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THE SYMBOLIC AND THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OLIVE TREE IN
THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1QS ^a	Rule of the Congregation (Appendix a to 1QS)
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
AJT	Asia Journal of Theology
ANEPI	Ancient Near Eastern Pictures
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts
ASORDS	American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series
AuS	Arbeit und Sitte in Palastina (Gustaf Dalman, 7 Vols.)
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BAR-IS	British Archaeological Reports – International Series
BD	Book of the Dead
BDB	Brown, Driver, Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BN	Biblische Notizen
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
COS	The Context of Scripture
CTH	Catalogue des textes hittites
DBI	Dictionary of Biblical Imagery
DOT	Dictionary of the Old Testament
ESV	English Standard Version

HALOT	Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament
IBoT	Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzelerinde Bulunan Boğazköy Tabeltleri
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
JANER	Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JMA	Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JNSL	Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
KBo	Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi
KBÜ	Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi
KTU	Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit; Einschliesslich der keilalphabetischen Texte ausserhalb Ugarits. (Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartín)
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NET	New English Translation
NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint
NIDOT	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis.
NIV	New International Version

OG	Old Greek
OJA	Oxford Journal of Archaeology
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TWOT	Theological Word Book of the Old Testament
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Relevance and Actuality

Few household items carry with themselves a rich history in antiquity. Even less have been associated with royalty and deity. Olive oil is one of them. For centuries, the *Olea europaea* or the olive tree, has lubricated the machines of civilization, illuminated homesteads and temples, dressed wounds, and satiated appetites at meals. Because of its relatively small need for water, the tree thrives in the dry Mediterranean climate of Israel's hill country and foothills.¹ However, it never thrives great distances from the sea as mists are required for its growth. In addition, the trees do not grow in altitudes greater than 2,000 ft. Perhaps this is why no reference in Sumerian or Akkadian records give the tree a distinct name.² The tree grows slowly, taking years to develop, but will produce fruit for centuries. When the olives would reach full maturity, they were harvested by shaking or knocking the trees with a stick.³ Strong wind currents from the east would also cause olives to fall from the trees, and according to Deuteronomy 24:20, Moses commands the Israelites to leave the remaining olives in the tree for the sojourners in the land, the orphan, and widow. Exodus 23:11 also instructs Israel to leave the olive orchards fallow every seventh year. The harvested olives were usually gathered in

¹ Desmond Alexander and David Weston Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (InterVarsity Press, 2003), 24.

² Harry A. Hoffner, *Alimenta Hethaeorum; food production in Hittite Asia Minor* (American oriental series v. 55; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1974), 117.

³ See Deut 24:20; Isa 17:6; 24:13.

baskets to be pressed by beating them in a bowl-shaped cavity or rolling over them with a large cylindrical stone carved out of bedrock (Exo 27:20; 29:40; Lev 24:2; Num 28:5; 1 Kgs 5:25).

At present the Temple Institute in the Jewish quarter of the Old City in Jerusalem, is celebrating what will become for the first time in 2000 years, the production of pure olive oil and the required vessels made in full conformity with the laws of the Torah. On the seventh night of Chanukah in January 2015 a celebration will occur in Jerusalem to celebrate this historic event. According to the institute, this is “another historic step towards the resumption of the Divine service in the Holy Temple, with the unveiling and presentation of the first pure olive oil for the Temple Menorah to be produced in purity in 2000 years, and the special vessels to hold them, created in purity.”⁴

Olive oil has also made international headlines for its health benefits. Most recently, it has been linked to the prevention or protraction of several age-related impairments including neurodegenerative diseases and Alzheimer-like pathology.⁵ Several studies concluded in 2013 that olive polyphenols may affect certain proteins in the brain that are involved in memory, learning and thinking.⁶ In another recent study, Spanish researchers from the University of Seville concluded that olive polyphenol extracts could improve chronic colitis, but also could be used as a functional food for this disease.⁷

⁴ See “Modern Chanukah Miracle: First Pure Olive Oil in 2000 Years.” *UWI*, n.d. No pages. Cited 5 January 2015. Online: <http://unitedwithisrael.org/modern-chanukah-miracle-first-pure-olive-oil-in-2000-years/>.

⁵ Cristina Grossi et al., “The Polyphenol Oleuropein Aglycone Protects Mice against Aβ Plaque Pathology,” *PLoS ONE* 8, no. 8. See also: Abuznait, Alaa H., Hisham Qosa, Belnaser A. Busnena, Khalid A. El Sayed, and Amal Kaddoumi. “Olive-Oil-Derived Oleocanthal Enhances β-Amyloid Clearance as a Potential Neuroprotective Mechanism against Alzheimer’s Disease: In Vitro and in Vivo Studies.” *ACS Chemical Neuroscience* 4, no. 6 (June 19, 2013): 973–982.

⁶ Sara De Nicoló et al., “Effects of olive polyphenols administration on nerve growth factor and brain-derived neurotrophic factor in the mouse brain,” *Nutrition* 29, no. 4 (April 2013): 681–687.

⁷ Susana Sánchez-Fidalgo et al., “Dietary extra virgin olive oil polyphenols supplementation

The Greek tragedian Euripedes writes concerning the olive, “it has not lost its green, but flourishes, born from an immortal olive tree.”⁸ In his treatise *Naturalis Historia*, renowned Roman philosopher Pliny the Elder wrote an entire chapter dedicated to the importance of the olive tree.⁹ “*Duo sunt liquores humanis corporibus gratissimi: intus vini, foris olei.*” (There are two liquids most pleasing to human bodies: wine inside and olive oil outside.)¹⁰ With such a noble reputation, it would be expected that significant scholarly research would have invested much in uncovering the multifaceted role of the tree and its fruit from all aspects of life in the ancient world. However, a comprehensive treatment of the olive tree is lacking and the dominant area of scholarly enquiry has focused almost exclusively on the production of olive oil in antiquity. Whereas these studies have been and continue to be integral to understanding the function and significance of the tree, they have primarily focused on its practical use and economic value. Much more can be said about the role of the olive tree and its produce, particularly in regard to its religious use and relationship to deities in the ancient world.

For example ancient Egyptian wall paintings tell us of the crown of justice worn by Pharaoh Tutankhamen, woven out of olive branches. Other pharaonic mummies have been excavated, revealing necklaces woven out of olive branches.¹¹ Moreover, Tutankhamen’s father, Pharaoh Akhenaten of the Eighteenth Dynasty, is depicted on a wall carving at El-Amarna, offering a plush olive branch to his god Aten, while standing

modulates DSS-induced chronic colitis in mice,” *The Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry* 24, no. 7 (July 2013): 1401–1413.

⁸ Euripides and Robert Potter, *Euripides Ion* (Harper, 1844), 113.

⁹ Pliny, *Natural History* (Loeb classical library; Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1938), Book XV. See also book III, XII and XIII.

¹⁰ Pliny, *Natural History*, 14.150.

¹¹ Saime Kucukkomur, “Olive in Culture,” *Pakistan Journal of Nutrition* 10 (February 1, 2011): 200.

beside an olive tree.¹² The Book of the Dead also describes the Egyptian god Horus as dwelling in the olive tree.¹³

The Greeks have various legends associated with the olive, most notable is the myth of Athena (Minerva) and the creation of the olive tree. Luyster recounts the mythohistorical image of the Athenian olive tree referring to it by its fifth century designation as “the ancient image.” The image was located in the Erechtheion at Athena and was made from olive wood. The sacred olive tree grew beside the temple of Athena and according to legend it was planted by Athena in a polemical effort to demonstrate her ownership of the Acropolis against any claim from Poseidon. The sacred tree was addressed by some as the "Athens-tree," though its common designation was the "Citizen Olive," as it came to be considered a bona fide citizen. A tradition had developed where the Citizen Olive had given new life to a dozen other olive trees in the garden of Academos on the Acropolis. The designation for these trees came from the greek μοπιατι, a derivative of μοπος, meaning fate. The association indicates the life of the olive tree was in direct correlation to the life or fate of the city. This olive tree is recorded to have been burnt together with the temple by the Persians. According to the account, the Athenians went up to make sacrifices at the temple the following day and among the destruction was an olive shoot sprung from the trunk.¹⁴ Minoan Crete and Hittite Anatolia are also olive tree breeding grounds where excavations have preserved artwork

¹² See limestone fragment from El Amarna at the Metropolitan Museum of Art: <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/100000253> Akhenaten is well known to have abandoned traditional Egyptian polytheism for a more “monolatrous” worship of Aten.

¹³ Thomas George Allen, “Horus in the Pyramid Texts.” Pages 1-76 in *Horus in the Pyramid Texts*, 1916. See also: Edwin Oliver James. *The Tree of Life: An Archaeological Study*. (Brill, 1967),41.

¹⁴ Robert Luyster, “Symbolic Elements in the Cult of Athena,” *History of Religions* 5, no. 1 (July 1, 1965): 133–163. See also Meneley, Anne. “Like an Extra Virgin.” *American Anthropologist* 109, no. 4 (2007): 678–687.

depicting olive trees and their place in mythology. Among the Hittites, olive oil was used in sacrificial cult ritual.¹⁵

In the early 19th century a collection of primary source documents were discovered and referred to by scholars as the Greek Magical Papyri (PGM). From Greco-Roman Egypt, these papyri are equal in significance to the later discovery of the Qumran scrolls and Nag Hammadi library. The Greek magical papyri include magical spells, formulae, hymns and rituals. One such text used in a rite of demon exorcism calls upon the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and calls him Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Son of the Father. Olive branches were used in the formulae and are depicted as manifesting power over demonic forces:

Excellent rite for driving out daimons: Formula to be spoken over his head: Place olive branches before him, and stand behind him and say: “Hail, God of Abraham; hail, God of Isaac; hail, God of Jacob; Jesus Chrestos, the Holy Spirit, the Son of the Father, who is above the Seven, who is within the Seven. Bring Iao Sabaoth; may your power issue forth from him, NN, until you drive away this unclean daimon Satan, who is in him. I conjure you, daimon, whoever you are, by this god, SABARBARBATHIOTH SABARBARBATHIOUTH SABARBARBATHIONETH SABARBARBAPHAI. Come out, daimon, whoever you are, and stay away from him, NN, now, now; immediately, immediately. Come out, daimon, since I bind you with unbreakable adamantine fetters, and I deliver you into the black chaos in perdition.”

Preparation: take 7 olive branches; for six of them tie together the two ends of each one, but for the remaining one use it like a whip as you utter the conjuration. Keep it secret; it is proven.

After driving out the daimon, hang around him, NN, a phylactery, which the patient puts on after the expulsion of the daimon –a phylactery with these things [written] on a tin metal leaf...¹⁶

In another text, olive oil is spread over the body and used in a spell believed to make the recipient invisible. The text associates the oil with the god Helios:

¹⁵ Harry A. Hoffner, “Oil in Hittite Texts,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 58, no. 2 (June 1, 1995): 108–114.

¹⁶ Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 62, PGM IV. 1227-64.

Indispensable invisibility spell: Take fat or an eye of a nightowl and a ball of dung rolled by a beetle and oil of an unripe *olive* and grind them all together until smooth, and smear your whole *I* body with it and say to Helios: “I adjure you by your great name, BORKE PHOIOUR IO ZIZIA APARXEOUCH THYTHER LAILAM AAAAAA IIIII OOOO IEO IEO IEO IEO IEO IEO NAUNAX AI AI AEO AEO EAO,” and moisten it and say in addition: “Make me invisible, lord Helios, AEO OAE EIE EAO, *I* in the presence of any man until sunset, IO IO O PHNXRIZO EOA.”¹⁷

In PGM III. 282-409 Olive wood is associated with the Holy Spirit and used in a spell that brings a vision of foreknowledge:

...words not to be spoken . . .beyond measure. . . .

Rite that brings foreknowledge, [which has] complete power and makes [all the passions] / subservient: In the deep . . . of a river [or in] a tomb . . . after descending, throw into . . . [the] passion stops, and you will learn whatever you wish.

[But speak thus:] “Continue without deception, lord, the vision of every act, in accordance with the command of the holy spirit, the [angel] of Phoibos, you yourself being pliable because of these / songs and psalms.”

The preparation for the operation: For a direct vision, set up a tripod and a table of *olive wood* or of laurel wood, and on the table carve in a circle these characters:...¹⁸

Olive wood is used in an initiation rite though the purpose of the initiatory rite is unclear:

Initiation: Keep yourself pure for 7 days beforehand. On the third of the month, go to a place from which the Nile has recently receded, before anyone walks on the area that was flooded- or at any rate, to a place that has been inundated by the Nile. / On two bricks standing on their sides, build a fire with *olive wood* (that is, with a branch of it) when half of the sun is above the horizon; hut before the sun appears, dig a trench around the altar. When the disk of the sun is fully above the horizon, / cut off the head of an unblemished, solid white cock which [you are to carry] under your left arm (and do dig the trench around the altar before the sun appears). When you are beheading the cock, fix it in place [with your knees] and hold it down all by yourself. / Throw the head into the river and drink up the blood, draining it off into your right hand and putting what's left of the body on the burning altar. Then jump into the river. Immerse yourself in the clothes you have on, walk backwards" out of the water, and, after changing into fresh garments, / depart without turning round . After this, take bilc from an owl, rub some of it over your eyes with the feather of an ibis, and your initiation will he complete. But if you can't get hold of an owl, use an ibis's egg and a falcon's feather. / Bore a hole in the egg, insert the feather, break it open, and thereby get the fluid to rub on yourself.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 9, PGM I. 222-31.

¹⁸ Ibid., 26-28.

¹⁹ Ibid., 37.

Olive wood is associated with an invocation involving Egyptian deity:

Lunar spell of Claudianus and [ritual] of heaven and the north star over lunar offerings:
This papyrus itself, the personal property of the Twelve Gods, was found in
Aphroditopolis [beside] the greatest goddess, / Aphrodite Urania, who embraces the
universe.

The preparation for Mistress Selene is made like this: Take clay from a potter's wheel and mix a mixture with sulfur, and add blood of a dappled goat and mold an image of Mistress Selene the Egyptian, as shown below, making her in / the form of the Universe. And make a shrine of *olive wood* and do not let it face the sun at all. And after dedicating it with the ritual that works for everything, [put it away,] and thus it will be dedicated in advance. And anoint it also with lunar ointment and wreath it. And late / at night, at the 5th hour, put it away, facing Selene in a [pure] room. And also offer the lunar offering and repeat the following in succession and you will send dreams, you will bind with spells. For the invocation to Selene is very effective. And after anointing yourself in advance [with] the ointment, appeal to her.²⁰

Olive oil is anthropomorphized as the sweat of gods and mucus of Isis:

Commendable love charm: . . . take pure olive oil and a beet plant and olive branches; and take seven leaves and grind them all together and pour them into the olive oil until they become like olive oil. / And put it into a jar, and go up onto a housetop (or on the ground) facing the moon, and say the spell 7 times: You are the *olive oil*; you are not the *olive oil* but the sweat of Good Daimon, the mucus of Isis, the utterance of Helios, the power of Osiris, the favor of the gods. / I release you against her, NN, the one NN bore.²¹

Jewish sources dating to at least the fall of the second temple have represented the menorah as a tree. Wirgin has documented this in his research titled *The Menorah as Symbol of Judaism*.²² Here he notes the earliest representation of the menorah as a tree found on a column capital in Capernaum. What is striking on this capital is how the tree-menorah is depicted as a whole together with the other elements. A pomegranate, wreath made out of leaves, branch and tree, symbolize the garden of Eden. This depiction of a heavenly garden is where any tree of life associations could be appropriately made. How

²⁰ Ibid., 141 PGM VII. 862-918.

²¹ Ibid., 290 PGM LXI. 1-38.

²² Wolf Wirgin, "The Menorah as Symbol of Judaism," *Israel Exploration Journal* 12, no. 2 (1962): 140–42.

the menorah could assume the form and significance of the tree of life is well answered by Wirgin who details several associations.

The menorah in the Temple was, in compliance with divine law, lighted exclusively with olive oil, the source of which is the olive tree. The olive tree is in wide popular belief the tree that never dies. Trees are constructed on an entirely different plan from that underlying the complex higher animals, and are thus endowed with a kind of potential immortality. There are, indeed, olive trees that are said to be over 2000 years old. No doubt such venerable individual trees existed also in antiquity. Furthermore, an olive leaf was the first thing mentioned in the Bible as having survived the flood outside Noah's ark. We should not doubt that for the ancients the olive tree was the symbol of enduring life, and thus it was befitting to blend it with the menorah into a Jewish symbol of eternal life after death.²³

In Islam, Reat notes the progressive importance that trees, and perhaps most revered, the olive trees have had in religious ritual. The Qur'ân ascribes only the olive tree as "blessed."²⁴

The tree symbol plays only a minor role in the Qur'ân itself, yet among the mystics and in Muslim art and architecture it became one of Islam's most developed symbols. The Shajarat alTûba, "Tree of Bliss," the Islamic World Tree, does not appear in name or description in the Qur'ân. Instead, there are several distinct supernatural trees. Only in the Hadîth and among mystics are the various trees integrated into one consistent symbol. There are, in the Qur'ân, three distinct supernatural trees: (1) the Infernal Tree, Zaqqûm, in Hell, (2) the Lote Tree of the Uttermost Boundary, Sidrat al-Muntahâ, in the Seventh Heaven and (3) the Tree of Knowledge, the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden. A fourth tree, mentioned in the Lamp Verse, The Infernal Tree the "olive neither of the East nor West.²⁵

What are the origins of the religious use of the olive tree and its components? Where did it begin, and why do the Hebrew Scriptures attribute special status to the olive tree over other trees that had a functional role in the biblical world? A casual reader of the Old and New Testament Scriptures cannot help but notice consistent allusions to the olive tree and its produce. From its first appearance in Genesis 8 in the mouth of a dove, to Zechariah's cataclysmic description of the Day of the Lord (Zech 14:4) when Messiah

²³ Ibid., 141.

²⁴ See Qur'ân Surat An-Nûr 24:35.

²⁵ Noble Ross Reat, "The Tree Symbol in Islam," *Studies in Comparative Religion* 19, no. 3 (1975): 8.

descends to the Mount of Olives, to its metaphorical illustration in Romans 11 as the people of God, the olive tree maintains special symbolism in the biblical record. Though the tree has its place in the cultural and religious nucleus of many ancient Near Eastern civilizations, its image is distinct in the biblical corpus as specially related to Israel.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

Does the extensive presence of the olive tree in Palestine account for its place of prominence in the biblical record or could there be a symbolic and theological meaning behind this common yet peculiar tree that supplies rich imagery for the people of God? The purpose of this study is to explore the possibility of a symbolic and theological meaning and attempt to extract the significance of the olive tree while comparing and contrasting it with what is known of olive trees among other ANE sources.

The focus of this study is narrowed to explicating the significance of the olive tree in the ancient Near East and in Hebrew Scriptures under the following trajectory:

- Sacred symbolism and trees in the biblical world (Ch.2)
- Olive in the ANE record (Ch.3)
- Theological significance of the olive tree in the Hebrew Scriptures (Ch.4)
- Synthetic conclusions (Ch.5)

This study will be primarily limited to the Hebrew Scriptures except where New Testament reception and other texts may be appropriate. Secondary discussions about the nature of olive imagery and iconography in ANE literature, archaeology and the Hebrew Scriptures are included as well. The purpose of this study is to arouse scholarly interest in the olive tree and particularly to encourage further research into investigating the religious use of the olive tree and its produce.

1.3 Methodology

This study will employ a philological, diachronic analysis, and literature study of the Hebrew lexical forms of זית, יצהר, שמן, משח and their derivatives to include their ANE cognates as evidenced in literature and archaeological records. When researching the cognates, some instances may include references to an oil type not distinctively from the olive and the author wishes to include those where they may be relevant or helpful in determining contexts with which oil may be directed in ritual. The author also recognizes that general references to oil without descriptors that explicitly state the type of oil will be left to determine through an examination of the context and location to decipher the most probable type. After gathering substantial ANE textual, archaeological and representations of the use of the olive tree and its fruit from the Hebrew Scriptures, the present study aims to synthesize the material from the Hebrew Scriptures and explicate the significance of the tree in each context. The presence of unpublished data forms a limitation to this study. For example, in the case of Hittite texts, instances of the word “oil” in all Akkadograms, SERDU or ZERTU[M], are limited to available catalogued instances of the word.²⁶ Notwithstanding limitations of this kind, the study will not be negatively affected since the scope of the study is not to examine every occurrence of the word across cultures but instead to find representative instances of the olive tree and its fruit that may serve a theological or a religious function.

Conceptually, this study will provide an overview of the importance of sacred objects and ideology in the ANE (Chapter 2). Included in this treatment is a survey of some sacred animals, plants and trees, as evidenced in surviving literature, archaeological findings, and the Hebrew Scriptures. This study then turns to a detailed analysis of the olive tree in antiquity. This is the primary section of the study and includes two chapters

²⁶ The *Chicago Hittite Dictionary* in the Oriental Institute will not treat all the related Akkadograms until it finishes treating all the syllabically written Hittite words from A to Z. This information was retrieved from personal correspondence with the late Harry Hoffner, former editor of the *Chicago Hittite Dictionary*.

covering the social-political significance and the religious-theological significance. Each chapter includes relevant textual and archaeological evidence from the ANE and related material from the Hebrew Scriptures. The evidence from the Hebrew Scriptures will include exegetical analyses where appropriate. Finally, in chapter 5, some synthetic conclusions are offered regarding the significance of the olive tree in the Hebrew Scriptures and ANE records.

1.4 History of Scholarship

In his article, *Von der Zeder bis zum Ysop. Zur Bedeutung der Pflanzen in der Lebenswelt des alten Israel*, Riede aptly recognizes that over the last three decades a series of fundamental work on the importance of animals in ancient Israel occurred. What has been missing are similar studies on the plants.²⁷ The attention given in scholarly research focused on the olive tree has primarily been interested in production. Israeli archaeologist, David Eitam, has written extensively on the olive oil industry during the Israelite period.²⁸ Harry Hoffner, has also written comprehensively on olive oil in Hittite Anatolia.²⁹ As editor of the *Chicago Hittite Dictionary* and co-founder with Hans Gustav Güterbock, Hoffner has been credited with discovering the Hittite word for oil. A survey of the use of oil among the Hittites will be provided in Chapter 3. Archaeologist, Herman Géntz, has investigated olive oil production and trade with Egypt

²⁷ Ute Neumann-Gorsolke and Peter Riede, *Das Kleid der Erde: Pflanzen in der Lebenswelt des alten Israel* (Stuttgart; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Calwer Verlag ; Neukirchener Verlag, 2002), 5.

²⁸ See: David Eitam, *Olive oil in antiquity : Israel and neighbouring countries from the Neolithic to the early Arab period* (Padova: Sargon, 1996); David Eitam. "Cereals in the Ghassulian culture in central Israel: grinding installations as a case study." *Israel Exploration Journal* 59, no. 1 (2009): 63-79; W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and David Eitam. *The oil industry in the Iron Age at Tel Mique*. Jerusalem: W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, 1985.

²⁹ See: Harry A. Hoffner, "The Hittite word for 'Oil' and its Derivatives," *Historische Sprachforschung / Historical Linguistics* 107, no. 2 (January 1, 1994): 222–230; Hoffner, Harry A., "Oil in Hittite Texts," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 58, no. 2 (June 1, 1995): 108-114.

in the Early Bronze Age and southern Levant.³⁰ In a more recent study, Jorrit Kelder has written extensively on olives in the Kingdom of Mycenae and their relationship with Egypt in the Late Bronze Age.³¹ Interest in the olive industry at the Philistine city of Ekron has also generated various studies which explore the industrial and cultural realities of the city.³²

Archaeological excavations have unearthed olive seeds at Teleilat Ghassul as well as at numerous other locations.³³ In the Early Dynastic period, Egyptian literature suggests that Syria and Palestine were among the chief exporters of olive oil. Further, Cyprus was also known to have imported olive oil from around 2500 BC.³⁴ The well-established use of the olive tree has been documented in various cultures of antiquity, some of which are explored in this paper, but what is common to each are the socio-economic and religious value they provide in everyday life. The rich texture of the wood proved useful in construction, ornamental carvings and household utensils. The oil was utilized in sacred rituals as well as for secular cosmetic interests.³⁵ The Hittites used olive

³⁰ See: Hermann Genz, “Cash Crop Production and Storage in the Early Bronze Age Southern Levant,” *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 16, no. 1 (June 2003): 59–78; Kelder, Jorrit M. “Royal Gift Exchange Between Mycenae and Egypt: Olives as ‘Greeting Gifts’ in the Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean.” *American Journal of Archaeology* 113, no. 3 (July 2009): 339–352.

³¹ Jorrit M. Kelder, “Royal Gift Exchange Between Mycenae and Egypt: Olives as ‘Greeting Gifts’ in the Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 113, no. 3 (July 2009): 339–352.

³² See: Young Jin Kim, “A Historical Investigation of Ekron, the Philistine City.” *Asia Journal of Theology* 20, no. 1 (April 2006): 128–141; Gitin, Seymour, and American Schools of Oriental Research. *Recent excavations in Israel: studies in Iron Age archaeology*. Eisenbrauns, 1989; Gitin, Seymour, and Trude Dothan. “The Rise and Fall of Ekron of the Philistines: Recent Excavations at an Urban Border Site.” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 50, no. 4 (December 1, 1987): 197–222.

³³ Emmanuel Anati, *Palestine before the Hebrews : a history, from the earliest arrival of man to the conquest of Canaan* (London: J. Cape, 1963), 307, 314. Kathleen Mary Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land* (Methuen, 1985), 307, 314.

³⁴ Anati, *Palestine before the Hebrews*, 307, 314.

³⁵ James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Hebrew Scriptures* (2d ed., corr. and enl.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 491f.

oil to placate and attract their gods, and in Mesopotamia, the olive tree was a symbol of the tree of life.³⁶ The sacred use of olive oil in the ancient Israelite world has been the subject of no known scholarly enquiry to date, except what has been explored in Hoffner's, "Oil in Hittite Texts."

The vast majority of interest in the olive tree has been concentrated on its practical use throughout history. On account of the lack of attention given to the symbolic meaning of the olive tree and its fruit, and to the theological assertions that can be explored especially as related to the Hebrew Scriptures, this study is desperately needed. In addition, this work will augment existing studies that have been done on the subject of olives in the ANE and perhaps illuminate areas of enquiry surrounding the alienation of the olive tree from other significant trees that held similar roles.

1.5 Hypothesis

This study will query whether or not the olive tree, its fruit, and its oil are accentuated in the Hebrew Scriptures because of their apparent symbolic and theological significance. If so, (1) is the symbolic significance emphasized when examining the role of the olive tree in other ancient Near Eastern cultures? (2) Is the theological significance emphasized when interpreting the references throughout the Hebrew Scriptures while understanding it together within its ancient Near Eastern context? The author proposes that *in the Hebrew Scriptures, the olive tree stands out among the cultures of the ANE as uniquely Yahwistic and exclusively representative of Israel*. Similarities shared in both the Hebrew Scriptures and ancient Near Eastern thought and religious rituals are acknowledged and highlighted where significant differences occur.³⁷

³⁶ Frank Charles Fensham, "An Ancient Tradition of the Fertility of Palestine," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 98 (1966), 166.

³⁷ See: John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern thought and the Old Testament: introducing the*

1.6 Chapter division and outline

Chapter 1 sets out to explain the rationale for the study. It begins by advocating for the need for the study in reference to the lack of scholarly attention dedicated to the olive tree. The aims and objectives are presented as the leading area of focus which is narrowed to explicating the role of olive trees in the ANE. Secondary discussions about the nature of imagery and icons in ANE literature, archaeology and biblical literature are included as necessary.

Chapter 2 focuses on sacred objects and imagery in the ANE. This section is devoted to introductory issues pertaining to the worldview of ANE cultures. Specifically, it explores the role of sacred animals, sacred plants, and sacred trees to facilitate a broad understanding to the reader of their potential significance to the study.

Chapter 3 presents the importance of the topic in the ANE. This section is comprised of the largest section of the thesis leading into the theological material in the Hebrew Scriptures. The significance of the Olive tree in all spheres of life in the ANE are explicated under several tiers: The ANE textual evidence, the archaeological evidence, and recorded miscellaneous evidence.

conceptual world of the Hebrew Bible (Baker Academic, 2006). See also: John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Zondervan, 2009), 14, 18. The religion found in the Old Testament is essentially different from the religion found among its neighbors. Oswalt maintains, “one striking difference between the Old Testament and the literatures of the ancient Near East that emerges from a comparative study of the two is the medium by which the divine is known. Among Israel’s neighbors (and indeed, everywhere else in the world) the medium is nature. But in Israel nature is only a distant second (see, e.g., Psalm 19 or Isaiah 6:3). Far and away, the medium in Israel is unique human-historical experience...I am far from denying that there are many similarities between Israel and its neighbors, or that an understanding of those similarities is significant for understanding the Israelite people and its experience. The studies of Israel and the ancient Near East in the last 150 years have been immensely valuable in that regard. But I am asking that we not overplay those similarities so that they obscure the much more significant differences that affect every interpretation of the similarities.” He indicates a prime difference that sets the Old Testament apart as unique among other ANE literature is in its depiction of where the deity resides, or rather, how the deity manifests himself or is represented among mankind.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the evidence from the Hebrew Scriptures. All occurrences of the olive tree and olive oil are presented and examined. More attention is given to the verses which have significant exegetical and syntactical bearing upon the study.

Chapter 5 concludes the study with final observations, synthesizing both the results of the evidence from both the Hebrew Scriptures and ANE. Finally, it provides suggestive directions for further research on the topic.

1.7 Terminology and Orthography

1.7.1 Terminology

- **Ancient Near East:** This term describes the following geographical regions to include: Mesopotamia for the lands between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers; Palestine for the region covering present day Israel and Jordan; Phoenicia for present day Lebanon, Anatolia for Turkey; Mycenae for southern Greece; and Persia for present day Iran. Egypt is included in the broader reference of the ANE civilizations.
- **Levant:** This term generally describes the eastern-Mediterranean coast-lands.
- **Hebrew Scriptures:** The term “Hebrew Scriptures” is used interchangeably with the term “Old Testament.”

- **West-Semitic:** This term generally refers to material related to Amorite, Canaanite, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Proto-Sinaitic, Hebrew and Aramaic.³⁸

1.7.2 Orthography

This study employs the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) referencing system and uses primary source texts with English translations for textual and archaeological records. The citations will follow the *SBL Handbook of Style: for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*.³⁹

Character	Transliteration	Character	Transliteration
אָ	‘ālep	ׁ	
בָּ	bêt	ׁ	b
גִּ	gîmel	ׁ	g
דָּ	dâlet	ׁ	d
הָ	hê	ׁ	h
וָ	wâw	ׁ	w
זָ	zayin	ׁ	z
ׁ	hêt	ׁ	h
ׁ	têt	ׁ	t
ׁ	yôd	ׁ	y
ׁ, ׁ	kâp	ׁ	k
ׁ	lâmed	ׁ	l
ׁ	= a	ׁ	= o
ׁ	= b	ׁ	= p
ׁ	= g	ׁ	= r
ׁ	= n (before ׁ, ׁ, ׁ, ׁ)	ׁ	= rh
ׁ	= d	ׁ, ׁ	= s
ׁ	= e	ׁ	= t
ׁ	= z	ׁ	= y (not in diphthong)
ׁ	= ē	ׁ	= u (in diphthongs: au, eu, ēu, ou, ui)
ׁ	= th	ׁ	= ph
ׁ	= i	ׁ	= ch
ׁ	= k	ׁ	= ps
ׁ	= l	ׁ	= ô
ׁ	= m	ׁ	= h (with vowel or diphthong)
ׁ	= n		
ׁ	= x		

³⁸ Richard Schiemann, "The Relevance of Archaeology to the Study of Ancient West Semitic Religion," *World Archaeology* 10, no. 2 (1978): 132.

³⁹ Patrick H. Alexander, Society of Biblical Literature, and Shirley Decker-Lucke, *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1999).

CHAPTER 2

SACRED SYMBOLISM AND TREES IN THE BIBLICAL WORLD

2.1 Introduction

A symbol is an object with a significance. To those who use the object, its significance extends quite beyond its visible content. Kotzé notes the importance of linguistic vehicle identification in the interpretation of images.⁴⁰ Drawing on the work of Dirven,⁴¹ he defines the vehicle for conceptual metaphor as the linguistic unit that carries the image that is communicated. He stresses the importance of verifying the image conveyed by a certain vehicle which aids the researcher in understanding the conceptual nature of linguistic expressions.⁴² To this end the present chapter aims to aid the reader in a better understanding of identifying conceptual images that communicated meaning in the ancient world. A recent study in South Africa has indicated the highly symbolic yet at the same time practical use of the olive tree among the amaXhosa in South Africa. Cultural meanings are attached to harvested plants throughout southern Africa and it is not a surprise to find the olive tree as one of them. Cocks and Dold express a shared sentiment concerning the lack of scholarly attention given to exploring the significance of these cultural meanings.

Recently in southern Africa, much attention has been given to the importance of wild plants for rural livelihoods, both through their household consumption and sale (Campbell and Luckert 2002; Shackleton et al. 2002). Cunningham's (1997) review of ethnobotanical literature from eastern and southern Africa focuses predominantly on the utilitarian use of wild plants, such as their edible use value, medicinal uses, fuelwood and charcoal use, fencing and construction use, domestic use, and commercial trade values

⁴⁰ Zacharias Kotzé, “A Cognitive Linguistic Methodology for the Study of Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible,” *JNSL* 31 (2005):107-17.

⁴¹ René Dirven, *Metaphor and Nation: Metaphors Afrikaners Live By.* (Duisburger Arbeiten zur Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft 22). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

⁴² Zacharias Kotzé, “A Cognitive Linguistic Methodology for the Study of Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible,” 111.

such as wood carving. Wild harvested plant products are generally classified as having either a subsistence consumption value or a commercial value (Goebel et al 2000; Campbell and Luckert 2002) but may also have cultural functions. The significance of these has, however, been poorly documented. The majority of studies that address the cultural significance of plants focus on areas or units of vegetation, such as sacred forests, rainmaking sites, landmarks, and so on (Posey 1999; Goebel et al 2000). The cultural meanings of harvested plants have for the most part been ignored in academic research in southern Africa.⁴³

Cocks and Dold document the use and significance of the *Olea europaea*, and subspecies *Africana*, among the amaXhosa in the eastern Cape Province. The olive tree is called *Umnquma* in the Xhosa language and in their research they attended sacrificial rituals involving the olive tree. The leaves were observed to be used medicinally to treat high blood pressure, improve kidney function, relieve colic, and as an eye salve. The trees are common throughout South Africa and it is considered taboo to permanently cut them down.

In religious ritual, the amaXhosa incorporate the use of the olive tree in sacrificial performances to petition for ancestral blessings and for protection against malevolent forces and sorcery. One such ritual called *Imbeleko* in the Eastern Cape, is used to introduce a young girl to her ancestors. During the procedure a goat is sacrificed, and some of its meat, covered by the skin, rests on a pile of olive leaves and branches. On the left side of the olive branches rests a bowl with left over bones that will be burnt together with the branches on the final day of the ritual. According to this study, the reason the olive branches are used in these rituals is because it symbolizes the ancestral spirits.⁴⁴

⁴³ Michelle Linda Cocks and Anthony Patrick Dold, "The Cultural Use of the Wild Olive Tree by the amaXhosa People in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 2, no. 3 (2008): 292–293.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 299–301.

The use of the olive in religious ritual did not meet its origins in southern Africa and as we will see next and additionally in chapters three and four, its use is ancient.

At this point in the study it would be helpful to provide a precursory survey of the significance of studying animal and plant symbolism in the ancient world. In order to see clearly the significance of symbols, we must try our best to see through the eyes of the culture studied. Separating the context from the content will inevitably lead to unsubstantiated observations. Othmar Keel makes an apt observation in stating,

We now see the Bible imbedded in a broad stream of traditions of the most diverse kind and provenance. Only when this rich environment has been systematically included in the study of the OT do OT conventionalities and originalities clearly emerge.⁴⁵

The biblical texts carry with them centuries of traditions that are integral to our understanding of those texts. Whereas modern systems of writing and graphics connect our world in the most understandable way, the world of the ancient Near East communicated most effectively through the pictorial arts. Iconography has been widely recognized as a significant field of study that has illuminated areas of biblical *realia*. Keel asserts that iconography is particularly important to study when it includes those objects which are timeless and unchangeable such as the sun, moon, storms, earth, and trees. “We assume far too easily that these phenomena held the same meaning for the ancient Near East as they do for us.”⁴⁶ For example, the phrase “heaven and earth” has connotations familiar to all of us in the modern world. In ancient Egypt these words bear with themselves a connotation much different from our own. The Egyptian Book of the

⁴⁵ Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (Eisenbrauns, 1997), 7.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Dead depicts the “heavens” in the figure of Nut, the goddess of the heavenly skies, arching over the earth god.⁴⁷ In this case the modern interpreter must immerse himself in the contextual world of the material studied as best as he can. In many ways, though not all, Keel is correct in stating, “The Bible shares the mentality of the ancient Near East. Every student of the Bible knows that certain expressions are not to be understood literally...Every OT scholar undoubtedly understands ‘horn of the wicked’ (Ps 75:4,10) as an ideogram for ‘power of the wicked.’”⁴⁸

With this mode of operation in mind, the next section of this study will investigate the role of sacred objects. The focus is limited to nature to include animals, plants and trees. The intent of this section is to provide a more relevant context for the duration of the study of the olive tree.

2.2 Sacred Nature

Unlike modern westernized cultures, the cultures of the ANE did not separate between the spiritual and the natural. Events that modern cultures call natural, were always connected to a divine agent in the ANE. Oswalt has posited that god’s are always represented by images in the shape of this world. Idols which can take the shape of animals, plants, trees, or humans can establish the relationship between the culture and the god(s) they worship. Oswalt asserts,

The idol is an ideal representative of continuity. First of all it is a part of nature, whether made of wood or stone or some other natural material; second, it is commonly in the form of a human; and third, it is ritually invested with the names

⁴⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 9. For similar statements from an evangelical perspective, see John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern thought and the Old Testament: introducing the conceptual world of the Hebrew Bible*. (Baker Academic, 2006).

and trappings of a particular god. Thus the typical idol is at the same time divine, human, and nature. Furthermore, by doing things to an idol, one is simultaneously doing things to the god or goddess and to the natural force he or she inhabits.⁴⁹

The animal world was one of the realms through which the deity makes himself known. This was true of all of nature to include the celestial and the terrestrial. Animal symbolism can be traced back to the earliest of periods among ANE civilizations. Bulls, lions, serpents, dragons, and other mythological beasts are well-represented among the religious décor of the Assyrians. They would often symbolize protective spirits at the beginning of their history. In Babylonia, the gates of Ishtar are painted with lions and dragons. Even more, winged bulls and giant lions guard the entrances of Assyrian palaces.⁵⁰ At this point in time, man regarded the bird navigating through the air as a symbol for the soul, and Egyptian monuments depict the soul of the king as a bird.⁵¹ In Egyptian art, the goddess Neith appears, though not always, with wings. The Hebrew Scriptures also describe Yahweh as riding on the wings of the wind (Ps 104:3) or as mounting his cherubim and flying on the wings of the wind (Ps 18:10). Animal worship was primarily symbolical in nature, for the beasts were not adored but rather the qualities they personified. Porphyry asserts, “under the semblance of animals the Egyptians worship the universal power which the gods have revealed in the various forms of living nature.”⁵² In this manner, the animals were not the deities themselves but symbols of

⁴⁹ John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Zondervan, 2009), 57.

⁵⁰ Maurice H Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism* (The Library of Biblical studies; New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1970), 53.

⁵¹ Ibid., 59.

⁵² See: On Abstinence from Animal Food, book IV, Chapter IX.

them. Although some scholars would hold that these animals were worshiped as deities, Farbridge summarizes that in any case, “we must note that amongst the Egyptians, the Babylonians, and the Assyrians symbolical zoology as the natural outgrowth of the doctrine of metempsychosis attained its greatest development.”⁵³

The study of sacred animals is relatively young in its development. However, some studies have devoted themselves to single fauna exploratory research that has illumined areas of biblical concern.⁵⁴ The animals that are mentioned here are not exhaustive, but instead are selected from those which have been found to play a religious or symbolic role in ANE cultures.⁵⁵ Those animals which played a significant role are mostly the domestic ones. The usual wild fauna encountered in Palestine are the wild boar, roe deer, brown bear, weasels, and shrews.⁵⁶ In the tropical marshlands, animals and birds flourish on account of the water and its importance in migratory patterns. Tropical animals are restricted to these areas and archaeological excavations have uncovered the existence of the hippopotamus in the marshlands at least until the Iron Age. Hippopotamus bones were excavated from strata XII-XI of the Iron Age at Tel

⁵³ Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*, 55.

⁵⁴ See: Kenneth C. Way, *Donkeys in the Biblical World* (Eisenbrauns, 2011); Brent A. Strawn, *What is stronger than a lion?: leonine image and metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East*. (Saint-Paul, 2005).

⁵⁵ For a comprehensive treatment of animal life in Palestine, see: Borowski, Oded. *Every living thing: daily use of animals in ancient Israel*. Rowman Altamira, 1998; Friedrich Simon Bodenheimer, *Animal life in Palestine: an introduction to the problems of animal ecology and zoogeography* (L. Mayer, 1935).

⁵⁶ Edwin Firmage, “Zoology,” in David Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, VI (1st ed.; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1110.

Qasile as well as at Aphek and Dan.⁵⁷ Simon Davis, who examined the bones, proposed that the hippopotamus was slaughtered for meat.⁵⁸

Crocodiles were also inhabitants of the marshes in Nahal Tanninim which is situated in North Caesarea.⁵⁹ Both Strabo and Pliny have called this place Κροκόδειλον πόλις or “Crocodile City.”⁶⁰ In the deserts, animal life has contributed minimally in culture, but some of the native species were and are the gazelle, Egyptian gerbil, the jerboa, the golden spring mouse, and the sand rat. Additional fauna include camels, sheep and goats.⁶¹

Throughout history, the greatest civilizations in antiquity viewed hunting as more of a sport among the elite and little did it contribute to any social or cultural role. However it did serve to function as a royal symbol among the kings. Royal hunting was mostly a symbolic activity and in some cases would never even take place.⁶² In some enthronement rituals, the king would slay a pre-captured animal that was presented to him and thus the entire hunting process was removed from him.⁶³ Further, in ancient

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Davis S.J.M., 1985. “The Large Mammal Bones.” In: A. Mazar (ed.), *Excavations at Tell Qasile, Vol. 2.* (The Hebrew University: Jerusalem), 148-151.

⁵⁹ G. Buchannan, "Crocodiles in Palestine," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 52 (1920), 167-76.

⁶⁰ See The Geography of Strabo, *Loeb Classical Library edition*, Vol. VII, 1932 Book XVI, Ch.2, 27 and Pliny, Natural History, 6.17.

⁶¹ Edwin Firmage, “Zoology,” in Freedman, *ABD*, VI, 1110.

⁶² Ibid., 1112.

⁶³ Enno Littmann and Daniel Krencker, *Vorbericht der deutschen Aksumexpedition* (Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1906), 37.

Assyria and Egypt the symbolic value of the ritual hunt is also evident. In Egypt, sacrificial bulls were taunted when captured as if the hunter has taken prisoner his enemy. In the slaughtering ritual, Otto suggests that first the bull would be lassoed.⁶⁴ Lassoing was used to hunt other sacrificial animals such as the antelope, gazelle, and ibex as well.⁶⁵ After being caught the victim would be bound and slaughtered.

The animals that were pursued in ritual hunt were chosen by tradition. For example, the animals selected for sacrificial slaughter in Egypt were the commonly hunted game such as wild cattle, gazelle, antelope, and ibex. The domesticated animals like the sheep and goats were not preferred. However in other civilizations of antiquity the reverse was true. In the late Stone Age, the ritualistic killing of animals accompanied sacred occasions or major changes in life. The sacrificial slaughtering of animals also became a community venture, which pulled kinship together and forged family ties and communal bonds while also distributing resources.⁶⁶

Among the Hittites, pigs and dogs played a prominent role as the sacrificial animal in purification rituals. One example is seen in the “Ritual for the elimination of family discord.” Here a pig is sacrificed between two quarrelling families or members and then buried. Another Hittite ritual involves the slaughtering of a pig to counteract a bad omen which affected newborns and was discerned by the moon:⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Eberhard Otto, “An Ancient Egyptian Hunting Ritual,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 9, no. 3 (July 1, 1950): 164–77.

⁶⁵ See: Hans Alexander Winkler, *Völker und Völkerbewegungen im vorgeschichtlichen Oberägypten im Lichte neuer Felsbilderfunde*. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1937). Figs. 17, 47, 56, 57; Pls. XV.1, XXIX.1.

⁶⁶ Edwin Firmage, “Zoology,” in Freedman, *ABD*, VI, 1113.

[I]f the moon gives an omen and in giving the omen it strikes [a person, then I do as follows: I dig the earth. Into the hole I take the karaå of a pig (and) the dung of a h[orse(?)] (and) [after]ward, I stick a piglet (into it). § If it is a girl child, I take a she-piglet. If it is a boy child I take a he-piglet, and I drive in (nails) over (it). We will take seven nails of iron, seven nails of bronze, seven nails of copper (and) stone to the gate. We bow at the door of the inner chamber. If at any time it (i.e., the door) opens, we will take that stone and we will nail (it in) place. § “A pin of copper— . . . —We draw it up and drive in (nails) over (it). They cook the piglet. Then they bring it back. I take a little bit (from) every body part and I present (them) to the Sun-goddess of the Earth. Then I say as follows: palçin waitkatiu tuçuripa watuças turu. I break a thick loaf. § I take the piglet and carry it into the inner chamber. The female attendants eat it. The bones, however, they bring to the kitchen and I sell them.⁶⁸

In another ritual, humans in the festival for the goddess Teteshapi consume pork. Collins comments that the context is fragmentary “but, as in the previous example, it is a piglet (not a pig) that is eaten and it is most likely women in service to the goddess who are the consumers.”⁶⁹

[S/he] tak[es] up [. . .]. For the priestess s/he takes a cup [. . .] and they swallow down the piglet. [. . .] they hit. The side x[. . .] § The priestess [. . . -s] Teteshapi.
. . .⁷⁰

Collins adds that pigs were killed as a safeguard in protecting community welfare to include their fertility and crop production. Additionally she asserts, “a festival performed in Istanuwa to reaffirm the human-divine relationship may parallel the practice of sacrificing a pig at the ratification of treaties in the classical world.”⁷¹ The pig among the Hittites held a unique status among other domesticated animals in that its sacrificial

⁶⁷ Billie Jean Collins, “Pigs at the Gate: Hittite Pig Sacrifice in its Eastern Mediterranean Context,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 6, no. 1 (2006): 165.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 166. See KUB 17.28 i 1-24.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 166.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 166.

⁷¹ Ibid., 154.

stature took the place of humans. This has also been evident in other cultures throughout antiquity.⁷²

The donkey has also functioned as a symbol for royalty and has occupied obscure roles in cultic ritual. In ancient Israel, it was forbidden as a sacrificial animal and for consumption. It is uncertain whether the biblical prohibition was established in light of the pagan use of donkey consumption but it remains a valid area of enquiry. Kenneth Way has undertaken an exhaustive study of the ceremonial significance of the donkey in the biblical world and has explicated the special relationship the donkey shares with humanity.⁷³ He asserts that the donkey is associated with at least twenty ideas which I will summarize as follows:⁷⁴

1. The donkey is characterized by its common purpose as a beast of burden in Egyptian, Aramaic, Hittite, Akkadian, Sumerian, and biblical literature.
2. The donkey is portrayed as having a large appetite in Egyptian, Ugaritic, and Sumerian sources of proverbs and mythology.
3. The donkey has a reputation of being a “lustful, promiscuous or licentious animal,” in Egyptian, Aramaic, Hittite, Akkadian, Sumerian, and the Bible.
4. The donkey is characterized as stubborn and lazy. This is attested in Egyptian, Aramaic, Hittite, Sumerian and biblical sources.
5. The donkey is characterized by its noisy braying in Egyptian, Northwest Semitic, Akkadian, and Sumerian sources.
6. The donkey is characterized by its lack of intelligence. An Egyptian school text and Sumerian proverb relate the idea of the donkey as without understanding.
7. The donkey is characterized as slow in Egyptian instructions, an Akkadian fable, and Sumerian proverbs.
8. The donkey is said to have a foul odor and is present in only Sumerian proverbs.
9. The donkey is associated with divination in Egypt, Ugarit, Mesopotamia and in the Bible.
10. The donkey is portrayed as peaceful along with the lion in Egyptian and Aramaic sources.

⁷² Ibid., 154.

⁷³ See Kenneth C. Way, *Donkeys in the Biblical World*, (Eisenbrauns, 2011).

⁷⁴ Ibid., 123–132.

11. The donkey is associated with the serpent in Egyptian, Ugaritic and biblical sources.
12. The donkey carries a capital value everywhere in the ANE world.
13. The donkey is associated with sickness in the Bible and an Egyptian school text describes the donkey as aiding a sick soldier.
14. The donkey is an icon of royal or noble socio-economic stature. This is attested in Biblical, Levantine, Anatolian and Mesopotamian sources but Egyptian sources portray the donkey mostly negative.
15. The donkey is associated with death in Egyptian and Biblical sources.
16. The donkey is used in elimination rites among the Hittite scapegoat ritual where it participates in bearing impurity.
17. The donkey is deified in the Egyptian god, Seth.
18. The donkey was used for consumption in times of famine in both Egypt and in biblical sources.
19. Donkeys were sacrificed to deities in Ugarit texts.
20. The donkey was used in ceremonial sacrifices in Ugaritic and Amorite texts.
21. Donkeys were buried with royalty in Sumerian and Mesopotamian sources.

