

This is a pro Christian Zionist piece downloaded 9th Jan 2024 from: <https://www.israelanswers.com/blog/what-does-bible-say-about-return-jews-their-homeland> It is a highly selective piece of 'proof-texting' My Comments are in *italic red* Bible quotes are in *Blue*. Except where noted otherwise they are from NIV.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT THE RETURN OF THE JEWS TO THEIR HOMELAND?

A special term from the Hebrew Bible is used to describe the process of returning to the Land—*Aliyah*, which means, to “ascend.” It was used in ancient times in reference to Jewish pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem for the three great biblical Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Thus, the process of making Aliyah today is seen as having spiritual meaning beyond the physical act of return.

Let’s see what the Bible has to say about the modern-day return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland—the Land of Israel.

There Are Two Returns

Isaiah 11:11 indicates there would be a day when God would raise his hand “a second time” to gather the children of Israel to their homeland. The first return was predicted by the prophet Jeremiah to take place after Israel had been in captivity for 70 years (Jeremiah 29:10), and according to Ezra 1:1 happened precisely as foretold.

Several points to note here: There are indeed two returns both of which had happened by 538BC, i.e. 2500 years ago! Both Isaiah and Jeremiah were writing long before the exile of Judah in 586BC. (Isaiah dates from 740-681BC and Jeremiah 626-585). It is probable from the text that Jeremiah is writing at about the time of the exile of 597BC. Thus NOT 1948!

There is nothing in Isaiah to suggest that what he is seeing is different from what Jeremiah writes about, especially given he is at least one hundred years earlier. The first return from exile is clearly the Exodus: it’s there in the text v.16! That being so, the reference is to the second that took place in 538BC.

Third, what is the context? 11:1-16 speaks of the shoot from the stump of Jesse (vv1,10). It is a person who, ‘with righteousness he will judge the needy’ But, if Jesus is the focus, noting verse 4 & 5, then the return is spiritual and symbolic as well as earthly. We should note that a common feature of prophecy is that it may have both a near future and distant future application.

After 500 years of intermittent and partial sovereignty in the Land, the Jewish people were once again dispersed under the Roman Empire in AD 70.

This is factually incorrect, simply not true. There was no exile in AD 70: how could there be since there was another ‘Jewish war’ 70 years later (!). How could Jews have produced a ‘Palestinian (aka Jerusalem) Talmud’ if they were not in Palestine? It is either ignorance or worse!

After 2,000 years, they have now returned and reestablished sovereignty. No other people group has managed to survive two exiles—much less one that was 2,000 years long—and then return to reestablish national sovereignty.

Again, this displays remarkable ignorance. First, the ‘Jews’ are not single people group. The genetic relationship between Ashkenazi (European) and Mizrahi (Levantine) is questionable.

Second, none of the exiles was total. In the case of Assyria we are told it totalled 27,290 (Pritchard ANET 2011 p.267). For the Judah exiles Jeremiah gives a figure of ‘4600 people in all’ (Jer52:30) which is probably only counting ‘principals’.

Furthermore, we know that by the time of Jesus almost half of Jews lived in the the diaspora: Jews who hadn’t returned and Jews who travelled as traders (i.e. to the west and east).

And this so-called ‘return’ of 1948 (actually from 1890’s) killed and displaced hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, including Christians, some of whom would have been descendants of 1st century/2nd temple Jews. (see endnote)

The Second Return is from All Nations

This second return was to be from every nation where they had been dispersed (Jeremiah 16:14–15; 23:3, 7–8; 29:14; 31:7–8), not just Babylon.

This totally lacks context. In Jer 16 the immediate context is disaster: God’s judgement. Verses 14 and 15 are words of hope, typical of Jeremiah and other prophets, in the midst of utter ruin. The following verses:

¹⁶ *'But now I will send for many fishermen many hunters ...' misinterpreted for the present day refer to the immediate: That is the context.*

In 23 again it is a remnant, rescued from 'shepherds' under judgement, and we note the raising up of a 'Righteous Branch, called, 'The Lord our Righteousness'. The strong affirmative, 'I myself' ('and I I shall' in Hebrew) tells us that this cannot be anyone associated with the nation state: it must be Jesus, the Messiah.

23:5 echoes Isaiah 11:1, the 'Righteous Branch'.

Jeremiah 29:14 also lack context. This must be before the final exile, so the anticipated return must be that of 538BC. This is the text:

*"For here is what ADONAI says: 'After Bavel's seventy years are over, I will remember you and fulfill my good promise to you by bringing you back to this place. ¹¹ For I know what plans I have in mind for you,' says ADONAI, 'plans for well-being, not for bad things; so that you can have hope and a future. ¹² **When you call to me and pray to me, I will listen to you. ¹³ When you seek me, you will find me, provided you seek for me wholeheartedly;** ¹⁴ and I will let you find me,' says ADONAI. 'Then I will reverse your exile. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have driven you,' says ADONAI, 'and bring you back to the place from which I exiled you.' (Complete Jewish Bible my emphasis).*

