



## Cedars of Lebanon

The mighty Cedars were the great and ancient blessing of Lebanon. They adorned the white-topped mountains in the Northern part of the Promised Land and were renowned throughout the ancient world. In the Old Testament, particularly in the psalms and the prophets, they are referenced over 70 times for their beauty, their fragrance, their strength, their shade and their magnificence. King David's house and the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem were built with cedar from Lebanon and when ancient Israel offended God his prophets suggested that the nation would be cut or burned down like the mighty cedars of Lebanon and reduced to a stump or a shoot.

Since those days empires and invaders have plundered and deforested most of the cedar forests and although there are preserved areas climate change now also drastically threatens the tree which is the national symbol of the modern state of Lebanon. It is easy to start to wonder about parallels between the loss of the trees and the current state of affairs in this beautiful but devastated land and its neighbours.

People of prayer might intuit a spiritual link between the health, peace and prosperity of Lebanon and the flourishing of its cedars. Who knows what God can do if as well as dealing with the immediate suffering in Beirut we also pray deeply for the promise of the land for Christian, Muslim and Jew and for its flourishing, its deep rooted peace and prosperity when the smell of explosive and the stink of corruption will once more be cleansed by the fragrance of the cedars.

Whether or not the actual forests will ever again shade this beautiful land of mountain and coastland the cedars are a powerful focus for the prayers of those who would sow peace and restoration. This small seedling cedar of Lebanon in your churchyard, garden or park can be a tangible symbol of our hopes and prayers not just for Lebanon but for the whole Middle East and Israel. Today a little slow-growing seedling of hope. Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow a great tree of shade, healing and peace.



## A prayer

Holy Lord

As we look at this tiny tree and nurture its growth we pray for Lebanon.

Restore its ancient blessing and let it be beautiful in its holiness.

Let it be a land of flourishing and peace once again.

Let its people be strong and united in lasting joy.

Let it become a jewel of your Kingdom where factions and corruption are only memories.

May its neighbours heal their wounds and enmities and may they flourish

so that Lebanon restored redeems the Middle East and brings the peace that the world so needs.

Help us to plant the seeds of the glory of Lebanon through our prayers, our gifts and our acts of love and then, Father God restore the beauty and the promise of Lebanon so that the whole earth will praise your glorious name.

We pray this prayer in the power of your Holy Spirit through your son, our Saviour, Jesus, who knew this land and blessed it with His grace. Amen