

Biblical Passages That Refer to God's Fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant And a Brief Explanation of Each One

by
Earle Craig

Part 4

Jeremiah-Ezekiel

**THE GREATNESS OF ISRAEL AND THE ETERNAL BLESSING OF ABRAHAM AND OTHERS IN
THE WORLD ARE FOUND IN GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID OF AN ETERNAL KING
WHO WILL RULE OVER THE GREAT NATION OF THE JEWS IN THE PRESENT REALM AND
PROVIDE ETERNAL FORGIVENESS OF SINS THROUGH HIS SUFFERING
TO ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM**

Ezekiel 37:21 "Say to them, 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;
37:22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.
37:23 "They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.
37:24 "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them.
37:25 "They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever.
37:26 "I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever.
37:27 "My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.
37:28 "And the nations will know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.'"

Jeremiah 3:6-18

3:6 Then Yahweh said to me in the days of Josiah the king, "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there.
3:7 "I thought, 'After she has done all these things she will return to Me'; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it.
3:8 "And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.
3:9 "Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.

- 3:10 “Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception,” declares Yahweh.
- 3:11 And Yahweh said to me, “Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.
- 3:12 “Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say,
 ‘Return, faithless Israel,’ declares Yahweh;
 ‘I will not look upon you in anger.
 For I am gracious,’ declares Yahweh;
 ‘I will not be angry forever (לֹעֲלֹם).’
- 3:13 ‘Only acknowledge your iniquity,
 That you have transgressed against Yahweh your God
 And have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree,
 And you have not obeyed My voice,’ declares Yahweh.
- 3:14 ‘Return, O faithless sons,’ declares Yahweh;
 ‘For I am a master to you,
 And I will take you one from a city and two from a family,
 And I will bring you to Zion.’
- 3:15 “Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding.
- 3:16 “It shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land,” declares Yahweh,
 “they will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of Yahweh.’ And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor will they miss it, nor will it be made again.
- 3:17 “At that time they will call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of Yahweh’ (and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of Yahweh). Nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart.
- 3:18 “In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.

Jeremiah, whose name *Yirmeyahu* (יִרְמְיָהוּ) probably means “May Yahweh Exalt,” was a prophet of God approximately one hundred years after Isaiah, i.e., from 626-586 B.C. He lived in Jerusalem and spoke to only the southern Kingdom of Judah because the Assyrians had destroyed the northern Kingdom of Israel in the late 700s B.C. Now Jeremiah is predicting the same fate for Judah by another fierce and cruel foreign power, the Babylonians, who conquered the Assyrians around 610 B.C. and who became the biblical model for all immoral people in history, especially those who have opposed and sought to harm the Jews, God’s chosen people. While the word Assyria or Assyrian is used 133 times in only the Old Testament, Babylon or Babylonian is used 264 times in the Bible, 11 of which are in the New Testament. The most famous uses in the New Testament are in the book of Revelation, such as [Revelation 14:8](#) And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality,” which I think refers to Jerusalem.

Assyria’s capital had been Nineveh in what today is northern Iraq near the current city of Mosul. And the city of Babylon was on the Euphrates River almost due south of modern-day Baghdad, which is on the Tigris River, these two rivers comprising the Mesopotamian (literally “Between the Two Rivers”) Valley. The Babylonians initially invade Judah in 605 B.C. and completely destroy Jerusalem and its temple in 586 B.C. They also begin taking the southern kingdoms’ inhabitants into exile in 605 B.C., among whom are the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel who speak for God to the Jews in Babylon. Jeremiah remains in Jerusalem and is an eyewitness of its capture. He then moves to Egypt with other Jews, while continuing to bring God’s messages to the southern Kingdom of Judah.

The above passage of Jeremiah 3:6-18 begins with God’s asking the prophet a question in 3:6, “Then Yahweh said to me in the days of Josiah the king, ‘Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there.’” First, we see that this conversation between God and Jeremiah is taking place “in the days of Josiah the king.” God

ends up addressing Himself through Jeremiah to five kings of Judah—Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah—as shown by the chart below.

Date B.C.	Prophet	King of Judah	King of Babylon	OT Passage
640	Zephaniah (640-621) Jeremiah (627-586) Habakkuk (612-588)	Josiah (640-609)	Nabopolassar (626-605)	2 Kings 22:1-23:30
600	Daniel (605-535) Ezekiel (593-571)	Jehoahaz (609) Jehoiakim (609-598) Jehoiachin (598-597) Zedekiah (597-586)	Nebuchadnezzar (605-562)	2 Kings 23:31-33 2 Kings 23:34-24:7 2 Kings 24:8-17 2 Kings 24:18-25:26
500	Haggai (520) Zechariah (520-480) Malachi (430)	Babylon destroys the southern Kingdom of Judah		Ezra 5:1; 6:14 Ezra 5:1: 6:14

We also see that God asks Jeremiah about “faithless Israel,” the northern Kingdom of Israel whom the Assyrians conquered and took into exile in 722 B.C. eighty-two years before Josiah began his reign in the southern kingdom in 640 B.C. How aware is Jeremiah of the level of rebellion towards God which had existed among the Jewish tribes of the north? Does he know that they were like a prostitute who sold themselves to the worship of false pagan gods?

In v. 7, God goes on to say that He had hoped that, after finding out how vacuous and worthless it was for the northern kingdom to depend upon pagan gods who are representations of the forces of nature, which in turn are under His control, that Israel would have returned to Him and worshiped and depended on Him instead. But they did not. Furthermore, in v. 8, we find out that Israel’s “treacherous sister,” Judah, had a ringside seat to all that happened to the northern kingdom when the Assyrians destroyed their cities and drove them from the land into the Mesopotamian Valley. But instead of learning from the hard lesson which God had imposed upon them, Judah “went and was a harlot also.” This was in spite of the God’s having “sent [Israel] away and given her a writ of divorce.” We must understand, that in the light of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants and the promises which God has made to Abraham’s descendants, He is not saying that He has abandoned the Jews of the northern kingdom completely and forever. He is divorcing these Jews, but only for a while—as we saw in Isaiah. There is and always will be a “remnant” of Jewish believers until the millennial kingdom arrives and every Jew becomes an authentic worshiper of Yahweh and Jesus the Messiah as foretold in Isaiah 10:20-23,

10:20 Now in that day (וַהֲיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) the remnant of Israel (שְׁאֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל),
and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never
again rely on the one who struck them,
but will truly rely on Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel.

10:21 A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob (שְׁאֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל יָשׁוּב יַעֲקֹב), to the mighty God.

10:22 For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea,
Only a remnant within them will return (שְׁאֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל יָשׁוּב);
A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness.

10:23 For a complete destruction, one that is decreed,
Adonai Yahweh of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land (בְּקֶרֶב כָּל-הָאָרֶץ).

Continuing with Jeremiah 3, v. 10 indicates that if there was any “returning” to God by the southern Kingdom of Judah in response to Israel’s demise at the disciplinary hands of God and the Assyrians, it was “in deception.” The Hebrew word *sheqer* (שֶׁקֶר) means lie or pretense. I think that God is saying that the people of Judah and Jerusalem may have increased the intensity with which they followed the Mosaic Covenant so that they brought even more offerings and sacrifices to the temple, but they were really only pretending to obey God. They were making obvious choices to follow the covenant, but their hearts were not oriented towards God as He required. Their hearts were

not circumcised, making their obedience only outward and not inward. As far as other human beings could tell by looking at these Jews' external actions, they were fully committed to obeying God and His commandments in the Mosaic Covenant. But they were like Christians who down through the centuries have followed their ecclesiastical and denominational traditions, but only because they want to appear righteous, not because they are righteous according to the biblical definition, which must include a heart that has been changed by the Spirit of God. When sinful human beings, whether Jews at the temple in Jerusalem in 600 B.C. or Christians at churches during the last two thousand years, pretend to believe in and submit to God, they may be able to deceive their fellow Jews and Christians respectively, but they cannot fool God, who will judge and condemn them for their lies.

God continues His monologue with Jeremiah in v. 11, "And Yahweh said to me, 'Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.'" Is it really possible that the Jews of Judah had become more disobedient than the northern kingdom who persistently worshiped pagan gods and even sacrificed their children to them? Yes. In fact, the southern kingdom obtained this honor by being the "treacherous sister" of Israel. However, before God speaks more directly to Judah, He instructs Jeremiah in vs. 12-15,

3:12 "Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say,

'Return, faithless Israel,' declares Yahweh;

'I will not look upon you in anger.

For I am gracious,' declares Yahweh;

'I will not be angry forever.

3:13 'Only acknowledge your iniquity,

That you have transgressed against Yahweh your God

And have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree,

And you have not obeyed My voice,' declares Yahweh.

3:14 'Return, O faithless sons,' declares Yahweh;

'For I am a master to you,

And I will take you one from a city and two from a family,

And I will bring you to Zion.'

3:15 "Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding."

Here we see God's incredible love, patience, and mercy towards His chosen people. He has been so angry with them that He used the Assyrian Empire to obliterate their kingdom in the north and expel them from the land which He promised them through Abraham. Now, approximately a hundred years later, He urges them to repent from their new homes far to the north in Assyria, "Return, faithless Israel." And here God uses alliteration (similar sounds in adjacent words) to get across His point in the Hebrew text, where the words are, "*Shoovah meshoovah Yisra'el* (שׁוּבָה מְשׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל)." It is striking but not unusual that the same root, *shoov* (שׁוּב), means "return," *Shoovah*, in the first instance and then "faithless," i.e., one who is not returning, *meshoovah*, in the second instance of the same sentence. Such is the beauty of the Hebrew language. We remember also that *Yisra'el* means "The One Who Struggles With God," so that the irony is that this is exactly what the Jews in exile are probably struggling to do—to repent or remain faithless. They may very well be asking themselves, "Should we repent and obey our God who caused us so much suffering and drove us from our land, or should we refuse to humble ourselves by remaining unbelieving and unfaithful?"

But if the exiled Jews repent and return to God, He will "not look on [them] in anger." Indeed, "'I am gracious,' declares Yahweh; 'I will not be angry forever.'" This is to say that He is not committed to holding their sins against them *le 'olam*, into the distant future whereby He will never fulfill His promise to make them a "great nation" according to Genesis 12:1-2. And all that is required of them is this, "'Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against Yahweh your God and have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice,' declares Yahweh" (v. 13). By confessing their sins (with a genuine heart of humility and

faith!), God will be “gracious” to these northern Jews and cease being angry with them. They must not be like Judah and only pretend to repent with outward actions which are merely guided by tradition or rituals but where they lack hearts that are authentically circumcised. Their repentance must be biblically spontaneous from a Spirit-created inward desire to obtain His mercy.

God also indicates in v. 14 that He is their “master.” This is a play on words, because the verb which God uses to say this is *ba'al* (בָּעַל), or Baal, which is more familiar to us as the false, pagan god whom the Israelites were worshiping instead of Yahweh. His name means “master.” Thus God is saying that He and not the false god of the Canaanites is their Baal. And if they make Him their Baal, then God will take them like His slaves, “one from a city and two from a family,” and lead them “to Zion.” In other words, God is predicting that He will bring a select few of them back, but their return will not be just to the land of the northern kingdom which they left, and which is north of Jerusalem. Instead, He will bring them all the way back to Zion—to Jerusalem and its temple. The significance of this can be seen in the fact that early on, the first king of the northern Kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam, established a place for the Jewish tribes under his authority to worship God outside Jerusalem, in the area of Samaria. He did not want them traveling to the southern kingdom so as to risk losing their allegiance to him. Consequently, for God to bring to Zion the believing Jews from the exiled northern tribes is to bring them all the way back to worshiping Him as they should—in the place where He has designated, the temple in the capital city of Israel, Jerusalem.

When, and if, the Jews of northern Israel repent and obey God as they should according to the Mosaic Covenant, God will also provide them with good teachers, “shepherds” who are like King David (v. 15). They will be “after [God’s] own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). As a result, these teachers will feed the Jews with “knowledge and understanding” that fits the biblical message, unlike the false teachers of their day. God may be speaking only hypothetically, that if the Jews repent, then He will return them to the land of Israel and to the central place of worshiping Him, Jerusalem. But He goes on in v. 16 to say, “It shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land,” declares Yahweh, “they will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of Yahweh.’ And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor will they miss it, nor will it be made again.”

The clause “in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land” sounds more like a prediction than merely a hypothetical possibility. The prepositional phrase “in those days” is similar to what we have seen before, “in that day,” which referred to either a time in the near future with respect to the prophet Isaiah or a time in the distant future and the millennial kingdom of the Messiah. Here, I think it refers to the latter. There will be a point in history when the existing Jews will confess their sins and God will grow their numbers on the land of Israel. And He will provide them with good, Bible teachers—the apostles and those who have been diligent students of the apostolic message of the New Testament before Jesus’ return. This would be in accordance with what Jesus tells his apostles in [Matthew 19:28](#) “And Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, ruling the twelve tribes of Israel.’” But we can imagine that the “ruling” which the apostles will perform will also involve instructing the Jews (and the rest of the world) as good “shepherds.” And not will the apostles engage in such teaching and ruling, but so will all those authentic believers in God who are either raised from the dead or lifted off the earth when Jesus returns. For example, the apostle Paul quotes from a 1st century Christian hymn, “If we endure, we will also reign with [Jesus]” (2 Timothy 2:12a). Referring to all Christians and, by extrapolation, to all authentic believers throughout history, Paul is saying that they will rule and instruct people during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 (like the apostles as Jesus states in Matthew 19:28).

God goes on to say in Jeremiah 3:16 that the believing Jews will neither think about nor even make “the ark of the covenant,” which, in Jeremiah’s day, resided in the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum of the temple in Jerusalem. Exodus 25 and Leviticus 16 indicate that the purpose of the ark of the covenant was to provide a “place of propitiation,” i.e., a physical location inside the temple where once a year on the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur* (or *Yom Kippureem* (יּוֹם כִּפּוּרִים)) in Leviticus 23:28), the High Priest sprinkles the blood of a sacrificed bull and goat to appeal to God for mercy

and forgiveness for the sins of the Jewish people. Here, in Jeremiah, I think that God is saying that, even if the temple is rebuilt during the millennial kingdom so that the Jews may bring offerings and sacrifices to it in accordance with the Mosaic Covenant, they will not build another ark, i.e., a place of propitiation and atonement, because Jesus will be such for them and all believing Gentiles. And Jesus will be the eternal place of propitiation for all them. Nevertheless, I think that it is still possible that, according to the prophets and passages such as Ezekiel 40ff., they will rebuild the temple while also placing their faith in Jesus for God's mercy, while he resides among and rules over them in Jerusalem.

This last idea is what God expresses in v. 17, "At that time they will call Jerusalem 'The Throne of Yahweh' (and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of Yahweh). Nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart." I suggest that there are two options for understanding this verse. The first is that the Jews will recognize that their capital city, Jerusalem, is where Yahweh reigns over them in the person of Jesus, His human proxy according to the Davidic Covenant, so that they will no longer be fundamentally rebellious towards Him because He will have changed their hearts by His Holy Spirit, while, parenthetically, some of the Gentiles around the world will also become authentic believers and will focus their minds and hearts on Jesus in Jerusalem as their ruler, too.

The second possibility is that the Jews will recognize that their capital city, Jerusalem, is where Yahweh reigns over them in the person of Jesus, His human proxy according to the Davidic Covenant, and, parenthetically, some of the Gentiles around the world will also become authentic believers and will look to Jesus with their minds and hearts as their ruler, too, and these Gentiles will no longer be fundamentally rebellious towards God because He will have changed their hearts by His Holy Spirit. The question is whether to interpret the last part of the verse as referring to the Jews or to the Gentiles?

I think that the first option is correct and more coherent with v. 18, "In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance." The emphasis in this passage (and most others in the prophets which address these issues) is on the Jews. Thus, God is saying through Jeremiah that the split between the northern and southern tribes, which occurred when Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, became king of Judah/Israel (~930 B.C.), will disappear completely. And the wound which resulted between the two sets of tribes will be healed. All the Jews "will come together from the land of the north," which is to say from the areas of the Assyrian Empire, in the case of the northern tribes, and the Babylonian Empire, in the case of the southern tribe of Judah (and by extrapolation, from the rest of the world where the Jews were dispersed between the Babylonian exile and Jesus' return). And thus those Jews who will become genuine believers in Yahweh and Jesus during the beginning of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 will return "to the land that [God] gave [their] fathers as an inheritance" and become the promised "great nation" (cf. Genesis 12:1-2).

Jeremiah 16:14-21

16:1 The word of Yahweh also came to me saying,

16:2 "You shall not take a wife for yourself nor have sons or daughters in this place."

16:3 For thus says Yahweh concerning the sons and daughters born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bear them, and their fathers who beget them in this land:

16:4 "They will die of deadly diseases, they will not be lamented or buried; they will be as dung on the surface of the ground and come to an end by sword and famine, and their carcasses will become food for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth."

16:5 For thus says Yahweh, "Do not enter a house of mourning, or go to lament or to console them; for I have withdrawn My peace (אֶת־שְׁלוֹמִי) from this people," declares Yahweh, "My lovingkindness and compassion (אֶת־חַסְדִּי וְאֶת־חַנּוּנִי).

16:6 "Both great men and small will die in this land; they will not be buried, they will not be lamented, nor will anyone gash himself or shave his head for them.

- 16:7 “Men will not break bread in mourning for them, to comfort anyone for the dead, nor give them a cup of consolation to drink for anyone’s father or mother.
- 16:8 “Moreover you shall not go into a house of feasting to sit with them to eat and drink.”
- 16:9 For thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I am going to eliminate (בְּשָׁרִית) from this place, before your eyes and in your time, the voice of rejoicing and the voice of gladness, the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride.
- 16:10 “Now when you tell this people all these words, they will say to you, ‘For what reason has Yahweh declared all this great calamity (כָּל־הַרְעָה הַגְּדוֹלָה הַזֹּאת) against us? And what is our iniquity, or what is our sin which we have committed against Yahweh our God?’
- 16:11 “Then you are to say to them, ‘It is because your forefathers have forsaken (עָזְבוּ) Me,’ declares Yahweh, ‘and have followed other gods and served them and bowed down to them; but Me they have forsaken (עָזְבוּ) and have not kept My law (לֹא שָׁמְרוּ).’
- 16:12 ‘You too have done evil, even more than your forefathers; for behold, you are each one walking according to the stubbornness of his own evil heart, without listening to Me.
- 16:13 ‘So I will hurl (וְהִטַּלְתִּי) you out of this land into the land which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers; and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will grant you no favor (חַנּוּנִיָּה).’
- 16:14 “Therefore (לָכֵן) behold, days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’
- 16:15 but, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them (הַדְרִיחָם).’ For I will restore them (וְהִשְׁבֵּתִים) to their own land (עַל־אֲדָמָתָם) which I gave to their fathers (לְאֲבוֹתָם).’
- 16:16 “Behold, I am going to send for many fishermen,” declares Yahweh, “and they will fish for them; and afterwards I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and every hill and from the clefts of the rocks.
- 16:17 “For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes.
- 16:18 “I will first doubly repay (וְשָׁלַמְתִּי רַאשׁוֹנָה מִשְׁנֶה) their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable idols and with their abominations.”
- 16:19 O Yahweh, my strength and my stronghold,
And my refuge in the day of distress (בְּיוֹם צָרָה),
To You the nations will come (אֵלֶיךָ גּוֹיִם וְבָאוּ)
From the ends of the earth (מִקְצוֹת־אֶרֶץ) and say,
“Our fathers have inherited nothing but falsehood,
Futility and things of no profit.”
- 16:20 Can man make gods for himself?
Yet they are not gods!
- 16:21 “Therefore behold, I am going to make them know (מִדְּיָעָם) —
This time (בְּפַעַם הַזֹּאת) I will make them know (אֲדִיעֵם)
My power and My might;
And they shall know that My name is Yahweh.”

In this passage we first see evidence in vs. 1-13 of God’s threat in Deuteronomy 28, that if the Israelites disobey the Mosaic Covenant, that God will discipline them severely and drive them off their land. Then, in vs. 14-21 He refers to His promise of Genesis 12:1-2, that He will bless them and make them a “great nation.” Regarding God’s threat of judgment, Moses says in Deuteronomy 28:36 & 63-65,

Deuteronomy 28:36 “Yahweh will bring you and your king, whom you set over you, to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone...

28:63 "It shall come about that as Yahweh delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so Yahweh will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you will be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it.

28:64 "Moreover, Yahweh will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known.

28:65 "Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there Yahweh will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul.

But fortunately God had said to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-2a,

Genesis 12:1 Now Yahweh said to Abram,

"Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,
To the land which I will show you;

12:2 And I will make you a great nation.

In accordance with Deuteronomy 28, God speaks to Jeremiah in vs. 1-4 and commands him not to take a wife and have children. His reason is that the fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters "in this place" and "in this land" of Israel "will die of deadly diseases" and of the "sword and famine." God is referring to the upcoming Babylonian invasion of the southern Kingdom of Judah and the devastation which will result. In vs. 5-8, He exhorts Jeremiah not to participate in any mourning ceremonies when all these diseases and death occur, because He has "withdrawn" His *shalom* from the people of Judah. In addition, God has taken away His *hesed* and compassion from them, meaning that these particular Jews will not experience the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham to make them the most powerful nation in history. Instead, He will grant this privilege to the people of Israel at a future date. In other words, God is not withdrawing His constant faithfulness, *shalom*, and compassion *completely* from the Jews. He is withdrawing them only from this generation of Jeremiah's day who will experience the destruction brought about by the Babylonians.

Indeed, it will be this present group of Jews who will feel the effects of what God says in v. 9, "Behold, I am going to eliminate from this place, before your eyes and in your time, the voice of rejoicing and the voice of gladness, the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride." Notice that God specifies where and when these events will take place. It will be in "this place," meaning the southern Kingdom of Judah. And it will be "in your time," meaning during Jeremiah's life, because all this will occur "before your [Jeremiah's] eyes." Thus, God is speaking of the Babylonian invasion and destruction of the Kingdom of Judah, which will include Jerusalem and the temple and will happen between 605 B.C. and 586 B.C.

God continues in v. 10 to say that the Jews will be baffled why God is bringing on them all this calamity. "What is our sin?" they will ask. And in vs. 11-12 He instructs Jeremiah as to how he should respond,

16:11 "Then you are to say to them, 'It is because your forefathers have forsaken Me,' declares Yahweh, 'and have followed other gods and served them and bowed down to them; but Me they have forsaken and have not kept My law.

16:12 'You too have done evil, even more than your forefathers; for behold, you are each one walking according to the stubbornness of his own evil heart, without listening to Me.

Previous generations of Jews living in Jerusalem and Judah have rejected God and the Mosaic Covenant. In addition, the current inhabitants of this city and land are also. None of them has guarded God's *torah*, His instructions for how His chosen people should demonstrate their obedience to Him.

Instead, they have abandoned and forsaken everything that God has said. Their hearts are stubborn and evil, and they are unwilling to listen to God and His prophets. This is why God is doing what He is doing in accordance with Deuteronomy 28. But if they would only listen!

