

The Meaning of the Verb "to Sprout/Grow"¹ (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) in Genesis 2:5, 9

"Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field **had yet sprouted** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground." (Gen 2:5)

"Out of the ground the LORD God **caused to grow** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (Gen 2:9)

The Meaning of the Hebrew Verb *tsamahk*

Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament: "sprout, grow"²

New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis: "sprout, spring up, grow, prosper, make grow"³

Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament: "sprout"⁴

Brown, Driver and Briggs: "sprout, spring up"⁵

Etymology

New (Late) Hebrew: "sprout, spring up"⁵

Ugaritic: "grow,⁴ sprout"^{4,6}

Akkadian: "grow upward"⁴

Aramaic: "sprout,^{3,6} spring up,³ grow,³ prosper,³ make grow,³ growth"⁶

Syriac: "sprout,^{3,4,5,6} spring forth,⁵ shine forth,^{3,4,5} gleam,⁴ glow,⁶ shining,^{3,5}"

Phoenician: "sprout,³ offshoot,³ offspring,⁵ posterity,^{3,5} descendant,⁴ scion"⁶

Punic: "offspring, scion"⁶

Mandaic: "glow, shine"⁶

Passages Relating *tsamahk* to Water

Gen 2:5-6: "Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and **no plant of the field had yet sprouted** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*), **for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth**, and there was no man to cultivate the ground." **But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.**

Gen 2:9-10: **Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) **every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden;** and from there it divided and became four rivers.

2 Sam 23:4-5: Is as the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springs out of the earth, through sunshine **after rain**. 'Truly is not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things, and secured; for all my salvation and all my desire, **will He not indeed make it grow** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*)?

Job 38:26-27: **To bring rain on a land without people, on a desert without a man in it**, to satisfy the waste and desolate land and **to make the seeds of grass to sprout** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*)?

Ps 104:13-14: **He waters the mountains from His upper chambers**; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works. **He causes the grass to grow** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) **for the cattle, and vegetation for the labor of man**, so that he may bring forth food from the earth,

Ps 147:8: Who covers the heavens with clouds, **who provides rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) **on the mountains.**

Eccl 2:6: **I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) **trees.**

Isa 43:19: "Behold, I will do something new, Now **it will spring forth** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*); Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, **rivers in the desert.**

Isa 44:3-4: '**For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground**; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants; **And they will spring up** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) **among the grass like poplars by streams of water.'**

Isa 45:8: "**Drip down, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds pour down righteousness; let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit, and righteousness spring up** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) **with it.** I, the LORD, have created it.

Isa 55:10: "**For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*), and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;

Ezek 17:5-6 "He also took some of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil. **He placed it beside abundant waters**; he set it like a willow. **Then it sprouted** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) **and became a low, spreading vine** with its branches turned toward him, but its roots remained under it. **So it became a vine and yielded shoots and sent out branches.**

Passages Indicating Growth

Gen 3:18: "**Both thorns and thistles it shall grow** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) **for you**; And you will eat the plants **of the field**;

Gen 41:5-6: He fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, **sprouted up** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) after them. (Also verse 23)

Exod 10:5: 'They shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land. They will also eat the rest of what has escaped-- what is left to you from the hail-- and **they will eat every tree which sprouts** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) **for you out of the field.**

Deut 28:23: 'All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and **no grass grows** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) **in it**, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and in His wrath.'

Isa 61:11: For as **the earth brings forth its sprouts** (Hebrew: *tsemahk*), and as **a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*), So the Lord GOD **will cause** righteousness and praise **to spring up** (Hebrew: *tsemahk*) before all the nations.

Growth of Hair or Beard

Lev 13:37: "If in his sight the scale has remained, however, and **black hair has grown** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) in it, the scale has healed, he is clean; and the priest shall pronounce him clean."

Judg 16:22: However, **the hair of his head began to grow** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*) again after it was shaved off.

2 Sam 10:5: When they told it to David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly humiliated. And the king said, "Stay at Jericho **until your beards grow** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*), and then return."

1 Chr 19:5: Then certain persons went and told David about the men. And he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly humiliated. And the king said, "Stay at Jericho **until your beards grow** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*), and then return."

Ezek 16:7: "I made you numerous like plants of the field. Then you grew up, became tall and reached the age for fine ornaments; your breasts were formed and **your hair had grown** (Hebrew: *tsamahk*). Yet you were naked and bare."⁷

The Implications for Genesis 2:5

The verb *tsamahk* means to sprout or grow by natural means. By using it in Genesis 2:5 as the second verse after the account of the seven days of creation, God is correcting the possible conclusion that on the third day of creation that he had created trees and vegetation with the appearance of age. The initial trees and vegetation grew by the natural means of water causing seeds to germinate and grow. This could not have happened in twenty-four hours.

The Implications for Genesis 2:9

God did not create the trees of the garden of Eden with the appearance of age. They grew naturally from seeds and acorns planted by God, irrigated by the river of Genesis 2:10, and cultivated by Adam (Gen 2:15).

¹ NASB

² Helmer Ringgren, "*tsamahk*, *tsemakh*," *TDOT*, 12:ix, 410-11.

³ M. G. Abegg, Jr., "*tsmhk*," *NIDOTTE*, 3:815.

⁴ S. Amsler, "*tsmhk* to sprout," *TLOT*, 3:1084.

⁵ *BDB*, 855.

⁶ Helmer Ringgren, "*tsamahk*, *tsemakh*," *TDOT*, 12:410.

⁷ The evidence all points to the fact that the Hebrew verb *tsamahk* indicates natural growth as opposed to supernatural, instant growth.