Throughout the Levant, animal figurines including cows, bulls, and doves have been found in tombs and private homes. This indicates that god's were regarded in some way through animal imagery among the earliest inhabitants of Palestine. Ezekiel 8 reveals various kinds of idolatry that Judah was guilty of, one being the worship of "all kinds of crawling things and unclean animals" (8:10 NIV). Interestingly, verse 14 reveals also the worship of the Babylonian god Tammuz, "Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the LORD, and I saw women sitting there, mourning the god Tammuz" (NIV). Tammuz is a Babylonian god associated with Ea and the sacred tree. The following is an excerpt from a bi-lingual hymn to the god Tammuz, whose mother is called the "Lady of Edin":

1. In Eridu a stalk grew overshadowing; in a holy place did it become green;
2. Its root was of white crystal, which stretched towards the deep;
3. Before Ea was its course in Eridu, teeming with fertility;
4. Its seat was the central place of the earth.
5. Its foliage was the couch of Zikum the primeval mother.
6. Into the heart of its holy house which spread its shade like a forest no man entered.
7. There is the home of the mighty mother who passes across the sky.

8. In the midst of it was Tammuz.⁷⁵

William Smith affirms that “All the great deities of the Northern Semites had their sacred animals, and were themselves worshipped in animal form or in association with animal symbols down to a late date.”⁷⁶ He goes on to suggest that this implies a certain unity between animals and gods. Cornelius asserts various animals such as lions and horses are associated with Astarte on stelae and ostraca.⁷⁷ Yet, worship through the symbolic was not limited to animals but included many objects, including plants and trees.

2.3 Sacred Plants and Trees

The Hebrew Scriptures present the lexical root פָּרָע in reference to both “tree(s)” and “wood.”⁷⁸ The root occurs 330 times with a balanced distribution. Specific modifiers which differentiate various botanical forms of trees are mentioned to include: “cedar”, “cypress”, “grapevine”, “olive”, “pomegranate”, “acacia”, “fig”, and “date palm”.⁷⁹ In the nominative form it can refer to an individual tree⁸⁰ or also an indefinite number.⁸¹ In the plural it can denote trees of a varying kind.⁸² In contrast to Canaan, Assyria, Babylon

⁷⁵ Emily M. Smith, *The Zodia Or the Cherubim in the Bible and the Cherubim in the Sky* (Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 173.

⁷⁶ William Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites* (Transaction Publishers, 1894), 288.

⁷⁷ Izak Cornelius, *The many faces of the goddess: the iconography of the Syro-Palestinian goddesses Anat, Astarte, Qedeshet, and Asherah c. 1500-1000 BC* (Orbis biblicus et orientalis 204; Fribourg, Switzerland : Goettingen: Academic Press ; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 78. See also Kenneth C. Way, *Donkeys in the Biblical World*, (Eisenbrauns, 2011), 56-58.

⁷⁸ HALOT, II, 863-64.

⁷⁹ TDOT, 11, 268.

⁸⁰ Gen 18:4,8.

⁸¹ Exo 9:25; 10:5; Lev 26:4; Jer 7:20.

and Egypt which were not known for their varieties of trees, Canaan was well known to have many varying types of trees.⁸³

During the travels of the Patriarchs, certain trees were designated as landmarks on account of their association with an event that took place where the tree was planted. For example, Genesis 12:6 records Abraham traveling as far as the site of the great tree at Moreh in Shechem. Deuteronomy 11:30 mentions these same trees as landmarks as well. The great trees of Mamre at Hebron were also the location marking the place where Abraham built an altar to Yahweh. Genesis 13:18 records, “So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord”(ESV). This site appears repeatedly in Abraham’s narrative as the site designator for Abraham’s home as well as the location where Yahweh appeared to him.⁸⁴

Depending on its kind, different trees were utilized for various types of service. Some trees were used as timber for construction, others were valued for their fruit. The fruit trees were considered vital as a source of food but also as a direct blessing from Yahweh when fertile. Infertility produced thorns and thistles and would have been interpreted as a sign of judgment. The pomegranate was valued as a symbol of Israel’s fertility and was also used in the construction of the temple sanctuary.⁸⁵

⁸² Jgs 9:8; Ezk 17:24;31:4.

⁸³ Willem VanGemeren, γνῶση, in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Pub. House, 1997), vol. 3, 474.

⁸⁴ See Gen 14:13; 18:1.

⁸⁵ Num 13:23; 20:5; Hag 2:19; Exo 28:33-34; 39:24; 1 Kgs 7:18,20,42; 2 Chr 3:16; Jer 52:22-23. For the symbolic function see Song of Songs 4:3, 13; 6:7, 11; 7:13; 8:2.

A well-known and accepted ideological concept throughout the ancient Near East

is the Tree of Life, and what the Hebrew Scriptures would designate תְּבִיבָה עַל עֵץ־חַיִּים.⁸⁶ The

Egyptian text known as, *the Great Hymn to Osiris*, records, “What Aten encircles is under his care, Northwind, river, flood, Tree of life, all plants.”⁸⁷ Osborne acknowledges the array of textual allusions and iconographical depictions that indicate the tree, plant, or leaf associated with life-giving power.⁸⁸ The concept of a life-giving tree, associated with Egyptian deity emerges in the New Kingdom era to which Billing asserts, “The tree goddess becomes a dominating iconographic realization of the maternal from the New Kingdom, in which Nut, with her distinctive core attributes of space and water, is given a central, though not exclusive, role.”⁸⁹ The personification of Nut as a tree is observed frequently to which Haynes asserts,

Egyptian gods are often shown rising up out of the cosmic Tree of Life. In most cases these gods are not shown merely within the tree, but as actually forming parts of its branches and structure. In this way, it is clear that the intent is to portray them as heteromorphic beings. On the one hand they are the celestial tree, on the other they are gods in typical anthropomorphic appearance.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ See: Gen 2:9; 3:22–44, Prov 3:17–18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4; Isa 65:22.

⁸⁷ Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 2:84.

⁸⁸ William R. Osborne, “The Tree of Life in Ancient Egypt and the Book of Proverbs,” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, 14, no. 1 (2014): 115.

⁸⁹ Nils Billing, *Nut: The Goddess of Life in Text and Iconography* (Distributor, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University, 2002), 185.

⁹⁰ Gregory R Haynes, *Tree of Life, Mythical Archetype: Revelations from the Symbols of Ancient Troy* (San Francisco: Symbolon Press, 2009), 179–80.

Osborne observes that the images and associations of the tree and the god are not a direct indication that ancient Egyptians believed the tree was actually Nut. Instead he contends that the religious symbolism is comparing Nut to be like the tree.⁹¹ Nut was considered to be the mother of the other Egyptian deities, Isis, Seth, Osiris and Re.⁹² She can be frequently found in Tree images associated with tombs and sarcophagi. Graves-Brown comments:

In the Pyramid Texts, Nut is a protector of the king, allowing him to be reborn. As such, she is later identified with the lids of coffins and the interiors of some examples are decorated with depictions of the goddess. On Twenty-first Dynasty coffins, in particular, Nut is portrayed as the tree goddess providing sustenance and protection for the deceased. She is shown either in front of the sycamore fig, or as an integral part of the tree, pouring refreshment for the deceased.⁹³

In the Book of the Dead, Nut is portrayed as the goddess who stands in the midst of the sycamore tree and offering life-giving water. The commentary on the papyrus image is supported by the artistic rendering of Nut, the life-giving tree and her devotees. The late Egyptian papyrus, sheet 7 of the Book of the Dead (EA 10086, 7) reads:

SPELL FOR BREATHING AIR IN THE GOD'S DOMAIN.

To be said by Osiris N.:

“O thou sycamore of Nut, mayest thou give me water and the breath that is in thee. It is I who occupy that seat in the midst of Heropolis...”

SPELL FOR NOT ENTERING THE FIRE.

“O thou sycamore of Nut [give me] water (and the brea)th that has gone forth from him.”

SPELL FOR DRINKING.

⁹¹ William R. Osborne, “The Tree of Life in Ancient Egypt and the Book of Proverbs,” *JANER*, 14, no. 1 (2014): 118.

⁹² Carolyn Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor: Women in Ancient Egypt* (London: Continuum International, 2010), 162.

⁹³ Ibid., 162.

“O thou sycamore of Nut, give me water and the breath that has gone forth from Atum to his nose.
I am the one who came from Atum.”⁹⁴

In these depictions, Nut is clearly associated with two of the most essential elements required to sustain life – oxygen and water. Osborne notes that this is not surprising to find when considering sycamore groves flourished along the lush and breezy riverbanks of the Nile.⁹⁵ Nut occupies the place of matron deity of Osiris who dwells in the midst of the holy city, and in other passages is the provider of more than water and air. The Book of the Dead records on BD 152b:

To be said by Osiris N.:

“O great one who art far away, eldest child of the household, [thou art] the foremost.

May Osiris N. drink the water of Tefnut.”

Utterance by the sycamore, lady of offerings, to Osiris: “I have come to bring thee my bread.”

Utterance: “O thou sycamore of Nut which refreshes the presider over the westerners and extends (its) arms to his members, behold, he is warm. Mayest thou give cool water to Osiris N. (while he sits) under (thy) branches, which give the north wind to the Weary-hearted One in that seat forever.”⁹⁶

In another record, the sycamore can possibly be associated with restoring life back from the dead. On BD 109a and 149b the translation reads:

I know that the sycamore of turquoise ['those twin sycamores' CT] from the midst of which Re comes forth, which grows on the [uplifted] of Shu at every gate through which Re comes forth.”⁹⁷

⁹⁴ English translation by Allen, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 135.

⁹⁵ William R. Osborne, “The Tree of Life in Ancient Egypt and the Book of Proverbs,” *JANER*, 14, no. 1 (2014): 122.

⁹⁶ English translation by Allen, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 276.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 183.

Gamer-Wallert contends that the rendering of “those twin sycamores” is a reference to two twin sycamores facing the east. The position was fixed to aid the dead in following Re in a resurrection.⁹⁸

In the Great Cairo Hymn of Praise to Amun-Re, the Tree of Life is said to have been fashioned by the chief of all the gods:

Section I.

UNIQUE ONE, LIKE WHOM AMONG the gods?
Goodly bull of the Ennead,
Chief of all gods,
Lord of Truth, Father of the gods,
Who made mankind, who created the flocks,
Lord of what exists, who created the tree of life,
Who made the herbage, who vivifies the herd...⁹⁹

Section III.

YOU ARE the Sole One, WHO MADE [ALL]
THAT EXISTS,
One, alone, who made that which is,
From whose mouth the gods came into being,
Who made the herbage [for] the herds,
The tree of life for the sunfolk,
Who made that on which the fish live [in]
The river...¹⁰⁰

In these passages, Amun-Re is described as the progenitor of all that exists. The Tree of Life is represented as the life-giving source for the Egyptians.

Because of the organic nature of plants, the biblical imagery often symbolizes life. Psalm 1 compares the righteous and wicked using plant imagery where the righteous man is “like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf

⁹⁸ Gamer-Wallert, “Baum, heiliger,” 1:655.

⁹⁹ “The Great Cairo Hymn of Praise to Amun-Re,” translated by Robert K. Ritner (COS, 1:25)

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 1:25.

does not whither” (RSV). Jeremiah 17:7-8 echoes this same image in describing the man who trusts in the Lord, who “is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes for its leaves remain green” (RSV). One of the qualities of a living plant is that it bears fruit. Images of fruitfulness and abundance are therefore frequently alluded to in the Hebrew Scriptures. Psalm 128:3 indicates that those who are loyal to Yahweh will have a wife who is like a “fruitful vine” and children “like olive branches” sitting around their table. Ezekiel 47:12 describes a flourishing tree: “On both sides of the river’s banks, every kind of tree will grow for food. Their leaves will not wither nor will their fruit fail, but they will bear fruit every month, because their water source flows from the sanctuary” (NET). In addition to plants symbolizing life, they are also used to symbolize death.

Plants are used to communicate the transient nature of life more than any other object.¹⁰¹ Isaiah 28:4 depicts the withering flower and Psalm 102:4 compares a parched heart with the withering grass. The rapid growth of plants can easily communicate the rapid decline of life. Psalm 103:15-16 records a reality statement concerning a person’s life, it “is like grass. Like a flower in the field it flourishes, but when the hot wind blows by, it disappears, and one can no longer even spot the place where it once grew.” In Moses’ reflection on human mortality in Psalm 90:5-6, he portrays God as bringing “their lives to an end and they fall asleep. In the morning they are like the grass that sprouts up; in the morning it glistens and sprouts up; at evening time it withers and dries up.” Isaiah makes a similar statement in a comment about human nature, “All people are like grass,

¹⁰¹ Leland Ryken, James Wilhoit & Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 650.

and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them...The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever" (Is. 40:6-7).

As subjects of metaphors and parables, plants are referenced figuratively in the Hebrew Scriptures. 2 Kings 19:30 describes the kingdom of Judah as a fruit-bearing plant. The suffering servant in Isaiah 53:2 is compared to a young shoot, growing out of dry ground. In religious usage, plant images are said to be engraved on the walls and doors of the temple. 1 Kings 6:29 records, "On all the walls around the temple, inside and out, he carved cherubs, palm trees, and flowers in bloom." The bronze pillars are decorated with images of lilies and pomegranates, and the lampstand is designed as seven plant stems (1 Kgs 7:15-26). When the Israelites would worship at the temple, the most sacred place, the images of plants and flowers would not easily escape their minds.¹⁰²

"It is perhaps correct to say that in the whole range of symbolism no emblem is more widespread or has exerted greater influence upon the institutions of mankind than the branch or tree."¹⁰³ To the ancient man, the prevalence of trees and the contribution of their fruit drew immediate interest as it served a vital role in social function. As is still the case today in many African villages, trees were focal points of social meeting, probably to escape the scorching heat of the sun or torrential downpours. The movement from functional object (and source of food) in society to object of veneration and worship is not difficult to ascertain. Farbridge contends that the symbolic significance and the

¹⁰² Ibid., 651.

¹⁰³ Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*, 27.

worship of trees in the ANE was perhaps the greatest when compared with modern cultures because of their inherent belief in the spiritual forces of nature.¹⁰⁴ Whereas orchards harbored wild beasts, trees were regarded as possessing spiritual or demonic beings among many ANE peoples and revered as divine throughout their lands. Lebanon was and is well known for its cedars. The Palestinian hill country is scattered with evergreen oaks. The tamarisk in Syria, the acacias in the Arabian wadis, the palms, olive and vines were all revered as sacred by ancient peoples.¹⁰⁵

The origins of flora symbolism can most likely be dated to the earliest of times when man desired to express concepts and passions through the instrumentality of flora (and fauna). Floral designs on the monuments of Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, and the Greco-Roman temples among others, evidence the importance of plants among the earliest of civilizations. In the ancient Near East, flowers were associated with phenomena such as fertility, birth and reproduction. Assyrian monuments frequently depict flowers, and the fruit of the pine tree as a venerated object carried by the priests. Austen-Henry Layard argued for a connection between the cone of the cypress tree and the worship of Venus in the religious systems of the East.¹⁰⁶ In Babylonian mythology, the cedar was considered magical and associated with the chief god Enki. Enki, also known as Ea, was the creator of the human race, moral codes and all the elements of civilization. The cedar naturally became associated here with prophecy and oracles.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 27.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 27.

¹⁰⁶ Austen-Henry Layard, *Nineveh and its remains with an account of a visit to the Chaldaean Christians of Kurdistan and the Yezidis or Devil-worshippers and an enquiry into the manners and arts of the ancient Assyrians* (John Murray, 1849), 181.

Initiation rites were deciphered on Babylonian tablets revealing the “Oracle of Heaven and Earth” as being delivered beneath the cedar tree, beloved of the gods. The Chaldeans also revered the tree, using its green branches in ceremonial and magical rites. Hageneder makes an astute observation in stating,

It is evident that the High Priests, kings and pharaohs chose the cedar not only for its physical virtues (size, durability, fragrance, grain quality) but also for its spiritual strength....in the eyes of the ancients, the extraordinary physical qualities of the cedar and its wood were reflections of the presence of the divine inside the tree. If the highest god lived in the cedar, it was most appropriate to ask these trees to give their bodies for the paneling in the temple so that the innermost shrine resembled the inside of the sacred tree. And it was deeply meaningful to have the doors to the throne room made from this wood, because the tree was a gate to the divine, and the king or pharaoh in the throne room was the god’s representative.¹⁰⁷

Farbridge contends that the worship of the sacred tree in all religions has undergone three stages of development. Stage one begins with the tree of knowledge. In stage two the associations with deity inhabiting the tree emerges and is then planted in sacred ground. Stage three develops into the tree as a symbol or *Ashera* in the manner of a Canaanite shrine.¹⁰⁸ Eusebius of Caesarea writes concerning the earliest Phoenician traditions, “the earliest of mankind consecrated the productions of the earth, and regarded them as gods, and worshiped them as the sources of sustenance to themselves and to following generations, and to all that went before them, and offered to them drink-offerings and libations.”¹⁰⁹ In addition they maintained a worldview that understood the entirety of the universe as a cosmic tree.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Fred Hageneder, *The meaning of trees: botany, history, healing, lore* (Chronicle Books, 2005), 55.

¹⁰⁸ Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*, 29.

¹⁰⁹ Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1981), I, IX.

¹¹⁰ Edwin Oliver James, *The Tree of Life: An Archaeological Study* (Brill: 1967), 129.

In ancient Egypt, the grounds and temples of every palace were adorned with a garden. Egyptian mythology presents gods and goddesses as having their abodes in the trees. Kemp asserts, “a prayer addressed to the *dōm*-palm is known from the New Kingdom. It was a tree sacred to Thoth, and in his personification as a baboon he is often depicted with it on jewelry, painted ostraca, and in the paintings of gardens on tomb walls.”¹¹¹ Nut, the goddess of the ocean was believed to dwell in the tree of the sky.¹¹² The land of the sacred sycamore surrounded the city of Memphis where they were viewed as symbols of the goddesses Hathor and Nut. The sycamores of the South were regarded as symbols of the body of Hathor. On the Papyrus of Ani (plate 16), Nut is depicted offering fruit to a male and female couple in a garden. In Heliopolis a revered Persea tree housed the god Sepes and the god Ra arose each morning between two turquoise sycamore trees. Also in Heliopolis was a sacred olive tree that was associated with the dwelling place of Horus.¹¹³ Marie-Louise Buhl asserts, “Investigation of the Egyptian attitude toward sacred trees reveals the fact that, in contrast to the animal cults, tree cults in the historical period began with purely local cults which at an early time became connected with nonlocal deities as their forms or attributes.”¹¹⁴ Although olive trees and olive oil do not appear abundantly in the Egyptian record until the New

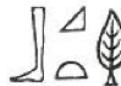
¹¹¹ Barry J. Kemp and Egypt Exploration Society, *Amarna reports* (Egypt Exploration Society, 1985), 184.

¹¹² Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*, 29.

¹¹³ Ernest A.W. Budge, *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1934), 99. See also Carol Andrews, and Raymond Oliver Faulkner. *The ancient Egyptian book of the dead*. (University of Texas Press, 1990).

¹¹⁴ Marie-Louise Buhl, “The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6, no. 2 (April 1, 1947): 80.

Kingdom, the deified olive tree makes its advent in the Book of the Dead as the abode of



Horus during this period as well. The text reads “The Olive Tree, *Beqt* , the abode of Horus.”¹¹⁵

Further, in contrast to trees, most plants only held sacred value in magic medicine or folklore.¹¹⁶ Concerning Mesopotamia, Simo Parpola maintains that the Assyrian Tree of Life, is recognized with distinction and contains obvious religious significance “already...as an art motif in fourth-millennium Mesopotamia, and, by the second millennium BC, it is found everywhere within the orbit of the ancient Near Eastern oikumene, including Egypt, Greece, and the Indus civilization.”¹¹⁷

The presence of flora in ancient Israel is best understood together with the plants of neighboring Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Greek botanist Theophrastus (ca. 372-287 BC) conducted one of the first comprehensive studies of plants in the Near East. The former Aristotelian philosopher completed two works on horticulture known as *Historia Plantarum* and *De Causis Plantarum*.¹¹⁸ In the history of Israel, sacred oaks and terebinths served as modes of theophanies. In Genesis 12, God appeared to Abraham at the oak of Shechem where Abraham built an altar. Three angels then appeared to Abraham while he was sitting beside the oaks of Mamre by the opening of his tent (Gen

¹¹⁵ Ernest A.W. Budge, *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1934), 99.

¹¹⁶ Buhl, “The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult,” 6:80.

¹¹⁷ Simo Parpola, “The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52, no. 3 (July 1, 1993): 161.

¹¹⁸ Theophrastus, “De causis plantarum,” Druck, *Europeana*, 1529, <http://www.europeana.eu/portal/record/03486/4942FD588CCD1B69E12F7C7E9B60B23029BC25C3.html>

18). Judges 6 retells the event of the angel of the Lord sitting down under the oak in Ophrah belonging to Joash where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress. Farbridge observes that “Abraham carried on his propaganda for his monotheistic religion by joining his form of worship to existing sanctuaries and cults, having a special preference for the sacred tree.”¹¹⁹ Genesis 21:33 mentions Abraham planting a tamarisk-tree in Beersheba and there he worshiped יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עֹלָם (“Yahweh the eternal God”).

Sacred trees repeatedly represent the will and words of the deity. Exodus 3:2 recounts God calling Moses from the midst of a burning bush at Horeb. Deborah gave her responses at a palm-tree near Bethel (Judg 4:5) and Judges 9:6 mentions a holy tree near Shechem. Today Arabs have named sacred trees *manahil* where angels dwell and sing.¹²⁰ One such tree, an olive, located in the land of Moab, contains plows in the branches and beneath the tree, surrounding it for protection. “The sacredness of the tree prevents the stealing of them by anyone.”¹²¹

2.4 Trees of Genesis 2 and 3

2.4.1 Tree of Knowledge

The book of Genesis records the first of two trees, which have carried with themselves symbolic significance throughout the ages. The tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life contain supernatural properties, one leading to death and the

¹¹⁹ Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*, 30.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 30.

¹²¹ Samuel Ives Curtiss, “The Transformation of the Local Divinities into Gods,” *The Biblical World* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 1903): 9.

other leading to eternal life. Both trees are located in the garden of Eden and are present through Genesis 2:4 and 3:24. In the midst of various trees that the Lord God had created after making man, Genesis 2:9 relates “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” (Gen 2:9, NIV). After placing man in the garden of Eden to work and take care of it, the Lord had commanded Adam “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die’” (Gen 2:16-17, NIV). The tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life are mentioned together both at the beginning and at the end of Genesis 3 where man is banished from Eden. The tree that is given central importance in the garden is the tree of knowledge of good and evil and is mentioned in 2:16-17, 3:3, 6, 11, and 12. God had placed a strict prohibition against eating from this tree saying that the fruit of any tree could be eaten except this, “You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die” (Gen 3:3, NIV). The serpent gives a little more information concerning the tree saying, “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5, NIV). Wallace maintains that a “clear understanding of what the tree of knowledge represents or what powers it can bestow is essential for interpreting the narrative of Genesis 2:4b-3:24.”¹²² Much attention has been given to the subject of the tree of knowledge and scholars have proposed a

¹²² Howard N. Wallace, "Tree of Life" in Freedman, *ABD*, VI, 657.

plethora of ideas. Wallace has suggested three broad areas of interpretation that most scholars adopt.

First, the tree of knowledge possesses the ability to give human faculties to those who eat of its fruit. Budde proposes that moral values can be acquired. Gunkel and Cassuto extend this to include human maturity. Others claim the tree can give the power to self-determination and the obligation to be responsible for one's own actions. Wallace notes that these suggestions are problematic in that they fail to explain why God would deny these responsibilities to humankind.¹²³ Further, Genesis 3:22 states "And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil" (NIV). This poses yet another problem in that it does not explain exactly how the fruit has made them "like one of us."

Second, the consumption of the fruit had produced in the first humans, knowledge of sexual relations. Those who propose this understanding are persuaded by the stark change in behavior from 2:25 "Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame," and 3:10-11 "He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid. And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?'" (NIV). The shame felt after eating of the fruit, the curse of pain in child-bearing, and the fertility associations of snakes in the ANE offer support for this view.¹²⁴

The third broad category of interpretation focuses on the tree giving access to universal knowledge. Wellhausen contends that the knowledge associated with the tree

¹²³ Ibid., 657.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 657.

of knowledge is a type that transcends human limitations. “It was a knowledge of the secrets of the world, and its acquisition enabled humankind to imitate the work of God.”¹²⁵ Other important passages in scripture help to discern the meaning of the knowledge acquired from this tree. They are:

1. Deuteronomy 1:39, “Moreover, your little ones who you said would become a prey, and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them and they shall possess it” (NASB).
2. 2 Samuel 19:35, “I am now eighty years old. Can I distinguish between good and bad?” (NASB).
3. Isaiah 7:15, 16, “He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken” (NASB).

In Deuteronomy 1:39 and Isaiah 7:15, 16 the context of good and evil is in reference to the knowledge of children. Specifically children who “have no knowledge of good or evil” and children who do not yet know how to “refuse evil and choose good.” Some have argued that טוֹב לְרֹעַ (good and evil) refers to human faculties or sexual ideas.

Wallace observes that these do not exhaust the explanations and that together with the passage from 2 Samuel 19:35 and 1QSa 1:9-11¹²⁶, “good and evil” can best be understood as a “merism indicating a comprehensive extent of knowledge which includes various

¹²⁵ Ibid., 657.

¹²⁶ 1QSa 1:9-11 states, “(A man) will not approach a woman to have intercourse with her until he has attained the age of twenty when he knows good and evil.”

concepts of maturity, with sexual, intellectual, and social implications.”¹²⁷ Probably the best interpretation then is to understand the tree of knowledge as imparting universal knowledge. This would explain how human beings become in some way, like God. Wallace says it well in stating that Genesis 2:4-3:24 “is a story about divine-human relations, the boundary that divides the two realms, and the consequences of attempting to breach the intimacy, trust, and responsibility that is part of the created order.”¹²⁸

2.4.2 *Tree of Life*

The second tree mentioned in the garden of Eden is the tree of life. According to Genesis 3:22-24, the Lord God sent the man out from the garden of Eden, and stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life. The risk that was mitigated by banishing the man was that he might have eaten of this tree and live forever. Although the tree of life has no exact counterpart in ANE literature, ANE literature does include reference to special plants, food and water that have the power to grant youth or immortality. For example, the Epic of Gilgamesh records that Gilgamesh found a plant in his travels that gave him the power to regain his “life’s breath.”¹²⁹ He gives the plant the name “In old age a man becomes young.” In this case the plant clearly is giving him the power to regenerate youth, at least before the serpent stole it while he was bathing.¹³⁰ In the myth of Adapa, the god Anu gives Adapa the “food of life” and the “water of

¹²⁷ Howard N. Wallace in Freedman, *ABD*, VI, 658.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 658.

¹²⁹ See Pritchard, Gilgamesh in *ANET*, 71.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 658. See also, Epic of Gilgamesh 11.279-89; *ANET*, 96.

life.”¹³¹ Unfortunately, he mistakes them for the bread and water of death. The “water of life” is also connected with Ishtar in her descent into the underworld. The “plant of life” is also associated with kingship in Sumerian and Akkadian texts.¹³² As will be demonstrated later, the olive tree also shares an association with kingship.

Sacred trees with magical powers, although not frequent, are mentioned in various ANE records. The *kiškanû* tree is associated with magical texts and apparently has healing powers in Akkadian incantations. What is interesting about this tree is its location is to be found in the place of *Eridu*, which would connect it with a garden where the gods dwell. Two other texts in the biblical record contain descriptions of a cosmic tree. First in Ezekiel 17:22-24 the text reads,

Thus says the Lord God, I will also take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and set it out; I will pluck from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one and I will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a stately cedar. And birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches. All the trees of the field will know that I am the Lord; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will perform it. (NASB)

The similarities with this cosmic tree and the tree of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision are easy to recognize. Daniel 4:10-12 records the description of this tree in the following way,

Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great. ‘The tree grew large and became strong and its height reached to the sky and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, and all living creatures fed themselves from it.

¹³¹ See Pritchard in Adapa, *ANET*, 75.

¹³² Ibid., 658. See also, Adapa 67-68; *ANET*, 101-3.

Although the tree of Ezekiel 17 and the one in Daniel 4 have different contextual backgrounds, some of the features are common to both. For example, both trees are portrayed as great in size, beautiful and fruitful. They become shelters for creatures of the earth and provide nourishment for all forms of life. The biblical tree of life does not resemble the description of these trees nor does it provide “life” in the same way. Notwithstanding the differences noted, Wallace aptly recognizes that the “concept of a supernatural tree as a source of life and of eating and drinking some substance to gain divine powers seem to have coalesced in the tree of life in Genesis 2:4-3:24.”¹³³

Carved images are also relevant to the discussion of the tree of life. Monuments including stelae and cylinder seals depict stylized trees, which have been understood to be sacred trees or a “tree of life.” Some of these monuments are associated with divine figures with anthropomorphic features or with mystical beasts. In some instances, a winged disk is depicted above the tree. Other instances depict mythic accounts. This tree is also found with a close association with a mountain or streams that have as their origin, a deity. In another category of artistic representations of this tree, animals flank either side. These are usually beasts, which have mythical identities or a common animal such as goats standing on their hind legs and resting on the tree.¹³⁴

Other references to the tree of life in the Hebrew Scriptures include the following:

1. Proverbs 3:18, “She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast” (NASB).

¹³³ Ibid., 658.

¹³⁴ For a study of these images see Othmar Keel, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God* (Fortress Press, 1998). See also Othmar Keel. *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible*. (Sheffield Acad. Press, 1998).

2. Proverbs 11:30, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise wins souls” (NASB).
3. Proverbs 13:12, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life” (NASB).
4. Proverbs 15:4, “A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit” (NASB).

In addition to these verses the tree of life makes its appearance in LXX Isaiah 65:22 stating, “and they shall not build, and others inhabit; they shall not plant, and others eat, for according to the days of the tree of life shall the days of my people be; they shall make old the works of their labor” (NETS). The context of Proverbs 3:18 indicates that the tree of life is closely associated with wisdom, yet in the other verses it is contrasted with something unpleasant. Some scholars conclude that in the Wisdom literature, there is a secularized interpretation of the tree indicating good health from what may have originally been mythological.¹³⁵ Despite that observation, the Hebrew Scriptures indicate that the concept of “life” includes within its range of ideas both immortality and good health. Although the tree of life mentioned in Proverbs is not directly associated with immortality, there may exist other associations behind the references. In the context of Isaiah 65 in the LXX, the tree of life in verse 22 does not have a secularized association.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ See Othmar Keel, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God* (FortressPress, 1998).

¹³⁶ Zofja Ameisenowa and W. F. Mainland, “The Tree of Life in Jewish Iconography,” *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 2, no. 4 (April 1, 1939): 326.

Ezekiel 28:13 and 31:8-9 mention the Garden of Elohim. Similarly Genesis 13:10 and Isaiah 51:3 record the phrase garden of Yahweh. In context, both of the phrases refer to a place of magnificence and splendor. Among the ANE literature, trees are described as possessing divine attributes and become symbols of fertility. The Epic of Gilgamesh mentions the “trees on the cedar mountain, the dwelling of the gods” as a place of great luxury.¹³⁷

Mesopotamian gardens are described in Akkadian with two forms, the most common, *kirū*, carries a broad meaning closer to a contemporary understanding. The meaning could be translated as 'garden', 'orchard', 'palm grove', also in the sense of a 'garden of gods and temples', 'garden of kings, of palaces'. They are described as having pathways and surrounded by protective walls and fences. The second and later form, *kirimahu*, describes a district of Uruk as well as the “pleasure garden,” of Assyrian Kings. Starodoub-Scharr notes in addition to the garden functioning as a place of administration, it is also amply attested as a place of religious worship, swearing of oaths, and for venerating and sacrificing to gods and offering sacrifices.¹³⁸

Among the biblical material, Ezekiel 31:2-18 records Pharaoh as compared to a great tree:

²“Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude:
“Whom are you like in your greatness?³Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon,
with beautiful branches and forest shade, and of towering height, its top among the clouds
⁴The waters nourished it; the deep made it grow tall, making its rivers flow around the
place of its planting, sending forth its streams to all the trees of the field.⁵So it towered

¹³⁷ ANET, 82

¹³⁸ הַגֵּן הַמֶּלֶכְוִי: לְהַבֵּנָת הַחִיבֶּט הַדָּתִי שֶׁל סְטוֹרָאוֹדָוב, קְסֵנִיה / הַמֶּלֶכְוִת בָּאָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבָסְרוּרִיה בְּעֵת הַעֲתִיקָה / the royal garden in the great royal palace of Ugarit: to the interpretation of the sacral aspect of the royalty in the ancient Palestine and Syria.” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* / 27th Congrès International de l’Hébreu et des Lettres Juives / 256.

high above all the trees of the field; its boughs grew large and its branches long from abundant water in its shoots.⁶ All the birds of the heavens made their nests in its boughs; under its branches all the beasts of the field gave birth to their young, and under its shadow lived all great nations.⁷ It was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches; for its roots went down to abundant waters.⁸ The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor the fir trees equal its boughs; neither were the plane trees like its branches; no tree in the garden of God was its equal in beauty.⁹ I made it beautiful in the mass of its branches, and all the trees of Eden envied it, that were in the garden of God.

¹⁰ “Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because it towered high and set its top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height,¹¹ I will give it into the hand of a mighty one of the nations. He shall surely deal with it as its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out.¹² Foreigners, the most ruthless of nations, have cut it down and left it. On the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen, and its boughs have been broken in all the ravines of the land, and all the peoples of the earth have gone away from its shadow and left it.¹³ On its fallen trunk dwell all the birds of the heavens, and on its branches are all the beasts of the field.”¹⁴ All this is in order that no trees by the waters may grow to towering height or set their tops among the clouds, and that no trees that drink water may reach up to them in height. For they are all given over to death, to the world below, among the children of man, with those who go down to the pit.

¹⁵ “Thus says the Lord God: On the day the cedar went down to Sheol I caused mourning; I closed the deep over it, and restrained its rivers, and many waters were stopped. I clothed Lebanon in gloom for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it.¹⁶ I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit. And all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the world below.¹⁷ They also went down to Sheol with it, to those who are slain by the sword; yes, those who were its arm, who lived under its shadow among the nations.

¹⁸ “Whom are you thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? You shall be brought down with the trees of Eden to the world below. You shall lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword.

“This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, declares the Lord God.”(ESV)

Divine and cultic gardens were commonplace among the ancient Near Eastern people groups. Ugaritic literature contains a text bearing *ršp gn* or “garden of the god.” Another cuneiform tablet records *gn* being used metaphorically in reference to the goddess Anat.¹³⁹ The ANE garden was not dissimilar to contemporary gardens in some respect. The palace of Ashurbanipal is detailed in an Assyrian relief which illustrates a

¹³⁹ Izak Cornelius in William A. VanGemeren, “Garden,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. Vol. 1 (Zondervan: 1997) 875. See KTU 4.219:3 and 6.62; KTU 1.6:1:4-5.

tiered garden with a channel of water running through. Keel notes regarding the relief, large trees with a site for temple worship including a stela and altar.¹⁴⁰ Cornelius recognizes the ANE garden, together with all of its elements, as having both practical and symbolic function. The lush landscaping would have provided protection against the heat. The fruits and vegetables would have provided life-giving sustenance, and the absence of these would have been interpreted as a divine curse and representative of death. Ultimately the garden held a direct association with the King. The garden also held an association with paradise and Cornelius notes a possible Canaanite paradise tale with similarities to the biblical account of Eden in Genesis 2-3.¹⁴¹

In the Hebrew scriptures, **גַן** is an enclosed space, protecting plants, trees, streams, ponds, and animals. The verb **גָנֹן** suggests it would have been walled or fenced and accessible through a gate. In Genesis 2-3 the history of human existence begins in the garden of Eden, fashioned by Yahweh. Genesis 2:10 describes a river which watered the garden of Eden. A multitude of trees flourished in this garden which were aesthetically pleasing and also good for food. In the middle of the garden was the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil (2:8). It was in this garden where man walked with Yahweh.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 875.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 875.

Ezekiel 28:13 records the phrase “garden of God” in reference to Eden and 31:8-9 uses “garden of the LORD.”¹⁴² Cornelius contrasts the garden spoken of in Ezekiel 28 with the garden of Eden in Genesis 2-3 because of the reference to a mountain in Ezekiel 28 and its absence in Genesis 2-3. However the argument is one from silence and the context of Ezekiel 28 mentions Eden as the garden of God. In the ANE gardens were places where cultic ritual took place and often on mountains and under trees. Isa 1:29-30 records divine judgment for the idolatry of worshipping under trees in a cultic garden. Isaiah 65:3 records the Israelites offering sacrifices in gardens and provoking Yahweh to anger. The penalty for Israel would be the infertility of the garden and a waterless wasteland (Isa 1:29-30).

Royal gardens are described throughout the ANE and Eccl 2:5 mentions the King’s great achievements which are highlighted by the royal gardens he planted. Other texts portray the garden as part of the design of Jerusalem. In Esther 1:5 the Persian King Ahasuerus is recorded to have given a royal banquet in the Kings palace garden. 1 Kings 21:2 records Ahab’s bloodlust for Naboth’s vineyard to become part of his own royal garden. Kings were also described as being buried in royal tombs in their gardens.¹⁴³ In Egypt, the necropolis was also a well known garden and Sinuhe was said to be buried in a royal tomb in his garden.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Gen 13:10; Isa 51:3 use “garden of Yahweh.”

¹⁴³ See 2 Kgs 21:18, 26.

¹⁴⁴ Izak Cornelius in William A. VanGemeren, “Garden,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. Vol. 1 (Zondervan: 1997), 877.

At the eschaton, the prophetic hope of Israel's restoration will be evidenced by flourishing vineyards and orchards.¹⁴⁵ The restoration of Israel and her people are described using garden terminology. Isaiah 51:3 describes this restoration, "For the Lord comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song."¹⁴⁶

Starodoub-Scharr maintains, the arranging of a garden was instructed by requirements supporting a local royal ideology, especially with cultic/sacral obligations. Among these would have included the worship of royal ancestors and kings of old. He further concludes the rituals performed in the garden were "possibly addressed to the divine or deified inhabitants of a Netherworld patronizing the royal dynasty, and thus focused on the king himself as their living emissary."¹⁴⁷ The association of gardens with royal cult sacral activity is also attested in Syria since the Early Bronze Ebla and can also be recognized in the later period in Assyria.

At the garden level, The Royal Palace at Ugarit is connected. Starodoub-Scharr asserts,

The garden is connected — with the main and side entrance and seems to occupy a key position on the way from one to another (this plan echoes the biblical passages of the royal garden on the route of escape from besieged Jerusalem);
- with court V and court II, both provided with water reservoirs, while there should have been a kind of royal scriptorium in court V and perhaps one of the ancestor cult sanctuaries in court II with its adjacent royal necropolis (under the room 28);
- with the central representative block of the throne hall and feast hall.⁵⁸

¹⁴⁵ See Amos 9:1

¹⁴⁶ See also Isa 58:11; Jer 31:12

¹⁴⁷ Starodoub-Scharr, 265.

- with the living quarters of the king through at least one large staircase in the south.¹⁴⁸

The interconnectivity of the Palace presents the garden as the sacral complex. Whereas the ritual texts of Ugarit may indicate the presence of several places of cult worship within the Royal Palace, most evidence suggests the garden is the focal point of cult activity. It has also been recognized that this garden must have been included in the route of ritual processions. With this is the observation that ritual would begin outside the palace and lead to the inner sanctuaries. The lush sanctuary, accessible from the King's residence would have served as a disclosed area of royal worship and sacrifice.

Starodoub-Scharr concludes that ancestor worship coupled with devotions to the royal dead were accompanied by offerings for the dead and gods of the Netherworld.

Additionally, divination rituals and perhaps marzih were performed in support of the sacral kingship. *Marzeah* in Samaria describes its debauch members lying on ivory beds, stretching out on couches, eating lambs from the flock and calves from the stalls, playing music, drinking wine and anointing themselves with oil. The described activities would be reminiscent of the marzih of El in Ugarit.¹⁴⁹

2.4.3 *Synthesis*

The purpose of this section was to provide a general and broad overview of the role of animal and plant symbolism in the world of the Israelites and among its ANE neighbors. The intent was to provide for a context for the duration of the study. The aforementioned presents fauna and flora in the ANE as occupying the place of representative, sometimes with associations to a god and /or king. Together they also are

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 268.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 268.

recorded as being used in healing rites or having healing properties. Sacred and practical functions are evident in both. Tree associations are clearly seen in the ANE and biblical material as having relationships with divine sources even if not clear as to how or why. The following chapters will provide for a greater understanding of some of those associations, the focus of which is the olive in the ANE record and then in the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ For a discussion regarding the non-anthropomorphic images associated with God in the Hebrew Scriptures, see Brent A. Strawn, *What is stronger than a lion?: leonine image and metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East.* (Saint-Paul, 2005) 1-17. He distinguishes between theriomorphic/zoomorphic and physiomorphic as additional categories in the God-language discussion. Plants and trees fall within the physiomorphic category.

CHAPTER 3

OLIVE IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN RECORD

3.1 Introduction

The Egyptian textual and archaeological evidence is most valuable to the present study as it calls into question the advent of the olive into Egyptian socio-political and religious life at a time shortly after it had been divinely introduced into Israelite worship through Mosaic Law. Regardless of whether an early (1446 BC) or late (1250 BC) dating of the exodus is held, the olive in the Egyptian record does not appear nor is it placed into religious ritual until the Eighteenth or Nineteenth Dynasty. Lucas and Harris affirm as early as the Old and Middle Kingdoms both the Moringa tree and *ben* oil as present in Egyptian texts. They also notice a problem in the translations which they argue are frequently mistranslated as olive and olive oil. Their primary support argues the word for olive does not occur before the Nineteenth Dynasty. However, a fragment of an Eighteenth Dynasty mural painting does show a small olive tree with several olives growing on it.¹⁵¹

3.2 Egyptian Textual Evidence

3.2.1 Archival Records

The first reference to olives or olive oil in the Egyptian textual records is found on the Silsileh Quarry stele, which has been dated to the reign of Seti I (ca. 1294-1279 BC). In this account, one of the king's messengers and standard-bearer receives olives as a ration:

That which he had: good bread, ox-flesh, wine, *sweet oil*, *olive oil*, fat, honey, figs, —, fish, and vegetables every day. Likewise the wreath of his majesty, L.

¹⁵¹ Alfred Lucas and John Richard Harris, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* (Courier Dover Publications, 1962), 332-333.

P. H., which was paid him from the House of Sebek, lord of Silsileh, daily; 20 linen garments were paid to the magazine of the standard-bearers of his army in like manner.¹⁵²

The next reference to olives or olive oil come later in regards to the reign of Rameses III (ca. 1186-1185 BC) and are mentioned three times in Harris Papyrus I:

I made for it Kanekeme, inundated like the Two Lands, in the great *olive*-lands; bearing vines; surrounded by a wall around them by the *iter*; planted with green trees in all their many paths, wherein was *oil* more than the sand of the shore; in order to bring them to thy ka, to “Victorious Thebes;” wine like drawing water without measure, to present them before thee as a daily offering. I built for thee thy temple in the midst of its ground, established with labor, excellent in stone of Ayan. Its door and its doorposts were of gold, mounted with copper; the inlay-figures were of every costly stone, like the double doors of the sky.¹⁵³

I made for thee *olive*-lands in thy city of Heliopolis, I equipped them with gardeners and numerous people, to make *pure oil*, the best of Egypt, in order to light the flame in thy august house.¹⁵⁴

Another inscription dating from the Twenty-sixth Dynasty during the reign of Apries (ca. 589-570 BC) records on the inscription of Nesuhor:

I have splendidly equipped your temple with vessels of silver; numerous cattle, ducks, and geese; I have made secure their maintenance by (an endowment of) lands, as well as (that of) their custodian forever and ever. I built their shelters in your city. I gave very fine wine of the Southern Oasis, spelt and honey into your storehouses, which I built anew in the great name of his majesty. I gave illuminating *oil* for lighting the lamps of your temple. I appointed weavers, maidservants and launderers for the august wardrobe of the great god and his divine ennead. I built their quarters in his temple, established forever by decree of the Good God, Lord of the Two Lands, Apries, living forever.¹⁵⁵

In addition to the references listed above, a funerary stela of a royal butler mentions a donation of two *mnt* of olive oil by Rameses V. Another reference appears on an

¹⁵² James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: The nineteenth dynasty* (University of Illinois Press, 2001), 3:208.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 4:216.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 4:263.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 4:992.

ostracon dating from the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty or beginning of the Twentieth Dynasty in the workers' village at Deir el-Medineh. It also appears in a model letter dating from the reign of Merneptah or of Seti II.¹⁵⁶

Probably the most common name for oil in Egyptian that is known is *bAk*. Ahituv contends that although *bAk* is the name of the Moringa Arabica tree, its fruit, and its oil, it is unlikely the tree mentioned in all Egyptian documents. Instead, when used pertaining to the land of the Levant, it refers to the most common oil of the Levant, olive oil. Supporting this conclusion, Ahituv observes in the story of Sinuhe of the Twelfth Dynasty, the description of the land of *iAA* which is located in Upper Retenu, part of Canaan. It records the following inscription:

He set me at the head of his children. He married me to his eldest daughter. He let me choose for myself of his land, of the best that was his, on his border with another land. "It was a good land called *iAA*. Figs were in it and grapes. It had more wine than water. Abundant was its honey, plentiful its oil (*bAk*). All kinds of fruit were on its trees. Barley was there and emmer, and no end of cattle of any kinds.¹⁵⁷

The inscription reinforces the biblical account of the land of Canaan which is described as a land blessed by God, "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod. 3:8) and "a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey" (Deut. 8:8). Therefore, even though Sinuhe uses the word *bAk* which can refer to the Moringa tree, it is clear that its usage is contextual and in this case refers to olive oil.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Shmuel Ahituv in Eitam. *Olive Oil in Antiquity : Israel and Neighbouring Countries from the Neolithic to the Early Arab Period.* (Padova: Sargon, 1996), 42.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 42

In the same document, *fine oil* and *tree-oil* are listed among the elements used to adorn royalty:

In it were riches from the treasury; clothes of royal linen, myrrh, and the choice perfume of the king and of his favorite courtiers were in every room. Every servant was at his task. Years were removed from my body. I was shaved; my hair was combed. Thus was my squalor returned to the foreign land, my dress to the Sand-farers. I was clothed in fine linen; I was anointed with *fine oil*. I slept on a bed. I had returned the sand to those who dwell in it, the *tree-oil* to those who grease themselves with it.¹⁵⁹

In a document referred to as "Admonitions" oil (apparently cedar-oil) is described as being used to embalm the chiefs in contrast to those whom it was intended for – the Priests:

What shall we do for cedar trees for our mummies? The priests are buried with their produce, The [chiefs] are embalmed with their *oil*,...¹⁶⁰

The next occurrence in this document indicates oil was used as a cosmetic:

Behold, he whose hair had fallen out and lacked *oil*, Has become a possessor of jars of sweet myrrh.¹⁶¹

Its composition dates to the First Intermediate period (c.a. 2000 BC) or the late Middle Kingdom. Papyrus Leiden 344 records its preservation, dating to the 18th or 19th Dynasty (1580-1200 BC). Shupak notes the original composition had contained "a narrative frame which has been lost. And which established the setting of the utterances of the sage as a council at the royal court, in a manner similar to that of the Prophecies of Neferti." The account appears to be overwhelmed with descriptors regarding the

¹⁵⁹ Miriam Lichtheim in William W. Hallo and Ebrary Academic Complete Subscription Collection, *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions and Archival Documents from the Biblical World* (Leiden : Boston: Brill USA, Inc. [Distributor], 2003), 82.

¹⁶⁰ Nili Shupak, *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

tribulations and misfortune of the times. The second portion of the inscription urges the people to repent by destroying the enemy and satisfying their religious duties.¹⁶²

Dua-Khety, or a document also known as *the Satire on the Trades* mentions oil as belonging to the equipment of a cobbler's profession:

The cobbler suffers much Among his vats of *oil*; He is well if one's well with corpses, What he bites is leather.¹⁶³

A later composition known as *Instruction of Amenemope* records a goodwill mandate to share household oil with a stranger. Lichtheim translates the Instruction,

Chapter 28
Do not pounce on a widow when you find
her gleaning in fields not her own,
And then fail to be patient with her reply.
Do not refuse your oil jar to a stranger,
Double it before your brothers. God prefers him who honors the poor
To him who worships the wealthy.¹⁶⁴

The Instruction given here closely resembles the Levitical law regarding the gleaning of the fields. Leviticus 19:9-10 (ESV) decrees,

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.

Again, in Deuteronomy 24:20-21(ESV) post-exodus Israel is given the instruction to heed the following:

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It

¹⁶² Miriam Lichtheim, *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁶⁴ Miriam Lichtheim, *Ibid.*, 121.

shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this.

The Mosaic texts are seen here as possibly bearing influence on the *Instruction of Amenemope*. Whether one holds to an early or late dating of the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt (13th or 15th century BC), the aforementioned scriptures date to a time in the 18th or 19th dynasty of ancient Egypt, which predates the composition of the *Instruction of Amenemope* during the 19th or 20th Dynasty.

Lichtheim advances the view that the biblical book of Proverbs was clearly influenced by the Egyptian text, yet the aforementioned references in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, appear to supersede those associations. She maintains that as early as Ptahhotep the ideal man was serene and peaceful. This man did not hoard his wealth but shared it with others. The new ideal man was content with his material possessions and humble before God. The written style of Amenemope presents numerous similes and metaphors that are organized carefully and cohesively. This is evidenced through the literary device employed using thirty chapters covering two basic themes which Lichtheim labels as: first, the depiction of the ideal man, the "silent man," and his adversary, the "heated man"; second, the exhortation to honesty and warnings against dishonesty. She asserts,

Israelite knowledge of things Egyptian, as reflected in the Bible, resulted from contacts during this period. The most tangible literary evidence of these contacts is found in the chips from the Instruction of Amenemope that are embedded in the Book of Proverbs." It can hardly be doubted that the author of Proverbs was acquainted with the Egyptian work and borrowed from it, for in addition to the similarities in thought and expression — especially close and striking in Proverbs 22 and 23 — the line in 22:20: "Have I not written for you thirty sayings of admonition and knowledge" derives its meaning from the author's acquaintance with the "thirty" chapters of Amenemope.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Miriam Lichtheim, *Ibid.*, 115.

