

Joint Event

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### Medicinal plants of the Bible - past, present and future

Based on data on archaeobotany and ethnobotany of the Holy Land, survey of the use of Medicinal plants in the Holy Land throughout history as well as now, and a revision of the medicinal plant of Assyria we suggest a new list of the medicinal plants of the Bible. While Duke and Duke (1983) enumerated not less than 176 plant species as “Biblical Medicinal Plants” and Jacob (1993) only 54, in our survey we suggest reducing that figure to 37. The overlap between Jacob’s list and ours is 19 species in total. Our contribution is 18 “new” suggested Biblical Medicinal Plants. This discrepancy is due to three reasons: not less than 22 species in Jacob’s list are not recognized today (Amar, 2012) as valid Biblical plants names at all, or they are not related to specific species; several identifications from Campbell-Thompson (1949), the only Mesopotamian source used by Jacob, are no longer recognized by modern; Assyriologists; several Mesopotamian plants were only recently identified in medical context. In our list there are three groups: (1) plants which are mentioned directly as medicinal plants in the Bible: Fig (*Ficus carica*), Nard (*Nardostachys jatamansi*), Hyssop (*Majorana syriaca*), Balm of Gilead (*Commiphora gileadensis*) and Mandrake (*Mandragora officinarum*=*M. autumnalis*); (2) plants which are mentioned in the bible and are known as medicinal in post Biblical Jewish sources and/or Egypt and/or Mesopotamia (28 spp.); (3) plant which are not mentioned in the Bible but are present in the Holy Land and are known as medicinal in post Biblical Jewish sources and/or Egypt and/or Mesopotamia (12 spp.) According to our survey, all the 45 suggested BMP’s are still in medical use today in the Middle East and are subjected, at the 21st century, to an active research in attempts; to understand their chemical composition and/or Medical activity and/or Isolation of new compounds for new drug development. Shakya (2016) mentioned “Top 25 Bioactive Compounds of Medicinal plants”, his list includes also: *Curcuma longa*, *Ricinus communis*, *Piper nigrum*, *Aloe vera*, *Nigella sativa*, *Artemisia absinthium* and *Allium sativa*=24% of our list of Biblical Medicinal Plants!! As written in the Bible: “That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun”.

#### Biography

Amots Dafni is a researcher at the “Laboratory of Ecology and Pollination, Institute of Evolution”, in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem he has obtained his BSc in Biology in 1967, in 1969 the Teacher’s Certificate, in 1970 he obtained his MSc in Botany, and from 1971 to 1975 he studied Doctorate, defending the thesis: “Comparative Biology of *Prosopis farcta* populations from different habitats in Israel.”

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