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**Ancient Bible References To Date Palm Trees, Phoenix Dactylifera**

**By Pat Malcolm**

Palm trees in ancient desert sands grew and satisfied almost every need the ancient Jews needed.

The Jews ate the palm tree dates; the tree juices were fermented into wine; the trunk of the palm tree was used as construction timber; and the palm leaves were woven into baskets, mats, brooms, beds, ropes and made into furniture.

Promises were made in the Hebrew Bible by God for a new home for the nation of Israel , and the moving finger on the wall pointed to the palm tree as the perfect supplier of food, shelter and medicine. This was the promised land of "milk and honey, (palm dates.)" the land of Canaan located on the banks of the Jordan River.

Ezekiel 47-12: "All kinds of fruit trees will grow along the river banks, the leaves will never turn brown and fall, and there will always be fruit. There will be a new crop every month- without fail! For they are watered by the river flowing from the Temple. The fruit will be for food and the leaves for medicine."

Date palm trees grow tall point toward the infinite heavens where there is a promise of Life Eternal. The symbolism of the straight trunk of the palm tree is clear; that humans should journey down the straight path that leads Christians toward righteousness. The straight soft trunk was capped with a canopy of 20 foot leaves of green that unfolded like a botanical star burst. The delicious honey-sweet dates fed the ancient Jewish nomads and the eventual settlers of Israel. The palm leaves shaded the hot, bright desert sands and the fibers provided a plethora of uses in the primitive lands.

The ancient date palm tree, it has been suggested, is the oldest fruit bearing tree on earth. Palm trees grow worldwide from sandy deserts to tropical rain forests. The palm trees has been grown in grove plantings, since the ancients understood the food value of the dates and the exotic appearance and shading on the landscape of the desert sands. Palm trees were often planted near an oasis as a source of water, shade and food.

Historically the tropical appearance of palm trees was noted in ancient documents, and on stone inscriptions uncovered by archaeological excavations and from multiple references in the Bible Scriptures. Ancient civilizations revered palm trees as symbols of fertility, peace, and victory. Palm tree

images were struck and minted on ageless coins of the Greeks and Romans. The trees were an economic resource for the exporting of high quality, edible dates into areas outside the Middle East and Africa.

In the Scriptures of the Hebrew Bible, Joshua 6–20, the brother of Moses, Joshua, stood at the miraculous crumbled walls at the city of Jericho, "the City of Palms", that was situated in the land of the Canaanites, located along the Mediterranean Coast. All these coastal lands of Phoenecia were the land of the palms where the Philistines lived, the legendary enemies of Israel, which is today named, Beirut, Lebanon, and Phoenicia was abundantly covered with palm trees. So the land of the palm trees was also the land, where in addition to the productive crops of dates, grape vineyards grew there, and groves of fig trees, olive trees and pomegranate trees thrived. The Greeks were reported to have carved their magnificent fluted columns of marble to memorialize the shape of the trunk of a palm tree.

Deuteronomy 34.3: "There is the Negeb (desert) and the Jordan Valley; and Jericho, the city of palm trees; and Zoar, the Lord told him."

Exodus 15.27 "And they come to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there beside the spring."

Tamar was the Hebrew name given to palm trees in Genesis and was often used to describe a beautiful woman. Gen 38.6 "Judah arranged for him to marry a girl named Tamar." (Palm Tree.)

2 Samuel 13.1 "King Davids son, Absalom, had a beautiful sister named Tamar."

2 Samuel 14.27 "He, (Absalom), had three sons and one daughter, Tamar, who was a very beautiful girl."

Palm trees produced long stout leaves that were used to build temporary tents and shelters at Jewish festivals. Leviticus 23.40, " Take boughs of fruit trees laden with fruit, and palm fronds, and the boughs of leafy trees-----such as willows that grow by the brooks....and (build shelters with them)."

Ezekiel 41.18 "the walls were decorated with carvings of cherubim, each with two faces and of palm trees alternating with cherubim."

Ezekiel 41.20 " One face,....that of a man....looked toward the palm tree on one side, and the other face...that of a young lion....looked toward the palm tree on the other side: and so it was, all around the inner wall of the Temple."

Ezekiel 41 25–26 "The doors leading into the nave were decorated with cherubim and palm trees, just as on the walls...There were recessed windows and carved palm trees on both sides of the entry hall, the hallways beside the Temple, and on the canopy at the entrance."

1 Kings 6.29 "Figures of angels, palm trees, and open flowers were carved on all the walls of both rooms of the Temple and the floor of both rooms was overlaid with gold."

## Ancient Bible References To Date Palm Trees, Phoenix Dactylifera

The New Testament Scriptures note the spreading of Christianity throughout the lands bordering Israel. These lands were known for their palm trees.

Acts 11.19 "believers who fled from Jerusalem during the persecution after Stephen's death traveled as far as Phoenicia, land of palms."

Acts 15.3 "the delegates went on to Jerusalem, stopping along the way in the cities of Phoenicia, the land of the palms."

John 12. 12–13 " The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city, and a huge crowd of Passover visitors took palm branches and went down the road to meet him shouting, "The Savior! God Bless the King of Israel! Hail to God's Ambassador!"

Revelation 7.9 "After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from all nations and provinces and languages, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white, with palm branches in their hands."

The San Fransisco Chronicle reported, Sunday 12, 2005, that Archaeologist , Ehud Netzer, discovered seed from the date palm, Phoenix dactylifera, from the spectacular palace built by King Herod on top of Mount Masada in Israel. The Romans destroyed the palace after the Jews committed mass suicide on Mount Masada, rather than surrender to the Roman soldiers. Archaeologist Ehud Netzer, found the date palm seed in a cache at the excavation site that presumably had been tossed into a corner after the Mount Masada Jews were cornered.

