

## **“The Fig Tree is Budding” by Jon Ikin**

*“This tree is iconic”* said Phil Scott, the Forestry Adviser for the National Trust. He was speaking about Sir Isaac Newton’s apple tree at Woolsthorpe Manor in Lincolnshire. *“For me, what’s fascinating is that this is where it actually happened. Newton may have been relaxing in his garden and a falling apple made him question why it should drop downwards.”* No doubt about it, some trees are very special and Sir Isaac certainly learned a thing or two whilst sitting under one. But for Israel there is another tree which holds a special charm all of its own: the fig tree, one of their national symbols (Luke 13:6-9). Little wonder then, that when the Lord Jesus revealed the signs of the times to His disciples He used the budding of the fig tree as a parable. Sitting on the Mount of Olives He said, *“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.”* (Matthew 24:32). In other words, when you see things happening in Israel, get ready! And get ready we should. Over the last seventy years the fig tree of Israel has definitely been putting forth her leaves as the following examples will show.

### **1. THE RECREATION OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

There’s no place like home, is there? And in great ’48 Israel came back to her divinely appointed homeland. *“To you and your descendants I have given this land...”* (Gen.15:18) said the covenant-keeping God of Abraham. And after two-thousand years of exile that’s exactly where she returned. The historic decision by the U.N. General Assembly in November 1947 providentially opened the door for the elect nation to go back home. Shortly afterwards, on May 14<sup>th</sup> 1948, she declared herself an independent state once again. As Dave Hunt in his book, *A Cup of Trembling*, pointed out: *“The state of Israel is therefore seen by many as the illegitimate offspring of a misguided and obnoxiously zealous Zionism that got lucky at just the right time in history.”* The truth is, however, that this was a fulfilment of Bible prophecy. The end-time revelations of Matthew 24 point to Israel’s return to the land. How else could, *“those who are in Judea flee to the mountains”* (v16)? It was just as Ezekiel prophesied, a national resurrection from the diaspora (Ezk.37:1-14).

Centuries ago, the prophet Joel described the end times as being, *“When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem”* (Joel 3:1).

So, the daily prayer of the Jew, that God would *“gather us together and deliver us from the nations,”* was finally answered. As author Milton B. Lindberg pointed out: *“Without the existence of the nation of Israel, we would not be able to say with certainty that we are in the last days. That single event, more than any other, is the most prominent sign that we are living in the final moments before the coming of Jesus!”*

Surely the fig tree was putting forth her leaves for the world to see. Dr Stephen Olford put it best when he said: *“Nothing has been more exciting in this century than to witness the birth of Israel and to see the important role she is playing on the world’s stage.”* Amen. The fig tree is back and budding. But another sign is...

## **2. JERUSALEM RESTORED AS ISRAEL’S CAPITAL**

Someone has said, *“The ancient city of Jerusalem is the heart and soul of the nation of Israel. While other cities around the world are known for their commerce, their size, their wealth, or their outstanding architecture, Jerusalem ascends to the pinnacle of world prominence with accolades that can be given to no other city on earth. Jerusalem is the chosen city of God”* And we would certainly agree. Without doubt, further proof of the fig tree’s budding was given in 1967 when the Israeli army recaptured their ancient capital. Many will be familiar with the heart-warming story of Moshe Dayan, the brilliant Israeli Commander, who placed a piece of paper in a crevice of the Western Wall which said: *“We have reached the holiest of our holy places never to go back.”* They surely realised the significance of the event, at least from a national perspective. But again, this was directly from Scripture’s script of the last days: *“And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”* said the Lord Jesus (Luke 21:24). Even though some of this prophecy will remain unfulfilled until the final return of Christ (Rev.11:1-2) the primary stages were set in place during the Six Day War of 1967. Even Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones (not known for premillennial views) felt the significance of this event. In an interview with *Christianity Today* magazine (1980) he said, *“All my life I’ve opposed setting ‘times and*

*seasons,' but I feel increasingly that we may be in the last times....To me 1967, the year that the Jews occupied all of Jerusalem, was very crucial. Luke 21:24 is one of the most significant prophetic verses: 'Jerusalem' it reads 'shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.'* It seems to me that that took place in 1967 - something crucially important that had not occurred in 2,000 years.... We sometimes tend to foreshorten events, yet I have a feeling that we are in the period of the end." We certainly are. Psalm 102:16-18 says, "For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory...This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD." With the fig tree budding, we should praise Him indeed! But consider also,