Adolf Erman was among the first to have made this observation and some scholars have adopted the apparent literary relationship theory, while others interpret it in reverse. By this understanding, priority for the Hebrew text is maintained. Another theory proposes that both works were derived from a lost Semitic original.¹⁶⁶

It was Budge who discovered the Instruction of Amenemope during his second expedition for the British Museum during December 1887 to April 1888.¹⁶⁷ At the time the scroll containing Instruction of Amenemope (Papyrus 10474) was published, Budge recognized that the content included a system of religious morality of high character. Such was the character and resemblance of exclusively ancient Semitic and Sumerian peoples. Budge was quick to note that some of Amenemope's precepts could be found in the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and in the Proverbs. His conclusion would maintain that Asiatic influence penetrated Egypt during the Middle Kingdom or during the rule of the Hyksos in Lower Egypt. "Whether this be so or not I cannot believe that they are of African, or native Egyptian, origin."¹⁶⁸

Some of the parallels between the language of Amenemope and the Hebrew Scriptures that Budge had initially recognized include the following:¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 115.

¹⁶⁷ Ernest Alfred Budge, *Nile and Tigris, a Narrative of Journeys in Egypt and Mesopotamia on Behalf of the British Museum Between the Years 1886 and 1913* (London: J. Murray, 1920), 1:123–150.

¹⁶⁸ Ernest Alfred Budge, *The Teaching of Amen-em-apt, Son of Kanekht: The Egyptian Hieroglyphic Text and an English Translation : with Translations of the Moral and Religious Teachings of Egyptian Kings and Officials Illustrating the Development of Religious Philosophy in Egypt During a Period of About Two Thousand Years* (Hopkinson, 1924), 104–105.

¹⁶⁹ James Black, *The Instruction of Amenemope: A Critical Edition and Commentary Prolegomenon and Prologue* (PhD dissertation, University of Madison-Wisconsin, 2002), 300–301.

- The rule of poverty with peace is better than riches with strife (*Amenemope* 158-161, 303-306; Proverbs 15:17).¹⁷⁰
- The imagery of ill-gotten gains sprouting wings and flying away (*Amenemope* 177-178; Proverbs 23:5)¹⁷¹
- The imagery of God as the divine builder (*Amenemope* 482-484; Psalm 127:1)¹⁷²
- The imagery of resting in the arms of God (*Amenemope* 432, 457; Deuteronomy 33:27)¹⁷³
- The metaphor of the well-watered tree (*Amenemope* 102-107; Psalm 1:3)¹⁷⁴
- The danger of consorting with gossips and loudmouths (*Amenemope* 215-240; Psalm 55:21)¹⁷⁵

After reviewing Budge's 1923 volume as well as Lange's translation, Adolf Erman published his own translation of *Amenemope* into German. He also published his list of apparent parallels which include the following:¹⁷⁶

- *Amenemope* 005-006 with Proverbs 22:21 (on refuting accusations)
- *Amenemope* 047-054 with Proverbs 4:20, 5:1, 22:17-18, and Psalm 78:1 ("give your ear to wisdom")

¹⁷⁰ Ernest Alfred Budge, *Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum* (2; London: British Museum. Dept. of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities, 1923), 12n2; *idem, Teaching*, 119.

¹⁷¹ Budge, *Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, 13n1.

¹⁷² Budge, *The Teaching of Amen-em-apt, Son of Kanekht: The Egyptian Hieroglyphic Text and an English Translation, with Translations of the Moral and Religious Teachings of Egyptian Kings and Officials Illustrating the Development of Religious Philosophy in Egypt During a Period of About Two Thousand Years*, 104-105.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 105.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 107.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 118-119.

¹⁷⁶ James Black, *The Instruction of Amenemope: A Critical Edition and Commentary* *Prolegomenon and Prologue*, 302. See also: Adolf Erman, "Eine ägyptische Quelle der Sprüche Salomos," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse* (1924), 86-93.

- *Amenemope* 060-061 with Proverbs 22:22-23 ("don't attack the weak")
- *Amenemope* 090-092 and 426-433 with Proverbs 20:22 ("don't take revenge")
- *Amenemope* 126-127 with Proverbs 22:28 and 23:10 ("don't displace border markers")
- *Amenemope* 158-161 and 303-306 with Proverbs 15:16-17, 16:8, 17:1, and Ecclesiastes 4:6 (also noted in part by Budge)
- *Amenemope* 167-178 with Proverbs 23:4-5 (already noted by Budge);
- *Amenemope* 207-208 with Proverbs 22:24 ("don't fraternize with hotheads")
- *Amenemope* 332-368 with Proverbs 16:11 ("don't use false weights and measures")
- *Amenemope* 370-371, 430-431, and 455-456 with Proverbs 27:1 ("don't worry about tomorrow")
- *Amenemope* 377 with Proverbs 20:9 ("don't claim to be without sin")
- *Amenemope* 436-441 with Proverbs 20:19 ("don't fraternize with gossips")
- *Amenemope* 460-465 with Proverbs 23:1-3 ("don't let food be your downfall")
- *Amenemope* 478-481 with Proverbs 17:5 ("don't mock the downtrodden")
- *Amenemope* 539 with Proverbs 22:20 ("I have written thirty sayings")

If any connection may exist between Amenemope and the book of Proverbs,

Erman concludes, contrary to Budge's conviction, that any thought influence must have gone from Africa to Asia. However, as stated previously, the references in the Pentateuch predate Amenemope which would suggest an Asiatic/Hebrew influence. Erman's publication initiated a wave of scholarly interest for years to come. However, scholarly consensus would not remain unchallenged for long and one of the first to challenge was William Oesterley. Oesterley proposed a theory recognizing that

borrowing may have occurred between the writer of Amenemope and Proverbs but that perhaps neither borrowed. Instead he envisions a mass of material gathered over time through oral sources. In this way, he refers to the content as "general property" and utilized by both writers to fit their contexts.¹⁷⁷

In agreement with Budge's statement that Amenemope's parallels were "inspired by an influence that was not of African but was of Asiatic origin", Oesterley's main point of conjecture concludes that the influence must have come not from a pagan nation but from ancient Israel.¹⁷⁸ He contends,

Either we must suppose that some of the Old Testament writers borrowed from, or at least were influenced by, Amen-em-ope, or else we must be prepared to acknowledge that Amen-em-ope was acquainted with some of those Hebrew writings which later became part of the Old Testament, and was so impressed by their spirit and teaching that he absorbed them and, perhaps unconsciously, reproduced them to some extent in his own writing. ... So far as 'Wisdom,' pure and simple, is concerned, we would not for a moment deny the influence of Egypt on Israel; but where it is a question of religion and ethics we contend that Amen-em-ope and, probably, other Egyptian thinkers of like exalted mentality were more likely to have been influenced by the Hebrew genius than that Israelite religious leaders should have borrowed from Egypt.¹⁷⁹

Oesterley then goes on to posit that the time of reference where this apparent influence must have taken place could not have been before the time of Israel's King Ahab. His rationale being that Egypt was far advanced over ancient Israel until the ministry of the prophets in the eighth century BC.¹⁸⁰ The late seventh century BC is his proposed date of

¹⁷⁷ William Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Egypt and the Old Testament in the Light of the Newly Discovered "Teaching of Amenemope"* (New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1927), 102.

¹⁷⁸ William Oesterley, "The 'Teaching of Amen-Em-Ope' and the Old Testament," *ZAW* 45 (1927): 19.

¹⁷⁹ Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Egypt and the Old Testament in the Light of the Newly Discovered "Teaching of Amenemope,"* 105–106.

¹⁸⁰ Oesterley, "The 'Teaching of Amen-Em-Ope' and the Old Testament," 17.

influence into Egypt. He assumes that Amenemope was written after the 8th century prophets had introduced their high ethical teaching and after it had taken root into their nation. The likelihood of the Old Testament influencing Amenemope is much greater than, than vice versa.¹⁸¹

Until this point, the discussion regarding origins of influence have been focused to the apparent parallels between the Instruction of Amenemope and the Biblical book of Proverbs. However greater interest in the discussion needs to be given equal attention to the apparent parallels found in the Pentateuch as mentioned previously. Black comments concerning Oesterley's conclusion,

If, as he believed, Amenemope was indeed composed during the late seventh or early sixth centuries BC, then anything was possible. If, on the other hand, *Amenemope* was written much before that time, when Israelite influence upon Egypt was well-nigh impossible, then one would be forced to grant priority to *Amenemope* over Proverbs. The problem,... was that no one yet knew when Amenemope had actually been written. And until they did, hypotheses such as Oesterley's were as plausible as any other.¹⁸²

The weakness in Oesterley's conclusion is in his commitment to hold that Israelite influence was impossible prior to the late seventh century BC. Parallels in the Pentateuch have already been recognized¹⁸³, predating Amenemope and the book of Proverbs. If it can be demonstrated that Israelite influence is present in Egypt through Amenemope then

¹⁸¹ Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Egypt and the Old Testament in the Light of the Newly Discovered "Teaching of Amenemope,"* 106.

¹⁸² James Black, *The Instruction of Amenemope: A Critical Edition and Commentary* Prolegomenon and Prologue, 318–319.

¹⁸³ Hugo Gressmann, “Ägypten Im Alten Testament,” *Vossische Zeitung*, no. 22 June (1924): 2–3. See also: Budge, E. A. Wallis. *The Teaching of Amen-Em-Ápt, Son of Kanekht: The Egyptian Hieroglyphic Text and an English Translation : With Translations of the Moral and Religious Teachings of Egyptian Kings and Officials Illustrating the Development of Religious Philosophy in Egypt during a Period of about Two Thousand Years.* (Hopkinson: 1924), 103.

it should not be surprising to find other areas of Egyptian religious life having been influenced as well. Section 3.16 of the current study on the Mycenaean-Egyptian archaeological evidence may support the possibility that olive oil may likewise have been used in Egypt in response to its use in the Israelite tabernacle shortly after the Exodus.

3.2.2 *Synthesis*

The Egyptian evidence presents the olive as appearing in the textual record perhaps not earlier than the 13th century BC where they are included as ration for a royal servant. During the reign of Rameses III (ca. 1186-1185 BC), there is mention of olive oil already having been in use in temple worship. Heliopolis is also described as flourishing with olive-lands in an effort to support the lighting of the flames in the temple cult. It is recorded as retaining its religious function as fuel for temples during the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (ca. 589-570 B.C.). Though the Egyptian word for oil is *bAk* and is also the name of the Moringa Arabica tree and its produce, the word can also refer to the olive tree depending on its context. If used in reference to the land of the Levant then the oil described would be that pertaining to the olive tree. Sinuhe of the Twelfth Dynasty describes the land of Canaan this way. The textual example provided earlier bears a striking resemblance to the biblical passage from Deuteronomy 8:7-8¹⁸⁴ and describes the land of the Levant using the Egyptian word *bAk* to reference the oil where the biblical passage specifies olive. The same document mentions fine oil and tree oil as elements reserved for royalty. Similarly the *Instruction of Amenemope* bears a description that mirrors the biblical account in Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:20-21 where

¹⁸⁴ Deut 8:7-8, “For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey,” (ESV)

olives are not to be withheld from the sojourner. Likewise the Egyptian text retains the same ethical principle regarding the gleaning of the fields and uses some of the same vocabulary. Parallels between the Instruction of Amenemope and the biblical book of Proverbs have also been the subject of much scholarly debate.

3.3 Hittite Textual Evidence

3.3.1 Archival Records

Probably the most systematic discussion of oil-bearing plants in Hittite Anatolia¹⁸⁵ comes from Güterbock's, *Oil in Plants in Hittite Anatolia*.¹⁸⁶ In his research, he provides textual evidence of words that indicate an oil producing plant. Among them are the Akkadogram ^{GIŠ}SERDU “olive” and ^{GIŠ}leti. Beckman asserts that in the Hittite view, deities and humans had to conscientiously perform their respective duties to ensure proper functioning of the universe. If disaster struck a sector of the world, then it would be interpreted as a god or goddess abandoning its duty thereby initiating the imbalance in daily life. The solution to the evil which would follow would involve a ritual or rite including both human and divine practitioners re-enacting the mythological account of what had transpired.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Hoffner, “Oil in Hittite Texts,” 58:111. See rock relief “Libations being poured out for the gods on a basalt orthostat from Malatya. Rock reliefs are the most characteristic form of Hittite imperial art. The representation of the king offering libations is a common motif. Oil may or may not have been involved in these libations, but it certainly found manifold ritual applications. Oil attracts and appeases the gods: one text speaks of “sprinkling a god’s path,” while another mentions a journey with oil, bread, and libation to mollify the mountain gods. Cult statues were anointed with oil as were, presumably the elite members of the royal establishment.” See photographs in Ekrem Akurgal, *The Art of the Hittites*. Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1962.

¹⁸⁶ Hans G. Güterbock, “Oil Plants in Hittite Anatolia,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, no. 1 (January 1, 1968): 66–71.

¹⁸⁷ Gary Beckman in William W. Hallo and Ebrary Academic Complete Subscription Collection, *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions and Archival Documents from the Biblical World* (Leiden : Boston: Brill USA, Inc. [Distributor], 2003), 151.

Texts that record the god or goddess leaving are attested for at least a dozen Hittite divinities. One such text listed below describes one of the many Anatolian storm-gods, Telipinu, and the placation offered in the hope of his return and blessing on the land, cattle, and over human life. This invocation ritual spell records the following on KUB XVII 13 col. ii:

...Let [your soul, O Telipinu], be sated with oil...

(1-4) Behold, [olives are lying here.] Just as [the olive] holds oil in its 'heart,' thus [hold thou, O Mother-goddess,] the king, queen, princes and the land of iatti in friendliness in thy heart and soul!..

I have now sprinkled the paths of Telipinu with fine oil. O Telipinu, tread the paths sprinkled with fine oil...O Telipinu, be reconciled (with gods and humans).

In another ritual text known as Zarpiya's ritual, the physician of Kizzuwatna (Zarpiya) performs a ceremony with the intent of winning the favor of the gods and in turn restoring health to the land plagued by death. Collins observes that this ritual is,

the second of three scapegoat rituals contained on a single Sammeltafel. The author of the text is from Kizzuwatna and as a result the text is laden with Luwian words and incantations, often rendering translation difficult. The first half of the ritual involves an oath-taking on the part of the participants; the second half is a scapegoat ritual of sorts. The human scapegoats in this case are nine young boys. The theme of the number nine is repeated throughout the ritual. The gods at whom the ritual is directed are Šantaš and Innarawanteš, a group of deities perhaps totaling nine.¹⁸⁸

Then, after an incantation written in Luwian, is the following:

They take up the ritual implements and he closes the door. He anoints it with *fine oil*, and says:

Let (the door) shut out evil and let it keep in good.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Billie Jean Collins in Hallo and Ebrary Academic Complete Subscription Collection, *The Context of Scripture*, 162.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 165. See CTH 757.

Another text records the ritual and prayer to the goddess Ishtar of Nineveh. The officiant recites an invocation including,

He cuts into one thin loaf and sets it on a pine cone. He pours *fine oil* on it and the diviner having taken the “ear” bread pulls the deity from the fire fourteen times and says as follows: “I have pulled it from the fire.”¹⁹⁰

In an incantation addressed to the gods dwelling in the underworld, olive oil is exchanged in return for their help in bringing down any uncleanness residing in the house. The ancient gods are beseeched to come up from the earth and to take down with them what plagues the home. Collins, notes that the ritual takes place over two consecutive days and alternates between the home and various outdoor locations. At the completion of the ritual, the paraphernalia can be properly disposed at the steppe:¹⁹¹

He throws the hanessa-vessel down from the roof and smashes it. But the mud that he had taken, that he carries to (the place) where all the ritual paraphernalia has been placed. He goes to the river bank and takes *oil*, beer, wine, walhi-drivk, marnuan-drink, a cupful (of) each in turn, sweet *oil* cake, meal, (and) porridge. He holds a lamb and he slaughters it down into a pit. He speaks as follows: "I, a human being, have now come! As Hannahanna takes children from the river bank and I, a human being, have come to summon the Primordial Deities of the river bank, let the Sun Goddess of the Earth open the Gate and let the Primordial Deities and the Sun God(dess) of the Earth (var. the Lord of the Earth) up from the Underworld (lit., earth). Aduntarri the diviner, Zulki the dream interpretess, Irpitiga Lord of the Earth, Nara, Namsara, Minki, Amunki, Abi — let them up! I, a human, have not come independently, nor have I come in quarrel. In a house, blood, tears, perjury, quarrel, (and) sin have occurred. Heaven above has been angered, and the Underworld below has been angered. The exorcist of the Storm God sent you, the Primordial Deities, from the underworld. He said this word to you:
 "[In this house] evil impurity, [blood, tears], quarrel, sin, (and) perjury [have occurred]. The exorcist [has] summon[ed] you,] the [Primordial Deities. [...] go back and go [...]. Cleanse [the house from] the evil, impurity, blood, [perjury, sin], quarrel, curses, tears, (and) [threat]. "Bind [their (i.e., each evil's)] [fee]t (and) hands and carry them down to the Dark Underworld." He takes the clay of the river bank, but in its place he sets sweet *oil* cake, meal (and) porridge. He libates beer, wine, [walhi]-drink, (and) [/n]a?7iHan-drink. He takes [up] (what has) bubbled and binds it in. He stretches out a scarf along the ground [...] walks along the scarf [...] and he goes in. He sprinkles the clay of the river bank with *oil* and honey. (With it) he fashions [the]se gods: Aduntarri the exorcist, Zulki the dream interpretess, Irpitiga, Nara, Namsara, Minki, Amunki, Abi. He fashions them

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. See CTH 716.

¹⁹¹ Billie Jean Collins, Ibid., 168-171.

as (i.e., in the form of) daggers. Then he spreads them along the ground and settles these gods there (San)...

He brings the water into the house and carries that also there where all the implements are placed, and puts it on the >wn;ya-stands. All the paraphernalia he places before the Anunnaki-deities. He mingles(?) silver, gold, iron, tin, stone, *oil*, honey, baked clay implements, wicker implements, the mud of the house, (and) the mud of the gatehouse... Before the Anunnaki-deities he opens up a Pit with a knife and into the Pit he libates *oil*, honey, wine, walhi-drmk, and marnuwan-drink. He also throws in one shekel of silver. Then he takes a hand towel and covers over the Pit." He recites as follows: "O Pit, take the throne of purification and examine the paraphernalia of purification...

When he is finished, the exorcist sets the ritual paraphernalia on the copper vessel. He sets the gods thereon and picks it up and carries it to the steppe. He settles the deities where (the spot) is marked, and their ritual paraphernalia he sets before (them). He libates wine. He offers one lamb and eight birds to the Anunnaki-deities. On three hearths he burns (them) together with flat breads, cedar, *oil* and honey and he libates wine and says as follows: "O Anunnaki-deities, your tribute has just been set up. Accept these offerings to you. Chase out the bloodshed, impurity, sin, perjury, (and) threat of the house and carry them down (with you to the Dark Underworld).

"Fine oil" is mentioned in yet another incantation as among the successful ingredients needed to establish a place of worship for the Deity of the Night. The goddess's cult was headquartered in southeastern Anatolia. The text reads,

Thus says the priest of the Deity of the Night (var. [Thus says m NIG.BA- U] the Babylonian [scrib]e(?) and Ulippi, priest of the Deity of the Night). If a person becomes associated with the Deity of the Night in some temple of the Deity of the Night and if it happens that, apart from that temple of the Deity of the Night, he builds still another temple of the Deity of the Night, and settles the deity separately, while he undertakes the construction in every respect:

The smiths make a gold image of the deity. Just as her ritual (is prescribed) for the deity, they treat it (the new image) for celebrating in the same way. Just as (it is) inlaid(?) (with) gems of silver, gold, lapis, carnelian, Babylon-stone, chalcedon(?), quartz(?), alabaster, sun disks, a neck(lace), and a comet(?) of silver and gold — these they proceed to make in the same way.

One sun disk of gold of one shekel (weight), its name is Pirinkir. One gold navel. One pair of gold *purka*— they are set with Babylon stone. The priest assigns these to the smiths as their task. One (vessel) for "carry-ing forth" (made) of stone inlaid(?) with silver, gold, lapis, carnelian, Babylon stone, quartz(?), NiR-stone, (and) alabaster. Two broaches of iron inlaid with gold, two pegs of iron, two *halwani*-vessels of silver, two cups of silver, two *ētmari* of silver, two *ētmari* of bronze (and) a potstand of bronze are included. Six sun disks of bronze, among them three inlaid with silver and three inlaid with gold. Two knives of bronze, two pairs of bronze GÍR.GÁN-vessels, one set of bronze cymbals(?), one set of tambourines(?) either of boxwood or of ivory, one drum. One bull's horn (full of) *fine oil*, one set of cups either of boxwood or of ivory...

When on the morning of the second day the Sun God has not yet risen, they take these things of his from the house of the officiant: One skein/strand of red wool, one skein/strand of blue wool, one plain (i.e. undyed) wool, one shekel of silver, one (bolt off?])

gazzamul fabric, a small amount of *fine oil*, three flat breads, one pitcher of wine. They go for drawing to the waters of purification and they draw the waters of purification. They carry them to the temple of the Deity of the Night from the temple of the Deity of the Night — (that is from) the temple of the Deity of the Night which is being built to that (old) temple of the Deity of the Night. They set it (the water) on the roof and it spends the night (lit., sleeps) beneath the stars. On the day on which they take the waters of purification, (they attract) the previous deity with with red wool and *fine oil* along seven roads and seven paths from the mountain, from the river, from the plain, from heaven and from the earth. On that day they attract (lit., pull) (the deity). They attract (lit. pull) her into the previous temple and bind the *ulihī* to the deity(s image). The servants of the deity take these things: One skein/strand of red wool, one skein/strand of blue wool, one plain (i.e. undyed) wool, one white scarf, one gem, one *kirinni*-stom, one shekel of silver, a little *fine oil*, five flat breads, two *mūlati* -loaves of $\frac{1}{2}$ handful (of flour), one small cheese, one pitcher of wine — these they take for the ritual of "pulling up." One skein/strand of red wool, one skein/strand of blue wool, one loop of white wool, two *mūlati* -loaves of $\frac{1}{2}$ handful (of flour), five flat breads, a little *fine oil* — these they take for the ritual of *dupšahi*. One white scarf, one skein/strand of blue wool, one skein/strand of red wool, one plain (i.e. undyed) wool, one set of blankets four layers thick, two shekels of silver of which one shekel is for the ritual pit and one shekel is for the *gangata*-, ten flat breads, two *mūlati* -loaves of $\frac{1}{2}$ handful (of flour), one small cheese, a little *fine oil*, $\frac{1}{2}$ handful of vegetable *oil*, $\frac{1}{2}$ handful of honey, $\frac{1}{2}$ handful of butter, one *wakšur* of wine, and either a lamb or a kid — these they take for the ritual of blood. Five flat breads, three *mūlati* -loaves of $\frac{1}{2}$ handful (of flour), one measure of wine and one sheep they take for the ritual of praise. Twenty flat breads, two *mūlati*-loaves of $\frac{1}{2}$ handful, one measure of wine, $\frac{1}{2}$ handful of vegetable *oil*, $\frac{1}{2}$ handful of honey, $\frac{1}{2}$ handful of butter, one handful of barley flour, one lamb — these they take for the *ambašši* ritual. All this they arrange each in (its) place. The second day is finished.

On the third day, at dawn, the officiant comes into the temple first thing in the morning... During the [night on that da]y, while the Sun God is still standing (in the sky), the servants of the deity [take these (things): one skein/ strand] of red wool, one skein/strand of blue wool, one plain (i.e. undyed) wool, [one shekel of silver, one (bolt of[?]) *gazzarnul* fabric, three flat breads, one pitcher of wine, a [l]ittle fine oil. They go to the waters of [purification and the waters of purifica[tio]n they bring to the old temple. They set it on the roof and it spends the night (lit., sleeps) [be]neath the stars. But those things (also they take): one sheep, one moist bread of ŠĀTU, five loaves (made of) GUG of a $\frac{1}{2}$ handful (of flour), three oil cakes of $\frac{1}{2}$ handful, one *mūlati* -loaf of $\frac{1}{2}$ handful, ten flat breads, three *haršpauwa*/tf-breads, their flour of handful, *gangati*-soup, porridge, chick pea soup, broad bean soup, lentil soup, *euwan* stew, stew of ARSANNU-meal, each of $\frac{1}{2}$ handful, dried fruits, a small quantity of each, cress, ŠU.KIŠ-herb, a little fine oil, two skeins/strands of red wool, two skeins/strands of bl[ue] wool, one plain (i.e. undyed) wool, one jug of beer, one pitcher of wine — these they take up to the roof for the well being (of) Pirinkir. One shekel of silver for the pit, two skeins/strands of red wool, two skeins/strands of blue wool, two plain (i.e. undyed) wools, a little fine oil, $\frac{1}{2}$ handful of vegetable oil, $\frac{1}{2}$ handful of butter, $\frac{1}{2}$ handful of honey, one (bolt of[?]) *gazzarnul* fabric, one *mūlati*-loaf of $\frac{1}{2}$ handful, three oil cakes of $\frac{1}{2}$ handful,...

When those < perform > the *tuhalzi* ritual in the temple of the old deity, they pour fine oil into the *tallai*-container and he speaks thus to the deity: "You, honored goddess, protect your person/body, divide your divinity, come to these new temples, take an honored place." When she goes and take<s> the aforementioned place, then they pull the deity out

from the wall with red wool seven times and he sets the *ulihī* in the fa/Zai-container of fine oil.¹⁹²

Olive is used as an oil in these ritual texts together with ^{GIŠ} *leti* where Güterbock suggests it may refer to anointing. We know from a Middle Hittite land grant text that olive oil did not need to be imported. The text mentions vineyards, olive trees, and fig trees on the estate of a man named Purlisari in the town of Šayanuwanda. Hoffner documents another text which describes the region of Kizzuwatna as having thirty IKU of fields, two vineyards, and three hundred olive trees.¹⁹³ Olives, figs, and raisins/grapes are mentioned frequently in rituals as seen above. In these instances where olive oil is used in rituals, it is associated with the highest caliber of oil and honey.¹⁹⁴

The logogram Ì.DÙG.GA is most often understood as representing “fine oil,” and of such a kind that refers to sweet smelling oil or perfume. Various texts depict this oil as in close relationship with both deity and royalty. In the myth “Song of Hedammu,” the goddess *İŞTAR* bathes, and then anoints herself with Ì.DÙG.GA in an effort to seduce Hedammu.¹⁹⁵ In the Old Hittite laws, a price list mentions one *zipattani* of Ì.DÙG.GA as costing two shekels of silver while other forms of oil are half the price. This would establish Ì.DÙG.GA as the most expensive of oils. For some, Hoffner notes that two shekels of silver was also the price of two sheep, six goats, or one unweaned calf. Another inscription records an account of Tešub, when in desperate need, is helped by

¹⁹² Billie Jean Collins in Ibid., 173-176.

¹⁹³ Hoffner, “Oil in Hittite Texts,” 58:109. See *KUB* 40.2 obv.36.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. See *KBo* 5.2 i 12.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 110. See *IBoT* 2.135 obv.5-10.

fellow gods who give him Ì.DÙG.GA.¹⁹⁶ Other ritual texts include wine mixed with Ì.DÙG.GA and one mentions Ì.DÙG.GA stored in six small ox horns, in which three were personal property of the King and three of the Queen.¹⁹⁷

Other examples of Ì.DÙG.GA serving in a spiritual and royal function are found in the funerary ritual for deceased royalty. Hoffner asserts,

After the deceased's body was burned on the funeral pyre, his bones were collected and placed to soak in a large silver vessel filled with fine oil (Ì.DÙG.GA). After they had soaked in the oil, the bones were removed, wrapped in a fine linen cloth, and placed on a chair or stool.

There follow various rites, including animal sacrifices, and then the bones are brought to the mausoleum (called the "Stone House").

It is here that we see the second interesting use of the oil. The text reads: "In the inner room of the mausoleum they spread bedding, take the bones from the chair, and put them on the spread bedding. They place a lamp [weighing ...] shekels, filled with fine oil (Ì.DÙG.GA) in front of the bones." This is a rare example of Ì.DÙG.GA used as fuel for a lamp. If it is perfumed oil, the odor might have been considered appropriate, as would incense, in a funerary setting.¹⁹⁸

A number of texts also attest to people being anointed with this special oil and particularly in relation to a deity. *KUB* 25.14 i, 15-16 records that three statues and five solar disks of the Sun goddess of Arinna were bathed and anointed with oil. *KBo* 18.2 rev.6-7 records a letter of the Hittite king to his mother where he complains of having no Ì.DÙG.GA for anointing himself. Hoffner observes in a legal text, a man "gives testimony in which he mentions that a woman gave him oil and instructed him to anoint himself with it when he worshipped the deity."¹⁹⁹ *IBoT* 1 obv. 14 records a letter from

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. See *KBo*32.15ii 14-15.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. See *KBo* 21.34ii 55-56; *KUB* 42.94 i 9-10.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 110.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 111.

Pharaoh to the King of Arzawa, written in Hittite. In this letter, the Pharaoh requires his servants to anoint with oil, the head of a woman chosen as his wife. Ritual anointing was also reserved for Hittite kings.

Ritual anointing among Hittite kings served both a royal and religious function. For example, Hittite kings were anointed with oil as part of a ritual of accession to the throne and priesthood of the Sun goddess of Arinna.²⁰⁰ *KUB* 24.5 obv. 19 together with *KUB* 9.13 obv. 7 record this ritual custom as applying to the substitute king as well where he is anointed with the “oil of Kingship.” Singer recognizes an Akkadian letter written by Hattusili III to the Assyrian King in which Hattusili complains that the Assyrian king did not send him the required coronation gifts which included fine oil for anointing.²⁰¹ Another tablet records a ritual performed by a woman physician preparing a commander on the eve of a battle. Here the female physician, Azzari, casts a spell over ȳ.DÙG.GA before anointing the commander together with his horses, chariots, and weapons.²⁰² In an inquiry made by a priest seeking divine counsel, it is determined that the deity was angry because the temple servants failed to offer ȳ.DÙG.GA.²⁰³ Hoffner records in a myth of the Kumarbi cycle known as the "Song of Ullikummi," that ȳ.DÙG.GA is used in ritual anointing of the bull-horns which draw the cart of the god

²⁰⁰ Ibid. See *KUB* 36.90:15-1.

²⁰¹ Itamar Singer in Eitam, *Olive oil in antiquity*, 183–186.

²⁰² Hoffner, “Oil in Hittite Texts,” 58:111. See *KUB* 30.42i 8-14

²⁰³ Ibid. See *KBo* 24.122:20-21.

Teihub and possibly the horns of male animals before being sacrificed.²⁰⁴ Goats and rams were also offered in the same fashion.²⁰⁵

3.3.2 *Synthesis*

The Hittite textual evidence records “the olive” and “fine oil” as a key player in Hittite invocations and ritual spells aimed at placating a deity. Pure olive oil is mentioned in a Luwian incantation as a medicinal agent that can restore health and ward off evil. In yet another incantation, olive oil is used to lure the favor of the gods in the underworld to take action in removing earthen plagues. It is also one of the necessary ingredients required in the establishment of a place of worship for the Deity of the Night. The textual evidence indicates that olive oil was not imported into Hittite Anatolia but that it was commonly found on estates. When used in religious ritual, the quality of olive oil was to be found in its finest. The oil could be mixed and found in perfume or ointment. Bones of deceased royalty were also anointed with olive oil. Hittite kings were anointed with olive oil and it was associated in relation to a deity. Before battle, a Hittite commander would have had his horses and weapons of war anointed with olive oil after it was infused with a spell invoking favor. Sacrificial animals are also recorded to have been anointed with olive oil in service to the god Teihub.

3.4 West Semitic Textual Evidence

3.4.1 *Archival Records*

Among the West Semitic texts, the most well known is the Baal myth or Baal cycle. Scholars are in somewhat general agreement that the myth maintained an oral

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 58:111-112. See *KUB* 36.12iii 3-4,19-20.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. See *KBo* 11.32 obv.22-24; *KBo* 14.21 i 28-31.

tradition prior to its composition. However, Pritchard and Flemming note, “Because so many letters, words, lines, columns, and probably some whole tablets are missing, not all of the tablets can be declared, with certainty, to be part of the great epic of Baal and arranged in their proper order within it.”²⁰⁶ The proposed dates of composition vary drastically from the third millennium to the middle of the second millennium.²⁰⁷ Though this promotes uncertainty surrounding the origins and influence of the Baal cycle, most attribute its formation to the fourteenth century BC. This would place the Baal myth among the West Semitic texts written during the corresponding Egyptian New Kingdom.

In summary, the Balu myth recounts the contest of kingship over gods and mankind. Yam, the sea-god, demands Baal to surrender to him but Baal defends himself and kills Yam. He then builds himself an elaborate temple. Mot, the god of death and the underworld kills Baal and brings him down to the underworld. The supreme god, El, together with Anath and everyone else mourn Baal’s death before Anath kills Mot. He grinds him up and scatters him over the fields. Then Baal resurrects and resumes his place of honor.

According to the myth and its accepted arrangement, oil first appears in the following:

They wipe up the blood of the soldiers in house, they pour out *oil* of peace in a bowl. Girl Anatu bathes her hands, the sister-in-law of Limu (bathes) her fingers. She bathes her hands in the blood of the warriors, her fingers in the gore of the fighters. She prepares chairs (in addition) to chairs, tables (in addition) to tables, footstools she prepares (in

²⁰⁶ James Bennett Pritchard and Daniel E. Fleming, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 107.

²⁰⁷ Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume I, Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2* (Brill, 1994), 29.

addition) to footstools. She gathers water and washes, dew of heavens, oil of earth, the showers of Cloud-Rider.²⁰⁸

She gathers water and washes, dew of heavens, *oil* of earth. The dew (that) the heavens pour down,²⁰⁹

Balu (*Baal*) will enter his insides, (will go down) his mouth like a roasted *olive* » (like) the produce of the earth and the fruit of (its) trees. Mighty Balu will fear him, Cloud-Rider will be frightened of him.²¹⁰

Then in the account of Balu's return from the underworld he is resurrected to rule again accompanied by a vision of olive oil raining down from heaven:

[... that Mighty Balu is dead,] that the Prince, [master of the earth], perished. And if Mighty [Balu] is alive, if the Prince, lord of [the earth], exists (again), In a dream of the Gracious One, the kindly god, in a vision of the Creator of creatures, The heavens will rain down *oil*, the wadis will run with honey. Then I'll know that Mighty Balu is alive, that the Prince, master of the earth, (again). In a dream of the Gracious One, the kindly god, in a vision of the Creator of creatures, The heavens rain down *oil*,²¹¹

In a cultic prayer for a city under siege oil is offered in veneration to Balu:

Another Festival, Perhaps of the Month of Hiyaru" (lines 18'-25') [...] On the fourth:" birds." On the fifth:" birds and a liver" and a sheep (as) a burnt-offering for Balu UgarTta in the temple. On the seventh: you shall bring the purifiers near. At sundown, the king is clear (of further cultic obligations). Behold the *oil* of well-being of Ba lu, libation-offering (for the benefit) of the kings, of the first quality.²¹²

In an extensive temple ritual, oil is offered by the King in the royal chapel. The translators note that this is the most extensive Ugaritic temple ritual on record. "It describes the annual celebrations of the grape harvest at the Temple of Baal in Ugarit

²⁰⁸ Dennis Pardee in Hallo, William W., and Ebrary Academic Complete Subscription Collection. *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions and Archival Documents from the Biblical World*. Leiden : Boston: Brill USA, Inc. [Distributor], 2003, 251.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 253.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 266.

²¹¹ Ibid., 271

²¹² Ibid., 284.

over the period of one month, in the autumn of the year. It highlights the New Moon, and other key days, especially the thirteenth and fourteenth of the month.”²¹³

The King Performs Rites at Midday (I7b-24a) And at midday, inside the convening room of the gods and the lords — goblets and cups, thirty, fil[led]. And the entrance offering that he brings to the royal chapel — a sacred meal ' of myrrh oil, of blended oil; a gift of bee-honey, a domestic pigeon and two cages. And at the ledge(?) — fourteen jugs of wine, measure of flour. At the steps of the altars of the goddess — birds.²¹⁴

Another text mentions olive oil as the chief ingredient to cure a hangover. The text depicts the god ^Ilu getting intoxicated and in desperate need of a remedy. Pardee labels this a "para-mythological text," which he explains as having mythological form but with a practical function.²¹⁵ The recipe to cure drunkenness reads:

The Recipe (lines 29'-31')

What is to be put on his forehead: hairs of a dog. And the head of the PQQ and its shoot he is to drink (mixed) together with *fresh olive oil*.²¹⁶

Pardee notes that the term translated as “mixed together” is a technical term “in the only type of medical text that has reached us from ancient Ugarit, viz., the hippiatric type (1.106), where it denotes “together” in the process of mixing the ingredients of a medicine.” Here, olive oil functions as a vehicle for the *pqq* and is also intended to heighten the anesthetic effect of the *pqq* on the stomach lining.²¹⁷

²¹³ Baruch A. Levine, Jean-Michel de Tarragon, Anne Robertson, *Ibid.*, 299.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 300.

²¹⁵ Dennis Pardee, *Ibid.*, 302.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 304.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 304-305.

The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script is riddled with uncertainties and is believed to have been written by an Egyptian scribe trained in the fourth century BC though dictated at an earlier date. The text records a New Year's festival liturgy of an Aramaic-speaking community in Upper Egypt. Borrowing from the Hebrew Scriptures is apparent as numerous references to 2 Kings 17 and various Psalms are scattered throughout. Horus and Adonai are beseeched in prayer and Israelite names are clearly listed. Steiner maintains,

The original homeland of these people, called rs and rs in the papyrus, is the subject of controversy. The present writer has suggested that it is the land between Babylonia and Elam which the Assyrians called Rashu and Arashu and that Assurbanipal, who captured Rashu in his campaign against Elam, deported its inhabitants to the Assyrian province of Samaria, like the Elamites from Susa mentioned in Ezra 4:9-10. There is reason to believe that most or all of them wound up in Bethel, joining the foreign colonists settled there by earlier Assyrian kings. Their subsequent migration to Egypt may be recorded in the text's account of the arrival of soldiers from Judah and Samaria (xvi.i-6). The text shows how the groups deported by the Assyrians to Samaria "would venerate the Lord but serve their own gods according to the practices of the nations from which they had been exiled" (2 Kgs 17:33). Veneration of the Lord is represented by prayers in cols. XI-XII that contain Hebrew words and Israelite divine names (Adonai, 7 times, Yaho, once). Among these prayers is one which parallels Ps 20 (xi.il-19). Phrases like "Yaho, our bull" (xi.17; cf. "let them kiss [your] bull[s], r let them de^sire your calves" in v.12), "lord of Bethel" (xi.18, cf. VIII.13), and "a city full of ivory houses" (xi.9, immediately before the prayer), if correctly deciphered, suggest that this prayer is a descendant of one used in Jeroboam's temple in Bethel. There may even be echoes of this prayer (xi.17) in Abijah's battlefield condemnation of Jeroboam and his calf-cult (2 Chr 13:8, 10, 12). Service of other gods is the main thrust of the text, which allows us to follow the progress of a pagan New Year's festival from morning until night. The rituals have counterparts at Babylon, Emar, and Sumer.²¹⁸

The possible reference to olive oil in this text is ambiguous and reads: "Father not Old, Brothers not Frail (xi.3-6) Saturate], *invigorate* (*lit.*, oil)." ²¹⁹

The Kirta epic records the story of the King of Betu-Hubur and his challenges in receiving an heir to his throne. Pardee suggests the story may have served a "didactic role at Ugarit, teaching proper relationships between kings and deities, between people

²¹⁸ Richard Steiner, *Ibid.*, 309.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 317.

and king, and between royal offspring and their parents.²²⁰ In the royal house of King Kirta, scented oil is present:

The house of Kirta they enter, to the dwelling [...] to the tent of myrrh (*-oil*) they proceed.”

Pardee notes “in spite of some damage, there is general agreement to read the signs here as {wlhmmr}, the best division of which seems to be w I frm mr, explained as an idiom for a banqueting hall, where myrrh-scented oil was used copiously.”²²¹

Although the context is unclear, the next reference to oil mentions the absence of oil as a dire sign of the times. Pardee maintains that this passage suggests the absence of agricultural fertility is a direct result of Kirta's ill-health. This would further reinforce the divine association of Kirta and emphasize his effect on nature:

The Earth Does Not Produce (iii) *Oil* was poured [from a bowl]. (Someone) saw the quaking of earth and heaven, did the rounds to the extremities of the earth, of (its) well-watered portions. A spring for the earth is the rain of Balu, even for the field(s) the rain of the High One; Good for the earth is the rain of Balu, even for the field(s) the rain of the High One. Good is it for the wheat in the garden(s), in the tilled land (for) the emmer, upon the mounds (for) the ..., The ploughmen lifted (their) heads, on high those who work the grain, (For) the bread was depleted [from] their bins, the wine was depleted from their skins, the *oil* was depleted from [their jars].²²²

3.4.2 *Synthesis*

The Baal myth associates olive oil with a peace offering and as having divine origins. Baal's return from the underworld associates olive oil with his resurrection as it is described as a sign of divine blessing and proof of his resurgence. Olive oil is offered during festivals as a libation in veneration of Balu. Royalty are recorded as making offerings of olive oil in a Ugaritic temple ritual. Medicinal uses of olive oil are recorded

²²⁰ Dennis Pardee, *Ibid.*, 333.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 339.

²²² *Ibid.*, 341.

where it is mixed together with other ingredients offering anesthetic features. Finally, the Kirta Epic suggests the absence of olive oil was interpreted as an omen of divine judgement.

3.5 Akkadian Textual Evidence

3.5.1 Archival Records

Among the Akkadian works, Dalley comments that *The Descent of Ishtar* “is first attested in Late Bronze Age texts, in both Babylonia and Assyria, and later from the palace library at Nineve.”²²³ This composition concludes with instructions for an annual ritual known from Assyrian texts, which featured the bathing and anointing of a statue of Dumuzi in Nineveh, Arbela, Assur and Kalah. Some lines of the text in *The Descent of Ishtar* are also found in Nergal and Ereshkigal and in the epic of Gilgamesh. The references to oil are the following:

For Dumuzi, the lover of her youth. Wash (him) with pure water, anoint him with sweet oil, Clothe him in a red robe, let the lapis lazuli pipe play (?).²²⁴

In the Babylonian epic of creation, cedar oil is apparently used in royal anointing: “With cedar [oil] and [] he anoi[nted] his body, He clothed himself in [his] princely [gar]ment,”²²⁵ In a move to elevate the supremacy of Marduk as high god, oil is also mentioned to be used in a swearing ritual together with water:

They made Marduk's destiny highest, they prostrated themselves. They laid upon themselves a curse (if they broke the oath), With water and oil they swore, they touched their throats. They granted him gods, (100) They established him forever for lordship of heaven and earth.²²⁶

²²³ Stephanie Dalley, *Ibid.*,381.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 383.

²²⁵ Benjamin Foster, *Ibid.*, 399.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 401.

Another text known as *Erra and Ishum*, dates no earlier than the eight century BC, and mentions best oil as a highly desirable possession.

Warrior Erra listened to them. The speech which the Sebitti made was as pleasing to him as the *best oil*.²²⁷

Warrior Erra listened to him, And the words that Ishum spoke to him were as pleasing as the *best oil*.²²⁸

Documents from the Old Babylonian period record the use of oil in divination practices, or *lecanomancy*.²²⁹ The Mesopotamian omens record,

If (I throw *oil* (in)to water and) the *oil* divides itself into two — the sick person will die; for the campaign: the army will not return.²³⁰

In another text known by *Rituals from Emar*, the storm god's highpriestess is installed in a ritual ceremony involving fragrant oil:

Day 1: The Day of Selection (lines 1-6)

When the sons of Emar elevate the high priestess to the storm god, the sons of Emar take lots from the temple of NINURTA and grasp them before the storm god. The daughter of any son of Emar may be designated. On the same day they take fragrant *oil* from the palace and from NINKUR's temple and place it on her head.²³¹

They offer to all the gods of Emar one standard loaf each, one standard vessel of barley-beer, thick bread, *cedar oil*, and fruit, which they distribute among the gods...

Just before evening," they take *fragrant oil* of NINKUR's temple and of the palace, and the diviner pours it on the head of the high priestess at the gate of the storm god.²³²

Just before evening, they seat the high priestess on her throne," set before her a new table from her father's house, and set bread on it...

²²⁷ Stephanie Dalley, *Ibid.*, 406.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 414.

²²⁹ Ann Guinan, *Ibid.*, 421.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 423.

²³¹ Daniel Fleming, *Ibid.*, 427.

²³² *Ibid.*, 428.

They put on her ears two gold earrings from her father's house, put on her right hand the storm god's gold ring/ and wrap her head with a red wool headdress. They offer fragrant oil for the storm god.²³³

When the high priestess is enthroned at her banquet...

From the House of the Gods they give her six hundred (shekels) of wool, two jars of oil, one juglet of oil, four hundred (shekels) of aromatics, five store-jars of wine, two racks of grapes, two racks of apples, two racks of apricots, one pot of milk, one large (pot) of soured milk, one bushel of emmer, one bushel of aromatics, three quart jars of malt beer, two pairs of sandals, two pairs of boots, two gazelles, two fish, and four pigeons — per annum. When the high priestess goes to her fate, slaughter one ox and one sheep at the temple. They offer to Šahru one sheep, one juglet of oil, a standard vessel, and two...²³⁴

The Emar *zukru* festival portrays the first early Syrian counterpart of the Israelite feast of unleavened bread and feast of Booths. Here, oil is recorded as anointing sacred stones at several times between the festival offerings:

After eating and drinking they rub all the stones with oil and blood...

During the First Month, on the 14th day, they enclose for all the seventy gods of Emar seventy pure lambs from the king thick bread, oil, and three store jugs.

After eating and drinking they anoint the upright stones with oil and blood.²³⁵

They anoint the stones d [with oil and blood]. ... tamarisk to the gods ...²³⁶

In a New-moon celebration for Dagan, oil is listed as an offering distributed among the gods:

During the month of Abi on the day of declaration, 2 they distribute among the gods: two gallons and two quarts of second quality flour, one store jug, ten doves, one juglet of oil, and one quart of raisins. On the 3rd day, they offer to Astart of the Abi: one quart of second quality flour, barley, ..., (one) flagon, and one jar from the House of the Gods; dove, fruit, and oil. On the 8th day, they distribute among the gods: two gallons and two quarts of second quality flour, one store jug, ten [doves, one] juglet of oil, and one quart of raisins. Also on the 8th day, as the offering for Sinapsi: one quart of (barley-)mash, two quarts second quality flour, a store jug, ... standard vessel, fruit, oil, and one dove. 5 Mount of [one] one female kid from the fire-lighters; ... cedar oil, barley, ghee, one

²³³ Ibid., 429.

²³⁴ Ibid., 431.

²³⁵ Ibid., 433.

²³⁶ Ibid., 435.

hundred (shekels) of aromatics, one standard vessel, one brick of figs, ten pomegranates, and raisins from the palace. 3 On the same day, as the offering to Mount Sinapsi: 4 one quart of (barley-)mash, two quarts of second quality flour, (one) standard vessel, one dove, fruit, and *oil*. On the 8th day, they distribute among the gods: two gallons and two quarts of second quality flour, one store jug, ten [doves, one] juglet of *oil*, and one quart of raisins. Also on the 8th day, as the offering for Sinapsi: one quart of (barley-)mash, two quarts second quality flour, a store jug, ... standard vessel, fruit, *oil*, and one dove.²³⁷ On the same day, (as the offering to ...):
...honey, *oil*, ghee, and fruit.

On the 27th day, they offer the Lesser Sacrificial Homage before the *abû* of Dagans temple, with:...honey, *oil*, ghee...

For the *abû* of Alal's temple:...honey, *oil*, ghee...

They give to the abu of the House of Trust...honey, *oil*, ghee...

Celebration for Halma...

...they offer *oil*...on the day of the Hiyaru, to Halma.²³⁸

In a psephomancy ritual from Assur using black and white stones the ritualist announces his actions in the divination rite:

Invocation

- (1) Incantation: I have called upon you O Shamash [...]
- (2) In the midst of the [pure (?)] heavens [...]
- (3) I am carrying a star; [...] you (?) [...]
- (4) I am carrying a star; I am touching my head [...]
- (5) x [...] offering, mashatu-flour ... [...]
- (6) The pure grain, in its body, a stone [...]
- (7) I offer bread, pure water, *fine oil*.²³⁹

The *Adapa Epic*, in which some have suggested parallels to the biblical account of Adam and Eve, records oil as being offered as an anointment though the subject is unclear:

They brought him *oil*, he anointed himself.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Ibid., 439.

²³⁸ Ibid., 441.

²³⁹ Victor Hurowitz, Ibid., 444.

²⁴⁰ Benjamin Foster, Ibid., 449.

The most famous of the Mesopotamian epics, *Gilgamesh*, records oil in several capacities during the building of the great boat:

Thrice 3600 measures of *oil* for the workers who carried the baskets, Aside from the 300 measures of *oil* that the caulking consumed, And twice 3600 measures of *oil* that the boatmen stored away. For the [builders] bullocks were slaughtered, And I killed sheep every day, Fine beer, [grape] wine, *oil* and date wine,²⁴¹

The coronation hymn of Assurbanipal records oil as favorable and evidence of divine blessing together with grain, silver and cattle:

May the [population] of Assur buy thirty kor of grain for one shekel of silver!
May the [population] of Assur buy three seah of *oil* for one shekel of silver!²⁴²

The Adad-Guppi Autobiography which is believed to have been written for the mother or grand-mother of Nabonidus records fine oil during Adad-guppi's mourning. While mourning the departure of the gods from Harran, the text portrays the absence of fine oil from his body, a sign of humility.

In order to appease the heart of my god and my goddess, I did not put on a garment of excellent wool, 6 silver, gold, a fresh garment; I did not allow perfumes (or) *fine oil* to touch my body. I was clothed in a torn garment. My fabric was sackcloth.²⁴³

Medicinal oil is used as an anointing oil in a dialogue between a man and his god. This early Akkadian text shares similarities with the biblical book of Job which describes a man plagued with illness, assumed to be associated with sin. The ill-struck young man is treated with oil:

[...] he has anointed him with medicinal *oil*,²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Ibid., 459.

