

The richness of Galilee became proverbial, particularly in olive oil (an olive grove is shown here). An example is the blessing on the Galilean tribe of Asher: Asher shall “dip his foot in oil” (Deuteronomy 33:24). The olive was one of the seven species with which Israel was blessed: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and honey (Deuteronomy 8:8). In Jotham’s parable it is the first tree asked to rule over all the others, and by its fatness gods and men are honored (Judges 9:8-9). Samuel warns that fields, vineyards and olive orchards will suffer confiscation by a monarch (1 Samuel 8:14). The Bible uses the olive tree as a proverbial designation for beauty: “his beauty shall be like the olive” (Hosea 14:6; also Jeremiah 11:16). On the other hand the destruction of the olive tree was a sure sign of disaster, like the destruction of the vineyard or the fig (Deuteronomy 28:40; Amos 4:9; Habakkuk 3:17; Haggai 2:19).

At other places in the Bible it is said of the Galilean tribes that the land of Asher is so fertile that “Asher’s food shall be rich, and he shall yield royal dainties” (Genesis 49:20). Naphtali will be fertile “and bear comely fawns” (Genesis 49:21). Likewise the land of Issachar is “pleasant” (Genesis 49:15). Adding to the region’s beauty are the spring poppy flowers that bloom throughout the area.