

## *The Lost Sheep of Israel*

- 1. God's plan for National Israel**
- 2. Phase one: National Israel will reject God**
- 3. The Northern Kingdom**
- 4. Gentiles and the 10 Tribes**
- 5. The Great Harvest**
- 6. The Regathering, and the Millennial Reign**
- 7. Jewish Tradition**

## God's plan for National Israel

The 'Song of Moses' (Deuteronomy 32) is a prophetic template outlining God's plan for Ethnic Israel throughout history from beginning to end. According to the song, the Jewish people would come to reject "the rock their savior" (their national rejection of Jesus). As a result, the Lord in turn would reject them by directing his attention to an obscure group described as "a people who are not a people" (Deuteronomy 32:22).

The question is, is this rejection absolute and definitive? Does God permanently disown the Jewish people? According to the song, God did briefly consider it:

- "I said I would scatter them and erase their name from human memory. But I dreaded the taunt of the enemy, lest the adversary misunderstand and say, 'Our hand has triumphed; the Lord has not done all this.'" - Verse 15

God does not allow Israel to perish, lest their enemies prevail over Israel and misinterpret the outcome. The adversary might regard their victory as a feat of strength against God and his purposes, rather than acknowledge that the Lord is in control. Instead, God allows persistent brushes against calamity and persecution to soften their hearts until they are humbled and without strength. It's as if God is taunting Israel:

- He will say: "Now where are their gods, the rock they took refuge in, the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up to help you! Let them give you shelter!" -Verse 38

God eventually does intervene to save his people, to atone for them and his land:

- Rejoice, you nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; **he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people.**

Other scriptures corroborate that this will initiate a thousand year period in which Israel is lifted above all Nations, and made the religious capital of the world. According to the prophetic content within the song, God's providential plan for Ethnic Israel can be understood as having two phases:

- Phase one: Ethnic Israel will reject God.
  - a. God temporarily abandons them. God provokes Judah to jealousy by going to "those who are not a people". Calamity builds until Judah is without strength.
- Phase two: God will deliver Ethnic Israel

### Phase one: National Israel will reject God

By rejecting Jesus, the following clause from the song of Moses was fulfilled:

- "They abandoned the God who made them and rejected the rock their Savior." – Deuteronomy 32:15

In the practice of masonry, the 'cornerstone' would act as the foundation for an entire structure. All other stones were placed in reference to this cornerstone. Psalms 118 verse 22 advances this theme of national Israel unwittingly rejecting a rock/stone which unbeknownst to them, would become the object of greatest value, the cornerstone:

- "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."

This verse is quoted in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, with every reference offering the same interpretation: Jesus is that very stone.

As written in the song of Moses, and according to the many words of warning offered by Jesus, God would "hide his face" (Deut 32:20) and remove his hedge of protection:

- "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling! Look, your house is left to you desolate." – Matthew 23:37
- "Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." – Matthew 24:1-2

### **The fig tree and Israel**

In Matthew 21, Jesus inspects a fig tree expecting to find fruit. Contrary to expectation, the fig tree was lacking. In reaction, Jesus announces a curse over the tree: "May you never produce fruit again!" (Matthew 21:19).

The "first ripe" fig is a symbol for Jewish leadership:

- "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time..." – Hosea 9:6

The act of cursing the fig tree was not done out of anger, but it served as an object lesson and a confirmation of prophecy:

- "I will surely consume them, saith the Lord: there shall be no grapes on the vine, **nor figs on the fig tree**, and the leaf shall fade; **and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.**" – Jeremiah 8:13

This curse represented God's final removal of favor from Jerusalem. The prophecy states that the blessings that Israel formerly enjoyed would "pass away from them." If the blessings are to pass elsewhere, where specifically will it go?

## A divided Kingdom

Prophecy regarding Ethnic Israel is incredibly nuanced. The narrative as outlined above, only applies to descendants of the “Southern Kingdom”.

During the reign of King Solomon’s son, the tenuous unity of the kingdom of Israel broke into two: The Southern Kingdom, and the Northern Kingdom. As a consequence of rampant idolatry, God divorced the Northern Kingdom and allowed Assyria to conquer the region. The majority of tribes associated with the Northern Kingdom were sent away into permanent exile. Very few ever returned.

The Southern Kingdom eventually suffered defeat and exile into pagan Babylon, yet after 70 years they returned to the land. In time, they appropriated the familiar title of “Jews” - referring mostly to the Southern tribes of Judah, Benjamin and a portion of Levi, with leadership posted in Jerusalem as its capital.

When the Jews returned from Babylon, the Temple was rebuilt and religious practice continued. A revolution against Greece allows the nation to enjoy a brief period of sovereignty, that is, until the land is made subject again to the foreign power of Rome.

The 10 tribes however, followed a completely different trajectory and research into their migration will yield a completely different history. The prophets would come to connect their return to the land to the events surrounding the Messianic era.

## The Northern Kingdom

God makes the Southern Kingdom jealous by going “to those who are not a people”:

- “Then He said, ‘I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end *will be*; For they are a perverse generation, Sons in whom there is no faithfulness. They have made Me jealous with *what* is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idol’s. **So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people [a failed nation];** I will provoke them to anger with **a foolish nation...**” - Deuteronomy 32:20-21

How can the subject be referred to as ‘not a people’ (not a nation) and a ‘nation’ at the same time? ‘Those who are not a people’ is a Hebrew idiom referring to a failed Nation. Therefore, these are members of what formerly used to constitute a Nation. The only one failed nation of import, associated with this kind of language in the Old Testament is the Northern Kingdom of Israel:

- “...within sixty-five years **Ephraim [the Northern Kingdom] will be too shattered to be a people...**” – Isaiah 7:8

Often the prophets would address the Northern Kingdom with the tribal identity of Ephraim, which was the largest tribe among them.

Inserting this understanding, the Song of Moses yields the following sequence of events:

1. Israel provokes God to jealousy by serving other Gods.
2. Israel eventually rejects God, and the “rock their savior” (the Messiah).
3. Therefore God will reject Israel and turn his attention to the members of a failed nation to drive them to jealousy.
4. That failed Nation is Ephraim: their kinsman who formerly established a rival nation north of Jerusalem, before suffering defeat and exile at the hands of the Assyrian Empire.

### **The Epistle of Peter**

The Epistle of Peter is an invaluable corroborating witness to this view. After exposure to this theory, many may read Peters introduction in a completely different light:

“To God’s **elect [eklektos]**, **exiles scattered** throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia...”

The Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word “eklektos” (Greek for Elect) is “Bakhar”. Bakhar expresses God’s activity of choosing certain individuals, or people, for specific roles, stations, or levels of authority.

For example, God chose/Bakhar Jerusalem as the place where he would place his name:

- “Yet I have chosen [Bakhar] Jerusalem, that My name may be there” – 2 Chronicles 6:6

God chose/Bakhar Levi to minister in the name of the Lord:

- For the Lord thy God hath chosen him [Levi] out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons forever.” – Deuteronomy 18:5

God chose/Bakhar Saul to be King:

- “...Samuel said to all the people, ‘Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen ...’” – 1 Samuel 10:24

God chose/Bakhar Israel as his inheritance. Ethnic Israel is his chosen/Bakhar/Eklektos:

- “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.” – Psalms 33:12
- “Seed of Abraham His servant, you children of Jacob, His chosen ones!” – Psalms 105:6
- “For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure.” – Psalms 135:4
- “For Jacob My servant’s sake, And Israel My elect...” – Isaiah 45:4
- “I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, from Judah an heir of My Mountains; My elect shall inherit it, And My servants shall dwell there.” – Isaiah 65:9

The term ‘God’s elect’ in scripture, has only ever applied to Ethnic/National Israel. The people to whom Peter is addressing are Ethnic Israelites. Furthermore, Peter mentions their exile, and their ‘scattering’ - their migration to and fro outside of the land.

In 1 Peter 2 verse 9, Peter writes:

- But you are a **chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession**, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Again, these are Epithets that only apply to Ethnic Israel.

Now for the grand finale:

- “Once you were **not a people**, but now you are the people of God...” - 1 Peter 2:10

Peter attaches the description ‘not a people’ to his audience. The Israelites reading the letter would have immediately made the connection between this phrase and the same phrase used in the Song of Moses. Peter himself is attaching Ethnic Israelite identity to the mysterious group mentioned in Deuteronomy 32:21.

### **Prophetic foreshadowing**

If the people of Deuteronomy 32:21 truly represent the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom, this would amount to a subtle prophecy of God’s will for Israel to be split into two kingdoms: the North and the South (the Jewish people). The North would eventually fail, become ‘too shattered to be a people’ and Assyria would cast them away from the land, among the gentiles.

According to this interpretation of the song of Moses, God will turn against the Jewish people and direct his attention to the failed Northern Kingdom, the 10 tribes and their descendants.

The New Testament accounts for this exchange.

The Apostle Paul translates the passage (Deuteronomy 32:21) into Greek, using the Greek word “Ethnei”:

- “I will make you envious by those who are not a **nation [Ethnei]**; I will make you angry by a **nation [Ethnei]** that has no understanding.” – Romans 10:19

This is the same Greek word used by Jesus when referring to the new recipients of the Kingdom, once it is taken away from from the Jews:

- “Therefore, I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you (**the Southern Kingdom**) and given to a people [Ethnei/Nation] (**The Northern Kingdom**) who will produce its fruit.” - Matthew 21:43

Jesus is simply restating Deuteronomy 32 verse 21, adding that the “Ethnei” to whom God does turn his attention to, will not resist his will, but will instead produce fruit.

