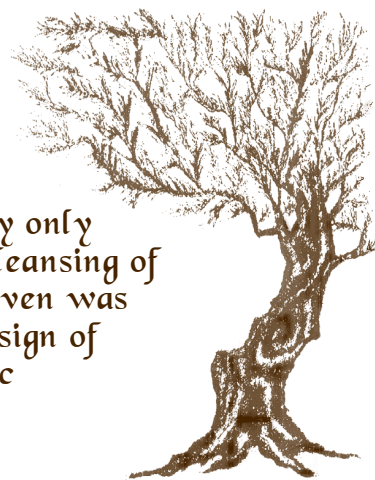


Wealthy and prosperous is the one who realizes that without Vision he is poor. For with vision, he will attain the greatest of all treasures.



In the distant past, lost in ancient history, are secrets which may only be revealed in the distant future. For we know that after the cleansing of the earth when all living creatures were covered by water, a raven was sent out, then a dove, which returned with an olive branch as a sign of life. How is it that the olive tree could survive such cataclysmic destruction, unless it be of unknown strength and fortitude? What great secret does the olive tree hold?

In Planning an olive grove, one must count the cost for the olive tree grows with great patience and lives longer than a thousand years. The one who plants might never see a mature crop come forth, since a span of fifty years or more may be required for a full harvest to occur. For many, their children's children will reap the benefit of their toil.

In Planting the olive tree, it is important to separate each tree by as much as thirty strides. The worst enemy of the olive tree is the olive fly which breeds, not in its wood which is resistant to decay, but in the flesh of the fruit. The olive tree is most susceptible to the olive fly when un-irrigated. When it is poorly nourished, the crop will be erratic, bearing a heavy crop one year and not even a blossom the next.

Pruning is a highly judgmental art. It protects the health of the tree by permitting greater circulation of air, for the olive tree is wind pollinated. The cutting away of live branches may seem like foolishness, as they have produced abundantly in past seasons. But this severe act will revitalize an aged tree, compensate for root loss, and promote desirable blossom formation for the coming season. Each tree must be pruned in a unique manner, taking into consideration the tree's age, limb support, penetration of sunlight, and health. The master pruner must know the individual needs of each of the trees in his grove.

And who is he who can tell why the ancient tree must experience the cold and chilling winter to even blossom and bring forth fruit in season? Although many fruit trees take either much or little water, the olive tree will tolerate six months of drought and then drink all the water it is supplied. And desirable olives do not come from seedlings, but must have a known source of unquestioned quality grafted in.

Harvest is a Product of the planning, planting, and pruning. It is performed in the autumn when the fruit has changed color from deep green to a straw or cherry red. One must harvest the fruit before it turns black; before the frost halts the harvest. One cannot help but reflect on the past year when there was little rain and much concern; yet, the fruit came forth.

This fruit I hold in my hand is not my own, but of the hands that tended the trees generations before me... as the many trees I tend without fruit will be for the generations ahead of me. Without vision, and the faith to work for things I can not see, I would be without a harvest.