²⁴² Alisdaire Livingstone, Ibid., 473.

²⁴³ Tremper Longman III, Ibid., 478.

²⁴⁴ Benjamin Foster, Ibid., 485.

A text from Ugarit referred to as a sufferer's salvation, records fine oil as being used to resurrect from the dead with the aide of Marduk:

My sisters sprinkled me with *fine(?) oil* from the press. Until the Lord raised my head, And brought me back to life from the dead, (15) Until Marduk raised my head And brought me back to life from the dead,²⁴⁵

The poem of the righteous sufferer mentions fine oil as present in the temple rites and used in ceremonial libations:

The protecting genius, the guardian spirit, divine attendants of the fabric of Esagila, 9 I made their feelings glow with libation, I made them exultant [with] lavish [meals]. [To the threshhold, the bolt] socket, the bolt, the doors [I offered] oil, butterfat, and choicest grain. 10 [] the rites of the temple.²⁴⁶

3.5.2 *Synthesis*

The use of oil for ritual anointing is recorded in *the Descent of Ishtar*. The Babylonian high god, Marduk, is said to have ascended to his place of supreme deity in a ritual involving oil and water. However, here cedar oil may have been the oil in reference. Divination rituals from the Old Babylonian period indicate oil as a key ingredient in lecanomancy. Fragrant oil is poured as an anointing on the head of the storm god's high priestess in the *Rituals from Emar*. In addition, stones are also recorded as being anointed with oil on a Syrian sacred festival that mirrors the Israelite feasts of unleavened bread and feast of booths. Oil is offered to gods during the New-moon celebrations for the god Dagan. The Epic of Gilgamesh mentions olive oil in the account of the building of the great boat. Medicinal uses of olive oil are also recorded in an early Akkadian text. A text from Ugaritic associates olive oil as a key ingredient used in a resurrection account where Marduk is given credit for bringing life back from the dead. Finally, pure oil is mentioned as being present in temples and used in ceremonial libations.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 486.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 491.

3.6 Sumerian Textual Evidence

3.6.1 Archival Records

The Sumerian Proverb Collection 3 records oil in several occurrences, the second referring to sesame oil which the interpreter suggests may be an expression for trying to the best of one's abilities:

65. The merchant - how he minimized the silver! [How he minimized] the *oil* and the barley!

75. "I am getting up on my haunches for you," (says) the man (who) is lifting sesame *oil*.²⁴⁷

128. May Inanna pour *oil* on my heart that hurts!²⁴⁸

In the Sumerian poem - *Man and his God*, which resembles the biblical book of Job fine oil is equated with placating his god.

(120) The man — his god verily heard his bitter weeping; After the heart of his god became soothed toward the young man at his prolonged lamentation and wailing, The true words, the artless words, uttered by him, his god accepted. His words of supplication, which the young man expressed, (And) the pure prayers(?) — pleased the flesh of his god like *fine oil*. (125) (Thereupon) his god withdrew his hand from the evil matter.²⁴⁹

A text known as *The Disputations Between Ewe and Wheat*, several oils are mentioned in connection with divine and kingly service:

(105) Sweet *oil*, the fragrance of the Gods, Mixed *oil*, pressed *oil*, herbal *oil*, cedar *oil* of the offerings — these are mine!²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Bendt Alster, *Ibid.*, 565.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 566.

²⁴⁹ Jacob Klein, *Ibid.*, 574.

²⁵⁰ Herman Vanstiphout, *Ibid.*, 576.

Another text, *Disputations Between Summer and Winter*, makes reference to a princely oil:

Emesh (Summer) and Enten (Winter) she bore as (smoothly as with) princely oil;²⁵¹

When you have made a perfect feast for the gods, The Anuna clothe their holy bodies with a garment. And in his House-of-Life, the holy abode of kingship founded by An, (235) When you have prepared at that place of heart's content a succulent banquet; With tambourine, drum, trumpet and lute playing for him as by themselves, And Tigi and Zamzam, they who gladden your heart, while away the day, It is I who have made the plentiful wine, who deliver lots of drink; I who perfect the garments with fine oil,²⁵²

In a *Dialogue between a Supervisor and his Scribe*, oil is depicted as included in a standard food ration:

You appointed me over your household; you cannot accuse me of a single instance of neglect. 3 I always assigned the tasks of the slave girls, the slaves and other personnel of your household. I soothed their hearts with rations of food, clothing and *oil*.

...Your counsels have penetrated my body as if I had taken milk and *oil*.²⁵³

3.6.2 *Synthesis*

In a Sumerian poem, pure oil is listed in a comparison indicating it was pleasing to a man's god. Various oils, mixed with other ingredients are described as the fragrance of the god's. A reference to a royal oil is probable in the *Disputations Between Summer and Winter*. Finally, oil is mentioned in a document which lists it as a standard ration together with food and clothing.

3.7 Egyptian Archaeological Evidence

3.7.1 *Archival Records*

²⁵¹ Ibid., 585

²⁵² Ibid., 587.

²⁵³ Ibid., 591.

During the Eighteenth dynasty, royal Egyptian inscriptions preserved to document the military campaigns of Amenhotep III into the Levant were discovered on two stelae at Karnak and at Memphis. The inscriptions were an attempt to pass along to his successor's historical feats to ensure the future of his empire. Amenhotep III had continued his father's military campaigns Amenhotep II (1427-1400 BC) in the Levant and was dedicated to preserving his leadership. The stela chronicles the campaigns and at times includes exaggerated claims not unfamiliar to those found on the Gebel Barkal stela of Thutmose III.²⁵⁴

During the plundering of a successful operation in the Levant, *His Majesty* is recorded to have taken captive a chief of a land that is likely translated as “Hill of Oil”(Giboa-Shemen):

His majesty arrived <at> Hukti. The chieftain of *Giboa-Shemen*, whose name is Kaka, his wife, his children and all his subjects likewise were carried off. Another chieftain was appointed in his place.²⁵⁵

Shmuel Ahituv identifies Giboa-Shemen with Tell es-Samn, by the Kishon Brook, just south of the Carmel Range.²⁵⁶

On a funerary inscription known as *Contrasting Harper songs from the Tomb of Neferhotep*, olive oil is likely mentioned as a placating offering mixed together with incense and inhaled by “God’s Father”. These inscriptions carved on the walls of Theban Tomb 50 date to the reign of Horemheb (ca. 1319-1292 BC):

²⁵⁴ James Hoffmeier, *Ibid*, Volume 2, 19.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁵⁶ Shmuel Ahituv, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents* (Jerusalem/Leiden: Magnes/Brill, 1984), 100.

Re presents himself in the mornings; Atum sets in Manu (the western mountain). Men beget; Women conceive. Every nose breathes the air; Dawn comes, and all their children have come to their tombs. Make holiday, O God's Father! Place incense together with *fine oil* to your nose; Garlands of lotus and mandragora flowers at your breast...²⁵⁷

3.7.2 *Synthesis*

The archaeological record includes an Eighteenth Dynasty stela which mentions the capturing of a chief in the land in the Levant and at a location identifying it as a hill of oil. A Theban tomb records olive oil to have been mixed with incense as an offering to the gods. The incense was an offering intended to be inhaled by the god.

3.8 Hittite Archaeological Evidence

3.8.1 *Archival Records*

A Hittite inscription known as The Treaty of Tudhaliya IV with Kurunta of Tarhuntashša on the Bronze Tablet found in Ḫattuša(2.18) records a value of olive oil as 2 shekels of silver:

The price of a weaned colt (or) a weaned filly is 4 shekels of silver. The price of 4 minas of copper is one shekel of silver, of one bottle of *fine oil* is 2 shekels of silver, of one bottle of lard is one shekel of silver, of one bottle of butter/ghee is one shekel of silver, of one bottle of honey is one shekel of silver, of 2 cheeses is one shekel [of silver], of 3 rennets is one shekel of silver.²⁵⁸

3.8.2 *Synthesis*

The Hittite inscription indicates the relative value of olive oil in the market. According to its price, it would have been considered a luxury item.

²⁵⁷ Robert K. Ritner in Hallo, William. The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, *Monumental Inscriptions and Archival Documents from the Biblical World*. Leiden : Boston: Brill USA, Inc. [Distributor], 2003. Volume 2, 65.

²⁵⁸ Harry Hoffner, Jr., *Ibid.*, 117.

3.9 West Semitic Archaeological Evidence

3.9.1 Archival Records

Among the Deir Alla plaster inscriptions discovered in 1967, olive oil is mentioned in the context of divination. Here the olive oil is highlighted as a medium used by diviners and anointed on the body. The inscriptions also known by, *The book of Balaam, son of Beor* refer to several incidences similar to the divine encounters of the biblical Balaam found in Numbers 22-23 and in a language very similar to biblical Hebrew.²⁵⁹

Balaam Acts to Save the Goddess and the Land (lines 13-14) Heed the admonition, adversaries of Sha[gar-andUg].

Ishtar]! [skilled diviner. To skilled diviners shall one take you, and to an oracle; [To] a perfumer of myrrh and a priestess. [Who] covers his body [with *oil*], And rubs himself with *olive oil*. To one bearing an offering in a horn;²⁶⁰

The Panamuwa inscription, written in Samalian Aramaic records a memorial dedication by Bar-Rakib to his father Panamuwa who died during Tiglath Pileser III's campaign against Damascus in 733-732 BC. The memorial may also serve to legitimize his rule, which would support a date of 733-727 BC for the inscription. The price of (olive) oil is referenced to be a shekel for 2/3 of a mina:²⁶¹

My father Panamwā, son of Baršūr(?), [he?] destroyed(?) in the la[nd]
[] ewe and cow and wheat and barley. And a parts stood at a shekel;
and a STRB-(measure) [of onions(?)*/wine(?)*] at a shekel;
and two-thirds of a mina of *oil* at a shekel.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Baruch A. Levine, *Ibid.*, 140.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

²⁶¹ Kevin Lawson Younger, Jr., *Ibid.*, 158.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 159.

3.9.2 *Synthesis*

Olive oil is recorded on *the Book of Balaam, son of Beor* inscription to have been employed in the aide of divination rituals. Apparently it was poured and smeared over the diviner's body. The Panamuwa memorial inscription indicates the price of olive oil around 733 BC to have been a shekel for 2/3 of a mina.

3.10 Akkadian Archaeological Evidence

3.10.1 *Archival Records*

Ekallatum – Shamshi-Addu (2.110), Aššur, preserves a long inscriptions that records the construction of the Aššur temple and equates it with the temple of the god Enlil:

(1-17) Shamshi-Addu king of the universe, builder of the temple of the god Assur, pacifier of the land between the Tigris and Euphrates, by the command of the god Assur who loves him, whom Ami and Enlil called by name for greatness among the kings who went before: (18-58) The temple of the god Enlil which Erishum (I), the son of Ilu-shumma, had built and which had become dilapidated, and I abandoned it. I constructed the temple of the god Enlil, my lord, the fearful dais, the large chapel, the seat of the god Enlil, my lord, which were methodically made by the skilled work of the building trade within my city Assur. I roofed the temple with cedar (beams). I erected in the rooms cedar doors with silver and gold stars. (Under) the walls of the temple (I placed) silver, gold, lapis lazuli, (and) carnelian; cedar resin, *best oil*, honey, and ghee I mixed in the mortar. I methodically made the temple of the god Enlil, my lord, and called it Eamkurkurra, "The Temple — Wild Bull of the Lands," the temple of the god Enlil, my lord, within my city, Assur. (59-72) When I built the temple of the god Enlil, my lord, the prices in my city Assur, (were): two kor of barley could be purchased for one shekel of silver; fifteen minas of wool for one shekel of silver; and two seahs of *oil* for one shekel of silver, according to the prices of my city Assur. (73-87) At that time I received the tribute of the kings of Tukrish and of the king of the Upper Land, within my city, Assur. I set up my great name and my monumental inscription in the land of Lebanon of the shore of the Great Sea." (88-98) When the temple becomes dilapidated: may whoever among the kings, my sons, renovates the temple anoint my clay inscriptions with *oil*, make a sacrifice, and return them to their places. (99-135) Who(ever) does not anoint my clay inscriptions and my monumental inscriptions with *oil*, does not make a sacrifice, does not return them to their places, (but) instead alters my monumental inscriptions, removes my name and writes his (own) name (or) buries (the monumental inscriptions) in the earth (or) throws (them) into the water: may the gods Shamash, Enlil, Adad and Sharru-matim pluck the offspring of that king; may he and his army not prevail in the face of a king who opposes him; may the god Nergal take away by force his treasure and the treasure of

his land; may the goddess Eshtar, mistress of battle, break his weapon, and the weapons of his army; may the god Sin, "god of my head," be an evil demon to him forever.²⁶³

Various tablets bearing inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser's accomplishments have been discovered. One tablet known by Summary Inscription 8 (2.117E) discovered at Nimrud in 1950, records fine oil as included in the spoils of this military triumph:

(lines 1'-9') [...] [...] his [...] on dry land [...] [...] I made (them) pour out [their lives]. That city to[gether with ...] [...] in the midst of the sea I devastated them and anni[hilated them]. [...] and he was afraid. He put on sackcloth [...] [...] of ivory, ebony, inlaid with precious stones and gold, together with [...] [...] ivory, *fine oil*, all kinds of spices, horses of Egypt] [...] from Kaspuna, which is on the shore of the [Upper] Sea, [as far as ...] under the control of my eunuch, the governor of Si[mirra, I placed].²⁶⁴

The Sippar Cylinder of Nabonidus (2.123A) records a detailed Neo-Babylonian script and was found at the site of the Ebabbar temple in Sippar. The inscription describes the rebuilding of three temples by Nabonidus (556-539 BC), the last king of Babylon:

Rebuilding of Ehulhul in Harran (i.8-ii.25)

Ehulhul, the temple of Sin in Harran, where since days of yore Sin, the great lord, had established his favorite residence - (then) his heart became angry against that city and temple and he aroused the Mede, destroyed that temple and turned it into ruins — in my legitimate reign Bel (and) the great lord, for the love of my kingship, became reconciled with that city and temple and showed compassion. In the beginning of my everlasting reign they sent me a dream. Marduk, the great lord, and Sin, the luminary of heaven and the netherworld, stood together. Marduk spoke with me: "Nabonidus, king of Babylon, carry bricks on your riding horse, rebuild Ehulhul and cause Sin, the great lord, to establish his residence in its midst." Reverently I spoke to the Enlil of the gods, Marduk: "That temple which you ordered (me) to build, the Mede surrounds it and his might is excessive." But Marduk spoke with me: "The Mede whom you mentioned, he, his country and the kings who march at his side will be no more." At the beginning of the third year they aroused him, Cyrus, the king of Anshan, his second in rank. He scattered the vast Median hordes with his small army. He captured Astyages, the king of the Medes, and took him to his country as captive. (Such was) the word of the great lord Marduk and of Sin, the luminary of heaven and the netherworld, whose command is not revoked. I feared their august command, I became troubled, I was worried and my face showed signs of anxiety. I was not neglectful, nor remiss, nor careless. For rebuilding

²⁶³ Douglas Frayne, *Ibid.*, 259.

²⁶⁴ Kevin Lawson Younger, Jr., *Ibid.*, 290.

Ehulhul, the temple of Sin, my lord, who marches at my side, which is in Harran, which Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, son of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, a prince who preceded me, had rebuilt, I mustered my numerous troops, from the country of Gaza on the border of Egypt, (near) the Upper Sea 8 on the other side of the Euphrates, to the Lower Sea, 9 the kings, princes, governors and my numerous troops which Sin, Shamash and Ishtar my lords had entrusted to me, (and) in a propitious month, on an auspicious day, which Shamash and Adad revealed to me by means of divination, by the wisdom of Ea and Asalluhi, with the craft of the exorcist, according to the art of Kulla, the lord of foundations and brickwork, upon (beads of) silver (and) gold, choice gems, logs of resinous woods, aromatic herbs (and cuts of) cedar (wood), in joy and gladness, on the foundation deposit of Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, who had found the foundation deposit of Shalmaneser, 10 the son of Assurnasirpal, I cleared its foundations and laid its brickwork. I mixed its mortar with beer, wine, *oil* and honey and anointed its excavation ramps with it. More than the kings my fathers (had done), I strengthened its building and perfected its work.²⁶⁵

Burying the foundation deposit (ii.43b-46)

The inscription written in the name of Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, I found and did not alter. I anointed (it) with *oil*, performed a sacrifice, placed it with my own inscription and returned it to its (original) place.

Rebuilding of Ebabbar in Sippar (ii.47-iii.7)

For Shamash, the judge of heaven and the netherworld, (concerning) Ebabbar, his temple which is in Sippar, which Nebuchadnezzar, a former king,...

Burying the foundation deposit (iii.8-10)

The inscription in the name of Naram-Sin, 19 son of Sargon, I found and did not alter. I anointed (it) with *oil*, made offerings, placed (it) with my own inscription and returned it to its (original) place.²⁶⁶

Rebuilding of Eulmash in Sippar-Anunttu (iii.22-38a) For AnunTtu — the lady of warfare,...

Prayer to Anunitu (iii.38b-42)

As for you, O Anunitu, great lady, when you joyfully enter that temple, look joyfully upon my good deeds and every month, at sunrise and sunset, petition Sin, the father your begetter, for favors on my behalf. Burying the foundation deposit and address to future generations (iii.43-51) Whoever you are whom Sin and Shamash will call to kingship and in whose reign that temple will fall into disrepair and who will build it anew, may he 21

²⁶⁵ Paul Alain Beaulieu, *Ibid.*, 310.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 312.

find the inscription written in my name and not alter (it). May he anoint (it) with *oil*, perform a sacrifice, place it with the inscription written in his own name and return it to its (original) place. May Shamash and Anunitu hear his supplication, receive his utterance, march at his side, annihilate his enemy (and) daily speak good recommendations on his behalf to Sin, the father their creator.²⁶⁷

The north Mesopotamian city of Eshnunna, east of Babylon, shares similarities in the Laws of Eshunna with other legal codes such as the Laws of Hammurabi. Here, fine oil is distinguished from oil, the former greater in value:

The Laws of Eshnunna

Superscription Appointment to the throne (lines i.1-7)

[...] day 21 [...] of the gods Enlil and Ninazu, [when Dadusha ascended to] the kingship of the city of Eshnunna [and entered] into the house of his father, [when] he conquered with mighty weapons within one year the cities Supur-Shamash [and ... on] the far bank of the Tigris River [...]. The Laws §1 300 SILA of barley (can be purchased) for 1 shekel of silver. 3 SILA of *fine oil* — for 1 shekel of silver. 12 SILA of *oil* — for 1 shekel of silver. 15 SILA of lard — for 1 shekel of silver. 40 SILA of bitumen — for 1 shekel of silver. 360 shekels of wool — for 1 shekel of silver. 600 SILA of salt — for 1 shekel of silver. 300 SILA of potash — for 1 shekel of silver. 180 shekels of copper — for 1 shekel of silver. 120 shekels of wrought copper — for 1 shekel of silver. 1 sila of *oil*, extract(?) — 30 SILA is its grain equivalent. 1 sila of lard, extract(?) — 25 SILA is its grain equivalent. 1 sila of bitumen, extract(?) — 8 SILA is its grain equivalent. A wagon together with its oxen and its driver — 100 SILA of grain is its hire; if (paid in) silver, Vs shekel (i.e., 60 barley corns)...

A merchant or a tapster will not accept silver, grain, wool, *oil*, or anything else from a male or female slave...

If a man gives his child for suckling and for rearing but does not give the food, *oil*, and clothing rations (to the caregiver) for 3 years, he shall weigh and deliver 10 shekels of silver for the cost of the rearing of his child, and he shall take away his child...²⁶⁸

If a man gives his child for suckling and for rearing but does not give the food, *oil*, and clothing rations (to the caregiver) for 3 years, he shall weigh and deliver 10 shekels of silver for the cost of the rearing of his child, and he shall take away his child...²⁶⁹

If there is an ubabtu, a nadtu, or a sekretu whose father awards to her a dowry and records it in a tablet for her, but in the tablet that he records for her he does not grant her written authority to give her estate to whomever she pleases and does not give her full discretion — after the father goes to his fate, her brothers shall take her field and her

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 313.

²⁶⁸ Martha Roth, Ibid., 332-334.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 342.

orchard and they shall give to her food, *oil*, and clothing allowances in accordance with the value of her inheritance share, and they shall thereby satisfy her. If her brothers should not give to her food, *oil*, and clothing allowances in accordance with the value of her inheritance share and thus do not satisfy her, she shall give her field and her orchard to any agricultural tenant she pleases, and her agricultural tenant shall support her. As long as she lives, she shall enjoy the use of the field, orchard, and anything else which her father gave to her, but she will not sell it and she will not satisfy another person's obligations with it; her inheritance belongs only to her brothers...²⁷⁰

If a man hires a boatman and a boat and loads it with grain, wool, *oil*, dates, or any other lading, and that boatman is negligent and thereby causes the boat to sink or its cargo to become lost, the boatman shall replace the boat which he sank and any of its cargo which he lost.²⁷¹

If a woman is residing in her father's house, or her husband settles her in a house elsewhere, and her husband then travels abroad but does not leave her any *oil*, wool, clothing, or provisions, 9 or anything else, and sends her no provisions from abroad — that woman shall still remain (the exclusive object of rights) for her husband for five years, she shall not reside with another husband.²⁷²

If a man pours *oil* on the head of a woman of the a'rtu-class on the occasion of a holiday, or brings dishes on the occasion of a banquet, no return (of gifts) shall be made.

If a man either pours *oil* on her head or brings (dishes for) the banquet, (after which) the son to whom he assigned the wife either dies or flees, he shall give her in marriage to whichever of his remaining sons he wishes, from the oldest to the youngest of at least ten years of age.²⁷³

Hurowitz further notes the use of oil in dedication ceremonies:

In Nabonidus's description of the dedication of Shamash's temple Ebabbar, we read (Langdon 1912:258 Nabonidus no. 6 col. II 13-15):

The door posts, locks, bolts and door leaves
I drenched with *oil*
And for the entry of their exalted divinity
I made the contents of the temple full of sweet fragrance.
The temple, for the entry of Shamash my lord,
Its gates were wide open
And it was full of joy.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 347.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 349.

²⁷² Ibid., 357.

²⁷³ Ibid., 358.

The anointing of the bolts in order to bring a god into his temple is mentioned in the Nabû-apla-iddinna inscription and in an Esarhaddon text. Esarhaddon's inscription reports the introduction of Ishtar of Uruk in a procession into her temple Enirgalanna. The Nabû-apla-iddinna text, like the Nabonidus inscription, reports bringing a new statue of Shamash into his temple Ebabbar in Sippar. This calls to mind immediately the anointing of the Tabernacle and all its cultic equipment at the time of its dedication (Exod. 40.9-16; Lev. 8.10-11 and cf. Exod. 30.22-23 for the fragrant components of the anointing oil), although the exact functions emphasized by the texts may not be identical (the anointing oil imparts special contagious sanctity to the anointed object, while the oils used in the Mesopotamian texts fill the anointed objects with their fragrance). The use of oil, although with a totally different function, is mentioned in the Weld-Blundell Prism of Nabonidus, also describing the building of Ebabbar in Sippar:

So as not to cause within it
Anger, curse and sin
And not to place in the mouth
Of the workers doing its work-
(but instead) to place in
their mouths good blessings-
loaves, beer, meat and wine
abundantly I heaped on them,
and salves of *pure oil*
I (rubbed) abundantly on their bodies.
With perfume and sweet (smelling) *oil*
I drenched their heads.

(Compare the ‘sweet smelling oil’, literally ‘good oil’, Ḫ.GIŠ DÙG.GA with the *šemen tōb* running from Aaron’s head down onto his beard and underwear in Ps. 133.2) Filling the temple with fragrant odors was apparently meant to attract the god to it. In connection with this rite we may mention the famous passage in the flood story (*Gilgamesh*, Tablet XI 155-61) in which the gods are attracted to Utnapishtim like flies when they smell the aroma of his sacrifices which were offered along with incense, fragrant reed, cedar and myrtle. The use of incense with the specific purpose of attracting gods is mentioned in an Old Babylonian Diviner’s Prayer (Goetze 1968:28I.15), as well as in a related text published by Starr 1983:30 I.5.²⁷⁴

3.10.2 Synthesis

The Akkadian record shows olive oil to have been used in the construction of the Aššur temple. Olive oil was said to have been mixed into the mortar of the temple walls and used as a ritual anointing for the temple inscriptions. It was also used as an essential element in the inscriptional sacrificial anointings. If the devotee failed to anoint the

²⁷⁴ Victor Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and North-West Semitic Writings* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 1992), 278-79.

inscription with oil during the sacrifice, it was considered as no sacrifice at all. Tablets bearing the accomplishments of Tiglath-Pilesar mention pure olive oil as some of his military spoils. Temples built by Babylonian King Nabonidus were also recorded to have had olive oil mixed into the mortar, and inscriptions were anointed with olive oil according to the sacrificial protocol. The Laws of the city of Eshunna distinguishes fine olive oil from second grade oil indicating its value was greater. Regular oil is also recorded in a list of standard rations together with food and clothing, and as a cargo item transported by boat. Additionally it is mentioned as a head anointing during special occasion's. Finally, olive oil was used in ritual anointings of the doors, doorways, and hardware of the divinity worshipped at Shamash's temple Ebabbar. Apparently pouring the olive oil over these elements were an attraction to the god and means to bring the god into the temple. In the construction of the temple, workers were also mentioned to have been anointed with pure oil.

3.11 Sumerian Archaeological Evidence

3.11.1 Archival Records

A tablet inscription from the Old Babylonian era records Ibbi-Sin's making of a golden *sikkatu* vessel, which is a large container used for the storage of oil. It was crafted from gold that had been plundered from Susa. The inscription explains the fashioning of the vessel for the god Nanna:

- (1-5) For the god Nanna, whose radiance spreads over his people, the lord who alone is a luminous god, his lord,
(6-10) Ibbi-Sin, god of his land, mighty king, king of Ur, king of the four quarters, (n-16)
when he roared like a storm against Susa, Adamshah, (and) the land of Awan, made them submit in a single day, and took their lord(s) as bound captive(s),
(17-22) a golden sikkatu vessel, a masterpiece whose decorations — (depicting) a kusarikku ("bison"), snakes, and radiant dark rain (clouds) — are of unceasing wonder,

(23-26) which (during) the "Exalted Festival," the highpoint of the year, (being) the illustration of the god Nanna, performs without end the "mouthopening" ritual at the place of the (secret) treasurechest —

(27) he fa[shioned] for him (the god Nanna)

(28-29) (and) dedicated for his (own) life.²⁷⁵

The Laws of Lipit-Ishtar bear another inscription dating to the First Dynasty of Isin (1934-1924 BC). The monuments record administrative laws concerned with maintaining justice:

If a man's wife does not bear him a child but a prostitute from the street does bear him a child, he shall provide grain, *oil*, and clothing rations for the prostitute, and the child whom the prostitute bore him shall be his heir; as long as his wife is alive, the prostitute will not reside in the house with his first-ranking wife.²⁷⁶

Two cylinders recovered at ancient Girsu, known as The Cylinders of Gudea, refer to the abundance of Sumer's oil as evidence of divine blessing. The cylinders are believed to have been written in honor of Gudea's dedication of a new Eninnu temple and for the god Ningirsu, the patron deity of Lagash:²⁷⁷

(xi.i) My temple, the foremost temple of all the lands, the right arm of Lagash, the Anzu bird screeching throughout heaven, the Eninnu, my royal temple;

(xi.5) O faithful shepherd Gudea, when you bring your faithful hand to bear for me ' I will cry out to heaven for rain. From heaven let abundance come to you, let the people receive abundance with you,

(xi.10) with the founding of my temple let abundance come! The great fields will lift up (their) hand(s) to you, the canal will stretch out its neck to you, (up to) the mounds, places to which water does not (normally) rise,

(xi.15) the water will rise for you. Sumer will pour out abundant *oil* because of you, will weigh out abundant wool because of you. When you fill in my foundation,...²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Martha Roth, *Ibid.*, 391.

²⁷⁶ Douglas Frayne, *Ibid.*, 413.

²⁷⁷ Richard E. Averbeck, *Ibid.*, 417.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 423.

In the same cylinder are two references to oil which may include cedar oil and are used in the ritual anointing of bricks:

- (xviii.15) Ningishzida ('Lord of the Good Tree'), his (personal) god, was leading him by the hand. In the box of the brick-mold he libated fine(?) water. While adab, sim, and ala instruments resounded for the ruler, he anointed the brick hoe,(?)
- (xviii.20) hoed in honey, butter, and ... oil; sap and resin(?) from various kinds of trees he worked into the paste. He picked up the holy carrying basket (and) stepped up to the brick-mold. Gudea put the clay into the brick-mold.
- (xviii.25) He made the long enduring thing appear in splendor; the brick of the temple he set forth in splendid appearance. The lands sprinkled (it) with *oil*;²⁷⁹

3.11.2 *Synthesis*

A Sumerian inscription records the construction of large vessels for storing oil.

The vessels were elegantly decorated and crafted for the god Nanna. The Laws of Lipit-Ishtar mention oil as a standard ration together with grain and clothing. The abundance of oil in Sumer is recorded as a sign of divine blessing on the Cylinder's of Gudea. Olive oil could also have been mentioned in the anointing of bricks in an Eninnu temple.

3.12 Evidence from Hittite Catalogs

3.12.1 *Archival Records*

In a collection of votive records, vows made by members of the royal family are made in exchange for divine favors from the gods. A large storage jar filled with oil is offered to secure the life of the queen's husband:

- (iii.7-16) [Dream of the queen.] When the matter of the deity Kurwasu [], as Kurwasu spoke to the queen in a dream: "That matter regarding your husband which you hold in your heart, he will live. I will give to him 100 years (of life)!" In the dream the queen made the following vow: "If you will do that for me, and

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 427.

my husband will live, I will give to the deity three large storage jars: one filled with *oil*, one with honey, and one with fruit.²⁸⁰

3.12.2 *Synthesis*

Again, olive oil is depicted as a tool of divine barter and as an attraction to the god's.

3.13 Evidence from Miscellaneous West Semitic Documents

3.13.1 *Archival Records*

Hundreds of objects have been recovered during excavations north of the Negev at Tel Arad, bearing mostly Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions. The majority of the readable inscriptions are from strata VII and VI, dated to the end of the seventh/beginning of the sixth centuries and some may be dated earlier than the Lachish ostraca. Pardee asserts that these are the “largest group of preexilic Hebrew documents from a single Palestinian site — has provided a wealth of information on the history and economy of south Judah/north Negeb in the last years before the fall of Judah.”²⁸¹

On two inscriptions bearing orders for the allotment of supplies, oil is mentioned together with wine, though the context is not entirely clear:

To Elyashib. Give to the Kittim one (jar of) *oil*. Seal (the jar) and send it. Also give them one *b(at-measure)* of wine.²⁸²

To Nahum. [And] now, go to the house of Elyashib son of Eshyahu and get from there one (jar of) *oil* and send (it) to Ziph right away (after) affixing your seal to

²⁸⁰ Harry A. Hoffner, Jr. in Hallo, William. *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions and Archival Documents from the Biblical World*. Leiden : Boston: Brill USA, Inc. [Distributor], 2003. Volume 3, 67.

²⁸¹ Dennis Pardee, *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 83.

it. Dated Postscript (lines 8-9) On the twenty-fourth of the month Nahum gave *oil* to the Kitti (for delivery) — one (jar).²⁸³

Of the thousands of texts discovered at Ras Shamra, correspondence letters between members of a Ugaritic Royal family record *šmn* being used in a royal anointing:

He has also taken *oil* in a horn and poured it on the head of the daughter of the king of Amurru. Whatever si[n ? ...] because my mother...²⁸⁴

Another document includes oil and olives in a shipping report delivered by the governor to the queen:

Address (lines 1-2)

To the queen, my lady, say: Message of the governor, your servant.

Prostration and Greeting Formulae (lines 3-4)

[A]t the feet of my lady I fall. With my lady may it be well.

Report of Well-being and Request for Return of News (lines 5-10)

Here in the king's palace, everything is fine. There with my lady, whatever (is fine), may she return word (of that) to her servant.

The Shipping Report (lines 11-21)

(From) here twenty [*dū*]du-measures of barley and five *dūdu* -measures of GDL and five *dūdu* -measures of N^cR, (one) *kaddu*-measure of *oil* (perfumed with) myrrh, (one) *kaddu*-measure of lamp *oil*, (one) *kaddu*-measure of vinegar, (one) *kaddu*-measure of *olives*, (from) my lady's food provisions, all (of this) I herewith cause to be delivered (to you).²⁸⁵

In a situation report written from a brother to his sister, olive-oil is mentioned together with perfumed olive-oil:

Request (lines 7-9)

Have (him bring) me ten *lg*-measures of (*olive*)-*oil* and three *lg*-measures of perfumed (*olive*)-*oil*. Have one TZN sent to me.²⁸⁶

²⁸³ Ibid., 84.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 91.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 107.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 109.

Another document mentions oil in short supply among other commodities:

The Problem (lines 6-13)

(It has been) three days now that there is no food in your house and for [...] someone] struck and provisions CARRY (to) the house of the king. Twice now (someone) has taken (provisions?) and keeps asking [...] CARRY the (message)-tablet. Now oil [...] perfume [...] and wood [...] for him/her/it.²⁸⁷

Among the Elephantine Aramaic texts, a petition addressed by Jedaniah, the priests, and all the Jews of Elephantine to Bagavahya, governor of Judah makes mention of anointing oil:

Mourning II

Moreover, from the month of Tammuz, year 14 of Darius the king and until this day, we have been wearing sackcloth and have been fasting; the wives of ours like a widow have been made; (with) *oil* (we) have not anointed (ourselves), and wine have not drunk.

Cessation of Cult

Moreover, from that (time) and until (this) day, year 17 of Darius the king, meal-offering and incense and burnt-offering they did not make in that Temple.²⁸⁸

3.13.2 *Synthesis*

Olive oil is mentioned as a royal anointing oil among the Ugaritic royal family.

Perfumed oil, lamp oil and olives are recorded in a shipping report apparently as a royal dispatch. The Elephantine Aramaic texts record olive oil as an anointing oil and its absence as a sign of mourning.

3.14 Evidence from Akkadian Letters and Contracts

3.14.1 *Archival Records*

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 114.

²⁸⁸ Bezalel Porten, Ibid., 128.

Olive oil together with scented oil and castor oil are mentioned among the items listed in a *Dowry* dated to 420 BC:

Dowry

Jehoishma your sister brought in to me to my house:

4 handfuls of olive oil; 1 handful of s[ce]nted oil; <21) 5 handfuls of (20) castor oil.²⁸⁹

One of the earliest letters of the Amarna documents, lists sweet oil as a greeting gift from Tusratta, the king of Mitanni. Apparently this is an attempt to salvage foreign relations with Egypt a former ally. The following section on the Mycenaen evidence will look more closely at this relationship and the use of olives and oil exchanges.

(lines 41-45)

And as the greeting-gift of Kelu-Heba, my sister, I send her 1 set of gold toggle-pins, 1 set of gold (ear)rings, 1 gold mashu-rmg, and a scent container that is full of "sweet oil."²⁹⁰

Hess recognizes the sale of a town in a manner similar to the sale of towns recalled in 1Kings 11:11 from Solomon to Hiram and as recorded in 1 Kings 9:16-17 where Pharaoh supplies a wedding gift to Solomon. In this document, a woman and her son sell the town of Iburia to Yarimlim of Alalakh and oil is included in the price:

Sales agreement (lines 1-15)

1 As for the town of Iburia
2 in its full extent
3 and its tax exempt status,
4 from Hebat-muhhirne
5 and her son Abiadu,
6 Yarim-Lim,
7 leader of Alalakh,
15 has bought
8 for one thousand silver shekels,

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 182-183.

²⁹⁰ William Moran, Ibid., 240.

- 9 one thousand parisu-msasures of barley,
- 10 one thousand parisu-measures of emmer,
- 11 six po[ts] of wine,
- 12 ten pots of *oil*,
- 13 [together] with their gifts(?)'
- 14 for the full price.²⁹¹

A land purchase text from Ugarit dating between the 14th to the beginning of the 12th centuries BC records the presence of olive groves:

Munahimu — the scribe.

From the present day on, before witnesses, Rashapabu and Pidda, his wife, have purchased 4 *īkū* fields, with *olive* grove with its slaves, with its (fruit) trees, among the fields of *Sa'u* from Yarimanu, son of Huzamu, for 400 (shekels) of silver. The fields (and) *olive-grove* are bound like the sunny day to Rashap-abu and Pidda, his wife, and to their sons forever. If in future Yarimanu and his sons rescind their decision...²⁹²

3.14.2 *Synthesis*

An Akkadian dowry contract includes olive oil in the list, together with scented oil and castor oil. The Amarna documents specify olive oil as a royal greeting gift used to strengthen foreign relations. Olive oil is also mentioned in a sales document as one of the items exchanged in return for a land property.

3.15 Evidence from Sumerian Contracts

A text which comes from Umma and dates to the Ur III period (ca. 2062 BC) records a real estate transaction listing oil as a house-gift:

(lines 1-14)

1 1/3 sar of a house — 17 1/6 shekels of silver being the price of the house; 1 mina of wool, 1 headband, (and) 1 liter of *oil* being the gift for the house — Ur-nigingar, son of Girini, the chief constable, bought (this) house from Gugu, son of Ušmu, (and) išagani, his wife, from both of them.²⁹³

²⁹¹ Richard Hess, *Ibid.*, 249-250.

²⁹² Michael Heltzer, *Ibid.*, 254.

²⁹³ Piotr Steinkeller, *Ibid.*, 300.

3.16 Mycenaen-Egyptian Archaeological Evidence

3.16.1 Archival Records

The relationship between the Greek Kingdom of Mycenae and the Egyptian New Kingdom during the Late Bronze Age, has been the subject of much scholarly debate. However, archaeological and paleobotanical discoveries have led to new findings that may suggest that the relationship between the two powers, was in fact established. Of premiere importance is the prevalence of Mycenaean pottery in the form of stirrup jars at El-Amarna. Kelder is convinced that the two Kingdoms were involved in diplomatic efforts which involved the exchange of olives and/or olive oil as royal gifts.²⁹⁴

During the Egyptian New Kingdom (ca. 1550 BC – 1150 BC) came the rise of the Mycenaen palatial states in Greece. Additionally, the New Kingdom began with the Levantine peoples known as the Hyksos, being thrust out of the Nile Delta. The emergence of the Hyksos rulers remains an enigmatic phenomenon in Egyptian history. Scholarly debate has been undertaken, covering most aspects of the Hyksos to include their culture, origin, politics, dominion, and contacts with Upper Egypt and Nubia, Canaan and Syria, Anatolia and the Aegean. Since the first comprehensive study of the Hyksos began in 1936 with Labib's dissertation, major new field projects in Egypt, Nubia, Syria and Palestine, as well as texts such as the Khamose Stela – have generated an abundance of new data.²⁹⁵ New perspectives are advancing as the archaeological data grows and as scholars are made aware of the material. The Hyksos have been concluded to be an immigrating people referred to in Egyptian records as Asiatics. They infiltrated

²⁹⁴ See Kelder, Jorrit M. "Royal Gift Exchange Between Mycenae and Egypt: Olives as 'Greeting Gifts' in the Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean." *American Journal of Archaeology* 113, no. 3 (July 2009): 339–352.

²⁹⁵ Eliezer D. Oren, *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives* (University of Pennsylvania Museum Publication, 1997), xiv.

Lower Egypt and under the weakened political leadership of Egypt at the close of the Middle Kingdom took control of the land. They participated in minimal warfare and established one of their own people as king. After being pushed out of the Nile Delta under the rule of Ahmose, the first King of the 18th Dynasty, one of his successors, Thutmose III (ca. 1479-1425 BCE) advanced the Kingdom east over the Levant even so far as crossing the Euphrates. It was during one of those campaigns that he met an envoy from a people across the “Great Green” or the Mediterranean Sea.

In his annals, he describes his encounter with emissaries from the land of *Tnj*. Accordingly, these men came to the Pharaoh’s court with greeting gifts from their King to King Thutmose III. Among these greeting gifts were a silver jug appearing to be from the Keftiu. The Keftiu were identified by the Egyptians as the Cretans.²⁹⁶ This record is the first to describe contact between the Egyptian royal court and *Tnj*, dating to the 42nd year of Thutmose’s reign (ca. 1437 BC).²⁹⁷ Although the location of *Tnj* has incurred quite some debate, a later text from the temple of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390-1352 BC), designates it as the Egyptian name for a region in the Aegean which includes Mycenae, among others.

Political contact between Egypt and Greece is referenced only in textual sources dating from the reign of Thutmose III to Amenhotep III. Kelder notes that it was during this period where formal gift exchanges occurred between the king of *Tnj* and the king of Egypt.²⁹⁸ Amenhotep III faience plaques at Mycenae indicate that the relationship continued throughout his reign. Despite archaeologists’ bewilderment regarding the purpose and presence of these plaques, new plaque fragments originally discovered in

²⁹⁶ For a discussion of the various possible identifications of the Keftiu see, Wachsmann, Shelley. *Aegeans in the Theban tombs*. Peeters Publishers, 1987.

²⁹⁷ Kelder, “Royal Gift Exchange Between Mycenae and Egypt,” 113:339.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 113:340.

1975, but left untouched in storerooms, are being re-examined.²⁹⁹ The presence of much Mycenaean pottery at El-Amarna will further substantiate the royal connection and indicate that olives and/or olive oil played a part in that connection.

The vast corpus of Mycenaean pottery sherds have been located at the central city, Akhetaten, where the iconoclast King Akhenaten established his rule. Kelder contends, “Mycenaean pottery, then, seems to have been used, to whatever end, in the administrative and ritual heart of Amarna-age Egypt-the central city of Akhetaten...As a consequence, it appears that Mycenaean pottery at Amarna was closely associated with court display.”³⁰⁰ Although Mycenaean pottery has been found prior to the Amarna era, the quantities were scarce and of different nature. Amarna marks the beginning of Mycenaean pottery in the Egyptian record which later was also discovered at various locations throughout Egypt until the close of the 12th century BC. The most common type of Mycenaean pottery found throughout Egypt are stirrup jars, followed by pilgrim flasks. Kelder asserts, “It is generally accepted that these vessels served as containers for a liquid, probably perfumed oil.”

It is necessary to briefly survey the prevalence of olives and olive oil in Mycenae and Egypt. Although the olive grows naturally in various areas around the Mediterranean, including Greece, the date of its accelerated cultivation has been open to debate. Renfrew contends that the olive was first cultivated in the Early Bronze Age in the Aegean.³⁰¹ Other scholars suggest that olive oil production in the Aegean began in the

²⁹⁹ See, J. Phillips and E.H. Cline, "Amenhotep III and Mycenae: New Evidence." In *Autochton: Papers Presented to Oliver Dickinson on the Occasion of His Retirement*. Edited by A. Dakouri-Hild and S. Sherratt, 2005, 317-28. *BAR-IS* 1432. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports.

³⁰⁰ Kelder, “Royal Gift Exchange Between Mycenae and Egypt,” 113:341.

³⁰¹ Colin Renfrew, *The emergence of civilisation: the Cyclades and the Aegean in the third millennium BC* (Oxbow Books, 2011), 287.

Cretan Second Palace period (ca. 1700-1450 BC).³⁰² However, according to a recent investigation, wood charcoal from stratified layers at Akrotiri (Thera) is revealing ecological blueprints of the island of Santorini. Although the island is treeless today, that was not always the case. Asouti notes that the island contained diverse vegetation and that olive cultivation can be traced back to the Early Bronze Age.³⁰³ Despite the open debate regarding the date of the olive's domestication, its use can be discerned from Mycenaen texts (Linear B). Some indicate various purposes for which olive oil had been employed. Shelmerdine provides conclusive evidence that one of its uses involved the production of unguents.³⁰⁴ Many ancient cultures used some type of animal fat, or oil such as olive or sesame oil mixed with aromatic plants, to produce perfumes. Perfumed oil was commonly offered to the gods and used in medicinal and cosmetic treatments.³⁰⁵ A number of these uses have already been seen earlier in this chapter.

The Mycenaeans made their perfumes with olive oil. The jars that held the oil have been called stirrup jars because the handle resembles a stirrup. These unique jars have an off-center spout and a narrow mouth.³⁰⁶ The jars are known to have come in two sizes, a large size suitable for transport or storage with a capacity of 12-14 liters; and a small size suitable for personal use that have also been found as offerings in tombs. The

³⁰² Curtis N Runnels and Julie Hansen, "The Olive in the Prehistoric Aegean: The Evidence for Domestication in the Early Bronze Age," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 5, no. 3 (November 1, 1986): 299–308.

³⁰³ Emmanuel Asouti, "Wood charcoal from Santorini (Thera): new evidence for climate, vegetation and timber imports in the Aegean Bronze Age," *ANTIQUITY* 77, no. 297 (September 2003): 481.

³⁰⁴ Cynthia W. Shelmerdine, *The perfume industry of Mycenaean Pylos* (P. Åströms Förlag, 1985), 17, 31, 107–11, 124.

³⁰⁵ Cynthia W. Shelmerdine in Jack L. Davis and Susan E. Alcock, *the perfumed oil industry in Sandy Pylos: an archaeological history from Nestor to Navarino* (University of Texas Press, 1998), 101.

³⁰⁶ See: Mycenaean Terracotta Stirrup Jar (1300-1190 BC) Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Online: <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/130000801?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=%20&where=Mycenae&pos=8>

latter are the most common type found outside of Greece.³⁰⁷ As a comestible, olives were certainly consumed yet the interest in the Mycenaean texts indicate more of an industrial purpose.³⁰⁸

In its religious use, olive oil was used in the ceremonial preparation of dresses for celebrations at Pylos. There is also strong evidence in the Linear B texts that it was ritually offered to deities. Shelmerdine asserts that some of the tablets are inventory records for storerooms but that many are for religious purposes. Oil is sent to the goddess Potnia as an ointment for robes. For example, note the following inscriptions on the Pylos fragments:³⁰⁹

PY Fr 1226

- .1 to the Lousian field for the gods, sage-scented OIL
- 4.8 liters
- .2 [line empty]

PY Fr 1205

- To the attendants, for anointing OIL 25.6 liters

PY Fr 1225

- .1 *olive oil* to *hupoio* Potnia
- .2 as ointment for robes OIL 9.6 liters

PY Fr 1201

- in all so much RED OIL 406.4+ liters

PY Fr 1203

- cyperus-scented rose-scented RED OIL 44.8 liters

Shelmerdine observes that the mention of oil with textiles on Fr 1225 is especially worth noting. “Homer often refers to cloth as “shining” or fragrant,” and the young men’s chitons on Achilles’ shield in *Iliad* 18 are “shining with olive oil.” It had previously been understood that such phrases were poetic exaggerations whereas the practice of treating cloth with, especially linen with oil will soften fabric and make it shine. This practice occurs in modern times and this Pylos tablet indicates it was by no means unknown to the

³⁰⁷ Davis and Alcock, *Sandy Pylos*, 101.

³⁰⁸ José L. Melana, “Olive Oil and other sorts of Oil in the Mycenaean Tablets,” *Minos*, no. 18 (1983): 123.

³⁰⁹ Davis and Alcock, *Sandy Pylos*, 107–108.

Mycenaean's. In addition, Shelmerdine notes the epics referred to scented clothing as uniquely belonging to the realm of the divine sphere. Moreover, it was the gods who said to have used perfumed oil as a body ointment. During the Mycenaean period, perfume found commonality in the human world and no longer was it found to be chiefly relating to the divine.³¹⁰

In Egypt, olive oil is well known to have been used to fuel temple lamps, which Kelder regards as the reason for the need to continuously import or produce oil. He also contends that a similar need was demanded in Greece, where large quantities of oil were burned as offerings to gods.³¹¹ However, the presence of olives in Egypt is worth tracing.

The climate of Egypt is not conducive to the wild olive. The dry desert conditions do not favor olive growth and Egypt lies outside of the ecological range of the wild olive.³¹² The climate is divided into two provinces: hyperarid and arid. The Mediterranean coast is the arid and endures mild winters, hot summers and an annual rainfall ranging between 20 to 200mm.³¹³ As a result, the origins of olives in Egypt must have come from another region, most likely the Levant. In the Levant, olives have been attested from the Chalcolithic era (3700-3500 BC) onward. The large number of olive stones found at Teleilat Ghassul in the arid Jordan Valley has been considered evidence for olive cultivation under irrigation or brought in from other regions within the country.³¹⁴ In Egypt, the oldest olive remains found were from charred stones dating from

³¹⁰ Shelmerdine, *Ibid.*, 109.

³¹¹ Kelder, "Royal Gift Exchange Between Mycenae and Egypt," 113:343.

³¹² Daniel Zohary and María Hopf, *Domestication of plants in the old world: the origin and spread of cultivated plants in West Asia, Europe, and the Nile Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2000), Map 14.

³¹³ Mahmoud A. Zahran and A. J. Willis, *The Vegetation of Egypt* (Springer, 2008), 7, 347.

³¹⁴ Rafael Frankel, *Wine and oil production in antiquity in Israel and other Mediterranean countries* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 36.

the Thirteenth Dynasty Memphis (1802-1640 BC),³¹⁵ and from the Intermediate period Avaris in the Nile delta.³¹⁶ However, the earliest olive wood identification dates to the New Kingdom era.³¹⁷ Beginning in the New Kingdom and thereafter, stones, wood, and leaves have been found regularly.³¹⁸ Newton records, “The leaves were used in garlands found in tombs from the New Kingdom, especially in the Theban area...and the wood for the manufacture of coffins.”³¹⁹ The olive trade industry in the Eastern Mediterranean has been demonstrated by the find of thousands of olives and olive stones from a late fourteenth century BC shipwreck at Ulu Burun. This site which is located off the southern coast of Turkey yielded a deposit of more than 2300 stones in a Canaanite jar.³²⁰ Newton adds that “Iconographic and textual evidence also point toward the cultivation of the olive tree in Egypt during the New Kingdom.”³²¹ In addition, Haldane notes that these texts also indicate that temples and the royal house were the exclusive recipients of this produce.³²² Serpico and White posit the two main regions for olive cultivation to be near

³¹⁵ Mary Anne Murray in Paul T. Nicholson and Ian Shaw, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 610.