### **Romans 9 and “the vessels”**

In Romans 9 Paul laments the exclusion of the great majority of the Jewish people from the gospel. Since their defiance against the truth is according to God's plan, Paul identifies the Jewish nation as a vessel dedicated for God's wrath. Paul was applying prophetic imagery found in the book of Jeremiah.

The prophet was instructed to buy a clay jar and proclaim words of judgment against the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Jeremiah then broke the jar in their sight as a demonstration of what God planned to do to them:

- “Hear the word of the Lord, **you kings of Judah and people of Jerusalem**....and say to them, "This is what the Lord Almighty says: I will smash this nation and this city just as this potter's jar is **smashed and cannot be repaired.**” Jeremiah 19:11

In the chapter prior, Jeremiah is directed to watch a potter at work, fashioning a lump of clay. At some point, the clay is marred in the potter's hands. The potter responds by simply starting over. The word of the Lord addresses the Northern Kingdom, using the designation “House of Israel”:

- “**O house of Israel**, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. **Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.** At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; **If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.** And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.” – Jeremiah 18:6-10

According to Jeremiah, the Southern Kingdom is destined for destruction beyond repair. This is even affirmed by the Apostle Paul as already shown in Romans 9. In contrast, Jeremiah's message to the Northern Kingdom is compassionate in its tone, and concludes with a proposal to allow the Northern Kingdom to rebuild. Just as a lump of clay, once marred, can be reshaped, so too is God willing to reshape the Northern Kingdom, to “build and plant it”.

However, the prophecy of Jeremiah prefaces restoration with the condition of repentance. The Northern Kingdom must repent, then they will be restored.

In Romans 9, Paul associates the objects/vessels of Mercy with the believing gentiles and the minority of believing Jews:

- “What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?” – Romans 9:23-24

Paul then quotes Hosea 2:23, a prophecy concerning the House of Israel:

- “I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people; and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one...”

The context is that God will call the House of Israel “my people” and “my loved one” yet, Paul is applying it to gentile believers. Hosea 1:10, and Isaiah 10:22-23 are used the same way, associating the restoration of the House of Israel with the many gentiles who are coming to the faith.

### **Gentiles and the 10 Tribes**

Paul refers to these people (the “Ethnei”) as gentiles, when he paraphrases verse 21 of the Song of Moses:

- “I am talking to you **Gentiles**. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry for I want somehow to **make the people of Israel jealous of what you Gentiles have**, so I might save some of them.” - Romans 11:13-14
- “**I will make you jealous by those who are not a nation [Ethnei]; I will make you angry by a nation [Ethnei] that has no understanding.**” – Romans 10:19; Deuteronomy 32:21

This is not entirely inaccurate. Enough time has passed for Israel to lose its identity. Generations of Idol worship and intermarriage has obscured their true origin, allowing for a collective amnesia to set in.

### **The Olive Tree**

Paul uses the grafting-in process of the olive tree as an illustration of gentiles joining the people of God. Two olive trees are used in the illustration: a cultivated olive tree, and a wild olive tree. As a gentile enters the faith, they are like a branch removed from their native wild olive tree. The grafting process allows the foreign branch to receive nourishment from the root:

- ...you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root...After all, if you were cut out of a olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree...”  
– Romans 11:17, 24

The inspiration behind the notion originates in the book of Ezekiel. In chapter 37, the Lord directs the prophet to pick up two sticks. Regarding the first stick, he is instructed to write: “Belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him.” The second stick he is instructed to write: “Belonging to Joseph - the stick of Ephraim - and to all the house of Israel associated

with him” (verse 16). Ezekiel is then told to bring the two sticks “into one stick” so that they became one in his hand. This was a physical demonstration of God’s plan to reunite the two separate houses of Judah (the Southern Kingdom) and Ephraim (the 10 Northern tribes) into one nation, and under the rule of one king (Ezekiel 37:20-22).

In the Hebrew language, there is no separate word to distinguish a branch or stick from the entire tree. Therefore when a Hebrew speaking Jew reads the word “stick” they are literally reading “tree.” This brings an interesting dimension to the passages of Ezekiel 37. While in reality, Ezekiel was handling two sticks - in the text, the process is said to bring together two “trees”. How can two tree’s fuse together as one? Paul identified the perfect explanation in the grafting process.

In addition, the Olive tree is a symbol for Israel:

- “But I am like a thriving olive tree in God’s house; I trust in the faithfulness of God for ever and ever.” - Psalm 52:10
- “The Lord called your name, a green olive tree, beautiful with good fruit.” - Jeremiah 11:16

The two olive trees are the two sticks held by Ezekiel. The cultivated olive tree is the tree/stick of Judah. The wild olive tree is the tree/stick of Joseph. A wild tree is an apt description of the stick of Joseph, since Ephraim was scattered from the land and never returned.

Despite the wild olive tree standing as a symbol of Ephraim and the 10 tribes, Paul refers to the gentile as a branch originally belonging to the wild olive tree.

### **Prophecy regarding Israel’s scattering world wide**

In Genesis 48, a prophetic declaration is made by the patriarch Jacob, that his grandson Ephraim would come to engender a “Multitude of nations” - meaning, many nations and members of nations distinct from the nation of Israel (Genesis 48:17-19).

In Deuteronomy 33, Moses transfers leadership to Joshua and retires to a mountain where he remained until he died. Before he departs, he announces words of prophecy to each tribe. To the tribe of Judah, Moses said:

- “Hear, Lord, the cry of Judah; **bring him to his people**. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh, be his help against his foes!” – Deuteronomy 33:7

There would be no need for Judah to be returned to his people, unless Judah were to become isolated and away from them!

To Ephraim and Manasseh, Moses states:

- “His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them **he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth**: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.” – Deut 33:17

The migration of Ephraim and Manasseh, pushing “the people” (the majority of the tribes) “to the ends of the earth” would serve as the means through which Judah would be separated from his kinsmen. While Judah (The southern kingdom) is destined to remain anchored to the land, Ephraim/Manasseh and “the people” are destined to venture to **the ends of the earth**.

The prophet Hosea announces that God resolves to make the tribes “wanderers among the nations” (Hosea 9:17). According to the prophet Jeremiah, the tribes would ultimately come to settle in the “North Country” and in the “remote parts of the earth” (Jeremiah 31:8). Isaiah calls them outcasts, sent to the “four corners of the earth” (Isaiah 11:12). He depicts God beckoning Israel from all four cardinal directions, and from “**the ends of the earth**” (Isaiah 43:5-6).

The inclusion of the phrase “the ends of the earth” was not coincidental. By doing so, the prophet Isaiah links the circumstances of Israel residing in multiple territories worldwide to the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 33:17, implying that in their scattering, Moses’ prophecy is fulfilled.

### **The lost sheep**

In Luke chapter 7, Jesus relates his fervent effort to find and help as many Jews as possible to a Sheppard willing to go great lengths to recover lost sheep:

- “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to .” – Luke 15:3-7

Yet, there were still “other sheep” Jesus intended to find:

- “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.” – John 10:16

In the book of Ezekiel, the Lord rebukes “the shepherds of Israel” - representing failed leadership, and the many in power who sought to take advantage of the people:

- “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock...You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.” – Ezekiel 34:2,4

Under their care, the sheep were scattered:

- “And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the

mountains, and upon every high hill: **yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth**, and none did search or seek after them.” – Ezekiel 34:5-6

Jesus identifies himself as the “good shepherd”:

- “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.” – John 10:11-13

Ezekiel states that the strays were scattered and lost “upon all the face of the earth.” In John 10, Jesus connects these scattered strays to the “other sheep” he intended to find:

- “Then the wolf attacks the flock and **scatters it... I have other sheep** that are not of this sheep pen. **I must bring them also.**”- John 10:12,16

Therefore, two types of lost sheep are mentioned:

- The sheep in the land who are spiritually lost and in need of care
- The “other sheep” - Israelites abroad who were scattered “upon all the face of the earth.”

The Jews at this time were well aware of their brothers who were dispersed abroad, and still in exile. This is why the gospel of John preserves the account of some wrestling with the following inquiry:

- “Whither will he [Jesus] go... will he go unto the **dispersed [the dispersed tribes] among the Gentiles**, and teach the Gentiles?” – John 7:3,5

### **Fishers of men**

The account of Jacob blessing Ephraim and Manasseh contains an interesting detail in the text:

- “The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them **grow [Dagah]** into a multitude in the midst of the earth.” Genesis 48:16

The Hebrew word translated as “grow” is the same word translated as “fish” in Genesis 1 verse 21:

- “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the **fish [Dagah]** of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” – Genesis 1:21

This was a figure of speech. Jacob was petitioning for God to allow them to move and produce in great numbers like a swarm of fish; that they would fish (in a verb sense) outwards. This set the precedent for an association we later find in the book of Jeremiah, and the New Testament.

In Jeremiah 16, the Lord condemns Israel and reveals his plan to cast them away from the land:

- “Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that you know not, neither you nor your fathers; and there shall you serve other gods day and night; where I will not show you favor.”

Yet in the typical pattern shown by many of the prophets, soon after God pronounces judgment, he offers the hope of redemption:

- “...and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.” – Jeremiah 16:15

He will gather them by sending fishermen! The fishermen would then recover the tribes that have swarmed as fish into the midst of the earth by searching in “every mountain, every hill”:

- “Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.” – Jeremiah 16:16

This is why the theme of fish is featured in the New Testament:

- “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you fishers of men.” – Matthew 4:19

Jesus was assigning them the task of Jeremiah 16:15. Throughout his ministry and in the great commission, Jesus would hand over the responsibility of recovering the descendants of the 10 tribes (by bringing them into the faith) to his Apostles, their disciples, and eventually the gentile church.

