

The Meaning of the Verb "to Sprout" (Hebrew: *dasha'*) and the Noun "Vegetation" (Hebrew: *deshe'*) in Genesis 1:11-12

And God said, "Let the earth **sprout** (Hebrew: *dasha'*) **vegetation** (Hebrew: *deshe'*), plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. The earth brought forth **vegetation** (Hebrew: *deshe'*), plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. (Gen 1:11-12)¹

The Significance of Hebrew Verbal Stems (as mentioned below)

Qal: Simple Active "The Qal stem... exhibits the simple or unnuanced type of action."²

Hiphil: Causative Active "The Hiphil stem is used to express causative action..."³

The Meaning of the Hebrew Verb *dasha'* (The Verbal Stem of *dasha'* in Genesis 1:11 is Hiphil.)

Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament: "bring forth"⁴

Ringren writes, "It is worth noting that on the third day of creation, unlike the first two, the word of God does not do its creative work directly, but through the mediation of earth, which has already been created and which receives the command to bring forth vegetation. The execution of the command is described by the statement... "and the earth brought forth vegetation" (v. 12). Here the cognate to *deshe'* is replaced by *yatsa'* in the hiphil: "Caused to go forth, brought forth." The vegetation is thus present, as it were, in the earth and now it sprouts up."⁵

New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis: Qal: "become green," Hiphil: "sprout"⁶

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament: "sprout, shoot, grow green"⁷

Brown, Driver and Briggs: Qal: "sprout, shoot, grow green;" Hiphil: "cause to sprout, shoot or shoot forth"⁸

Etymology of the Verb *dasha'*

Akkadian: "to sprout"⁴

Jewish Aramaic: to cause to sprout"⁴

Assyrian: "to make abundant"⁸

Only Two Verses in the Old Testament Contain the Verb *dasha'*

Gen 1:11 And God said, "Let the earth **sprout** (Hiphil stem of *dasha'*) **vegetation**, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so.

A paraphrase of the use of the Hiphil stem in Genesis 1:11 would be "Let the earth **cause** vegetation to **sprout**..."

Joel 2:22 Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness **are green** (Qal stem of *dasha'*); the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

The Meaning of the Noun *deshe'*

Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament: "vegetation, young grass"⁹

New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis: "refers to the new grass that sprouts after the rains have fallen..." or "in Genesis 1:11... to all vegetation..."¹⁰

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament: "young, new grass, green herb, vegetation"¹¹

Brown, Driver and Briggs: "grass"¹²

Etymology of the Noun *deshe'*

Akkadian: "spring, grass,^{6,8} spring grass, new pasture⁷"

Old Southern Arabic: "spring"⁴

Arabic: "spring rain"^{4,6}

Old Assyrian "spring"⁴

Assyrian: "herb"⁸

Sabean: "abundant spring rain,⁴ fresh shoots, springtime⁸"

Minean: spring rain"⁴

South Arabic Kabyles: "early harvest time"⁴

Syriac: "sprouting grass, spring"⁶

Three of the Fourteen Passages Containing the Noun *dasha'* relate It to Rain and/or Sprouting

Deut 32:2 May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle **rain** upon the **tender grass** (Hebrew: *deshe'*), and like showers upon the herb.

2 Sam 23:4 He dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like **rain** that makes **grass** (Hebrew: *deshe'*) **to sprout** from the earth.

Job 38:25-28 "Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of **rain** and a way for the thunderbolt, to bring **rain** on a land where no man is, on the desert in which there is no man, to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground **sprout** with **grass** (Hebrew: *deshe'*)? Has the **rain** a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew?"

Three of the Fourteen Passages Containing the Noun *dasha'* identify it as New Grass

Prov 27:25 When the grass is gone and the **new growth** (Hebrew: *deshe'*) appears and the vegetation of the mountains is gathered,

Isa 37:27 while their inhabitants, shorn of strength, are dismayed and confounded, and have become like plants of the field and like tender **grass** (Hebrew: *deshe'*), like grass on the housetops, blighted before it is grown.

Isa 66:14 Then you will see this, and your heart will be glad, And your bones will flourish like the **new grass** (Hebrew: *deshe'*); And the hand of the LORD will be made known to His servants, But He will be indignant toward His enemies. (NASB)

The other seven verses using the noun *deshe'* (2 Kgs 19:26, Job 6:5, Ps 23:2, Ps 37:2, Isa 15:6, Jer 14:5) are not relevant for the interpretation of Genesis 1:11-12.

The Implications for Genesis 1:11-12

The verb *dasha'* in the Hiphil stem means "to cause to sprout."¹³ Thus all that Genesis 1:11 records is the sprouting of vegetation.

Whereas in the usages other than Genesis 1:11-12 the noun *deshe'*"refers to the new grass that sprouts after the rains have fallen," in Genesis 1:11-12 the meaning of the word is expanded to include all vegetation that had sprouted in response to God's command to the earth.

The vegetation of Genesis 1:11-12 would include all vegetation, not just grain and fruit trees.¹⁵ The reason for the corresponding third and sixth days uniquely to include two acts of creation is for the first triad of days to end with the creation of fruit trees and the second triad of days to end with the creation of man to set the stage for the next two chapters' account of man and the fruit of the tree.¹⁶

¹ *ESV*.

² Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Hebrew Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 124.

³ Pratico and Van Pelt, *Grammar*, 126.

⁴ Helmer Ringgren, "deshe' " *TDOT*, 3:308.

⁵ Ringgren, "deshe', 3:308.

⁶ Mark D. Futato, "dsh" *TLOT*, 1:999.

⁷ Herbert Wolf, "dasha," *TWOT*, 1:199.

⁸ *BDB*, 205.

⁹ Ringgren, "deshe,' " 3:307.

¹⁰ Futato, "dsh," 1:999.

¹¹ Wolf, "dasha," 1:199.

¹² *BDB*, 205.

¹³ *BDB*, 205.

¹⁴ Futato, "dsh," 1:999.

¹⁵ *Contra* Jordan who maintains that only grain and fruit trees were created on day three, with other vegetation being created later (Gen 2:5). See James B. Jordan, *Creation in Six Days: A Defense of the Traditional Reading of Genesis One* (Moscow, Idaho: Canon, 1999), 52-53.

¹⁶ Lee Irons and Meredith G. Kline, "The Framework View," in *The G3n3sis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (ed. David G. Hagopian; Mission Viejo: Crux, 2001), 228.