And in v. 13 God ends this section of warnings to Judah, “So I will hurl you out of this land into the land which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers; and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will grant you no favor.” God is in the process of driving these 7th century Jews off the land of Israel so as to scatter them into foreign lands where they will continue their idolatry and receive no “favor,” literally no “grace,” from Him.

But then God changes His tone completely in v. 14-16,

16:14 “Therefore behold, days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’

16:15 but, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them.’ For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers.

16:16 “Behold, I am going to send for many fishermen,” declares Yahweh, “and they will fish for them; and afterwards I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and every hill and from the clefts of the rocks.

It is interesting that God starts this section with “Therefore” (לָכֵן). It is as if He is drawing a conclusion from telling the people of Judah that they have been rebellious, which is resulting in their death and destruction. But how can the latter be the reason for the former? I think that it is because of the theological relationship between God’s bringing about the curses of Deuteronomy 28 on the Jews and His fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation.” If the former happens, which it did for the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. and is about to happen for the southern kingdom about one hundred years later, and if the former has continued to happen at other times in Jewish history, which it has, for example, in A.D. 70 and A.D. 132-135 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and drove the Jews off the land, then the only way to go is up. These acts of judgment and severe discipline by God have been recurring low points for the nation of Israel. And where do the Jews go from these low points? They could keep experiencing them on occasion for the rest of human history—*ad infinitum*. Or they could eventually result in their reaching their high point. I think that it is this second option to which God quickly refers in vs. 14-21. Yes, the Babylonian invasion, destruction, and invasion were a low point in Israel’s history. And we know that there have been further low points, including such terrible events as the Holocaust of World War II. But just wait. The high point for the Jew is coming when God keeps His promise and they become the most powerful nation in human history. This is why I think God says, “Therefore...” It is a theological “therefore” based upon His promise, guarantee, and oath to Abraham in Genesis 12-22.

And up to this moment in Jeremiah’s day, the greatest event in Israel’s history has been God’s saving them from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses around 1500 B.C. This has been what they associate with their God, Yahweh, more than anything else. However, there is coming a time when an even greater event will occur for them. It will be when God has “brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from the countries where He had banished them” (v. 15). But He must be referring to more than Assyria, where the northern kingdom was dispersed in the 8th century B.C., and Babylon, where the southern kingdom was exiled in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C., from which He “will restore them to their own land which [He] gave to their fathers” by sending “fishermen” and “hunters” to find them (vs. 15,16).

Notice how God continues in vs. 17-18,

16:17 “For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes.

16:18 “I will first doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable idols and with their abominations.”

When God says that He will “first doubly repay their iniquity and their sin,” I think that He is speaking of two things which He is going to do with and for the people of Israel. The first thing is that He will expel them from the land—as He did with the northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. and as He is in the process of doing with Judah in Jeremiah’s day as the 6th century B.C. begins. The second thing which God will do is provide forgiveness of their sins through the death of their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, six hundred years later. Jeremiah’s contemporaries “have polluted” God’s land, which is also His “inheritance” that He has given them for the posterity of His chosen people. And they have “filled” it with “detestable idols and with their abominations” whenever they have worshiped false gods. However, after driving them from the land for a period of time and after providing them with an acceptable propitiatory offering through Jesus’ death, God will eventually fulfill His promise to Abraham and not only physically bring the Jews back to the land, but also forgive them for their sins and abominations. Yet, only a future series of generations will experience this after Jesus returns to establish the millennial Kingdom of God of Revelation 20. In other words, God is not speaking of the upcoming return from Babylon of the Jews seventy years later. He is describing an event far into the future that pertains to His promise of Genesis 12:1-2.

This correlates with what Jeremiah goes on to pray in v. 19,

16:19 O Yahweh, my strength and my stronghold,
And my refuge in the day of distress (בְּיָמֵי צָרָה),
To You the nations will come (אֵלֶיךָ גּוֹיִם יִבְאוּ)
From the ends of the earth (מִקְצוֹת הָאָרֶץ) and say,
“Our fathers have inherited nothing but falsehood,
Futility and things of no profit.”

First, Jeremiah communicates to God that He is the one who keeps him believing and standing by the truth, so that when “the day of distress” comes when the Babylonians destroy the southern Kingdom of Judah, he will be able to continue believing God for all His promises—that the Jews will eventually become a “great nation” and that Jeremiah will participate in it by being raised from the dead as a result of his Abraham-like faith. Then the prophet states that “the nations,” the Gentiles, will find their way to Israel, having come “from the ends of the earth” to approach God. They will admit that their ancestors passed down to them nothing but lies and “falsehood.” And these deceitful ideas which circulated among the Gentile nations were worthless and brought them nothing that would help them in their relationships with God. This is to say that there was “no [eternal] profit” in these false ideas, which is the only “profit” worth gaining in this life.

God then finishes this chapter in vs. 20-21,

16:20 “Can man make gods for himself?
Yet they are not gods!
16:21 “Therefore behold, I am going to make them know —
This time (בְּפַעַם הַזֹּאת) I will make them know
My power and My might;
And they shall know that My name is Yahweh.”

God asks a rhetorical question, “Is it really possible for human beings to create ‘gods’ that rule, govern, and provide for them in a substantial way?” They can try, which people have been doing since the beginning of the human race, while avoiding the one, true God. But He goes on to state unequivocally, “Yet they are not gods!” Of course they are not. Only Yahweh is God, but the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and all other peoples (even those today throughout the world)

have ignored Him and depended on what they imagine to be gods for their *shalom* and well-being in this world. They have concocted religions *ad infinitum* and rejected the only valid understanding of God and reality—that which the Old Testament and the New Testament rightly teach.

And what is God going to do about this intentional rebellion by the nations against Him? He says in v. 21, “Therefore behold, I am going to make them know — this time I will make them know My power and My might.” The form of the Hebrew verb “know” in both cases means to cause someone to know. Thus, God as the transcendent author of reality is going to cause the Gentiles to know His “power,” literally His “hand,” and His might/strength. And how will they recognize that God is as powerful, dominant, sovereign, and in control as He is? By virtue of the Jews’ being back in their land which He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and by the fact that they are exercising complete hegemony and authority over the entire world—with, of course, their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, as their king in Jerusalem. Consequently, “they shall know that My name is Yahweh,” says God. This probably means that at least some of these particular Gentiles will become genuine believers in Yahweh and His Messiah. In other words, they will really, really know (at the core of their being with full acceptance and faith) that God is God and they should depend on no one else for their well-being.

Jeremiah 21-23

- 21:1** The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malchijah, and Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah, saying,
- 21:2** “Please inquire of Yahweh on our behalf, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is warring against us; perhaps Yahweh will deal with us according to all His wonderful acts, so that the enemy will withdraw from us.”
- 21:3** Then Jeremiah said to them, “You shall say to Zedekiah as follows:
- 21:4** ‘Thus says Yahweh God of Israel, “Behold, I am about to turn back the weapons of war which are in your hands, with which you are warring against the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans who are besieging you outside the wall; and I will gather them into the center of this city.
- 21:5** “I Myself will war against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm, even in anger and wrath and great indignation.
- 21:6** “I will also strike down the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; they will die of a great pestilence.
- 21:7** “Then afterwards,” declares Yahweh, “I will give over Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people, even those who survive in this city from the pestilence, the sword and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their foes and into the hand of those who seek their lives; and he will strike them down with the edge of the sword. He will not spare them nor have pity nor compassion.”
- 21:8** “You shall also say to this people, ‘Thus says Yahweh, “Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.
- 21:9** “He who dwells in this city will die by the sword and by famine and by pestilence; but he who goes out and falls away to the Chaldeans who are besieging you will live, and he will have his own life as booty.
- 21:10** “For I have set My face against this city for harm and not for good (לְרָעָה וְלֹא לְטוֹבָה),” declares Yahweh. “It will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon and he will burn it with fire.”
- 21:11** “Then say to the household of the king of Judah, ‘Hear the word of Yahweh,
- 21:12** O house of David, thus says Yahweh:
 “Administer justice every morning (חֲדָשׁ יוֹמָם לְבָקֵר מִשְׁפָּט);
 And deliver (וְהַצִּילוּ) the person who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor,
 That My wrath may not go forth like fire
 And burn with none to extinguish it,
 Because of the evil of their deeds (מִפְּנֵי רָע מַעַלְלֵיהֶם).
- 21:13** “Behold, I am against you, O valley dweller,
 O rocky plain,” declares Yahweh,
 “You men who say, ‘Who will come down against us?

Or who will enter into our habitations?’

21:14 “But I will punish (וַיִּכְרֹתֶיךָ) you according to the results of your deeds,” declares Yahweh,
“And I will kindle a fire in its forest
That it may devour all its environs.””

22:1 Thus says Yahweh, “Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and there speak this word
22:2 and say, ‘Hear the word of Yahweh, O king of Judah, who sits on David’s throne, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates.

22:3 ‘Thus says Yahweh, “Do justice and righteousness (עֲשׂוּ מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה), and deliver the one who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor. Also do not mistreat or do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

22:4 “For if you men will indeed perform this thing, then kings will enter the gates of this house, sitting in David’s place on his throne, riding in chariots and on horses, even the king himself and his servants and his people.

22:5 “But if you will not obey these words, I swear by Myself,” declares Yahweh, “that this house will become a desolation (לְחָרְבָה).””

22:6 For thus says Yahweh concerning the house of the king of Judah:

“You are like Gilead to Me,
Like the summit of Lebanon;
Yet most assuredly I will make you like a wilderness,
Like cities which are not inhabited.

22:7 “For I will set apart destroyers against you,
Each with his weapons;
And they will cut down your choicest cedars
And throw them on the fire.

22:8 “Many nations will pass by this city; and they will say to one another, ‘Why has Yahweh done thus to this great city?’

22:9 “Then they will answer, ‘Because they forsook the covenant of Yahweh (עָזְבוּ אֶת-בְּרִית יְהוָה) their God and bowed down to other gods and served them.”

22:10 Do not weep for the dead or mourn for him,
But weep continually for the one who goes away;
For he will never return
Or see his native land.

22:11 For thus says Yahweh in regard to Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who became king in the place of Josiah his father, who went forth from this place, “He will never return there;

22:12 but in the place where they led him captive, there he will die and not see this land again.

22:13 “Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness

And his upper rooms without justice,
Who uses his neighbor’s services without pay
And does not give him his wages,

22:14 Who says, ‘I will build myself a roomy house
With spacious upper rooms,
And cut out its windows,
Paneling it with cedar and painting it bright red.’

22:15 “Do you become a king because you are competing in cedar?

Did not your father eat and drink
And do justice and righteousness?
Then it was well with him.

22:16 “He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy;
Then it was well.
Is not that what it means to know Me?”
Declares Yahweh.

22:17 “But your eyes and your heart
Are intent only upon your own dishonest gain,
And on shedding innocent blood

And on practicing oppression and extortion.”

22:18 Therefore thus says Yahweh in regard to Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah,

“They will not lament for him:

‘Alas, my brother!’ or, ‘Alas, sister!’

They will not lament for him:

‘Alas for the master!’ or, ‘Alas for his splendor!’

22:19 “He will be buried with a donkey’s burial,

Dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

22:20 “Go up to Lebanon and cry out,

And lift up your voice in Bashan;

Cry out also from Abarim,

For all your lovers have been crushed.

22:21 “I spoke to you in your prosperity (בְּשִׁלּוֹתֶיךָ);

But you said, ‘I will not listen!’

This has been your practice from your youth,

That you have not obeyed My voice.

22:22 “The wind will sweep away all your shepherds,

And your lovers will go into captivity;

Then you will surely be ashamed and humiliated

Because of all your wickedness.

22:23 “You who dwell in Lebanon,

Nested in the cedars,

How you will groan when pangs come upon you,

Pain like a woman in childbirth!

22:24 “As I live,” declares Yahweh, “even though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet ring on My right hand, yet I would pull you off;

22:25 and I will give you over into the hand of those who are seeking your life, yes, into the hand of those whom you dread, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

22:26 “I will hurl you and your mother who bore you into another country where you were not born, and there you will die.

22:27 “But as for the land to which they desire to return, they will not return to it.

22:28 “Is this man Coniah a despised, shattered jar?

Or is he an undesirable vessel?

Why have he and his descendants been hurled out

And cast into a land that they had not known?

22:29 “O land, land, land,

Hear the word of Yahweh!

22:30 “Thus says Yahweh,

‘Write this man down childless,

A man who will not prosper in his days;

For no man of his descendants will prosper

Sitting on the throne of David

Or ruling again in Judah.”

23:1 “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares Yahweh.

23:2 Therefore thus says Yahweh God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares Yahweh.

23:3 “Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock (וְאֶנִּי אֶקְבֹּץ אֶת־שְׁאֵרֵי־צֹאֲנִי) out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply.

23:4 “I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares Yahweh.

23:5 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh,

“When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch (צֶדִיק צְדָיִק);
 And He will reign as king (וְיִמְלֹךְ כִּמְלֹךְ) and act wisely
 And do justice and righteousness in the land (וְיַצְדִּיק בְּאֶרֶץ).”

23:6 “In His days Judah will be saved,
 And Israel will dwell securely (וְיָבִטוּ);
 And this is His name by which He will be called,
 ‘Yahweh our righteousness.’

23:7 “Therefore behold, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when they will no longer say, ‘As
 Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,’

23:8 but, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel
 (אֶת־יִרְעֵי בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל) from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ Then
 they will live on their own soil (וְיֵשְׁבוּ עַל־אֲדָמָתָם).”

23:9 As for the prophets:
 My heart is broken within me,
 All my bones tremble;
 I have become like a drunken man,
 Even like a man overcome with wine,
 Because of Yahweh
 And because of His holy words.

23:10 For the land is full of adulterers;
 For the land mourns because of the curse.
 The pastures of the wilderness have dried up.
 Their course also is evil
 And their might is not right.

23:11 “For both prophet and priest are polluted;
 Even in My house I have found their wickedness,” declares Yahweh.

23:12 “Therefore their way will be like slippery paths to them,
 They will be driven away into the gloom and fall down in it;
 For I will bring calamity upon them,
 The year of their punishment,” declares Yahweh.

23:13 “Moreover, among the prophets of Samaria I saw an offensive thing:
 They prophesied by Baal and led My people Israel astray.

23:14 “Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing:
 The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood;
 And they strengthen the hands of evildoers,
 So that no one has turned back from his wickedness.
 All of them have become to Me like Sodom,
 And her inhabitants like Gomorrah.

23:15 “Therefore thus says Yahweh of hosts concerning the prophets,
 ‘Behold, I am going to feed them wormwood
 And make them drink poisonous water,
 For from the prophets of Jerusalem
 Pollution has gone forth into all the land.’”

23:16 Thus says Yahweh of hosts,
 “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you.
 They are leading you into futility;
 They speak a vision of their own imagination,
 Not from the mouth of Yahweh.

23:17 “They keep saying to those who despise Me,
 ‘Yahweh has said, “You will have peace (שָׁלוֹם)”’;
 And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart,
 They say, ‘Calamity (רָעָה) will not come upon you.’

23:18 “But who has stood in the council of Yahweh,
 That he should see and hear His word?
 Who has given heed to His word and listened?

- 23:19 "Behold, the storm of Yahweh has gone forth in wrath,
Even a whirling tempest;
It will swirl down on the head of the wicked.
- 23:20 "The anger of Yahweh will not turn back
Until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart;
In the last days (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים) you will clearly understand it.
- 23:21 "I did not send these prophets,
But they ran.
I did not speak to them,
But they prophesied.
- 23:22 "But if they had stood in My council,
Then they would have announced My words to My people,
And would have turned them back from their evil way
And from the evil of their deeds.
- 23:23 "Am I a God who is near," declares Yahweh,
"And not a God far off?
- 23:24 "Can a man hide himself in hiding places
So I do not see him?" declares Yahweh.
"Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares Yahweh.
- 23:25 "I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsely in My name, saying, 'I had a dream, I had a dream!'
- 23:26 "How long? Is there anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, even these prophets of the deception of their own heart,
- 23:27 who intend to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal?
- 23:28 "The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. What does straw have in common with grain?" declares Yahweh.
- 23:29 "Is not My word like fire?" declares Yahweh, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?
- 23:30 "Therefore behold, I am against the prophets," declares Yahweh, "who steal My words from each other.
- 23:31 "Behold, I am against the prophets," declares Yahweh, "who use their tongues and declare, 'The Lord declares.'
- 23:32 "Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams," declares Yahweh, "and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit," declares Yahweh.
- 23:33 "Now when this people or the prophet or a priest asks you saying, 'What is the oracle of Yahweh?' then you shall say to them, 'What oracle?' Yahweh declares, 'I will abandon you.'
- 23:34 "Then as for the prophet or the priest or the people who say, 'The oracle of Yahweh,' I will bring punishment upon that man and his household.
- 23:35 "Thus will each of you say to his neighbor and to his brother, 'What has Yahweh answered?' or, 'What has Yahweh spoken?'
- 23:36 "For you will no longer remember the oracle of Yahweh, because every man's own word will become the oracle, and you have perverted the words of the living God, Yahweh of hosts, our God.
- 23:37 "Thus you will say to that prophet, 'What has Yahweh answered you?' and, 'What has Yahweh spoken?'
- 23:38 "For if you say, 'The oracle of Yahweh!' surely thus says Yahweh, 'Because you said this word, "The oracle of Yahweh!" I have also sent to you, saying, "You shall not say, 'The oracle of Yahweh!'"'
- 23:39 "Therefore behold, I will surely forget you and cast you away from My presence, along with the city which I gave you and your fathers.
- 23:40 "I will put an everlasting reproach on you and an everlasting humiliation which will not be forgotten."

Zedekiah ruled Judah as their final king from 597-586 B.C. In this passage, he is concerned for the safety of his kingdom because Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has invaded the land and is attacking Jerusalem. He inquires of Jeremiah through two priests, Pashhur and Zephaniah, if God will protect the city and make the Babylonians withdraw. I assume Zedekiah is thinking of how God made the Assyrians abandon their siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (21:1-2). Jeremiah's response is not at all encouraging. Instead of protecting Judah, God is going to make their weapons worthless against the Babylonians and gather these enemies into the city. In other words, Nebuchadnezzar is going to capture Jerusalem (v. 4). Jeremiah goes on to say that God will war against Zedekiah and the people "in anger and wrath and great indignation" (v. 5). Obviously, God is not happy with the way the people of Judah are conducting their lives, which must be in violation of the Mosaic Covenant. As a result, most of the city will die, and a "great pestilence" will occur, which is probably some kind of plague that sweeps through the city in the midst of the Babylonian siege (v. 6). Afterwards, Zedekiah and anyone left who survives disease, the sword, and famine will die at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and his army. The Jews will experience no "pity" or "compassion" from their enemies (v. 7).

Then, in 21:8, God says through Jeremiah to the people, "I have set before you the way of life and the way of death." He goes on to explain in v. 9 what He means. If the people dwelling in Jerusalem resist being captured by the Babylonians, they will die in the city. But if they leave the city and freely give themselves up to their enemy, they will live. Indeed, they will have their "own life as booty." Remaining alive (and being led to Babylon) will be the spoils of war which Nebuchadnezzar will acquire.

And there are no other choices at this time, because God says, "'For I have set My face against this city for harm and not for good,' declares Yahweh. 'It will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire'" (21:10). God has decided to destroy Jerusalem. And, yet, in vs. 11-14, He continues to appeal to the Jews to obey Him, implying that, if they do, they will receive His forgiveness and escape death or exile by the Babylonians,

21:11 "Then say to the household of the king of Judah, 'Hear the word of Yahweh,

21:12 O house of David, thus says Yahweh:

"Administer justice every morning (חֲדָשׁ לְבֹקֶר מִשְׁפָּט);

And deliver (וְהַצִּיל) the person who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor,

That My wrath may not go forth like fire

And burn with none to extinguish it,

Because of the evil of their deeds (מִפְּנֵי רָע מַעַלְלֵיהֶם).

21:13 "Behold, I am against you, O valley dweller,

O rocky plain," declares Yahweh,

"You men who say, 'Who will come down against us?

Or who will enter into our habitations?'

21:14 "But I will punish (וְעָנֵה) you according to the results of your deeds," declares Yahweh,

"And I will kindle a fire in its forest

That it may devour all its environs.'"

If Zedekiah and the people are willing to do what is right in regard to those who are being "robbed" by the powerful and the wealthy of Judah, then God's "wrath" will "not go forth like fire and burn with none to extinguish it." It is "the evil" of Zedekiah's and other people's "deeds" in violation of the Mosaic Covenant's call to love their Jewish "neighbor" as themselves that is provoking God to anger and judgment, so that they are heading towards disaster in the southern kingdom (vs. 11-12). And God's hostility towards the Jews pertains to the "valley dweller" and the person who lives on the "rocky plain." In their arrogance, these men are saying, "Who will come down against us? Or who will enter our habitations" (vs. 13)? They think that they are protected from the Babylonians, probably because they believe that they are obeying God properly and thereby deserving of His protection. But God makes it clear in v. 14, "But I will punish you according to the

results of your deeds,...and I will kindle a fire in its forest that it may devour all its environs.” The fire is the Babylonian army, which will be the instrument of God’s punishment. Literally He says, “I will visit you...”, and the Hebrew word is *paqad* (פָּקַד). The books of the Old Testament prophets make it clear that the last thing the nation of Israel should want is for God to “visit” them, because it only brings suffering, death, and destruction.

Chapter 22 continues with the same theme. God appeals to the people of Judah to change their evil ways and turn back to Him in their hearts and minds in order to avoid His judgment and disciplinary actions. But the chapter also appears to be presenting this message at a time prior to Zedekiah’s reign in 597-586 B.C. We are not told exactly when the prophet’s message of vs. 1-10 takes place, while vs. 11-17 address Jehoahaz, whose name was originally Shallum and who ruled for one year in 609 B.C., and vs. 18-30 refer to Jehoikim, who ruled from 609-598 B.C.

Jeremiah begins the chapter in vs. 1-2, “**1** Thus says Yahweh, “Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and there speak this word **2** and say, ‘Hear the word of Yahweh, O king of Judah, who sits on David’s throne, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates.’” The king is not named, so that we are not sure exactly when the prophet is presenting his message. But it certainly is between 627 and 586 B.C. when Jeremiah is actively God’s spokesman. He is to speak to the existing “king of Judah, who sits on David’s throne,” which is to say who is a successor of David in accordance with the Davidic Covenant. His message also extends to the “people who enter these gates,” the gates of Jerusalem.

Similar to 21:12, God commands Jeremiah to instruct the people in 22:3, “Do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor. Also do not mistreat or do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place.” However, this statement includes the details of mistreating and doing “violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow,” as well as shedding “innocent blood.” Jewish society in the Judah of Jeremiah’s day is not a friendly place for the weak, the poor, the disenfranchised, and those without families. And God is calling the wealthy and powerful to change their ways, so that a very positive effect will occur, “For if you men will indeed perform this thing, then kings will enter the gates of this house, sitting in David’s place on his throne, riding in chariots and on horses, even the king himself and his servants and his people” (v. 4). If the people obey the Mosaic Covenant and genuinely care for their fellow Jews, then God’s agreement with David always to have one of his descendants sitting on his throne and ruling the nation of Israel will remain intact. “But if you will not obey these words, I swear by Myself,” declares Yahweh, “that this house will become a desolation” (v. 5). Rejecting God’s instructions in the Mosaic Covenant will result in the Davidic king disappearing from Judah and Israel.