### **The purpose of the gentile**

In the gospel of John chapter 11, the High priest was known for what seems to be an involuntary prophecy concerning Jesus:

- “He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for **the scattered children of God**, to bring them together and **make them one**.”

This is reminiscent of the messianic content found in Ezekiel 37:22 and Isaiah 49:5.

In Ezekiel 37, the prophet declares that the Southern Kingdom and the Northern Kingdom would reunite to become one nation in the land, subject to one king:

- “I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel, and one king will rule over all of them.” – Ezekiel 37:22

Isaiah 49 is a scripted conversation between God and the Messiah. The Messiah recognizes his task to restore the tribes of Israel, by gathering all the exiles to himself:

- “And now the Lord says—he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself...” Isaiah 49:5

Yet, this plan is not inclusive enough. The Messiah will also be used in a much more expansive effort:

- “I will also make you a light for the gentiles, that my salvation [my Yeshua] may reach **to the ends of the earth.**”

In Hebrew, the phrase my salvation is “Yeshua ti” - my Yeshua. God makes the Messiah a light for the gentiles so that the testimony of Yeshua would reach to the ends of the earth. Recall one more time, the association of the phrase “unto the ends of the earth” with the 10 tribes. This is a subtle hint of the purpose behind the inclusion of the gentile world.

The purpose of the gentile is to spread the gospel so that it reaches to the **ends of the earth**. By doing so, the gospel is allowed to travel the vast distances necessary to recover the descendants of the 10 tribes and bring them back into covenant with God.

### **A reversal of fortune**

Jesus warned that the kingdom would come to humble the proud. Its arrival would cut down the cruel and undeserving from their place of a power, and it would lift up high those who were previously low and suffering:

By advancing his ministry in this manner, Jesus was revealing the nature of the coming kingdom that he warned was fast approaching:

#### *The exalted will be humbled*

- “A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.” – Proverbs 29:23
- “Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.” – Proverbs 3:34
- “...You humble those with haughty eyes.” – Psalm 18:27
- “So mankind is brought low, and man is humbled...” – Isaiah 2:9
- “The eyes of the arrogant will be humbled and human pride brought low” – Isaiah 2:11
- “So mankind will be brought low, and each man humbled; the arrogant will lower their eyes.” – Isaiah 5:15

#### *The humbled will be exalted*

- “Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.” – Psalm 138:6
- “The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down” – Psalm 145:14
- “He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the needy from the ash heap...” – Psalm 113:7
- “He mocks proud mockers but shows favor to the humble and oppressed.” – proverbs 3:34
- “So that He sets on high those who are lowly, And those who mourn are lifted to safety.” – Job 5:11
- “He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap To make them sit with nobles, And inherit a seat of honor; For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, And He set the world on them.” – 1 Samuel 2:8

God has humbled Jerusalem and Jewish people, and is now seeking to lift up those of God’s people who were abandoned and sent away in the Old Testament.

1 Peter 2:10 perfectly captures the tragedy behind the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Although they once possessed the inheritance and blessings, they were ultimately abandoned, stripped of their inheritance, and cast away into the nations with God’s wrath. They departed with the following curses:

- “you shall not have mercy”- Hosea 1:6
- “you are not my people” - Hosea 1:8

Their time of misfortune has come to an end, and God is now seeking to bring them all back into Covenant (the New Covenant) so that he may allow them to return to their inheritance. This process represents the ultimate testimony of compassion, healing and reparation within the Biblical narrative. For through the Messiah, people who were once condemned and made destitute have been granted mercy, given a purpose, and God plans to restore their inheritance.

In the Old Testament they were last, and the Jewish people were first. However, in this New Covenant era, the Jewish people have been made last, while God’s attention has made the recovery of the 10 Northern tribe’s first priority:

- “So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen [made elect].” – Matthew 20:16

The election as it has left the Jewish people, has not been removed from Ethnic Israel entirely. The election has only been restored to their kinsman, the descendants of the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom.

- “I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” – Matthew 8:11

The many coming from the east and west are the lost tribes; those with Israelite ancestry who have accepted Jesus, and look forward to the day when their inheritance is restored and they “take their places at the feast...in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

### **The Great Commission**

Matthew 28:19 preserves the command to make disciples and spread the gospel to all nations:

- “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

At this time, the circumstances leading to the decree of Acts 15 have not yet occurred. The Apostles were not yet privy to God’s plan to open the faith to the uncircumcised. With gentile inclusion not yet accounted for, how do you suppose the Apostles understood the instruction? They would have related to the great commission as God’s revealed plan to recover the lost sheep of the Northern Kingdom worldwide. The Epistles of James and Peter show that great care was made to minister to the Israelites abroad, and this is why.

- James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, **To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:** Greetings. - James 1:1
- Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, **To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia** who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. - 1 Peter 1:1

### **The Apostle John and the “Sons of God”**

In his first Epistle, John writes:

- “But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God **even to them** that believe on his name.” – John 1:12

The sentiment: “even to them” sounds redundant. Interestingly, John is inserting a subtle reference to the lost tribes. This is easily proven by a search for the phrase “sons of God.” This was a promise of restoration, coming from the prophet Hosea:

- “There it shall be said **unto them**, You are the sons of the living God.” – Hosea 1:10

The affirmation is said to “them” - the 10 tribes that were divorced and sent into exile. Yes it is miraculous that God would embrace the gentiles. But it is even more miraculous that he would accept “them”. This is the theological kicker; that those who were abandoned, would return as sons of God. In Jesus, John envisioned the fulfilment of this prophecy of restoration.

### **The parable of the sower**

The parable of the sower is a simplification of this complicated theological matter. To distil the entire process into a few words, God scatters the tribes of the Northern Kingdom among the nations like a farmer sows seed. The giveaway is the immediate mention of “scattering”:

- “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was **scattering** the seed...” – Matthew 13:4

When the Apostles questioned Jesus, he responds:

- “**Hear** then to what the parable of the sower means...” - Matthew 13:18

Jesus elaborates on the four possible outcomes for each seed sown:

1. A seed Hearing the message but not understanding.
2. Hearing the word and receiving it with joy, but losing it in fear of persecution.
3. A seed that hears the word, but the worries and distractions of life make it unfruitful.
4. A fruitful seed.

Encoded within this parable is the “Shema”. “Shema” is the first word used, when reciting the injunction of Deuteronomy 6 verses 4-9: “**Hear [Shema]** O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” When Jesus said “**Hear** then to what the parable...” he would have said “Shema!” Deuteronomy 6:4 really amounts to a declaration of allegiance to YHVH. The verse that follows, then clarifies how Israel is to show their allegiance and devotion:

- “You shall love the Lord your God with all your **heart**, and with all of your **soul**, and with all your **strength**.”

The first three outcomes signify failure to love God in one of these three points:

1. A failure to love God with the heart represents a failure to fully grasp and understand the message. The message doesn’t penetrate deeply enough.
2. The word translated as “soul” is the Hebrew word “Nefesh”. Nefesh is a reference to the body, rather than the spiritual component within man. To fail to love God with all of one's Nefesh represents a failure to be willing to give up one's life, or risk danger for the sake of faith.
3. A failure to love God with all of one’s strength, is a failure to give up one’s wealth and resources. Wealth and resources represent the result of our labour and efforts. Therefore, the fate of this seed is to lose focus and become unfruitful because of distraction and worldly pursuits.

All of this serves to bolster the conclusion that the parable is about Ethnic Israel, specifically the 10 tribes Northern Kingdom. God as the sower, scatters them among the gentiles in expectation of a vast yield.

### **The Great Harvest**

In Acts 26, Paul is granted an audience with Herod, King of Judea. In his speech, he mentions the “hope” of the twelve tribes:

- “The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. 5 They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. And now it is because of **my hope in what God has promised our ancestors** that I am on trial today. 7 **This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled** as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead. – Acts 26:4-8

In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet is granted a vision of a valley of dead bones. The Lord speaks on their behalf:

- Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ – Ezekiel 37:11

Ezekiel directs this prophecy to them:

- ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.’” – Ezekiel 37:11-14

The “hope” lost was a reference to their inheritance. The Lord's declaration proves the contrary, their hope is not lost! Instead, he announces his plans to regather them to their inheritance.

According to Jeremiah, the Israelites truly have hope in their “end”. In chapter 31, Jeremiah reveals what this hope really means:

- “...there is hope in your end says the Lord **that your children shall come again to their own border.**” – Jeremiah 31:17

According to Paul, the New Covenant will “fulfill” the “hope in what God has promised” - and by comparing his statement with the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah, we know that Paul was referring to Israel coming “again to their border.”

### **The trigger event**

If conditions are building for a great harvest; i.e. a regathering of the lost tribes, surely there must be prophecy regarding a trigger event - a condition that once met, will initiate the regathering. This trigger event is found in Deuteronomy 30.

God warns that as a result of sin, Israel will be sent into exile. However, Israel will never be uprooted from the land for good. If the Israelites return to the Lord by seeking to obey the Torah while in exile, he will bring them back.

The prerequisite for the re-gathering of the lost tribes is Torah obedience:

- “When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, and **when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.** Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. **He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it.”** – Deuteronomy 30:1-5

The question is, why will Israel suddenly obey the Torah while in exile, when the people refused to submit to their obligations while living in the comfort of their own land? Deuteronomy 30 reveals that God himself will inspire Israel to obey by “circumcising” their hearts:

- **“The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts** and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live...**You will again obey the Lord and follow all his commands** I am giving you today.” – Deuteronomy 30:6,8

Prophecy later clarifies how this is done, and through what means:

- “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make **a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...’This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,’ declares the Lord. **‘ I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.** I will be their God, and they will be my people.” – Jeremiah 31:31, 33
- “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; **I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.** And I will put my Spirit in you and **move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”** – Ezekiel 36:26
- **“In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands.** Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ...” - Colossians 2:11

It’s the New Covenant that circumcises the hearts of the Israelites leading them to obey the Torah as prophesied in Deut 30. After the lost sheep of the house of Israel have received the gospel in faith, being restored back into Covenant with God – the Holy Spirit will stir within them, the desire to obey the Torah.

