

Loving God

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Hospitality

Genesis 18:1-5 (NKJV) 1 Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth{אֵלִיָּא} <436> trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. 2 So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, 3 and said, “My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. 4 Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 5 And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.” They said, “Do as you have said.”

Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of OT Words: “terebinth / TREE”{אֵלִיָּא} <436>

'elon (אֵלִיָּא, H436), “large tree.” This noun is probably related to *'ayil*, “large tree.” *'Elon*, occurs 10 times and only in relation to places of worship. It may well be that these were all ancient cultic sites. The word does not represent a particular genus or species of tree but, like the noun to which it is related, simply a “big tree”: “Gaal spoke again and said, Look, men are coming down from the center of the land, and one company is coming from the direction of the Diviners’ oak [KJV, “Meonenim”; NASB, “oak”]” (Judg. 9:37, RSV). Judg. 9:6 speaks of the “tree of the pillar” (KJV, “plain of the piilar”) in Shechem where the men of Shechem and Beth-millo made Abimelech king.

(ACCS) Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 18:1-8

The Appearance to Abraham at Mamre

Overview: The statement that “God appeared” posed a problem: How could a human being see the invisible God and Creator of all? [See also the comment on Genesis 12:7 (pp. 5-6).] The more common and earlier solution was based on Gen 18:3, in which Abraham says, “my Lord,” thus appearing to speak to only one of the three visitors, who was then interpreted to be the divine Word of God (Eusebius). The three visitors were also seen as a symbol or prefiguration of the Trinity (Ambrose) and explained in terms of post-Nicaean terminology. Another interpretation saw the three visitors as angels (Ephrem, Augustine). The oak of Mamre is interpreted etymologically to mean “vision,” and, using the principle of interpreting the Scriptures by means of the Scriptures (see introduction, p. xxxiv), this notion can be linked with the Beatitudes, which promise the vision of God to the pure of heart. The contrast between the three men who come to Abraham and the two who visit Lot (Gen 19) permits a comparison between their respective merits (Origen, Caesarius of Arles). Small details such as the phrase “in front of him” also provide material for edifying comment (Origen, Ephrem, Caesarius of Arles) based on the principle that Scripture does not waste words or every detail counts (see introduction, p. xvii). The passage also provides an occasion for exhortation to the virtue of hospitality. The reference to three loaves or cakes and to the calf prepared for the visitors is interpreted as foreshadowing the doctrine of the Trinity and the sacrifice of Christ (Origen, Ambrose, Caesarius of Arles).

Abraham's Hospitality

Wash Your Feet. Origen: But how does he continue again as if speaking to men: "Let water be received," the text says, "and your feet be washed"?

Abraham, the father and teacher of nations, is indeed teaching you by these things how you ought to receive guests and that you should wash the feet of guests. Nevertheless even this is said mysteriously. For he knew that the mysteries of the Lord were not to be completed except in the washing of feet. [See Joh 13:6.] But he was not unaware of the importance of that precept, indeed, in which the Savior says, "If any shall not receive you, shake off even the dust which clings to your feet for a testimony to them. Truly I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for that city." [Mar 6:11; Mat 10:15.] He wished, therefore, to anticipate that and to wash their feet lest perhaps any dust should remain, which, shaken off, could be reserved "in the day of judgment" for a testimony of unbelief. For that reason, therefore, wise Abraham says, "Let water be received and your feet be washed." Homilies on Genesis 4.2. [FC 71:105-6.]

A Meal, The Return at The Appointed Time, & The Time of Life

Genesis 18:6-15 (NKJV) 6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes." 7 And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. 8 So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate. 9 Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent." 10 And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. 12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" 13 And the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' 14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." 15 But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"

1 John 4:18-19 (NKJV) 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 We love Him because He first loved us.