

בשורה *Besorah!* (Good news!)

Learn the Parable...

Like any country, Israel celebrates historic national events. However, because their inception as a nation was an act of God, these landmarks are also spiritual and they not only commemorate the past, but are also prophetic. Chanukah is no different and therefore has future implications and fulfilment.

The events of Chanukah took place between the Old and New Testament times. However, they were faithfully recorded in other documents, such as the books of the Maccabees and Josephus, and are alluded to by Jesus in the Gospels (Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 21 and John 10). I have written more fully on this in previous issues of the *Besorah* (see archives on our website).

The main point about Chanukah is the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem: the spiritual/governmental polestar of Israel and the world, though this emphasis has sadly waned in recent times. Chanukah celebrations today are more mythical, inclusive and focus on military prowess and patriotism. Nevertheless the Temple – though last destroyed in 70 AD – has not lost its significance in God's plan and will play a pivotal political and spiritual role in the Last Days. Jesus said so, Himself.

I've written previously on the three Biblical symbols for Israel: the vine, the olive and the fig tree. They depict three distinct aspects

of that nation. In this issue, I'd like to highlight the fig tree, which represents the civic, yet spiritual, government of Israel - specifically, Judah and Jerusalem, with the Temple in its midst.

Proverbs 27:18 makes the defining comparison: 'Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master (or, sovereign) shall be honoured.'

The whole chapter of Jeremiah 24 describes two baskets of figs: one, very good and one very 'bad' (lit. evil). Each pertains to the government's response toward God regarding exile. The very good figs represented those Judeans who willingly went into exile at the command of the Lord. In contrast, the very 'evil' figs signified Zedekiah the king who rebelled and remained in the Land.

Jer 29:16 reads: 'Know that thus saith the LORD **of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city**, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity; Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like **vile figs**, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

In Luke 13:6-8, Jesus tells a parable about a fig tree in the vineyard which bears no fruit. He was warning the Judean politicians of His



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day, which ruled 'in the midst of the vineyard', i.e., in the midst of the whole house of Israel (Isaiah 5:7)

Just before Jesus cleansed the Temple, He saw a fig tree and looked for fruit on it. However, we're told that He found nothing but leaves, 'for the time of figs was not yet'. He cursed it and it withered from the roots up (Mark 11:20). At first glance this seems unfair since, we're told, it was not the season for figs. However, the nature of a fig tree is to produce tiny figs *at the same time* as putting forth leaves! The picture here is of gross hypocrisy!

In Matthew 24, Jesus sat on the Mt. of Olives and foretold the destruction of the Temple. In effect, He prophesied from a spiritual place (olive) about a political judgement to come (fig). When the disciples asked about the timeline of the overthrow and His return, His first words were a warning against deception.

He refers to the history of the Maccabean revolt (vv. 15-22) and then continues: 'Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that **summer is nigh**: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled (vv. 32-34).

Here, Jesus is drawing from Amos: 'Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of **summer fruit**. And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of **summer fruit**. Then said the LORD unto me, **The end** is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them anymore. And the **songs of the temple** shall

be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.' (Amos 8:1-3)

In Hebrew, the word for 'end' is the same as 'summer-fruit', which is another word for figs. This is because they are harvested at the end of the season, or summer. This wordplay explains the interpretation of Amos' vision.

Israel's rebirth as a nation is God's plan and the signal of end-time prophecy fulfilments (Ezek 37:1-14, and many others). These are not just geo-political in scope. There will be a rebuilt Temple with a reconstituted priesthood before the Lord returns. This is clear when Jesus says: '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).' (Mat 24:15)

For years now, various organisations have been preparing for the rebuilding of the Temple and the dedication of a priesthood in Israel. This year, marking Tisha B'Av (the two Temple destructions), the Jewish Chronicle carried an article entitled, 'The Temple Was Our Beating Heart – We Should Mourn Its Loss'. The author encourages a re-think about simply consigning the Temple to the past.

Founded in 1987, the Temple Institute aims to rebuild the temple, training choirs and clerics and making objects for use in religious rites. The Institute has made all of the objects deemed necessary for this according to rabbinical instructions, such as priestly robes, incense burners and musical instruments.

Zealots are by no means marginal today. Defying the ban by top rabbis, some 50,000

Jewish people 'ascended the Temple Mount' last year. Among them was firebrand politician Itamar Ben-Gvir, who has also visited twice this year. Ben-Gvir is an Orthodox Israeli lawyer and politician who, since 2019, has led the far-right party 'Jewish Power' (Otzma Yehudit) and serves as Israel's minister of national security. Ben-Gvir expressed support for the establishment of a synagogue on the Temple Mount and responded enthusiastically in the affirmative when asked if he would put a Jewish house of worship at the flashpoint holy site if he could.

Under the heading, 'The Temple, a Revolution of Consciousness', another group - The Third Temple – declares on its site: "This [rebuilt] temple will be a building that G-d would want, to disclose His presence before everyone on earth. We can then resolve the social and environmental wrongs and ensure accessibility to health to everyone. The addition of these elements will result in a solution to all conflicts and subsequently bring about world peace. Without this divine presence, unfortunately, we cannot achieve this.

"Finding a place of prayer to the one G-d that will be open to all nations in Jerusalem instantly erases the invention of religions. "Why divide those who believe in One G-d? Religions constitute the most severe disaster known to man. The concept of a synagogue, mosque or church is obsolete. The time has come to build the Third Temple of Jerusalem on the Temple Mount in accordance with the prophecy of Ezekiel, in peace. If we want, we can build the 3rd Temple today. You support the most humanist project in history."

Among the promo videos on their site, there is a clip which shows people dressed in clothing representing all religions and faith

groups smiling, hugging and shaking hands in a show of unity, as a result of the rebuilt temple. Ironically, while the Third Temple organisation proposes that a rebuilt Temple will bring about world peace, the US State Department rebuked Ben-Gvir for 'sowing chaos', warning him not to exacerbate tensions.

I have known believers who have donated funds to 'third temple' organisations, but Jesus warned against deception in the Last Days. He foretold that the fig tree would produce tender branches, which is what happens when the leaves are about to appear: the tender shoots come out of the old, woody ones. Along with the leaves will be the tiny 'fruitlets', which will grow until the end/summer. Meanwhile, 'the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come' (Mat 24:14). Let us continue to take heed and reach out with this glorious Gospel to a Nation whose eyes are still blinded, until the Lord returns.

In Yeshua's shalom, Chrissy Rodgers