**The New Covenant pattern**

This pattern of repentance, obedience while in exile, and re-gathering is attached to every prophecy regarding the New Covenant, because it's the New Covenant that inspires the change.

Let's look at a few verses before the reference to the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31. Read the verse knowing that the term "Ephraim" is often used to reference the house of Israel:

- “I have surely heard Ephraim’s moaning: ‘You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the Lord my God. 19 After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.’ - Jeremiah 31:18,19

God says he has heard Ephraim's (10 tribes of Israel) moaning. Ephraim cry's out in shame, claiming he has been disciplined enough. He begs to be re-gathered, to be allowed to return. He claims to have repented - to have understood his wrongs. Therefore as an inevitable process of repentance, he has returned to the Torah. In response God says:

- “Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him,” declares the Lord. 21 “Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take. Return, Virgin Israel, return to your towns. “- Jeremiah 31:20-21

God says that he still loves and remembers Ephraim. As a result of Ephraim's repentance, just as Deut 30 says, he decides to re-gather Ephraim. He declares that road signs and guideposts will be set. A highway so to speak is set up to lead Ephraim back home.

It goes on to say again, that God will re-gather Israel:

- This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “When I bring them back from captivity, the people in the land of Judah and in its towns will once again use these words: ‘The Lord bless you, you prosperous city, you sacred mountain.’ People will live together in Judah and all its towns—farmers and those who move about with their flocks. I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint.” - Jeremiah 31:23 - 25

Again, more reference to Israel back on the land:

- “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will plant the kingdoms of Israel and Judah with the offspring of people and of animals. Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant,” declares the Lord. “In those days people will no longer say, ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ Instead, everyone will die for their own sin; whoever eats sour grapes—their own teeth will be set on edge. - Jeremiah 31: 27-30

Finally we get to verse 31, as an explanation as to why Israel has repented of sin, and returned to the Torah: **It's the New Covenant!**

Let's look at the next New Covenant prophecy made by Ezekiel in chapter 36. In verses 8 - 12, God prophecies to the mountains of Israel that the people of Israel will be brought back:

- 'But you, mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home. I am concerned for you and will look on you with favour; you will be ploughed and sown, and I will cause many people to live on you—yes, all of Israel. The towns will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. I will increase the number of people and animals living on you, and they will be fruitful and become numerous. I will settle people on you as in the past and will make you prosper more than before. Then you will know that I am the Lord. I will cause people, my people Israel, to live on you. They will possess you, and you will be their inheritance; you will never again deprive them of their children. - Ezekiel 36:8-12

Two verses before verse 26 this is what he says:

- For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. - Ezekiel 36:24-25

Verse 26 speaks of the New Covenant:

- I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. - Ezekiel 36:26

What does the next verse say?

- "Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God." - Ezekiel 36:27

As Deut 30, Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31 reveals, it is necessary for Israel to obey the Torah in order to be re-gathered back to the land. The New Covenant writes the Torah on the hearts and minds of Israel leading them to obey.

### **The 10 gentiles of Zechariah 8:23**

- "In those days [the Messianic age] **ten men from all languages and nations** will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'"

The specific mention of ten men is an unmistakable allusion to the ten tribes of Israel. The ten men are grabbing hold of the "hem" of the robe of a Jew, recognizing the knowledge and wisdom the Jewish people possess hold merit worth pursuing. The "hem" in Hebrew is

“tzitzit” which is a reference to the fringes or tassels that hang from their religious garments. The Jewish people wear ‘tzitzit’ as a reminder of the obligation to obey all of the commandments of the Torah:

- “And it shall be unto you for a fringe [Tzitzit], that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them...” – Numbers 15:39

The ten men grabbing hold of the tzitzit of a Jew is a symbolic depiction of gentiles with Israelite ancestry **remembering** the Torah, and their imperative to obey it.

### **A full breakdown of the New Covenant**

- God circumcises Israel’s hearts so they will **Love God and Live**
  - The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and **live**. - Deuteronomy 30:6
- To love God is to obey his commands, decrees, laws
  - I command you today **to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws**; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. - Deuteronomy 30:15
- To live is to obey the law
  - Keep my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will **live** by them. I am the Lord. - Leviticus 18:5
  - He follows My statutes and faithfully keeps My ordinances; he is righteous; surely he will **LIVE**. declares the Lord GOD. – Ezekiel 18:9
  - “They did not follow My statutes and they rejected My ordinances—though the man who does these things will **LIVE** by them—and they utterly profaned My Sabbaths.” – Ezekiel 20:13
- To have an uncircumcised heart is to be stiff-necked:
  - “Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.” - Deuteronomy 10:16
- To be stiff-necked is to refuse to obey the commandments:
  - “But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments.” - Nehemiah 9:16
- God circumcises their hearts through the New Covenant
  - “In him **you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands**. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ...”- Colossians 2:11
- *Once their hearts are circumcised, they will no longer be stiff-necked, and they will seek to obey the commandments.*
- The New Covenant will remove their hearts of stone
  - “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; **I will take the heart of stone** out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” - Ezekiel 36:26
- A stone heart belongs to a person who will not listen/hear the law

- They made their **hearts as hard as flint** and **would not listen to the law** or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the Lord Almighty was very angry. - Zechariah 7:12
- *Therefore when the heart of stone is removed, Israel will come to hear the law*
- To hear the law is to obey the law
  - **Hear**, Israel, and **be careful to obey** so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you. - Deuteronomy 6:3
- the New Covenant leads Israel to obey the “Chuqqah” and “Mishpat”:
  - “Then they will follow my **decrees [Chuqqah]** and be careful to keep my **laws [Mishpat].**” – Ezekiel 11:20
  - “And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my **decrees [Chuqqah]** and be careful to keep my **laws [Mishpat].**” – Ezekiel 36:27
- An analysis of every law referred to as “Chuqqah” will yield the conclusion that “Chuqqah” is the Hebrew equivalent of the Christian concept of “Ceremonial law”:
  - Passover - Exodus 12:14
  - Unleavened bread - Exodus 12:17
  - No foreigner can eat the passover - Exodus 12:43
  - Feast of unleavened bread - Exodus 13:10
  - Keep lamps burning in the Temple - Exodus 27:21
  - High Priest must wear priestly garments - Exodus 28:43
  - Priesthood belonging to Aaron and his sons - Exodus 29:9
  - Do not eat any fat from sacrifice - Leviticus 3:17
  - Parts of the offerings allotted to Aaron and his sons - Leviticus 7:36
  - Priests forbidden to drink wine or fermented drink before entering the the Temple - Leviticus 10:9
  - Israel is to 'afflict' themselves on Yom Kippur - Leviticus 16:29
  - Yom Kippur is a day of Sabbath rest - Leviticus 16:31
  - Sacrifice is only allowed in the tabernacle, or Temple - Leviticus 17:7
  - Against eating bread, or roasted or new grain until the offering of first fruits is made - Leviticus 23:14
  - The fiftieth day of the Festival of weeks is a sabbath - Leviticus 23:21
  - Festival of tabernacles lasting seven days - Leviticus 23:41
  - Blow trumpets - Numbers 10:8
  - All tithes in Israel are granted to the Levites as an inheritance in return for their service - Numbers 18:23
  - Red Heifer - Numbers 19:2
  - Red Heifer waters of cleansing will purify impurity contracted from a dead body - Numbers 19:10
  - wash clothes after receiving cleansing - Numbers 19:21
  - regarding bowls that can be made clean through fire and washing - Numbers 31:21
- *Therefore the New Covenant leads Israel to obey the Ceremonial law*

- An analysis of every law referred to as “Mishpat” will yield the conclusion that “Mishpat” is the Hebrew equivalent of the Christian concept of “Civil law”:
  - laws for servants and injuries (Exodus 21)
  - laws concerning daughters (Exodus 21:9)
  - unbiased judgement in legal affairs (Exodus 23:6)
  - Legal dispute, concern, issue (Numbers 27:5; Deuteronomy 17:8)
  - Laws of inheritance (Numbers 27:11; Numbers 36:29; Deuteronomy 21:17)
  - Legal issue resolved through consulting the Urim (Numbers 27:21)
  - Guidelines for judging a case for accidental manslaughter (Numbers 35:24)
  - Laws for accidental manslaughter (Numbers 35:29)
  - legal rulings of priests/judges (Deuteronomy 17:11)
  - *“Mishpat” is also connected to sacrifice:*
  - Construction of tabernacle (Exodus 26:30)
  - The procedure of a burnt offering (Leviticus 5:10; Leviticus 9:16)
  - Procedure for Passover (Numbers 9:3,14)
  - Food offerings (Numbers 15:16)
  - Community sin (Numbers 15:24)
  - Monthly and daily burnt offerings (Numbers 29:6)
  - share of sacrifices due to priests (Deuteronomy 18:3)
- *Therefore the New Covenant leads Israel to perform sacrifice and obey the Civil laws.*
- When the new heart and spirit implanted within Israel leads them to obey the Torah while in exile, God will regather them to the land:
  - **He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it.** He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors. **The Lord your God will \*circumcise\* your hearts [New Covenant]** and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live... **You will again obey the Lord and follow all his commands I am giving you today.** - Deuteronomy 30:5-6,8
  - My eyes will watch over them for their good, and **I will bring them back to this land.** I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. **I will give them a heart to know me [New Covenant], that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart [by obeying the Torah].** - Jeremiah 24:6-7
  - **I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety.** They will be my people, and I will be their God. **I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me and that all will then go well for them and for their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them [New Covenant]:** I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. I will rejoice in doing them good and **will assuredly plant them in this land** with all my heart and soul. - Jeremiah 32:36-4

- “Therefore say: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: **I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.** “They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. **I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them [New Covenant]; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. - Ezekiel 11:17-20**
- ‘For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and **bring you back into your own land.** I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you [New Covenant];** I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. **And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.** I will save you from all your uncleanness. - **Ezekiel 36:24-29**
- I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. **I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel.** There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offences, **for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them.** They will be my people, and I will be their God. ‘My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. **They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees.** They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your ancestors lived. They and their children and their children’s children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. I will make a **covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant [New Covenant]. - Ezekiel 37:21-26**

### **The Epistle of James**

It was James' conviction that his readers should faithfully obey the Torah, even as members of the New Covenant:

- But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, **and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed** in what they do. - James 1:25

The Torah is a law of liberty/freedom:

- "And I will walk at LIBERTY: for I seek thy precepts." -Psalm 118:45

The Torah is perfect:

- "The law of the Lord is PERFECT, refreshing the soul." - Psalms 19:7

Putting the two together - the Torah is a perfect law of liberty. James as a Jew, was referring to the Torah as described by King David in the Psalms.