And God goes on to explain His reasoning in vs. 6-10,

22:6 For thus says Yahweh concerning the house of the king of Judah:

“You are like Gilead to Me,
Like the summit of Lebanon;
Yet most assuredly I will make you like a wilderness,
Like cities which are not inhabited.

22:7 “For I will set apart destroyers against you,
Each with his weapons;
And they will cut down your choicest cedars
And throw them on the fire.

22:8 “Many nations will pass by this city; and they will say to one another, ‘Why has Yahweh done thus to this great city?’

22:9 “Then they will answer, ‘Because they forsook the covenant of Yahweh (עָזְבוּ אֶת-בְּרִית יְהוָה) their God and bowed down to other gods and served them.’”

22:10 Do not weep for the dead or mourn for him,
But weep continually for the one who goes away;
For he will never return

Or see his native land.

Just as God loves and enjoys Gilead and Lebanon, He will preserve the Davidic line of kings—if the people obey Him. But if they do not, He will make their kingdom “a wilderness, like cities which are not inhabited” (22:6) In other words, there will be no king ruling over the Jews. And God will “set apart destroyers” against them, and they will decimate all that the kings have built (22:7). Afterwards, the Gentile nations will look at Jerusalem and ask why their God did this to them? And the simple answer will be, “Because they rejected the [Mosaic Covenant] and worshiped false gods in violation of it” (22:8-9). Jeremiah then ends this particular speech with an exhortation to anyone listening not to “weep” for the Jew who dies in the midst of God’s judgment. Instead, he should mourn for the king who is taken into exile, because he will never see the land of Israel again (22:10).

The second prophetic speech begins in v. 11 by identifying the subject as “Shallum, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who became king in the place of Josiah his father.” Shallum changed his name to Jehoahaz and ruled for one year in 609 B.C. And God says of him, “[He] went forth from this place,” meaning that the Babylonians took him into captivity to their capital city. And He also says, “He will never return.” Instead, he will die in Babylon (v. 12). Then in vs. 13-17 God pronounces condemnation on Shallum and kings like him and explains why. Any king who aggrandizes himself with wealth and luxurious buildings instead of being like their ancestor David, who “pled the cause of the afflicted and needy,” so that “it was well” with him, will meet with God’s temporal (and by extrapolation, eternal) condemnation. Certainly this was the case with Jehoahaz/Shallum because, as God says to him in v. 17, “Your eyes and your heart are intent upon your own dishonest gain, and on shedding blood, and on practicing oppression and extortion.” This sounds like many world leaders in our time. Such behavior on the part of Jewish leaders results in only God’s anger and judgment towards them, because they especially are members of God’s chosen people.

In vs. 18-23, the third prophetic message of this chapter confirms God’s intent to punish the evil of the Davidic kings, when He speaks through Jeremiah to Jehoiakim, who ruled Judah from 609 to 598 B.C. God declares that Jehoiakim will die and “be buried with a donkey’s burial, dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem”—a rather ignominious and undignified ending to God’s proxy and substitute according to the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7 (22:19). And at the height of Jehoiakim’s “prosperity” and power as the king of Judah, God had spoken to him. Yet, “[he] did not listen,” God says, which “has been [his] practice from [his] youth, that [he] has not obeyed” God’s voice (22:21). Apparently, Jehoiakim loved Lebanon for its supply of cedar wood with which he built his official buildings. But God tells him to “go up to Lebanon and cry out..., for all your lovers have been crushed” (v. 20). In addition, “the wind will sweep away all your shepherds [who have tended the king’s numerous sheep], and your lovers will go into captivity” (v. 22). The Babylonians are going to invade and capture Lebanon as they will Judah. Consequently, Jehoiakim “will surely be ashamed and humiliated because of all [his] wickedness” (v. 22). He will “groan” with “pain like a woman in childbirth” (v. 23).

The fourth and final prophetic message of chapter 22 addresses a third king, Jehoiachin (called Coniah in the text), who ruled Judah from 598 to 597 B.C. God’s words to him are like those to the previous kings. He says in vs. 24-26,

22:24 “As I live,” declares Yahweh, “even though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet ring on My right hand, yet I would pull you off;

22:25 and I will give you over into the hand of those who are seeking your life, yes, into the hand of those whom you dread, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

22:26 “I will hurl you and your mother who bore you into another country where you were not born, and there you will die.

Obviously Coniah/Jehoiachin has angered God as other evil kings have done so. The result will be that God is going to take him and his mother and throw them into Babylon at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and his army. And there they will die. Then, in v. 27, God says, “But as for the land to which they desire to return, they will not return to it.” Jehoiachin and his mother will long to return to Judah and Jerusalem, but God will prevent it. And either God or Jeremiah asks, “Is this man Coniah a despised, shattered jar? Or is he an undesirable vessel? Why have he and his descendants been hurled out and cast into a land that they had not known?” The answer to these rhetorical questions are first, “Yes, the king is an ‘undesirable vessel’ in the eyes of God,” and second, “Because of his fellow Jews’ rejection of the Mosaic Covenant and deceitful ways of thinking that they are obeying it when they really are not” (cf. Jeremiah 3:10).

And Jeremiah reveals God’s heart when he cries out, “**29** O land, land, land, hear the word of Yahweh! **30** Thus says Yahweh, ‘Write this man down childless, a man who will not prosper in his days; for no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah.’” As shown by Jeremiah’s speaking the word three times, God aches for the “land” which He has promised Abraham and his descendants. It is being abandoned by them because their enemies are driving them away. And he exhorts them to listen to Him, that none of Jehoiachin’s (seven) sons will succeed him on the throne of their ancestor David. In other words, “write this [king] down [as] childless,” for he might as well be such when it comes to any direct descendants of his ruling Judah.

Next, in chapter 23, God turns his attention to all the “shepherds” of the Jews in Judah who have the role of leading them as their kings. In v. 1, the prophet writes, “‘Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!’ declares Yahweh.” It is possible that God is referring to leaders of the Jews who live at a time future to Jeremiah. But I suggest that these “shepherds” are the recent kings who reside in Jerusalem and who have not been good leaders and teachers of the Jewish people. They have misled them in their worship of God, resulting in their rebelling against Him so that He is the process of dispersing them from His pasture of the land of Israel by means of the Babylonians. These enemies of His people have invaded the land and are taking them into exile.

Then in 23:3-4, God all of a sudden speaks of His chosen people in the far distant future,

23:3 “Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock (וְאַנְיָ אֶקְבֹּץ אֶת־שְׁאֵרֵי־תַּאֲנִי) out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply.

23:4 “I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares Yahweh.

God says that this gathering of “the remnant” of His flock will be “out of all the countries” where He has scattered them and required them to live in exile. Therefore, He is most likely referring to not only Jews from the southern Kingdom of Judah, but also to those of the northern Kingdom of Israel. He also indicates that “they will be fruitful and multiply” when He gathers them back into their land, which sounds like the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-2 to make them a “great nation” (v. 3). In addition, God will “raise up shepherds over them,” who will care for them in a good and proper manner. As a result, the people of God, finally living together after being driven off the land and separated from one another in multiple foreign countries, “will not be afraid any longer.” Plus, none of them will go “missing” by being captured or kidnapped by their enemies as in the past (v. 4).

And all this will include what God states in vs. 5-6,

23:5 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh,
 “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch (צֶדֶק צִדְקָה);
 And He will reign as king (וְהָיָה לְהָלַךְ) and act wisely
 And do justice and righteousness in the land (וְעָשָׂה צְדָקָה).”

23:6 “In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell securely;
And this is His name by which He will be called,
‘Yahweh our righteousness.’

These future days of gathering the Jews back into the land of Israel will coincide with God’s raising up “for David a righteous branch,” one of his descendants who will be morally perfect and also think, speak, and act with goodness and righteousness. Indeed, “he will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land,” just as God has required of all Davidic kings (v. 5). But this one will finally fulfill this requirement completely and perfectly! And the effect of having this wise, just, and righteous king will be that “in his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely” (v. 6). By referring to the two names of both the former northern kingdom, “Israel,” and the current southern kingdom, “Judah,” God is indicating that both groups of Jews will be gathered back into the land to live together in peace with one another and in complete safety from their Gentile enemies who might want to harm them. Because this king will be morally perfect and produce such a high quality moral environment for the Jews, they will call him, “Yahweh our righteousness” (v. 6). They will acknowledge that all that they are enjoying under this king’s leadership comes from the transcendent creator, the God of Israel, Yahweh.

And as we saw God state in Jeremiah 16:14-15, He says in 23:7-8,

23:7 “Therefore behold, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when they will no longer say, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,’
23:8 but, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel (אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד יְהוָה) from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ Then they will live on their own soil (וְיָשְׁבוּ עַל־אֲדָמָתָם).”

Up to the moment when God brings about this rather idyllic situation for the Jews, they have always remembered His gracious, strong, and salvific actions when He rescued them from slavery in Egypt under Moses’ leadership around 1500 B.C. But after this righteous king arrives, the Egyptian exodus will fade in their memories and their minds will focus on God’s gathering them from all the foreign countries where they had been living, bringing them back to Israel, and causing them to “live on their own soil,” the very ground which He promised them through Abraham in Genesis 12-22. They will come “from the north” where they were taken by the Assyrians in the 8th century B.C. and by the Babylonians at the beginning of the 6th century B.C., as well as from any other Gentile land where they have been dwelling during the many years of their dispersion outside the land of Israel.

Then, once again, God and Jeremiah together take up their diatribe against certain people in Jeremiah’s day—the false prophets and the immoral priests—and they do not stop for thirty-two verses, from v. 9 to v. 40! We will not look at all the details, but this long passage includes these six ideas:

1) Jeremiah is like a man drunk with wine as he contemplates God’s threats to the highly immoral people of Judah such that death, destruction, and captivity await his fellow Jews (vs. 9-10).

2) The prophets and priests who are teaching lies to the people will find themselves on the slippery path to gloom and darkness as God brings on them “the year of their punishment” (vs. 11-12).

3) The prophets of the former Kingdom of Israel taught their people to worship Baal. Those of Judah are committing adultery and encouraging every kind of evil among their people so that God will make them drink the bitterness of His judgment and destruction (vs. 13-15).

4) God exhorts the people of Judah to stop listening to these false prophets who predict *shalom* when He in His anger is bringing a storm of disaster down on them, and it will be the Jews who live “in the last days” who will really grasp all of God’s judgments on His chosen people down through the centuries (vs. 16-20).

5) God declares that He did not send these prophets, and if they had listened to Him instead of making things up in their own imaginations, they could have turned the people away from the evil which they have been pursuing, for no one can hide his sin (or righteousness) from the God who is omnipresent (vs. 21-32).

6) God tells Jeremiah that when one of the false prophets or the people ask him about what He would want them to hear, he should say that they will forget everything they have learned about God, so that He will forget them and cast them out of the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem which He promised to their ancestors, thus causing them shame and humiliation which will not go away (except, as implied, when He keeps His oath to Abraham to make their descendants a great nation) (vs. 33-40).

Jeremiah 24

24:1 After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the officials of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths from Jerusalem and had brought them to Babylon, Yahweh showed me: behold, two baskets of figs set before the temple of Yahweh!

24:2 One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, and the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten due to rottenness.

24:3 Then Yahweh said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad figs, very bad, which cannot be eaten due to rottenness."

24:4 Then the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,

24:5 "Thus says Yahweh God of Israel, 'Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans.

24:6 'For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not overthrow them, and I will plant them and not pluck them up.

24:7 'I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am Yahweh; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

24:8 'But like the bad figs which cannot be eaten due to rottenness — indeed, thus says Yahweh — so I will abandon Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials, and the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land and the ones who dwell in the land of Egypt.

24:9 'I will make them a terror and an evil for all the kingdoms of the earth, as a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse in all places where I will scatter them.

24:10 'I will send the sword, the famine and the pestilence upon them until they are destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their forefathers.'"

Jeconiah is Jehoiachin, referred to in Jeremiah 22:24-26 above as Coniah, who ruled Judah from 598 to 597 B.C. Verse 1 of this chapter 24 tells us that Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has taken him into captivity along with the kingdom's other officials and skilled craftsmen, and they are now living in the capital of the empire, the city of Babylon. God presents Jeremiah with a vision showing two baskets of figs in front of the temple in Jerusalem. One basket contains good figs, which are ready to be eaten, and the other basket has rotten figs, good for nothing but to be thrown out.

In vs. 5-10, God interprets the metaphorical vision for Jeremiah. The Jews who have been taken into captivity to Babylon are the good figs, implying that the bad figs are those who have either been killed in Judah or still alive there (v. 5). God looks upon the exiled Jews as "good figs," because He will bring back "to this land," to the land of Israel. In addition, He will "plant" them in the land "and not pluck them up," indicating that they will live there permanently, which sounds like the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. God will also give these returning Jews "a heart to know" Him (vs. 6-7). Thus, God says, "They will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart" (cf. v. 7), which also sounds like the "great nation" of God's promise to Abraham and which He will fulfill during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Therefore, what is potentially confusing about His statements here is that we know that many of the Babylonian exiles returned to the land of Israel seventy years after their deportation. We also know that not all these

who returned after seventy years seemed to believe God with changed hearts of authentic faith, such that each and every one of them could be said to be a *bona fide* member of God's people.

Consequently, I think that God initially refers to the actual Jews of the southern kingdom whom the Babylonians take into captivity, but then He speaks of Jews who will live long after them and who will still be dwelling outside the land of Israel. These are the same people of Jeremiah 23:8 whom God will lead back at the end of the present age in order to live in the millennial kingdom of the Messiah, and they will come "from the north land and from all the countries" where He has driven them down through the centuries, and not just as an immediate effect of the Babylonian destruction of Judah and Jerusalem in 586 B.C. But, as God asserts in v. 7, all these returning Jews will truly be His people, and He will finally be their people, because each and every one of them will have a heart that knows Him, i.e., a heart that has been changed by the Spirit of God whereby they all express genuine faith and obedience towards God.

In contrast, vs. 8-10 of the above passage reveal that, as for Zedekiah, king of Judah in 597-586 B.C., and the smaller group of Jews who remain behind after the Babylonian captivity, God will not call them "His people." And apparently, there are also Jews who have fled to Egypt to escape the Babylonians. They too will lack the status of being God's people. Instead, God "will send the sword, the famine and the pestilence upon them until they are destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their forefathers." Thus, He "will make them a terror and an evil for all the kingdoms of the earth, as a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse in all places" where He has driven them.

In this way, by preserving some of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity and their descendants down through the rest of history, God will fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant and make a future generation of Jews the most powerful nation in history. Nevertheless, most of the Jews up to this time will find themselves abandoned and forsaken by God for their rebellion against Him.

Jeremiah 29:1-14

- 29:1 Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.
- 29:2 (This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the court officials, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.)
- 29:3 The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying,
- 29:4 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon,
- 29:5 'Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce.
- 29:6 'Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease.
- 29:7 'Seek the welfare (שְׁלוֹם) of the city where I have sent you into exile (הַגִּלְיָהּ אֲתֶכֶם), and pray to Yahweh on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare (כִּי בְשָׁלוֹמָהּ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שְׁלוֹם).'
- 29:8 "For thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream.
- 29:9 'For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,' declares Yahweh.
- 29:10 "For thus says Yahweh, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit (אֶפְקֹד) you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.
- 29:11 'For I know the plans (אֶת־הַמַּחְשָׁבֹת) that I have for you,' declares Yahweh, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity (לְרָעָה) to give you a future and a hope (לְכֶם אֲחֵרִית וְתִקְוָה).
- 29:12 'And you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.
- 29:13 'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart (בְּכָל־לִבְבְּכֶם).
- 29:14 'I will be found by you,' declares Yahweh, 'and I will restore your fortunes (אֶת־שְׁבִיתְכֶם) and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares Yahweh, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'

Jeconiah is Jehoiachin, referred to in Jeremiah 22:24-26 as Coniah and in Jeremiah 24:1 as Jeconiah, who ruled Judah from 598 to 597 B.C. Verse 2 of chapter 29 above indicates that he was subsequently taken into exile to Babylon with his mother and a large number of other leading officials, including “the craftsmen and the smiths” whom Nebuchadnezzar wanted to use to enhance his capital city. Jeremiah, who is in Jerusalem, apparently hears that there are false prophets among the Jews in Babylon who are predicting the fall of the empire and that the Jews will soon return to their own beloved city in the land of Israel. To dispel these unfortunate rumors, he writes a letter to the exiles, encouraging them to remain patient until the time which God has decreed that they will return.

Verse 1 reads, “Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.” Because of the words “the rest of the elders...,” it appears that either some of the Jewish leaders have remained in Jerusalem or some did not survive the journey into exile. And so Jeremiah is writing to whoever are the leaders of the Jews in captivity, along with priests, prophets (some of whom must be speaking falsely about what God will do), and the entire Jewish community who are now living in Babylon.

In v. 2, Jeremiah adds the parenthetical statement, “This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the court officials, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.” The date of this letter, therefore, is between 597 B.C. and the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. But it is probably closer to the first date since Jeremiah mentions Jeconiah and his mother. He also informs the reader in v. 3 that the “The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.” The current (and last) king of Judah, Zedekiah, who ruled from 597-586 B.C., has sent two emissaries, Elasah and Emariah, to Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah decides to take advantage of this situation and sends his letter with them to give to the Jewish community in this foreign land.

He begins the letter in v. 4, “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.” Jeremiah is writing the letter but also speaking directly for God, whom he identifies as both “Yahweh of hosts” and “the God of Israel.” In other words, he provides His name, Yahweh, along with the fact that He controls a host of beings who operate on His behalf. Plus, He has chosen the Jewish people so that He might be their God and they might represent Him to the world. Jeremiah additionally makes it clear that God is the one who has “sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon” everyone who is now residing in this foreign city. The Jews disobeyed God and the Mosaic Covenant, and He is taking full responsibility for judging them, disciplining them, and causing them the suffering which they have already experienced at the hands of the Babylonians and will continue to go through by having to live in a foreign country.

God’s subsequent exhortation to the exiled Jews is in vs. 5-7,

29:5 ‘Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce.

29:6 ‘Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease.

29:7 ‘Seek the welfare (שְׁלוֹם) of the city where I have sent you into exile (הַגִּלְיָה אֲתֶכֶם), and pray to Yahweh on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare (כִּי בְשָׁלוֹמָהּ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שְׁלוֹם).’

He wants them to settle in Babylon and become as comfortable as possible by doing the best they can to enhance the lives of the indigenous people. They are to “build houses” and “plant gardens,” providing shelter and food for themselves as they did in Jerusalem and Judah. They should also “take wives” and raise families for as many generations as necessary. And they should “multiply” while they are in exile, becoming as numerous as possible in this foreign land. Their responsibility is also to

“seek the welfare” (literally the *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם)) of Babylon and to “pray” that God will bless everyone living in it. And God assures them that, as they entreat Him to make the whole city thrive in every way possible, the Jews will prosper and flourish also. Thus, it is clear here that Babylon and its immigrant Jews will experience a formidable degree of *shalom* and well-being while the people of Israel live there and seek God’s blessing for the entire community. We can probably assume that this is good counsel for all Jews wherever they live, both within the land of Israel and outside it. But as history has proven with the degree of persecution and mistreatment the Jews have suffered, there is no guarantee that God will bless them and the people among whom they live. It is also probably good counsel for God’s other people, Christians, to seek to enhance materially, intellectually, morally, and spiritually the communities around the world where they live and to pray that God will bless everyone within them. However, we also know from the rest of the Bible and especially the book of Revelation that God’s plan is to display His judgments and bring about significant suffering among both the Jews and the Gentiles as Jesus’ return approaches. And these end times will be difficult for Christians, too, as they encounter more and more hostility from the world of unbelievers.

Next, in Jeremiah 29:8-9, God addresses the issue of the false prophets in Babylon and says, “8 Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. 9 For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them.” These men are feeding the Babylonian Jews bad intel, and God urges the people not to listen to them. He has not sent them, and, therefore, they are in no way speaking for Him. They even claim to have dreams where God communicates His messages to them. But they are only dreaming and imagining that God is speaking to them—not unlike many Christians down through the centuries who have claimed to speak for God apart from what God has communicated in the Bible.

We learn from v. 10 what the problem is, “For thus says Yahweh, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.’” Four chapters earlier, God has said,

Jeremiah 25:8 “Therefore thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘Because you have not obeyed My words, **25:9** behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,’ declares Yahweh, ‘and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. **25:10** ‘Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. **25:11** ‘This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years’”.

Verse 1, which is not quoted, of chapter 25 indicates that Jeremiah is speaking “in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah,” which would be in 605 B.C. And his message is “concerning all the people of Judah.” Therefore, God is predicting the complete destruction of the southern kingdom by the Babylonians along with the exile of the people of Judah for seventy years. This is the message which God expects the Jews in Babylon to remember when Jeremiah writes to them and warns them away from the false prophets who must be claiming that God in their dreams is saying that the time will be shorter. No. At least eight years later in 597 B.C. or sometime thereafter, God is sticking with His original plan. The Jews will spend seventy years in Babylon.

And, in vs. 11-14, God includes another reason for why their exile will last for as long as He has said,

29:11 ‘For I know the plans (אֲתֵּת הַמַּחְשָׁבֹת) that I have for you,’ declares Yahweh, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity (לֹא לְרָעָה) (מַחְשָׁבוֹת שְׁלוֹם וְלֹא לְרָעָה) to give you a future and a hope (לְהֵיטֵב לָכֶם אֲחֵרִית וְתִקְוָה). **29:12** ‘And you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. **29:13** ‘You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.

29:14 'I will be found by you,' declares Yahweh, 'and I will restore your fortunes (וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבִיתְכֶם) and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares Yahweh, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'

Ultimately, God here must be referring to His promise in the Abrahamic Covenant to make his descendants a "great nation." This is the "future" and the "hope" to which all Israel can and should look forward. These are "the plans" that He has for them, which include "welfare," i.e., *shalom*, and not "calamity." God also says that the people of Israel will "call upon" and "pray to" Him, and, indeed, He will "listen" to them. In fact, they will "search" for Him "with all [their] heart," which will result not only in their finding God, but also in His gathering them "from all the nations and from all the places where [He has] driven [them]." Through this process, God "will bring" the Jews "back to the place from where [He!!] sent [them] into exile," which means back to the land of Israel.

It would be easy to interpret God as referring to the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles as "all the nations" and "all the places" from which God will gather His people around 535 B.C., seventy years after the beginning of the captivity of people of Judah by the Babylonians. Nevertheless, it is also plausible that He is looking even farther into the future, all the way to the return of the Messiah and Jesus' establishment of his kingdom as described in Revelation 19-20. And I think that the latter is the correct interpretation, so that God is promising the Babylonian Jews that, while it may be only seventy years that they will spend in exile, His plans for the descendants of Abraham extend far beyond this time and into the distant future. Therefore, when the Babylonian exiles return to Jerusalem and Judah around 535 B.C., it will be a picture of what will take place long after their time when the "return" so to speak of the Jews to the land of Israel will be complete and final. It will be when God fulfills His promise to Abraham to make them a "great nation." And they will never be harmed again by their enemies and never leave the land which God has promised them.