Similarly with chapter 31. Why not also quote chapter 30? Perhaps because verse 11 tells us that Israel will not be 'completely' destroyed, with the obvious implication that some will be. It's also crucial to note, as many 'True Torah Jews' still believe, that it is God who acts. 'I will bring... I will break ... I will discipline ...I will restore... (then) 21 Their leader will be one of their own,

*their ruler will come from among them.
I will cause him to come close
and let him approach me;
for, otherwise, who would guarantee his heart
enough to approach me?" says ADONAI.*

²² *"You will be my people,
and I will be your God."*

²³ *Look! The storm of ADONAI,
bursting out in fury,
a sweeping storm, whirling down
upon the heads of the wicked!*
²⁴ *ADONAI's fierce anger will not abate
till he accomplishes the purpose in his heart.
In the acharit-hayamim,
you will understand.*

^{25(31:1)} *"When that time comes," says ADONAI,
"I will be God of all the clans of Isra'el,
and they will be my people." ¹(Jer 30:21-25)*

Again in 31 (see 30:25 above) it is a remnant coming with weeping and supplication, 'They will pray as I bring them back'. But the early Zionists didn't pray or weep, they were secular atheists! And 'the blind and the lame' were not wanted in 1930's 40's and 50's. And why no mention of the 'New Covenant' of Jer 31:31-33 and the 'broken covenant' of 31:32? Jer 31:7,8 is followed by restoration – he who scattered will gather and the priests will be satisfied (v.14) but in verse 15

'Thus says the LORD:

*A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more.*

¹⁶*Thus says the LORD:*

*Keep your voice from weeping,
and your eyes from tears;
for there is a reward for your work,
says the LORD:*

1 Stern, D. H. (1998). *Complete Jewish Bible: an English version of the Tanakh (Old Testament) and B'rit Hadashah (New Testament)* (1st ed., Je 30:21–25). Jewish New Testament Publications.

they shall come back from the land of the enemy;

¹⁷ there is hope for your future,

says the LORD:

your children shall come back to their own country.'

This is quoted in Matthew's gospel chapter 2 verse 18, so, for Christians the whole passage must be understood to refer to Jesus.

Over the past 120 years or so, more than 3.5 million Jews have immigrated to the Land of Israel from all over the world—from the north, south, east, and west—in literal fulfillment of God's promises (Isaiah 43:5–6).

It is a significant stretch to associate the mid 20th century immigration to Isaiah 43:5-6. And it is 'everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.'

That cannot apply to Zionists who were mainly secular North Europeans. Who judges to whom the text refers and to its timing? More importantly it is not good theology to take two verses and detach them from the rest of the book. In typical prophetic fashion Isaiah veers between judgement against Israel and hope for the future.

Isaiah 43 is part of a section that begins with chapter 40 'Comfort, comfort my people, says your God' with verse 3 referenced as John the Baptist in New Testament understanding (Mark 1:3. Matt 3:3. Luke 3:6. John 1:23). Care is needed, for when we arrive at chapter 45 it is Cyrus of Persia who is God's anointed! And Chapter 43 closes with Jacob destroyed and Israel consigned to scorn!

And what should we make of 44:5? This one will say, "I am the LORD's," another will be called by the name of Jacob, yet another will write on the hand, "The LORD's," and adopt the name of Israel.²

A Banner to the Nations

The regathering of the Jewish people to their land is depicted as God's banner to the nations (Isaiah 11:12). A banner was often a rallying point in military operations, and was carried to lead a formation, but often bore the name or image of that army's God. Using this symbolism, the Hebrew prophet Isaiah considered the ingathering as a proclamation of God's name and His character to the nations (Ezekiel 28:25).

This is a nonsense. In Isa 11:12 the 'banner' is the 'root of Jesse' i.e. a person (v.10. Compare 11:1ff). It is strange that Christians do not see this. Why? What individual do we see as a 'banner to the nations'? And we note again that it is 'The remnant that is left...'

As for Ezekiel 28:24 where is the holiness of God in modern day Israel? To make that claim is exceedingly dangerous.

The house of Israel shall no longer find a pricking brier or a piercing thorn among all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. And they shall know that I am the Lord God.

The Return is not Based on Merit

The Mosaic Covenant was clear that living in the Land of Israel was a benefit of walking in obedience with God, and that even after exile, repentance would lead to Israel's return. However, the Hebrew prophets spoke of a day when God would sovereignly gather His children back to the Land, not because of anything they had done, but to be a witness to the gentiles and to vindicate His name. The timing was up to Him (Psalm 102:13); He would do it (Jeremiah 23:3), and He would even use the gentiles to make it happen (Isaiah 49:22–26; 60:8–12).

Psalm 102 is little help as to the actual time. In the context of Israel's history Jer 23:3 simply won't fit. It can only be made to work by ignoring the context. God will deal with the unrighteous shepherds and 'raise up David's righteous Branch' (23:5-8). Where is the wisdom, where the justice? Where is 'The Lord our Righteousness'?

The writer ignores Gen 18 where it is clear that only by Abraham's descendants 'following the way of the Lord' will God be able to fulfil His promise. That necessarily has a generational application.