Now how are we to make sense of James encouraging those in the faith to look intently into the Torah and to do it, when Paul demonstrates through his epistles that he is vehemently against this? Paul's contention was against coercing gentiles towards Torah observance. However, James did not address his letter to gentiles, but to Israelites:

- "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, **to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:**"

### **The 144,000**

- "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." – Revelation 7:3

This is a subject of much debate for Christianity, and is especially important to those who adhere to the religious group of the Jehovah's Witnesses. In truth however, it's quite simple who the 144,000 really are. The book of Revelation tells us unequivocally. The 144,000 are Israelites:

- "Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel." – Revelation 7:4

There's an interesting omission made in the 12 tribes listed in Revelation 7. It seems the tribe of Dan has been removed and replaced by the inclusion of the Tribe of Levi. This is a distinct departure from the pattern established in the Old Testament, which did not include Levi in the count of Israel due to their special job as serving God as priests. One other change can be identified; the tribe of Ephraim is stripped of its name and made to inherit the name of their father Joseph:

- "Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand." Rev 7:5-8

Why the unprecedented removal of Dan from the number of Israel? Why rename the tribe of Ephraim to the tribe of Joseph?

The tribe of Dan was the first among Israel to engage in the grievous sin of idolatry. When the kingdom of the North severed ties with Judah, a religious site was placed in the heart of the territory of Dan for Idol worship.

The Old Testament has special rebuke for the tribe of Ephraim as well:

- “The children of Ephraim, being armed and [a]carrying bows, Turned back in the day of battle.<sup>10</sup> They did not keep the covenant of God; They refused to walk in His Torah...Yet they went on still to sin against him, to rebel against the most High in the desert...” – Psalm 78:9-10,17
- “Ephraim is oppressed, he is crushed in judgment; because he was content to walk after man’s command.” – Hosea 5:11

According to David in Psalm 78, the tribe of Ephraim had a particular struggle with keeping to the Covenant. They demonstrated a refusal to walk in the Torah (God’s law) yet ironically were content to walk after man’s command.

Now what institution does this resemble? The Christian church has a long history of enmity with God’s law, ever vigilant in its doctrine to justify the belief that the Torah is “fulfilled” and therefore nullified in the New Covenant. Yet in our unyielding opposition against God’s law, the Christian church ironically decided to submit itself to “man’s command” in the form of Vatican law!

The removal of Dan and Ephraim is a very clear message: Idolatry and lawlessness will not be tolerated. The 144,000 will therefore consist of Christian Israelites who have resisted idolatry/religious falsehood, and faithfully obey the terms of the Covenant, the Torah.

### **The Mark/Seal**

- “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” – Revelation 7:3

The seal on the forehead is reminiscent of Deuteronomy 6, where the Israelites are commanded to bind a sign on their hand, and between their eyes:

- “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as a reminder between your eyes.” – Deuteronomy 6:8

The Israelites are told to bind the principle of the “Shema” as a sign on their hand, and a reminder between their eyes. The Israelites are commanded to hear/pay attention, so that they would love God with all their heart, soul and might. How should the Israelites love God in this manner? How does one love God with all their heart, soul and might? In Deuteronomy 11, God tells the Israelites how he wishes for them to express their love for him:

- **“Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always...If, then, you obey the commandments that I enjoin upon**

you this day, **loving the LORD** your God and serving Him with all your heart and soul” Deut 11:1,13

Therefore the “Shema” they are commanded to bind on their hand and forehead represents loving God through obedience to the Torah.

- They are to bind the Torah on their hand: through obeying the Torah with their actions.
- They are to establish the Torah as a reminder between their eyes: to know, study, to ever be reminded of it.

When an Israelite obeys the Torah with their actions, their actions operate as a sign – a witness that they are set apart from all nations for God’s possession.

The Sabbath is a sign. A sign that Israel is “sanctified” – made holy, set apart:

- “Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you...– Exodus 31:13,17

The Sabbath’s (Feast Days) are a sign:

- Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy. – Ezekiel 20:12
- Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God." – Ezekiel 20:20

Passover is a sign:

- This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead ...For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. – Exodus 13:9

The Torah as a whole is a sign:

- ...like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that this law of the LORD is to be on your lips... – Exodus 13:9
- Bind up the testimony, seal the TORAH among my disciples. – Isaiah 8:16

As a result of Torah obedience, the 144,000 were sealed. They were sealed and made God’s possession as a result of the clear message of where they had placed their allegiance. They obeyed the Torah, the Torah set them apart, “Sanctified them” until the time came when God finally purchased them as the First Fruits of the New Covenant.

**The 144,000 and the land**

- Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads... They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb. – Revelation 14:1,4

The 144,000 seals represent the first wave of humanity, restored and redeemed back to God through the New Covenant. As the scripture says, those who are sealed were purchased. The analogy of a business transaction serves to emphasize the point of ownership. God now owns and/or possesses the 144,000. There is no question, no struggle between God and Satan for these people. The matter has been settled.

The 144,000 as a result are immune from suffering God's instruments of wrath reserved for the world because of sin. In Revelation 9 the 144,000 are spared from the torment of locusts that are released from "the Abyss" opened by angel:

- And out of the smoke, locusts descended on the earth, and they were given power like that of the scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. The locusts were not given power to kill them, but only to torment them for five months, and their torment was like the stinging of a scorpion. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, but death will escape them.

As we read, the only ones spared of this torment – torment so bad that people will beg and seek death, are the 144,000.

The 144,000 have free reign, protection and immunity to move through the war torn and ravaged earth in order to proclaim as witnesses God's two truths (Torah and Jesus) and to rebuke the unbelief and the wickedness of the beast system.

- Then the kings of the earth, the nobles, the commanders, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and free man, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they said to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of Their wrath has come, and who shall be able to stand?" – Revelation 6:15-17

Unfortunately this inquiry is interrupted by a badly placed chapter break. As a result, when we move on to chapter 7 this question has already been forgotten. John is not asking a rhetorical question, but provides an immediate answer. Chapter 7 introduces the first appearance of 144,000. Who is able to stand such wrath, destruction, mayhem that many have retreated in fear to hide in caves, rocks and mountains? 144,000. They and they alone will be empowered to endure and stand.

In Numbers 31 the Israelites face their very last battle before settling into the land. Moses orders 1,000 men from each tribe to be sent for the war effort, resulting in an army of 12,000. The result is what seems to be an immediate victory with a monumental amount of spoils. The absolutely astonishing detail of this account is found in Numbers 31:48

- “Then the officers who were over the units of the army—the commanders of thousands and of hundreds—approached Moses and said, ‘Your servants have counted the soldiers under our command, and not one of us is missing.’”

All 12,000 men survived and returned from the war.

The end time tribulation is a similar final battle. The scale however, is much bigger and the stakes astronomically greater. The devastation of battle, rather than confined to the Holy land, has encompassed the entire earth. And the enemy is not just a cunning tyrant or an alliance of wicked nations but is the author of evil and the inspiration behind the chaos of the ages. The Devil is not alone, but joined by an army of fallen angels recently liberated from the abyss. Moses had his 12,000 – therefore our Lord during this final battle has 144,000: Exactly 12 times 12. The tribulation is 12 times greater.

If the tribulation is a repeat of the final battle in Numbers 31 but on a grander scale, then we can be confident that every member of the 144,000 will survive the tribulation. As John implies, they will stand.

The expression gives the impression that the 144,000 would assemble to become a formidable army. Where are they heading? Just as Moses and his army of 12,000 fought for the sake of the land, so too will the 144,000 embark on an epic exodus of their own to the Holy Land.

Ezekiel makes a subtle reference to the 144,000 as a community of many nations that had gathered to live on the land in safety:

- “...a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. **They had been brought out from the nations**, and now all of them live in safety.” - Ezekiel 38:7-8

### **The 144,000 begin their trek to the land after Mystery Babylon is destroyed**

In Jeremiah chapters 50 and 51, the prophet announces a lengthy and comprehensive malediction against the Kingdom of Babylon. As a consequence of pillaging “my inheritance” (invading the land) the Lord promises severe retribution: they will suffer disgrace, and desolation, even to the extent that all who pass by will be “appalled” (chapter 50, verses 11 – 13). Words of frenzy, and threats of destruction ebb and flow:

- “Shoot at her! Spare no arrows...”
- “Pursue, kill and completely destroy them”
- “Come against her from afar”
- “Let them go down to the slaughter!”