Jeremiah 30:1-31:1

- 30:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, saying,
 30:2 "Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book.
 30:3 'For behold, days are coming,' declares Yahweh, 'when I will restore the fortunes (וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבִיתְכֶם) of My people Israel and Judah.' Yahweh says, 'I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers (אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי לְאֲבוֹתָם) and they shall possess it (וְיִירְשֻׁהָ).'"
 30:4 Now these are the words which Yahweh spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah:
 30:5 "For thus says Yahweh,
 'I have heard a sound of terror,
 Of dread, and there is no peace (וְאֵין שָׁלוֹם).
 30:6 'Ask now, and see
 If a male can give birth.
 Why do I see every man
 With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth?
 And why have all faces turned pale?
 30:7 'Alas! for that day is great,
 There is none like it;
 And it is the time of Jacob's distress (וְעַתָּה־צָרָה הִיא לְיַעֲקֹב),
 But he will be saved from it (וּמִמָּוְנָה יִנָּשֵׁעַ).
 30:8 'It shall come about on that day,' declares Yahweh of hosts,
 'that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds;
 and strangers will no longer make them their slaves.
 30:9 'But they shall serve Yahweh their God and David their king,
 whom I will raise up for them.
 30:10 'Fear not, O Jacob My servant,' declares Yahweh,

- ‘And do not be dismayed, O Israel;
 For behold, I will save you from afar
 And your offspring (וְאַתֶּם-יְרֵעָה) from the land of their captivity.
 And Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease,
 And no one will make him afraid.
- 30:11 ‘For I am with you,’ declares Yahweh, ‘to save you (לְהוֹשִׁיעֲכֶם);
 For I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you,
 Only I will not destroy you completely.
 But I will chasten you justly
 And will by no means leave you unpunished.’
- 30:12 “For thus says Yahweh,
 ‘Your wound is incurable
 And your injury is serious.
- 30:13 ‘There is no one to plead your cause;
 No healing for your sore,
 No recovery for you.
- 30:14 ‘All your lovers have forgotten you,
 They do not seek you;
 For I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy,
 With the punishment of a cruel one,
 Because your iniquity is great
 And your sins are numerous.
- 30:15 ‘Why do you cry out over your injury?
 Your pain is incurable.
 Because your iniquity is great
 And your sins are numerous,
 I have done these things to you.
- 30:16 ‘Therefore all who devour you will be devoured;
 And all your adversaries, every one of them, will go into captivity;
 And those who plunder you will be for plunder,
 And all who prey upon you I will give for prey.
- 30:17 ‘For I will restore you to health
 And I will heal you of your wounds,’ declares Yahweh,
 ‘Because they have called you an outcast, saying:
 “It is Zion; no one cares for her.”’
- 30:18 “Thus says Yahweh,
 ‘Behold, I will restore the fortunes (הַנְּגִידָה) of the tents of Jacob
 And have compassion on his dwelling places;
 And the city will be rebuilt on its ruin,
 And the palace will stand on its rightful place.
- 30:19 ‘From them will proceed thanksgiving
 And the voice of those who celebrate;
 And I will multiply them, and they will not be diminished;
 I will also honor them, and they will not be insignificant.
- 30:20 ‘Their children also will be as formerly,
 And their congregation shall be established before Me;
 And I will punish all their oppressors.
- 30:21 ‘Their leader shall be one of them,
 And their ruler shall come forth from their midst;
 And I will bring him near and he shall approach Me;
 For who would dare to risk his life to approach Me?’ declares Yahweh.
- 30:22 ‘You shall be My people,
 And I will be your God.”’
- 30:23 Behold, the tempest of Yahweh!
 Wrath has gone forth,

A sweeping tempest;
It will burst on the head of the wicked.

30:24 The fierce anger of Yahweh will not turn back
Until He has performed and until He has accomplished
The intent of His heart;
In the latter days (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים) you will understand this.

31:1 “At that time (בְּשַׁעַת הַהִיא),” declares Yahweh, “I will be the God of all
the families of Israel (לְכָל מִשְׁפָּחוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל),
and they shall be My people.”

In the first three verses of chapter 30, God predicts the future of all the Jews in accordance with His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-2 to make them a “great nation.” In v. 1, Jeremiah has written that God’s message came to him. In v. 2, he relates that God has told him to write all that he has communicated (and probably still will communicate) to him “in a book.” This must be so that the Jews of future generations, all the way out to the end of the present age, will be able to learn and be encouraged by what God had said at the turn of the 7th century B.C. This is clear from v. 3,

30:3 ‘For behold, days are coming,’ declares Yahweh, ‘when I will
restore the fortunes (וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוֹתָם) of My people Israel and Judah.’
Yahweh says, ‘I will indeed bring them back to the land that I gave
to their forefathers (וְיִרְשֻׁהָ) אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי לְאֲבוֹתָם) and they shall possess it (וְיִרְשֻׁהָ).”

We notice that God refers to both “Israel and Judah” as “My people.” And He says of them that that He will “restore [their] fortunes.” He then goes on to express what this means, that He “will indeed bring them back to the land that [He] gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it.” Around 2000 B.C., God had spoken directly to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs of the Jewish people, and He had promised to each one of them that their descendants would obtain the land of Israel as a permanent possession. Later, closer to 900 B.C., the Jewish people split into two groups, the northern Kingdom of Israel, ruled by non-Davidic kings, and the southern Kingdom of Judah, ruled by direct descendants of David. As we have seen in Isaiah, the Assyrians destroyed Israel in 722 B.C., taking their people into captivity, and now the Babylonians are doing the same thing to Judah. However, God is stating unequivocally that eventually He will bring both groups, “Israel and Judah,” back together, and they will live again on the land of Israel. Indeed, “they shall possess it,” by which I think He means that they will never lose it and be driven off it again. Therefore, God must be speaking of the time when Jesus returns and establishes the Kingdom of God, the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. We see that, once again, God is looking into the distant future with this prediction.

Then, in the rest of the chapter and v. 1 of chapter 31, Jeremiah provides a more detailed description of what God is going to do for the northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribes of Judah when He keeps His promise to the patriarchs to make the Jews the most powerful nation in human history. The prophet starts with the introductory words of v. 4, “Now these are the words which Yahweh spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah.” And he continues in vs. 5-7,

30:5 “For thus says Yahweh,
‘I have heard a sound of terror,
Of dread, and there is no peace (וְאֵין שָׁלוֹם).

30:6 ‘Ask now, and see
If a male can give birth.
Why do I see every man
With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth?
And why have all faces turned pale?

30:7 ‘Alas! for that day is great,
There is none like it;

And it is the time of Jacob's distress (וְנֶתְצָרָה הָיָא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל),
But he will be saved from it (וְיִשְׁעָהּ יְיָשָׁע).

God is hearing and seeing the effects “of terror and of dread” among His chosen people, which includes members of both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. Indeed, there is no *shalom* in the land. The men are reacting to the terrifying circumstances by literally holding their hands on their loins “as a woman in childbirth.” And all their faces have “turned pale.” And God asks, “Why?” Why is this happening to the Jews? Then He answers His own question, “Alas! for that day is great,” meaning that there never has been one like it in the past, and by implication there never will be one like it in the future. And God calls this horrifying experience “the time of Jacob’s distress” and declares that the Jewish people nevertheless “will be saved from it.”

As we have seen before, the obvious question is, “At what time exactly do these events take place?” Is God referring to the Assyrian invasion of Israel that already took place in the 8th century B.C.? Or is He referring to the Babylonian invasion of Judah during Jeremiah’s time of the late 7th century and early 6th century B.C.? Or is He referring to both? Or does He have in mind the Roman destruction of Jerusalem along with the expulsion of the Jews from the land of Israel in A.D. 70 and A.D. 132-135? Or maybe He means the Holocaust of World War II? I suggest that none of these is correct. Instead, as we will see for example in Ezekiel 38-39, God has in mind the time immediately before the return of Jesus when the Beast of Revelation and his armed forces will bring about great destruction among the Jewish people in Israel. And while it will appear as though this sworn enemy of the Jews is going to succeed in annihilating them, he will fail because God will save His people from him when the Messiah appears with God’s armies and destroys the invaders. Thus, God says in v. 7, “that day is great” when this large Gentile force pursues their destructive purposes and seems to overwhelm the Jews on the land of Israel. I also think that this is the same as “The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord” which we will examine in Malachi 4:5.

God continues in vs. 8-9 with His encouraging words regarding the future of Israel and Judah,

30:8 ‘It shall come about on that day,’ declares Yahweh of hosts,
‘that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds;
and strangers will no longer make them their slaves.
30:9 ‘But they shall serve Yahweh their God and David their king,
whom I will raise up for them.

This certainly refers to the Messianic Kingdom which Jesus will finally set up when he returns. It will be “that day” when God releases the Jews from all levels of power and oppression which they have experienced at the hands of their most aggressive enemies in world history, the Beast of Revelation and his coalition of Gentile nations who are intent on wiping off the face of the earth the Jews, whom God has gathered back into the land of Israel (cf. Ezekiel 38-39). And not only will God rescue His chosen people from these enemies, but no “strangers” will ever harm or oppress them again. Instead, the entire nation of Israel will uninterruptedly serve only God and His Messiah, “David their king,” throughout the time of the millennial kingdom. However, God does not literally mean David who lived around 1000 B.C. He means his descendant who will be the final and permanent Davidic king of Israel. And we now know him to be Jesus of Nazareth, who, when he returns, will rule not only the Jews on the land of Israel, but also the rest of the world, the Gentile nations, “with a rod of iron” as Psalm 2:8-9 says.

With additional encouraging words, God goes on in vs. 10-11,

30:10 ‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant,’ declares Yahweh,
‘And do not be dismayed, O Israel;
For behold, I will save you from afar
And your offspring (וְאַתְּ יִשְׂרָאֵל) from the land of their captivity.

And Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease,
And no one will make him afraid.

30:11 'For I am with you,' declares Yahweh, 'to save you (לְהוֹשִׁיעַ);
For I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you,
Only I will not destroy you completely.
But I will chasten you justly
And will by no means leave you unpunished.'

Regardless of what the Jews, i.e., "Jacob [His] servant," are experiencing at any time during their history, and especially near the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel by Jesus, their Messiah, God exhorts them not to "fear" or be "dismayed" by the threats, attacks, and apparent successes of those who persecute and even kill them. They can count on the fact that God will eventually rescue them as His people and bring them back to the land of Israel, no matter how distant they may presently be living from this land which God has promised them from the time of Abraham. He will bring either them or their descendants "from the land of their captivity," starting with those who went into exile in Assyria in 722 B.C. and continuing with those who have been scattered into the far reaches of the world down through history. Thus, "Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease" back in his own land, so that "no one will make him afraid" ever again. Again, I think that this refers to the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. God will gather the Jews back into their land and will cause them to live safely and securely during the entire time that Jesus rules over them after his return.

In v. 11, God provides even more evidence to the effect that this will happen. "For I am with you...to save you." God will rescue the Jews from their enemies and "destroy completely all the nations" where He has caused them to be dispersed. Because other passages such as Psalm 2 state that the Messiah will rule over the Gentiles of the world while He is king on the land of Israel, I think that God means here that He will destroy the oppressive power and authority of "all the nations" and anyone who with the Beast of Revelation was attacking the Jews. These nations will be reduced to ruling their people and never again striking out at the Jews in Israel. In addition, God will not destroy completely the Jews. He will "chasten [them] justly and will by no means leave [them] unpunished" for their disobedience against Him, especially their rejecting His (and their!) Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. However, because of His promise, guarantee, and oath to Abraham, He will never abandon them entirely and allow their oppressors to destroy them completely. As we saw in Isaiah 10:20-23, God will always preserve a "remnant" of Jews, so that the last "remnant" will constitute the first generation of the "great nation" of the restored Kingdom of Israel under Jesus' rule.

In vs. 12-15, God further describes the problem with the Jews,

30:12 "For thus says Yahweh,
'Your wound is incurable
And your injury is serious.

30:13 'There is no one to plead your cause;
No healing for your sore,
No recovery for you.

30:14 'All your lovers have forgotten you,
They do not seek you;
For I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy,
With the punishment of a cruel one,
Because your iniquity is great
And your sins are numerous.

30:15 'Why do you cry out over your injury?
Your pain is incurable.
Because your iniquity is great
And your sins are numerous,
I have done these things to you.

30:17 'For I will restore you to health

And I will heal you of your wounds,' declares Yahweh,
 'Because they have called you an outcast, saying:
 "It is Zion; no one cares for her.'"

The middle lines of v. 15 are key. It is "because [the Jews'] iniquity is great and [their] sins are numerous" that all the trouble which they have encountered down through the centuries has occurred, especially at the end of the present age when the last "terrible day" arrives and God finishes His judgment and disciplinary actions towards them. We also notice in the other verses of the above paragraph that God takes full responsibility for the suffering which the Jews are enduring as a His rightful response to their disobedience. The sinful wounds of the current generation are incurable, so God will cause many of them to die, but this does not mean that He is abandoning His promise to make them a "great nation." And anyone who has been their friend has nothing adequate to say in defense of these Jews. Indeed, these "lovers" have "forgotten" them and no longer "seek" them. No one is coming to their aid, and the Jews' enemies are having their way with them. Such are the fickle loyalties of human beings. One moment, certain people and nations are supportive of the Jews, and the next moment, they abandon them. The history of anti-Semitism and pro-Semitism has been an alternating one.

But we continue to count on God's statement in 30:10 to be true, "I will save" the nation of Israel from wherever they may be in the world and bring them back to their land to live in safety and prosperity for the rest of their existence on this earth. And what will be God's consequences for their enemies? He says in vs. 16-17,

30:16 'Therefore all who devour you will be devoured;
 And all your adversaries, every one of them, will go into captivity;
 And those who plunder you will be for plunder,
 And all who prey upon you I will give for prey.
30:17 'For I will restore you to health
 And I will heal you of your wounds,' declares Yahweh,
 'Because they have called you an outcast, saying:
 "It is Zion; no one cares for her.'"

Even though God has sovereignly motivated Israel's enemies to devour, plunder, and make them their prey, He still holds them accountable for their hostility and antipathy towards His chosen people. And just as God required of the Jews within their own community, it will be "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" for these Gentile nations who have attacked the Jews (cf. Leviticus 24:19-21). And God will "restore" Israel "to health" and "heal" their wounds, meaning that He will reverse all the hardships which they have suffered at the hands of those who have opposed and oppressed them. In general, the Gentiles have declared that "no one cares for" the Jews, as though Israel and its inhabitants are "an outcast" from the world. Many people have looked on the Jews as an ethnic group who do not fit in this world and do not deserve to live in it. Consequently, they have persecuted and pushed them out of society after society and nation after nation. And even if the Jews have had the opportunity to settle in a particular country, they usually have had to live in enclaves and keep to themselves, ostracized from the majority culture in the country.

However, God goes on in vs. 18-22 to spell out the wonderful plans which He has for the nation of Israel,

30:18 "Thus says Yahweh,
 'Behold, I will restore the fortunes (הֲנִי־שָׁבַר) of the tents of Jacob
 And have compassion on his dwelling places;
 And the city will be rebuilt on its ruin,
 And the palace will stand on its rightful place.
30:19 'From them will proceed thanksgiving

And the voice of those who celebrate;
 And I will multiply them and they will not be diminished;
 I will also honor them, and they will not be insignificant.
 30:20 'Their children also will be as formerly,
 And their congregation shall be established before Me;
 And I will punish all their oppressors.
 30:21 'Their leader shall be one of them,
 And their ruler shall come forth from their midst;
 And I will bring him near and he shall approach Me;
 For who would dare to risk his life to approach Me?' declares Yahweh.
 30:22 'You shall be My people,
 And I will be your God.'

Once again, God specifies that He will “restore” the Jews to their land and the international glory which He has promised them. He will “have compassion” on the all the structures which they will need to carry out their human existences on this earth, so that “the city” of Jerusalem “will be rebuilt on its ruin.” Any damage which the Gentiles have caused in Jerusalem will be repaired, so that even “the palace” of the king “will stand in its rightful place”—meaning that there will be a king who rules over them. I think that God is referring to the final and permanent king, the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, after his return when he restores the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah as one kingdom.

And this will be a time when the nation of Israel will celebrate with great joy and thanksgiving to God for His fulfilling the promises which He made to Abraham to make them the “great nation” that they finally have become. Plus, God will “multiply them” for many more generations during what we know from Revelation 20 to be the millennial kingdom. He will also “honor them, and they will not be insignificant.” Indeed, they will be so significant and important that, with their king, they will rule the entire rest of the world. Rather than the Gentiles’ oppressing the Jews, the Jews will exercise complete authority and hegemony over all the Gentiles for the remaining years of the present realm (cf. Revelation 20).

And as the people of Israel flourished and lived in safety and security during the relatively brief period of the reigns of David and Solomon, they and “their children” will do so again, resulting in their being “established” on the land of Israel before God. No one will ever again be able to dislodge them from their homeland. And, as God has been saying, He will “punish their oppressors.” In addition, they will have a “leader” who has all the confidence he needs to “approach” God. I think that this means that he will be the only king of Israel who has obeyed God perfectly and thereby qualified to fulfill his role permanently among his fellow Jews. He will be “one of them,” but he will be far different from them. All the other Jews are and will be sinful human beings who dare not “approach” God without an appropriate intermediary to rescue them from God’s judgment, condemnation, and the punishment which they deserve, i.e., eternal death and destruction. But this “leader” will be the very icon and morally perfect human representative of God among men (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15). He will be God in God’s story, having performed his role as a perfect human being during his first appearance, so that he is the only human being who can approach God without an intermediary during his second appearance. This clearly is Jesus of Nazareth, who, by means of his willingness to die on the cross, earned the right both to be the permanent king of Israel and to appeal to God for mercy on behalf of sinners. Therefore, when he speaks to God, he is in no way risking his life and has to be afraid of God’s justice and condemnation. He is speaking to God as God and, because of his role, becomes the only person “in whose name” all other human beings, who are sinners, can speak to God (cf. Colossians 3:17).

It will also be at this time that finally all the Jews will God’s people, and He will be their God, because they all will become circumcised of heart, so that they demonstrate genuine belief and stand in a position to receive His forgiveness through the remaining time of their lives in the Kingdom of Israel and into eternity. But this will be only after God has expended all the wrath and judgment on

the Jews which He has planned in the present age, just as the final three verses of this passage indicate,

30:23 Behold, the tempest of Yahweh!

Wrath has gone forth,
A sweeping tempest;
It will burst on the head of the wicked.

30:24 The fierce anger of Yahweh will not turn back

Until He has performed and until He has accomplished
The intent of His heart;

In the latter days (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים) you will understand this.

31:1 “At that time (בְּעֵת הַהִיא),” declares Yahweh, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel (לְכָל מִשְׁפָּחוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל), and they shall be My people.”

In Jeremiah’s day, and before it in Isaiah’s day, and after them immediately before Jesus’ return, the Jews have and will experience “the tempest of Yahweh,” for “wrath has gone forth” and will go forth again. It is like a “sweeping tempest,” a storm of God’s justice and disciplinary actions towards His chosen people, so that it “will burst on the head of the wicked” within the nation of Israel. Indeed, “the fierce anger” of God will not go out from Him and then all of sudden “turn back” so that it does not accomplish its purpose. God has His plans to judge and discipline His people, the Jews, and in His wrath He will do so “until He has performed and until He has accomplished the intent of His heart.” And what is His intent towards the Jews? To make them a “great nation” and the most powerful people in all human history. But they must go through extremely difficult times and the utmost suffering in order to arrive finally at the moment when God keeps His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It will be then, after much pain and heartache, that God will have gathered the Jews back into the land of Israel and will change the hearts of all the Jews who survive His final judgment, so that “in the latter days you [the Jews who are still living and who reside in the restored Kingdom of Israel under Jesus’ reign] will understand this.”

God is implying that, until then, most Jews will lack a proper understanding of their scriptures and of His relationship with them. But when that special moment in history finally arrives, God will cause all the Jews whom He has predestined to become oriented in their hearts towards Him such that they believe with authentic belief all that He has communicated in the Bible, and they will worship not only Him in His transcendence, but also Jesus in His immanence on earth as their king. As v. 1 of chapter 31 says, “‘At that time,’ declares Yahweh, ‘I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.’” During the millennial kingdom, there will never again be one Jew whose heart is not right before God and who does not, throughout his life, submit to God and the Messiah Jesus with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. And all this will constitute the fulfillment by God of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants.

Jeremiah 31:2-40

31:2 Thus says Yahweh,

“The people who survived the sword
Found grace in the wilderness —
Israel, when it went to find its rest.”

31:3 Yahweh appeared to him from afar, saying,

“I have loved you with an everlasting love (וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ עוֹלָם);
Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness (חֶסֶד).”

31:4 “Again I will build you and you will be rebuilt,
O virgin of Israel!

Again you will take up your tambourines,

And go forth to the dances of the merry-makers.

31:5 "Again you will plant vineyards
On the hills of Samaria;
The planters will plant
And will enjoy them.

31:6 "For there will be a day when watchmen
On the hills of Ephraim call out,
'Arise, and let us go up to Zion,
To Yahweh our God.'"

31:7 For thus says Yahweh,
"Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
And shout among the chief of the nations (בְּרֵאשׁ הַגּוֹיִם);
Proclaim, give praise and say,
'Yahweh, save Your people,
The remnant of Israel (שְׁאֵרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל).'

31:8 "Behold, I am bringing them from the north country (מִצְפּוֹן),
And I will gather them (וְקִבַּצְתִּים) from the remote parts of the earth (מִקְרֵי-אֶרֶץ),
Among them the blind and the lame,
The woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together;
A great company, they will return here (יָשׁוּבוּ הַכֶּהָן).

31:9 "With weeping they will come,
And by supplication I will lead them;
I will make them walk by streams of waters,
On a straight path in which they will not stumble;
For I am a father to Israel,
And Ephraim is My firstborn."

31:10 Hear the word of Yahweh, O nations,
And declare in the coastlands afar off,
And say, "He who scattered Israel (מְזַרְקֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל) will gather him (וְקִבַּצְנוּ)
And keep him (וְשִׁמְרוּ) as a shepherd keeps his flock."

31:11 For Yahweh has ransomed Jacob (פָּדָה)
And redeemed him (וְגָאֵל) from the hand of him who was stronger than he.

31:12 "They will come and shout for joy on the height of Zion,
And they will be radiant over the bounty of Yahweh —
Over the grain and the new wine and the oil,
And over the young of the flock and the herd;
And their life will be like a watered garden,
And they will never languish again (וְלֹא-יִיָּסְפוּ לְרֹאצָה עוֹד).

31:13 "Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance,
And the young men and the old, together,
For I will turn their mourning into joy
And will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow.