And, whilst it is correct that it is not based on merit, several passages demonstrate that return requires penitence and commitment to change, (see above).

Isaiah 49 is part of the 'Servant' section. We have already noted that the 'banner' (49:22) must be Jesus. So what do we understand from verse 6?

he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

2 [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#) (Is 44:5). (1989). Thomas Nelson Publishers.

And what should we make of the question at 49:19-21? 'I was left all alone, but these – where have they come from?'

Again Isa 60:8-12 is highly selective. Why not start at 59:1 for instance, taking in 12,13 & 15-20. 59:20 is quoted by Paul in his letter to Rome (ch 11) but updated!

Nothing here supports the statement that restoration is nothing to do with what they, the Israelites, had done. That is strictly true, but it ignores God's conditions. His children may not deserve his favour, but they may not benefit from it without their own penitence. 2 Chronicles 6:12-42)

God vindicates His name because it has been profaned before the nations through the disobedience and exile of His people (Ezekiel 36:22). He will demonstrate His holiness (Ezekiel 36:22–23) and His faithfulness, whether His children are deserving or not. It reflects His love and mercy toward them (Isaiah 60:8–10), as well as toward the world He plans to redeem and fill with His truth and glory for eternity (Psalm 102:16–22).

So, what does Ezekiel 36:23 actually say?

Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. 23 I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when **through you I display my holiness** before their eyes.

I have highlighted some crucial words, noting also: 26 to 38. God will cleanse, they will plead ...³³ Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the towns to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt.³ Then in Ezekiel 37 they will no longer defile themselves and, 'My servant David (dead for 500 years!) will be king...'. We should again note the new covenant in 37:26, a covenant of peace. Israel, the nation state, has not been at peace and has never sought peace.

This Great Act of God Leads to Revival

The ingathering of the Jewish people in modern times holds great promise for Israel and for the world, as it heralds the soon coming of the Messianic kingdom.

This is remarkable for someone who claims to be a Christian to write! Doesn't Jesus himself tell us that the kingdom is here? All we need do is to 'step inside'. That is the consistent claim of the gospels and the letters, especially Romans and Hebrews. This cannot be supported in scripture.

While it is a physical return with many logistical and practical aspects, it is a sacred thing because it is building a platform for the coming of the kingdom of God, when the glory of the Lord appears (Psalm 102:15–16) and He tabernacles with man (Ezekiel 37:26–27; Revelation 21:3).

There is nothing in Psalm 102 to justify this claim: it is a highly selective reading, making unwarranted inferences and ignoring i.e. 'a people not yet created' which, bearing in mind Hosea and Paul's letter to Rome, could be the New Covenant ecclesia. We might also ask, have Christians been doing nothing for 2000 years?

The selected verses from Ezekiel ignore context. 'There will be one king over all of them ...I will cleanse them ... My servant David will be king ... They will follow my laws' (Ezek37:22-24) Noting that 'David', having been dead 500+ years, must be messianic. Therefore the whole passage is messianic.

That the gentiles are called to assist in this process is an amazing and holy thing. Isaiah 66:20 describes the act of gentiles bringing His people home—the people He loves and will use to bless the whole earth—as so sacred it is likened to “bringing an offering to the Lord.” What a wonderful image depicting the biblical significance of the return of the Jews to their homeland.

Why not begin at Isa 66:1 or earlier? What is the sign (v.19); who is 'the one I esteem'? (v.2b); what can we make of vv. 7-11? 15th May 1948 doesn't come close to meeting the criteria. The early Zionists were, with few exceptions, secular socialists, and the events leading up to 1948 included terrorism against unarmed civilians: hardly a blessing. How does any of that glorify God?

But, verses 7-13ff considered in their context fit well the the event taking place 6 centuries later in Bethlehem, Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem and on into our present day. A nation state: any nation state: cannot meet the necessary criteria. But the ekklesia can, and sometimes, does

3 [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#) (Eze 36:33–34). (1989). Thomas Nelson Publishers.

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Things to Note: the longest text referenced is of seven verses, from a Psalm: Thus all passages quoted are divorced from their contexts. 'A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text'. This is not exegesis but eisegesis. For example Isaiah chapter 11 cannot be properly understood without reference to the preceding chapters from at least chapter 9.

Furthermore from this purportedly 'Christian' organisation there is only a single verse referenced from the New Testament, from Revelation. It is not exegesis it is not theological, it IS idolatrous.

Comments 10/01/2024. David J Carter

Endnote:

'Palestine is not an uninhabited land and can offer a home only to a very small portion of the Jews scattered throughout the world. Those who settle in Palestine must above all seek to win the friendship of the Palestinians, by approaching them courteously and with respect. But what do our brothers so? Precisely the opposite. They were slaves in the land of their exile, and suddenly they find themselves with unlimited freedom. This sudden change has aroused in them a tendency to despotism, which is what always happens when slaves come to power. They treat the Arabs with hostility and cruelty, rob them of their right in a dishonest way, hurt them without reason and then pride themselves on such actions: and no one attacks this despicable and dangerous tendency'

This is a quote from the Jewish philosopher Asher Ginsberg in 1891.