Chapter 51 begins with:

- “See, **I will stir up the spirit of a destroyer** against Babylon.”

There is a remarkable parallel between this statement, and an event found in Revelation chapter 9. Chapter 9 elaborates on all the calamity surrounding the sounding of the “fifth trumpet.” An angel is given a key to open “the Abyss.” Once opened, billows of smoke rise as if from a giant furnace and Locusts begin to emerge. John writes that the Locusts were subject to the command of their King: “Whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (That is, **Destroyer**).” Using Chapter 51 verse 1 in conjunction with Revelation chapter 9, it is clear that Abaddon is responsible for sparking a campaign and attack against Mystery Babylon.

Back to Jeremiah 51, Swarms of Locusts are mentioned twice:

- The Lord Almighty has sworn by himself: **I will surely fill you with troops, as with a swarm of locusts**, and they will shout in triumph over you.
- Appoint a commander against her; **send up horses like a swarm of locusts**.

Revelation 9 also merges the imagery of horses with Locusts:

- The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. – Revelation 9:7

These connections serve as reasonable evidence to confirm a case of “double fulfilment” regarding Jeremiah’s words. Yes, in context, Jeremiah was speaking against the Babylon of his day. However, by referencing the book of Revelation, it’s clear that the words of rebuke also apply to the Babylon that is yet future: Mystery Babylon.

Interestingly, peppered throughout the Lord’s curses against Babylon, are brief prophetic snap shots of Israel seeking refuge and protection in the land:

- “In those days, at that time,” declares the Lord, “the people of Israel and the people of Judah together will go in tears to seek the Lord their God. They will ask the way to Zion and turn their faces toward it. They will come and bind themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten. – Jeremiah 50:4-5
- “I will punish the king of Babylon and his land as I punished the king of Assyria. But I will bring Israel back to their own pasture, and they will graze on Carmel and Bashan; their appetite will be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and Gilead. – Jeremiah 51:19
- “Babylon must fall because of Israel’s slain, just as the slain in all the earth have fallen because of Babylon. You who have escaped the sword, leave and do not linger! Remember the Lord in a distant land, and call to mind Jerusalem.” – Jeremiah 51:49-50

Chapters 50 and 51 tie the event of Babylon falling, to an ingathering of Israel to the land. A call is issued for Israel to “remember the Lord in a distant land, and call to mind Jerusalem” (verse 50). Those of Israel outside the land who have survived the sword are told to “not linger” (verse 49). Jeremiah 50 states they will seek the Lord and “go” (travel) while in tears.

They will “ask the way to Zion” and on the way it seems, they will enter into an “Everlasting Covenant” (chapter 50, verses 4-5).

Jeremiah makes one other reference to this Covenant. The context behind this Covenant seems to suggest a type of refinement process, in which trials are encountered during their perilous journey to make them fit for the land:

- I will surely gather them from all the lands **where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath**; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. 38 They will be my people, and I will be their God. **I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me** and that all will then go well for them and for their children after them. I will make an **everlasting covenant** with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and **I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me**. I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul. - Jeremiah 32:37-40

Israel is brought out from the nations, and directed to the “wilderness” where he will enter into judgment with them:

- As surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, with a strong hand, an outstretched arm, and outpoured wrath I will rule over you. 34 With a strong hand, an outstretched arm, and outpoured wrath I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands to which you have been scattered. **And I will bring you into the wilderness of the nations, where I will enter into judgment with you face to face**. Just as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt so I will enter into judgment with you, declares the Lord GOD. **I will make you pass under the rod and will bring you into the bond of the covenant**. – Ezekiel 20:33-37

A purging process will take place, and only those who are worthy will be allowed into the land:

- And I will purge you of those who rebel and transgress against me. I will bring them out of the land in which they dwell, but they will not enter the land of Israel. – Ezekiel 20:38

### **The 10 Virgin Brides**

The 10 virgins are the 10 tribes worldwide who hold and preach the testimony of Jesus. The parable foreshadows an even split in his bride, 5 are wise and the other 5 are foolish. Only two elements are provided as an aid to decode the parable: the lamps, and the oil. The differentiation of the bride occurs to separate them according to their level of preparation:

- The five who were foolish didn’t take enough olive oil for their lamps, 4 but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil. - Matthew 25:4

The lamp:

- For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light - Proverbs 6:23

The wise:

- The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall. - Proverbs 10:8

According to the words of our Lord, wisdom is linked to putting his words to action:

- Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. - Matthew 7:24

Foolishness is linked to listening but not obeying:

- But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. - Matthew 7:26

What words of instruction are the 5 wise virgins obeying? They are obeying the Torah. Half of his bride have submitted to the instruction to obey the Torah, whereas the other half have succumbed to the temptation to sleep without preparation. When all 10 virgins awake, only half are prepared while the other half rush to buy oil. The foolish expect that even when they delay until the groom comes, they will have ample time to obey God last minute and “get in” on time. They will ultimately be shut out, and left banging on the door:

- “But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, ‘Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!’ “But he called back, ‘Believe me, I don’t know you!’ - Matthew 25:10-12

What are the full ramifications of being locked out? Does this mean that half of the bride isn’t saved?

In Luke 13 and Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus mentions the “Narrow door”:

- Make every effort to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. After the master of the house gets up and shuts the door, you will stand outside knocking and saying, ‘Lord, open the door for us.’ - Luke 13:24-25

Again, the same terrifying fate is mentioned. When the door is shut, many will knock and shout but they will be turned away:

- And he will answer, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers.’ - Luke 13:27

Where will they go? Are they sent into hell?

The prophet Hosea likens the land of Judah to a door:

- “There I will give back her vineyards (return Israel to the land) and make the Valley of Achor (the northern border Judah’s territory) into a **door of hope.**” – Hosea 2:15

In this prophecy, Hosea addresses the future rekindling of the Lords relationship with the Northern Kingdom. Romantic language is used to illustrate a reunion of two lovers. Israel relates to God once again as a bride, and God responds by ‘opening the door’ so to speak, to let his bride in.

The association of the door with ‘hope’ is reminiscent of Jeremiah 13:17, Ezekiel 37:11, and Paul’s public declaration in Acts 26:6-8. The hope in context, is the hope that someday their inheritance will be restored; that the land, and the kingdom, will be returned to them.

According to Luke, the door shutting is tantamount to a rejected visa application for residence in the land:

- There will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth** when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves are thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. And indeed, some who are last will be first, and some who are first will be last.” - Luke 13:28-30

They will depart with “weeping and gnashing of teeth” but not in the sense that we as Christians assume. The kingdom that they have been shut out from, is the physical kingdom of God on earth during the messianic age! The many Jews who have rejected Jesus will watch in such terrible regret they will gnash their teeth, with weeping and deep sorrow because they have forfeited their inheritance. Instead, they will watch as the gentiles stream in from all cardinal directions into the inheritance that originally belonged to them.

The 5 foolish virgins in turn are also shut out because they disregarded the requirement for the inheritance of the kingdom - which was obedience to the Torah. They are still saved, yet without the inheritance of the land.

### **The Regathering, and the Millennial Reign**

- Therefore tell the house of Israel that this is what the Lord GOD says: It is not for your sake that I will act, O house of Israel, but for My holy name, which you profaned among the nations to which you went. **I will show the holiness of My great name,** which has been profaned among the nations—the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, **when I show My holiness in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations and gather you out of all the countries, and I will bring you back into your own land.** – Ezekiel 36:22-24

The Lord's prayer begins with: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name". This is the 1611 old English version, but it doesn't quite express exactly what Jesus was saying. In Hebrew, the phrase would be: "may your name be sanctified". It's not just a static recognition of the Holiness of God, but an affirmation, a call. It is a process that we participate in. Israel sanctifies God's name by obeying him and conducting themselves in a righteous way to be an example to the nations. We sanctify God when we live in such a way that the people around us are inspired to worship the God that we stand for. In Ezekiel 36 verse 23, God himself will sanctify his name. He does so by the regathering of Israel. This is the culmination of the New Covenant process. God causes Israel to obey, so that he may bring them back to the land – all this is a demonstration of his compassion and longsuffering, and that he is a faithful God who keeps his promises.

### **Proof that God exists, and that the God of Abraham is true**

- "Hear the word of the Lord, you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.'" - Jeremiah 31:10

Jeremiah addresses the nations of the world. "Hear the word of the Lord" he exhorts, the nations are instructed to "Proclaim it" – the awesome conclusion to prophecy, that "he who gathered Israel will gather them..." Why should gentiles have any care? Again, through this event, God is bringing glory to his name. He proves his cause true, and his people blessed when they have been considered a reproach to the nations.

- Lead out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf. All the nations gather together and the peoples assemble. **Which of their gods foretold this and proclaimed to us the former things?** Let them bring in their witnesses to prove they were right, so that others may hear and say, "It is true."- Isaiah 43:8-9

The Lord inquires, who could have known beforehand that world events would unfold in this manner? No other religion or false god in history has made such a prediction.

To those who dare answer, God responds: bring forth your witnesses so that they may confirm the claim. For God will present his witnesses: **the Jewish people and his word** preserved in scripture:

- "You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "and My servant whom I have chosen, so that you may consider and believe Me and understand that I am He." - Isaiah 43:10

God uses the gathering and the fact that he alone declared it before it happened, as proof that he exists.