31:14 "I will fill the soul of the priests with abundance,
And My people will be satisfied with My goodness," declares Yahweh.

31:15 Thus says Yahweh,
"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."

31:16 Thus says Yahweh,
"Restrain your voice from weeping
And your eyes from tears;
For your work will be rewarded," declares Yahweh,

- “And they will return from the land of the enemy.
- 31:17 “There is hope for your future,” declares Yahweh,
 “And your children will return to their own territory (לְגִבּוֹלָם).
- 31:18 “I have surely heard Ephraim grieving,
 ‘You have chastised me, and I was chastised,
 Like an untrained calf;
 Bring me back that I may be restored (הַשִּׁיבֵנִי וְאָשׁוּבָה),
 For You are Yahweh my God.
- 31:19 ‘For after I turned back, I repented;
 And after I was instructed, I smote on my thigh;
 I was ashamed and also humiliated
 Because I bore the reproach of my youth.’
- 31:20 “Is Ephraim My dear son?
 Is he a delightful child?
 Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him,
 I certainly still remember him;
 Therefore My heart yearns for him;
 I will surely have mercy on him,” declares Yahweh.
- 31:21 “Set up for yourself road markers,
 Place for yourself guideposts;
 Direct your mind to the highway,
 The way by which you went.
 Return, O virgin of Israel,
 Return to these your cities.
- 31:22 “How long will you go here and there,
 O faithless daughter?
 For Yahweh has created a new thing in the earth —
 A woman will encompass a man.”
- 31:23 Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel,
 “Once again they will speak this word in the land of Judah (בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה)
 and in its cities when I restore their fortunes (בְּשׁוּבֵי אֶת־שְׁבוּתָם),
 ‘Yahweh bless you, O abode of righteousness, O holy hill!’
- 31:24 “Judah and all its cities will dwell together in it, the farmer and they who go about with flocks.
- 31:25 “For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes.”
- 31:26 At this I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me.
- 31:27 “Behold, days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when I will sow
 the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man (זֶרַע אָדָם)
 and with the seed of beast.
- 31:28 “As I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to overthrow,
 to destroy and to bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and
 to plant,” declares Yahweh.
- 31:29 “In those days they will not say again,
 ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
 And the children’s teeth are set on edge.’
- 31:30 “But everyone will die for his own iniquity;
 each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge.
- 31:31 “Behold, days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when I will make
 a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,
 31:32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day
 I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt,
 My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares Yahweh.
- 31:33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel
 after those days,” declares Yahweh, “I will put My law (אֶת־תּוֹרָתִי) within them
 and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
- 31:34 “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother,

saying, 'Know Yahweh,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares Yahweh, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

31:35 Thus says Yahweh,

Who gives the sun for light by day
And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night,
Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar;
Yahweh of hosts is His name:

31:36 "If this fixed order departs

From before Me," declares Yahweh,
"Then the offspring of Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) also will cease
From being a nation before Me forever (בְּכָל-הַיָּמִים)."

31:37 Thus says Yahweh,

"If the heavens above can be measured
And the foundations of the earth searched out below,
Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) (בְּכָל-יָרֵעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל)
For all that they have done," declares Yahweh.

31:38 "Behold, days are coming," declares Yahweh,

"when the city will be rebuilt for Yahweh from
the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate.

31:39 "The measuring line will go out farther straight ahead

to the hill Gareb; then it will turn to Goah.

31:40 "And the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes,

and all the fields as far as the brook Kidron, to the corner of
the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be holy to Yahweh;
it will not be plucked up or overthrown anymore forever (עוֹד לְעוֹלָם)."

As we consider this passage verse by verse, we will see that it is packed with meaning for both the exiles of the northern Kingdom of Israel and the people of the southern Kingdom of Judah. Verse 2 says, "Thus says Yahweh, 'The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness — Israel, when it went to find its rest.'" To what "sword" and what "wilderness" is God referring? Could it be the "sword" of Pharaoh when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, so that the "wilderness" is the Sinai desert where they spent forty years? Or is it the "sword" of the Assyrian army which destroyed the northern Kingdom of Israel, so that the "wilderness" is the area of the Assyrian Empire where the ten tribes were taken into exile? I think that the second option fits the context better. And God is saying that these exiles will at some time find His "grace" as they search for "rest" from the hardships of living among Gentiles who are not altogether keen on having them there. Plus, their minds will probably be on their final earthly "rest" of the land of Israel when God fulfills His Abrahamic promise to make them a "great nation."

In v. 3, we hear that "Yahweh appeared to him from afar, saying, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore, I have drawn you with lovingkindness,'" i.e., with *hesed* (חֶסֶד). God's dwelling place on earth is in Jerusalem, but He will appear to the people in exile, which is to say He will work in the hearts of those who are living outside the land of Israel, and He will draw them inwardly to Himself by causing them to have authentic belief.

In vs. 4-6 God continues His description of what will happen to these Jews,

31:4 "Again I will build you and you will be rebuilt,

O virgin of Israel!
Again you will take up your tambourines,
And go forth to the dances of the merrymakers.

31:5 "Again you will plant vineyards

On the hills of Samaria;
The planters will plant

And will enjoy them.

31:6 “For there will be a day when watchmen
On the hills of Ephraim call out,
‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion,
To Yahweh our God.’”

God will “build,” or we can say “build up,” the people of Israel. He will take those Jews and transform them into people who are now worshiping Him instead of playing the prostitute by worshiping false gods. As a result, the Jews of the former northern Kingdom of Israel will be a “rebuilt” people. They will be intent on believing and obeying God as they had not before. And they will display their joy in finally being a community of authentic worshipers of God by playing music, singing, and dancing (v. 4).

And when will this happen? It seems best to interpret God as referring to the final, messianic kingdom when Jesus returns. And where will this happen? God says in v. 5, “on the hills of Samaria,” which is the northern portion of the land of Israel. It will be at this time that the descendants of the Assyrian exiles “will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria,” and they will enjoy the wine which comes from them as the fruit of their labor, so that no enemy will ever rob them of it again. Plus, those who, “on the hills of Ephraim” in this northern area, keep watch over the people and are on the lookout for any invading enemies, will call out a completely different message to the ten tribes of the former Kingdom of Israel. Instead of warning their fellow Jews of an approaching army so that everyone prepares for war, they gladly leave their posts of observation and encourage all their brethren to go to Jerusalem to worship God—because, as it is implied, no enemy will ever threaten them again (v. 6). And what is also striking is that the first king of the northern Kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam, built a place of worship within the boundaries of this kingdom in order to make it unnecessary for his subjects to go to Jerusalem in the southern Kingdom of Judah. However, at some point in the future, after returning to the land of Israel, the northern tribes will willingly and joyfully travel to God’s city in order there to worship Him properly according to the Mosaic Covenant.

God continues in vs. 7-14 with this same theme. First, v. 7 says, “For thus says Yahweh, ‘Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of nations; proclaim, give praise and say, ‘Yahweh, save Your people, the remnant of Israel.’” The question is whether or not God still means only the Jews from the northern Kingdom of Israel when He refers here to “Jacob.” I suggest that He is beginning another prophetic message in v. 7, and “Jacob” means all the Jews who will comprise the nation of Israel during the final, messianic, millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Nevertheless, we will see that the emphasis is still on the northern ten tribes. God exhorts His people to sing with joy for their salvation from the enemies, especially those who have sought to destroy them at the end of the present age, something we will examine more closely in Ezekiel 38-39. The Jews are to “shout among the chief of nations,” who, of course, are themselves, because they are now exercising authority over all the Gentiles, instead of the other way around. And they are to entreat God to rescue His people from those who would seek to harm them, so that the group for whom God does this will be the “remnant of Israel” who inhabit the messianic kingdom. As we have seen, this “remnant” will all be authentic believers in God and His Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

Then God continues this prophetic message in vs. 8-9,

31:8 “Behold, I am bringing them from the north country (מִצְפֹּן),
And I will gather them (וְקִבַּצְתִּים) from the remote parts of the earth (מִמְדִּבְרֵי-אֶרֶץ),
Among them the blind and the lame,
The woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together;
A great company, they will return here (וְשָׁבוּ הֵנָּה).

31:9 “With weeping they will come,
And by supplication I will lead them;
I will make them walk by streams of waters,
On a straight path in which they will not stumble;

For I am a father to Israel,
And Ephraim is My firstborn."

The large area "north" of Israel is where both the Assyrian Empire and the Babylonian Empire have existed. These, in fact, were "the remote parts of the earth" in the days of the northern and southern kingdoms of the Ancient Near East, from the 10th through 7th centuries B.C. It will be from these areas, and by implication from beyond them wherever it is necessary, that God "will gather" the Jews, "the blind and the lame, the woman with child and she who is in labor," in other words even the physically infirm and those Jews who will have difficulty traveling (v. 8). "With weeping" for joy "they will come" to the land of Israel. And they will be praying the entire time for God to assist them in their journey back to their homeland. As a result, He "will make them walk by streams of water" and "on a straight path," which is to say that He will make their travels easy and pleasant, so that they will not have to strain unnecessarily to return to their land. And the reason why God will do this is because He is "a father to Israel, and Ephraim is [His] firstborn" (v. 9). Again, the name of Joseph's second son, who gained ascendancy over his firstborn brother, Manasseh, when their grandfather Jacob blessed them, is used to refer to the Jews. However, I think that God is referring to all the Jews, i.e., to "Israel," but with an emphasis on the ten northern tribes, who are "Ephraim."

Then Jeremiah becomes the speaker in vs. 10-13,

- 31:10 Hear the word of Yahweh, O nations,
And declare in the coastlands afar off,
And say, "He who scattered Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) will gather him (יִקְבְּצֵנּוּ)
And keep him (וְשִׁמְרֵנּוּ) as a shepherd keeps his flock."
31:11 For Yahweh has ransomed Jacob (יַעֲקֹב)
And redeemed him (וְגָאֲלֵנּוּ) from the hand of him who was stronger than he.
31:12 "They will come and shout for joy on the height of Zion,
And they will be radiant over the bounty of Yahweh —
Over the grain and the new wine and the oil,
And over the young of the flock and the herd;
And their life will be like a watered garden,
And they will never languish again (וְלֹא-יִסְיִפוּ לְרֹאשָׁה עוֹד).
31:13 "Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance,
And the young men and the old, together,
For I will turn their mourning into joy
And will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow.

The prophet exhorts the Gentiles to listen to what he has to say from and about God, Yahweh. He wants them to say that God "scattered Israel," but He "will gather him and keep him as a shepherd keeps His flock" (v. 10). God will bring His chosen people back to their land and guard them there from their enemies. And the basis on which God will do this is that He "has ransomed Jacob" and freed the people of Israel from those who have been stronger than them and persecuted and oppressed them (v. 11). I think that we can conclude that God has done this for the Jews because of His promise to Abraham to make them a "great nation" (cf. Genesis 12:1-2).

When God has accomplished His saving acts for Israel, "they will come and shout for joy on the height of Zion," which is Jerusalem and the temple mount. Plus, God will provide them with a "bounty" and abundance of food and wine, with flocks of sheep and cattle. And the result will be that the land of Israel "will be like a watered garden," fruitful and never without its produce. Thus, the Jews "will never languish" and experience hardship again, which also I assume to be a reference to the messianic and millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 (v. 12).

Life will be so good for the nation of Israel because God will have turned "their mourning" of thousands of years and which reached its pinnacle when the Beast of Revelation invaded them just before Jesus' return "into joy." And He will "comfort them and give them joy for their [previous]

sorrow.” And the Jews will display their joy when “the virgin will rejoice in dance, and the young men and the old” will do likewise “together” (v. 13). Never again will the youth of Israel be robbed of the opportunity to celebrate life as free and safe individuals, protected from anyone would want to harm them.

And God Himself finishes this prophetic message in v. 14,

31:14 “I will fill the soul of the priests with abundance,
And My people will be satisfied with My goodness,” declares Yahweh.

It seems a safe assumption that the temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt at the end of the present age for use during the millennial kingdom. And God will make the job of the Levitical priests an abundant and joyous one while they watch every Jew who brings them offerings and sacrifices do so with authentic humility and faith. Thus, all God’s “people” will reveal how “satisfied” and fulfilled they feel as those who are finally living on the land which God promised them and for whom God is granting all His “goodness” to meet their needs and keep them safe during the remaining existence of the nation of Israel in the messianic kingdom. Therefore, in spite of Jesus’ presence and his being their ultimate sacrifice and offering to God for obtaining His eternal mercy, the Jews will demonstrate their Jewishness by performing the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, including those which pertain to bringing their own sacrifices and offerings to the Levitical priests in the temple.

Then the setting and tone change in another and different prophetic message which begins in v. 15,

31:15 Thus says Yahweh,
“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.”

Ramah is a town just five miles north of Jerusalem, placing it in the southern Kingdom of Judah of Jeremiah’s day. And Rachel was Jacob’s wife who bore him two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. We recall that, by his Egyptian wife Joseph had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, both of whose descendants were members of the northern tribes of the Kingdom of Israel, while the descendants of Benjamin belonged sometimes to the northern Kingdom and sometimes to the southern Kingdom of Judah. Therefore, I think that we can interpret God in v. 15 as referring either to the northern tribes who were taken into exile by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. more than a hundred years prior to this message through Jeremiah, or to the southern tribes who are in the process of being taken into exile by the Babylonians, or to both. My guess is that it is probably both to whom God is referring, but again with an emphasis on the northern tribes.

And it is as though Rachel, who died over a thousand years earlier, is standing in the Benjamite town of Ramah and weeping bitterly for all the descendants of her two children who no longer live on the land of Israel. And “she refuses to be comforted, because they are no” longer there. They have been led in chains to Assyria (and are being led in chains to Babylon). As I suggested, it is also possible that God is using Rachel as representative of the four mothers of the tribes of Israel—Leah, Rachel, Bilhah (Leah’s handmaid), and Zilpah (Rachel’s handmaid), so that “her children” are all the Jews who end up in exile, including the tribe of Judah whom the Babylonians took into captivity between 605 and 586 B.C. But I am inclined to think that God has mostly the exiles of the northern Kingdom of Israel in mind.

Jeremiah goes on in v. 16 to encourage Rachel,

31:16 Thus says Yahweh,
“Restrain your voice from weeping

And your eyes from tears;
For your work will be rewarded," declares Yahweh,
"And they will return from the land of the enemy."

We know that God is still speaking to Rachel because the possessive pronouns "your" are feminine. He exhorts the mother of the two tribes of Israel, Joseph and Benjamin, not to despair, because her "work" of birthing their forefathers, as representative of the other eight tribes of the northern kingdom, "will be rewarded." She will not have given birth to Joseph and Benjamin for nothing. Indeed, their descendants "will return from the land of the enemy," from the land first governed by the Assyrian Empire in the Tigris-Euphrates valley and now under the authority of the Babylonian Empire in Jeremiah's day. And when will they return? At the same time as the exiles from Babylon starting in the mid-6th century? Or at the end of this age just before Jesus returns? Let us consider the next verses, vs. 17-22, before we answer these questions,

31:17 "There is hope for your future," declares Yahweh,
"And your children will return to their own territory (לְגִבּוֹלָם).

31:18 "I have surely heard Ephraim grieving,
'You have chastised me, and I was chastised,
Like an untrained calf;
Bring me back that I may be restored (הַשִּׁיבֵנִי וְאֶשְׁכְּחַהּ),
For You are Yahweh my God.

31:19 'For after I turned back, I repented;
And after I was instructed, I smote on my thigh;
I was ashamed and also humiliated
Because I bore the reproach of my youth.'

31:20 "Is Ephraim My dear son?
Is he a delightful child?
Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him,
I certainly still remember him;
Therefore My heart yearns for him;
I will surely have mercy on him," declares Yahweh.

31:21 "Set up for yourself road markers,
Place for yourself guideposts;
Direct your mind to the highway,
The way by which you went.
Return, O virgin of Israel,
Return to these your cities.

31:22 "How long will you go here and there,
O faithless daughter?
For Yahweh has created a new thing in the earth —
A woman will encompass a man."

In v. 17, God declares that Rachel (again, the feminine "your") can hope for a better future for her children than their being in exile. In fact, they "will return to their own territory," literally border (*gevoal*, גִּבּוֹל), i.e., within their own borders of the land of Israel which God has given the descendants of Abraham. It is possible that He is referring to at least some of the people taken into exile by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., that they will return when the Babylonian captives find their way back seventy years after the beginning of their exile. Or He may be speaking of the descendants of these Jews at the end of the present age.

Notice, God says in v. 18 that He has heard "Ephraim grieving." Ephraim was Joseph's son whom Jacob blessed ahead of his older brother, Manasseh, and who thereby becomes the "firstborn" of Jacob who adopts them both as his sons, while also replacing Reuben with Joseph (cf. Genesis 49, especially verses 22-26). In addition, "Ephraim" is sometimes used in the Old Testament to refer to

the northern Kingdom of Israel and its ten tribes. I think that this is the case here. God has heard the Assyrian exiles (and certainly will hear the Babylonian exiles) as they long to return to their homeland and are possibly being mistreated by their captors. These Jews recognize their sin and that God has “chastised” and disciplined them. And now, with what it seems is authentic faith, they are appealing to God that they may be “restored.”

These Jews also believe that they have the right to be restored to God and to the land because of what they say in v. 19, that they “turned back” to God and “repented” of their former sins and disobedience of the Mosaic Covenant. They have been “ashamed” and “humiliated” by God’s disciplinary actions in regard to the sins of their “youth,” meaning literally their own youth or the sins of the former generations who actually experienced the Assyrian captivity.

In v. 20, God then asks if Ephraim (and the ten tribes of Israel) is His “dear son?” The answer is of course, “Yes!!” Thus, God will “remember” these Jews, even into the far distant future, because His “heart yearns for” them, and He will “surely have mercy” on them and forgive them their sin. Therefore, He is most likely referring to the Jews at the end of the present age who remain alive at Jesus’ return and who do receive God’s complete forgiveness by virtue of their authentic faith in Him and His Messiah.

God goes on in v. 21 to urge these future Jews who will be returning to their promised land to “set up...road markers” and “guideposts.” These are probably metaphorical for whatever plans they need to make to accomplish the journey from wherever they live outside the land of Israel back to their land. The path that led them away from their land will be the same (geographically speaking of sorts) by which they will return. As they have emigrated and then even migrated further to places outside the land of Israel, they will find themselves immigrating back into the land. Thus God can exhort them, “Return, O virgin of Israel,” i.e., whose whom God considers now to be completely forgiven and morally chaste because of their changed inwardness which is producing genuine belief and obedience within them. And He says in the last line of this verse, “Return to these your cities,” the cities which formerly belonged to them before the Assyrians expelled them and will now be their possessions for the rest of the messianic kingdom.

With this in mind, v. 22 asks how long it will be that the “faithless daughter” of Israel goes “here and there” on the earth and misses out on living in the land of Israel. The last two lines of the verse are difficult to interpret, but perhaps the Greek Septuagint is correct when it says, “For God creates a new salvation for the purpose of the planting; men will travel about in salvation.” The gist of this is to confront rebellious Israel with the fact that God will bring about something new out of nothing, and this new thing will be salvation for His people from their enemies. Therefore, whenever they live in history, and especially in the last days before Jesus returns, the Jews should consider and be encouraged by the fact that God will fulfill His promise to Abraham, bring them back to the land, and make them a “great nation.” All of this will be a “new” thing and very much a “new salvation” for the people of Israel.

In the next prophetic speech of vs. 23-26, it is clear that God is speaking to the people of the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah,

31:23 Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel,

“Once again they will speak this word in the land of Judah (בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה)

and in its cities when I restore their fortunes (בְּשׁוּבִי אֶת־שְׁבוּתָם),

‘Yahweh bless you, O abode of righteousness, O holy hill!’

31:24 “Judah and all its cities will dwell together in it, the farmer and they who go about with flocks.

31:25 “For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes.”

31:26 At this I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me.

Jeremiah refers to God as “the God of Israel,” which is to say, the God of all the Jews, both the former northern tribes and the current southern tribe of Judah. There is coming a time when the statement, “Yahweh bless you, O abode of righteousness, O holy hill,” will be spoken “once

again...in the land of Judah and in its cities.” When will this be? God says, “When I restore their fortunes.” This could be when the Babylonian exiles return mid-6th century B.C. and in the years afterwards. Or it could be at the end of the present age, during the millennial kingdom. God adds a further clue in v. 24, “Judah and all its cities will dwell together, the farmer and they who go about with flocks.”

I wonder if the togetherness of the people of Judah is a complete and permanent feature of their existences, basically the final *shalom* of God’s promise to make Israel a “great nation.” It would seem so as a result of the reason God gives in v. 25 for why He is doing this for Judah, “For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes.” The Babylonian exiles may have become weary of living in a foreign land, so that they languished and lacked the vitality of living in their own country. But this description may be more à propos to those who will experience God’s final disciplinary actions immediately before Jesus’ return and during the Great and Terrible Day of Yahweh of Malachi 4:5. It is true that God brings a sense of refreshment to all believers who turn from their sin, repent, and find hope in the promises of God which include both Israel’s greatness and eternal life for those of Abraham-like faith. But dreaming about God’s fulfilling His oath to the Jews to make them the most powerful nation in history is most likely what allowed Jeremiah to awake and say, “My sleep was pleasant to me” (v. 26).

Next, vs. 27-30 provide another prophetic message,

31:27 “Behold, days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man (זֶרַע אָדָם) and with the seed of beast.

31:28 “As I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to overthrow, to destroy and to bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant,” declares Yahweh.

31:29 “In those days they will not say again,
‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
And the children’s teeth are set on edge.’

31:30 “But everyone will die for his own iniquity;
each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge.

God points to the future when He “will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of beast.” This is to say that there will come a time when God multiplies the populations of both the Jews and their cattle of the combined tribes of the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah, long after the kingdoms have disappeared at the hands of the Assyrians (722 B.C.) and of the Babylonians (586 B.C.) respectively. As He says in v. 28, God has brought about their destruction, which, as we have learned, was due to their disobedience. But eventually He will “build” them up and “plant” them on the land which He gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the land of Israel. This will be just as we saw God say in Jeremiah 30:3, “‘For behold, days are coming,’ declares Yahweh, ‘when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.’ Yahweh says, ‘**I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it**’” (emphasis mine).

In addition, God says in vs. 29-30 of chapter 31 above, “29 In those days they will not say again, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ 30 But everyone will die for his own iniquity; each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge.” These are strange statements, but I think that all God means is that the next generation or generations of Jews who live in the messianic kingdom will not experience hardship because their fathers and/or ancestors disobeyed God. Instead, when Jesus rules over Israel and the world, the believing Jews (and there will be only believing Jews) will never suffer because their parents or others have sinned against God, as has been the case throughout Jewish history. Instead, each believing Jew on the land of Israel, while still being a sinner, will experience the consequences of only his sin and not that of someone of a previous generation. So when death comes to each Jew during the last age of the current realm, his

death is simply a natural result of being a sinner and not something that can be traced back to his ancestors' disobedience.

