

A DICTIONARY OF BIBLE PLANTS

This book describes and illustrates each plant mentioned in the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha. It draws on Lytton John Musselman's extensive field investigations from Beirut to Borneo and from the Atlas to the Zagros mountains and includes his own photographs of each plant. The text also reviews recent analytical studies of plants used in materials and technology as well as beer production, medicine, tensile materials, soaps, and other articles. On the basis of these materials, Musselman provides several new plant identifications from controversial biblical passages. In addition, the book surveys the history of biblical plant literature from the time of the Greeks and Romans to the present and reviews and correlates it with biblical plant hermeneutics. To aid readers, extensive references for further study are provided, along with an index to all verses containing references to plants that enables the reader to quickly locate a plant of interest in its textual setting.

Lytton John Musselman is Mary Payne Hogan Professor of Botany in the Department of Biological Sciences at Old Dominion University and a longtime student of plants of the Bible and Quran. Among his books on this topic are *Jordan in Bloom: Wildflowers of the Holy Land* and *Figs, Dates, Laurel, and Myrrh: Plants of the Bible and the Quran*. He is also founder and manager of the Blackwater Ecologic Preserve in southeastern Virginia and is presently part of a team working on a flora of Iraq.

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LYTTON JOHN MUSSELMAN

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*For my parents, who taught me to
appreciate the Book of Revelation
and the Book of Creation*

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Solo Deo Gloria

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My prayer is that this book will be a blessing to its users, drawing attention to the beauty of the written word and the glories of God's wondrous handiwork as revealed in plants.

PREFACE

In this book, I review biblical plant literature from the past half millennium. It could be asked if another treatment is needed. Has any new information been obtained? If so, what are the sources of these data? Put another way, what makes this dictionary different from its many worthy predecessors?

First, it is the only dictionary in which each biblical plant is studied in situ. This means not only that each plant was seen and photographed in the field but also that indigenous knowledge about the plant and its uses was gathered. In other words, each entry has a strong ethnological basis, essential to a proper understanding of the plant in its scriptural context, as noted by several earlier writers. Collecting this knowledge involved years of fieldwork from Beirut to Borneo and from the Atlas to the Zagros mountains.

Second, research into the utilization of a crop in ancient eras often revealed the basis of misunderstandings of the texts. One of the best examples of this is the almost exclusive use of emmer wheat in Egypt during biblical times, a crop that required additional specialized preparation not necessary for modern wheats.

Finally, extraordinary advances in analytical processes in archeology, including the development of the science of archeobotany, have elucidated the plants that produced ancient products, for example, the plants used in Egyptian embalming, and have shown the extraordinary ability to determine the composition of materials found in vessels. All this new information is now handily available through immense databases.

The plan of the book is simple: plants are arranged alphabetically by their most frequently used English names, and their scientific names are also provided. For each entry, I do not exhaustively review how the plant has been treated by earlier writers; however, I place emphasis on plants that I consider to be mistreated and note those features necessary to understand the context in which the plant is used in the text. Verses in which the plant is mentioned are listed.

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