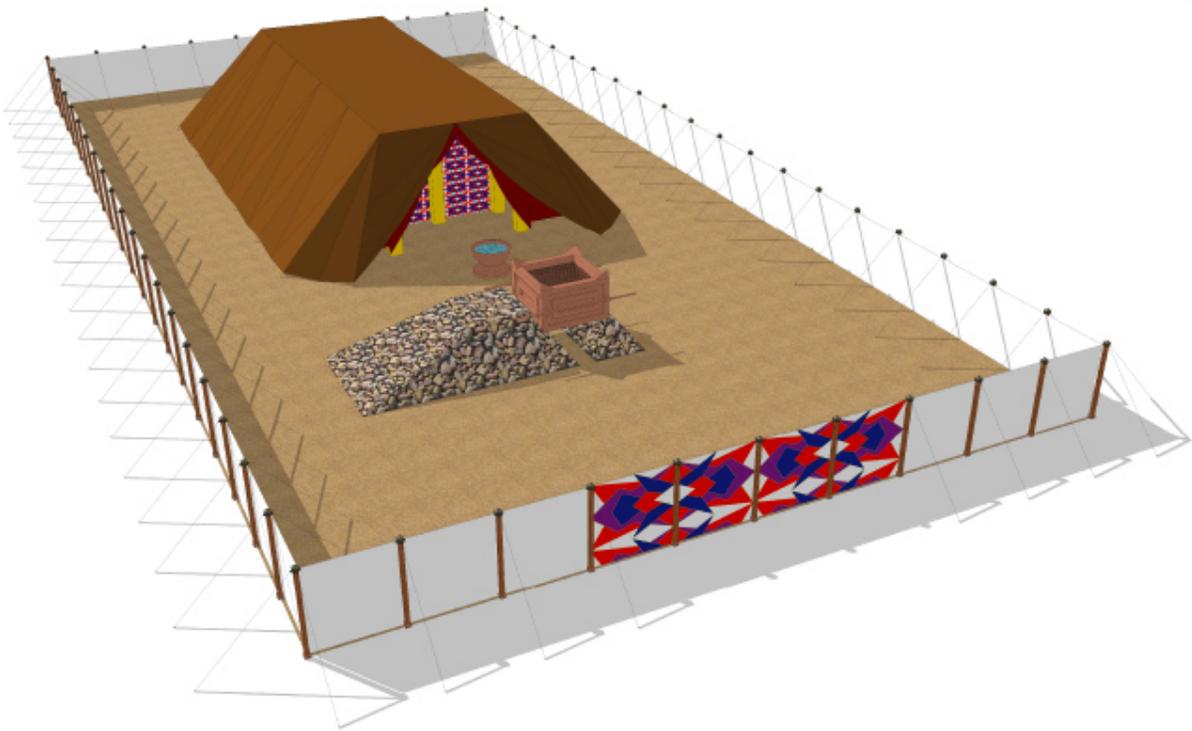
Illustration: Top View of the Tabernacle⁹



The Tabernacle was located inside a rectangular courtyard, surrounded by an outer enclosure. The entrance to the courtyard was the Gate on the eastern side. The Altar of Burnt Offerings was located in the center and directly east of the Tabernacle. The Laver (Lavar) was located directly west of the Altar of Burnt Offerings, and directly east of the Door of the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was divided by a veil into the Holy Place on the eastern end and Most Holy Place on the western end. The Table of Showbread (Shewbread), Altar of Incense, and Menorah (seven-branched golden candlestick) were located inside the Holy Place. The Ark of the Covenant was located inside the Most Holy Place, also called the Holy of Holies.

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabernacle#mediaviewer/File:Tabernacle_Schematic.jpg

Illustration: Model of the Tabernacle Compound¹⁰



¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabernacle#mediaviewer/File:Tabernacle-view.jpg>

Illustration: The Tabernacle in the Wilderness with the Shekinah (Glory Cloud)¹¹



The Shekinah (Glory Cloud) filled the Tabernacle:

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34).

The Shekinah, described as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, was the visible manifestation of God's presence dwelling with His people, protecting and guiding His people:

And the LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night (Exodus 13:21).

And it came about, whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent (Exodus 33:9-10).