This is in contrast to God's warning in the Ten Commandments to Israel about worshiping false gods,

Exodus 20:5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,
20:6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

And Ezekiel will express the same principle as Jeremiah regarding the messianic, millennial kingdom,

Ezekiel 18:2 "What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, 'The fathers eat the sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge'?
18:3 "As I live," declares Adonai Yahweh, "you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore.
18:4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die."

All the souls, which is to say every Jew living on the land of Israel when Jesus rules over them, will belong to God, because every Jew will be an authentic believer with a heart which has been changed by the Spirit of God. Therefore, the Jew "who sins will die." God could be referring to Jews who are not believers and who eventually experience eternal death. But He would be speaking only hypothetically, because all the Jews of the millennial kingdom will have genuine faith and therefore will obtain eternal life. Or God could mean the same thing as Jeremiah 31:30 above, that "everyone will die for his own iniquity" and not because of the disobedience of a previous generation of Jews. I think that this is the correct interpretation. Jews during the messianic kingdom will still be sinners, and they will die. But their deaths will be only because of their own sinfulness and mortality and not because of the sins of their ancestors.

Now we have reached a prophetic message in Jeremiah that is very important to the apostle Paul's argument in his letter called Hebrews in the New Testament,

31:31 "Behold, days are coming," declares Yahweh, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,
31:32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares Yahweh.
31:33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares Yahweh, "I will put My law (אֶת־תּוֹרָתִי) within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
31:34 "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know Yahweh,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares Yahweh, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Here God speaks of making a New Covenant with all the Jews, the "house of Israel," i.e., the northern tribes and their descendants, and the "house of Judah," who comprise the one tribe (plus Simeon and members of Levi who have been absorbed into Judah) and their descendants of the southern kingdom. And He will make the New Covenant at some time in the future, for "Behold, days are coming" when it will happen. Plus, two major differences will exist between the New Covenant

and the Old Covenant, which is the Mosaic Covenant that God made with the Israelites when He brought them out of Egypt. God says that the Jews “broke” the Mosaic Covenant, implying that they will not break the New Covenant.

Thus, one of the differences will be that God will “put [His] *torah* within them” and “write” it “on their heart.” God had already said in Deuteronomy 30, which is part of the Mosaic Covenant, that, at some point in the future, He would circumcise their hearts and the hearts of their descendants so that they would love Him with all their heart and all their soul, so that they would live on the land of Israel (cf. Deuteronomy 30:6). In other words, He promised within the Old Covenant to change the inwardness of all the Jews who “return” to Him, which we now know from what the prophets are saying and from Revelation 20 will be during the messianic and millennial kingdom. Therefore, this is a previously predicted difference between the Old and New Covenants, which God stated right within the Old Covenant itself.

An important ramification of this difference is what God goes on to say in v. 34 above, “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know Yahweh,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.” I do not think that He is declaring that teaching the Bible will no longer exist in Israel, but that no Jew will have to encourage or persuade another Jew to become an authentic believer in Yahweh, because they will all have become changed in their heart by the Spirit of God and will believe not only in God as the transcendent creator, but also in Jesus as His Messiah and their king.

Then, in the rest of v. 34, God provides the second major difference between the Old and New Covenants when He says, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” While the Mosaic Covenant in Deuteronomy mentions explicitly the first difference of between the two covenants of the changed hearts of the Jews, it does not explicitly state or predict this second difference. God is implying in Jeremiah 31:34 that the Jews are not able to obtain complete forgiveness for their sins through the sacrifices and offerings which they bring to the temple according to the Mosaic Covenant. In other words, the Old Covenant cannot provide them with eternal forgiveness and life. The Jews can certainly appeal to God for mercy by presenting their offerings of bulls and goat, but this obedience of theirs to the Mosaic Covenant can never be the basis for His forgiving them. Something else must be—as implied in the last words of v. 34.

And what is the basis of God’s eternal forgiveness for the Jews? The apostle Paul indicates what it is in Hebrews 7:23-28,

Hebrews 7:23 The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing,
7:24 but Jesus, on the other hand, because he continues forever, holds his priesthood permanently.
7:25 Therefore he is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.
7:26 For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;
7:27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this he did once for all when he offered up himself.
7:28 For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

We can see Paul’s point that there were two fundamental problems with the Levitical priests of the Mosaic Covenant. The first problem is that there had to be an ongoing stream of them whereby they continually replaced each other because they were mortal and eventually died. The second problem is that they were not only mortal, but also sinful. And the combination of these two problems is that the Levitical priests were always ineffective in their appeals to God for mercy, so that they could never “save forever” the sinful Jews who brought their animal sacrifices to the temple. Instead, God requires a “high priest” who is “undefiled” and “separated from sinners,” i.e., morally perfect.

And He also requires that this “high priest” offer himself as the propitiatory and atoning sacrifice for sinners. Paul is saying that Jesus did this “once for all when he offered up himself.” Therefore, as a result of God’s raising him from the dead, Jesus “is able to save forever those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” He is the “Son” of God, who is “made perfect forever,” or, better translated, who accomplishes his goal of being a permanent priest. This is the second and most radical difference between the Old and New Covenants and to which God is alluding in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

As a result, God has made the New Covenant with the Jews by virtue of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and ascension. However, He has not implemented it completely and will not do so until Jesus returns, destroys all Israel’s enemies, and establishes his messianic kingdom. This will be when God fulfills His promise of Deuteronomy 30 and circumcises the heart of all remaining Jews who will live on the land of Israel, along with their children, grandchildren, and the future generations for as long as God desires the restored Kingdom of Israel to exist. Thus, we can see that the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 is an integral part of God’s fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a “great nation.” An important aspect of their greatness is that all of them will obtain both a changed and circumcised heart through the inner work of the Spirit of God and God’s complete and eternal forgiveness through their Messiah and high priest, Jesus of Nazareth, who sacrificed himself on their behalf when he died on the cross.

It is important to grasp this detail, that Jesus of Nazareth’s role as crucified Messiah and then raised by God from the dead is central not only to the *eternal* salvation of all sinful human beings of genuine faith, but also to the *temporary* salvation of the nation of Israel from their enemies and their own unbelief during the messianic kingdom as described in both the Old Testament prophets and chapter 20 of the New Testament book of Revelation. In other words, Jesus is key to God’s fulfilling His first promise to Abraham to make his physical descendants, the Jews, a “great nation” on the land of Israel, as well as His second promise to Abraham to grant him (and all authentic believers like him) eternal life. It is also important to grasp that, just as God will be faithful by means of His *hesed* (חֶסֶד) to the people of Israel to ensure they become the most powerful nation in history, He will also exercise the same *hesed* towards both Jewish and Gentile believers to ensure that they persevere in their faith and enter into the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

And how certain is it that God will make and implement this New Covenant with the Jews? Verses 35-37 state,

31:35 Thus says Yahweh,

Who gives the sun for light by day
And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night,
Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar;
Yahweh of hosts is His name:

31:36 “If this fixed order departs

From before Me,” declares Yahweh,
“Then the offspring of Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) also will cease
From being a nation before Me forever (בְּכָל־הַיָּמִים).”

31:37 Thus says Yahweh,

“If the heavens above can be measured
And the foundations of the earth searched out below,
Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) (בְּכָל־יְיָ)
For all that they have done,” declares Yahweh.

Basically, if someone can rearrange, measure precisely, or even destroy the universe, all 200 or so billion galaxies of it, then the Jews will no longer exist, or at least God will no longer consider them to be His chosen people, especially “for all that they have done,” i.e., for all their acts of disobedience and rebellion against Him. The Jews (like all other sinful human beings) deserve for God to wipe

them out and condemn and destroy them for all eternity. This became clear when God dealt with both the northern Kingdom of Israel in the 8th century B.C. and the southern Kingdom of Judah in the 7th century B.C. The surprise was that God did not treat the Jews as they deserved. Yes, He expelled them from their land, but He preserved a remnant, indeed, a believing remnant (as we learned from Isaiah 10:20-23). In fact, He always preserves a believing remnant of Jews down through history. And why does God do this? Because of His *hesed*, His constant faithfulness to His promise, guarantee, and oath to Abraham to make his descendants through Isaac and Jacob a “great nation” at the end of the present age.

Remarkably, the Jews could commit the greatest sins that any human being has committed, and it would not stop or prevent God from fulfilling His promise to them. This is how steadfast God is in what He has declared He will do for them. As a result, in vs. 38-40, God can end this chapter with another message through Jeremiah which reiterates His commitment to the Jews and the future activities He has planned for them,

31:38 “Behold, days are coming,” declares Yahweh,
“when the city will be rebuilt for Yahweh from
the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate.

31:39 “The measuring line will go out farther straight ahead
to the hill Gareb; then it will turn to Goah.

31:40 “And the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes,
and all the fields as far as the brook Kidron, to the corner of
the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be holy to Yahweh;
it will not be plucked up or overthrown anymore forever (עֲדָא לְעוֹלָם).”

For the third time since v. 27, God declares, “Behold, days are coming.” In this case, “the city will be rebuilt for Yahweh.” He most likely is referring to Jerusalem, “from the Tower of Hananel” at the northeast corner, “to the Corner Gate” on the northwest corner. While “Gareb” and “Goah” are unknown, they probably refer to the other sides of the city. The “whole valley of dead bodies and of the ashes” is probably the Valley of Hinnom, i.e., Gehenna, the garbage dump where the trash was burned and to which Jesus refers several times as a metaphor for eternal destruction (cf. Matthew 5:22, etc.). The “brook Kidron” is in the Kidron Valley on the east side of the city, and the “Horse Gate” must be the southeast corner of the temple mount. In other words, after the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. (and the Romans destroy it again in A.D. 70), and at some time in the far distant future relative to Jeremiah’s day, God will make sure the entire city is rebuilt and occupied, so that not only will it be “holy to Yahweh” and a sacred city to God, but also “it will not be plucked up or overthrown anymore forever.” The Hebrew says *‘oad le‘olam* (עֲדָא לְעוֹלָם), literally “until to perpetuity,” and the Greek Septuagint states *heos tou aionos* (ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος), literally “until the age.” Both phrases mean for as long as God wants Jerusalem to remain protected and whole, which will be during the messianic kingdom of the future. Once Jesus establishes this kingdom when he returns, no enemy of the Jews will ever attack or harm the city and its Jewish occupants.

Therefore, we can see that this whole chapter of Jeremiah 31:2-40 is mainly referring to God’s promise within the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants to restore the Jewish people from wherever they reside outside the land of Israel and make them dwell safely and securely within the land and in a new Jerusalem that remains completely intact and unharmed throughout the duration of the messianic kingdom. And God will do so by adding the New Covenant to His relationship with the Jews whereby their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, offers himself to God as the basis for their obtaining His eternal mercy and forgiveness and they become authentic believers in him when God circumcises all their hearts. Thus, Jesus will be not only their permanent king during the millennial kingdom, but also their permanent high priest, even as they very likely perform the Mosaic Covenant sacrifices,

which point to the necessity for the already accomplished single sacrifice by Jesus to save them forever. This is where all world history is heading.

Believing “Rachel,” who was part of the generations to whom God explicitly promised that Israel would be a great nation (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), weeps as Israel’s enemies, the Babylonians, destroy Jerusalem and exile the people from the land, making it appear as though God has abandoned His promise.

Matthew will use this to refer to another of Israel’s enemies, Herod, when he murders all the sons two years and younger in Bethlehem. Anytime Israel’s enemies get the best of them and kill them and/or expel them from their land, this passage is appropriate for what looks as though God is not upholding His promise to them.

Jeremiah 32:16-44

- 32:16 “After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, then I prayed to Yahweh, saying,
- 32:17 ‘Ah Adonai Yahweh! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You,
- 32:18 who shows lovingkindness (וְחֶסֶד) to thousands, but repays the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them, O great and mighty God. Yahweh of hosts is His name;
- 32:19 great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, giving to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds;
- 32:20 who has set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and even to this day both in Israel and among mankind (וּבְיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְאֲדָמָה); and You have made a name for Yourself, as at this day.
- 32:21 ‘You brought Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and with wonders, and with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terror;
- 32:22 and gave them this land, which You swore to their forefathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey.
- 32:23 ‘They came in and took possession of it, but they did not obey Your voice or walk in Your law (וְיָבִיחוּ וְיִשְׁמְרוּ); they have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do; therefore You have made all this calamity (כָּל-הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת) come upon them.
- 32:24 ‘Behold, the siege ramps have reached the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans who fight against it, because of the sword, the famine and the pestilence; and what You have spoken has come to pass; and behold, You see it.
- 32:25 ‘You have said to me, O Adonai Yahweh, “Buy for yourself the field with money and call in witnesses” — although the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.”
- 32:26 Then the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, saying,
- 32:27 “Behold, I am Yahweh, the God of all flesh (אֲנִי-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי כָל-בָּשָׂר); is anything too difficult for Me?”
- 32:28 Therefore (לָכֵן) thus says Yahweh, “Behold, I am about to give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will take it.
- 32:29 “The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city will enter and set this city on fire and burn it, with the houses where people have offered incense to Baal on their roofs and poured out drink offerings to other gods to provoke Me to anger.
- 32:30 “Indeed the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah have been doing only evil in My sight from their youth; for the sons of Israel have been only provoking Me to anger by the work of their hands,” declares Yahweh.
- 32:31 “Indeed this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and My wrath from the day that they built it, even to this day, so that it should be removed from before My face,
- 32:32 because of all the evil of the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah which they have done to provoke Me to anger — they, their kings, their leaders, their priests, their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

- 32:33 “They have turned their back to Me and not their face; though I taught (וְלִמַּנְתִּי) them, teaching again and again, they would not listen and receive instruction (מוֹסֵר).”
- 32:34 “But they put their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it.”
- 32:35 “They built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.”
- 32:36 “Now therefore thus says Yahweh God of Israel concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine and by pestilence.’”
- 32:37 “Behold, I will gather them (הִנְנִי מְקַבְּצָם) out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath and in great indignation; and I will bring them back (וְהִשְׁבֹּתִים) to this place and make them dwell in safety (לְבִטָּחָה).”
- 32:38 “They shall be My people, and I will be their God;
- 32:39 and I will give them one heart and one way (לֵב אֶחָד וְדֶרֶךְ אֶחָד), that they may fear Me always (כָּל־הַיָּמִים), for their own good and for the good of their children after them.”
- 32:40 “I will make an everlasting covenant (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.”
- 32:41 “I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully (בְּאֵמֶת) plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul (בְּכָל־לִבִּי וּבְכָל־נַפְשִׁי).”
- 32:42 “For thus says Yahweh, ‘Just as I brought all this great disaster (הַגְּדוֹלָה הַזֹּאת) on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them.”
- 32:43 ‘Fields will be bought in this land of which you say, “It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.”’
- 32:44 ‘Men will buy fields for money, sign and seal deeds, and call in witnesses in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland and in the cities of the Negev; for I will restore their fortunes,’ declares Yahweh.”

In Jeremiah 32:1-15 which immediately precedes this one, the prophet buys a field in the area of the tribe of Benjamin from his cousin Hanamel. This is in 587 B.C., “the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar,” king of Babylon. Verse 16 above tells us that Jeremiah prayed after giving “the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah.” First, Jeremiah states to God how powerful He is, “Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You” (v. 17). If God has brought into existence the entire universe, which scientists estimate to contain 200 billion galaxies, then is anything impossible for Him? Certainly, He cannot do the irrational. He cannot make a rock which He cannot lift. But I think that Jeremiah is referring specifically to what God has said He is going to do in regard to the Jews—to make them a “great nation,” in spite of how He is exercising His judgment on them by means of the Babylonians!

Thus, Jeremiah goes on in v. 18 to speak of God’s lovingkindness, His *hesed*, which He guards as the basis of His relationship with the Jews, who are His chosen people. God “shows” this “to thousands” of Jews, which will finally become evident when Jesus returns and the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel (cf. Revelation 7:4; 14:1, etc.), which is symbolic of many, many Jews, will become authentic believers in God and His Messiah. And then thousands, if not millions, more after them during the kingdom of 1,000 years (again symbolic for a very long time) will follow God in the same way. In the meantime and definitely in Jeremiah’s day, God is bringing His judgment and disciplinary actions on the Jews of the southern Kingdom of Judah and on their children after them—even though the latter may not be disobeying God as their parents and grandparents are doing. This is a hard truth to swallow, that God is not averse to making the Jewish people suffer when the previous generation or generations have been the main target. But He is the “great and mighty God,” who, as the author of the story of the cosmos, has the right to orchestrate reality as He sees fit, even if it seems unfair to us.

However, we can be confident that He is never unfair, because we consider this concept from our limited perspective. As the apostle Paul says in Romans 9, we human beings, regardless of our age, gender, ethnic origin, social position, etc. are merely clay pots on His potter's wheel. Just as a human potter has the right to make from a lump of clay exactly what he wants for as long as he wants the clay pot to exist, God has the right to do the same with us individually and collectively. And He is never being unfair. This is also a hard truth to swallow, because we do not feel like clay pots on God's wheel, and we are so used to ascribing much greater ontological status to ourselves—as if we are God, or at least completely independent of Him! But we would not even take a breath if God did not cause us to do so. In addition, we can be confident that God never does evil. He is morally perfect and always sovereignly directs human history within the boundaries of His own perfect goodness and moral character. This includes the judgment and disciplinary actions which He is bringing on the Jews in Jeremiah's day and that He creates at any other time during their history.

Therefore, God is “great in counsel and mighty in deed.” Plus, His response to human beings and their actions is always just and right. His “eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, giving to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds” (v. 19). To those sinful Jews and others who genuinely believe Him for His truth, we find out from the rest of the Bible that He will grant them to participate in the restored Kingdom of Israel and eternal life when Jesus returns. To others who reject Him, God will rightly repay them with His wrath, condemnation, and eternal destruction.

Then, Jeremiah points out in v. 20 that God displayed “signs and wonders in the land of Egypt” that brought death to the Egyptians and escape from slavery to the Israelites. This was truly His justice and His mercy on display—justice towards the Egyptians and mercy towards His people, the Jews. And the same divine justice and mercy are happening “in Israel” and among the rest of mankind in the prophet's day. Judah is under siege by the Babylonians and soon to be destroyed, which is God's justice. Nevertheless, authentic believers can place their hope in His mercy in order to gain eternal life. As a result, God is always making a name for Himself, if people are willing to grasp the biblical explanation for the nature of reality and the history of mankind, with Jesus' death as the greatest display of His justice and mercy. His death is a picture of what all of us sinners deserve according to God's justice. And Jesus' death by which he qualified to intercede on our behalf is what God has required for us to obtain His eternal mercy. Therefore, Jewish history and Gentile history are both filled with examples of life and death, of authentic belief and appalling rebellion, of God's mercy and justice respectively.

In vs. 21-22 of chapter 32, Jeremiah states the obvious but the important, that God rescued the Israelites by means of His transcendent power. The Pharaoh of Egypt could not stop Him. Indeed, no one can keep God from achieving His purposes and completing His plans. These plans included bringing His “people Israel” not only “out of the land of Egypt,” but also into the land which He “swore to their forefathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey.” The last part of this statement has not yet been completely fulfilled in Israel's history. Yes, the Israelites entered and conquered (to a degree) the land of Canaan under Joshua's leadership after they had escaped Egypt. But they have never fully possessed all the land which God had sworn to give them. The potential is there, but the abundance, prosperity, success, and grandeur to which “milk and honey” refer will exist only during the messianic kingdom as the finalization of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The prophet continues in vs. 23-24 to say that the Israelites definitely entered into the land after their escape from Egypt and even took possession of it (to a degree, as I said), but they still chose not to obey God and the Mosaic Covenant, i.e., “all that [He] commanded them to do.” As a result, the southern Kingdom of Judah is currently experiencing the attacks of the army of the Chaldeans, who are the Babylonians. And, in v. 25, Jeremiah informs the reader that God has ordered him to buy the field in Benjamin, even though Jerusalem is about to be destroyed by these enemies. The prophet's description of the Babylonians' actions is in v. 24, “Behold, the siege ramps have reached the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans who fight against it, because of the sword,

the famine and the pestilence; and what You have spoken has come to pass; and behold, You see it.” God has repeatedly warned the Jews that He will drive them from their land if they disobey Him. Now He sees it in the sense that He is making real His threats by means of the Babylonian army.

Verse 26 probably begins a new message from God to Jeremiah, “Then the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, saying.” In v. 27 He declares Himself “the God of all flesh,” meaning the creator and sustainer of every human being who exists on the earth. And just as Jeremiah said in his prayer in v. 17 that nothing of which God has promised the Jews is too difficult for Him to accomplish, God asks if this is true? Of course it is a rhetorical question, because God and everyone knows the answer. No one can prevent God from doing exactly what He wants to do.

And what does God want to do? Verses 28-35 tell us not only what God has planned for the people of Jerusalem, but also why He is going to bring destruction on them,

32:28 Therefore (וְלִפְנֵי) thus says Yahweh, “Behold, I am about to give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will take it.

32:29 “The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city will enter and set this city on fire and burn it, with the houses where people have offered incense to Baal on their roofs and poured out drink offerings to other gods to provoke Me to anger.

32:30 “Indeed the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah have been doing only evil in My sight from their youth; for the sons of Israel have been only provoking Me to anger by the work of their hands,” declares Yahweh.

32:31 “Indeed this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and My wrath from the day that they built it, even to this day, so that it should be removed from before My face,

32:32 because of all the evil of the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah which they have done to provoke Me to anger — they, their kings, their leaders, their priests, their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

32:33 “They have turned their back to Me and not their face; though I taught (וְלִמַּנְתִּי) them, teaching again and again, they would not listen and receive instruction (וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ).

32:34 “But they put their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it.

32:35 “They built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

In this prophetic message, God states not only that Jerusalem is going to be destroyed, but also that He will be the ultimate cause of all that happens to it and its people in 586 B.C. The Babylonians may do the actual burning of the city as divine judgment for the Israelites’ worshiping pagan gods such as Baal, but it will be God in His anger who will be the one who motivates them to do so. Again, we are looking at the intersection of God’s transcendent sovereignty over all the creation and human beings’ existential choices within the creation. Both are true and both are real. It is only that God and His choices are more real than human beings and their choices. Such is the nature of reality as the Bible describes it and urges us to understand as best we can and to accept.

There are two options for interpreting the phrase “the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah” in both v. 30 and v. 32—1) God is referring to the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah respectively, so that He mentions the former, even though it has not existed for over a hundred years, while His focus is obviously on the latter; 2) God is emphasizing that the people of Judah are also members of the people of Israel, because indeed Judah was a son of Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel, and this name can easily be applied to any one or all the tribes who descend from the twelve sons of Israel. The way this text flows with its focus on Jerusalem, I think that the second option is correct.

