

The Leafing of the Fig Tree

By T.W. Tramm

MARCH 10 marks an historic and prophetic milestone, the 70th anniversary of the end of the Arab-Israeli War that began on May 14, 1948.

During the ten-month War of Independence, the newly established Nation of Israel significantly expanded its borders. By the time that a hand-made ink flag was raised in Eilat on March 10, 1949¹, Israeli forces had not only driven the Arabs from the land proposed for the Jewish State by UN Resolution 181 they controlled more than half of the land proposed for the neighboring Palestinian state.

Following a nearly 2,000-year-long winter, the fig tree had come to life and was putting forth leaves.

In addition to the end of Israel's War of Independence, other important fig-tree anniversaries occur in 2019.

This year marks—

- 70 years since Israel's parliament, the Knesset, convened for the first time (Feb. 14).
- 70 years since Israel was admitted to the UN as its 59th member (May 11).
- 70 years since Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's current prime minister, was born (Oct. 21).
- 70 years since David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, proclaimed Jerusalem Israel's capital (Dec. 5).
- 70 years since the Mossad, Israel's intelligence and special operations organization, was established (Dec. 13).
- 70 years since the Knesset voted to transfer the seat of government from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (Dec. 13).
- 70 years since the largest ever number of Jews in a single year, nearly a quarter million, migrated to Israel.²
- 70 years since Israel signed peace agreements with the Muslim nations who attacked her on May 14, 1948.³

- 70 years since Jerusalem became divided when the Israelis captured and controlled the western portion and the Jordanians captured and controlled East Jerusalem.⁴

The 70-year mileposts related to replanted Israel are significant because Jesus says the generation who sees the fig tree putting forth leaves will see all of the events described in Mathew 24, including the Tribulation, come to pass:

“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near ... Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened” (Matt. 24:32, 34).

Scripture defines a typical generation as 70 years, with an upward limit of 80 “by strength” (Ps. 90:10). Therefore, the Rapture and Tribulation should occur sometime between Israel’s 70th and 80th year.

The 70th year seems most probable to see the fullness and redemption of the Church as the number 70, more than any other number in Scripture, signifies fullness, redemption, and an endpoint. The numbers 71, 72, or 73, it should be noted, do not connote redemption or an endpoint in any comparable way in the Bible.⁵

(More on the prophetic significance of the number 70:

http://www.theseasonofreturn.com/ISRAELS_70TH_YEAR_-_WHY_ITS_SIGNIFICANT_rev_a.pdf)

Another reason Israel’s 70th year seems a likely time for the onset of the Day of the Lord is the planned unveiling of a Middle East peace deal after Israeli elections in April. This is crucial because the fundamental sign given by Paul to identify the season of the Rapture is people saying “peace and safety”:

“Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape” (1 Thess. 5:1-3).

With Paul’s peace-and-safety sign in view, it’s awe-inspiring to consider how an unlikely series of events and circumstances, including the election of renowned dealmaker Donald Trump as US President, has yielded a peace plan dubbed the “deal of the century” during Israel’s 70th year. This improbable meeting of key prophetic sign and timeline suggests that the end of the fig-tree generation, as far as the Church is concerned, is at hand.

The question that remains is, when exactly does Israel’s 70th year end? Is it Nisan 1? Or is God, rather, counting the equivalent of 70 years from a specific date? If the latter is true, because the fledgling Nation of Israel put forth its leaves over a period of months, spanning 1948-49, one cannot know the exact starting point and, therefore, end point.

This is why we cannot set a date-limit on Jesus' return.

And this is why we must keep watch always.

"Keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come" (Matt. 24:42).

NOTES:

1. The raising of the ink flag, considered to mark the end of the Arab-Israeli War, occurred on March 10 (Adar 9-10), 1949. Adar 10 corresponds to March 17 in 2019
2. 1949 Jewish migration to Israel: <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3539874,00.html>
3. Armistice dates in 1949: Egypt (Feb. 24); Lebanon (March 23); Jordan (April 3); Syria (July 20). Iraq was the only country that did not sign a peace agreement with Israel, choosing instead to withdraw its troops and hand over its sector to Jordan's Arab Legion.
4. According to the 1947 UN Partition Plan, Jerusalem was to be an international city, not included as a part of either the proposed Jewish or Arab states. During the war, however, the Israelis captured and controlled the western part of the city and the Jordanians captured and controlled East Jerusalem.
5. Given the biblical emphasis on the number 70 as signifying a generation-timespan, fullness, and liberation or redemption, it would seem incongruous for the most anticipated redemption event of all—the rapture of the body of Christ—to occur apart from a 70th year.