

## ISRAEL: A SIGN FOR THE NATIONS

**Mat 24:32** *Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:*

**Mat 24:33** *So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.*

King Frederick the Great of Prussia (1712-1786) once asked his physician for proof of the existence of God. The physician is famously reported to have said, “Your Majesty, the continued existence of the Jews”. Against all odds, the Jewish nation has persevered despite persecution that at times reached genocidal proportions in various countries. Antisemitism is considered to be the world’s most successful hatred. It is unique in the annals of history because the Jews appear to be the only people whom sworn enemies in different eras had vowed to eliminate collectively as a people. Pharaoh, Haman, Hitler and Nasser of Egypt are some of the most prominent, but there were countless others with similar ambitions. Why has Satan so hated this people? The answer is simple, and provided by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). The Law, the prophets, Psalms and the New Testament emanated from Israel. When the fullness of time came (Galatians 4:4), God sent forth his Son from Israel to save the nations. The 12 apostles were Jews and Jesus will return to Israel from where he will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 12:5). Let us follow the spiritual history of this nation and its message for us who look for the return of Christ.

**Mark 13:28** *Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near.*

In the Bible, the metaphor for Israel is a fig tree. Just as the fig tree shoots forth new leaves and branches, the Lord tells us events unfolding in the land of Israel will point to his return. In 40 A.D., the Roman prince, Titus, destroyed the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. Precisely 1,908 years later, on May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion declared the creation of the State of Israel. Never before in the history of the world did a people who were scattered across the world, persecuted and hated with such venom keep their faith and traditions alive to return and recreate their ancient nation.

**Jeremiah 16:14** *Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;*

***Jeremiah 16:15*** But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.

Nearly one million Russian Jews migrated to Israel since the collapse of the Soviet Union. As I boarded the Russian Aeroflot flight from Moscow to Tel Aviv in 2015, I couldn't help thinking of Jeremiah's prophecy as I saw Russian Jews all around me in the flight with skull caps and speaking Hebrew. The north has given up its Jews as was prophesied. The fig tree is speaking – the return of the Lord is imminent. In addition to returning from all over the world, Israel surprises the world with its innovations and ingenuity. Drip irrigation technology, microchips used in several computers, firewall, ReWalk exoskeleton<sup>1</sup> and many others. Despite constant war with its enemies, Israel produces more start-up companies than Japan, India, Korea, Canada and the UK. Israel has more companies on the NASDAQ stock exchange than Korea, Japan, Singapore, India and all of Europe combined. "Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it" (Ezekiel 36:36). Consider another prophecy: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock" (Ezekiel 36:37). The population of Israel was only 806,000 in 1948, but has grown to 9.2 million in 2020. Why is all this important? Simply because God always begins with the nation of Israel before he turns to the rest of the world.

***Exodus 4:22*** And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:

***Exodus 4:23*** And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.

Before God introduced his holy Law, the Torah, to the world, he first delivered Israel from 430 years of bondage. Before the Gospel was preached to the world, it was first preached to Israel. "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5, 6). Now, as we approach the end of time, God is turning his attention to Israel as the fig tree whose branches are tender and is putting forth its leaves. So what does God's final prophetic clock tells us about events in the nation of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://rewalk.com/rewalk-personal-3/>

Israel? The modern state of Israel was created in 1948, Jerusalem became its capital in 1967 and, now, we should expect the building of the third Temple in Jerusalem. We already know that plans for this Temple have been underway for many years now. One organization committed to rebuilding the Temple and reinstituting animal sacrifices is the Third Temple Institute. Here is a statement from its website<sup>2</sup>:

*But we fool ourselves if we think that the state of Judaism today, without the Temple, is normal. On the contrary, we are like fish out of water. If 1/3 of all the Torah's commandments center on the Temple, it would seem that Biblical observance in the Temple's absence is but a skeleton of what G-d had intended it to be.*

