



Etz Chayim – Tree of Life

Yeshua as the Paradise of God

עֵץ-חַיִּים הִיא לַמְחַזְּקִים בָּהּ וְתִמְכֶיהָ מֵאֲשֶׁר:

*She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her:
and happy is every one that retaineth her. – Proverbs 3:18*

The “Tree of Life,” *etz chayim*, is mentioned ten times in the Scriptures. In the Torah it first appears in the center of the paradise of Eden (Gen. 2:9; 3:22,4), but it is soon lost to humanity on account of Adam’s transgression. In the book of Revelation, it reappears in the center of the Paradise of God (Rev. 2:7, 22:2), resurrected on account of the faithful obedience of Jesus as mankind’s “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45). Those who have washed their robes by means of His righteousness are given access to this Tree in the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 22:14). The paradise lost by Adam has been regained by the greater *ben-adam*, Son of man, Yeshua the Messiah.



In the book of Proverbs, the Tree of Life is a metaphor for the life of *wisdom (chockmah)*, which is the implied subject of our verse above (*see* Prov. 3:13). Traditional Judaism identifies *talmud Torah* (the study of Torah) as the Tree of Life, promising wisdom to those who “lay hold of her” (a Torah scroll has wooden rods called *atzei chayim* – the “trees of life” – used to roll the parchment). According to the Rabbis, the eternal life that was lost in Eden was restored to humanity with the giving of the Torah at Sinai.

A Jewish midrash relates that in the paradise of *olam haba* (the world to come) there stands the Tree of Life, with the tree of knowledge forming a hedge around it. Only the wise one who has cleared a path for himself through the tree of knowledge can come close to it (which is said to be so enormous that it would 500 years to walk around it). Beneath the Tree flows forth the water that irrigates the whole earth, parting into four streams, the Ganges, the Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. In mystical (i.e., gnostic) Judaism, the Tree of Life is depicted as an elaborate symbol, the meditation of which is said to “clear the path” back to paradise.



Followers of Yeshua understand that He (alone) is the Tree of Life, the Center of the true Paradise of God (Rev. 22:2). He is the Seed, Root, Trunk, Branches, and Fruit that comes from heaven. The first Adam lost access to God by means of his transgression (eating from the tree of the “knowledge of good and evil”), but the “greater Adam” reclaimed our access by means of His obedience, resisting the power of evil even to the point of death upon the “tree” of the cross (Phil. 2:8). His resurrection life is the firstfruits of all who put their trust in Him (1 Cor. 15:20; Jas. 1:18).

Yeshua is the “Tree of Life in the center of the Paradise of God,” and all who retain Him are forever blessed indeed.

Transliteration:

שָׂר	אֲשֶׁר	מְ	וְ	תִמְ	כִּי	הָ	בָּהּ	קִים	זֵי	חַ	לַ	פִּ	חַ	זֵי	קִים	הִיא	עֵץ	חַיִּים	
(3)	(2)	(1)	(5)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(3)	(2)	(1)			
me'u-shar		ve-tom	khey	ha	bah			la-ma	cha	zi	kim		hi	eitz	chai	yim			
are blessed		and all	who	retain	her	her		to	them	who	lay	hold	(of)	(is)	she	tree	of	life	

Etz-chayim hi lamachazikim bah, vetomkheyha me'ushar.