¹¹ <https://www.templeinstitute.org/mishkan.htm>

The Tree of Life on Mount Moriah (Temple Mount)

With this understanding of the basic pattern of the Tabernacle, we can show how it relates to the Garden of Eden as it existed at the site of Jerusalem. According to the prophetic pattern understood by Peter Michas, the Tree of Life grew on Mount Moriah, the same place God chose for the site of the Temple (which was based on the pattern of the Tabernacle). If this is correct, the place God manifested His presence and fellowship with Adam and Eve (before they sinned) was the same place God manifested His presence in the Temple. This is the specific place God chose on Earth to dwell and fellowship with humanity, and the pattern was established at the time of Creation. For this reason, this is also the place where Messiah Yeshua will establish His Throne during the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:4).

Mount of Olives Altar of Sin Sacrifice

After Adam and Eve sinned, they were no longer able to approach the Tree of Life on Mount Moriah and be in the direct presence of God. They were expelled east of the Garden of Eden, east of Mount Moriah. Cherubim were stationed at the eastern entrance to the Garden of Eden, placing them at the summit of the Mount of Olives, which is directly opposite Mount Moriah, with the Kidron Valley separating the two mountains. The eastern entrance to the Garden of Eden corresponds to the eastern entrance to the Tabernacle courtyard.

From the summit of the Mount of Olives, Adam and Eve would have been able to look westward across the Kidron Valley to Mount Moriah, where they had fellowshiped with God. After Adam and Eve sinned, God would have established an altar for sin sacrifice. Logically and according to the prophetic pattern, the altar would have been located at the place Adam and Eve were expelled directly east of Mount Moriah, the summit of the Mount of Olives.

According to the Word of God, the summit of the Mount of Olives was the place where God was worshipped at the time of King David, even before the Temple was built by his son, Solomon (2 Samuel 15:30, 32). This means that an altar to God existed on the Mount of Olives. In Chapter 2, we trace the altar back to the time of Adam and Eve.

During the Second Temple Period, the summit of the Mount of Olives was the site of the Red Heifer sacrifice, the holiest of the Temple sacrifices. And it was here that Messiah Yeshua was crucified for the sins of the world. According to the prophetic pattern, Yeshua paid the price for sin at the very place Adam and Eve committed the first sin, showing that the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was located on the Mount of Olives. That Yeshua cursed a particular fig tree

on the Mount of Olives also fits this prophetic pattern. (See below: “The Fig Tree on the Mount of Olives Cursed by Yeshua”.)

According to the pattern of the Tabernacle, the altar on the Mount of Olives corresponds to the Altar of Burnt Offerings for sin sacrifice that was positioned at the eastern end of the Tabernacle courtyard enclosure. In the same way, the altar on the summit of the Mount of Olives was located east of Mount Moriah, where God’s presence dwelled.

The Gihon Spring

Continuing to follow the Tabernacle pattern from east to west, we move from the Altar of Burnt Offerings to the Laver, which contained the waters of purification, corresponding to the Gihon Spring. In this regard, it is also interesting to note that water from the Gihon Spring was mixed with the ashes of the Red Heifer for purification from spiritual defilement (Numbers 19; see Chapter 2 “The Mount of Olives – True Site of the Crucifixion”).

The Holy Place of God’s Fellowship with Adam and Eve

Entering the Tabernacle, we come to the Holy Place, where the Table of Showbread, Menorah (Golden Candlestick), and Altar of Incense were located. The Showbread represents fellowship with God; the Menorah represents the Light of God, the Word of God; and from the Altar of Incense arose smoke representing prayers to God. When the Temple stood on Mount Moriah, the Table of Showbread, Menorah, and Altar of Incense were also located in the Holy Place of the Temple, according to the exact pattern of the Tabernacle. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve saw the Light of God, heard the Word of God, fellowshiped with and spoke to God.

The Ark of the Covenant and the Tree of Life

Past the Veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies), we come to the Ark of the Covenant, covered by the Mercy Seat, where God manifested His presence. Aaron’s rod, an almond tree branch that miraculously budded, was placed with the Ark of the Covenant and corresponds to the Tree of Life on Mount Moriah (Numbers 17:8, 10; Hebrews 9:4). In the following chapters, we will show that Aaron’s rod was a branch from the Tree of Life, and that King David placed it on the summit of the Mount of Olives, where it grew into the tree upon which Messiah Yeshua was crucified.