³¹⁶ Claire Newton, Jean-Frédéric Terral, and Sarah Ivorra, “The Egyptian olive (*Olea europaea* subsp. *europaea*) in the later first millennium BC: origins and history using the morphometric analysis of olive stones,” *Antiquity* 80, no. 308 (June 2006): 407.

³¹⁷ Asensi Amorós in Katharina Neumann, *Food, fuel and fields: progress in African archaeobotany* (Heinrich-Barth-Institut, 2003), 177–86.

³¹⁸ Christian de Vartavan and Victoria Asensi Amorós, *Codex of ancient Egyptian plant remains* (Triade Exploration, 1997), 183–6.

³¹⁹ Newton, Terral, and Ivorra, “The Egyptian olive (*Olea europaea* subsp. *europaea*) in the later first millennium BC,” *ANTIQUITY* 80 (2006):407.

³²⁰ Cheryl W. Haldane, “Direct Evidence for Organic Cargoes in the Late Bronze Age,” *World Archaeology* 24, no. 3 (1993): 352.

³²¹ Newton, Terral, and Ivorra, “The Egyptian olive (*Olea europaea* subsp. *europaea*) in the later first millennium BC,” *ANTIQUITY* 80 (2006):407.

³²² Haldane, “Direct Evidence for Organic Cargoes in the Late Bronze Age,” 24:348–60.

Memphis, the Fayum and Thebes.³²³ In addition a document dating to the third century BC indicates a variety of olive trees cultivated during Ptolemaic reign. Newton records that the owner of an estate in the Fayum, Apollonios, “recommends grafting of olives to his employee Zenon, in order to introduce Greek varieties to replace the Egyptian ones (*P. Cairo Zen.* 59184). By the time Pliny wrote *Natural History* in the first century A.D., fifteen varieties are recorded of which five are suitable for pickling, including an Egyptian one.³²⁴

Kelder asserts that the olive was seldom used or imported prior to the New Kingdom. He further contends that although the olive is attested in the early New Kingdom, its prevalence is not noticeable in the Egyptian record until the reign of Akhenaten (ca. 1352-1336 BC).³²⁵ This is of particular importance to this study because it not only establishes the prevalence of the olive tree in the Egyptian record but also its use in religious worship at a time not distant from its advent into Israelite tabernacle worship.

On the walls of the great temple of Aten are various pictorial carvings that depict royal members of the Egyptian court making offerings to Aten. On one limestone wall, King Akhenaten is shown offering a lush olive branch bearing olives to his god. Further, an olive tree is found on an Amarna mural painting. Olive branches, or leaves, were also found in the coffin of Akhenaten’s son and successor Tutankhamen.³²⁶ One wreath of

³²³ Margaret Serpico and R. White, “Oil, fat and wax,” in Nicholson and Shaw, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology*, 401.

³²⁴ Pliny, *Natural History*, XV: 15–7.

³²⁵ Kelder, “Royal Gift Exchange Between Mycenae and Egypt,” 113:343.

³²⁶ Howard Carter, *The Tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amen: Discovered by the Late Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 191. For the most detailed analysis of the flora found in the tomb and not detailed by Carter, see: De Vartavan, Christian. “Contaminated Plant-foods from the Tomb of Tutankhamun: A New Interpretive System.” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 17, no. 5 (1990): 473–94.

olive leaves was found on the sarcophagus and several floral collars were found in the tomb.³²⁷

In addition to these findings, Pendlebury notes that an olive wreath was also found in a house in the central city, El-Amarna.³²⁸ Moreover Kelder concludes on account of a New Kingdom relief, that this “represents the first depiction of an olive tree and olives in ancient Egypt, and because Mycenaean pottery appears for the first time in large quantities in the same city, there is reason to consider the olives offered to Aten as arriving from the Mycenaean world.”³²⁹ He further adds that the presence of olives and oil in Mycenaean pottery gives it a royal status. The presence of olive stones at the workmen’s village at El-Amarna³³⁰ may also establish it in a royal context since this is where work on the final resting place of the King took place. Kelder asserts, “the presence of olive twigs in the funerary bouquets on Tutankhamen’s sarcophagus

³²⁷ See: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Online: <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/100000253?img=1>. “In this fragment only the beautifully carved left hand of Akhenaten remains, holding a heavily laden branch of olives that appears to be caressed by the hands of the sun's rays. The entire scene would have shown the king standing directly beneath the sun disk, facing what appears to be the olive tree from which he may have cut the branch. The upper boughs of the tree are to the right along the lower edge of the block. The text in the upper right has been intentionally destroyed, leaving only a few traces of the hieroglyphs.” See also, Floral collars from Tutankhamen’s embalming cache, New Kingdom, Dynasty 18 (ca. 1336-1327 BC) Tomb KV54, Valley of the Kings. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Online: <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/09.184.214-216>

³²⁸ John Pendlebury, *The City of Akhenaten: Part III. The central city and the official quarters.* The excavations at Tell el-Amarna during the seasons 1926-1927 and 1931-1936, by J. D. S. Pendlebury. With chapters and contributions by J. Černý, H. W. Fairman, H. Frankfort, Mrs. L. Murray Thriepland, Mrs. Julia Samson... (Egypt exploration society, 1951), 118, pl.78.

³²⁹ Kelder, “Royal Gift Exchange Between Mycenae and Egypt,” 113:344.

³³⁰ Barry J. Kemp and Egypt Exploration Society, *Amarna reports* (Egypt Exploration Society, 1985), 185.

demonstrate that olives were important in Amarna age royal display.”³³¹ The findings at the site of El-Amarna offer strong and convincing evidence that the olive in Egypt was well established from this period forward. Although the Egyptians knew of the fruit prior to Amarna, it demonstrates that the olive was “from that point onward part of the Egyptian conceptual world-in iconography, ritual, and daily life.”³³²

Additional archaeological evidence supporting the use of olives in diplomatic contexts is found in the southern Levant. Ekron, today known as Tel Miqne, was a city known for its large-scale production of olive oil. Yet the annual yield of oil at Ekron was only 5% of what Israel exports today and exceeded the production in Ancient Ugarit during the 14th cent. BC. Located about 22 miles southwest of Jerusalem, Ekron was part of the *Pentapolis*, one of the five major cities of the Philistines.³³³ Its importance as a Philistine capital is revealed in the Biblical book of Joshua,

²This is the land that yet remains: all the regions of the Philistines, and all those of the Geshurites ³(from the Shihor, which is east of Egypt, northward to the boundary of Ekron, it is counted as Canaanite; there are five rulers of the Philistines, those of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron), and those of the Avvim. (Jos 13:2-3 ESV)

The city was also the site of well known events in Israel’s history which took place during the Iron I period. 1 Samuel 5 records the account of the Philistines capturing the ark and bringing it to Ekron. Chapter 17 records the armies of Israel pursuing the Philistines as far as Gath after David slew the giant Goliath. Further, the

³³¹ Kelder, “Royal Gift Exchange Between Mycenae and Egypt,” 113:344.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Hoffner, “Oil in Hittite Texts,” 58:110.

prophets spoke against the city as evil and warned of the Lord's coming wrath and of the looming destruction.³³⁴

During the 7th century BC, Ekron became an Assyrian vassal state and it was during this time that it enjoyed political and economic prosperity. The affluence of the city was primarily related to its flourishing olive oil industry. Gitin and Dothan assert, "Phenomenal physical and economic growth was the dominant feature of the strata IB and IC cities, and the olive oil industry was the chief stimulus."³³⁵ By the close of the 8th century BC, Syria-Palestine was brought under the Assyrian Empire and the coastal areas of Canaan became vassal states as well.³³⁶ Kim asserts that especially by the 7th century BC, the Philistine cities thrived under Assyrian rule. Gaza became a major trade center, Ashdod a nucleus for pottery production, Ashkelon the center of Philistine oil and wine export. During this era, Ekron grew eight times greater than it was in the previous century and was established as a center of 85 acres for the olive oil industry. Excavations have uncovered 115 olive oil installation units dating to the 7th century BC, 4.6 times more than what have been discovered from the 8th century BC. Kim notes that these units could produce nearly 1,000 tons of olive oil annually, requiring 48,000 storage vessels and at least 12,000 acres of olive groves. In addition Eitam asserts that at least 2,000 laborers would have been necessary to support the industry.³³⁷

³³⁴ See Am 1:8; Jer 25:20; Zeph 2:4; Zech 9:5,7; 2 Kgs 1:2-16.

³³⁵ Gitin and Dothan, "The Rise and Fall of Ekron of the Philistines," 50:215.

³³⁶ Young Jin Kim, "A Historical Investigation of Ekron, the Philistine City.," 20:137.

³³⁷ Eitam, *Olive oil in antiquity*, 48–49.

3.16.2 *Synthesis*

Formal gifts were exchanged between Egypt and the Greek Kingdom of Mycenae during the New Kingdom era involving olives and olive oil. At Amarna, the first indication of Mycenaean pottery in Egypt was discovered to be primarily stirrup jars for holding oil. Olive oil served as the base of Mycenaean perfumes and could also be found in offering jars located in tombs. At Pylos, the oil was used in ceremonial and religious ritual, both in anointing clothing and also as an offering to deities. In Egypt, olive oil was employed in fueling temple lamps and in Greece large quantities were burned as offerings to the gods. The Egyptian evidence indicates the olives and olive oil were exclusively reserved for royalty and the temples. Pictorial carvings of olive branches offered to Aten and an olive wreath found in Tutankhamen's tomb indicate its religious and royal function by the New Kingdom era. Though the southern Levant (Ekron) was well known for its olive industry, the importation of olives and oil into Egypt from Mycenae is supported by the current textual record.

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OLIVE TREE

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is comprised of selected expositions of those portions of the Hebrew Scriptures which exhibit substantial material reflecting the importance of olive oil or olive trees. Though all occurrences are examined in the Appendix, primary attention is given to Genesis 8:1-14, Exodus 27:20, Judges 9:7-21, 1 Kings 6:31-33, Psalm 52:7-8, and Zechariah 4:1-14. Miscellaneous but relevant material will follow.

4.2 Genesis 8: Flood Narrative

He waited seven more days and then sent out the dove again from the ark. When the dove returned to him in the evening, there was a freshly plucked olive leaf in its beak. (Gen 8:11, NIV)

The first attestation of the olive tree in the Hebrew Scriptures is found in the very beginning during the lifetime of Noah in Genesis 8. The historical account of the flood narrative begins in Genesis 6:9 with the introduction of the תָּוִלְדַת. After indicating that the following account will describe the generations of Noah, the author begins by qualifying Noah as a אֵישׁ צַדִּיק (lit. a righteous man), blameless in his ways.³³⁸ The reader then begins the narrative with the confidence that Noah followed the true God and lived according to His ways and begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. It is necessary to recognize that this account depicts God's cataclysmic judgment upon the earth as a result of sinful rebellion. Noah has already been set apart from the crooked generation in which he resisted to succumb to the cultural morays of the day. After God

³³⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, and Cathi J. Fredricks. *Genesis: A Commentary*. First edition. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2001), 123.

judges the world through a destructive flood, He establishes a new order of creation, beginning with a righteous man and his sons.

4.2.1 Genesis 8:1-5

But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided. 2 Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained; 3 and the water receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased. 4 In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. 5 The water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible. (NASB)

These verses begin the second half of the flood story and represent a turning point in the course of the narrative. The author writes, “God remembered Noah.” Childs makes the apt observation that the Hebrew word “remembered” or זיכר references the covenant.³³⁹ זיכר is used frequently with what is remembered and in this context what is remembered is the fulfilling of the covenant promises. “God’s remembering always implies his movement toward the object...the essence of God’s remembering lies in his acting toward someone because of a previous commitment.”³⁴⁰ For example, God remembered Abraham after the destruction of Sodom (19:29); he remembered Rachel (30:22), and he remembered the covenant made in Genesis 9:15. In agreement with Child’s, the author stresses the association of זיכר with Yahweh’s covenants, more specifically Yahweh’s covenant faithfulness. Its employment points the reader back to a

³³⁹ Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and tradition in Israel*. (SCM Press, 1962), 34.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 34.

promise already made. This is perhaps most evident in Zechariah's prophetic ministry whose name not only means "Yahweh remembers," but whose ministry encouraged his covenant people that they would be restored and their temple rebuilt despite their exile.

Wenham asserts that the word יִזְכֶּרְוּ probably is more closely related to the idea of "thinking about" rather than to a concept of recalling something.³⁴¹ This is the first occurrence of "Yahweh remembering" someone in the Hebrew Scriptures, and when he does, he acts to save. In verse two (*Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained*), the author indicates that the floodgates of the heavens were closed, and God divinely intervenes to reestablish the beginning of order and life on earth. This scene closely corresponds to the previous one in that the water is drawn to the forefront of the story as the main actor. The same period of time (150 days) is mentioned again, yet instead of continuing in destructive dominion of the flood, Yahweh remembers Noah. A new hope begins with the promise on the horizon, symbolized by the olive tree. A look at some of the vocabulary may aide in the interpretation of the context the olive branch first appears. Verse two carries with it a couple of words that have their cognates in other ANE sources. The verb סַכֵּר (seal, block) is frequently found in Akkadian (*sekeru*) for blocking waters. The Hebrew נָלַא (restrain) is cognate with Akkadian *kalu* found in a similar context of the Gilgamesh Epic (11:31).³⁴² Five months after the flood began the ark comes to its final resting place.

³⁴¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis*. (Word Biblical Commentary v. 1-2; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 184.

³⁴² Ibid., 184.

Wenham notes that in verse 4, the Hebrew verb translated “rested” or (נִשְׁתַּחֲוֵד) forms a paronomastic allusion to Noah’s name. These words point the reader to a context in which the olive tree first appears, which is preceded by a relenting of Yahweh’s judgment and a withholding or restraint of his anger as evidenced in the terms chosen by the author.

4.2.2 Genesis 8:6-14

Then it came about at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made; 7 and he sent out a raven, and it flew here and there until the water was dried up from the earth. 8 Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land; 9 but the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, so she returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth. Then he put out his hand and took her, and brought her into the ark to himself. 10 So he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark. 11 The dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth. 12 Then he waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; but she did not return to him again.

13 Now it came about in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first of the month, the water was dried up from the earth. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up. 14 In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. (NASB)

In this section, the following three events can be divided as follows:

- 8:6-7 Noah opens the window and dispatches the raven
- 8:8-12 The dove makes three journeys, the second with an olive leaf
- 8:13-14 Noah sees the earth is dry

The first and last section share commonalities, each beginning with the introduction of a temporal clause followed by וַיַּהֲיוֹן and by a clear indication that Noah is uncovering part of the ark, and both end with an indication that the waters are drying up from the earth. The central section of this mini-plot is focused on the three journeys of the dove. Noah is interested in discovering whether or not the earth is dry and if the floodwaters have

receded.³⁴³ The raven section is characterized by a failed attempt, bringing back no evidence of change on the earth. However the dove brings back promising evidence, in a theologically and symbolically charged image of the olive branch. More will be said about the significance of the olive branch in the next section.

The use of the first bird, the raven, carries with it strong symbolism as well. The raven is not only a dark bird but also unclean according to Mosaic law (Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14). The second bird, the dove, is also symbolically significant. The dove is a brilliant white bird, and a clean animal used in ceremonial sacrifice (Lev 1:14; 12:6). Though not yet developed in Noah's narrative, the dove is also a symbol of Yahweh's people, Israel (Hos 7:11; 11:11).³⁴⁴ It would not be surprising then, to find an olive branch in the beak of a dove, which will be seen later to symbolize Yahweh's chosen people.³⁴⁵ In this context, the dove may be symbolically related to Noah as a clean one among the unclean.

4.2.3 *Synthesis*

The significance of the freshly plucked olive branch should not be overlooked, as it represents new beginnings for God's covenant people symbolized both by the dove and the olive branch. The theological significance that emerges in the earliest appearance of the olive branch communicates to the reader that the tree is a representative sign of both Yahweh's faithfulness to Noah in reestablishing the new world, and a foreshadowing of the promise of the land his faithful people will inherit. Though it has yet to be developed, the tree will be a sign of covenant prosperity and blessing that Noah's descendants will receive.

³⁴³ Von Rad maintains that the use of birds as a maritime compass was practiced in ancient times. See Rad, Gerhard Von. *Genesis: A Commentary*. (Westminster John Knox Press, 1973), 121.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 186.

³⁴⁵ See Rom 11:11-24.

4.3 Olive Oil in Exodus 27:20

4.3.1 Olive Oil in the Sanctuary

Among the Israelites, symbolism served to represent and visually identify the worship of the true God by his chosen people. Stuart keenly recognizes that everything associated with worship “had to partake of proper symbolism, so that the presence of God, the purity of God, the superiority of God, and the nature of his salvation could be communicated visually and, at least sometimes, even tacitly, to his people.”³⁴⁶ The seven feasts of Israel each bear witness to the importance of symbolism. The furnishings of the tabernacle with their unique requirements together with those who facilitated the worship indicate that they were to reflect the “only intelligent God in his covenant relationship to his specially chosen people.”³⁴⁷ The tabernacle furnishings symbolize the presence of Yahweh among his covenant people. It is therefore not an overstatement to say those objects and their details are unique and intrinsically Yahwistic. This is not to say that similarities do not exist among other ANE temples, but that Israel, expressing itself through the conventions of its time did have distinctives and those should not be overlooked.

The book of Exodus records the first use of olive oil in priestly temple activity. After being delivered by God “out of the house of slavery” in Egypt, Moses had led the Israelites to Mount Sinai. It was on the top of this mountain where he entered into a cloud and received instruction from God for forty days and forty nights. Jacob describes this mysterious encounter in the following way: He begins by noting that Moses ascended into the presence of God, but remained on earth. Moses was not in heaven but was firmly planted on the earth. However, the text is clear that he stood in the presence of God. He

³⁴⁶ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus, The New American Commentary* (B&H, 2006), 2:562.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

took on the form of a heavenly servant before God’s throne, like the angels, and he consumed neither bread nor water. The instruction he received was intended to inform him of all of God’s demands and purposes that he would deliver to the Israelites. Here Moses would also receive the stone tablets and the detailed instructions for the tabernacle that was to be built. Moses finally descends from the mountain at the sin of idolatry when Israel fashioned a golden calf to worship.³⁴⁸

The first indication of the use of olive oil in tabernacle/sanctuary worship is hinted at in Exodus 25:6 but is later explained in 27:20. Chapter 25:1-7 introduces the materials to be used in tabernacle worship and are grouped according to type. The first mentioned included the metals (v.3), then the fabrics (v.4), then the skins and wood (v.5), followed by olive oil for the lighting, and spices for the anointing olive oil and incense (v.6). The gemstones for the ephod and breastpiece of the high priest conclude the section (v.7). The olive oil, as will be seen in 27:20, was to be of the highest caliber, and used to fuel the lamps of the tabernacle lampstand. It was continually poured into the base of the lampstand and was the only oil used in priestly anointing together with fragrant spices (30:22). Stuart notes that the incense was compounded into a formula especially for tabernacle use from the donated ingredients.³⁴⁹

The God-ordained instructions given to Moses for the building of the sanctuary as well as the installation of the priests are given an extraordinary amount of space in the Torah. Jacob asserts that, “this was equally true of the details of its transportation, erection and protection during the desert wanderings. Thirteen of the forty chapters of Exodus as well as substantial sections of Leviticus and Numbers have been devoted to it.”³⁵⁰ Included in the instructions is the command to supply the light with freshly pressed

³⁴⁸ Benno Jacob, *The second book of the Bible: Exodus* (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1992), 750.

³⁴⁹ Stuart, *Exodus, The New American Commentary*, 2:564.

³⁵⁰ Jacob, *The second book of the Bible*, 758.

olive oil. These were priestly instructions given specifically for Aaron and his sons. The text of Exodus 27:20-21 reads as follows:

וְאַתָּה תִּצְוֹ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחُו אֲלֵיכֶם שֶׁמֶן זִית וְזֶה כְּתִית לְמַאוֹר לְהֻעָלָת נֵר תְּמִיד
בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד מְחוֹז לְפִרְכָּת אֲשֶׁר עַל הַעֲדָת יָעַרְךָ אֶתְךָ אַהֲרֹן וּבְנֵיו מִעָרְבָּד עַד בְּקָר לְפָנֶיךָ
יְהוָה חֲקַת עוֹלָם לְדָرְתָּם
מִאֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

You shall charge the sons of Israel, that they bring you clear oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually. In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the LORD; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel. (27:20-21)

In this text the usual term for olive oil, **שמן**, is qualified by **זית**. These specific instructions exclude any other oil from use in the tabernacle lampstand. Verse 20 begins with the pronoun, **וְאַתָּה** (you.) Except when it occurs in contrast to another person, **וְאַתָּה** indicates the imperative or the imperative future.³⁵¹ Jacob asserts that **וְאַתָּה** introduces important supplementary information here, and represents a new beginning. The fruit of the olive tree is singled out and given prominence among other oil producing plants in the ancient Near East. The importance is emphasized when observing the location of Moses receiving the instructions for olive oil came at a place where the tree was not native. As we will see later, the olive tree will be central to Zechariah's vision of the golden lampstand and golden olive oil. Though the descriptions of the lampstands differ in Exodus 25 and Zechariah 4, the object in view is the same-the golden lampstand in the sanctuary which burns continually with olive oil and which may resemble an olive tree.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 809.

Durham describes the lampstand as a symbol of the immediate presence of Yahweh, present and active among his people.³⁵²

On the left side, opposite the table for the bread of the presence stands the lampstand, which is described in a way making interpretation difficult. The Midrash records Moses' own difficulty in understanding God's verbal instructions for its form until shown an example.³⁵³ The dimensions of the lampstand in Exodus 25:31-40 are not recorded in full, but the span does not exceed one meter. The weight is stated at less than a talent but whether it is solid or hollow is not stated. Josephus records that the tabernacle lampstand was hollow and weighed 100 minas. However, he may have been describing the lampstand contemporary to his day.³⁵⁴ One potentially useful source of information concerning the lampstand has come from archaeological findings. Though no golden lampstands have emerged, scholars have found many seven spouted saucer lamps from multiple periods throughout Syria-Palestine.³⁵⁵ The closest parallel comes from the tomb of Tutankhamen which included an alabaster lamp with three Lotus blossom cups which could have had floating wicks.³⁵⁶

The symbolism of the lampstand is necessary to assess in light of its potential meaning and association with the olive tree. Meyers contends that the lampstand represents a sacred tree.³⁵⁷ Propp agrees stating, "It is undeniable that, as generally

³⁵² John I. Durham. *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 3, Exodus.* (Waco, Texas: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 364-65.

³⁵³ Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews.* (2nd ed.; The Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 3.160, 219.

³⁵⁴ See Josephus *Antiquities.* 3.114.

³⁵⁵ William H.C. Propp, *Exodus 19-40.* (1St Edition.; Yale University Press, 2006), 509.

³⁵⁶ See Mannfred Görg, "Zur Dekoration des Leuchters," *BN*, no. 15 (1981): 21–29.

³⁵⁷ Carol L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah.* ASORDS 2 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), 95–164.

constructed, the lampstand recalls to our minds a tree...and stresses the special prominence of the six-branched tree motif in Late Bronze II art.”³⁵⁸ The most obvious connection then, would be to the olive tree since the lampstand burns only pure olive oil and is associated with the olive tree in Zechariah’s vision of the lampstand. Propp also maintains that “it is undeniable that the tree is a pregnant symbol of life and divinity throughout ancient Near Eastern literature and iconography, including the Bible...by this approach the lampstand is the ‘Tree of Life.’”³⁵⁹ Though its association as the tree of life found in the biblical material is not supported, its association with an olive tree could be.

Ameisenowa maintains that the tree of life is a symbol that has been unmatched in its prominence among ancient cultures. “There is scarcely any symbol more ancient or more widely distributed than that of the cosmic tree of life with its promise of immortality and everlasting youth.”³⁶⁰ He further adds that apart from the cross of Christ which he views as an embodiment of the tree of life, no other symbol has received as much scholarly attention.³⁶¹ After reviewing a plethora of material written on the tree of life over the past seventeen years, Ameisenowa comes to an interesting conclusion concerning the tree of life and its relation to the lampstand. He contends that the tree of life was a premiere religious symbol in ANE civilizations but that it had lost its significance during the Greco-Roman era. At this time, it had degenerated into a mere palm or candelabra ornament. He further argues, “Eventually it was expelled by the Christian cross, or rather it assumed this form among the Christians, and among the peoples of Islam it degenerated into ornament”³⁶² The association of the tree of life

³⁵⁸ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 511.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 511.

³⁶⁰ Zofja Ameisenowa and William. F. Mainland, “The Tree of Life in Jewish Iconography,” *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 2, no. 4 (April 1, 1939): 326.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 326.

³⁶² Ibid., 327.

assuming the form of the Christian cross is unwarranted though the absence in iconography is noted.

Ameisenowa's drawing is of particular interest to this study of the olive tree as it relates to the lampstand. This drawing depicts the tree of life (400 x 300 mm) and is composed of micrographic letters of the Masoretic type. The picture can be found on fol. I 18v of the Hebrew Bible of 1298³⁶³, which has been suggested to be German in origin. The picture includes a seven-branched olive tree, standing as the lampstand, fusing together images from Zechariah's vision in 4:1-14. The branches of the lampstand are sprouting leaves and bearing olives. Flanking each side of the olive tree is a man. To the right is a Jewish man wearing a hat, and gathering olives. The man on the left is pressing out the oil and a third man is seen collecting the oil in a round receptacle. Ameisenowa observes the illustration as not representing a doctrine regarding the source of the light although his concluding remark seems to suggest it does, "It is a tradition known to the apocalyptic writers and continued in the Talmud, according to which the Tree of Life gave not only fruit but also oil which is used by the righteous in after-life and gives them immortality."³⁶⁴ The verses discussed previously in the Pentateuch have already shown support for these associations. Perhaps the tradition itself promulgated a doctrine even if not systematically and associating righteousness and eternality with the olive oil.

³⁶³ Ibid., 338

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 339.

4.3.2 *Synthesis*

Genesis 8 provides the first glimpse into the theological meaning of the olive tree as a symbol of covenant faithfulness and the promise of the land that would be inherited. Contrary to popular associations of the olive branch as a symbol of peace, Genesis makes no indication this is implied in the meaning unless one were to interpret the receding of the floodwaters as symbolic of peace as well. More likely, in addition to what was stated above it serves as a signpost of a brighter future that awaits Yahweh's people. Exodus goes further and the olive symbolism is focused on the worship of Yahweh and is strictly priestly. The association that emerges is one of Levitical purity, though more specifically is reflective of the purity of Yahweh and his desire for worship in his presence to be exceptionally pure as well.

4.4 Olive Tree in Judges 9:7-21

4.4.1 *General Portrayal*

Judges 9 presents a unique illustration of the olive tree in the context of an allegorical story where the olive tree is associated with royal status. Three horticultural characters are involved: the olive tree, fig tree, and vine. Tatu recognizes the work of Bullinger who argues that the three trees mentioned in this fable appear in three different New Testament books intentionally.³⁶⁵ Some have argued they represent the vocation of service of the people of God and their leaders.³⁶⁶ Because of its peculiarity, the historical

³⁶⁵ See: Silviu Tatu, "Jotham's fable and the crux interpretum in Judges ix," *Vetus Testamentum* 56, no. 1 (2006): 105.; See also Ethelbert W. Bullinger, *The Fig, the Olive, and the Vine: An Epitome of Israel's History with special references to the dispensational position of St. John's Gospel.* (London, 1900).

³⁶⁶ John Lyle Story, "Jothams Fable: A People and Leadership Called to Serve (Judges 8:22-9:57)." *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 2, no. 2 (2009): 30.

context will be briefly investigated to aide in the interpretation before drawing any theological conclusions. The text of Judges 9:7-21 reads,

7 Now when they told Jotham, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted his voice and called out. Thus he said to them, “Listen to me, O men of Shechem, that God may listen to you. 8 Once the trees went forth to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, ‘Reign over us!’ 9 But the olive tree said to them, ‘Shall I leave my fatness with which God and men are honored, and go to wave over the trees?’ 10 Then the trees said to the fig tree, ‘You come, reign over us!’ 11 But the fig tree said to them, ‘Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to wave over the trees?’ 12 Then the trees said to the vine, ‘You come, reign over us!’ 13 But the vine said to them, ‘Shall I leave my new wine, which cheers God and men, and go to wave over the trees?’ 14 Finally all the trees said to the bramble, ‘You come, reign over us!’ 15 The bramble said to the trees, ‘If in truth you are anointing me as king over you, come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, may fire come out from the bramble and consume the cedars of Lebanon.’

16 “Now therefore, if you have dealt in truth and integrity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have dealt with him as he deserved— 17 for my father fought for you and risked his life and delivered you from the hand of Midian; 18 but you have risen against my father’s house today and have killed his sons, seventy men, on one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maid servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your relative— 19 if then you have dealt in truth and integrity with Jerubbaal and his house this day, rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. 20 But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and consume the men of Shechem and Beth-millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem and from Beth-millo, and consume Abimelech.” 21 Then Jotham escaped and fled, and went to Beer and remained there because of Abimelech his brother. (Judg 9:7-21 NASB)

Jotham's fable, as it is commonly called, occurs fairly early in chapter nine and is another key text offering insight into the association of olive trees and royalty in Israel.

Fables are unique in the Hebrew Scriptures and this one emphasizes Israelite kingship to which the olive tree takes center stage. The ambiguity surrounding the meaning of the fable, especially in using an olive tree as a key character is expressed well by Tatu. Tatu comments on the comparison of the olive tree in Judges 9 to the olive trees in Paul's letter to the Romans. The similarity suggested by some is in the apparent "temporary

covenantal shift from Israel to the Church and back again.”³⁶⁷ In agreement with Tatu, such a connection requires more evidence.³⁶⁸ The ambiguity surrounding the meaning of these trees remains a challenge for interpreters.³⁶⁹

4.4.2 *The Historical Context*

The Abimelech narrative is usually thought to be an attachment to the Gideon narrative,³⁷⁰ though Way contends that viewing it as merely a sequel to the Gideon story ignores some of the literary features that suggests more is at hand. Way’s observations are compelling in that he suggests that the Abimelech narrative should be viewed as the first account in the second parallel panel (or triad of stories) of the body of the book.³⁷¹ Way recognizes a clear ring pattern throughout the book of Judges, and following this arrangement, the Abimelech story is rhetorically parallel with the accounts of Deborah and Barak in Judges four and five. He also recognizes recurring themes that are common to the parallel accounts, listed as follows:

- (1) Both stories have a northern geographical orientation (note that Shechem is on the border of Ephraim/Manasseh); (2) resolution is achieved by the heroic efforts of a woman independently killing the villain by a blow to his head with an unconventional weapon (4:21; 5:26; 9:53); (3) both stories conspicuously omit reference to a human judge/deliverer so that God’s role is elevated; and (4) both stories integrate poetic quotations (song and fable respectively in 5:1-31 and 9:8-15) with the events of the prose narratives. Like the literary function of Jotham’s

³⁶⁷ More on the olive trees of Romans 11 will be treated in chapter 5.

³⁶⁸ For a comparison of the two olive trees in Romans 11 and the two olive trees of Zechariah 4, see section titled, 1st century rabbinic midrash on the olive tree.

³⁶⁹ Silviu Tatu, “Jotham’s fable and the crux interpretum in Judges ix,” *Vetus Testamentum* 56, no. 1 (2006): 105.

³⁷⁰ Trent Butler, *Judges*. (Word Biblical Commentary; Thomas Nelson, 2006), 233.

³⁷¹ Kenneth C. Way, *Teach the Text: Judges*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker, Forthcoming), 8:33–9:57. See also Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges*. (Reprint edition. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012).

fable in the narrative which follows about Abimelech, the song of Deborah/Barak (chapter 5) is complimentary to the previous narrative account (chapter 4). In addition to these common themes, there are a number of contrasting themes in these parallel passages.³⁷²

Abimelech's narrative illustrates the fall of Israelite leadership. Way observes as a prominent theme, "Israel's worship of Baal-Berith and Abimelech's three year oppression is followed by God's retribution on both Abimelech and the Shechemites for their violence against Gideon's house."³⁷³ At this point in Israel's history, they are experiencing judgment for transgressing the Mosaic covenant by worshiping Canaanite gods. Israel had turned her back on Gideon by murdering his heirs, and Abimilech's attempt to rule through tyranny is oppressing the nation. Abimelech, whose name means "my father is king" would turn out to be all that his father was and even worse.

At an opportune time Abimelech gave himself the authority that his father seemingly refused and mended the rivalry between the Canaanite clan of his mother's side in Shechem and the Ephraimite clan of Joash of his father's side. After murdering all of his father's male descendants, he looked to establish himself on the throne. It is at this point when Jotham approaches Abimelech. Jotham, whose name means "the Lord is perfect/honest" was the only surviving descendant. He was the youngest of Jerubbaal's sons and managed to successfully hide from Abimelech's serial murder.³⁷⁴ After mustering enough courage to confront Abimelech and the crowds at Shechem, he

³⁷² Kenneth Way, *Teach the Text: Judges*. Ibid., 8:33-9:57.

³⁷³ Ibid., 8:33-9:57.

³⁷⁴ Daniel I. Block, *The New American Commentary: Volume 6 - Judges-Ruth*. (ed. Kenneth A. Mathews and David S. Dockery; Holman Reference, 1999), 315.

positions himself on top of Mount Gerizim and delivers his message. The focus now shifts to Jotham in verses 7-21.

4.4.3 *Jotham's Fable*

Jotham ascends Mount Gerazim probably because he knows he would be killed if he entered Shechem. Because he has no political power or authority he presents his speech with a powerful rhetorical device, in the manner of a fable.³⁷⁵ Two sections are apparent in this passage: verses 8-15 comprise the fable itself and verses 16-20 provide for its interpretation. Block makes a keen observation in noting that,

In function and content Jotham's speech parallels that of the prophet in 6:7-10. In the former the prophet had brought a lawsuit against the people of Israel in the name of Yahweh. Here Jotham brings a lawsuit against the lords of Shechem in the name of his father Jerubbaal. Covenant language favors both.³⁷⁶

The fable begins with a laconic statement,

הלוֹךְ הַלְכָו הָעָצִים לְמִשְׁחָה עַלְיָהֶם מֶלֶךְ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְזִיתָ (מֶלֶכה)

“Once the trees went forth to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, ‘Reign over us!’” (NASB)

During a royal coronation, the rite of anointing an Israelite king involved an authorized person pouring sacred olive oil over the head of the one selected to rule. Block states that the course of the tree's search occurs in four stages while they approach plant to plant to seek a leader for themselves (the Shechemites). It should be emphasized that the first of trees approached is the olive tree (**זִית**). What follows is an interesting statement where the olive tree declines the offer on the grounds that it would have to discontinue its sacred and religious duty to provide oil “by which gods and humans are honored (Judg 9:9).”

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 315.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 315.

ויאמר להם היזת החדלתי את דשני אשר بي יכבד אלהים ואנשים והלבתי לנוע על העצים

“But the olive tree said to them, ‘Shall I leave my fatness with which God and men are honored, and go to wave over the trees?’” (NASB)

The word translated “fatness” is from **דשׁן**, which functions as synonym for the most common word used for olive oil, **שמן**. Block rightly observes the value of olive oil to be the most desirable of all the agricultural products in antiquity. “In a context involving an invitation to kingship, the olive, appropriately cites its ceremonial value. The olive would rather honor others than be narcissistically anointed with its own oil.”³⁷⁷ He cites its value for cooking, medicinal purposes, for lubrication, as a leather softener, for fueling lamps, making perfumes, and its use in sacred rituals as a sacrificial offering and in anointing ceremonies as support for its selection.

4.4.4 *Synthesis*

The subject of which gods and men are honored by olive oil is of particular interest to this study and has been demonstrated to be consistent with a number of ANE deities. Further, the Mount of Olives has been cited as a place “where God was worshiped” (2 Sam. 15:32; Ezek. 11:23; Zech. 14:4). It was on this mountain where King Solomon had built places of worship for the Moabite and Ammonite gods Chemosh and Milkom.³⁷⁸ This is an area of study that has received little scholarly attention, and

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 319.

³⁷⁸ See 1 Kgs. 11:7; 2 Kgs. 23:13. Perhaps a long standing tradition had already existed on this hill.

although not directly expounded upon in this study, might be beneficial to understanding the olive tree's response. Nevertheless, the theological significance that can be drawn from Judges 9:7-21 is in the affirmation of the olive tree as having both divine and practical value. Its associations in this text are ascribed to the place of royalty and to the realm of deity.

4.5 1 Kings 6 and the New Temple

4.5.1 *Symbolism and Theology*

1 Kings 6 records the account of King Solomon's construction of what would become the new Israelite temple. The symbolism and association of Jerusalem with the temple structure cannot be separated. Psalm 48:2 declares this as "the city of the great king." Monson describes the relationship of both the temple and Jerusalem as occupying the place of reminder that God is sovereign, Jerusalem is where he is worshipped, and that the functioning of the temple is in direct proportion to Israel's spiritual health.³⁷⁹

The description of Solomon's temple has been found to be comparable to descriptions of other ancient Near Eastern temples in terms of physical structure among other characteristics. It would be expected that contemporary conventions to Solomon's time and surrounding would have been naturally included in his construction. However, the differences would stand out in a heightened contrast. Comparative temples have been uncovered belonging to royal palace complexes with temple features, most notably the 'Ain Dara temple in northern Syria. Many temples were located in well-known cities that emerged in the eastern Mediterranean during the first millennium BC.³⁸⁰ For example, at Tell Taint in southern Turkey, a first millennium BC temple which is attached to a royal

³⁷⁹ Monson in Hess, Richard S., and Gordon J. Wenham, eds. *Zion City of Our God*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.: 1999), 1.

³⁸⁰ John Monson in Arnold, Bill T., and H. G. M. Williamson. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*. (InterVarsity Press, 2011), 931.

palace has been identified to share similarities with Solomon's temple.³⁸¹ Some of these common features were a staircase leading to its entrance which led into a large hall with an inner sanctuary behind the hall. Second millennium temples at Ebla have also been compared to Solomon's. Monson, places Solomon's temple-type in a categorical description he calls the "long-room Syrian type" belonging to northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia.³⁸² Commenting on the similarities of temples within the region he maintains that builders exchanged "supplies, artisans and raw materials, it should follow that this Syrian tradition of temple building influenced the temples of Phoenicia and Israel. One should not expect architectural uniqueness within the temple built by Solomon."³⁸³ However, the presence of shared materials and construction should not entirely replace any presence of uniqueness. The differences that do exist would then be heightened in significance and the presence or absence of design features can be looked at more carefully.

Typical of ancient Near Eastern temple and palace structures is the presence of a national deity residing in a shrine adjacent to the king's palace which would have been elevated on the capital city. The palace and temple complex together were earthly manifestations of a cosmic reality. Monson describes it as including a significant mountain above waters, a heavenly dwelling for the deity, and surrounding by a fertile and luscious garden where the tree of life flourished.³⁸⁴ Other creatures, such as the cherubim attended to the deity and protected the sacred garden. Among the Israelites, this type of iconography is clearly seen in Solomon's temple which sat on top of Mount Zion and the Gihon spring, saturated among the olive trees. Solomon's temple was to be

³⁸¹ Ibid., 931.

³⁸² Ibid., 932.

³⁸³ Ibid., 932.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 932.

regarded as reminiscent of Eden. “It was an affirmation of the presence, virility and moral supremacy of Yahweh (1 Kings 6:29). In the eyes of the ancient Israelites, therefore, Solomon’s temple was an earthly residence for Yahweh, a meeting point between heaven and earth.”³⁸⁵ The representation of gourds, leaves, flowers, fruit, the cherubim as well as other decorations were to establish the house of Yahweh not with recollections of Sinai but in Zion.

The purity of the temple is contrasted with the failing world order that surrounds the sacred precinct. The two distinct orders were connected through courtyards and rooms each with a progression of holiness as one would move from the outside into the interior and then to the most holy place. The inner courtyard would serve as a place of ritual worship and offering before entering into the place where only the high priest could enter once a year, into the presence of Yahweh.

Significant to this study is the utilization of olive wood to construct the two cherubim in the inner sanctuary and for the door posts surrounding the entrance to the most holy place in the temple, the entrance of Yahweh’s dwelling. In light of the association of olive oil with Yahweh and Priestly worship in Exodus 27, perhaps the olive wood was chosen because of its proximity to Yahweh’s presence. Other ANE religious temples have been observed with similarities to Solomon’s temple, and it should come as no surprise to find Israel articulating itself using the art, architecture, idioms or environment of its day. Monson, commenting on the uniqueness of Solomon’s temple asserts that Israel had a number of distinctives, most notable would have been the absence of a central shrine with the image of the deity. Though the layout of the temple would have much in common with Syrian temples, no image of Yahweh would be found.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 934.

The throne of God would include the presence of the Cherubim and the decorations and temple furniture testify to his omnipotence.³⁸⁶

The inclusion of specific woods in the construction of the temple furnishing heightens the significance of the olive wood when recognizing its location within the vicinity of Yahweh's presence. Israel's first temple would become the tangible representation of their religious and national identity. What king David could only envision, was beheld by his son Solomon. The location and the design of this first temple declared the splendor of Yahweh among the nations and was the meeting point of Israel with her God. Scholars have suggested that this temple is perhaps the most thoroughly studied structure of the ancient Near East.³⁸⁷ 1 Kings 6:1 records the commencement of the temple's construction in the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, and in the fourth year of Solomon's reign (967 BC). The temple rested atop Mount Zion and was laden with cosmic significance. Its elevation above the city, lush gardens surrounding the premise, and adjacent water channels would bring to memory visions of Eden.

The temple's location on top of Mount Zion is not without theological significance, and to find the olive tree utilized in religious ritual at this site should not be surprising. Zion is a place that is used synonymously with Jerusalem. Its location rests on the southern side of modern Jerusalem and is usually identified with the Temple Mount. Zion also represents the sanctuary where God dwells, the Holiest place in the life of the nation of Israel. Though the etymology of the name is shrouded, the Hebrew root

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 934.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 929.

צִיּוֹן³⁸⁸, meaning “castle” would fit well with the description of a fortress in 2 Samuel 5:7.

Here it occupies the place of protection.³⁸⁹

Zion is equated with Jerusalem because of the location of the temple. Yahweh’s presence dwells in Jerusalem and more specifically on Mount Zion in the sanctuary. Psalm 76:1-3 describes it as a place of security and protection:

נודע ביהודה אלהים בישראל גדול שמו
ויהי בשלם סבו ומעונתו בציון
מה שבר רשב פיקשת מגן וחרב ומלחמה סלה

In Judah God is known, in Israel his name is great.

His dwelling place has been established in peace, and his dwelling place is in Zion.

There he broke the flashing arrows, the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war.

Selah.³⁹⁰

In Psalm 2:6, Yahweh’s anointed (**משיחו**), the Messiah, is enthroned on Mount Zion.

Here the Messiah reigns as king and is victorious over his enemies. He serves as a channel through which Yahweh acts to save.

Mount Zion also has symbolic significance when studied in light of the Canaanite belief that the mountains were the home of the gods. Psalm 48:2 records,

יפה נוף משוש כל-הארץ הר-ציון ירכתי צפון קריית מלך רב

³⁸⁸ See HALOT, 1022.

³⁸⁹ S.L. Clouda in Tremper Longman III, and Peter Enns. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: wisdom, poetry & writings: a compendium of contemporary biblical scholarship*. (InterVarsity Press, 2008), 936.

³⁹⁰ Translation my own.

Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth, like the heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion., the city of the Great King.³⁹¹

The New International Version (NIV) translates this with the comparison of Mount Zaphon and Mount Zion. Mount Zaphon was the mythical mountain upon which the Canaanite god Baal dwells.³⁹² Clouda recognizes the correspondence between Yahweh's cosmic and earthly conquest over the chaos with the enthronement of Baal which symbolized his victory over Mot. He maintains, "The transformational significance of equating Mount Zion with Mount Zaphon asserts Yahweh's superiority over all other gods and places him in the position of authority in the ancient Near East."³⁹³

The idea of the Ark of the Covenant representing the throne of Yahweh has also been attributed to be of Canaanite origin matching the concept of El who is seated on a throne and surrounded by Cherubim. Common then to Israel is the adaptation of Canaanite imagery in its religious expressions but without applying the theological significance without first making distinctives. In this case Mount Zion or more specifically as stated before, the dwelling place of Yahweh, and the careful selection of the olive wood for the Cherubim in the sanctuary and door posts constitute some of those distinctives, perhaps for polemical purposes.

In the Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134) Zion is emphasized as the place to encounter Yahweh in worship, and also as the location of the future hope and ideal kingdom. Zion is portrayed as a place of peace, where the *Shalom* of Yahweh rests with his people. Jerusalem, synonymously linked with Zion is to be a place of eschatological safety for Yahweh's people. Psalm 125:1 reads:

³⁹¹ Translation my own.

³⁹² Ibid, 937.

³⁹³ Ibid., 937.

שיר המעלות הבתחים ביהוה בהר-צין לא-ימוט לעולם ישב

A Song of Ascent.³⁹⁴ They who trust in Yahweh will be like Mount Zion, never shaken, but stays unto eternity.³⁹⁵

Here, the psalms presents Mount Zion as an immovable fortress that endures to eternity. It is not surprising then, to find the presence of olive trees in Zion- which also have been associated with long life and describe as enduring forever. For this reason olive trees are a constant reminder to Yahweh's people of not only his eternality but also to trust in him and in the promise of an eternal restoration of Zion. The use of olive trees in the construction of the holiest place in Zion would seem fitting even if only as a reminder to draw Israel's attention to the eternal security found in Yahweh.

Moving back to 1 Kings 6, translators have struggled with the description in verses 31 and 33 that refer to doorposts made of olive-wood that are five-sided (v.31) and another in the shape of a square. The text in 1 Kings 6:31-33 reads as follows:

וְאַת פָתֵח הַדֶּבֶר עֲשֵה דְלִתּוֹת עַציּוֹן הָאֵל מִזּוֹזֹת חַמְשִׁית:
וְשַׁתִּי דְלִתּוֹת עַציּוֹן וְקָלָע עַלְיָהֶם מִקְלָעוֹת בְּרוּבִים וְתִמְרֹות וְפִטוּרִים אַזְּבִים וְצַפָּה זָהָב
וַיַּרְד עַל-הַכְּרוּבִים וְעַל-הַתְּמִרְזֹת אֶת-הַזָּהָב:
וְכֹן עֲשֵה לְפָתֵח הַהִיכָּל מִזּוֹזֹת עַציּוֹן מִאַת רַבָּעִית:

He made doors of olive wood at the entrance to the inner sanctuary; the pillar on each doorpost was five-sided. 32 On the two doors made of olive wood he carved cherubs, palm trees, and flowers in bloom, and he plated them with gold. He plated the cherubs and the palm trees with hammered gold. 33 In the same way he made doorposts of olive wood for the entrance to the main hall, only with four-sided pillars (NET).

Verse 31 describes the doorways of the inner shrine and verse 33 the doorway of the main entrance. In all buildings the width of the doors play an important role in

³⁹⁴ Likely an ascent to the temple.

³⁹⁵ Translation my own, emphasis added.

determining the need for lintels and load-bearing components. Millard adds, special significance is given to doorways of religious buildings since they control access to and from the interior and are visible to those outside.³⁹⁶ Common to ancient temples were the restrictions allowing access only to cultic officials. Some temples allowed visibility through the temple doorways to a sacred statue or kept it covered.³⁹⁷ The Israelite temple prohibited access to the Temple and the Sanctuary to everyone except the High Priest. Only the High Priest was authorized to enter the inner sanctuary where the presence of the Ark dwelt. The Ark's presence could be observed by the priests who could see its carrying poles extending through the door.³⁹⁸

The tabernacle was a sanctuary built for the Lord, a place where Yahweh's presence would dwell while Israel journeyed from Egypt to the land of Canaan. According to the instructions given in Exodus 25-31, Israel completed the requirements and on the day it was finalized "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."³⁹⁹ From that day forward, his presence would be visually manifested as he guided and protected his people, appearing to them in the form of a cloud by day and fire over the tabernacle by night.

The details of the tabernacle's construction, the theology undergirding its primacy as the central place of worship and the furnishings had been established with purpose and should not be overlooked. Several phrases are used to describe this place to include, the sanctuary, the tabernacle, and "tent of meeting." Included in this holy residence was the tent itself, the basin, and "alter of burnt offering." Inside of the tent included two main areas, the holy place, and the most holy place. Within the latter dwelt the "Ark of the

³⁹⁶ Alan Millard, "The doorways of Solomon's temple." *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies* (1985), 137.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 137.

³⁹⁸ See 1 Kgs 8:8

³⁹⁹ Exo 40:34

Covenant of the Lord.” Within the former was the altar of incense, “the table of the bread of the presence,” and of particular interest to this study, the olive-oil fueled lampstand.

Central to the theology of the tabernacle is that in the midst of the camp of the Israelites, there would be a holy place occupied by Yahweh who requires holiness among his people. Among the tabernacle and its inward components are relative gradations of holiness. The most sacred being the inner sanctuary, housing the Ark of the Covenant. As seen in 1 Kings 6 previously, the doors leading to the inner sanctuary contains olive wood and elements of the ark itself are constructed with olive wood. The entrance to the way to meet Yahweh was displayed with the olive wood door-posts and each step toward the Ark of the Covenant was a step towards meeting the Holy one, though no one but the High priest would enter.

A gradation of the quality of materials can also be observed. Sarna has noted a progression in materials as one moves closer to the inner sanctuary where higher quality materials would be found.⁴⁰⁰ The metals are presented in this way with the inclusion of bronze for the overlay of the altar and for the basin in the courtyard.⁴⁰¹ Averbeck recognizes that these could be contrasted with the table and incense altar overlaid with gold and the golden lampstand in the inner sanctuary.⁴⁰² It should be especially noted then, that olive wood and the most precious of metals are found in closest proximity to the holiest place of the Israelite sanctuary. Olive wood can then be seen among the trees in like manner to what gold represents among the metals, most valuable and pure, and in this case-divine.

⁴⁰⁰ Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus* (Jewish Publication Society, 1991) 156-157.

