

# Prayer For Israel

The background of the page is a photograph of a valley. In the foreground, there are green, leafy branches of a tree, likely a fig tree, which are slightly out of focus. The middle ground shows a valley floor with some greenery and a large, white, dome-shaped structure, possibly a religious or historical site, situated in a valley. The background consists of rolling hills or mountains under a clear sky. The overall tone is peaceful and natural.

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“Though the fig tree may not blossom ...  
yet I will rejoice in the Lord”

Hab 3:17

# Prayer For Israel

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Prayer for Israel began in 1969. We are a fellowship of those whose first concern is to pray for Messianic and Arab believers in the land of Israel, including adjoining territories. We also provide practical support, and relieve hardship and distress in Israel and elsewhere. Designated gifts are sent on to recipients in full. Unallocated gifts and legacies are applied where most needed, and may be used in part for our operating costs. An independent Board of Trustees discharge their duties through a team of executive officers, led by the Director, Derek Rous. We are in fellowship with various organisations praying for and supporting Israel, both within the UK and overseas.

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## Cover Picture:

Fig tree against background of Jordan.

## Our Contributors

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The views expressed by contributors to this bulletin and other publications are personal and do not necessarily reflect the views of Prayer for Israel.

# The Fig Tree - Symbol of Israel and Sign of the End Time

*Two years ago we published an excellent article by Rod Boggia on the different fruit of the fig tree in scripture. This article by Dr Gershon Nerel of Yad Hashmona explores the imagery of the fig tree further.*

“Learn this parable from the fig tree”, Yeshua said to his disciples and continued: “when its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.” Additionally, the Saviour elaborated as follows: “So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near - at the doors!” Then, Yeshua expanded his teaching and pointed to another aspect: “Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place” (Matt 24:32-34). The context of these words is the ‘Olivet Discourse’ of the Lord, when he spoke about the final events of history. A very similar narrative also appears in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 13.

A basic question arises in relation to this information: What does the Fig Tree, within the relevant circumstances, stand for? Metaphorically, here it represents Israel, both people and land. In fact, for example, already according to the prophet Jeremiah, the fig fruit symbolises Israel.

Jeremiah spoke about two baskets of figs, “set before the temple of the Lord” (Jeremiah 24: 1). One basket had very good figs, sweet like the figs that are first ripe, while the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten. In other words, within Israel one finds both good and bad, and God rewards each group as justly as He should, exactly as He does with any other nation. Yet it is very clear that according to Jeremiah’s parable the ‘fig baskets in Jerusalem’ represent Israel in particular.

In Yeshua’s discourse in Matthew 24 and in Mark 13 he deals with a period of time which covers about two millennia, from His first coming in weakness, until His second coming in might and glory. A key word in these two chapters is the concept of ‘end’, or *Ketz* in Hebrew, such as the expression ‘end of the age’ (*Ketz Ha’Olam*). This term of end/*ketz* appears sharply in four verses, highlighting the issue of the finality of current history, bringing the human course of developments to a cessation – just to be followed by a new world order, dominated by the Messiah Son of God himself.

Coming back to Yeshua’s parable concerning the Fig Tree which blossoms towards the summer, it should be noted that the Hebrew word for summer is *kaitz*. When we have this Hebraic background in mind, we rapidly realise the phonetic closeness between the two Hebrew terms *ketz* and *kaitz*, namely the nearness of the lingual pronunciation between ‘end’ and ‘summer’. Thus, therefore, the ‘summer’ (*kaitz*) also symbolises the



'end' (*ketz*). This play of words in Hebrew is not unusual in the Hebraic Bible, as for example it is seen in connection with the symbolism of the Almond Tree – in Hebrew '*shaked*' is almond, and '*Shoked*' is to watch or to be diligent (Jer 1:11-12).

The blossoming Fig Tree with the first leaves (Matthew 24) represents a new phase in Israel's history, namely the modern restoration of the Jewish people in their ancient and promised homeland. This comeback does not take place just in any other territory, but rather in the land of Zion and of the first Jewish Apostles. This unique and unprecedented phenomenon of Israel's revival influences the global agenda only because God miraculously enables it to happen. The contemporary ingathering of the Jews in the pre-exilic Promised Land is indeed a flourishing or budding era after 2000 years of Jewish pain and suffering in the Diaspora.

However, the existent blooming of Jewish national sovereignty is becoming, slowly but surely, a heavy stumbling block for the entire world. God himself will make Jerusalem, Israel's capital city, a cup of poisonous drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples and nations that will come to fight against her. God will make Jerusalem "a very heavy stone for all peoples", and eventually all the nations of the globe will gather to fight against her (Zech 12:2-3). This will, quite naturally, bring an apocalyptic end. Today it is more and more evident that nuclear weapons will be involved in the universal battle of *Armageddon* which will begin in Israel (Rev 16:14-16).

And what about the specific generation that will see or even pass through such difficult events? That is connected to Yeshua's return,

first for his Bride and then for the world. If we attempt to relate to the literal context, it looks that this refers to the lifetime of the same generation which has experienced and had the privilege to identify spiritually Israel's physical restoration. Nowadays the endurance of a generation can easily last for about four score years. In other words, the 'generation' of Yeshua's parable coincides with people that already today live among us, within our own generation.

Finally, is the meaning of 'end' or '*ketz*' just the termination of life without hope and without eternal reward? Actually the 'end' means a transformation from the current historic phase to the new era when Yeshua will return, judge and rule the world for 1000 years. Only after this *Millennium* will history stop, and there shall be a new earth and a new heaven (Rev 21:1-2). Our calling is to watch daily and be prepared in holiness (Matt 25:13). Without having holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14).

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