Sadly, this is where Israel is mistaken. Adam and Eve covered themselves with fig leaves when they sinned against God and tried to cover their nakedness. Israel is trying once again to cover itself with fig leaves which have no blood. “For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:13). God killed animals and covered Adam and Eve with their skins. Only the blood of God manifested in flesh, Jesus Christ, can redeem us from sin. “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Revelation 5:9). Despite this egregious error, God has not forsaken his people, the Jews. The apostle Paul reminds Christians that we are not the root, but the branches – Israel is the root and we are the wild olive tree grafted in. “Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee” (Romans 11:18). Once Israel builds the third Temple, the man of perdition, the antichrist, will deceive them, enter into the Temple and declare himself God. It is this terrible found in the Book of Daniel that Jesus warned about.

***Daniel 11:31*** *And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.*

***Matthew 24:15*** *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:).*

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<sup>2</sup> [Statement of Principles - Temple Institute](#)

Let us explore this prophetic event more closely. Prophecy watchers should look for signs of the rebuilding of the Third Temple in Jerusalem because the Lord himself commands us to watch and understand. The Bible states that there will a period of seven years from the time the antichrist makes a covenant of peace with Israel. “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (Daniel 9:27). However, to the astonishment of Israel, the antichrist will reveal his true colors in entering the Temple and declaring himself God. This event is “the abomination that causeth desolation”. Not only is it a desecration of the Temple, but this event will start a process which will lead to chaos and the return of the Lord. The Spirit of the Lord revealed this to the apostle Paul also. “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2Thessalonians 2:4). Furthermore, we will need to divide the seven years called the Tribulation period into two halves, with the last three and half months called the Great Tribulation (remember the Jewish months have 29/30 days/lunar calendar).

***Dan 12:11*** And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

***Revelation 11:2*** But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

Hence, we need to follow these events closely because they are harbingers of the return of the Lord. Furthermore, there is also another great sign for us to watch: the return of the lost tribes of Israel back to the holy land. Christians do not talk much about this event, but Jews obsess about it, and rightly so. Let us remember there are almost an equal number of Jews outside the land of Israel as are currently residing in it. Jews point to the prophecy in Ezekiel and await the “stick of Joseph” to be reunited with the “stick of Judah” and then the Messiah shall appear.

***Ezekiel 37:16*** Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:

***Ezekiel 37:17*** And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

**Ezekiel 37:18** *And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these?*

**Ezekiel 37:19** *Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.*

We are already hearing talk of lost tribes of Israel in places such as Manipur, India, and even among the Taliban in Afghanistan. The last king of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah, who reigned in Kabul until 1973, reportedly claimed his family was descended from what he called the tribe of Benjamin. The UK-based *Guardian* newspaper writes about the Pashtuns of Afghanistan (the Taliban belong to this tribe):

*The Pashtuns have a proud oral history that talks of descending from the Israelites. Their tribal groupings have similar names, including Yusufzai, which means sons of Joseph; and Afridi, thought by some to come from Ephraim. Some customs and practices are said to be similar to Jewish traditions: lighting candles on the sabbath, refraining from eating certain foods, using a canopy during a wedding ceremony and some similarities in garments.<sup>3</sup>*

In summary, the Lord has given us a roadmap which will guide us to his return. He selected Abraham and his descendants through Isaac to be his firstborn, the fig tree which shoots forth branches and leaves with prophetic messages for the people of God. For the rest of the world, Israel is a troublesome country they only hear about in connection with war and conflict. For the church, however, they are God's prophetic clock. The first time Jesus came to Israel, he was not well-received. However, and thankfully, the second time he returns will be to fight for Israel against the nations, and Israel will receive him with repentance and gratitude.

**Zechariah 12:9** *And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.*

**Zechariah 12:10** *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*

There is a special blessing for those who watch and study Bible prophecy – we will seek to purify ourselves as we expect the return of the holy and pure Lord Jesus. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/17/israel-lost-tribes-pashtun>

shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (I John 3:2, 3).