### **Greater than the Exodus from Egypt**

One can only imagine such a gathering of this size and scale; men and women journeying from all directions, countries and even the Isles of the Sea. The prophet Jeremiah states that

this exodus will be so epic, that the first exodus from Egypt will soon be forgotten. This is said in near identical ways twice:

- “However, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ but it will be said, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ For I will restore them to the land I gave their ancestors. – Jeremiah 16:14-15
- “So then, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when people will no longer say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ 8 but they will say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ Then they will live in their own land.” – Jeremiah 23:7-8

### **Phase two: God will deliver Ethnic Israel**

The Song of Moses defined two distinct phases in God’s plan for National/Ethnic Israel:

- Phase one: Ethnic Israel will reject God.
- Phase two: God will deliver Ethnic Israel.
  - Jesus returns to atone for “the land and his people”

Phase two begins right before the conclusion of the final battle of the tribulation. Just before it seems that the Antichrist and his armies have prevailed over Jerusalem, Jesus returns.

As Zechariah states: The Lord will defend Jerusalem and save his people:

- “On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem.” – Zechariah 12:9
- “The Lord their God will save his people on that day as a shepherd saves his flock.” Zechariah 9:16

There will be a National recognition of Christ:

- “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be as great as the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.” – Zechariah 12:10-11

The fruit of the land will be the glory of the survivors of Israel. Those in Jerusalem will be called Holy:

- “In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. Those who are left in Zion,

who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem.” – Isaiah 4:2

Jerusalem will be Holy, and foreigners will never invade her. Judah/Jerusalem inhabited forever/through all generations:

- “Then you will know that I, the Lord your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her. “In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the Lord’s house and will water the valley of acacias. But Egypt will be desolate, Edom a desert waste, because of violence done to the people of Judah, in whose land they shed innocent blood. Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations.” – Joel 3:17-21

Israel will serve the Lord their God, and David [Jesus] their king:

- ““In that day,’ declares the Lord Almighty, ‘I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them. Instead, they will serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.” – Jeremiah 30:8-9

Sacrifice will take place:

- “On that day holy to the Lord will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the Lord’s house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the Lord Almighty, and all who come to sacrifice will take some of the pots and cook in them.” – Zechariah 14:20-21

The Lord will reach out his hand to reclaim the remnants of Judah in other lands. The Messiah will also raise a banner to gather the exiles. This triggers the gathering of Israel in the sight of the Nations – the event that God says will glorify his name, and prove he exists!

- “In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the Mediterranean. He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.” – Isaiah 11:11-12

They [Israel] will eat and lie down and no one will make them afraid:

- On that day you, Jerusalem, will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me, because I will remove from you your arrogant boasters. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill. But I will leave within you the meek and humble. The remnant of Israel will trust in the name of the Lord. They will do no wrong; they will

tell no lies. A deceitful tongue will not be found in their mouths. They will eat and lie down and no one will make them afraid.” – Zephaniah 3:11-13

The Nations will rally to Jesus:

- “In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place [Jerusalem] will be glorious.” – Isaiah 11:10

The Lord will be king over the earth:

- “The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name.” – Zechariah 14:9

### **Theological reform is imperative**

I worry that as Israel begins to collectively wake up, the Christian church will be hampered by its theology and rendered incapable to properly guide them and keep them in the fold. Unless Christianity changes its paradigm and its view of the Torah, Christianity will suffer an unprecedented time of many leaving the faith for Judaism. According to the report of Rabbi Yosef Mizrahi this unprecedented time has already arrived, as more gentiles are banging on his door to become Jewish than ever before:

- “It’s scary to say it, but it’s 100 percent the truth. I realize now, that now in these days, in the last few months, there are more converts to Judaism, more than ever before. I mean, I’ve been giving lectures for 23 years. And I’ve dealt with hundreds of converts over the years. But now I realize there is not a day, I cannot find one day, without getting a few emails of people that beg to convert to Judaism. And people...who are really in love with God, and with the Torah...More and more goyim are begging to be Jewish...if this phenomenon would continue another generation or two, probably the majority of the Jewish people will be descendants of converts!”

### **Jewish Tradition**

#### **Genesis 48:19**

Regarding Ephraim’s blessing to become a “Multitude of Nations”:

- “Ibn Ezra: **Many nations will descend from him.** [ie, the word fullness, connotes abundance, the phrase meaning: And his seed will become the abundance of the nations...] R’ Avraham b. HaRambam somewhat similarly: **The expression denotes abundant profligacy to a point that they will have to inhabit lands of other nations.** It is an allusion to Ephraim’s expansive territory. Radak: This refers to the Exile when the lands of others will be filled with his scattered descendants.” – Bereishis volume 2, Page 2121

- “According to the Targum, says Rashi, this means that **the entire generation would be obliterated by merging into the nations among whom they are banished.**” – The Torah Anthology, 12 Prophets 1, page 18

### **Zechariah 8:23**

- “In those days [the Messianic age] **ten men from all languages and nations** will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’”

Jewish interpretations converge on the opinion that this prophecy is indicative of a massive religious revival of many gentiles (the lost Israelites who have forgotten their identity) seeking Torah observance and conversion.

According to the Torah luminary known as Rashi, this prophecy does not just refer to ten men, but ten men from every nation. Jewish tradition acknowledges 70 distinct nations which bumps the total of men approaching the Jew to 700:

- “Ten men from seventy nations. This equals seven hundred for one corner” – Rashi

However, Jews do not wear tzitzit on just one corner, but on four cornered garments. By multiplying 700 by 4, this yields 2800 gentiles per one Jew seeking to obey the Torah.

### **Isaiah 65**

The Apostle Paul pairs the passage of Deuteronomy 32:21 with an equally cryptic prophecy found in Isaiah:

- Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.” And Isaiah boldly says, “**I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.**” - Romans 10:19-20

Romans 10 is an exploration into the degree of culpability that can be assigned to the Jewish people regarding their national rejection of Jesus. Is exoneration possible? Paul’s point is, if a people without understanding can comprehend the merit of the gospel - so can Israel. If a people who, prior to hearing the gospel, were indifferent to God and yet are now finding inspiration in the gospel - again, so too can Israel.

In making this point, and by connecting the two prophetic statements, Paul implies that Deuteronomy 32 and Isaiah 65 are addressing the same people.

According to Jewish tradition, Isaiah 65 is speaking concerning the ten tribes:

- “Isaiah, chapter 65, speaks mainly concerning the Ten Lost Tribes. “I was sought of them that asked not for me; I made myself found to those who did not request me; I

siad, I am here, I am here, to a people who did not call my name (Isaiah 65:1)” - Ephraim, the Gentile children of Israel. Page 226, chapter 9. Yair Davidi.

### **The Mishnah**

The Rabbi's held the understanding that the 10 tribes have lost their identity among the nations, and therefore did not rule out the possibility that a gentile may be a descendant of one of the tribes:

- “Rab Judah said in the name of R. Assi: ‘If at the present time a heathen betroths [a daughter in Israel], note must be taken of such betrothal since it may be that he is of the ten tribes.’”- Talmud Yev 16b

### **Gezerah Sheva**

“Gezerah shavah” means equivalence of expressions. This is the practice of linking disparate sections of scripture based on a common phrase or figure of speech. When a “Gezerah shavah” is identified, the rule would allow for the interpretation of a verse to be informed by the other sections of scripture where the identical phrase or figure of speech is used.

### **Gezerah Sheva: Comfort**

- When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum” – Matthew 4:12-13

Capernaum means – “Village of comfort”. Hidden in this seemingly insignificant detail, is a “Gezerah Shavah.” The sentiment of comfort is often linked in prophecy to the event of the regathering of Israel:

- Comfort ye, comfort ye my people says your God. The voice of him that cries in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand and his arm shall rule for him: behold his reward is with him and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom and shall gently lead those that are with you... Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow. There is hope in your end says the Lord that your children shall come again to their own border.” – Jeremiah 31:10,16, 17

Notice, that after every inclusion of the word comfort, is a promise of the re-gathering of Israel to their land. According to the prophet Isaiah, God “comforts” Israel by ending their exile from the land. By sneaking the phrase “Capernaum” into the narrative, the author of Matthew was wanting to assign Messianic expectation to Jesus. Prophecy connects the miracle of a final regathering of Israel to the land, with the historic arrival of the Messiah. The gospel of Matthew was implying, in short: “Jesus is the Messiah. He will regather Israel.”

According to Jewish tradition, Galilee was an important location regarding the appearance of the Messiah:

- “The king Messiah will be revealed in the Galilee” – From Exile to redemption, volume 2, page 119. Zohar I, 119a

Why would tradition insist on Galilee? It was in Galilee that the 10 Northern tribes were conquered and carried away into Assyria:

- In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.” – 2 King 15:29

Since the job description of the Messiah is to regather Israel, it is fitting that he would arrive in the very place where the exile happened first:

- Said R. Simeon: ‘At the time when the dead will be awakened and be in readiness for the resurrection in the Holy Land, legions upon legions will rise on the soil of Galilee, as it is there that the Messiah is destined to reveal himself. For that is the portion of Joseph, and it was the first part part of the Holy Land to be destroyed, and it was there that the exile of Israel and their dispersion among the nations began, as Scripture says, “but they are not grieved for the hurt of Joseph”(Amos 6:6) – Socnino Zohar, Shemoth, Section 2, Page 220a.

### **Gezerah Sheva: Prophecy of Zacharias**

In Luke chapter 19, Jesus announces the calamity that will soon befall the city and the Temple. This depiction of violence would visibly reveal the wrath of God against Jerusalem for “knowing not the time” of their “visitation”:

- And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. – luke 19:24

The word “visit” or “visitation” connotes an act of God; an appearance of his strength, for the purpose of deliverance:

- Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: – Exodus 3:16

The word first appears in Genesis chapter 50:

- And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. – Genesis 50:24

Both appearances of the term connote God's intention to usher Israel into the safety of the land promised to the Patriarchs.