### **3. THE REVIVAL OF THE ANCIENT HEBREW LANGUAGE**

For just a moment, let us take you back in time to observe an old man who is searching his house for a tiny scrap of paper. *Who is he and why is this fragment of paper so important?* The answer is almost incredible: Eliezer ben Yehuda is reconstructing the Hebrew language after 2,000 years of lying dormant – something that has no known precedent in history. And the missing piece of paper contains a word that has taken him many years to research. He can't lose it now!!! Where could it be? He *has* to find it! You see, this man believes that without a unified language Israel will be divided by 'a babel of tongues.' So he is gathering words, one by one, rebuilding the mother-tongue of God's ancient people. If you look around you'll see that his study is a giant 'heap system' with piles of paper patiently waiting to be compiled into a dictionary. And this missing piece is essential to the whole. After all, the prophecy of Zephaniah 3:9 is coming to pass as the old fig tree begins to blossom yet again: "For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the Name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord" (see also Jer.31:23). A miracle is slowly taking place in this organised chaos. If he can only find this missing word (and the whole family are turning the house upside down searching for it) he can resume his vital work and bring it to completion. Then it won't be just his own children who are speaking reconstructed Hebrew – it will be all the Jews. And though he doesn't know it yet, by the time of his death in 1922 his amazing vision of a Hebrew speaking race in the land of Israel

will be a soon reality. *But wait, hold on! What's that he sees?* It's the missing piece of paper.... fallen in the turn-up of his own trousers! Emergency over. The fig tree can bud again!

#### **4. THE ARMY OF ISRAEL**

Now, here's a question for you: how do you storm an apartment on the 32<sup>nd</sup> floor of a tower block to end a siege without alerting the enemy before you get there? (They'll be watching the front doors, hallways, stairs and lifts). Don't know? Try another: how do you clear a bus of hostages and disarm the hijackers in less than ten seconds, protecting the vulnerable and defeating the despicable? Still don't know? Then ask the YAMAM. They are Israel's top counter-terrorism force and three times winners of the *Urban Shield* competition for international special-forces. This elite unit of Israeli's military is comprised of commandos from other special units, over half of them being of officer class. In fact, they are such an elite unit that only 1% of candidates who apply are accepted onto their training program. And they are only one of many special units in the Israeli military. Not bad for a tiny nation that started with little more than a handful of rifles to defend itself. In fact, Israel's military is the one that puts fear into all our enemies. *"A German journalist who spent 10 days with Islamic State says that the radical jihadist group that has captured wide swaths of Syria and Iraq is deterred by only one Middle Eastern country – Israel. In an interview with the British Jewish News, Jurgen Todenhofer recalls his brief time behind enemy lines during which he spoke with ISIS fighters. 'The only country ISIS fears is Israel,' Todenhofer, a former member of the German parliament, told Jewish News. 'They told me they know the Israeli army is too strong for them....They think they can defeat US and UK ground troops, who they say have no experience in city guerrilla or terrorist strategies,' he told Jewish News. 'But they know the Israelis are very tough as far as fighting against guerrillas and terrorists'"* (Jerusalem Post online 27/12/15). Looking at Israel's military, it seems that the fig tree has budded with prophetic life yet again. One can easily see how, *"the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in the LORD of hosts, their God'"* (Zech.12:5) with an army like this.

#### **5. PREPARATION TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE**

Let us introduce you to Avi. He holds a box containing his very own priestly garments with a degree of reverence. On the lid is a note demanding that when the temple is rebuilt, he should report for duty *immediately* in order to begin service. For several years he has been training in a yeshiva (seminary) for future priests and knows how to offer the sacrifices and perform many other duties. But will he ever, really get to do it? Many think so. According to a poll taken in 2013, a third of Israelis believe that their nation should pursue a new temple. Members of the Knesset have even called for such a construction. *"We've built many little, little temples,"* said MK Uri Ariel, referring to synagogues, *"but we need to build a real Temple on the Temple Mount."* Certainly the work is in progress regarding the sacred furniture of the temple. The *Temple Institute* in Jerusalem have already constructed many of the necessary items as attested by their visitor centre in the old city. And the people are both giving and praying for it to become a reality. Blind to our Saviour's atoning work on the cross, they ask: *"May it be acceptable to Thee our God and the God of our Fathers that the sanctuary be rebuilt speedily in our days"*. And prophecy confirms that it will indeed be built. Daniel (9:24-27), the Lord Jesus (Matt.24:15), the apostles Paul (2 Thess.2:4) and John (Rev.11:1-2) all reveal that the temple has to be constructed so that Antichrist can set up his image inside. What an amazing display of foliage is therefore seen in the movement to restore and rebuild the temple in our day.

## **Conclusion**

We could go on. We haven't mentioned the reconstituted Sanhedrin who remarkably came back into existence after hundreds of years in 2005. Neither have we written about the discovery of coveted fuels (such as gas) in recent years, or the amazing development of technology in which Israel excels. But enough has been said to justify the belief that the fig tree is indeed putting forth her leaves in our generation. Surely author Sale Harrison was right when he said, *"The Jew is truly God's timepiece.... Watch the Jew, consider his movements in the light of the Word of God, and you have your finger on the time of the great world-movements which are still to take place."* Let us do that. And let us all prepare our hearts for the Lord Jesus' soon return.

*(This article first appeared in Prophetic Witness magazine)*