The Ark of the Covenant contained the Ten Commandments. Had Adam and Eve obeyed the commandment of God, they could have eaten from the Tree of Life and never experienced physical death. However, God provided His Son, Messiah Yeshua, to pay the price for their sins, as well as the sins of all humanity, so that all could have forgiveness and eternal life with God (John 3:16). By coming through Messiah Yeshua, the only Mediator between human beings and God (1 Timothy 2:5), we are spiritually restored in unity with God's Holy Spirit. Eating the fruit of the Tree of Life represents partaking of Yeshua's sacrifice, the one and only way to have forgiveness of sins and be spiritually restored in a right relationship with God.

Mount Moriah and Mount of Olives in the Center of the Garden of Eden

As we have previously noted, the Word of God tells us that the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil were located in the middle of the Garden of Eden:

Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. **In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil** (Genesis 2:8-9, NIV, emphasis added).

According to the prophetic pattern, the Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge did indeed fall along the central (east-west) line through Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives to Mount Moriah. Prophetically, these two mountains have been at the center of God's Master Plan of Redemption from the beginning when Adam and Eve committed the first sin in the Garden of Eden.

During Temple times, sin sacrifices were offered on Mount Moriah, and the holiest of all sacrifices, the Red Heifer, was made on the summit of the Mount of Olives. From the summit of the Mount of Olives, Messiah Yeshua faced the entrance to the Temple on Mount Moriah as He was being crucified, just as the head of the Red Heifer was turned to face the Temple as it was being sacrificed. Yeshua paid the final and complete price for all humanity's sin in the place where Adam and Eve committed the first sin. His sacrifice made the way for forgiveness of sins and full spiritual restoration to God and eternal life with Him.

THE FIG TREE ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES CURSED BY YESHUA

According to the Biblical context, description, and prophetic pattern as we have shown it, the

Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was a fig tree located on the Mount of Olives. This takes on particular significance in regard to the fig tree that Messiah Yeshua cursed just before His crucifixion.

In the days leading up to Passover, Yeshua stayed overnight with His disciples in Bethany, located on the lower eastern slope of the Mount of Olives (John 12:1). There was a roadway that ran from Bethany up the eastern slope to Bethphage and continued over the summit of the Mount of Olives and down the steep western slope. This was the roadway that Yeshua used when going back and forth from Bethany to the Temple on Mount Moriah.¹²

Along this road, Yeshua singled out a specific fig tree and cursed it:

And on the next day, when they had departed from Bethany [on the Mount of Olives], He became hungry. And seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And He answered and said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And His disciples were listening (Mark 11:12-14).

This same fig tree withered and died as a result of the curse Yeshua placed on it:

And as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. And being reminded, Peter said to Him, “Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.” And Jesus [Yeshua] answered saying to them, “Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him (Mark 11:20-23).

Yeshua refers to “this mountain”, meaning the Mount of Olives, where the fig tree that He cursed was located.

Why did Yeshua curse this fig tree? As the Word of God tells us, “it was not the season for figs” (Mark 11:13). According to *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*:

¹² Jack Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament: The Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church*, p. 171.

In the E, the fig tree produces two definite crops of fruits per season. The normal winter figs ripen in May and June and the summer figs in late August and September. Sometimes, one crop overlaps the other. The baby fruit buds are usually seen in February before the leaves appear in April each year.¹³

Since this incident took place just prior to Passover, it was too early for ripe figs:

And seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for **it was not the season for figs** (Mark 11:13, emphasis added).

Could it be that this fig tree represented the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil that grew on the Mount of Olives? Perhaps this fig tree grew in the same area as the Tree of Knowledge that Adam and Eve ate from. If so, it marked the place where Adam and Eve committed the first sin and where Messiah Yeshua paid the price for all humanity's sins.

In cursing the fig tree, Yeshua may have been providing another clue as to the identity of the actual species of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the tree by which sin came into the world. At the time Yeshua cursed the fig tree, He knew that the time had come to offer Himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and thereby break the curse of sin (Revelation 22:3).

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