In Luke chapter 1, Zacharias (John the Baptist's father) out of inspiration from the Holy Spirit, delivered the following prophecy:

- "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David..." – Luke 1:68-69

The prophecy foretells God's imminent visitation. As established, the word implies a powerful display of God's power – specifically God's power to rid his people of captivity, to redeem and regather them. The next statement mentions a "horn of salvation" – this is reminiscent of Isaiah 23:13. According to the prophecy, the regathering of the exiles is triggered after the blow of a horn/Shofar:

- "And it will be on that day when a great shofar will be blown, the perishing in the land of Assyria and the exiles in the land of Egypt will come, and they will worship before the LORD on the Holy Mountain in Jerusalem."- Isaiah 27:13

Yet, there is more to parse out in Zacharia's prophecy:

- "...To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he swore to our father Abraham." – Luke 1:72

According to Leviticus 26:41-45, the act of the Lord remembering the Covenant is an implication of his will to regather Israel, despite their undeservedness. God therefore mercifully regathers Israel, not for their sake, but on account of his promise to Abraham:

- "Then, if they humble their uncircumcised hearts and accept their guilt, I will remember my promise to Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. I will also remember the land. The land, abandoned by them, will enjoy its time to honour the Lord while it lies deserted without them. They must accept their guilt because they rejected my rules and looked at my laws with disgust. Even when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or look at them with disgust. I will not reject or cancel my promise to them, because I am the Lord their God. But for their sake, I will remember the promise to their ancestors." – Leviticus 26:41-45

Remarkably, three accounts of Gezerah shavah can be found in Zacharia's prophecy:

1. Luke 1:68 – "Visit"
2. Luke 1:69 – "raised up a horn of salvation"
3. Luke 1:72 – "remember"

The content revealed in the prophecy: the mercy of God, the regathering, the redemption, etc. were all made available in potential, should Israel recognize the time of their visitation. Unfortunately, the condition was not met. Jesus would lament their loss in two accounts:

- “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! – Matthew 23:37, Luke 13:34

The depiction of a hen gathering chickens is an illustration of the regathering of Israel. It was Jesus’ desire to gather the children of Israel, and to remove from Israel their yoke of bondage to Rome. This would have triggered the beginning of the Messianic age.

### Prayer of 1948

This prayer was written by the chief rabbi of the state of Israel in 1948. Many synagogues all over the world have resolved to recite it every Sabbath. Found in the prayer is a quote of Deuteronomy 30:4-5, included as a prophecy for the regathering of Israel:

- “Our Father in Heaven, Rock and Redeemer of Israel, bless the State of Israel, the first manifestation of the approach of our redemption. Shield it with Your lovingkindness, envelop it in Your peace, and bestow Your light and truth upon its leaders, ministers, and advisors, and grace them with Your good counsel. Strengthen the hands of those who defend our holy land, grant them deliverance, and adorn them in a mantle of victory. Ordain peace in the land and grant its inhabitants eternal happiness. **Remember our brethren, the whole house of Israel (the 10 lost tribes), in all the lands of their dispersion.** Lead them swiftly and upright, to Your city Zion and to Jerusalem, the abode of Your Name, **as is written in the Torah of Your servant Moses: ‘Even if your outcasts are at the ends of the world, from there the Lord your God will gather you, from there He will fetch you. And the Lord your God will bring you to the land that your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will make you more prosperous and more numerous than your fathers.’** Draw our hearts together to revere and venerate Your name and to observe all the precepts of Your Torah, and send us quickly the Messiah son of David, agent of Your vindication, to redeem those who await Your deliverance. Manifest yourself in the splendor of Your boldness before the eyes of all inhabitants of Your world, and may everyone endowed with a soul affirm that the Lord, God of Israel, is king and his dominion is absolute. Amen forevermore.”- <https://opensiddur.org/prayers/collective-welfare/government/medinat-yisrael/prayer-for-the-welfare-of-the-state-of-israel-by-yitshak-halevi-hertzog-1948/>

### The “Amidah”

In Numbers 28, God outlines his specifications for the daily sacrifices. Rather than assigning this responsibility exclusively to the Levitical Priests, the entire assembly of Israel was addressed. This was a curious inclusion, since only the priests were permitted to perform

sacrifice. In addition, how can sacrifices be brought by the entire assembly on a daily basis without the absurd demand of requiring the entire population of Israel to reside in Jerusalem? This presented a slight challenge to Israel as they sought to honor the command. A system involving the election of “Ma’amadot” was devised by the early prophets during the time of the first temple:

- “Now how can a man’s offering be offered and he is not present? [Therefore] the former prophets instituted... ma’amadot in Jerusalem consisting of priests, Levites and Israelites.” – Mishnah Taanit 4.

Israel was divided into twenty-four districts, and each district was responsible to appoint a pious and respected Israelite to represent the district by attending the daily offerings. This delegation of 24 (the Ma’amadot) were known as the “Anshei Ma’amad” translated as “The men of standing” because they were appointed to stand by and observe the daily sacrifices, and by doing so, represent the entire nation in the ritual. As the “Ma’amadot” gathered to watch the daily sacrifices, they would participate by offering prayers, worship, and a public reading of the scriptures. Even the Ma’amadot who couldn’t attend, would form prayer assemblies timed to coincide with the exact time of the daily sacrifices.

Two lambs were presented as a “burnt offering” each weekday, one in the morning and the second in the afternoon (Numbers 28:2-4). These would constitute the first and last sacrifices, while all the other sacrifices would be performed during the time in between. After the last sacrifice, the altar would continue burning throughout the night until morning the following day (Leviticus 6:2,9).

The phrase “appointed time” is used in reference to these times of sacrifice. The Hebrew word is “mo’ed”, and it is the same word used for the Holy festivals of Leviticus 23. The intimation is that they represent Holy times during the day to commune with God. David makes subtle reference to these times in Psalm 55:17

- “Morning, noon, and night, I cry out in distress, and He hears my voice”

Even after the destruction of the first Temple and the Jewish exile into Babylon, these three distinct “mo’edim” were still considered holy times to honor God with prayer. This is why Daniel the prophet prayed three times a day facing Jerusalem:

- “Now when Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house, where the windows of his upper room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.” – Daniel 6:10

The prophet Hosea pleads with the Northern Kingdom to repent, implying that although they couldn’t offer sacrifices at that time, that God would accept their prayers as a substitute until they were reunited with Judah once again:

- “Bring your confessions and return to the LORD. Say to Him: ‘Take away all our iniquity and receive us graciously, that we may offer the sacrifices of our lips.’” – Hosea 14:2

When the Jewish people returned from exile to resettle the land, they had great difficulty joining together in community prayer. Many had lost the ability to speak Hebrew, and spoke with a mixture of elements coming from a variety of languages:

- “When Israel was exiled in the time of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, they mixed with Persia, Greece and the other nations. They had children in those foreign lands. Those children spoke mixed languages and each person’s language was made up of many different languages. When a person would speak he would not be able to express himself properly because of the language confusion. This is the meaning of the verse ‘and their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the language of Jews, but according to the language of each people’ (Nehemiah 13:24). Because of this, when each person would pray, he would be unable to fully express all his needs or to say the full praise of God in Hebrew without using other languages as well.” – Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 1:5

Ezra the high priest, and the “members of the great assembly” therefore established a formal prayer called the “Amidah”:

- “When Ezra and his court saw this they arose and established for them the Amidah blessings and their order...” – Rambam, Hilchot 1:5.

“The Men of the Great Assembly instituted this prayer of the Amidah in order that it should be fluent in every mouth. Therefore they instituted it using simple language, in order not to confuse the ideas with their understanding of the language, and so that all of Israel would be equal in prayer, whether they were clever or foolish.” – Rabbeinu Bachya, Commentary to Parshat Eikev 11:13.

Since the time of Ezra, the “Amidah” has held such prominence that Jewish tradition assigns to it the term “Tefillah” – the general term for prayer. The Amidah is therefore “The prayer” the central edifice, to which the entire synagogue service and Jewish liturgy is built around. Although the exact words were not officially established until just after the destruction of the second Temple, tradition had always preserved the general formula as set by Ezra and his court. The formula consists of eighteen benedictions, each benediction representing a certain theme. The tenth benediction, titled: “Tekah bashofar” translated as “Ingathering of the dispersed” would carry the following sentiments, although not verbatim in this manner until after 70 AD:

- “Sound the great shofar (to proclaim) our freedom, lift up a banner for the ingathering of our exiles, and bring us together from the four corners of the earth. Blessed art Thou, Lord, who gathers together the dispersed of his people Israel.” – To Pray as a Jew, “The Shemoneh Esrei: The Amidah of ‘Eighteen’ Blessings”, page 88.

In Acts 3, Peter and John are departing to enter into the temple. According to the passage, they did so at the “time of prayer” – three in the afternoon. After entering into the Temple, they would have joined a mass assembly of Jews in the local area gathering to pray the Amidah in conjunction with the last sacrifice of the day. In Acts 10:9, during the sixth hour of the day Peter rushes to the roof of his home to pray. He did so, because it corresponded to the first sacrifice of the day. He was praying the Amidah. Interestingly, in Acts 10:31 even Cornelius the Roman Centurion was praying during the third prayer hour (the ninth hour), presumably in solidarity with the Jewish people.

Now isn't it interesting to reflect on the fact that the Apostles, the first Jewish converts to Christianity and even the gentile “God Fearers” were praying for the ingathering of the exiles; that the dispersed of the people of Israel worldwide would return to the land, and they did this **three times a day!** If this is so, the event of the recovery of the lost of Israel worldwide was not lost on the Apostles, but instead, it no doubt would have been a prominent feature in their understanding of how the faith would unfold.