For example, in v. 31 God says, “Indeed this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and My wrath from the day that they built it, even to this day, so that it should be removed from before My face.” Verse 32 could refer to the northern kingdom’s “kings,...leaders,...priests,...prophets” in addition to those of the southern kingdom, but then God mentions specifically “the men of Judah and

the inhabitants of Jerusalem,” which heads us in the direction of option #2. In v. 35, God goes on to say, “They built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.” The “valley of Ben-hinnom” is in on the west and south side of the temple mount in Jerusalem, and God is saying that the inhabitants of Jerusalem have sacrificed their children to false gods in this valley, so that, with the word “Judah” in the verse, this also points us in the direction of option #2. Therefore, “from their youth” (cf. v. 30), i.e., for as long as they have been God’s chosen people who now live in the southern portion of the land of Israel, the area assigned to the tribe of “Judah,” who are bona fide members of the nation of “Israel,” they have rebelled against God. “They have [metaphorically] turned their back to God instead of their face” and not listened to His “instruction,” resulting in their worshipping false gods. They have even added figurines and other elements of idol worship to the items which God has prescribed for the temple in Jerusalem. Thus, they have defiled the sacred space where God is said to dwell among His people (cf. vs. 33-34).

Then God changes His tone completely in vs. 36-44. He begins in vs. 36-37,

32:36 “Now therefore thus says Yahweh God of Israel concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine and by pestilence.’

32:37 “Behold, I will gather them (הַגִּבִּי אֶת־הַבָּצִיִּים) out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath and in great indignation; and I will bring them back (וְהָשִׁבֵם) to this place and make them dwell in safety (לְבִטָּחָה).

God has already indicated in the previous verses that Jerusalem will be destroyed because of its inhabitants’ rebellion against Him. He restates this fact and then speaks of the distant future, starting in v. 37. He will “gather” the people of Jerusalem “out of all the lands to which” He has “driven them” as a result of His “anger.” And He “will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety.” God has predicted in Jeremiah 25 and 29 that after the exiles of Judah have spent seventy years in Babylon, they will return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the temple, which they did when Cyrus of Persia issued an edict for them to do so. But there is something different about what He is saying here in Jeremiah 32:36-44. For example, in v. 37 above, He “will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety.” Certainly, He could be speaking of only a temporary “safety” for the Jews. But does this make sense in the light of the next two verses?

32:38 “They shall be My people, and I will be their God;

32:39 and I will give them one heart and one way (לֵב אֶחָד וְדֶרֶךְ אֶחָד), that they may fear Me always (כָּל־הַיָּמִים), for their own good and for the good of their children after them.

Ever since God led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, He has longed for them to be “My people” in the fullest sense of this phrase, i.e., an entire ethnic group whose hearts are oriented towards Him with genuine faith and obedience. But they have always fallen short of God’s desire. However, a time is coming when God “will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear [Him] always,” literally “all the days” (*kol hayyameem*, כָּל־הַיָּמִים) (*pasas tas haymeras*, πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας in the Greek Septuagint). The people of Israel will not be like those who returned from Babylon seventy years after their exile around the middle of the 6th century B.C., with the result that eventually they rejected their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Instead, God will change them internally “for their own good and for the good of their children after them.” In other words, every generation of Jews after the first one who receive the oneness of heart will be just like them. They, too, will have “one heart and one way” as they all believe, trust, and obey God together as they never have before. Therefore, God must be speaking of the messianic kingdom when Jesus returns. This is how far distant in the future He is looking.

God continues similarly in vs. 40-41,

32:40 “I will make an everlasting covenant (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.

32:41 “I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully (בְּאֵמֶת) plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul (וּבְכָל-לִבִּי וּבְכָל-נַפְשִׁי).

The covenant which God will make with the Israelites in order to gather them into their land and to give them “one heart” will be “everlasting,” i.e., *‘olam* (עוֹלָם), meaning into perpetuity, which is to say, for as long as God wants the Jewish people to have their own country in the present realm. This will be during the millennial and messianic kingdom of Revelation 20. The result of this covenant will be that God “will put the fear of [Him] in their hearts so that they will not turn away from [Him]” (v. 40). This is a further description of the “one heart” which will characterize them as a nation. Each of them individually will “fear” God. It is not as though they will never sin. But none of them will fail to persevere in faith during their entire lives, so that all of them will have changed hearts and authentic faith throughout the generations of Jews who live in the millennial kingdom under the rule of their Messiah Jesus.

Indeed, the Jews will become so inwardly devoted and committed to God that He “will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all [His] heart and with all [His] soul” (v. 41). Just as the entire nation of Israel will have hearts and souls that will submit to God as much as sinners can, God will have a heart and soul so that He is dedicated to remaining faithful to each of the Jews, making the nation a permanent fixture on the land of Israel for as long as the Jews exist in the present realm. In other words, they will still experience death, but not because of their enemies, or disease, or any other mishap which people currently encounter. Death will come naturally from their body’s wearing out, not from someone else or something else making them die prematurely.

God ends this prophetic message in vs. 42-44 by again contrasting the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem with the future benefits which He has planned for the Jews,

32:42 “For thus says Yahweh, ‘Just as I brought all this great disaster (אֵת כָּל-הָרָעָה הַגְּדוֹלָה הַזֹּאת) on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them.

32:43 ‘Fields will be bought in this land of which you say, “It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.”

32:44 ‘Men will buy fields for money, sign and seal deeds, and call in witnesses in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland and in the cities of the Negev; for I will restore their fortunes,’ declares Yahweh.”

In the same way that God is bringing the calamity and evil of the Babylonian invasion, destruction, and exile on the people of Judah, He will also cause such great goodness to descend upon the Jews in the far distant future. And the goodness will occur in accordance with what He is “promising,” literally “speaking” (v. 42). When God says He is going to do something good for His chosen people, nothing and no one can and will stop Him from completing His plans and purposes. They cannot even prevent Him from fulfilling His promises to them.

The land will appear desolate after the Babylonians have finished their work of destroying everything in their path. It will be “without man or beast.” But what will happen when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel? “Men will buy fields for money, sign and seal deeds, and call in witnesses in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland and in the cities of the Negev” (v. 44). Interestingly enough, these geographical areas are all in the southern portion of the land of Israel, in the area assigned to only the tribe of Judah (and Simeon which is absorbed into Judah). Is God saying that the

northern tribes will not participate in the messianic kingdom? I do not think so. He is merely focusing on Judah at this point because the Babylonians are attacking and destroying only it. “For I will restore [Judah’s] fortunes,” God is saying. And these blessings which God will bestow on Judah are based on the promises which He has made through the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants.

Jeremiah 33

- 33:1 Then the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah the second time,
while he was still confined in the court of the guard, saying,
- 33:2 “Thus says Yahweh who made the earth, Yahweh who formed it
to establish it, Yahweh is His name,
- 33:3 ‘Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things,
which you do not know.’
- 33:4 “For thus says Yahweh God of Israel concerning the houses of this city,
and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah which are broken down
to make a defense against the siege ramps and against the sword,
- 33:5 ‘While they are coming to fight with the Chaldeans and to fill them
with the corpses of men whom I have slain in My anger and in My wrath,
and I have hidden My face from this city because of all their wickedness:
- 33:6 ‘Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them;
and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth (עֲתֵת־שָׁלוֹם וְאֱמֻנָה).
- 33:7 ‘I will restore the fortunes (וְהִשְׁבַּחְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוּתָם) of Judah and the fortunes of Israel
and will rebuild them as they were at first (כַּבְּרָאֲשֵׁנָה).
- 33:8 ‘I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me,
and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me
and by which they have transgressed against Me.
- 33:9 ‘It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth
which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble (וַיִּפְחָדוּ וַיִּרְגְּזוּ)
because of all the good and all the peace (כָּל־הַשָּׁלוֹם) that I make for it .’
- 33:10 “Thus says Yahweh, ‘Yet again there will be heard in this place,
of which you say, “It is a waste (הֶחָרֵב), without man and without beast,”
that is, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate,
without man and without inhabitant and without beast,
- 33:11 the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom
and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who say,
“Give thanks to Yahweh of hosts,
For Yahweh is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting (לְעוֹלָם);”
and of those who bring a thank offering into the house of Yahweh.
For I will restore the fortunes of the land (כִּי־אָשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוּת־הָאָרֶץ)
as they were at first,’ says Yahweh.
- 33:12 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘There will again be in this place which is waste (הֶחָרֵב),
without man or beast, and in all its cities, a habitation of shepherds who rest their flocks.
- 33:13 ‘In the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland, in the cities of the Negev,
in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah,
the flocks will again pass under the hands of the one who numbers them,’ says Yahweh.
- 33:14 ‘Behold, days are coming,’ declares Yahweh, ‘when I will fulfill the good word (אֶת־הַדְּבָרִי הַטוֹב)
which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah.
- 33:15 ‘In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth;
and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth (וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְיִצְדִּיקָהּ בְּאֶרֶץ).
- 33:16 ‘In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety;
and this is the name by which she will be called: Yahweh is our righteousness (יְהוָה צְדִיקֵנוּ).’
- 33:17 “For thus says Yahweh, ‘David shall never lack a man to sit
on the throne of the house of Israel;

- 33:18 and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me
to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to prepare sacrifices continually (כָּל־הַיָּמִים).”
- 33:19 The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, saying,
- 33:20 “Thus says Yahweh, ‘If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant
for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time,
- 33:21 then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant
so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne,
and with the Levitical priests, My ministers.
- 33:22 ‘As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea
cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David (אֶת־יְרֵדֵי דָוִד) My servant
and the Levites who minister to Me.”
- 33:23 And the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, saying,
- 33:24 ‘Have you not observed what this people have spoken,
saying, ‘The two families which Yahweh chose, He has rejected them’?
Thus they despise My people, no longer are they as a nation in their sight.
- 33:25 “Thus says Yahweh, ‘If My covenant for day and night stand not,
and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established,
- 33:26 then I would reject the descendants (יְרֵדֵי) of Jacob and David My servant,
not taking from his descendants rulers (מִשְׁלֵי) (מִיְרֵדֵי מִשְׁלֵי)
over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
But I will restore their fortunes (אֶת־שְׁבוּתָם) and will have mercy on them (וְרַחֲמֵתִים).”

The time of Jerusalem’s complete destruction by the Babylonians is getting closer. If the events of chapter 32 can be dated to 587 B.C., then this chapter is also just before the final destruction in 586 B.C. Verse 1 tells us that Jeremiah is still under arrest and in the custody of the local palace of guards King Zedekiah. The first prophetic message of this chapter begins in v. 2, “Thus says Yahweh who made the earth, Yahweh who formed it to establish it, Yahweh is His name.” God identifies Himself by His name, “Yahweh,” the name He indicated to Moses in Exodus 3:15, and as the one who has made, formed, and established the earth. Properly understood, this means that He is the author of all reality, including the story which He is telling with the entire creation and human history that specifically features the nation of Israel as His chosen people.

Next in v. 3, because God uses the singular pronoun “you,” He is addressing Jeremiah and exhorting him to make an appeal to Him to tell him things which he may not know, i.e., things which are not obvious given the present situation in Jerusalem which is under siege by the Babylonians. It appears as though all hope is lost for the Jews. The northern Kingdom of Israel has already disappeared over a hundred years earlier. And now the same thing is in the process of happening to Judah in the south. While at least the southern kingdom existed, it seemed as though God could still keep His promise to Abraham to make the Jews a “great nation.” But if the Judah is destroyed as the northern kingdom has been before it, then what hope do the Jews have of ever reaching their predicted status?

Fortunately, God spells out Judah’s (and therefore Israel’s) hope in the remaining six verses of this prophetic message,

- 33:4 “For thus says Yahweh God of Israel concerning the houses of this city,
and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah which are broken down
to make a defense against the siege ramps and against the sword,
- 33:5 ‘While they are coming to fight with the Chaldeans and to fill them
with the corpses of men whom I have slain in My anger and in My wrath,
and I have hidden My face from this city because of all their wickedness:
- 33:6 ‘Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them;
and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth (עֲתֵרַת שְׁלֹום וְאֱמֻנָה).
- 33:7 ‘I will restore the fortunes (וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוּתָם) of Judah and the fortunes of Israel
and will rebuild them as they were at first (כַּבְּרָאשִׁינָה).

- 33:8 'I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me.
- 33:9 'It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble (וַיִּפְחָדוּ וַיִּתְּרָדוּ) because of all the good and all the peace (עַל כָּל-הַטּוֹבָה וְעַל כָּל-הַשָּׁלוֹם) that I make for it.'

While it is true that the people of Jerusalem are using the brick and mortar of their houses and the king's palace to strengthen the walls of the city against the Babylonians' siege ramps and to defend themselves against the swords of their army, and while the result is going to be abject failure, because the city is going to be filled with the corpses of Jews, and this is on the basis of God's anger towards them in the light of their disobedience, God says, "Behold, I will bring to [the city] health and healing, and I will heal them" (vs. 4-6a). He also says, "I will reveal to them an abundance of *shalom* and truth" in the midst of his restoring their fortunes to them "as they were at first" (vs. 6b-7). This last phrase in Hebrew is literally "just as in the former [time]" (כְּבָרָא שְׁנָה). The Greek Septuagint translates it with "just as the former" (καθὼς τὸ πρότερον). I think that God is referring to when David ruled all Israel as their king starting in 1000 B.C., three hundred years or so before the destruction of Jerusalem. Under David, the Jews lived in peace, and they enjoyed a relative prosperity and success as a nation, which they have never achieved since then. But God is going to restore all these elements of greatness to the Jewish people.

And very importantly, He is going to forgive them of all their sins (v. 8). This last promise is in line with the statements of the New Covenant which we looked at in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and that the author of Hebrews in the New Testament explains as taking place through God's using Jesus of Nazareth, a Davidic king from the tribe of Judah, as both offering and high priest for the nation of Israel instead of bulls and goats which are sacrificed by Levitical priests in accordance with the Mosaic Covenant.

And the end result of all the goodness which God will eventually bring about for the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians will be that the very name of the city will evoke a sense of "joy, praise, and glory" to the inhabitants of the city, which will be obvious to all the Gentile nations throughout the entire earth. As a result, everyone will recognize what God has done by bringing "all the good and all the *shalom*" to Israel which they are now enjoying (v. 9). The obvious question is, "When will this occur after the Babylonians destroy the city and take its remaining inhabitants into captivity to Babylon?" Will it be when the exiles return approximately seventy years later as God has promised they will? Or will it be later, indeed at the end of the present age, when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel? I think that God is referring to the second option, because this will be the only time when all the sins of all the Jews are forgiven because God will circumcise all their hearts to believe that Jesus lived, died, and rose from the dead in order to qualify to be their permanent and eternal high priest who intercedes on their behalf and obtains God's everlasting mercy for them.

Then another message from God comes to Jeremiah in vs. 10-11,

- 33:10 "Thus says Yahweh, 'Yet again there will be heard in this place, of which you say, "It is a waste (הָרֵב), without man and without beast," that is, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man and without inhabitant and without beast,
- 33:11 the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who say, "Give thanks to Yahweh of hosts, For Yahweh is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting (לְעוֹלָם)"; and of those who bring a thank offering into the house of Yahweh. For I will restore the fortunes of the land (כִּי-אֲשִׁיב אֶת-שְׁבוּת-הָאָרֶץ)";

as they were at first,' says Yahweh.

At this moment, the Kingdom of Judah in Jeremiah's day looks pretty much like a "waste" land, "without man and without beast." The "cities of Judah" and "the streets of Jerusalem...are desolate" (v. 10). However, at some time in the future, "the voice of joy and the voice of gladness" will be heard throughout the land. Indeed, everyone will "give thanks to Yahweh," declaring that "Yahweh is good" and "His lovingkindness," i.e., His *hesed*, "is everlasting." There will also be those who "bring a thank offering into the house of Yahweh," meaning that the temple which the Babylonians destroy in 586 B.C. will be rebuilt, when, as He said in the previous message in v. 7, He will "restore the fortunes of the land" *kevarishonah* (כְּבָרְאֲשׁוֹנָה), i.e., "as they were at first." I think that, again, God is looking into the far distant future when He will keep His promise to Abraham to make the Jews a "great nation," while also comparing the future kingdom to that of David.

Verses 12-13 state the same thing from God,

- 33:12 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'There will again be in this place which is waste (הַחֲרָב), without man or beast, and in all its cities, a habitation of shepherds who rest their flocks.
33:13 'In the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland, in the cities of the Negev, in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah, the flocks will again pass under the hands of the one who numbers them,' says Yahweh.

Here, though, God is more specific about the places where He will grant His blessing to the Jewish people. First, it will be "in this place which is waste," i.e., the area of the southern Kingdom of Judah and specifically Jerusalem. Next, He speaks of "the cities of the hill country," which is the Central Mountains as we saw on the topographical map of Israel in the "Introduction to the Prophets." Also, He will bring prosperity and success "in the cities of the lowland," i.e., along the Mediterranean coast, and "in the cities of the Negev," which is the most southern part of Judah. And God will include "the land of Benjamin" just north of Jerusalem, as well as "the environs of Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah." God will act in all these places so that "the flocks will again pass under the hands of the one who numbers them." When Jeremiah is hearing these messages from God, shepherds and sheep are missing from the countryside because of the Babylonian invasion. But in the future, indeed, when Jesus returns and establishes the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20, the Jewish people, their buildings, including the temple in Jerusalem, their cities, and their commerce will return and thrive—at least in Judah as mentioned here. However, based upon all the writings of the prophets, the northern area of the land of Israel will prosper and enjoy the same blessings as what God is describing this passage in regard to the southern area. In other words, the final effect of what God will do for the existing southern Kingdom of Judah will include the northern Kingdom of Israel.

In vs. 14-18 Jeremiah receives another message from God,

- 33:14 'Behold, days are coming,' declares Yahweh, 'when I will fulfill the good word (אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַטוֹב) which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah.
33:15 'In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth (וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה בְּאֶרֶץ).
33:16 'In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: Yahweh is our righteousness (יְהוָה צְדִיקֵנוּ).'
33:17 "For thus says Yahweh, 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel;
33:18 and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to prepare sacrifices continually (כָּל־הַיָּמִים).'"

At some point in the future, God is going to keep His "word" regarding "the house of Israel and the house of Judah," by which I think He means the northern kingdom which was called "Israel" and

disappeared at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 B.C. and the southern kingdom which is called “Judah” and will soon cease to exist because of the Babylonians. Thus, God has said something that He is going to make sure happens for all the Jews (v. 14). What is this? First, it will involve His causing “a righteous Branch of David to spring forth” (v. 15). Therefore, the “word” which God has spoken is the covenant which He made with David in 2 Samuel 7. And we find out in the New Testament that Jesus of Nazareth is this final and eternal descendant of David who will rule over the Jews in the restored Kingdom of Israel. When he returns, he will “execute justice and righteousness on the earth” (v.15). The word “earth” could mean “land” and refer to only the land of Israel. But God goes on to say that “in those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety” (v. 16). But in order for the Jews to experience salvation from their enemies and enjoy total and enduring “safety” while they are the “great nation” of the Abrahamic Covenant, Jesus will have to “execute justice and righteousness” over the entire world. Therefore, I think that “earth” here in v. 15 is the whole earth.

In addition, Jerusalem will be called “Yahweh is our righteousness,” either literally or just in the hearts of the Jews who will acknowledge with authentic belief that God has brought about their earthly salvation and their moral living by means of His grace and power (v. 16). God goes on to say that never again will there be a lapse in the reign of Davidic kings over Israel and in the service of the Levitical priests in the Jerusalem temple. This must be for two reasons. One, the Jewish people will never again rebel against Him as they did during the 9th-7th centuries B.C. which resulted in God’s unleashing the Assyrian and Babylonian forces on them to disrupt the rule of their kings and drive them off the land so that they could not worship God at His temple. And, two, Israel’s enemies will never gain any level of ascendancy over them so as to accomplish the same kind of thing as the Assyrians and the Babylonians. This means that Jesus will rule permanently during the restored Kingdom of Israel, and the Jews will worship God in accordance with the Mosaic Covenant and therefore with authentic faith at their rebuilt temple. Consequently, another part of God’s “word” which He has spoken to the Jews is the promise He made to them in Genesis 12:1-2 to make them a “great nation.” God will “fulfill the good word” of both the Abrahamic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant in those “days” which are “coming” (v. 14).

And two more similar messages end this chapter in vs. 19-26,

33:19 The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, saying,

33:20 “Thus says Yahweh, ‘If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time,

33:21 then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers.

33:22 ‘As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David (אֶת־יְהוֹרֵד) My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.’”

33:23 And the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, saying,

33:24 “Have you not observed what this people have spoken, saying, ‘The two families which Yahweh chose, He has rejected them’? Thus they despise My people, no longer are they as a nation in their sight.

33:25 “Thus says Yahweh, ‘If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established,

33:26 then I would reject the descendants (אֶת־עַד) of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers (מִשְׁלֵי) over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

But I will restore their fortunes (אֶת־שְׁבוּתָם) and will have mercy on them (וְרַחֲמֵתִים).”

We saw in Jeremiah 31:35-37 the same challenge to the Jeremiah and the Jews (and that applies to any other group of people), that if they can make the daytime and nighttime go away, then God will forget the Davidic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant and never again cause a descendant of David

to rule the Jews and a descendant of Levi to act as priest in His temple (vs. 20-21). However, this is like saying that if someone can make the universe disappear, then he can make God forget His promises to Israel. It is this simple to terminate God's *hesed* towards the Jews, so that He abandons them forever and puts out of His mind the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant to make them the most powerful nation in human history.

On the other hand, all someone has to do is to make an accurate count of the stars in the sky or the sand on the sea and God will turn His back on the Jews (v. 22). Indeed, the Gentiles in Jeremiah's day have concluded that "the two families" which God has chosen, the descendants of Jacob in general and the descendants of David specifically, have been "rejected" by God because of the destruction of especially the southern kingdom and Jerusalem, and they are using this as an excuse to "despise" the Jews and "no longer" consider them "as a nation in their sight" (v. 24). However, the other nations are wrong in their assessment of God's relationship with the Jews. It will take the complete disruption of the "fixed patterns" of the solar system, by which the earth experiences both night and day, to draw God away from the Jews (v. 25). Instead, God states categorically in v. 26, "I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them," which will all happen when the Messiah appears and establishes the Kingdom of God on the land of Israel for the remainder of the time of the present realm (cf. Revelation 20). This will be when God fulfills all the promises which He has made to the people of Israel in the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants.

Jeremiah 46:25-28

- 46:25 Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, says, "Behold, I am going to punish Amon of Thebes, and Pharaoh, and Egypt along with her gods and her kings, even Pharaoh and those who trust in him (הַבְּטְחִים בּוֹ)."
- 46:26 "I shall give them over to the power of those who are seeking their lives, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of his officers. Afterwards, however, it will be inhabited as in the days of old (כִּימֵי־קִדְמָה)," declares Yahweh.
- 46:27 "But as for you, O Jacob My servant, do not fear, Nor be dismayed, O Israel! For, see, I am going to save you (הַנִּנִּי מוֹשָׁעֲךָ) from afar (מִרְחֹק), And your descendants (וְאַתָּה וְיִרְעֶךָ) from the land of their captivity; And Jacob will return and be undisturbed And secure, with no one making him tremble.
- 46:28 "O Jacob My servant, do not fear," declares Yahweh, "For I am with you. For I will make a full end of all the nations (אֶעֱשֶׂה כָּלָה בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם) Where I have driven you, Yet I will not make a full end of you; But I will correct you properly (וְיִסְרְתִּיךָ לְמִשְׁפָּט) And by no means leave you unpunished."

