

Jeremiah recognises the environmental value of trees when he likens the one who trusts in God to the positive attributes of a tree growing by water:

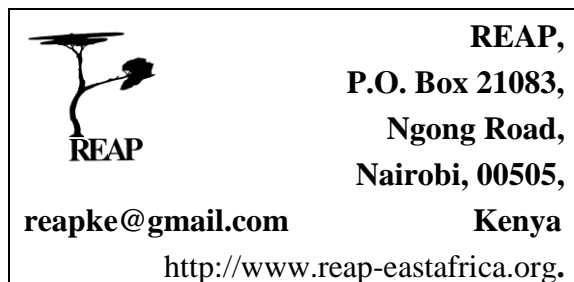
"He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." (Jeremiah 17:8)

One of the characteristics of trees, coppicing, is described in a simile in Job:

"At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail. Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant." (Job 14:7-9)

In Isaiah the positive side of trees also reflects that there are some trees which we want to encourage because they are more useful to us.

"...all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of the briars the myrtle will grow." (Isaiah 55 12b-13a)



A BIBLICAL VIEW OF TREES – GOD’S GIFT TO US FOR OUR PROVISION

Trees were part of the good creation that God gave us, and as such the Bible points to them being one of the good things God gave us. Trees are used in many parts of the Bible as illustrations of spiritual truths. The Biblical view of trees is very positive, as illustrated by these verses.

In the creation story we read that trees are an important part of the creation, made for a purpose:

"Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good." (Genesis 1:11-12)

"And the LORD God made all kinds of tree grow out of the ground - trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food." (Genesis 2:9)

In the Psalms trees often reflect the power and wonder of God the creator.

"The trees of the LORD are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted." (Psalm 104:16)

The story of creation teaches us that we need to get a balance between making use of and caring for what God has given us in creation, including trees. We need to work with rather than against creation. This is a challenge we need to work through.

"The LORD God took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Genesis 2:15)

In the picture of abundance that is promised in the Law for those who obey the ways of the Lord, trees feature prominently as part of what God intends in the perfect environment for His people:

"If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit. Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land." (Leviticus 26:3-5)

The Bible sees trees as an important part of the resources available to God's people. They are seen as so important that there was a special law relating to them in times of war:

"When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an axe to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees of the field people, that you should besiege them? However, you may cut down trees that you know are not fruit trees and use them to build siege works until the city at war with you falls." (Deuteronomy 20:19-20)



During times of peace one of the significant aspects was having trees in the environment:

"During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig-tree." (I Kings 4:25)

In the Wisdom literature trees are also seen as a positive part of life:

"He who tends a fig-tree will eat its fruit, and he who looks after his master will be honoured." (Proverbs 27:18)

Every one being able to have their own trees on their land and production is a picture of peace and the ideal in "the last days".

"Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, and no-one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken." (Micah 4:4)

In Ezekiel's vision trees are seen as an important part of the environment that is fulfilling to man:

"Fruit trees of all kind will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing." (Ezekiel 47:12)