⁴⁰¹ See Exo 27:2 and 30:18

⁴⁰² Richard Averbeck in Alexander, T. Desmond, and David Weston Baker. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. (InterVarsity Press, 2003), 812-813.

Among the items placed in the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant was considered to be of first importance. It was placed in the inner sanctuary called “the most holy place.” On top of the Ark rests the atonement seat where two cherubim were carved out of gold and placed on the end of the seat. The structure was made of acacia wood and overlaid and inlaid with pure gold. The ark would become the sacred house of the two stone tablets, bearing the Law.

The Table of Presence was also made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. Exodus 25:30 records Yahweh’s mandate to display the Bread of Presence on this table continually. Utensils are also mentioned including bowls, dishes or ladels, and jars used for libations.⁴⁰³ Leviticus 24:59 details the requirements and arrangement of the bread which included 12 loaves presented before the lampstand, arranged in two rows. Averbeck maintains that the 12 twelve loaves represent the 12 tribes of Israel standing before the presence of the Lord. He adds, “The combination of the daily lighting of the lampstand and associated burning of incense plus the bread constantly on the table impresses one with the fact that the Lord had truly taken up residence in the tabernacle. If there is a lamp burning and bread on the table, then someone is ‘home’.”⁴⁰⁴

4.5.2 *Synthesis*

Commenting on Psalm 93, Human asserts, “The contextualization of Yahweh’s kingship takes concrete form in the Jerusalem temple cult. His transcendent majesty and reign is experienced through his witnesses—the Torah—in the temple on the divine Mount Zion.”⁴⁰⁵ Both the location on Mount Zion and the materials used in the construction of the temple have theological significance to which the olive tree contributes. The

⁴⁰³ Exo 25:29

⁴⁰⁴ Richard Averbeck in Alexander, T. Desmond, and David Weston Baker. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. (InterVarsity Press, 2003), 815.

⁴⁰⁵ Dirk J. Human, Psalm 93: Yahweh Robed in Majesty and Mightier than the Great Waters’, in D.J. Human (ed.), *Psalms and Mythology* (LHBOTS, 462; London and New York: T.&T. Clark, 2007), 168.

construction of the olive wood Cherubim together with the lintels and doorposts lining the entrance into the inner sanctuary, indicate the presence of Yahweh is near. The presence of olive trees on Mount Zion would further conjure images from Genesis 8 and Exodus 27, each bringing to remembrance Yahweh's covenant faithfulness and promise of restoration for Israel in the land promised to their forefathers. The olive trees would also be a reminder of the purity required to approach Yahweh in temple worship. The lampstand of Exodus 25:31-40 will be treated in the following section together with Zechariah's vision.

4.6 Olive Tree in Psalm 52

4.6.1 General Portrayal

The olive tree of Psalm 52 has been given minimal attention in the literature commenting on this Psalm. Most likely this is because the olive tree in general has not been studied in depth for its theological value in the Hebrew Scriptures to which this study aims to address. With the exception of Botha's monograph on the wisdom of Psalm 52,⁴⁰⁶ no other work has been exclusively devoted to the psalm with much detail. Of the commentaries that have been written, very little is said in regards to the olive.

The context based on the superscript places the psalm within the account of 1 Samuel 22:17-23. Here, Doeg the Edomite kills the priests of Nob on orders from Saul. Gaebelein asserts that Doeg is symbolic of all evildoers who will "meet their just deserts."⁴⁰⁷ In contrast, David symbolizes the righteous who will be exalted. The Psalm contrasts the proud man who trusts in his wealth, with the godly man who trusts in God. The fate of the former is destruction and the latter boasts of God's faithfulness to which he owes his gratitude.

⁴⁰⁶ Philippus J. Botha, "'I Am like a Green Olive Tree': The Wisdom Context of Psalm 52." *HTS Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013): 01–08.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 384.

The man who trusts in himself, devises evil schemes for personal gain, and to him the Lord will uproot like a tree. Yet, as VanGemeren notes, the godly man is compared to a tree flourishing within the house of the Lord. Whereas the wicked boast in their own abilities, the godly praise the Lord for what he has done.⁴⁰⁸ The choice of tree used to communicate the psalmist's disposition should not be overlooked. VanGemeren, further comments on the psalmist's choice of the olive tree saying, "He is like a luxuriant, productive olive tree...the olive tree may last for hundreds of years and is a symbol of longevity and usefulness."⁴⁰⁹ The imagery he suggests, is representative of the blessedness of the godly.⁴¹⁰

Botha recognizes the apparent similarities with the tree imagery used in Proverbs 1-3 and its use here in Psalm 52.⁴¹¹ Proverbs 1:31 describes the destruction of those who do not choose the fear of the Lord, "they shall eat the fruit of their way." Proverbs 2:22 warns that the wicked will be "cut off" and "rooted out" from the land. Wisdom is then associated with the Tree of Life in Proverbs 3:18. Botha compares the wicked who are uprooted from the land in Proverbs 2:22 with the uprooting of the wicked man who trusts in his own riches in Psalm 52:5-8.

The text of Psalm 52:7-8 reads:

הנה הגבר לא ישם אלהים מעוזו ויבטח ברב עשרו יען בהותו
ואני צוית רענן בבית אלהים בטחתי בחסד אלהים עולם ועד

Look, here is the strong man who would not make God his refuge,

⁴⁰⁸ Willem A. VanGemeren in Frank E. Gaebelein, et al., *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1991), 387.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 387.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 387.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 4.

But I am like a fresh green olive tree, flourishing in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God, forever unto eternity.⁴¹²

The disjunctive construction (vav + 1st person sing.) heightens the contrast between the proud man's (strong man) fate and the psalmist's eternal security. A comparison is made between the flourishing green olive tree⁴¹³ and the תָּםִימָנָה love of God, both of which communicate God's unending faithfulness. The olive tree with its association to long life (eternity) and its production of the pure anointing oil compliments תָּםִימָנָה - the steadfast, unfailing, and holy love of God.

4.6.2 *Synthesis*

Though this is certainly communicated in the text, the choice of an olive tree rather than another tree that may have flourished in the region is deliberate. The psalmist is drawing on a national emblem that is intrinsically Yahwistic. The olive tree symbolizes the people of Yahweh, set apart (sanctified and anointed) for his purposes. David, as an Israelite King would have received his kingly anointing but also functioned as a priest. He is the ideal man who places his trust in the God of Israel and in this way is said to be flourishing. The choice of the olive reflects David's covenant status as a member of God's household and as a priest in service of Yahweh.

4.7 Olive Trees of Zechariah 4

4.7.1 *General Portrayal*

The two olive trees in Zechariah 4:1-14 supply the richest level of theological significance among the prophets which is why this study explores the passage in greater depth. It is in this passage where the olive trees function as symbols and as conduits

⁴¹² Translation my own.

⁴¹³ G. Dalman contends that olive trees were planted within the temple precinct. See G. Dalman, *AuS VI*, 58. See also, Hans-Joachim Kraus. *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 511.

through which the oil in the temple is resupplied in accordance with the priestly laws established in the wilderness tabernacle. The identity of the trees as representatives is not clear though several suggestions are maintained. The passage reads as follows:

And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. 2 And he said to me, “What do you see?” I said, “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. 3 And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.” 4 And I said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” 5 Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” I said, “No, my lord.” 6 Then he said to me, “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. 7 Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’”

8 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 9 “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. 10 For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.

“These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range through the whole earth.” 11 Then I said to him, “What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?” 12 And a second time I answered and said to him, “What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?” 13 He said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” I said, “No, my lord.” 14 Then he said, “These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” (Zech 4:1-14 ESV)

This section will begin by exploring the image of the golden lampstand menorah followed by an analysis of the identity and meaning of the two olive trees.

4.7.2 *The Golden Lampstand*

The first six chapters of Zechariah contain variations between the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Old Greek (LXX/OG). These variations are in part due to the nature of transmission, while other reasons may include distinctions made as a result of the worldview of the translator. On account of the orthodox nature of transmission in antiquity, the variation found in the LXX/OG is not a result of intentional manipulation.

Kroll maintains that these differences instead result from the theological and historical assumptions of the translator.⁴¹⁴

In Zechariah 4, the prophet sees a golden lampstand with two olive trees standing on either side. Verse 14 includes the angel's explication of the identity of the two olive trees and reports the following according to the MT and OG:

ויאמר אלה שני בני היצחאר העמידים על אדון כל הארץ

He said, “These (are the) two sons of (fresh olive) oil who stand by the Lord of all the earth.”⁴¹⁵

καὶ εἶπεν οὗτοι οἱ δύο νίοὶ τῆς πιότητος παρεστήκασιν τῷ κυρίῳ πάσης τῆς γῆς

He said, “these two sons of prosperity stand by the Lord of all the earth.”⁴¹⁶

The primary difference in this verse is in the translation of the term **יצחאר** (fresh oil, i.e.

anointing oil). According to Jerome, the early recensions included the following translations: στιλπνότητος (α'; “of brightness”), ἐλαίου (σ'; “of oil”), and λαμπρότητος (θ'; “of splendor”). Aquila and Theodotion rely on a different translation of the Hebrew root **צָהָר**, rendering it as “noon.”⁴¹⁷ However, the Symmachus recension retains the

literal rendering. Kroll, drawing on the work of Zeigler, asserts “only the Akhmimic

⁴¹⁴ Patricia Ahearn Kroll in Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden, *Septuagint research: issues and challenges in the study of the Greek Jewish scriptures* (Brill, 2006), 179.

⁴¹⁵ Translation my own. Emphasis is added because of the type of oil implied by **יצחאר** (fresh oil, anointing oil).

⁴¹⁶ Translation my own.

⁴¹⁷ Ludwig Koehler, *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Brill, 2001). See צָהָרִים.

Coptic version and the Arabic versions deviate from πιότης, ‘oil, fat,’ and most likely found καλλιελαιον, ‘of cultivated oil,’ in their Greek *Vorlagen*.⁴¹⁸

In the LXX/OG, all the references to this oil are translated with ἔλαιον. To be consistent with the employment of ἔλαιον, the preferred translation of verse 14 would favor the Symmachus recension. Kroll points out a possible exception by noting the metaphorical usage of יִצְהָר. She notes that يִצְהָר is juxtaposed with דָּגַן תִּרְוֹשׁ and דָּגַן in all but one example in the MT from Joel 2:24. According to Kroll, this sequence denotes agricultural prosperity. She concludes “in this sense the appearance of πιότης in Zechariah 4:14 may refer to this general connotation of יִצְהָר.”⁴¹⁹ πιότης is utilized throughout the Septuagint in reference to an abundance of food, and in this sense the term can best reflect the coming success of God’s appointed leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua. This is the interpretation put forth by Meyers and Meyers who contend instead of Zerubbabel and Joshua described as “anointed ones,” they are established by God as leaders who will restore the temple and security in the land, thus promising economic prosperity.⁴²⁰

Whereas the outcome of their roles certainly would include economic prosperity, removing from them the title of anointed ones is unnecessary. A leader anointed by God for a task, works through God’s power, hence the anointing, inaugurating blessing for a

⁴¹⁸ Patricia Ahearne-Kroll in Kraus and Wooden, *Septuagint research*, 188.

⁴¹⁹ Patricia Ahearne-Kroll, *Ibid.*, 188.

⁴²⁰ Carol Meyers and Eric Meyers. *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*. (Doubleday:1987), 229-34.

nation and land. Petersen reflects this in observing that the lampstand represents the presence of God. The “sons of oil” flanking the lampstand are inseparable from the lampstand and are thus elevated to a position with access to the deity.⁴²¹ Further, Psalm 2:7 provides an instance where God coronates an Israelite king with the words “You are my son, today I have begotten you.” Petersen asserts “The notion of the King as an adopted or ‘reborn’ son of Yahweh is elsewhere attested in the Hebrew Bible.⁴²² The notion of the king being in filial relationship to the deity is a standard way of speaking about kingship in ancient Israel.”⁴²³ The immediate context surrounding these visions will also provide for a more accurate understanding of how to translate **בני היכר**.

The following discussion will explicate Zechariah’s vision of the two olive trees according to its broader context within the visions. This text includes the fifth of eight visions recorded by the prophet Zechariah. Next to Zephaniah, more is known about him than any other minor prophet. The name Zechariah in Hebrew, means “Yahweh remembers,” and was a popular name that belonged to over two dozen men in the Hebrew Scriptures.⁴²⁴

In the house of the Lord, a lampstand was always present, illuminating the place of worship. The first occurrence of lampstand comes through divine dictation to Moses in Exodus 25:31-40. Here, the text indicates that a single golden lampstand provided

⁴²¹ David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8: A Commentary* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1984), 233–234.

⁴²² See Sam 7:14, ‘I will be his father, and he shall be my son’; See also I Chr 28:6; Ps 89:26.

⁴²³ Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8: A Commentary*, 233.

⁴²⁴ George Klein, *New American Commentary Vol. 21B: Zechariah* (Holman Reference, 2008), 20.

light in the most holy place. Later in 1 Kings 7:49, Solomon had included ten lampstands made of pure gold, five on each side in front of the inner sanctuary. The next detailed instruction concerning a lampstand is in Zechariah 4 and though the descriptions are slightly different than those found in Exodus, similarities remain. Klein accurately summarizes, “In each instance, the light produced by the lampstands represents God’s glory and his presence among his people.”⁴²⁵ He also maintains that the lampstands are symbols of the people of God and of the role they are intended to play in being a light to the world.

While Zechariah’s eight visions represent a literary unit, the overall structure and messages of those visions have incurred numerous interpretations. At the onset, the visions are concerned with Judah’s desperate need for encouragement and deliverance. However, the messages of the visions are not confined to their immediate context alone. Eschatological prophecies and visions are often known to include both a present and future fulfillment. The language of the visions introduce the eschatological day when the Messiah will establish his eternal Kingdom and will reign with all those who have accepted his offer of salvation.⁴²⁶ From the premillennialist perspective, Unger argues that “all these visions have the same scope. They bridge the centuries and extend to the period of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel (Acts 1:6).”⁴²⁷ Mitchell maintains that visions 1-3 describe Judah’s return from captivity, 4-5 describe the anointed of the Lord

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 153.

⁴²⁶ Eugene H. Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi - An Exegetical Commentary*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 25.

⁴²⁷ Merrill Unger, *Commentary on Zechariah*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 25.

and 6-8 describe the seat of wickedness and its removal.⁴²⁸ Klaus Seybold⁴²⁹ and Baruch Halpern⁴³⁰ contend that the primary focus of the visions is the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Halpern argues that Zechariah stresses the temple reconstruction in chapters 1-6, which include the temple and other cultic imagery in the visions, and that the divine warrior theme demands a cultic context. Others have noted that the visions form a chiastic structure. Baldwin asserts that the visions follow a pattern “a b b c c b b a” where the fourth and fifth visions hold the theological emphasis of the entire section.⁴³¹

Meyers and Meyers offer another chiastic interpretation, holding to “a b c d c b a,” yet they exclude the priestly vision (3:1-10) on account of the divergent introduction from the usual pattern of the visions.⁴³² Klein argues that Meyers and Meyers’ omission of 3:1-10 is unwarranted and adopts their structure but includes the vision they left out. The following is the remaining chiastic structure that emerges:⁴³³

- A Vision One: The Man on a Red Horse (1:7-17)
- B Vision Two: Four Horns and Four Craftsmen (1:18-21)
- C Vision Three: The Surveyor (2:1-13)
- D Vision Four: The Cleansing of the High Priest (3:1-10)
- D Vision Five: The Lampstand and Two Olive Trees (4:1-14)
- C Vision Six: The Flying Scroll (5:1-4)
- B Vision Seven: The Woman in the Basket (5:5-11)
- A Vision Eight: The Four Chariots (6:1-8)

⁴²⁸ Hinckley Gilbert Thomas Mitchell, John Merlin Powis Smith, and Julius August Bewer, *A critical and exegetical commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah*. (Scribner, 1912), 115.

⁴²⁹ Klaus Seybold, *Bilder zum Tempelbau: Die visionen des Propheten Sacharja* (Stuttgart: KBW, 1974), 100.

⁴³⁰ Baruch Halpern, “The Ritual Background of Zechariah’s Temple Song,” *CBQ* 40 (1978): 189.

⁴³¹ Joyce, G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, TOTC. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1972), 80–81.

⁴³² Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 179–80.

⁴³³ Klein, *New American Commentary*, Vol. 21B, 91.

As mentioned earlier, there is a thematic unity among the visions. The vision of “The Cleansing of the High Priest” complements “The Lampstand and Two Olive Trees.” Klein observes a ring pattern in the chiasm where the outermost ring (visions 1 and 8) demonstrates a universal perspective concerning the Lord’s omniscience. The next inner ring (visions 2 and 7) is concerned with international matters and Judah’s relationship to the empires. The next ring (vision 3 and 6) is concerned with national issues, especially in Jerusalem. The final innermost ring (vision 4 and 5) expresses the prophet’s primary focus by pointing to the temple and the leadership.⁴³⁴ The following analysis will focus on the content of vision 5 with special attention given to the olive trees.

The fifth vision records an encouraging account to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and Zechariah through the proclamation that Zerubbabel will complete the temple. Merrill summarizes several similarities that the fourth vision shares with the fifth: “both deal with the cultic persons or objects (the high priest and the menorah respectively), both mention historical persons contemporary to the prophet (Joshua and Zerubbabel), both refer to temple building, and both reach their climax on a strong messianic note.”⁴³⁵ Both the visions are indicative of the Lord’s presence with his people and in the temple. While the fourth vision involves the ceremony of the High Priest, the fifth vision involves the ceremony of the governor.⁴³⁶

After being awakened by an angelic messenger (from vision 4), Zechariah is asked what he sees, to which he replies זהב מנורת, or “golden lampstand” (4:2). Some scholars would argue that although modern English translations render מנורת as

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 91.

⁴³⁵ Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi - An Exegetical Commentary*, 145.

⁴³⁶ Edgar W. Conrad, *Zechariah*. (Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 106.

“lampstand,” the translation may not fit the context.⁴³⁷ Part of the support for this reasoning is that modern Jewish iconography depicts the lampstand in a manner that most likely did not resemble the lampstand of Zechariah’s vision.⁴³⁸ However, citing a modern depiction of what the lampstand may have looked like is not a strong argument. Klein notes that the style of menorah seen today was rare in the postexilic era and does not exactly match the description of lights and bowls that Zechariah sees.⁴³⁹ Baldwin asserts that contemporary styles of the menorah were unknown prior to the first century BC⁴⁴⁰ However, Keel provides an isolated example of a lamp from Zechariah’s era that resembles the modern styles seen today.⁴⁴¹ The Hebrew text describes the design with ambiguity to the modern reader as, שבעה ושבעה מוצקות לנרות (seven and seven pipes to the lamps).

This description is problematic for obvious reasons in that the reader is left to interpret what seven and seven pipes may look like. Many suggestions have been offered, and due to the scope of this study they will be omitted. Yet, what remains as constant, irrespective of what we make of the description, is that Zechariah’s vision of the lampstand provides information that no other verses in the Hebrew Scriptures provide (other than what can be inferred from Exodus 25:31-40).⁴⁴² Klein notes that “in addition

⁴³⁷ For a detailed discussion of Zechariah’s lampstand see: Robert North, “Zechariah’s Seven-Spout Lampstand,” *Biblica* 51 (1970): 183-206; Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 1-8*, 229-40; and Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8: A Commentary*, 217-24.

⁴³⁸ For a scholarly reconstruction of Zechariah’s menorah see: Hachlili, Rachel. *The menorah, the ancient seven-armed candelabrum: origin, form, and significance*. Brill, 2001.

⁴³⁹ Klein, *New American Commentary*, Vol. 21B, 156.

⁴⁴⁰ Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, TOTC, 119.

⁴⁴¹ Keel, *The symbolism of the biblical world*, 165–166.

⁴⁴² Exo 25:31-40, You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand shall be made of hammered work: its base, its stem, its cups, its calyxes, and its flowers shall be of one piece with it. 32 And there shall be six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it; 33 three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on one branch, and three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and

to the spectacle of light such an unusual configuration produced, the solid gold lampstand made it dazzling to behold.”⁴⁴³ However, of greater significance is the lampstand’s theological significance that will be explained together with that of the olive trees.

Zechariah’s vision of the lampstand stands in unison with his vision of שְׁנִים זִיתִים, or “two olive trees.” The olive trees stand beside the lampstand, one on the right of the receptacle and one on the left. In ancient Israel, olive oil fueled lamps, and the presence of the two trees here probably symbolizes, as Klein observes, the continual supply of oil to keep the lamp burning.⁴⁴⁴ The lamp did not require human agency to maintain its supply. Mitchell asserts that the olive trees represent “diminutive images of the things they were intended to represent.”⁴⁴⁵ Given the high prevalence of olive trees in Israel, Zechariah’s apparent confusion over the identity of the trees is cleared up after the angel’s response to his question “What are these, my Lord.” Klein maintains that the angel’s response makes it clear that the question is over the symbolism of the olive trees and not their identity.⁴⁴⁶ The angel’s response in verse 5 (“don’t you know?”) serves to emphasize the importance of the items Zechariah is seeing in the vision. The delay in the angel’s response serves to further enhance the importance of the question. One important textual feature that must be examined is the identification of מה אלה, “what are these?”

flower, on the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand. 34 And on the lampstand itself there shall be four cups made like almond blossoms, with their calyxes and flowers, 35 and a calyx of one piece with it under each pair of the six branches going out from the lampstand. 36 Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it, the whole of it a single piece of hammered work of pure gold. 37 You shall make seven lamps for it. And the lamps shall be set up so as to give light on the space in front of it. 38 Its tongs and their trays shall be of pure gold. 39 It shall be made, with all these utensils, out of a talent of pure gold. 40 And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain. (ESV)

⁴⁴³ Klein, *New American Commentary*, Vol. 21B, 156.

⁴⁴⁴ Klein, *New American Commentary*, Vol. 21B, 156.

⁴⁴⁵ Mitchell, Smith, and Bewer, *A critical and exegetical commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah*, 162.

⁴⁴⁶ Klein, *New American Commentary*, Vol. 21B, 157.

The identification of “these” has been suggested by many scholars to be only the two olive trees.⁴⁴⁷ However, the text does not clearly indicate the objects in Zechariah’s question as exclusively the two olive trees. The author argues that the entire vision is in question and specifically the two olive trees together with the lampstand. Perhaps this is a more complete explanation since the description of the lampstand is far more obscure than the familiar olive trees. It may be possible then, that together they are in question as one, unified sight of inquiry.

One of the most well known verses in Zechariah is the angel’s response in 4:6. Though the response is not a direct answer to Zechariah’s question in 4:5, and though it does not specifically mention the olive trees, it is part of the answer. The angel responds saying:

זה דבר יהוה אל זרבעבל לאמר לא בחיל ולא בכח כי אם ברוחי אמר יהוה צבאות

“This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might and not by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts.”⁴⁴⁸

Scholars have noticed that Zechariah 4:6-10 may have similarities that parallel inscriptions discovered on Mesopotamian royal buildings.⁴⁴⁹ Klein notes the following parallels that he extracts from Laato’s work on Akkadian building inscriptions which occur in both Mesopotamian sources and in Zechariah 4:⁴⁵⁰

1. God gives a command to rebuild the temple.
2. The king or divine representative assists in the (re)building.

⁴⁴⁷ See Baldwin, *Zechariah*, 120; Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 1-8*, 240.

⁴⁴⁸ Translation my own.

⁴⁴⁹ See Richard S. Ellis. Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia. (Yale Near Eastern Researches, 2.) Xv, 230 Pp. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968). *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33, no. 03 (1970): 604–605.

⁴⁵⁰ Klein, *New American Commentary*, Vol. 21B, 158.

3. The ruins of the old temple were razed in preparation for the new construction.
4. The inscriptions recount in great detail the rebuilding process.
5. The king placed his own deposits in the foundation.
6. Religious ceremonies accompany the rebuilding of the temple.
7. Priests or kings pronounce divine blessings on the newly constructed temple.
8. The king re-inaugurates the cult at the new temple.

Klein aptly contends that the angel's response to Zechariah indicates that the olive oil which supplied the lampstand in vv. 2-3 is symbolic of "the Spirit of the Lord and continues the theme of the Lord's provision for the ongoing reconstruction of the temple."⁴⁵¹ In similar manner, Barker asserts "Zechariah's work on the temple and in the lives of the people was to be completed, not by human might or power, but by divine power-constant and sufficient."⁴⁵² This vision is closely related to the previous vision given to Joshua in 3:1-10. The two visions are unified in that they serve to encourage the two most important leaders in the postexilic community, the spiritual leader-Joshua and political leader-Zerubbabel. As a result of God's blessing and his sovereign work among them, the visions would serve to strengthen the resolve of these leaders, Judah, and the nation as a whole. The angel's statement declares that only the Lord's power will have lasting achievement. With the rebuilding of the temple in mind, the Lord is guaranteeing that Zerubbabel and his people will succeed in the face of hopelessness and hardship. Further, the repetition of the negative particle נֹכַח reinforces the futility of relying on human strength to accomplish what only God can.

The two words that are negated, "might" and "power," are combined, communicating to the hearer that not all of the resources available to mankind, including military and political, will be enough to affect God's sovereignty. Genesis 11:1-9 which records the account of the tower of Babel incident bears a similar theological message—that pride and human invention over God's will is trivial. Regardless of the reader or

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 158.

⁴⁵² Kenneth L. Barker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 7:629.

intended audience the message is a timeless one, namely that salvation is not the result of human achievement, but from the grace of God. The last phrase of verse 6 “by my Spirit,” indicates that the Spirit of God (symbolized by the olive oil) will be the active agent involved in the restoration of God’s people. Feinberg asserts that “everywhere in Scripture (olive) oil is seen as the type of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁵³ In this context the restoration of the temple will be contingent upon God’s Spirit standing behind their effort. With similar intentions, Psalm 33:16 advises “No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his strength,” then concludes in verse 20 with the corrective: “We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.”

The verse closes with the angel attributing verse 6 to the “Lord of Hosts.” The Hebrew word **צָבָאֹת** has been translated “almighty” or “hosts” or “who rules over all.” The word can include military or angelic imagery, which further indicates the authority with which God commands and accomplishes his will. All authority and power belongs to the Lord who is sovereign over earthly and heavenly entities acting through his agent, **רוּחַ**, the Spirit. Because of the symbolic nature of olive oil as a medium of God’s Spirit, it is necessary for our understanding to survey the use of the phrase “The Spirit of the Lord.” This phrase occurs frequently in the Hebrew Scriptures. Baldwin reviews some of the roles the Spirit of the Lord fulfilled in the Hebrew Scriptures which included completing creation (Gen 1:2), parting the red sea (Exod. 15:8), and reviving the dead bones in Ezekiel’s vision (37:1).⁴⁵⁴ With these in mind, a consistency can be observed between the working of God’s Spirit in creation, his power manifested through signs and wonders, and his revelation through prophetic visions. In each of these as well as in the case of Zechariah’s vision, the Spirit applies the work of Yahweh.

⁴⁵³ Charles L. Feinberg, *God Remembers: A Study of Zechariah* (Multnomah Press, 1975), 59.

⁴⁵⁴ Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, TOTC*, 121.

4.7.3 Two Olive Trees

Zechariah 4:11-12 revisits the question Zechariah asked in verses 4-5. Two questions are asked, the first concerning the olive trees and the second one more specifically, “What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves?” Both of these questions are asking for clarification to the vision seen in verses 1-3. Klein argues that verse 12 draws the reader to Zechariah’s point in this vision “like concentric circles draw the eye toward the inner circle.”⁴⁵⁵ Merrill translates the branches of the olive trees as “extensions.”⁴⁵⁶ Modern translations maintain the translation “branches” from the Hebrew **שְׁבָلִי**. Regardless of the translation, the image portrayed includes some type of extension from the branches that allow olive oil to freely flow into the burning lampstand, without any need for human involvement. Another possible translation of **שְׁבָלִי** is “ears of corn.”⁴⁵⁷ In this context the ears of corn would refer to the fruit of the olive trees. Klein suggests that this view would stress the “fertility and the restoration of prosperity throughout the land once the temple resumes its role as the place for worshipping the Lord.”⁴⁵⁸

Zechariah’s vision of the olive trees explain to the reader that these “branches” or “extensions” served as conduits (**הַמְרִיקִים**) by which the golden oil flowed to the lampstand. Although the image remains obscure, the purpose serves the flow of the golden oil, which is supplied by God, through the two golden pipes. The Hebrew word **צַנְתָּרוֹת**, translated “pipes,” is used nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures. The constant flow of golden oil into the golden lampstand reinforces the golden imagery which symbolizes the purity and pristine quality of the oil. The continuous flow of this golden

⁴⁵⁵ Klein, *New American Commentary*, Vol. 21B, 163.

⁴⁵⁶ Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi - An Exegetical Commentary*, 154.

⁴⁵⁷ HALOT, 1394; BDB, 987.

⁴⁵⁸ Klein, *New American Commentary*, Vol. 21B, 164.

oil symbolizes God's unending חסֵד love and provision for his people. Hosea 2:8 and Joel 2:19,24 illustrate God's continued blessing indicating abundant olive oil as evidence.

The final verses, 13-14, include the angel's response to Zechariah's confusion over the olive trees. The angel responds first with a question "do you not know what these are?" Zechariah's puzzlement is answered directly with the angel identifying the two trees as שְׁנִי בָנֵי הַיֶּצֶר, which translates, "the two sons of freshly pressed oil." They are said to be the ones "who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth." Since olive oil was used to anoint Israelite priests and kings, the translation "the two anointed ones" is rendered in most translations.

The symbolism of the olive trees, the golden lampstand, and the golden olive oil carry with themselves a deeper theological meaning. The term for oil in verse 14 above, is a term that departs from the usual term for oil, שמן . Instead the term הַיֶּצֶר is employed. This word is used to describe unmanufactured, freshly pressed oil and represents a fresh crops' produce.⁴⁵⁹ The Hebrew Scriptures use this word in Deuteronomy 7:12-13:

If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your ancestors. He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land—your grain, new wine and olive oil...

The postexilic community would have been reminded of the agricultural blessing among others that would be theirs, should they keep God's laws. Klein makes a keen observation in stating "Theologically, the fresh oil's unrefined state further deemphasizes human agency in God's supernatural provision for Israel. The oil flows directly from the trees into the lampstand without human hands to refill their oil reservoirs."⁴⁶⁰ The olive

⁴⁵⁹ HALOT, 427.

⁴⁶⁰ Klein, *New American Commentary Vol. 21B*, 165.

trees and the free flowing pure oil further substantiate the theme of the fifth vision which promotes God’s protection and provision over against human debility.

The identity of the two anointed ones symbolized by the olive tree is not clear, but it seems to refer to Joshua and Zerubbabel-God’s chosen leaders. The primary support for this conclusion is that only the priests and kings of Israel were anointed with oil. Joshua would have been anointed at his ordination to High Priest. Zerubbabel never served in the role of king, but only as a Persian vassal.⁴⁶¹ This would exclude him from receiving a royal anointing, however, his Davidic lineage ascribes him royal status. Further, Haggai 2:23 states that the Lord Almighty will choose and give Zerubbabel a royal signet ring. 1 Chronicles 3:17-19 identifies Zerubbabel as grandson to king Jehoiachin. The imagery that emerges, regardless of the identity of the two anointed ones, is that the political and religious life of the people will continue to prosper with leadership that has been anointed by God. Cohen makes an appropriate observation concerning the olive tree symbolism: “The allusion is clearly to Joshua and Zerubbabel, the representatives of the priestly and regal offices. They are the channels by which Israel (symbolized by the lamps) is kept supplied with the divine spirit (symbolized by the oil).”⁴⁶² The last phrase of verse 14 ends with a statement that reinforces the theme of God’s sovereignty, not only in the lives of Israel but over “all the earth.”

The lampstand has received less attention in the interpretation of the vision than anything else and various interpretations have been offered. Baldwin suggests that the lampstand symbolizes the temple and the Jewish people as a witness to God.⁴⁶³ Others maintain that the lampstand symbolizes God. Petersen refers to it as the “divine

⁴⁶¹ Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, TOTC, 124.

⁴⁶² Abraham Cohen, *The Twelve Prophets*. (2 Sub.; Soncino Press, 1994), 286.

⁴⁶³ Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, TOTC, 124.

presence.”⁴⁶⁴ Unger asserts that “the golden lampstand thus portrays the messiah as both Light and Lord of the whole earth in the kingdom age revealed to and through his restored nation Israel.”⁴⁶⁵ Although the exact identification is not easily discerned, the purpose is best summarized by Klein who describes the golden lampstand in stating, “The Lord’s presence in the temple provides the unending source of light to all nations, drawing all to Jerusalem to worship.”⁴⁶⁶ The prophet Isaiah presents a similar picture in 60:1-3:

- 1 “Arise, shine; for your light has come,
And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
- 2 “For behold, darkness will cover the earth
And deep darkness the peoples;
But the Lord will rise upon you
And His glory will appear upon you.
- 3 “Nations will come to your light,
And kings to the brightness of your rising.

Whereas Klein noted that the Lord’s presence in the temple provides the light for the nations, the author would add that the spirit-filled leadership of Israel is symbolized by the olive trees and by the olive oil. The leaders led by the spirit are the means by which the light for the nations burns continuously.

4.7.4 *Synthesis*

The implications of the contextual factors mentioned above indicate that Zerubbabel and Joshua are most likely the identity of the two leaders appointed by God, having been anointed through his spirit. Kroll aptly observes that there is a clear hope in

⁴⁶⁴ David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8: A Commentary*. (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1984), 234.

⁴⁶⁵ Unger, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 82.

⁴⁶⁶ Klein, *New American Commentary*, Vol. 21B, 167.

the Davidic restoration that is seen in the usage of the term צמַח in Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12. She maintains that בְּנֵי הַיְצָהָר most likely reinforces the messianic hope of restoration. In the same way that Joshua was clothed with “pure vestments” and a “turban,” conjuring images of Aaron’s ordination, so the “sons of oil” bring to mind images of Davidic and Aaronic leadership. Kroll rightly concludes in stating that the Greek rendering “sons of πιότης” detracts and weakens the association to the Davidic and Aaronic institutions and instead “ascribes a new role for the descendants of a royal and priestly past.”⁴⁶⁷ בְּנֵי הַיְצָהָר is best understood as connoting a Davidic (Messianic) and priestly overtone, as if reading “sons of שָׁמֶן.” However this is an unnecessary inference and appeal to שָׁמֶן as communicating the rightful meaning. Most likely הַיְצָהָר was chosen to reinforce imagery associated with priestly offices and with the anointing oil to which it is accurately employed.

4.8 Rabbinic Midrash on the Olive Tree

Because others have made the association between the olive trees of Romans 11 and the olive tree of Judges 9,⁴⁶⁸ a final theological consideration of Paul’s teaching and Zechariah’s olive trees would be helpful to the present study. Though his illustration and commentary on the olive tree is found in his letter to an assembly in first century Rome,

⁴⁶⁷ Patricia Ahearne-Kroll in Kraus and Wooden, *Septuagint research*, 189.

⁴⁶⁸ See Trent Butler, *Judges*. (Word Biblical Commentary; Thomas Nelson, 2006), 233. See also Silviu Tatu. “Jotham’s Fable and the Crux Interpretum in Judges IX.” *Vetus Testamentum* 56, no. 1 (2006): 105.

his theological argument regarding the nation of Israel and the Gentile relationship between Yahweh, Abraham, and the Israelite community has ancient roots in the Pentateuch. Educated under renowned rabbi Gamaliel, grandson of Hillel, a Pharisee and former persecutor of the followers of Yeshua of Nazareth, Paul calls upon the ancient symbolism of the olive tree among his Israelite brothers to bring new light upon the Israelite-Gentile relations in the first century. He appeals to Torah and to Abraham to make his case in an image which has already been seen in this study to be uniquely Israelite and Yahwistic. His letter reads,

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written,

“God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear,
down to this very day.”⁴⁶⁹

And David says,

“Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;
let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and bend their backs forever.”⁴⁷⁰

So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!
Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save

⁴⁶⁹ See Deut 29:4; Isa 29:10

⁴⁷⁰ See Psa 69:22, 23.

some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.⁴⁷¹

In agreement with Esler, the author stresses the importance of the image of the olive tree in Romans 11:16b-24, and understands it as a key interpretative consideration in extracting the meaning of the passage.⁴⁷² Further, Esler comments on the lack of scholarly attention given to the field of New Testament imagery in Paul's letters, “The current concentration on cognitive, dianoetic analysis of biblical texts has resulted in critics and commentators devoting insufficient attention to interpreting imagery such as that of Paul's olive tree.”⁴⁷³ He goes on to stress the importance of interpreting images and pictures within appropriate interpretive frameworks to which he suggests would be primarily ancient Greco-Roman oleiculture. However, with this understanding it would not be difficult to see why Dodd would come to the hasty conclusion that Paul “had not

⁴⁷¹ See Romans 11:16-24 and larger context of Romans 9-11, (ESV)

⁴⁷² Philip F., Esler, “Ancient Oleiculture and Ethnic Differentiation: The Meaning of the Olive-Tree Image in Romans 11.” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26, no. 1 (2003): 103.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 104.

the curiosity to inquire what went on in the olive-yards which fringed every road he walked!”⁴⁷⁴ The author argues the starting point is found in the Hebrew Scriptures and ANE background, despite the 1st century horticultural relevance which can only be secondary in importance. Paul’s employment of the olive tree metaphor is not to be interpreted in its broad cultural context in the first century Mediterranean world, but rather in its Biblical context. Paul’s appeal to Abraham and to Torah at the start of Romans 11 (in context, he gives Abraham a lengthy space in chapter 4) directs us to the appropriate interpretive framework. Esler does however make an apt observation in stating “...Paul was deliberately turning the tables on the non-Judeans, reminding them of their own innate non-productivity and their need to be grafted onto the cultivated olive that was Israel.”⁴⁷⁵

Havemann comments on the importance of asking why Paul has used the olive tree and not the vine, which appears more frequently in the New Testament. He goes on to suggest the reason is two-fold, “Firstly he is able to explain the mystery of Israel’s apparent rejection of the Messiah, and secondly, it provides an opportunity to the Gentile Christians not to boast about their new undeserved status...”⁴⁷⁶ However his conclusion remains unable to address why the olive tree was chosen to illustrate his point. It is the goal of this present research to illuminate the answer, even if only in part, and to aid the reader in a greater appreciation for the ancient roots of this imagery.

⁴⁷⁴ Charles H., Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*. (Hodder and Stoughton, 1932) 180.

⁴⁷⁵ Philip F., Esler, “Ancient Oleiculture and Ethnic Differentiation: The Meaning of the Olive-Tree Image in Romans 11.” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26, no. 1 (2003): 123.

⁴⁷⁶ Jacob C. T. Havemann. “Cultivated Olive — Wild Olive: The Olive Tree Metaphor in Romans 11:16-24.” *Neotestamentica* 31, no. 1 (1997): 87–106.

For the people of Israel, the olive tree stands alone as the representative image of Israel's spiritual heritage. Among the nations, Israel is anointed by Yahweh in the manner of an Israelite Priest and King (with olive oil) and to whom from Messiah will usher in the remaining covenant promises. With this in mind, the olive tree would have been the most appropriate symbol available, heightened by its historical significance in the Hebrew Scriptures.

In this larger passage (ch.11), Paul makes the case that Israel's sin and unbelief has made possible the inclusion of gentile believers into the Abrahamic covenant. He further argues that the inclusion of gentile believers into the family of Israel will in God's providence, turn the hearts of the Jewish people back to Him and in this way "all Israel will be saved" (v.26). For Paul, God is entirely faithful and reliable, and the thought of God rejecting his own covenant people was unthinkable as evidenced by the strong negation - με γενοίτο (by no means!). He then goes on to remind the recipient of his letter of his Israelite credentials. Paul identifies himself here as both a Jew and a believer in Yeshua as the Messiah. The idea of God rejecting his own people, to whom Paul would have to include himself, was preposterous. Paul, as a Jew, was God's chosen messenger to the Gentiles and it was through his ministry to the Gentiles that Israel's national ministry was to be fulfilled.

Paul then appeals to Torah in establishing his Israelite credentials. He refers to himself as being of the seed of Abraham, and more specifically of the tribe of Benjamin. It was to Abram that the covenant blessings of Israel were first promised but also through Abram that these covenant blessings would be extended to the Gentiles as well, making

him the Patriarch of many nations. His name was changed to Abraham, to reflect this covenant reality. Genesis 12:1-3 records this promise,

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”(ESV)

It was to Abraham, the greatest figure of faith in the Hebrew Scriptures, that the promise was to be fulfilled and extended to all the families of the earth. The covenant promise would also be reiterated to Isaac and Jacob. Regarding Isaac, the angel of Yahweh called to Abraham a second time saying,

By myself I have sworn, declares Yahweh, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.⁴⁷⁷

Again, the Lord would repeat to Isaac as a warning and reminder of his promise when Isaac sought refuge from a famine among the Philistine leader Abimelech:

And the Lord appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”⁴⁷⁸

The Lord would later remind Jacob in a dream at a place he would then name Bethel:

⁴⁷⁷ Gen 22:15-18.

⁴⁷⁸ Gen 26: 1-5.

I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.⁴⁷⁹

For Paul, he sees this promise being fulfilled in his present day not only with Israel as an ethnicity but also with the promised Gentile nations to which he was sent as a messenger.

Paul had argued that uncircumcised Gentiles could make their way by adoption into the family of God by faith in the Jewish Messiah.⁴⁸⁰ Both as an Israelite heir of Abraham's promise, he would, like Abraham, usher in the covenant promises among the Gentile communities in fulfillment of the Scriptures already mentioned. He will later use the olive tree analogy as representative of this prophecy being fulfilled through Israel.

Morris notes concerning Paul's appeal to his Israelite tribe, that Benjamin was the only son of Jacob born in the land of Israel. This would have identified Benjamin's tribe occupying the land of Israel's holiest site, the temple in Jerusalem. Benjamin was also historically the only tribe that remained faithful to Judah.⁴⁸¹ This is significant because the covenant promise of the coming of the Messiah would also be prophesied in Genesis 49 as coming from Judah.

The scripture records Jacob prophesying over the twelve tribes (his sons) and concerning Judah he says, "the Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the

⁴⁷⁹ Gen 28:13-14.

⁴⁸⁰ Craig S. Keener. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. (IVP Academic, 2012), 437.

⁴⁸¹ Leon Morris. *Epistle to the Romans*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 398.

peoples.” Judah’s prophecy would foretell of the Davidic Kingdom that would soon come and of the future Davidic kingdom that would come at the advent of the Davidic Messiah. The next verse records, “Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes.” For Paul, now a follower of Yeshua the Messiah, this prophecy was fulfilled to which the gospel writer Matthew records concerning Yeshua’s entrance in Jerusalem on the Passover,

Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”⁴⁸²

Important to note regarding this source is that he records this taking place on the Mount of Olives, the very place where Zechariah’s prophecy concerning the Messiah would come to pass.⁴⁸³

The certainty of Israel’s future salvation is reinforced with several illustrations from the Hebrew Scriptures. Paul writes “If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump.”⁴⁸⁴ Morris maintains that Paul has in mind Numbers 15 which makes reference to “the first of your ground meal” from which a cake is to be presented as an

⁴⁸² Mt 21:2-5.

⁴⁸³ See Zech 14:4.

⁴⁸⁴ Rom 11:16; For references to firstfruits in the Hebrew Scriptures see Exo 23:19; 34:22; Lev 2:12, 14; 23:10, 17, 20; Num 15:20-21; 18:12; 28:26; Deut 26:2, 10.

offering to the Lord.⁴⁸⁵ The firstfruits are holy and therefore according to Paul, the cakes made from the firstfruits are holy as well. He then goes on to heighten this illustration by saying that “if the root is holy, then so are the branches.” Morris notes that Ancient religions had concepts of a holy tree, and in this analogy, Paul appeals to the root who is Abraham as the Patriarch. It is possible that he had in mind all the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) nevertheless the point he makes is that the patriarch(s) is holy and this has benefits for his descendants. If the root of Israel is holy then so must be its branches.⁴⁸⁶ The same concept is portrayed with the first illustration of the firstfruits and now Paul turns to the olive tree to finish the illustration. Others have proposed identifications of the root as the Messiah or even God.⁴⁸⁷ The possibility remains in light of the centrality of Messiah in chapters 9-11. Paul quotes Isaiah 11:10 in chapter 15 as well, mentioning “the root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the gentiles; in Him will the gentiles hope.”⁴⁸⁸

In an effort to warn the Gentile believers from presuming their position, Paul draws on the richness of the olive tree image to illustrate what Yahweh is working out through his covenant people. He has already alluded to Abraham as the root from which covenant blessings are transferred to his offspring and now Paul will allude to how the fullness of the Abrahamic promise would be extended to the Gentiles. For Paul, Torah

⁴⁸⁵ Leon Morris. *Epistle to the Romans*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 411.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Robert W. Wall, John Paul Sampley, and N. T. Wright. *The New Interpreter's Bible : Acts - First Corinthians*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 684.

⁴⁸⁸ See Rom 15:12.

records Abraham's covenant as having not only a promise to his seed, but also to Gentile believers who would become his own seed. Though in former times this would have been a mystery hidden in the Scriptures, now Paul declares it has been made known.

Verse 17 mentions a common practice called grafting, though the way he describes it seems improbable. The usual practice would involve taking a healthy olive shoot and grafting it onto a wild olive stock which doesn't bear much fruit. The result would produce a revitalized and strong olive tree that bears good fruit. However, Paul intentionally describes this process in the reverse to explain how in the providence of God, the Abrahamic promise was extended to the Gentiles. He begins by referring to Gentiles as the "wild olive shoots grafted in among the others." They now share in the nourishing root (Abraham) of the olive tree. Here the olive tree is representative of Israel as a covenant community. In light of the olive tree symbolism already seen in this study, the image Paul uses has priestly overtones and there would be good reason to suggest he may have had the image of Zechariah's olive trees in mind. The wild olive shoot is grafted into the natural olive shoot and Paul even mentions the possibility of the natural branches which were cut off, being grafted back into the tree.

Verse 24 makes clear that Paul is describing a process that is "contrary to nature." Paul would have been surrounded by olive orchards in the first century Roman world and the process he has in mind is not one he would have likely observed. However, some commentators have suggested that the practice Paul describes as unnatural was practiced. An olive tree that was failing to bear fruit would have been pruned by breaking off the failing branches and grafting in wild olive shoots. The result would have yielded a

reinvigorated tree.⁴⁸⁹ Philo uses a similar analogy in describing the sinful Israelites with the gentile converts, “That God welcomes the virtue which springs from ignoble birth, that He takes no account of the roots but accepts the full-grown stem, because it has been changed from a weed into fruitfulness.”⁴⁹⁰ The Talmud refers to Ruth the Moabitess and Naamah the Ammonitess as “two godly shoots” engrafted into Israel:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham, 'I have two goodly shoots to engraft on you: Ruth the Moabitess and Naamah the Ammonitess'. All the families of the earth, even the other families who live on the earth are blessed only for Israel's sake. All the nations of the earth, even the ships that go from Gaul to Spain are blessed only for Israel's sake.⁴⁹¹

Paul seems to use this illustration with some similarity to Philo and the Talmud, which would have been understood without difficulty to the first-century reader. Morris recognizes the olive tree as emblematic of the nation of Israel citing Jeremiah 11:16 “The Lord called you a thriving olive tree with fruit beautiful in form...But with the roar of a mighty storm he will set it on fire, and its branches will be broken.”⁴⁹² Like Jeremiah, Paul visualizes some of the olive branches as broken off.

In contrast to the natural olive tree representing Israel, the wild olive tree mentioned in verse 17 represents the Gentile believers. The wild olive tree is known to produce very little fruit and in this case is said to have been ἐνκεντρισθήσονται (engrafted) among the natural branches. Commenting on the word, συνκοινωνός, Morris refers to the wild olive as becoming a sharer or partner with the branches that remain.

⁴⁸⁹ William Mitchell Ramsay, *Pauline and Other Studies* (London, 1906), 223.

⁴⁹⁰ See Philo, *De praemiis et poenis*, 152.

⁴⁹¹ See Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Yebamoth 63a.

⁴⁹² Leon Morris. *Epistle to the Romans.*, 413.

The branches that remained would have referred to believing national Israel. The end of verse 17 reads, τῆς ρίζης τῆς πιότητος τῆς ἐλαίας (of the root of the fatness of the olive tree). Gentiles then are co-sharers, together with ethnic believing Israel in the root (Abraham). In this way they become heirs of the covenant promises to Abraham's descendants. Morris emphasizes Dodd's point, "The illustration shows clearly how complete, in Paul's thought, was the continuity between the Christian Church and the Israel of the Old Testament. The Church is not a new society; it is 'the Israel of God'".⁴⁹³ However, this interpretation falls into the same error replacement theology and supercessionism has made centuries before Dodd. Paul is not teaching that Gentile believers in Yeshua replace ethnic and national Israel as the new Israel of God, but rather, Gentile believers become co-heirs together with believing Israel. Paul envisages a co-regency and not a substitute for ethnic Israel. Together gentile believers and Jewish believers form the "Israel of God."⁴⁹⁴ There is not a replacement in mind in the language nor in the theology of Paul, but rather an inclusion with Israel as the Abrahamic promise of Genesis 12 foreshadows: וְנִבְרָכוּ בְךָ כָל מִשְׁפָחַת הָאָדָם (in you, *all* the families of the earth will be blessed.)

Zechariah's Olive Trees

⁴⁹³ Leon Morris. *Epistle to the Romans.*, 414. See also Charles H. Dodd: *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London, 1944).

⁴⁹⁴ For a discussion of the supercessionist argument/ replacement theology see: Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?: A Theological Evaluation*. (Nashville, Tenn: B&H Academic, 2010). For a more in-depth treatment, see: Robert Saucy. *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993).