A few seed were treated by Eaine Solowey with the growth hormone Gibberellic acid– widely researched and tested at Yale University in the 1960's, and within five weeks a 2000 year old seed sprouted to form a small tree named the "Methuselah Palm." Years before this experiment was done, some Egyptian Pharaoh seed of grain were sprouted but did not survive. Seeds of excavated lotus water lilies, dating back 1200 years ago, have been sprouted from their ancient dormancy to grow into lotus lilies.

Date palms grew up to 80ft tall in a river valley 7 miles wide, where ancient Israel had generated a giant economy. The fruit of the date palm was known for its high quality and was exported throughout the Roman empire.

The seed were planted on Jan 25, 2005, by a botanist, Eaine Solowey, who was educated at UCLA....Other seed were sent off for radioactive carbon dating to the University of Zürich, Switzerland, and determined to be approximately 2000 years old.

This remarkable discovery of Date Palm Seeds, Phoenix dactylifera, that have been confirmed by scientific experts to date approximately 2000 years old led to an unbelievable miracle that resurrected a dormant 2000 year old seed into a living tree...the Date Palm...that symbolized the tree that nurtured the Jews in the promised land of "milk and honey", the land of Canaan, that became ancient Israel. Now those ancient seeds of the Date Palm have been resurrected to sprout and grow as Israel did, a land that also lay dormant for 2000 years. Israel has also been Resurrected.

Is this mysterious phenomenon and miracle of restoration a metaphor to all people of the world, that Jesus' promise to raise Christians from the dead to be resurrected to eternal life, a revelation that might be understood in this modern day parable of reality?

Psalms 92 12–14 "But the Godly shall flourish like palm trees, and grow as tall as the cedars of Lebanon. For they are transplanted into the Lord's own garden and are under his personal care. Even in old age they will still produce fruit and be vital and green.

Patrick A. Malcolm, owner of TyTy Nursery, has an M.S. degree in Biochemistry and has cultivated palm trees for over three decades.

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### **Moderate Cold Hardy Traits In Date Palms And Fan Palms**

**By Pat Malcolm**

The Canary Island Date palm, *Phoenix canariensis*, is one of the most sought after and spectacular palm trees seen in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Lower Texas, and coastal South Carolina. This large, formal palm tree, looks great when grown next to Mediterranean architectural structures at resorts and hotels, such as the Cloister Hotel, at Sea Island, Georgia, where the large Canary Island Date palms are planted and grown at the entrances to the hotels, and stretching up the boulevards as a street tree along Sea Island Drive. These Canary Island Date palms produce dates, but barely palatable; are very slow growing, and the unique triangular leaf scars are very ornamental. You can buy Canary Island Date palms in large specimen sizes that are extremely expensive, but small trees are reasonably priced at most nurseries.

Other Phoenix Date Palm trees that show moderate cold hardy traits are the standard Biblical Date palms, *Phoenix dactylifera*; the celebrated plant of the Scriptures of the Hebrew Bible, documented thousands of years ago in Deuteronomy 8:8, "A land (Israel) of wheat and barley, and vines and fig trees, and pomegranates, a land of olive oil, and dates (palms)." A huge grove of these large date palms grow outside Yuma, Az, where the date products are harvested seasonally from the trees with tall ladders, as they have been for decades past.

The Wild Date palm, *Phoenix sylvestris*, called the Sylvester palm, is not a fast growing date palm tree, but the blue–green foliage forms a large canopy of leaves that persists for years. The wild, large date palm tree, *Phoenix sylvestris*, can grow to 40 feet, but the trunk is slender, and this wild date palm will readily hybridize with other date palms growing nearby. You can buy large specimens of wild, date palm trees that are very expensive, but smaller trees can be purchased at reasonable prices. This palm tree has also been called a Toddy palm, because the sweet dates are harvested and fermented into an alcoholic drink, a Toddy.

The Chinese Fan Palm, *Livistona chinensis*, is a well adapted tree to large areas of the South. The huge leaves are fan shaped (palmate), and not fast growing, but the large heavy leaves give a weeping appearance. You can buy these Chinese fan trees cheap, but almost any nursery sells them, and they

can survive cold hardy temperatures, around 20 F.

Mexican Fan Palm Tree, *Washingtonia robusta*, is also called the Washington Palm Tree, and grows faster than most other cold hardy Palm Trees. The fan shaped, bright green leaves are large, growing 6 feet long. Mature Washington Palm trees can grow 100 feet tall, and small Washington Palm Trees are so fast growing and inexpensive to buy, many people are planting them. Large Washington palm trees planted in front of motels at Waycross, Georgia, have survived extreme cold winters, and even when leaf canopies were frozen and black, the new shoots grew back in the Spring to renew their beauty.

The European Fan Palm, *Chamaerops humilis*, also called the Mediterranean Fan Palm, is a beautiful cluster palm; a favorite palm tree planted abundantly at the Cloister Hotel, at Sea Island, Georgia. The European Palm Tree forms multiple, daughter, closely connected, palm trees that were planted and grown as circular groups, although if the daughter palm trees are removed after the trunks grow to 3 - 4 feet, single trunked specimens can be grown in the landscape. The leaves are very variable in color, from green to silver. This very delicately leaved plant is controlled by a graceful, slender trunk, that is

embedded with long brown fibers. In Mediterranean areas, the European Palm tree is often grown as a street tree, planted in large containers. Its slow growing character makes the European palm tree well adapted for planting in pots.

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