

All the days of your life.
Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you shall eat the plants of the field;
By the sweat of your face
You shall eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return.' "

Genesis 3:22-24 -- "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever-- therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.'"

Excursus: The problem of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden

in Genesis 2:9 we are told that "the Lord God caused to grow the tree of life also in the midst of the garden." From Genesis 2:16 we learn that Adam and Eve had free access to eat freely of the tree of life. In Genesis 3:22-24 we read the words, "lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever;" and the words, "So He drove the man out; and at the east of the Garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life."

In Revelation 22:1-2 we read: "And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Revelation 22:14 and 22:19 tell us who will have access to the tree of life in the new heavens and the new earth: "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which were written in this book."

Two quite distinct conceptions of the tree of life have been suggested:

a. one conception is that the tree of life had and will have the God-given power to preserve man's physical constitution in perfect equilibrium; i.e., it had biological life preserving properties. All Adam and Eve had to do was to eat its fruit once each month, and they would have lived forever. If they had cut themselves or bruised themselves or smashed one of their fingers, the leaves of the tree would have healed any wound they suffered.

In this conception, the tree of life is biologically important.