There are only two places in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the New Testament where two olive trees appear together: the olive trees of Zechariah 4 and Paul's olive trees in Romans 11. The author would like to propose a new concept regarding the identification of Zechariah's vision of the two olive trees in 4:14 and Paul's olive trees in Romans 11:16-24. Zechariah's two olive trees are biblical types (a foreshadowing) of the Israel of God who would inherit the blessings of the Abrahamic promise and in turn bless the nations. Most scholars are in general agreement that the identity of Zechariah's two olive trees are Joshua and Zerubbabel. The author is in agreement with this conclusion but would like to make the case that Zerubbabel and Joshua are only prototypes of a deeper theological meaning. As was already discussed in the previous section, Zerubbabel and Joshua occupied the priestly and regal offices and would serve as the channels by which Yahweh would keep the lamp of Israel alive (burning). The common understanding is that Zerubbabel and Joshua were anointed by God and the olive tree would represent the divine נֶעֱלָה . However, this understanding is not without complication. Zerubbabel was excluded from receiving the kingly Israelite anointing. As a Persian vassal he held political leadership but was not an Israelite King. He did, however maintain Davidic lineage. Jeremiah 22:30 records the curse on Jechoniah's line that would exclude him from sitting on the throne as a Davidic King. The peculiarity then is in assessing whether or not there would be something or someone else who could qualify Zerubbabel to receive an Israelite anointing. Zechariah 4 indicates that only Yahweh could do this. What then is the significance bearing on Paul's metaphor of the olive trees in Romans 11?

The author proposes the possibility that the olive trees of Romans 11 and Zechariah's two olive trees share a common theological meaning though applied under different contexts. They are representative of Yahweh's covenant people. More specifically they represent those whom Yahweh has anointed by his spirit (Zech 4:7) even if contrary to normal standards. A similarity can be drawn between two different groups of people represented by both Zechariah's olive trees and those of Paul. The two groups are those who qualify as Yahweh's people as priests (Israelite Priests) and those who qualify as Yahweh's covenant people by some other means (Zerubbabel). The natural olive tree will be considered first followed by the unnatural.

Joshua was an Israelite High Priest who had received the priestly anointing. As a Levite and descendant of Aaron he fulfilled what the law required from an Israelite High Priest. The natural olive tree of Romans 11 was also of Israelite origin to which Paul uses to refer to Abraham's descendants, as the Holy dough of the firstfruits, and as the root that is Holy. Zerubbabel, if represented in Zechariah's vision as the other olive tree, did not meet the qualifications to receive the anointing like Joshua did. Zerubbabel did not sit on the Davidic throne perhaps because of the curse spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah:

“As I live, declares the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet ring on my right hand, yet I would tear you off²⁵ and give you into the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans.²⁶ I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into another country, where you were not born, and there you shall die.²⁷ But to the land to which they will long to return, there they shall not return.”

²⁸ Is this man Coniah a despised, broken pot,
a vessel no one cares for?

Why are he and his children hurled and cast
into a land that they do not know?

²⁹ O land, land, land,

hear the word of the Lord!
³⁰ Thus says the Lord:
Write this man down as childless,
 a man who shall not succeed in his days,
for none of his offspring shall succeed
 in sitting on the throne of David
 and ruling again in Judah.(ESV)

However, Haggai 2:23 mentions the reversal of that curse:

“On that day,’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will make you like a signet *ring*, for I have chosen you,’ ” declares the Lord of hosts.” (NASB) The signet ring appears to be restored in Haggai’s prophecy and therefore the interpretation of the curse on Coniah’s descendants may have only been applicable to his lifetime. Rabbinic sources are in agreement that God had removed the curse on Coniah’s line as result of Jeconiah’s repentance.

Sanhedrin 37b-38a

R. Johanan said: Exile atones for everything, for it is written, *Thus saith the Lord, write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days, for no man of his seed shall prosper sitting upon the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah.* Whereas after he [the king] was exiled, it is written, *And the sons of Jechoniah, -- the same is Assir -- Shealtiel his son etc.*(1) [He was called] *Assir*, because his mother conceived him in prison. *Shealtiel*, because God did not plant him in the way that others are planted. We know by tradition that a woman cannot conceive in a standing position. [yet she] did conceive standing. Another interpretation: *Shealtiel*, because God obtained [of the Heavenly court] absolution from His oath.(2)

(1) I Ch. III, 17. Notwithstanding the curse that he should be childless and not prosper, after being exiled he was forgiven.(2) Which He had made, to punish Jechoniah with childlessness.⁴⁹⁵

Pesikta de-Rab Kahana

I accepted the repentance of Jeconiah: shall I not accept your repentance? A cruel decree had been imposed upon Jeconiah: Scripture says, *This man Coniah is a despised, shattered image ('sb)* (Jer. 22:28), for Jeconiah, according to R. Abba bar Kahana, was like a man's skull ('sm) which once shattered is utterly useless, or according to R. Helbo, like a wrapper of reed matting that dates are packed in, which, once emptied, is utterly useless. And Scripture goes on to say of Jeconiah: He is a vessel that none reaches for with delight (ibid.), a vessel, said R. Hama bar R. Hanina, such as a urinal; or a vessel, said R. Samuel bar Nahman, such as is used for drawing off blood. [These comments on Jeconiah derive

⁴⁹⁵ See Socino Talmud.

from] R. Meir's statement: The Holy One swore that He would raise up no king out of Jeconiah king of Judah. Thus Scripture: *As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim . . . were the signet on a hand, yet by My right, I would pluck thee hence* (Jer. 22:24), words by which God was saying, explained R. Hanina bar R. Isaac, "Beginning with thee, Jeconiah, I pluck out the kingship of the house of David." It is to be noted, however, that the Hebrew for "pluck thee" is not as one would expect 'tkk, but the fuller and less usual 'tknk, which may also be rendered "mend thee"--that is, mend thee by thy repentance. Thus in the very place, [the kingship], whence Jeconiah was plucked, amends would be made to him: [this line would be renewed].

R. Ze'era said: I heard the voice of R. Samuel bar Isaac expounding from the teacher's chair a specific point concerning Jeconiah, but I just cannot remember what it was. R. Aha Arika asked: Did it perhaps have some connection with this particular verse -- *Thus saith the Lord: Write ye this man childless, a man [who] will not prosper in his days* (Jer. 22:30)? "Yes, that's it!" said R. Ze'era. Thereupon R. Aha Arika went on to give R. Samuel bar Isaac's interpretation of the verse: In his days Jeconiah, so long as he is childless, will not prosper, but when he has a son, then he will prosper by his son's prosperity.

R Aha bar Abun bar Benjamin, citing R. Abba bar R. Papi, said: Great is the power of repentance, which led God to set aside an oath even as it led Him to set aside a decree. Whence the proof that a man's repentance led Him to set aside the oath He made in the verse *As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim were the signet on a hand, yet by My right, I would pluck thee hence* (Jer. 22:24)? The proof is in the verse where Scripture says [of one of Jeconiah's descendants] *In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel . . . the son of Shealtiel . . . and will make thee as a signet* (Haggai 2:23). And the proof that a man's repentance led God to set aside a decree He issued in the verse *Thus saith the Lord: Write ye this man childless*, etc. (Jer. 22:30)? The proof is in the verse where Scripture says, *The sons of Jeconiah -- the same is Asir -- Shealtiel his son*, etc. (1 Chron. 3:17). R. Tanhum bar Jeremiah said: Jeconiah was called *Asir*, "one imprisoned," because he had been in prison('asurim); and his sons called "Shealtiel" because he was like a sapling, newly set out (*hustelah*), through whom David's line would be continued.

R. Tanhuma said: Jeconiah was called *Asir*, "imprisoned," because God imprisoned Himself by His oath in regard to him; and Jeconiah's son was called Shealtiel, "God consulted," because God consulted the heavenly court, and they released Him from His oath.⁴⁹⁶

Leviticus Rabbah XIX:6

The Holy One, blessed be He, then said: 'In Jerusalem you did not observe the precept relating to issues, but now you are fulfilling it,' as it is said, *As for thee also, because of the blood of thy covenant I send forth thy prisoners out of the pit* (Zech. IX, 11) [which means], You have remembered the blood at Sinai, and for this do '*I send forth thy prisoners*'. R. Shabbethai said: He [Jeconiah] did not move thence before the Holy One, blessed be He, pardoned him all his sins. Referring to this occasion Scripture has said: *Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no blemish in thee* (S.S. IV, 7). A Heavenly Voice went forth and said to them: '*Return, ye backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings*' (Jer. III, 22).⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁶ See *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana*, *Yale Judaica*, translated by William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975), 376-77.

⁴⁹⁷ See Freedman, *Soncino Midrash Rabbah* vol. 4, 249.

Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 47

R. Joshua ben Levi, however, argued as follows: Repentance sets aside the entire decree, and prayer half the decree. You find that it was so with Jeconiah, king of Judah. For the Holy One, blessed be He, swore in His anger, *As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim kind of Judah were the signet on a hand, yet by My right -- note, as R. Meir said, that it was by His right hand that God swore -- I would pluck thee hence* (Jer. 22:24). And what was decreed against Jeconiah? That he die childless. As is said *Write ye this man childless* (Jer. 22:30). But as soon as he avowed penitence, the Holy One, blessed be He, set aside the decree, as is shown by Scripture's reference to *The sons of Jeconiah -- the same is Assir -- Shealtiel his son, etc.* (1 Chron. 3:17). And Scripture says further: *In that day . . . will I take thee, O Zerubbabel . . . the son of Shealtiel . . . and will make thee as a signet* (Haggai 2:23). Behold, then how penitence can set aside the entire decree!⁴⁹⁸

Like the wild olive tree of Romans 11, Zerubbabel was cut-off from the Davidic throne, though not permanently. Zerubbabel would be grafted back in and his line restored. There is no wild olive tree in Zechariah's vision and this fits well with Paul's teaching on the wild olive joining together with the natural olive tree and together becoming one Israel of God. Although Zerubbabel was not a Gentile, his appointment as an Israelite leader was unnatural. The key term "grafted" indicates the properties of the unnatural taking on the properties of the natural and not the reverse. In both cases, Zerubbabel and the wild olive tree are restored by something only God's spirit and anointing could accomplish. For Paul, God's anointing would literally be the anointed one- Messiah, who would make possible Gentile inclusion in the family of God. Rabbinic sources likewise indicate a connection between Zerubbabel and the ministry of the Messiah:

Tanhuma Genesis, Toledot

Scripture alludes here to the verse *Who art thou, O great mountain before Zerubbabel? Thou shalt become a plain* (Zech. 4:7). This verse refers to the Messiah, the descendant of David. . . . From whom will the Messiah descend? From Zerubbabel.⁴⁹⁹

Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg on Jeremiah 22:24

⁴⁹⁸ William G. Braude (tr.), *Pesikta Rabbati, Yale Judaica edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), vol. 2, 797.

⁴⁹⁹ Samuel A. Berman (trans.), *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu*, (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1996), 182.

Malbim calls to our attention that in the prophecy of Haggai (2:23), God says, "On that day I will take you, Zerubbabel, and I will make you like a signet," for the King Messiah will be like a signet ring on God's right hand, so to speak. Just as the name of the owner of the ring is engraved on his signet ring, through which he makes himself known, so will God's name be known in the world through the King Messiah, through whom His miracles will be known. He says here that, though, in the future, Coniah will be the signet on My right hand, for the Messiah will spring from his seed, now I will remove him from there.⁵⁰⁰

Immediately following the curse on Jeconiah's house as recorded in Jeremiah 22, the next chapter records a time of restoration ushered in by the Messiah who is referred to as the Branch (root of David):

⁵“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a *righteous Branch*, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’”(ESV)

The same Branch is referred to in Zechariah 3 and in context says,

⁸Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant *the Branch*. ⁹For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. ¹⁰In that day, declares the Lord of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree.” (ESV)

Paul refers to the same Branch as a person in Romans 11:16 and calling him “holy” like Zechariah’s description (righteous branch). Did Paul have Zechariah’s vision of the two olive trees in mind when writing Romans 11? As a Pharisee and instructor of the *Tanakh*, it would not be unlikely to see how they could have been at the forefront of his mind especially given their unique role and selection in both passages. Regardless, both passages seem to have a focus on the work of Yahweh’s Spirit and the work of the

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 183.

Anointed one. Messianic deliverance makes holy what is unholy, and acceptable what is unacceptable, and God's people who were not God's people.

In the larger context of Romans 11 which begins in chapter 9, Paul quotes Hosea 2:23 and 1:10: "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.' "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'" (ESV)⁵⁰¹ In the original context Hosea addresses, these verses refer to Yahweh's restoration of ethnic Israel in the last days. However, Paul's use of Hosea's prophecy is in reference to Gentiles, precisely the point he is making in Rom 11:16-24 that the Israel of God would include but not be limited to ethnic Israel. Stated another way, Paul's teaching on ethnic Israel would not be limited to Abrahamic DNA but rather Abrahamic faith. This is something he will argue was promised from the beginning and Paul brings the reader back to the Abrahamic narrative and to Torah to explain.

4.9 Mount of Olives

4.9.1 General Portrayal

This section will explore the theological significance of the Mount of Olives in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Mount of Olives located on the eastern side of Jerusalem, gets its name from the presence of extensive olive orchards, though it contains only a fraction of what it had in antiquity. Although the number of direct occurrences to the Mount of Olives is scarce (two occurrences) its association as a divine mountain occupying a strategic location is warranted. Both of these occurrences are addressed here as well as several indirect or probable references as well.

⁵⁰¹ Rom 9:25-26.

The first direct occurrence is found in 2 Samuel 15:30.⁵⁰² In the context of fleeing from his son Absalom, David leaves Jerusalem for the Mount of Olives. As he ascends the mountain, he covers his head while weeping as do his followers. Then in 2 Samuel 15:32, the text records the summit of the mount as a place where God was worshipped. Heard notes that this location was not mentioned beforehand as a place of worship. He goes on to suggest that given the inclination of ancient people to worship on mountains, it is not impossible that a sanctuary existed here.⁵⁰³ Heard, though uncommitted, advances the possibility of identifying this place of worship with Nob as recorded in 1 Samuel 21:1 and 22:9-11.⁵⁰⁴ However, the next occurrence in Zechariah 14 offers strong support that it would have been a choice place of worship, at least among the Israelites.

The second direct occurrence of the phrase “the Mount of Olives” occurs in Zechariah 14:4-5.⁵⁰⁵ The context describes the eschatological Day of Yahweh. Here Yahweh as the anticipated Messiah is prophesied to come as King of Israel, accompanied by his faithful followers (holy ones). After a great earthquake, which will split the Mount

⁵⁰² 2 Sam 15:30-32a: “³⁰But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went. ³¹And it was told David, ‘Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.’ And David said, ‘O Lord, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.’ ³²While David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped...(ESV).”

⁵⁰³ Warren J. Heard, Jr. in Freedman, David. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, V. 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 13.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁰⁵ Zech 14:4-5: “On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. ⁵And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.(ESV)”

of Olives in two, Yahweh's presence on earth will culminate in "his feet landing on the Mount of Olives."

In addition to the direct references above, a number of other indirect references may also be inferred. 1 Kings 11:7-8 records the high places Solomon built for his pagan wives to worship the Moabite god Chemosh and the Ammonite god Molech.⁵⁰⁶ The location is revealed in 2 Kings 23:13 as east of Jerusalem and identified by the name "Mount of Corruption" in reference to the abomination Solomon had allowed.⁵⁰⁷ Some have suggested a word play in 2 Kings 23:13, comparing the mount of corruption from the Hebrew word מִשְׁחָה with מַשְׁחָה for anointed. The sacred anointing oil is produced from the abundance of olive trees on the mountain for use in priestly and royal Israelite anointing. Allowing for this sacred space to be devoted to another god or gods would have corrupted the site as an abomination.

Another indirect reference may be discerned from Ezekiel 11:23 which records the mountain east of Jerusalem as the site from which the glory of the Lord rests after departing from the temple. Later in the vision, Ezekiel records he sees the reverse happen, where the glory of the Lord returns to the temple at the eschaton in the new Jerusalem. The identification of this mountain is the Mount of Olives.

⁵⁰⁶ 1 Kgs 11:7-8: ⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. ⁸ And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods (ESV).

⁵⁰⁷ 2 Kgs 11:13-14: ¹³ And the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, to the south of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites (ESV).¹⁴

Finally in rabbinic literature, the burning of the red heifer in Numbers 19:1-11 is associated with the Mount of Olives as the site where the purification ritual occurred. The Mishna records the Mount of Olives as the starting point for lighting the signal fires which would signal the new moon celebration extending all the way to Babylon.⁵⁰⁸ Additionally, tradition holds that the Jews who died outside of the land would be resurrected on the Mount of Olives.⁵⁰⁹ According to tradition, the olive branch plucked by the Dove in Gen 8:11 was taken from the Mount of Olives.⁵¹⁰

4.9.2 *Synthesis*

In light of the occurrences and possible references listed above, the Mount of Olives is associated with Yahweh worship, the association with other gods is considered an abomination (1 Kings 11:7-8). It has associations with the anointing oil of Exodus 27 because of the presence of olive orchards and the use in temple activity. Zechariah's prophecy places the Mount of Olives within the context of Messianic deliverance and the Day of Yahweh. Ezekiel's vision records the glory of Yahweh departing and returning to earth at the Mount of Olives on the great eschatological day.

4.10 Olive in early Rabbinical Literature

4.10.1 *Early Rabbinic Oral Traditions*

The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with any further associations of the olive, olive tree and olive oil as they were understood in rabbinic oral tradition and to see if its significance may have been redacted in any other way. Although some of these

⁵⁰⁸ These occurrences are documented in the section on rabbinic literature.

⁵⁰⁹ *m. Ketub.* 111a

⁵¹⁰ *Gen. Rab.* 33:6.

sources may move outside of the delimitation of this study, the Talmud as well as other rabbinic literature would be a necessary source to consult in search of possible associations the olive may have had in the religious life of Israel. The Talmud, both Jerusalem and Babylonian, are believed by many in the Jewish faith to have been the Oral Torah revealed to Moses and equal in authority as the Hebrew Scriptures. Others within the Judaic community consider it secondary in importance but a helpful tool for study. Its place in this study is to include any relevant associations of the olive among what could have been understood as the Oral Torah which predates its composition by centuries and nevertheless document any apparent differences or affirmations concerning the significance of the olive.

Saldarini has noted the difficulties in using rabbinic literature as an interpretative aide to New Testament studies and some of those same problems may be inherent to Old Testament studies though for different reasons. He asserts that a continuous normative form of Judaism as implied by the rabbinical sources have been demonstrated to be anachronistic for the first century. “The rabbinic sources retrojected their understanding of Jewish life and institutions onto Judaism as far back as Ezra in the 5th century.”⁵¹¹ If there is a recognized presence of what Saldarini refers to as “retrojection,” and I suppose this may be the case with commentators writing in any era, it would serve the present study by providing a possible indicator of a change in interpretation. This study would benefit as it would establish an association of the olive tree (either symbolic or theological) not supported by the evidence already demonstrated in this study and indicate what may have influenced a possible change in association (i.e. Hellenism).

⁵¹¹ Anthony J. Saldarini, Rabbinic Literature, in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 602-603.

The dating of these sources are problematic as well. Rabbinic traditions reached their final form around 200 A.D. and Saldarini makes the observation that “No rabbinic document or set of traditions can be presumed to be early in its entirety; nor does a late historical reference in a large collection prove that all its traditions are late.”⁵¹² In any case these may provide the reader with the earliest extrabiblical, Jewish sources, commenting on the olive.

Of what has been preserved at present, the olive is mentioned 1224 times in the Jerusalem Talmud and 252 times in the Babylonian Talmud. In the Babylonian Talmud, nearly all the occurrences refer to the olive in the context of a unit of measurement, “the size of an olive.” The following are the exceptions. They are organized by the Jerusalem Talmud first and then the Babylonian Talmud and according to tractate. A synthesis will follow the presentation of the select data.

Jerusalem Talmud

Tractate Terumot

1. [E] it is forbidden [i.e., the unconsecrated olives are rendered forbidden for consumption by a non-priest].
[F] But [if] whole unconsecrated [olives are pickled] with crushed [olives] in the status of heave-offering — it is permitted.⁵¹³
2. Said R. Mana, “*He who says* it is permitted speaks of a case in which the clean and unclean fish were pickled simultaneously. [The fish absorbs the clean brine together.] *He who says that* the fish is forbidden speaks of a case in which the clean and unclean fish were pickled successively. [The clean fish is pickled second, in the brine in which the unclean fish was pickled.] You may know that that is so, *for we have learned in the Mishnah: [As regards] unconsecrated olives that one pickled with olives in the status of heave-offering — [or if*

⁵¹² Ibid., 603.

⁵¹³ y.Terumot.10:4 E,F. Neusner, Jacob, ed. *The Jerusalem Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*. Translated by Tzvee Zahavy, Edward Goldman, and B. Barry Levy. Cdr edition. (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010).

they were pickled] in brine in the status of heave-offering — it is forbidden [i.e., the unconsecrated olives are rendered forbidden for consumption by a non-priest]. Doesn't this refer to a case in which the consecrated and unconsecrated olives were pickled successively?" [The brine left over from pickling the olives in the status of heave-offering imparts the status of heave officering to the unconsecrated olives that are pickled afterward.]⁵¹⁴

3. **R. Ilia in the name of R. Eleazar: "This is what the Mishnah says: And they may not bring first fruits in the form of liquids, except for that which is produced from olives or grapes. And even after the householder has produced the juice and has it in hand, he may not do so." [That is de facto as well as de jure.]⁵¹⁵**

Tractate Pe'ah

4. Said R. Abun, "If Scripture had specified only the case of vineyards [in connection with peah], that would be all right. But Scripture singled out both vineyards and olive trees. If Scripture had mentioned olive trees as subject to peah but did not specify that vineyards are liable to peah, I should have said that olive trees, exempt from the category of separated produce, are subject to peah. But grapevines, subject to separated grapes, are not subject to peah. Thus Scripture had to say that grapevines are subject to peah."⁵¹⁶
5. Said Rabban Gamaliel, "In my father's household they used to designate one [portion of produce as] peah on behalf of all of the olive trees that they owned in every direction [i.e., all that they owned together]."⁵¹⁷
6. Let us derive the answer from the following: R. Yosé says, "The [restrictions of the] forgotten sheaf do not apply to olive trees [at all]." And said R. Simeon bar Yaqim, "R. Yosé made this statement only in olden times, when olives were uncommon, because Hadrian the Wicked devastated the Land of Israel. But now, when olive trees are once again abundant, the law of the forgotten sheaf does apply to olives."⁵¹⁸

Tractate Pesahim: All the occurrences refer to the olive as a unit of measurement.

⁵¹⁴ y.Terumot.10:5.I:1C

⁵¹⁵ y.Terumot.11:3.I:1A

⁵¹⁶ y.Pe'ah.1:4.C

⁵¹⁷ y.Pe'ah.2:3.F

⁵¹⁸ y.Pe'ah.7:1.2:B

Tractate Nazir

7. *How shall we interpret the issue?* Is it because of the juice [that exudes from the prohibited slice?] We already have learned, “**As to what Imparts uncleanness by reason of exuded juice, it is only what exudes from olives and grapes [M. Ter.11:3].** [If one consumes olive oil or grape juice from produce in the status of *orlah*, he is flogged. There is no punishment by reason of consuming the juice of other produce in that status.]”⁵¹⁹

Tractate Horayot

8. **Who is the anointed priest? It is the one who is anointed with the anointing oil, not the one who is dedicated by many garments [M. 3:2G]:**

[B] Said R. Huna, “For all those six months during which David was on the run from Absalom, it was through a she-goat that he would attain atonement for himself, like any ordinary person.”

[C] *It was taught in a Tannaitic tradition:* R. Judah b. R. Ilai says, “As to the anointing oil that Moses prepared on the mountain, miracles were done with it from beginning to end.

[D] “For at the beginning it was only twelve *logs*, as it is said, ‘And a *hin* [= twelve *logs*] of olive oil’ (Ex. 30:24).

[E] “If it was merely to anoint the logs of wood, there would not have been enough. How much the more so [would this small volume be lacking], since the fire fed on it, the kettle fed on it, the wood fed on it. From it the tabernacle and all its utensils were anointed, ‘the altar and all its utensils, the candelabrum and all its utensils, the laver and its base’ (Ex. 30:27). From it were anointed Aaron the high priest and his sons all seventy days of consecration. From it were anointed high priests and kings.”

[F] A king at the outset requires anointing. A king who is son of a king does not require anointing,

[G] for it is said, “[And the Lord said to him,] Arise, anoint him, for this is he” (1 Sam. 16:12) — this one requires anointing, but his descendants do not require anointing.

[H] But a high priest, son of a high priest, even in the tenth generation, requires anointing.

[I] “And yet all of [that original oil, used for so many purposes] remains for the age to come, as it is said, ‘This shall be my holy anointing oil throughout your generations’ (Ex. 30:31).

[J] They anoint kings only by a spring, as it is said, “.Eand cause Solomon my son to ride on my own mule and bring him down to Gihon, and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet ther anoint him king of Israel” (1 Kings 1:33-34).

⁵¹⁹ y.Nazir.6:II.3:A

- [K] They anoint kings only on account of strife.
- [L] On what account was Solomon anointed? Because of the strife raised by Adonijah, and Joash, because of Athaliah, and Jehu, because of Joram.
- [M] Now has it not been written as follows: “Arise, anoint him, for this is he,” meaning, this one requires anointing, but the kings of Israel do not require anointing?
- [N] And did not Josiah hide it away?
- [O] It was said that they were anointed by balsam oil.
- [P] Joahaz [was anointed] on account of Jehoiakim his brother, who was two years older than he.
- [Q] They anoint kings only from a horn. Saul and Jehu, who were anointed from a curse, had a transient reign. David and Solomon, who were anointed from a horn, had an enduring reign.
- [R] They do not anoint priests as kings.
- [DD] These are the five things in which the latter house of the sanctuary was less than the former one, and these are they: fire, ark, Urim, Thummim, and holy anointing oil [none of which was available in the Second Temple].”⁵²⁰

Tractate Shabbat

9. [Their oil M. A.Z. 2:8B(3):] Who forbade their oil?
- [B] Judah said, “Daniel forbade it: ‘And Daniel resolved [that he would not defile himself with the king’s rich food or with the wine which he drank]’ (Dan. 1:8).”
- [C] R. Aha, R. Tanhum bar Hiyya in the name of R. Yohanan, and some say it is in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi, “Because [Daniel] saw that [Israelites] were [risking their lives to] go up to the Royal Mountain [to collect the olives, so he made a decree concerning it, since] they were put to death on account [of avoiding the use of gentile oil].”
- [D] Who permitted it? **Rabbi and his court [permitted their oil]** [M.A.Z. 2:8C].⁵²¹
10. R. Zeira, R. Judah in the name of Rab: “Four sorts of fires [may be kindled on the eve of the Sabbath if there is time for the fire to catch] any amount [of the fuel] whatsoever:⁵²²

⁵²⁰ y.Horayot.3:2.I:A-III.

⁵²¹ y.Shabbat.1:3.I:6A-D.

⁵²² y.Shabbat.1:11.II:1A

11. [F] R. Tarfon says, “They kindle only with olive oil...”
R. Ishmael says, “They do not kindle the Sabbath lamp with tar, because of the honor owing to the Sabbath [Tar produces a putrid smell.]”[M. 2:2B-C].
R. Yohanan b. Nuri got up on his feet and said, “What will the people in Babylonia do, who have only sesame oil? What will the people in Medea do, who have only nut oil? What will the people in Alexandria do, who have only radish oil? What will the people of Cappadocia do, who have neither one nor the other?”⁵²³
12. [As to M. 2:3A,] said R. Simeon bar R. Isaac, “It is written,’[And you shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light,] that a lamp may be setup to burn continually’ (Ex. 27:20). [Sages] drew the inference that you have only flax that produces a suitable flame.”⁵²⁴
13. [A] A reed for olives, if it has a knot on its top, is susceptible to uncleanness.
[B] And if not, it is not susceptible to uncleanness.
[C] One way or the other, it is handled on the Sabbath.⁵²⁵

Tractate Maaserot: All occurrences pertain to the laws regarding harvesting and tithe.

Tractate Berakhot

14. We must emend the Mishnah as follows: Workers may recite [the Shema’] from atop a tree and craftsmen from atop a scaffold. And it was taught: [Workers may recite [the Shema’] from atop a tree,] and they may recite the Prayer from atop an olive tree or from atop a fig tree. But from all other kinds of trees one must come down to recite the Prayer below. And the householder must always come down and recite the Prayer below. [T. 2:8.]⁵²⁶
15. I:3: Yohanan ate olives and recited blessings before and after. And R. Hiyya bar Abba [Wawa] stared at him. Said to him R. Yohanan, “Babylonian, what are you staring at? Don’t you know that blessings must be recited before and after eating any food of the seven kinds of produce [of the Land of Israel]?” [The Talmud explains:] He knew the law. So what was his question? [He had a doubt whether one should recite a blessing over the olive] because [when

⁵²³ y.Shabbat.2:1.X:3.F-2:2.3:I

⁵²⁴ y.Shabbat.2:3.I:1A

⁵²⁵ y.Shabbat.17:3

⁵²⁶ y.Berakhot.2:5.I:1

you remove] the olive's pit, it leaves you with less [than an olive's bulk of volume, i.e. less than the minimum volume for which one recites a blessing].]⁵²⁷

Tractate Shebi'it

16. And R. Joshua accord with Rabbi, as it is taught on Tannaite authority: Said Rabbi, "Why did they say, 'A five year old tree, a six year old tree, a seven year old tree?' Rather I [would] phrase [the rule as follows]: grapevines [are considered saplings until they are] five years old, and fig trees [are considered saplings until they are] six years old, and olive trees [are considered saplings until they are] seven years old" [T. Sheb. 1:3].⁵²⁸

Tractate Baba Batra

17. [EE] And anywhere people may take plants for themselves, except olives and grapes — [FF] in the case of an olive plant, from the newest of the new and the oldest of the old [in which case it is not yet productive or is past producing, so it is permitted to take growths]. [GG] But in the case of an olive plant in the shape of a whip even in the case of the newest of the new, it is prohibited to do so.⁵²⁹

Tractate Besah: All references are to the olive as a unit of measurement.

Tractate Demai

18. olive trees as equivalent to land. [B] *Then R. Judah does not concur with R. Eliezer, for A priest or a Levite who sharecropped a field for an Israelite — R. Eliezer says, "The [heave-offering or] tithes belong to them [to the priest or Levite], for on this account did they come [to sharecrop the field]" [M. Dem. 6:2].* And here a priest or a Levite who sharecropped an olive grove for an Israelite — the tithes belong to them, for on this account they came to sharecrop the olive grove.

Said R. Yosé, "Here [where the stipulation is forbidden] the priest profits. [He gets the use of the olives and gives the owner half of the tithes in payment for the delay.] There, if he himself profits by delaying repayment, this is forbidden as interest and the desecration of Holy Things."⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ XXXII.y.Berakhot.6:1.I:3

⁵²⁸ y.Shei'it.1:6.2:1E

⁵²⁹ y.Baba Batra.5:1.I:2

⁵³⁰ y.Demai.6:4.I:1

Tractate Baba Mesia: Nearly all occurrences refer to settling land and olive tree ownership disputes.

Tractate Hallah: Occurrences refer to olives and oil in the context of tithing and what constitutes acceptable tithes.

Tractate Yoma

19. *There we have learned: Than the first kind of oil from the first way of preparing the olives, there is none better; the second kind of oil from the first way of crushing the olives and the first kind of oil from the second way of crushing the olives are equal [M. Men. 8:5].*⁵³¹
20. *It has been taught:* If one offered up an olive's bulk of incense outside of the Temple, he is liable [since that bulk is suitable for use on the altar].
[B] If he offered up less than an olive's bulk of incense inside the Temple, he is exempt.
[C] R. Zeirah in the name of R. Jeremiah: "The community thereby is acquitted of its obligation [for incense on that day]. [After the fact it suffices.]"
[D] R. Yosé b. R. Bun in the name of R. Jeremiah: "*On the basis of that which has been taught*, 'If one has burned an olive's bulk of incense outside of the Temple, he is liable,' you may infer that if one offered up less than an olive's bulk of incense inside the Temple, he is exempt [so the meaning is that one is not liable for offering too little]. [The thesis of the meaning of 'exempt' offered at (C) is rejected.]"
[I:3 A] "[Incense beaten] small" (Lev. 16:12).
[B] Why does Scripture say so?
[C] Because Scripture says, "And you shall beat some of it very small, [and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you; it shall be for you most holy]" (Exod. 30: 36).⁵³²

Tractate Abodah Zarah

22. "And is it not written, 'When David came to the summit, where he would prostrate himself to God' (2 Sam. 15:32)[this being the summit of the Mount of Olives, and this would indicate that this was a place where prostration usually took place, and it was not the temple mount]?"⁵³³

⁵³¹ y.Yoma.3:6.I:1

⁵³² y.Yoma.4:5.I:2-3

⁵³³ y.Abodah Zarah.4:1.I:2

Tractate Hagigah: Most of the occurrences are in reference to the pressing or crushing of olives.

Tractate Nedarim: Most are in reference to olive-press regulations and cutting olives.

Tractate Shebuot: All occurrences refer to a unit of measurement.

Tractate Mo'ed Qatan: All the occurrences refer to what is permissible during a festival

Tractate Kilayim

23. It was taught as a Tannaite rule: they do not graft the branch of a palm tree onto olive [trees], because [these are grafts] of a tree onto a tree [of a different kind] [T. Kil. 1:10].

[B] R. Yudan asked, “But doesn't this conflict with R. Levi: ‘Your wife will be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your house, your children will be like olive shoots around your table’ (Ps. 128:3): just as there is no grafting among olives, so may there be no worthlessness among your children.’ It follows [from the prohibition of an olive graft] that there could be worthlessness among them.”

[C] That case is different for one is prohibited from grafting olive branches onto the cleft of a palm tree not because it may yield fruit but because the palm tree will sweeten the olives.⁵³⁴

24. R. Meir says, “Every tree is [considered] a barren tree, except for the olive tree and the fig tree.”⁵³⁵

Tractate Maaser Sheni

25. ”He said to him, “You will be raised up in a few days.”

[C] Somebody else came to R. Yosé b. Halapta. He said to him, “I saw in my dream that I was wearing a crown of olive branches.”

[D] He said to him, “You will be flogged.”

[E] He said to him, “To him you said, You will be raised up, and to me you said, You will be flogged!”

[F] He said to him, “His olives were budding, yours were ready to be pressed for oil.”

[II:8 A] Somebody came to R. Ishmael b. R. Yosé. He said to him, “I saw in my dream that someone was watering an olive tree with oil.”

⁵³⁴ y.Kilayim.1:7.I:6

⁵³⁵ y.Kilayim.6:3.N

[B] *He said to him, “May the spirit of that man burst. He has been intimate with his mother.”*⁵³⁶

Tractate Orlah

26. *It was taught as a Tannaite statement in the name of R. Meir, “All sorts of trees are subject to an intention that renders them exempt from the law of ‘orlah except for an olive or a fig tree, [which are always planted for their fruit].”*

*R. Meir rules in a manner consistent with principles of his expressed elsewhere, for he said, “All trees may be classified as barren except for olive and fig trees.”*⁵³⁷

27. Does the same rule apply by analogy to the case of an olive tree that one planted for oil for lighting the Hanukkah lamp?
 [What kind of a question is this?] Said R. Yosé b. R. Bun, “The matter of the etrog derives from the authority of the Torah, while the matter of oil for the Hanukkah lamp derives merely from the legislation of the scribes *and yet you say this?*”
 [J] So is there an analogy between the present case and the olive tree that one planed to provide oil for lighting the Temple candelabrum. For here we have a religious obligation imposed by the Torah and there we have a religious obligation imposed by the Torah [the etrog].⁵³⁸

Tractate Bikkurim

28. They may not bring firstfruits [from any produce] other than [the] seven kinds [for which the land of Israel was noted, i.e., wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives used for oil, and dates for honey (Deut. 8:8)]:
 [B] not from dates of the hill country,
 [C] and not from fruits of the valley,
 [D] and not from olives used for oil which are not of the choicest kind.⁵³⁹
29. Those [who come] from nearby bring figs and grapes,
 [B] but those [who come] from afar bring dried figs and raisins.
 [C] And an ox walks before them,

⁵³⁶ y.Maaser Sheni.4:6.II:7

⁵³⁷ y.Orlah.1:1.I:2A

⁵³⁸ y.Orlah.1:1.II:2H

⁵³⁹ y.Bikkurim.1:3.

[D] its horns overlaid with gold,

[E] and a wreath of olive [leaves] on its head.

and a wreath of olive [leaves] on its head: for olives are one of the seven species for which the Land is celebrated.⁵⁴⁰

Tractate Sheqalim:

30. The flask of anointing oil: “Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh five hundred sheqels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, two hundred and fifty, and of aromatic cane two hundred and fifty, and of cassia five hundred, according to the sheqel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin” (Exod. 30:23-24).
[H] The hin contains twelve logs of liquid measure.
[I] “In this [oil] they seethed the roots,” the words of R. Meir.
[J] R. Judah says, “One would seethe them in water and then put oil on them. When the water would absorb the scent, one would then remove them, as the perfumers do.”
[K] This is in line with that which is written, “And you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil, blended as by the perfumer; a holy anointing oil it shall be” (Exod. 30:25).
[L] “It will be”—this refers for all generations to come (cf. Exod. 30-37).
[M] It was taught: R. Judah b. R. Ilai says, “With the anointing oil which Moses made in the wilderness miracles were done from beginning to end [Y. Hor. 3:2X.N-JJ = M-R, IV.A-U].
[N] “For at the outset there were only twelve logs, as it is said, ‘and of olive oil, a hin’ (Exod. 30:24).
[O] “Now if there was not sufficient oil for putting oil on the wood, how much the more so [that the oil was insufficient for much else]!
[P] “And yet the fire fed on it, the wood fed on it, the pot fed on it,
[Q] “with it were anointed the tabernacle and all its utensils, the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and all its utensils;
[R] “with it were anointed Aaron and his sons for all the seven days of consecration;
[S] “from it were anointed high priests and kings. [And yet it sufficed (see V.D)!]”
[V:1 A] A king [anointed] at the outset [of a dynasty] requires anointing. But the son of an anointed king does not, for it is said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he” (1 Sam. 16:12).
[B] This one requires anointing. But his son does not require anointing.
[C] But a high priest son of a high priest requires anointing, even down to the tenth successive generation.
[D] Now the whole [of the twelve *hin* of oil] will remain for the age to come, for it is said, “It will be holy anointing oil for all your generations” (Exod. 30:31).
[E] They anoint kings only over a spring, as it is said, “Cause Solomon my

⁵⁴⁰ y.Bikkurim.3:2, III:1A

son to ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon; and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel" (1 Kings 1:33-34).

[F] They anoint a king who is son of a king only on account of dissension.

[G] Why was Solomon anointed at all? Because of the struggle with Adonijah; Joash, because of Athaliah; Jehu, because of Joram.

[H] Now is it not written, "Rise, anoint him; for this is he" (1 Sam. 16:12)?

[I] This one requires anointing, but the kings of Israel do not require anointing.

[J] But Jehoahaz, because of Jehoiakim, his brother, who was two years older than he, [was anointed].

[K] Now did not Josiah hide the anointing oil away [so where did they get it]?

[L] You must say, they anointed him with oil from a balsam tree.

[M][49d] They anoint kings only from a horn. Saul and Jehu, who were anointed from a curse, had a transient reign. David and Solomon, who were anointed from a horn, had an enduring reign.

[N] They do not anoint priests as kings.⁵⁴¹

Tractate Sukkah: References are to building materials for booths.

Tractate Rosh Hashana: References are to kindling flares on the Mount of Olives.

Tractate Ta'anit

31. There were two cedars on the Mount of Olives. Under one of them there were four stalls, selling food preserved in a condition of cultic cleanliness [to be eaten in Jerusalem].⁵⁴²

Tractate Megillah: One reference to cutting olives.

Tractate Yebamot: Refers to unit of measurement or cutting olives.

Tractate Ketubot

32. There are twenty-four kinds of cedars, and of all of them, Scripture has explicitly referred to only seven of them alone. That is in line with the following: "I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive; I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane, and the pine together" (Is. 41:19).⁵⁴³

⁵⁴¹ y.Sheqalim.6:1.V:1

⁵⁴² y.Ta'anit.4:3.VII:4

⁵⁴³ y.Ketubot.7:9.I:2.

Tractate Sotah: Repeats the flask of anointing oil and comments by R. Judah.

Tractate Gittin: All occurrences refer to a unit of measurement or heave-offering.

Tractate Qiddushin: One reference to an olive press.

Tractate Sanhedrin: A reference to tithes and 1 Kings 5:26.

Tractate Makkot: A reference to Deut. 28:40

Babylonian Talmud

Tractate Shabbat

1. REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE SABBATH AND 'HANUKAH LIGHT.

R. Joshua b. Levi said: "All fats are good for the 'Hanukah lamp, but olive oil is the best." Abayi said: "My master always sought for poppy-seed oil, because, said he, it burns slowly (and p. 37 the light lasts longer), but when he heard the saying of R. Joshua b.. Levi, he sought for olive oil, for that gives a clearer light."⁵⁴⁴

2. REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE SABBATH AND 'HANUKAH LIGHT.

MISHNA II.: The lamp used on a (biblical) feast-night shall not be fed with oil of rejected heave-offerings. R. Ishmael said: The Sabbath lamp shall not be fed with tar, out of honor for the Sabbath. The sages, however, allow all fatty substances for this purpose: poppy-seed oil, nut oil, fish oil, radish oil, wild-gourd oil, tar, and naphtha. R. Tarphin said: It shall be lighted with nothing but olive oil.⁵⁴⁵

3. REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE SABBATH AND 'HANUKAH LIGHT.

"Tebhel" even on week days, and the less so on the Sabbath. In a similar manner, white naphtha shall not be used to feed a lamp with on week days, much less on Sabbath, because it is volatile. In the Boraitha it was said that aromatic balsam shall not be used; so also did R. Simeon b. Elazar teach:

⁵⁴⁴ Michael L. Rodkinson (trans.) *The Babylonian Talmud, Book I: Tract Sabbath, Ch.2* (Boston: 1903), 36-37.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 40.

Aromatic balsam is nothing but resin, that comes forth from aromatic trees. R. Ishmael said: The (Sabbath) lamp shall not be fed with anything that comes from the trunk of a tree. R. Ishmael b. Beroqa said: It shall be lighted only with such substances as come from fruit. R. Tarphon, however, said: It shall be fed only with olive oil. R. Johanan b. Nuri then arose and said; "What shall the people of Babylonia do, who have nothing but poppy-seed oil? What shall the people of Media do, who have nothing but nut oil? What shall the people of Alexandria do, who have nothing but radish oil? and what shall the people of Cappadocia do, who have no oil of any kind, nothing but tar?" Nay; we have no choice but to accept the decree of the masters as to substances which should not be used. Even fish oil and resin maybe used. R. Simeon Shezori said: Oil of wild gourds and naphtha may be used. Symmachos said: No animal fat save fish oil may be used.⁵⁴⁶

4. REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE PRESCRIBED QUANTITIES OF VICTUALS AND BEVERAGES WHICH MUST NOT BE CARRIED ABOUT ON THE SABBATH:

"For lime," etc. A Boraitha states: To cover the smallest finger of a damsel. Said R. Jehudah in the name of Rabh: Daughters of Israel, when they become of age, and they have not yet developed the signs of puberty, the poor smear their bodies with lime, the rich ones with fine meal, and princesses with myrrh oil. What is myrrh oil? στακτή. And R. Jeremiah b. Aba said: Olive oil from olives which were only one third ripe.⁵⁴⁷

5. RABBI AQIBA'S REGULATIONS ON DIFFERENT SUBJECTS.

" But what have those of old limited? Answered R. Samuel bar Na'hmeni in the name of R. Jonathan: "It is written [Gen. xxxvi. 20]: "These are the sons of Seir the Chorite, who inhabited the land." Only they inhabited the land? Did the rest of mankind inhabit heaven? It simply means to state that they made the earth inhabitable by their knowledge of agriculture and their experience as to what ground is adapted for the planting of olive trees, vines, date trees, etc.⁵⁴⁸

6. REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE HANDLING OF UTENSILS AND FURNITURE ON THE SABBATH:

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., Ch.2, 42.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., Ch.8, 149-150.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., Ch.9, 157.

MISHNA: The hollow olive-cane is subject to defilement if it has a knot; if not, it is not subject to defilement. In any event, it may be handled on the Sabbath.⁵⁴⁹

Tractate Baba Metzia (Middle Gate)

7. LAWS RELATING TO FOUND ARTICLES, WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT BE KEPT WITHOUT PROCLAMATION, AND HOW FOUND ARTICLES SHALL BE CARED FOR, ETC.

χασσια which were found in a public thoroughfare, although they were near the field where they grew, and also a fig tree the branches of which were bent toward the street, and one found figs beneath, the people are allowed to eat these, and it is not considered robbery; they are free from tithe." Now the Boraitha would not contradict Abayi, as the cassia are of great value, and it is known where the fruit of the fig tree would drop; but the latter part of the same Boraitha states that if it were an olive tree or carob, it is prohibited.⁵⁵⁰

8. REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE TIME A LABORER HAS TO WORK, WHAT HE MAY OR MAY NOT CONSUME OF THE ARTICLE HE IS WORKING, AND ABOUT MUZZLING AN OX WHILE LABORING.

The same is the case with all products that are brought forth from the ground, and when they are ripe the laborer engaged in producing them may partake of them. But their likeness is further seen in that they are brought to the altar (wine to the offerings, and fine meal to meal-offerings)? Therefore, olive trees may also be inferred from this, as oil from the olives is also brought to the altar with the meal-offering. [Is it, then, necessary to infer olives from vineyards and stalks? Are the olives themselves not called a vineyard; as it is written [Judges, xv. 5]: "And burnt up both shocks and standing corn, as also oliveyards"? Said R. Papa: It is named a vineyard of olives (Kerm Zayith), but not indefinitely a "vineyard," which does not include olives. And the above-cited verse reads, "when thou comest in the vineyard," therefore olives are to be inferred from above.]⁵⁵¹

Tractate Erubin

9. REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE WIDTH AND HEIGHT OF AN ERUB CONSTRUCTED IN STREETS INHABITED SOLELY BY ISRAELITES, AND REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ERUB BY A CARAVAN.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., Ch. 17, 268.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., Tract Baba Metzia, Ch. 2, 45-46.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., Tract Baba Metzia, Ch. 7, 230-231.

R. Hyya bar Ashi in the name of Rabh said: The several prescribed quantities (as mentioned in Tract Sabbath), the Chatzitzah (intervention of articles at bathing), and the ordinance concerning the walls of an entry and of a booth are ordinances given by Moses at the Mount Sinai. How can it be said, that these are Sinaic laws, they are biblical laws? For it is written [Deutr. viii. 8]: "A land of wheat and barley, and of the vine, and the fig-tree and the pomegranate; a land of oilolive and of honey."⁵⁵²

Tractate Rosh Hashana

10. THE OBSERVERS OF THE NEW MOON BEFORE THE HIGH COURT IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM,

MISHNA: Formerly bonfires were lighted (to announce the appearance of the new moon); but when the Cutheans 2 practised their deceit, it was ordained that messengers should be sent out. How were these bonfires lighted? They brought long staves of cedar wood, canes, and branches of the olive tree, and bundles of tow which were tied on top of them with twine; with these they went to the top of a mountain, and lighted them, and kept waving them to and fro, upward and downward, till they could perceive the same repeated by another person on the next mountain, and thus, on the third mountain, etc. Whence did these bonfires commence? From the Mount of Olives to Sartabha, from Sartabha to Grophinah, from Grophinah to Hoveran, from Hoveran to Beth Baltin; they did not cease waving the burning torches at Beth Baltin, to and fro, upward and downward, until the whole country of the captivity appeared like a blazing fire.

"How were these bonfires lighted? They brought long staves of cedar wood," etc. R. Jehudah says: There are four kinds of cedars: the common cedar, the Qetros, the olive tree, and the cypress. Qetros says Rabh is (in Aramaic) Adara or a species of cedar. Every cedar, said R. Johanan, that was carried away from Jerusalem, God will in future times restore, as it is written [Isa. xli. 19]: "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar tree," and by "wilderness" He means Jerusalem, as it is written [Isa. lxiv. 19]: "Zion is (become) a wilderness."⁵⁵³

Tractate Baba Bathra

11. RULES AND REGULATIONS CONCERNING SALES OF SHIPS, BOATS, ANIMALS, AND TEAMS; CONCERNING BROODS OF PIGEONS AND BEASTS; TREES, WITH THE GROUND AND WITHOUT. HOW TO ACQUIRE TITLE TO FRUIT AND FLAX. OF ARTICLES WHICH BECAME DEARER OR CHEAPER BETWEEN THE TIME OF SALE AND DELIVERY. AT WHAT TIME THE WHOLESALERS AND STOREKEEPERS HAD TO CORRECT THEIR WEIGHTS AND

⁵⁵² Ibid., Tract Erubin, Ch. 1, 5.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., Tract Rosh Hashana, Ch.2, 42-43.

MEASURES, AND OF WHAT MATERIAL THE WEIGHTS MIGHT AND MIGHT NOT BE MADE

MISHNA V.: If one buys the brood of a pigeon-coop (e.g., if he buys in the month Nisan all the pigeons to be hatched during the whole year, but not the old ones, and usually each dove hatches two young ones every month, male and female, and those pigeons after two months hatch also, and so it is during the entire year, the month Adar excluded), he must leave the first pair of little ones with the parents. If one buys the brood of a beehive, he has to take the first three broods, after which the owner may make the bees impotent of propagation. If he buys the honey in combs, he must leave two with the beehive. If one buys olive trees for the purpose of cutting them down, he must leave the branches which are only two spans high for the seller.

"Olive trees," etc. The rabbis taught: If one buys a tree for the purpose of cutting it down, he must begin a span high from the ground; if it was an uninoculated sycamore, he must leave three spans; and if a trunk of a sycamore, two spans. If sticks or vines, from the knots upwards. If date and cedar trees, he may take them with the roots, for if they were cut at the top they would not grow again.⁵⁵⁴

The rabbis taught: The roller for smoothing must not be made from a melon stem, as it is too light; nor of iron, as it is too heavy; but of olive, nut, sycamore, or box tree.⁵⁵⁵

Tractate Yomah (Day of Atonement)

12. REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE FASTING ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT, WHAT MAY BE DONE THEREON, AND WHAT MAY NOT BE DONE.

