

BOOK REVIEW

LYTTON JOHN MUSSELMAN, WITH FOREWARD BY GARRISON KEILLOR. 2007. **Figs, Dates, Laurel, and Myrrh: Plants of the Bible and the Quran.** (ISBN 978-0-88192-855-6, hbk.). Timber Press, Inc., 133 S.W. Second Avenue, Suite 450, Portland, Oregon 97204-3527, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.timberpress.com, 1-800-327-5680, 1-503-227-3070 fax). \$24.95, 336 pp., 255 color photos, 1 map, general index and index to verses in the Bible and Quran, 5 1/2" × 8".

From the publisher: "This book celebrates the plants of the Old Testament, New Testament, and Quran. From acacia, the wood of the tabernacle, to wormwood, whose bitter leaves, as absinthe, flavor alcoholic drinks, 81 chapters cover the more than 100 plants in the holy texts that have true botanical counterparts. Fascinating stories of the fruits, grains, grasses, trees, flowers, and fragrances include botanical characteristics, habitat, uses, and literary context. Richly illustrated with extensive color, this delightful ecumenical botany offers the welcome tonic of a deep look into an enduring, shared natural heritage."

Figs, Dates, Laurel and Myrrh: Plants of the Bible and the Quran is divided into sections that are based on each plant that was mentioned or alluded to in either the Bible or the Quran. The plants are listed alphabetically by their common names, but the author does list many of the scientific names through the various sections of this book. Each particular section differs slightly, but the reader will typically find a brief description of the plant (e.g. barley, onion, saffron, wheat) that includes color images and the plant's specific traits, habitat, and uses. Musselman also includes the actual scripture or simply the specific chapter or verse from the Bible or Quran as a reference for the reader.

It is interesting to note that the author does provide a list of the various Bible and Quran translations that were used in the production of this book. In some cases one plant is listed in only one of the religious sources (e.g. King James Version of the Bible versus the New Living Translation). From reading this book, it appears that Musselman truly understands the flora of this specific region in order to determine some of the particular plants that were mentioned within each text. This book was easy to understand and would be a good read for any person that is eager to learn more about the variety of plants that are listed in the Bible or the Quran.—*Keri McNew, MS Biology, Programs Manager, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas 76102-4025, U.S.A.*

About the author: "Lytton John Musselman has studied Bible plants in their native habitats for three decades and has published widely on their identification, symbolism, and use in the holy writings. He is Mary Payne Hogan Professor of Botany and chair of the Department of Biological Sciences at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. He also wrote *Jordan in Bloom* (2000), which was commissioned by Queen Rania Al-Abdullah. With ongoing research projects in several countries, he is a frequent visitor to the Middle East, has held three Fulbright awards, and has served as a visiting professor at the American University of Beirut. Also a field naturalist, he co-edits *Haustorium*, a newsletter on parasitic plants, and is the manager of Old Dominion's Blackwater Ecological Preserve."



Mcnew, Keri. 2009. "BOOK REVIEW." *Journal of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas* 3, 872–872.

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