R. Johanan had the scurvy. He went to a matron of Rome. She did something to relieve him on a Thursday and the eve of Sabbath. He asked her, What shall I do on Sabbath?...Said R. A'ha the son of R. Ammi: Water of leavened dough, olive oil, and salt. R. Yemar says: Not the water, but leavened dough itself, olive oil, and salt. R. Ashi says: Fat of the wing of a goose. Said Abayi: I have used all these things, and was not cured until an Arab merchant said: The stones of olives, one-third grown, should be taken and burned in a new Mar, and be applied to the rows of the teeth. This I have done, and have been cured.⁵⁵⁶

Tractate Hagiga (Holocaust)

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., Tract Baba Bathra, Ch.5, 174.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 195.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., Tract Yomah, Ch.8, 128-129.

13. REGULATIONS REGARDING IN WHAT CASES SACRED THINGS ARE MORE RIGOROUS THAN HEAVE-OFFERINGS, AND VICE VERSA

He who finishes his olives shall leave aside one box and place it before the eyes of the priest (in order that he shall examine it as to whether they are not ripe yet, and the priest shall place them in cleanness when they become ripe.⁵⁵⁷

Tractate Succah

14. REGULATIONS CONCERNING PALM BRANCHES, MYRTLES, WILLOWS, AND CITRONS USED ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

GEMARA: ...Torah says: "Seven days ye shall dwell in booths." Therefore we say a Succah should be made of any materials. And so it is written in Nehemiah, viii. 15: "Go forth unto the mountain and fetch olive leaves, and oleaster leaves, and myrtle leaves, and palm leaves, and leaves of the three-leaved myrtle to make booths." R. Jehudah, however, explains this verse thus: That olive leaves and oleaster leaves are for the walls of the Succah, and myrtle leaves, etc., are for the covering.⁵⁵⁸

Tractate Abuda Zara

15. RULES AND REGULATIONS CONCERNING PLACING OF CATTLE WITH HEATHENS, ACCEPTING CURE FROM THEM, AND CONCERNING THINGS WHICH MAY AND MAY NOT BE BOUGHT FROM THEM.

This remedy, however, is effective only in case of external pains; for internal abdominal pains grease the sore place with the molten fat of a goat that has not yet born any offspring, or burn three pumpkin leaves dried in the shade and apply the ashes; also almondworms or olive-oil and wax may be applied, in summer on linen, in winter on cotton.

R. Abuahu suffered once from an ear-ache,... The following is another good remedy for ear-ache: Fill the sick ear with olive-oil, then make of wheat-straw seven wicks, and with the hairs of a cattle attach p. 51 to them the peel of garlic; kindle these wicks and put them into the olive-oil in the ear,⁵⁵⁹

Tractate Horioth (Decisions)

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., Tract Hagiga, Ch. 3, 49.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., Tract Succah, Ch.3, 53.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., Tract Abuda Zara, Ch.2, 50.

16. The rabbis taught the following five objects are conducive to one's forgetting his studies: The eating up of the remnants of the mice's or cat's food, of the heart of a cow, the frequent consuming of olives, the drinking of the water left from one's own washing, and, finally, the bathing of one's feet one kept on the other. According to others add yet this: the putting of one's clothes under one's head while sleeping, The following five are apt to strengthen one's memory: Bread baked on coals, and particularly the consuming of the coals themselves, soft eggs without salt, the frequent drinking of olive oil, of wine flavored with spices, of water left after its use for a dough. According to others add yet this: to dip the finger in salt and consume the latter. According to others add this: the consuming of wheat bread and particularly of the wheat itself. This Boraitha furnishes a support to R. Johanan who was wont of saying that as an olive cause's one to forget one's studies acquired during a period of 70 years, so the oil thereof calls back to one's memory the studies of such a period.⁵⁶⁰

Tractate Baba Kama (First Gate)

17. The rabbis taught: "Upon the following ten conditions did Joshua divide the land to the settlers: ...a branch may be cut off a tree at any place, except of an olive tree;"⁵⁶¹

4.10.2 *Synthesis*

It is clear from the nearly 1500 combined number of occurrences in both the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmud's, that the olive came to be used and commonly understood by its audience as an accepted unit of measurement and more. The majority of references to the olive came with the phrases "an olives bulk" or "the size of an olive" according to the translators. This indicates the high level of function the olive had in the religious and social life of Israel. In the Jerusalem Talmud, tractate *Horoyot* addresses issues pertaining to collective sin and atonement and it is within this context that the anointing oil appears to have been understood as having divine properties. Referring to

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., Tract Horioth, Ch.3, 26.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., Tract Baba Kama, Ch.7, 176.

the anointing oil and incense of Exodus 30, R. Judah b. R. Ilai says, “As to the anointing oil that Moses prepared on the mountain, miracles were done with it from beginning to end.” (y.Horayot.3:2.I:A-III) The absence of the “holy anointing oil” is also cited as a reason the second temple was inferior to the first. The presence of this anointed oil within the religious life of the priesthood and community was a significant affirmation of the divine presence. Tractate Shabbat mentions Israelites risking their lives to go up the Royal Mountain to collect olives. Apparently this was to avoid uncleanness resulting from gentile oil. The identification of the royal mountain with olives is not clear though most likely it refers to the Mount of Olives. The high level of concern for the purity of the olive branches is evidenced by the declaration of olive reeds with knots as unclean (y.Shabbat.17:3). The olive tree together with the fig tree are also listed as the only two types of trees that are acceptable for a worker to recite the Shema from without having to come down (y.Berakhot.2:5.I:1).

In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Baba Metzia* records an interesting statement that equates the olive orchard with a vineyard. Commenting on the verse from Judges 15:5⁵⁶², כָּרֶם is recognized here in the Talmud as having a semantic range to include the olive orchard. Most of the occurrences denote vineyard, but in Judges 15:5 the text indicates a כָּרֶם זִית. The Egyptian noun cognate from the Pyramid texts and its later equivalent is understood as “garden.”⁵⁶³ Grapes would have been one of many types of

⁵⁶² וְעַד־כָּרֶם זִית (and as far as [the] olive vineyards), translation my own.

⁵⁶³ H.P. Müller_in Willem VanGemeren, כָּרֶם ,*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Pub. House, 1997), Vol. 3, 320.

fruits included as a possibility. In the Hebrew scriptures the association of vineyards with olive orchards make it difficult in some cases to determine the type of בָּרֶם the author has in mind.

Müller recognizes concerning the Samaria ostraca⁵⁶⁴ which records “*krm htl (?)*, ‘vineyard of the mound [?],’ and a ‘vineyard of *yhw'ly*’ as sources of wine; in the same context, they mention *smn rhs* “refined [?]/cosmetic oil,” which also appears by itself.”⁵⁶⁵ He further notes the close and recurrent association of wine and olive oil/trees in the Hebrew Scriptures.⁵⁶⁶ The present study would benefit from future research done on this association since it may open up the number of olive tree/orchard references not included in this research.

4.11 Final Synthesis

Olive tree symbolism flows throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, emphasizing a rich theology unique to Israel. The sanctified nature of what it represents, namely those persons and items that are in closest relationship to Yahweh, was not conjured by man but instead through a divine directive according to Exodus 25. This is significant, especially in light of its symbolism developed throughout the Scriptures where we find the following emphases studied in this chapter:

- Judges 9 - royal and divine emphasis
- 1 Kings 6 – divine emphasis
- Psalm 52 – emphasizes eternality, and Yahweh’s faithfulness

⁵⁶⁴ Samaria ostraca, 20, 5; 53, 2; 54, ½; 58, 2; 61, 1.

⁵⁶⁵ Müller in Ibid., 321.

⁵⁶⁶ See Deut 6:11; Josh 24:13; 1 Sam 8:14; Neh 5:11; 9:25; 2 Kgs 5:26; Amo 4:9.

- Zechariah 4 – Yahweh's anointing and anointed
- Paul's midrash – Emphasizes Abraham and/or the Messiah
- Mount of Olives – Emphasis is eschatological, location of Yahweh's departure from earth and the location of the Messiah's return to earth
- Early Rabbinic Literature - Emphasizes the sanctified nature of the olive and its royal status. Also associates the Mount of Olives with resurrection.

Among the Hebrews, the olive tree was among the most valuable, both in the economic and religious life of Israel. On account of its royal and priestly associations, fixed by Yahweh himself, and of its highly symbolic image of the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the olive is second to none.

CHAPTER 5

SYNTHETIC CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The following summarizes the observations that can be drawn from the use of the olive as described in the ANE material as well as in the Hebrew Scriptures. The list of occurrences located in the Appendix should be referenced in conjunction with the findings discussed below in the Hebrew Scriptures. This section gives the reader an overview of what has been developed in the prior chapters and will conclude with final results and direction for further research.

5.2 Summary of the Olive in the ANE Records

Like the Hebrew Scriptures, olive oil in the ANE symbolizes the gifts of gods to the people and the responsibilities now laid on their leaders through the anointing ceremony. Egyptian and Hittite sources reveal that the anointing was in some regard a protective element worn to protect from and expel the powers of netherworld deities. As was custom to the Israelites, both kings and priests were anointed. Walton maintains, “in the Amarna texts there is reference to a king of Nuhasse being anointed by the Pharaoh, and at Emar the priestess of Baal is anointed.”⁵⁶⁷ He further notes some Mesopotamian priests were anointed, though there is no evidence their kings were anointed. Common to the ANE world was the understanding that anointing symbolized a change in a person’s legal status. The anointing offered both protection and an advancement in legal status.

⁵⁶⁷ John H. Walton, Victor Harold Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Hebrew Scriptures*. (InterVarsity Press, 2000), 125.

For the priest the anointing would offer protection while handling sacred things and associate him with the divine.⁵⁶⁸

5.2.1 Characteristics in the ANE

The following categories have been applied to the summarized list of the olive associations in the ANE.

Deity: This category is applied where the olive in some way serves or is in relation to a deity.

1. The olive tree is both the birthplace and house of the Egyptian god Horus.
2. Olive trees were offered to the Egyptian god Aten.
3. The olive tree was sacred and created by Athena according to Greek mythology.⁵⁶⁹
4. Olive oil was offered as a libation to deities at Pylos and anointed on ceremonial dress at Pylos.
5. Olive oil was exchanged by Hittite deities in times of distress.
6. Olive oil was used to bathe and anoint the statues of Hittite deities.
7. Hittite deities are recorded to grow angry when temple servants fail to offer olive oil as libations.

Royalty: This category is applied where the olive maintains associations with royalty.

1. Olive oil is associated with royalty at least by New Kingdom Egypt.
2. Olive branches were buried in both royal and non-royal Egyptian sarcophagi.
3. Olive oil was stored in personal horned flasks by Hittite royalty.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 125.

⁵⁶⁹ Luyster, “Symbolic Elements in the Cult of Athena,” 5.

4. Olive oil was used to anoint Hittite kings.

Ritual/Priestly: This category encompasses the use of olive oil in religious ritual and/or a priestly function.

1. Olive oil is employed in religious ritual in both Egyptian and Hittite records.
2. The installation of Egyptian priests included ritual anointing.
3. Olive oil was used in Hittite scapegoat rituals.
4. Olive oil was used to anoint the bones of the deceased in Hittite funerary ritual.
5. Olive oil was used to illuminate sacred rooms in both Hittite Anatolia, Egypt, and Mycenae.
6. Olive oil was used by worshipers of Hittite deities to anoint themselves during worship.

Political: This category denotes the olive as participating in a political relationship.

1. Olives and olive oil were employed to strengthen political alliances between Mycenae and Egypt.

Tree of Life: This category is reserved for the olive tree association with the ANE tree of life.

1. The olive tree was associated with the tree of life in Mesopotamia.

Cosmetic: This category is applied where olive oil is referenced as a perfume or an ointment.

1. Olive oil was used cosmetically as a perfume and for industrial purposes in Mycenae.

Protective Anointing: This category is applied to olive oil used as a protective and shielding agent in both the physical realm and spiritual realm.

1. Olive oil was used to anoint shields and armor in Mycenae.
2. Olive oil anointing was believed to offer protection from evil deities in both Egypt and Hittite Anatolia.

Prosperity: This category applies where olive oil is indicated as having a high financial value and/or as an item of luxury.

1. Olive oil was the most expensive of the oils in Hittite records.
2. Olive oil was imported into Egypt in bulk.

Magical: This category is reserved for where the olive is employed as a conjuration.

3. Olive oil was used in magic spells to anoint Hittite commanders, their armies, horses, chariots and weapons.

The characteristic of the olive in the ANE record as documented in this study are mostly focused to two areas: its association with the realm of the deities and its employment in religious cult rituals either by devotee or a priest. Whereas similarities of use are found in the Hebrew Scriptures, namely its ritual and priestly use, the ANE evidence is not undergirded by a divine prerogative. Whereas the Hebrew Scriptures demand the use of the highest quality of olive oil in priestly service, the ANE religious ritual does not necessarily make a demand. Instead we find it employed in religious ritual without necessarily a divine directive, though for example, the apparent Hittite deities prefer it.

5.3 Summary of the Olive in the Hebrew Scriptures

Among the West Semitic languages, the Hebrew word זית and Ugaritic *zt* are used to describe both the natural olive tree (*Olea europea*) and the olive fruit. The Egyptian cognate is *dt* and Coptic *djoit*. The Akkadian SERDU is also present in some texts from Ugarit.⁵⁷⁰ The Arabic equivalent is *zait* for oil and *zaitūn* for olive tree.⁵⁷¹ The tree and its fruit have been actively cultivated throughout the eastern Mediterranean from at least the fourth millennium BC⁵⁷²

In the Hebrew Scriptures the word זית is used 38 times, and in the Apocrypha it is found in Sirach 50:10. In nearly all cases, the word most frequently refers to olive orchards or the tree or its fruit. For example, in Micah 6:15 the phrase **אתה תדרך זית** (you will tread olives) occurs. In some instances the phrase **ועץ הזית** (and the olive tree) is used, as in Haggai 2:19. The word **צָהָר** is used to describe fresh oil and in several instances the phrase **זית שמן** (olive oil) is utilized (Exo 27:20; 30:24; Lev 24:2).

As a verb **צָהָר** is used only once in the *hiphil* in the sense, “to press out oil.” In Job 24:11 the text reads, **ובין שורתם יצהירו יקבים דרכו ויצמא**, (They press out the olive oil between the rows of olive trees; they tread the winepresses while they are thirsty

⁵⁷⁰ Willy Corswant, *A Dictionary of Life in Bible Times*. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960), 153–255.

⁵⁷¹ Mark D. Futato, זית, in Willem VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Hebrew Scriptures Theology & Exegesis*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Pub. House, 1997), v.1, 1097.

⁵⁷² Ahlström, זית, in G. Johannes Botterweck, *Theological Dictionary of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1974), v.4, 59.

(NET)). As a noun it can refer to “fresh olive oil.”⁵⁷³ **רָחֵל** is found most frequently and is used 21 times, together with grain and wine, in reference to the fresh olive oil of the land (Deut 7:13; 11:14). The most common word for oil in the Hebrew Scriptures is **שְׂמִן**. It occurs 192 times and mostly in reference to olive oil.⁵⁷⁴ This is evident in 1 Kings 6:23, 31-33; and Isaiah 41:19 where **עֵץ שְׂמִן** is translated as “olive wood.”

The first oil pressed was considered the purest and was employed in priestly ritual. Two instances (Exod 27:20; Lev 24:2) record **שְׂמִן** used in conjunction with **צָהָב** which translates “clean” or “pure.” In those instances **צָהָב** is the adjective modifying **שְׂמִן**. In the settlement period olive trees were found in Canaan, for Samson is said to have burned the olive orchards of the Philistines (Judg 15:5). In addition, Jotham’s fable in Judges 9 depicts the olive tree in a royal capacity by which gods and men are honored.⁵⁷⁵ In the Hebrew Scriptures, the olive tree produced one of the three primary staples of life in the eastern Mediterranean. Kings, in acts of tyranny would seize grain fields, vineyards, and olive groves and give them to their attendants (1 Sam 8:14). The yearly harvest would include grain in the spring, grapes in the early fall, and olives in late fall.

The olive tree and its oil were also used extensively in religious cultic ritual. The oil used for anointing an Israelite king or priest was that of the olive. Inside the inner sanctuary of Solomon’s temple, the two Cherubim were carved out of olive wood and overlaid with gold (1 Kgs 6:23). In addition, Solomon had the entrance of the inner sanctuary doors carved of olive wood, along with the lintel and five-sided doorposts (1 Kgs 6:31). Psalm 52:8 indicates that olive trees were planted in “the house of the Lord,” which may be indicative of having divine attributes. Nehemiah 8:15 presents the olive branches as utilized in the construction of booths during the festival of *Sukkoth*. “For the

⁵⁷³ Richard E. Averbeck, **רָחֵל**, in Willem VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, v.3, 771.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 771.

⁵⁷⁵ Ahlström, **תְּמִימָה**, in Botterweck, *Theological Dictionary of the Hebrew Scriptures*, v.4, 60.

Lord your God is bringing you into a good land-a land of olive oil" (Deut 8:7-8). This description of the Promised Land portrays the olive tree to be flourishing (Deut 6:11; 8:8; Josh 24:13; Neh 9:25) though not as any result from Israel's own cultivation. The prophets spoke of God's blessing, envisaging olive oil together with grain and wine as indicators of divine favor (Hos 2:22; Joel 2:19). Hosea 14:6 speaks of a restored blessing upon Israel where Israel is compared to the glory of the olive tree.

The Psalmist, in describing the household of those who are blessed by God for obeying his commands, says their children will be like olive plants around their table (Psa 128:3). In the statements of blessings and curses that will follow from heeding or disobeying the commands of the Lord, the olive tree is mentioned as subject to destruction. If Yahweh's commands are not heeded, the olive trees along with the grain and wine will be destroyed (Deut 28:39; Isa 17:6; Am 4:9; Mic 6:15; Hab 3:17). Isaiah 24:13 compares the judgment of the Lord to that of the shaking of the olive tree to break its fruit from the tree. Additionally Psalm 52:8 compares the righteous man who trusts in the Lord to the olive branch. In contrast, the unrighteous and those who act arrogantly towards the sovereign God are compared to a barren olive tree, dropping its blossoms. The two anointed ones of Zechariah 4:14 share the identity of two olive branches. The image of the olive branch serves also as a symbol for the royal priesthood of Levi on account of its exclusive use among the Israelite priesthood in temple activity.⁵⁷⁶

Several personal names contain the word זית in their etymologies. זיתן (Zethan) in 1 Chronicles 7:10 and זתם (Zetham) in 1 Chronicles 23:8 and 26:22 demonstrate this. 1 Chronicles 7:31 also records the name of בירזית (Birzaith). The most well known is the geographical name הר הזית (the Mount of Olives) (Zech. 14:4; 2 Sam 15:30). Though very old olive trees exist there today, the mountain was most likely saturated with olive

⁵⁷⁶ Geo Widengren, *The king and the tree of life in ancient Near Eastern religion: (King and saviour IV)* (Lundeqvistska bokhandeln, 1951), 37.

trees during biblical times but today hosts various churches among other developments. Of special relevance to this research is the well-established fact that the Mount of Olives was used in pre-Israelite, pagan cult worship. The biblical record describes this mountain as a place “where God was worshiped” (2 Sam. 15:32; Ezek. 11:23; Zech. 14:4). 1 Kings 11:7 and 2 Kings 23:13 record that King Solomon had built places of worship for Chemosh and Milkom, Moabite and Ammonite gods respectively—though perhaps not exclusively. In addition to the anticipated return of Yahweh to the Mount of Olives, Ezekiel 11:22–23 also records concerning the last days of Jerusalem, that both God and the Cherubim will stand over the Mount of Olives. The site not only maintained close associations with Yahweh but with other pagan deities as well.

The olive tree and its oil are directly or indirectly referenced in the Hebrew Scriptures 357 times under the lexical forms of **משָׁח**, **מִשְׁחָה**, **זִית**, **יַצֵּהֶר**, **שְׂמֹן**, and **מִשְׁחָה**. **משָׁח** is attested in both verbal and nominal forms, while the verb **צָהַר** is a *hapax legomenon*.

The following lists represent those occurrences. They are arranged by the root word with the exception of two occurrences (listed last) where the Mount of Olives is indirectly referenced as the mountain east of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 11:23 and in 2 Kings 23:13. The following summaries draw general conclusions about the lexical forms searched and their meaning in the Hebrew Scriptures.⁵⁷⁷ The context in which these terms are employed throughout the Hebrew Scriptures provide for the basis of its overall semantic meaning.

1. **Šemen** (שְׂמֹן): oil, olive oil

⁵⁷⁷ The verses referenced are listed in their entirety in the Appendix. The lexical searches were computed using BibleWorks 9 software and the arrangement with contextual conclusions are my own.

Šemen has the semantic range to include “oil”, “olive oil”, “fat”, “fatness”, “fertile”,⁵⁷⁸ and is the most common lexical form to describe oil in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is recorded 178 times, most of which occur in the Pentateuch. The primary context in which most of the occurrences occur are allocated to the sphere of the sanctified or sacrificial. This suggests it occurs most frequently in the context of holiness. Other contexts in which it occurs include: prosperity, blessing, healing sickness, covenant prosperity, feast of tabernacles, cosmetic, comestible, and covenant disobedience.⁵⁷⁹

2. **zayit** (זִית): olive, olive tree

zayit has a semantic range of including the fruit of the olive tree, or the tree itself.⁵⁸⁰ It is also employed in the root of several personal names discussed previously.⁵⁸¹ It occurs 38 times and is dispersed throughout the Tanakh without any apparent emphasis in a particular book. The contexts that are emphasized more than any other are: blessing (8), prosperity (9), and sanctified (7). Other contexts in which it occurs include: covenant disobedience, royal, sacred precinct, feast of tabernacles, judgment, enduring faith, Israel, and Israel-Judah.

3. **māšah** (מִשָּׁחַ): to anoint

⁵⁷⁸ See TWOT 2410e, 2410f; BDB.

⁵⁷⁹ For definitions of the contextual labels, see the following section.

⁵⁸⁰ See TWOT 548.

⁵⁸¹ זֶתֶן (Zethan) in 1 Chronicles 7:10 and זֶתֶם (Zetham) in 1 Chronicles 23:8 and 26:22. 1 Chronicles 7:31 also records the name of בֵּרֶץ־יְהוּדָה (Birzaith). הַר הַזֵּית (the Mount of Olives) (Zech. 14:4; 2 Sam 15:30).

māšah has the semantic range to include “to anoint”, “to smear”, or “to consecrate” with anointing oil.⁵⁸² It is recorded over 66 times always within the context of the sanctified with the exception of one occurrence in Jeremiah 22:14 where the nuance is uncertain. The term is most appropriately reserved for the realm of the sacred.

4. **yishār** (יְשָׁר): freshly pressed oil, anointing oil

yishār has the semantic range to include “fresh-pressed oil”, “shining oil”, and “anointing oil”.⁵⁸³ It is used 36 times and over a dozen times within a proper Israelite name. Outside of proper names it is most frequently used in the context of: blessing (8) and sacrifice (6). Most of the occurrences are in the Pentateuch, 1 Chronicles, and Nehemiah.

5. **māšiāh** (מֶשֶׁח): anointed one, the Messiah

māšiāh has the semantic range to include “anointed one”, “the messiah”, “messianic prince”, “the high priest of Israel”, and occurs 39 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Most of the occurrences are concentrated in 1 and 2 Samuel (17) and the Psalms (10). Both instances in Daniel most likely refer the Messiah. Other occurrences have messianic and Davidic associations which place *māšiāh* in the realm of the priestly and royal.

Nearly fifty percent (162+) of all occurrences of the olive terminology relate to the realm of the sanctified. Twenty percent are concentrated within the context of the sacrificial, ten percent in reference to prosperity, and eight percent in the context of

⁵⁸² See TWOT 1255.

⁵⁸³ See TWOT 1883c.

blessing. The remaining occurrences comprise less than four percent. The breakdown is as follows:

1. Sanctified, 162 (2 references specifically to the Messiah)
2. Sacrificial, 72
3. Prosperity, 35
4. Blessing, 27
5. Israelite name, 13
6. Cosmetic, 12
7. Covenant Disobedience, 8; Healing Sickness, 8
8. Sacred Precinct, 4
9. Covenant Prosperity, 2; Feast of Tabernacles, 2; Israel-Judah, 2; Judgment, 2
10. Blessing removed, 1; Comestible, 1; Enduring Faith, 1; Royalty, 1; To paint, 1

5.3.1 Categorical labels

This section defines the contextual terms used to set the olive within a particular setting or context with the intent that it will aid the reader in a better understanding of how it is employed in a particular verse. The categories of use are explained below according to the label the author has chosen and as reflected in the list in the Appendix.

1. **Sanctified** is used when the scripture references the exclusive use of the olive tree and its oil for priestly use and/or service in the temple or when designated as a holy anointing oil in service of the God of Israel.
2. **Sacrificial** is used when the scripture references the exclusive use of the olive or its oil as a libation to the God of Israel.
3. **Prosperity** is used when the scripture references the olive tree, olives, or olive oil as a source of income, sign of wealth or indication of divine favor over a land or household. The lack of the aforementioned is also included under this label.
4. **Blessing** is used when the scriptures reference divine blessing from the God of Israel, indicated by the presence of olive trees, olives, or oil.
5. **Israelite name** is used when the occurrence is a proper name.

6. **Cosmetic** is used when olive oil is referenced as a perfume, lotion, or used in a metaphor for its smooth texture.
7. **Covenant Disobedience** is used when the benefit of the olive trees and its produce are removed from Israel as a result of their unfaithfulness to the covenant.
8. **Healing Sickness** is used when olive oil is employed in medicinal healings. Association with the God of Israel is not removed in these instances.
9. **Covenant Prosperity** is used when the presence and produce of the olive tree is bestowed upon Israel as an indication of the faithfulness of the God of Israel.
10. **Feast of Tabernacles** refers to those instances where the olive tree is employed in keeping the ritual feast of tabernacles.
11. **Israel-Judah** is used when the scriptures identify Jacob, Israel, Judah (personally or in reference to the land) with an olive tree.
12. **Judgment** is used in the same way as covenant disobedience but when covenant unfaithfulness is not immediately in reference.
13. **Blessing removed** is used when the removal or failure of the olive tree and its produce directly results from divine directive.
14. **Comestible** is used when olive oil is used in reference to nourishment or food preparation.
15. **Enduring Faith** describes the theme of David's metaphor in Psalm 52:8.
16. **Royalty** is used when the olive tree and its oil is likened to an Israelite King.
17. **To paint** is used in one reference probably not related to olive oil.

5.4 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study set out to answer two questions: (1) is the symbolic significance of the olive tree emphasized when examining the role of the olive tree in other ancient Near Eastern cultures? (2) Is the theological significance emphasized when interpreting the references throughout the Hebrew Scriptures while understanding it together within its ancient Near Eastern context? The initial hypothesis stated that *in the Hebrew Scriptures, the olive tree stands out among the cultures of the ANE as uniquely Yahwistic and exclusively representative of Israel.* After examining the evidence from both the Hebrew Scriptures and the ANE as discussed in this study the author accepts the original hypothesis. The symbolic significance of trees (not exclusively the olive) in the ancient world heightens the association of the olive tree with the people and God of Israel. What is lacking on account of the ANE material is a prerogative supporting the use of the olive in the symbolic and religious. In contrast, the Hebrew Scriptures make it clear from the very beginning (Exodus 25) that Yahweh directs the exclusive employment of fresh olive oil in priestly service. This associates the olive as intrinsically Yahwistic among the Israelites. The theological significance is emphasized only because a theology of the olive exists in the Hebrew Scriptures and not because it is rivaled in the ANE evidence.

5.5 Final Remarks

Searchable databases of primary sources have allowed for a comprehensive but contemporary inclusion of the relevant historical data needed for research projects such as this one. In addition, the inclusion of Bibleworks software has aided this study by allowing for a relatively quick way to analyze all the occurrences of the olive tree, olive, olive oil and anointing. This has benefited the current study by giving the reader a big picture of what is being emphasized, how much it is emphasized, where it is emphasized, and in what manner. Although the high number of occurrences is not necessarily an indication of the degree of importance, the association of the olive tree in Israelite

religion originating from a divine directive does establish it as significant wherever it is used. Concerning the ANE records outside of Israel, it is difficult to date with certainty the first attestation of the cultivated olive tree. Although further study is needed, the dating of the origin of olive oil use in religious ritual can be attributed to be of Israelite origin if the Pentateuch preserves fifteenth-century BC traditions.⁵⁸⁴ If it can be determined through further research that the religious use of the olive predates Israelite use, then perhaps the employment of the olive tree and olive oil in Israel was instituted as a reaction to ANE associations that have been clearly seen as both royal and divine within their own contexts.

5.6 Directions for Future Research

Inasmuch as this study has made an effort to discern and explicate the function of the olive tree from primarily a religious perspective, only a select sampling of ANE sources have been discussed. Whereas the majority of records analyzed in this study were of Egyptian, Mycenaean and Hittite origin, this represents only a fraction of the available data. No doubt the present study could also benefit from (1) the inclusion of research focusing on the sources not given attention in this study. To this end, the addition of the uncatalogued archaeological and textual records could complement this research when available. (2) Of equal importance to this study would be the sources (textual, archaeological, pictorial, etc.) outside of the scope of this study, which is limited primarily to sources predating the Persian period (332 BC). The worship of the olive tree and the use of olive oil in religious cult practice is greatly attested in the Hellenistic era and beyond. Studying the development of these practices may substantiate the religious presuppositions behind veneration of the olive tree and olive oil in ancient times. Nevertheless, the author maintains that special attention should be given to the

⁵⁸⁴ This statement assumes an early date for the exodus (1446 BC) rather than a late date in the thirteenth-century BC.

Pentateuch, which contains the earliest attestation of the olive tree and its oil from a divine directive. (3) Finally, the inclusion of references to the olive tree and olive oil in all of Rabbinic literature, extending the scope of what has already been looked at in the Talmudim could develop further interest in the subject.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF OCCURANCES

	Root Word	Verse	Context⁵⁸⁵	
		Šemen		
1	Šemen	Genesis 27:28	Prosperity	
2	Šemen	Genesis 27:39	Blessing	
3	Šemen	Genesis 28:18	Sacrificial	
4	Šemen	Genesis 35:14	Sacrificial	
5	Šemen	Exodus 25:6	Sanctified	
6	Šemen	Exodus 27:20	Sanctified	
7	Šemen	Exodus 29:2	Sanctified	
8	Šemen	Exodus 29:7	Sanctified	
9	Šemen	Exodus 29:21	Sanctified	
10	Šemen	Exodus 29:23	Sacrificial	
11	Šemen	Exodus 29:40	Sacrificial	
12	Šemen	Exodus 30:24	Sanctified	
13	Šemen	Exodus 30:25	Sanctified	
14	Šemen	Exodus 30:31	Sanctified	
15	Šemen	Exodus 31:11	Sanctified	
16	Šemen	Exodus 35:8	Sanctified	
17	Šemen	Exodus 35:14	Sanctified	
18	Šemen	Exodus 35:15	Sanctified	
19	Šemen	Exodus 35:28	Sanctified	
20	Šemen	Exodus 37:29	Sanctified	
21	Šemen	Exodus 39:37	Sanctified	
22	Šemen	Exodus 39:38	Sanctified	

⁵⁸⁵This column reflects the author's interpretation of the context in which the olive tree, olives, or olive oil are being referenced by the authors and not necessarily its place in the semantic range. In most instances the context theme is limited to one word.

23	Šemen	Exodus 40:9	Sanctified
24	Šemen	Leviticus 2:1	Sacrificial
25	Šemen	Leviticus 2:2	Sacrificial
26	Šemen	Leviticus 2:4	Sacrificial
27	Šemen	Leviticus 2:5	Sacrificial
28	Šemen	Leviticus 2:6	Sacrificial
29	Šemen	Leviticus 2:7	Sacrificial
30	Šemen	Leviticus 2:15	Sacrificial
31	Šemen	Leviticus 2:16	Sacrificial
32	Šemen	Leviticus 5:11	Sacrificial
33	Šemen	Leviticus 6:15	Sacrificial
34	Šemen	Leviticus 6:21	Sacrificial
35	Šemen	Leviticus 7:10	Sacrificial
36	Šemen	Leviticus 7:12	Sacrificial
37	Šemen	Leviticus 8:2	Sacrificial
38	Šemen	Leviticus 8:10	Sanctified
39	Šemen	Leviticus 8:12	Sanctified
40	Šemen	Leviticus 8:26	Sacrificial
41	Šemen	Leviticus 8:30	Sanctified
42	Šemen	Leviticus 9:4	Sacrificial
43	Šemen	Leviticus 10:7	Sanctified
44	Šemen	Leviticus 14:10	Sacrificial
45	Šemen	Leviticus 14:12	Sacrificial
46	Šemen	Leviticus 14:15	Healing sickness
47	Šemen	Leviticus 14:16	Healing sickness
48	Šemen	Leviticus 14:17	Healing sickness
49	Šemen	Leviticus 14:18	Healing sickness
50	Šemen	Leviticus 14:21	Sacrificial
51	Šemen	Leviticus 14:24	Sacrificial
52	Šemen	Leviticus 14:26	Healing sickness
53	Šemen	Leviticus 14:27	Healing sickness

54	Šemen	Leviticus 14:28	Healing sickness
55	Šemen	Leviticus 14:29	Healing sickness
56	Šemen	Leviticus 21:10	Sanctified
57	Šemen	Leviticus 21:12	Sanctified
58	Šemen	Leviticus 23:13	Sacrificial
59	Šemen	Leviticus 24:2	Sanctified
60	Šemen	Numbers 4:9	Sanctified
61	Šemen	Numbers 4:16	Sanctified
62	Šemen	Numbers 5:15	Sacrificial
63	Šemen	Numbers 6:15	Sacrificial
64	Šemen	Numbers 7:13	Sacrificial
65	Šemen	Numbers 7:19	Sacrificial
66	Šemen	Numbers 7:25	Sacrificial
67	Šemen	Numbers 7:31	Sacrificial
68	Šemen	Numbers 7:37	Sacrificial
69	Šemen	Numbers 7:43	Sacrificial
70	Šemen	Numbers 7:49	Sacrificial
71	Šemen	Numbers 7:55	Sacrificial
72	Šemen	Numbers 7:61	Sacrificial
73	Šemen	Numbers 7:67	Sacrificial
74	Šemen	Numbers 7:73	Sacrificial
75	Šemen	Numbers 7:79	Sacrificial
76	Šemen	Numbers 8:8	Sacrificial
77	Šemen	Numbers 11:8	Sacrificial
78	Šemen	Numbers 15:4	Sacrificial
79	Šemen	Numbers 15:6	Sacrificial
80	Šemen	Numbers 15:9	Sacrificial
81	Šemen	Numbers 28:5	Sacrificial
82	Šemen	Numbers 28:9	Sacrificial
83	Šemen	Numbers 28:12	Sacrificial
84	Šemen	Numbers 28:13	Sacrificial

85	Šemen	Numbers 28:20	Sacrificial
86	Šemen	Numbers 28:28	Sacrificial
87	Šemen	Numbers 29:3	Sacrificial
88	Šemen	Numbers 29:9	Sacrificial
89	Šemen	Numbers 29:14	Sacrificial
90	Šemen	Numbers 35:25	Sacrificial
91	Šemen	Deuteronomy 8:8	Covenant Prosperity
92	Šemen	Deuteronomy 28:40	Covenant Prosperity
93	Šemen	Deuteronomy 32:13	Blessing
94	Šemen	Deuteronomy 33:24	Blessing
95	Šemen	1 Samuel 10:1	Sanctified
96	Šemen	1 Samuel 16:1	Sanctified
97	Šemen	1 Samuel 16:13	Sanctified
98	Šemen	2 Samuel 1:21	Sanctified
99	Šemen	2 Samuel 14:2	Sanctified
100	Šemen	1 Kings 1:39	Sanctified
101	Šemen	1 Kings 5:11	Prosperity
102	Šemen	1 Kings 6:23	Sanctified
103	Šemen	1 Kings 6:31	Sanctified
104	Šemen	1 Kings 6:32	Sanctified
105	Šemen	1 Kings 6:33	Sanctified
106	Šemen	1 Kings 17:12	Prosperity
107	Šemen	1 Kings 17:14	Blessing
108	Šemen	1 Kings 17:16	Blessing
109	Šemen	2 Kings 4:2	Prosperity
110	Šemen	2 Kings 4:6	Prosperity
111	Šemen	2 Kings 4:7	Prosperity
112	Šemen	2 Kings 9:1	Sanctified
113	Šemen	2 Kings 9:3	Sanctified
114	Šemen	2 Kings 9:6	Sanctified
115	Šemen	2 Kings 20:13	Prosperity

116	Šemen	1 Chronicles 9:29	Sanctified
117	Šemen	1 Chronicles 12:40	Prosperity
118	Šemen	1 Chronicles 27:28	Prosperity
119	Šemen	2 Chronicles 2:10	Prosperity
120	Šemen	2 Chronicles 2:15	Prosperity
121	Šemen	2 Chronicles 11:11	Prosperity
122	Šemen	Ezra 3:7	Prosperity
123	Šemen	Nehemiah 8:15	Feast of Tabernacles
124	Šemen	Esther 2:12	Cosmetic
125	Šemen	Job 29:6	Blessing
126	Šemen	Psalm 23:5	Sanctified
127	Šemen	Psalm 45:7	Sanctified
128	Šemen	Psalm 55:21	Cosmetic
129	Šemen	Psalm 89:20	Sanctified
130	Šemen	Psalm 92:10	Sanctified
131	Šemen	Psalm 104:15	Cosmetic
132	Šemen	Psalm 109:18	Cosmetic
133	Šemen	Psalm 109:24	Comestible
134	Šemen	Psalm 133:2	Sanctified
135	Šemen	Psalm 141:5	Sanctified
136	Šemen	Proverbs 5:3	Cosmetic
137	Šemen	Proverbs 21:17	Prosperity
138	Šemen	Proverbs 21:20	Prosperity
139	Šemen	Proverbs 27:9	Cosmetic
140	Šemen	Proverbs 27:16	Cosmetic
141	Šemen	Ecclesiastes 7:1	Cosmetic
142	Šemen	Ecclesiastes 9:8	Sanctified
143	Šemen	Ecclesiastes 10:1	Cosmetic
144	Šemen	Song of Solomon 1:3	Cosmetic
145	Šemen	Song of Solomon 4:10	Cosmetic
146	Šemen	Isaiah 1:6	Cosmetic

147	Šemen	Isaiah 5:1	Prosperity
148	Šemen	Isaiah 10:27	Blessing
149	Šemen	Isaiah 25:6	Blessing
150	Šemen	Isaiah 28:1	Prosperity
151	Šemen	Isaiah 28:4	Blessing removed
152	Šemen	Isaiah 39:2	Prosperity
153	Šemen	Isaiah 41:19	Blessing/deliverance
154	Šemen	Isaiah 57:9	Prosperity
155	Šemen	Isaiah 61:3	Blessing
156	Šemen	Jeremiah 40:10	Prosperity
157	Šemen	Jeremiah 41:8	Prosperity
158	Šemen	Ezekiel 16:9	Sanctified
159	Šemen	Ezekiel 16:13	Prosperity
160	Šemen	Ezekiel 16:18	Sanctified
161	Šemen	Ezekiel 16:19	Sanctified
162	Šemen	Ezekiel 23:41	Sanctified
163	Šemen	Ezekiel 27:17	Prosperity
164	Šemen	Ezekiel 32:14	Blessing
165	Šemen	Ezekiel 45:14	Sacrificial
166	Šemen	Ezekiel 45:24	Sacrificial
167	Šemen	Ezekiel 45:25	Sacrificial
168	Šemen	Ezekiel 46:5	Sacrificial
169	Šemen	Ezekiel 46:7	Sacrificial
170	Šemen	Ezekiel 46:11	Sacrificial
171	Šemen	Ezekiel 46:14	Sacrificial
172	Šemen	Ezekiel 46:15	Sacrificial
173	Šemen	Hosea 2:5	Sanctified
174	Šemen	Hosea 12:1	Sanctified
175	Šemen	Amos 6:6	Sanctified
176	Šemen	Micah 6:7	Sacrificial
177	Šemen	Micah 6:15	Covenant disobedience

178	Šemen	Haggai 2:12	Sanctified
		zayit	
179	zayit	Genesis 8:11	Blessing
180	zayit	Exodus 23:11	Prosperity
181	zayit	Exodus 27:20	Sanctified
182	zayit	Exodus 30:24	Sanctified
183	zayit	Leviticus 24:2	Sanctified
184	zayit	Deuteronomy 6:11	Blessing
185	zayit	Deuteronomy 8:8	Blessing
186	zayit	Deuteronomy 24:20	Prosperity
187	zayit	Deuteronomy 28:40	Covenant disobedience
188	zayit	Joshua 24:13	Blessing
189	zayit	Judges 9:8	Royal
190	zayit	Judges 9:9	Sanctified
191	zayit	Judges 15:5	Prosperity
192	zayit	1 Samuel 8:14	Prosperity
193	zayit	2 Samuel 15:30	Sacred precinct
194	zayit	2 Kings 5:26	Prosperity
195	zayit	2 Kings 18:32	Blessing
196	zayit	1 Chronicles 27:28	Prosperity
197	zayit	Nehemiah 5:11	Prosperity
198	zayit	Nehemiah 8:15	Feast of Tabernacles
199	zayit	Nehemiah 9:25	Prosperity
200	zayit	Job 15:33	Judgment-barren
201	zayit	Psalm 52:8	Enduring faith
202	zayit	Psalm 128:3	Blessing
203	zayit	Isaiah 17:6	Israel
204	zayit	Isaiah 24:13	Judgment-shaking of
205	zayit	Jeremiah 11:16	Israel-Judah
206	zayit	Hosea 14:6	Blessing
207	zayit	Amos 4:9	Covenant disobedience

208	zayit	Micah 6:15	Covenant disobedience
209	zayit	Habakkuk 3:17	Prosperity-lack of
210	zayit	Haggai 2:19	Blessing
211	zayit	Zechariah 4:3	Sanctified
212	zayit	Zechariah 4:11	Sanctified
213	zayit	Zechariah 4:12	Sanctified
214	zayit	Zechariah 14:4	Sacred precinct
		<i>māšah</i>	
215	māšah	Genesis 31:13	Sanctified
216	māšah	Exodus 28:41	Sanctified
217	māšah	Exodus 29:2	Sanctified
218	māšah	Exodus 29:7	Sanctified
219	māšah	Exodus 29:36	Sanctified
220	māšah	Exodus 30:26	Sanctified
221	māšah	Exodus 30:30	Sanctified
222	māšah	Exodus 40:9	Sanctified
223	māšah	Exodus 40:10	Sanctified
224	māšah	Exodus 40:11	Sanctified
225	māšah	Exodus 40:13	Sanctified
226	māšah	Exodus 40:15	Sanctified
227	māšah	Leviticus 2:4	Sanctified
228	māšah	Leviticus 6:20	Sanctified
229	māšah	Leviticus 7:12	Sacrificial
230	māšah	Leviticus 7:36	Sanctified
231	māšah	Leviticus 8:10	Sanctified
232	māšah	Leviticus 8:11	Sanctified
233	māšah	Leviticus 8:12	Sanctified
234	māšah	Leviticus 16:32	Sanctified
235	māšah	Numbers 3:3	Sanctified
236	māšah	Numbers 6:15	Sacrificial
237	māšah	Numbers 7:1	Sanctified

238	māšah	Numbers 7:10	Sanctified
239	māšah	Numbers 7:84	Sanctified
240	māšah	Numbers 7:88	Sanctified
241	māšah	Numbers 35:25	Sanctified
242	māšah	Judges 9:8	Sanctified
243	māšah	Judges 9:15	Sanctified
244	māšah	1 Samuel 9:16	Sanctified
245	māšah	1 Samuel 10:1	Sanctified
246	māšah	1 Samuel 15:1	Sanctified
247	māšah	1 Samuel 15:17	Sanctified
248	māšah	1 Samuel 16:3	Sanctified
249	māšah	1 Samuel 16:12	Sanctified
250	māšah	1 Samuel 16:13	Sanctified
251	māšah	2 Samuel 1:21	Sanctified
252	māšah	2 Samuel 2:4	Sanctified
253	māšah	2 Samuel 2:7	Sanctified
254	māšah	2 Samuel 3:39	Sanctified
255	māšah	2 Samuel 5:3	Sanctified
256	māšah	2 Samuel 5:17	Sanctified
257	māšah	2 Samuel 12:7	Sanctified
258	māšah	2 Samuel 19:10	Sanctified
259	māšah	1 Kings 1:34	Sanctified
260	māšah	1 Kings 1:39	Sanctified
261	māšah	1 Kings 1:45	Sanctified
262	māšah	1 Kings 5:1	Sanctified
263	māšah	1 Kings 19:15	Sanctified
264	māšah	1 Kings 19:16	Sanctified
265	māšah	2 Kings 9:3	Sanctified
266	māšah	2 Kings 9:6	Sanctified
267	māšah	2 Kings 9:12	Sanctified
268	māšah	2 Kings 11:12	Sanctified

269	māšah	2 Kings 23:30	Sanctified
270	māšah	1 Chronicles 11:3	Sanctified
271	māšah	1 Chronicles 14:8	Sanctified
272	māšah	1 Chronicles 29:22	Sanctified
273	māšah	2 Chronicles 22:7	Sanctified
274	māšah	2 Chronicles 23:11	Sanctified
275	māšah	Psalm 45:7	Sanctified
276	māšah	Psalm 89:20	Sanctified
277	māšah	Isaiah 21:5	Sanctified
278	māšah	Isaiah 61:1	Sanctified
279	māšah	Jeremiah 22:14	To paint
280	māšah	Daniel 9:24	Sanctified
281	māšah	Amos 6:6	Sanctified
		yišhār	
282	yišhār	Job 24:11	Prosperity
283	yišhār	Exodus 6:18	Israelite name
284	yišhār	Exodus 6:21	Israelite name
285	yišhār	Numbers 3:19	Israelite name
286	yišhār	Numbers 3:27	Israelite name
287	yišhār	Numbers 16:1	Israelite name
288	yišhār	Numbers 18:12	Blessing
289	yišhār	Deuteronomy 7:13	Blessing
290	yišhār	Deuteronomy 11:14	Blessing
291	yišhār	Deuteronomy 12:17	Sacrificial
292	yišhār	Deuteronomy 14:23	Blessing
293	yišhār	Deuteronomy 18:4	Sacrificial
294	yišhār	Deuteronomy 28:51	Covenant disobedience
295	yišhār	2 Kings 18:32	Blessing
296	yišhār	1 Chronicles 6:2	Israelite name
297	yišhār	1 Chronicles 6:18	Israelite name
298	yišhār	1 Chronicles 6:38	Israelite name

299	yîshâr	1 Chronicles 23:12	Israelite name
300	yîshâr	1 Chronicles 23:18	Israelite name
301	yîshâr	1 Chronicles 24:22	Israelite name
302	yîshâr	1 Chronicles 26:23	Israelite name
303	yîshâr	1 Chronicles 26:29	Israelite name
304	yîshâr	2 Chronicles 31:5	Sacrificial
305	yîshâr	2 Chronicles 32:28	Prosperity
306	yîshâr	Nehemiah 5:11	Prosperity
307	yîshâr	Nehemiah 10:37	Sacrificial
308	yîshâr	Nehemiah 10:39	Sacrificial
309	yîshâr	Nehemiah 13:5	Sacrificial
310	yîshâr	Nehemiah 13:12	Sacrificial
311	yîshâr	Jeremiah 31:12	Blessing
312	yîshâr	Hosea 2:22	Blessing
313	yîshâr	Joel 1:10	Covenant disobedience
314	yîshâr	Joel 2:19	Covenant disobedience
315	yîshâr	Joel 2:24	Blessing
316	yîshâr	Haggai 1:11	Covenant disobedience
317	yîshâr	Zechariah 4:14	Sanctified
318	Implied	Ezekiel 11:23	Sacred precinct
319	Implied	2 Kings 23:13	Sacred precinct
		mâšîah	
320	mâšîah	Leviticus 4:3	Sanctified
321	mâšîah	Leviticus 4:5	Sanctified
322	mâšîah	Leviticus 4:16	Sanctified
323	mâšîah	Leviticus 6:22	Sanctified
324	mâšîah	1 Samuel 2:10	Sanctified
325	mâšîah	1 Samuel 2:35	Sanctified
326	mâšîah	1 Samuel 12:3	Sanctified
327	mâšîah	1 Samuel 12:5	Sanctified

328	māšīah	1 Samuel 16:6	Sanctified
329	māšīah	1 Samuel 24:6 (2 occurrences)	Sanctified
330	māšīah	1 Samuel 24:10	Sanctified
331	māšīah	1 Samuel 26:9	Sanctified
332	māšīah	1 Samuel 26:11	Sanctified
333	māšīah	1 Samuel 26:16	Sanctified
334	māšīah	1 Samuel 26:23	Sanctified
335	māšīah	2 Samuel 1:14	Sanctified
336	māšīah	2 Samuel 1:16	Sanctified
337	māšīah	2 Samuel 1:21	Sanctified
338	māšīah	2 Samuel 19:21	Sanctified
339	māšīah	2 Samuel 22:51	Sanctified/Davidic
340	māšīah	2 Samuel 23:1	Sanctified
341	māšīah	1 Chronicles 16:22	Sanctified
342	māšīah	2 Chronicles 6:42	Sanctified
343	māšīah	Psalm 2:2	Sanctified
344	māšīah	Psalm 18:50	Sanctified/Davidic
345	māšīah	Psalm 20:6	Sanctified
346	māšīah	Psalm 28:8	Sanctified
347	māšīah	Psalm 84:9	Sanctified
348	māšīah	Psalm 89:38	Sanctified
349	māšīah	Psalm 89:51	Sanctified
350	māšīah	Psalm 105:15	Sanctified
351	māšīah	Psalm 132:10	Sanctified
352	māšīah	Psalm 132:17	Sanctified
353	māšīah	Isaiah 45:1	Sanctified
354	māšīah	Lamentations 4:20	Sanctified
355	māšīah	Daniel 9:25	Messiah
356	māšīah	Daniel 9:26	Messiah
357	māšīah	Habakkuk 3:13	Sanctified