Jeremiah 46:1, which I have not quoted above, reads,

46:1 That which came as the message of Yahweh to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations.

These nations are obviously Gentile nations, whom God will address in the chapters starting with this one, chapter 46. These Gentile nations are Egypt, who is the subject of Jeremiah 46:2-28, Philistia in chapter 47, Moab in chapter 48, Ammon in 49:1-6, Edom in 49:7-22, Damascus/Syria in 49:23-27, Kedar and Hazor in 49:28-33, Elam in 49:34-39, and Babylon in chapters 50 & 51. Then, chapter 52, the last chapter of Jeremiah, will describe the fall of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

The historical background for our verses above in chapter 46 is this. Egypt has rebelled against Babylon, and, while assisting the remnants of an Assyrian army, been defeated by the Babylonians at the

famous battle of Carchemish on the Euphrates River in northern Iraq in 605 B.C. The mighty Assyrian Empire is finally extinct. But there is at least one more battle between Babylon and Egypt. And here in Jeremiah 46:25-28, God is describing Egypt's final defeat south within its own borders. This is one of those passages where our previous study of the origin of Old Testament names which are used to refer to the Jews—Jacob, Israel, Judah, and Ephraim—will come in handy when interpreting it. The northern Kingdom of Israel is gone. The Assyrians destroyed it over a hundred years before this message of God to Jeremiah, and now the Babylonians are the largest and most powerful empire in the Ancient Near East with Nebuchadnezzar as their king (cf. v. 26).

In v. 25, God declares that He is going to punish the Egyptian gods, starting with “Amon of Thebes,” and the Egyptians' kings, starting with the current Pharaoh, both of whom the people trust to protect them from their enemies. However, God is going to hand them over “to the power” of the Babylonians, who are the current superpower in that region of the world. Nevertheless, there is hope for Egypt. God states in v. 26, that “afterwards,” meaning at some time in the future, Egypt “will be inhabited as in the days of old.” I think that God is referring to the same time as when He fulfills His promise to the descendants of Abraham and makes them a “great nation.” It will be then, which will be the same time when Jesus returns, that, the Egypt will experience of resurgence of people, power, and prosperity. And this will happen in spite of their probably having joined the coalition of nations of the Beast of Revelation with the purpose of destroying the Jews in Israel (cf. Revelation 19:11-21). With these other nations' armies, the Egyptians will experience large-scale devastation, but God will not wipe out the people completely. Instead, God is saying in Jeremiah 46 that the land of Egypt will be reinhabited as part of His mercy which He will express to all peoples at that time. Yes, the Jews' enemies will suffer tremendously, but they will survive to the extent that some of them even become genuine believers in God and His Messiah Jesus. We learn this from other Old Testament prophetic passages (cf., for example, Isaiah 2 & 56).

This message from God is not just about Egypt and Babylon. It is also about Israel. God goes on to say in v. 27,

46:27 “But as for you, O Jacob My servant, do not fear,
Nor be dismayed, O Israel!
For, see, I am going to save you (הַנִּינִי מִיָּשָׁעַדְךָ) from afar (מִיָּרְחוֹק),
And your descendants (וְאַתָּה יְרֻעָדְךָ) from the land of their captivity;
And Jacob will return and be undisturbed
And secure, with no one making him tremble.

We remind ourselves that, at this time when Jeremiah is speaking on behalf of God, that ten of the tribes of Israel have been hauled off into exile in northern Iraq by the Assyrians a hundred years earlier. All that are left on the land of Israel are the people of Judah, some Levites who serve in the temple, and descendants of Simeon who have been absorbed into Judah. Therefore, in v. 27 above, God could be referring to only these latter remaining southerners when He uses the names “Jacob” and “Israel.” However, I think that it makes more sense that He is expanding His future purview and is including the Jews from the former Kingdom of Israel. He is saying in Jeremiah's day to all the Jews of all the tribes, and all those who follow them in history, that, if they truly grasp who He is and what His plans are for them as His chosen people, that they need “not fear.” He is going to save the “from afar” (*mayraḥoq* in Hebrew, *makrothen* (μακρόθεν) in the Greek Septuagint), from wherever they be when the time comes to fulfill His promise to Abraham. He will bring their “descendants from the land of their captivity,” which is to say from the far reaches of the earth where they have not been really feeling at home, because their true home is always the land of Israel, which God promised them in Genesis 12:1-2.

But “Jacob,” the Jews whom He chooses and who remain alive at the end of the present age, “will return” to their land “and be undisturbed and secure” on it for the remainder of time that this earth exists. No one will make them be afraid, because we know from the rest of the Bible that this will be the time when Jesus the Messiah will return and establish his kingdom, the Kingdom of God, over the entire earth. Israel's enemies will never harm them again. Therefore, just as God has plans for Egypt to repopulate it in

the last days, He has even greater plans for Israel to make them the most powerful, successful, prosperous, and safe nation of people in all human history. This is the essence of God's promise to Abraham and his physical descendants, the Jews.

Again, in v. 28, God encourages Jacob, who is His "servant" and who therefore are His people, not to fear. And He probably is speaking to not only the Jews of Jeremiah's day, but also to those who will follow them in history. And these are members of all the tribes, because He says to them, "For I am with you." For God to be with someone, even David in Psalm 23, is for Him to have their back, to be so committed to them that His plans of blessing them and providing them with participation in the future Kingdom of God is guaranteed.

In addition, God says that He "will make a full end of all nations" where He has scattered the Jews from their own land. To make this coherent with everything else the Bible says about the Gentiles after Jesus' return, which is when this will happen, God must mean that these nations will cease to exist in the manner which they do now. They will not exercise hegemony over other nations, and especially over the Jews and the nation of Israel. Instead, their final king, who is Jesus of Nazareth, will exercise all authority and power over them. They may exist with their own leaders within their own borders, but they will not exist as oppressive or hostile nations towards other nations or even towards their own citizens. Instead, Jesus will rule them all with a rod of iron as David predicts in Psalm 2:9.

In contrast, God says that He will not end Israel's rule of other nations. Indeed, He will enhance it and make them the most powerful nation in all human history. Nevertheless, between the time of the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles of the 8th century and 6th century B.C. respectively and Jesus' return, God will "correct" and even punish the Jews "properly." This last word is literally "to/for judgment" (*lammishpat* (לַמִּשְׁפָּט) in Hebrew, *eis krima* (εἰς κρίμα) in the Greek Septuagint). God always deals justly and appropriately with His chosen people, the Jews, and He will do so right up to the time when He fulfills His promise to Abraham to make them a "great nation."

Jeremiah 50:1-20, 41-43; 51:1-11

50:1 The word which Yahweh spoke concerning Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, through Jeremiah the prophet:

50:2 "Declare and proclaim among the nations.

Proclaim it and lift up a standard.

Do not conceal it but say,

'Babylon has been captured,

Bel has been put to shame, Marduk has been shattered;

Her images have been put to shame, her idols have been shattered.'

50:3 "For a nation has come up against her out of the north; it will make her land an object of horror, and there will be no inhabitant in it. Both man and beast have wandered off, they have gone away!

50:4 "In those days and at that time," declares Yahweh, "the sons of Israel will come, both they and the sons of Judah as well; they will go along weeping as they go, and it will be Yahweh their God they will seek.

50:5 "They will ask for the way to Zion, turning their faces in its direction; they will come that they may join themselves to Yahweh in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.

50:6 "My people have become lost sheep;

Their shepherds have led them astray.

They have made them turn aside on the mountains;

They have gone along from mountain to hill

And have forgotten their resting place (רֶגְלָם).

50:7 "All who came upon them have devoured them;

And their adversaries have said, 'We are not guilty,

Inasmuch as they have sinned against Yahweh who is the habitation of righteousness,

Even Yahweh, the hope of their fathers.'

50:8 "Wander away from the midst of Babylon

- And go forth from the land of the Chaldeans;
Be also like male goats at the head of the flock.
- 50:9 "For behold, I am going to arouse and bring up against Babylon
A horde of great nations from the land of the north,
And they will draw up their battle lines against her;
From there she will be taken captive.
Their arrows will be like an expert warrior
Who does not return empty-handed.
- 50:10 "Chaldea will become plunder;
All who plunder her will have enough," declares Yahweh.
- 50:11 "Because you are glad, because you are jubilant,
O you who pillage My heritage,
Because you skip about like a threshing heifer
And neigh like stallions,
- 50:12 Your mother will be greatly ashamed,
She who gave you birth will be humiliated.
Behold, she will be the least of the nations,
A wilderness, a parched land and a desert.
- 50:13 "Because of the indignation of Yahweh she will not be inhabited,
But she will be completely desolate;
Everyone who passes by Babylon will be horrified
And will hiss because of all her wounds.
- 50:14 "Draw up your battle lines against Babylon on every side,
All you who bend the bow;
Shoot at her, do not be sparing with your arrows,
For she has sinned against Yahweh.
- 50:15 "Raise your battle cry against her on every side!
She has given herself up, her pillars have fallen,
Her walls have been torn down.
For this is the vengeance of Yahweh:
Take vengeance on her;
As she has done to others, so do to her.
- 50:16 "Cut off the sower from Babylon
And the one who wields the sickle at the time of harvest;
From before the sword of the oppressor
They will each turn back to his own people
And they will each flee to his own land.
- 50:17 "Israel is a scattered flock. The lions have driven them away.
The first one who devoured him was the king of Assyria,
and this last one who has broken his bones is Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.
- 50:18 "Therefore thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel:
'Behold, I am going to punish the king of Babylon and his land,
just as I punished the king of Assyria.
- 50:19 'And I will bring Israel back to his pasture and he will graze on Carmel and Bashan,
and his desire will be satisfied in the hill country of Ephraim and Gilead.
- 50:20 'In those days and at that time,' declares Yahweh, 'search will be made
for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none;
and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found;
for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant (אֲשֵׁרִי).'
- 50:41 "Behold, a people is coming from the north,
And a great nation and many kings
Will be aroused from the remote parts of the earth.
- 50:42 "They seize their bow and javelin;
They are cruel and have no mercy.
Their voice roars like the sea;

And they ride on horses,
 Marshalled like a man for the battle
 Against you, O daughter of Babylon.

50:43 "The king of Babylon has heard the report about them,
 And his hands hang limp;
 Distress has gripped him,
 Agony like a woman in childbirth.

51:1 Thus says Yahweh:

"Behold, I am going to arouse against Babylon
 And against the inhabitants of *Leb-kamai*
 The spirit of a destroyer.

51:2 "I will dispatch foreigners to Babylon that they may winnow her
 And may devastate her land;
 For on every side they will be opposed to her
 In the day of her calamity (יָמֵי צָרָה).

51:3 "Let not him who bends his bow bend it,
 Nor let him rise up in his scale-armor;
 So do not spare her young men;
 Devote all her army to destruction.

51:4 "They will fall down slain in the land of the Chaldeans,
 And pierced through in their streets."

51:5 For neither Israel nor Judah has been forsaken
 By his God, Yahweh of hosts,
 Although their land is full of guilt
 Before the Holy One of Israel.

51:6 Flee from the midst of Babylon,
 And each of you save his life!
 Do not be destroyed in her punishment,
 For this is the Yahweh's time of vengeance;
 He is going to render recompense to her.

51:7 Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of Yahweh,
 Intoxicating all the earth.
 The nations have drunk of her wine;
 Therefore the nations are going mad.

51:8 Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been broken;
 Wail over her!
 Bring balm for her pain;
 Perhaps she may be healed.

51:9 We applied healing to Babylon, but she was not healed;
 Forsake her and let us each go to his own country,
 For her judgment has reached to heaven
 And towers up to the very skies.

51:10 Yahweh has brought about our vindication (אֶת־צִדְקַת־יְהוָה);
 Come and let us recount in Zion
 The work of Yahweh our God!

51:11 Sharpen the arrows, fill the quivers!
 Yahweh has aroused the spirit of the kings of the Medes,
 Because His purpose is against Babylon to destroy it;
 For it is the vengeance of Yahweh, vengeance for His temple.

Jeremiah 50 & 51 speak of the utter destruction of Babylon, i.e., the Babylonian Empire, and the vindication of God's people, the Jews. The language of these chapters is so extreme that they must refer to events not only around the time of Jeremiah, but also of a later date. For example, verse 3 of chapter 50 says,

50:3 "For a nation has come up against her out of the north; it will make her land an object of horror, and there will be no inhabitant in it. Both man and beast have wandered off, they have gone away!

In 539 B.C., King Cyrus of Persia captured the city of Babylon without destroying it. Therefore, v. 3 is describing an even greater destruction which Babylon will experience at some other time in the future. Eventually the city becomes uninhabited, and we see that vs. 8-9 continue this theme,

50:8 "Wander away from the midst of Babylon
And go forth from the land of the Chaldeans;
Be also like male goats at the head of the flock.
50:9 "For behold, I am going to arouse and bring up against Babylon
A horde of great nations from the land of the north,
And they will draw up their battle lines against her;
From there she will be taken captive.
Their arrows will be like an expert warrior
Who does not return empty-handed.

God is encouraging mainly the Jews of the southern Kingdom of Judah to leave Babylon, because He is going to bring a vast number of "great nations from the land of the north" against her. Again, this sounds like more than what happened when Cyrus the Persian overcame the city. Then, vs. 10-13 describe the extent of destruction of the city of Babylon and the reason for which God will bring it about,

50:10 "Chaldea will become plunder;
All who plunder her will have enough," declares Yahweh.
50:11 "Because you are glad, because you are jubilant,
O you who pillage My heritage,
Because you skip about like a threshing heifer
And neigh like stallions,
50:12 Your mother will be greatly ashamed,
She who gave you birth will be humiliated.
Behold, she will be the least of the nations,
A wilderness, a parched land and a desert.
50:13 "Because of the indignation of Yahweh she will not be inhabited,
But she will be completely desolate;
Everyone who passes by Babylon will be horrified
And will hiss because of all her wounds.

The Babylonians were only all too happy to "pillage [God's] heritage," the Kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem in particular, when they destroyed both the city and its sacred temple for the worship of Yahweh. However, for its cruel and violent treatment of Judah and God's chosen people, eventually Babylon "will be the least of the nations" when it becomes "completely desolate," without buildings or inhabitants. God describes the same destiny for Babylon in vs. 1 & 2 of chapter 51,

51:1 Thus says Yahweh:
"Behold, I am going to arouse against Babylon
And against the inhabitants of *Layv-qamai*
The spirit of a destroyer.
51:2 "I will dispatch foreigners to Babylon that they may winnow her
And may devastate her land;
For on every side they will be opposed to her
In the day of her calamity (הַיּוֹם הַהוּא).

He calls Babylon *Layv-qamai* (לֵב קָמַי) in Hebrew, meaning “The Heart of Those Who Rise Up Against Me.” And God speaks of “the day of her calamity,” her *ra’ah* (רָעָה), a word which God also uses to refer to the calamity that He brings on His own people (cf. Jeremiah 1:14). In reference to Babylon, He continues saying in v. 7 & 8,

51:7 Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of Yahweh,
Intoxicating all the earth.
The nations have drunk of her wine;
Therefore the nations are going mad.
51:8 Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been broken;
Wail over her!
Bring balm for her pain;
Perhaps she may be healed.

In other words, the Babylonians in their arrogance and opposition to God’s chosen people, the Jews, have been a model nation of evil, and like a cup of wine, the other nations have drunk from her evil throughout history, so that they all have mistreated and persecuted the Jews similarly. In other words, every time a group of people, a nation, an empire, a coalition of nations, etc. choose to persecute, attack, and harm the Jews, they are acting like the ancient Babylonians of the 7th century B.C. These are the model and paradigm for the whole world, for anyone who refuses to see the nation of Israel as special to God and who want to harm them.

But God is going to “devastate” the land of the Babylonians, which should be a warning to all other peoples—that if they turn against the Jews and seek to destroy them, they will have to deal with God and His wrath, who will eventually destroy Israel’s enemies instead. After v. 10, chapter 51 goes on for another fifty-three verses describing the destructive effects of God’s judgment on the Babylonians, but we end our consideration of this prominent theme with v. 11,

51:11 Sharpen the arrows, fill the quivers!
Yahweh has aroused the spirit of the kings of the Medes,
Because His purpose is against Babylon to destroy it;
For it is the vengeance of Yahweh, vengeance for His temple.

God mentions specifically the Medes, who with the Persians under Cyrus’ rule will capture Babylon (but not completely destroy it) in 539 B.C. Yet, “His purpose is...to destroy it; for it is the vengeance of Yahweh, vengeance for His temple.” This is to say that God holds the Babylonians accountable for leveling His temple in Jerusalem, and eventually their own city will experience the same degree of devastation. Thus, Babylon is the prime example of not only the Gentiles’ hostility towards the nation of Israel, but also God’s response to those who seek to harm the Jews by being hostile towards them, judging them, and endeavoring to bring about their complete destruction.

On the other hand, God has words of mainly encouragement and hope for Israel and the Jews, starting with vs. 4-8 of chapter 50,

50:4 “In those days and at that time,” declares Yahweh, “the sons of Israel will come, both they and the sons of Judah as well; they will go along weeping as they go, and it will be Yahweh their God they will seek.
50:5 “They will ask for the way to Zion, turning their faces in its direction; they will come that they may join themselves to Yahweh in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.
50:6 “My people have become lost sheep;
Their shepherds have led them astray.
They have made them turn aside on the mountains;
They have gone along from mountain to hill
And have forgotten their resting place.

- 50:7 "All who came upon them have devoured them;
 And their adversaries have said, 'We are not guilty,
 Inasmuch as they have sinned against Yahweh who is the habitation of righteousness,
 Even Yahweh, the hope of their fathers.'
 50:8 "Wander away from the midst of Babylon
 And go forth from the land of the Chaldeans;
 Be also like male goats at the head of the flock.

Because these verses follow immediately after God's speaking of a nation's coming from the north against Babylon with the result that there is "no inhabitant in it," He may very well be referring to "those days" and "that time" that is future to 539 B.C. when Cyrus captures the city and issues his decree allowing the Jewish exiles to return from Babylon to Jerusalem. Or He may be both referring to the time of Cyrus and also looking ahead to the far distant future beyond him. If the first option is correct, then "in those days and at that time" refers to when God will fulfill His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a "great nation." It will be then that "the sons of Israel" from the Assyrian exile of the Jews from the northern Kingdom of Israel and "the sons of Judah" from the Babylonian exile of the Jews from the southern Kingdom of Judah will, after even thousands of years, finally find their way back "to Zion." They will leave the countries where God has dispersed them and immigrate to Jerusalem specifically and to the land of Israel in general.

They will also be people of authentic belief who will "join themselves to Yahweh in an everlasting covenant," which must be the New Covenant which we examined in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (v. 5). This covenant will provide the Jews with eternal forgiveness through their Messiah and High Priest Jesus, who qualified to intercede with God on their behalf by sacrificing himself on the cross. Therefore, the covenant "will not be forgotten" by the Jews, even though they have ignored the Mosaic Covenant. And it certainly will not be forgotten by God since, through Jesus and his death, it will be the source of eternal forgiveness for both Jews and Gentiles.

If the second option is correct and God is referring to both the time of Cyrus and the far distant future, then the Jews in exile in Babylon, along with those who have been in exile for a hundred years from the Kingdom of Israel, will begin the process of returning to Jerusalem and their whole land seventy years after the Jews were first taken to Babylon. Then, much later, their descendants will complete this process during the time of the messianic kingdom of Jesus. Because God mentions the "everlasting covenant" in v. 5, I am inclined to think that He is referring to only the return of the Jews immediately before Jesus' return and, therefore, to the first option.

In v. 8, God exhorts the Jews to leave Babylon and "the land of the Chaldeans." He is probably referring to both the exiles of the former northern kingdom, who live just north of Babylon, and those of the southern kingdom who are living in the actually city of Babylon. God is urging them all to leave not only the city, but also the whole system of evil and rebellion against God that infiltrates the culture of the empire. He also says in v. 7 that those who oppose and attack the Jews could readily use the excuse that His chosen people deserve it, because "they have sinned against" Yahweh their God. Nevertheless, He is "the hope of their fathers," meaning that whatever God promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this is what He is going to do regardless of the circumstances. Therefore, no sin or rebellion by the Jews will prevent Him from remaining faithful to them. This, obviously, is a remarkable commitment to them on His part. But it also means that no one has the right to persecute or attack the nation of Israel. Implied is that, whoever does, will be held accountable for their gross evil, and God will destroy them.

Yet, God admits in v. 6 that His "people have become lost sheep," because their leaders and teachers have "led them astray" from the truth of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants. The result has been that the Jews have been made to forget "their resting place," the land of Israel, and wandered off into foreign lands where they do not belong. Their home is the land which God promised them in the Abrahamic Covenant and nowhere else. Now, just as they wandered from their

land as a result of worshiping pagan gods, God urges them to “wander away from the midst of Babylon” and its commitment to immorality and sin.

God continues His encouraging words to His chosen people in vs. 17-20,

50:17 “Israel is a scattered flock. The lions have driven them away.

The first one who devoured him was the king of Assyria,
and this last one who has broken his bones is Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

50:18 “Therefore thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel:

‘Behold, I am going to punish the king of Babylon and his land,
just as I punished the king of Assyria.

50:19 ‘And I will bring Israel back to his pasture and he will graze on Carmel and Bashan,
and his desire will be satisfied in the hill country of Ephraim and Gilead.

50:20 ‘In those days and at that time,’ declares Yahweh, ‘search will be made
for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none;
and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found;
for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant (רְשִׁיטִים).’

The only time before 722 B.C. and the Assyrian exile that the people of Israel experienced a separation from one another was when Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery and he was taken from the land of Canaan into Egypt. And this was for only a short time, because his father Jacob and his brothers joined him there during a famine. Their descendants continued to live in Egypt until Moses led them all out of their slavery there, and they crossed the Sinai Desert and entered the land of Canaan under Joshua’s leadership around 1500 B.C. Then, they occupied Canaan and eventually became a kingdom under first Saul, and then David and Solomon until 900 B.C., when they split into the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom disappeared and the people were scattered into the upper Tigris-Euphrates valley in 722 B.C. by the Assyrians. Now, during Jeremiah’s day, the Babylonians are separating the Jews from their land, starting in 605 B.C. and completing the process in 586 B.C. Therefore, at this point in their history, God’s chosen people are truly “a scattered flock,” bereft of their homeland, monarchic government, and national status under their own ethnic leaders. And history has shown us that they will remain under these circumstances until the present day. They may have their homeland back, to a degree, but they are still dispersed throughout the world. They may possess a certain national status, but where is their king, their Messiah? He is coming.

In the meantime, God is “going to punish the king of Babylon” and the people of “his land, just as [He] punished the king of Assyria” (v. 18). Babylon conquered and absorbed the Assyrian Empire in 609 B.C., and Cyrus and the Persians will do the same to Babylon in 539 B.C. The lesson for all peoples is that no Gentile nation continues to exist if they oppose the Jews. Eventually, God destroys them, and they disappear into the annals of history. However, it will be different for the Jews. They will never cease to exist as a people group in the present realm. Indeed, God will “bring Israel back to his pasture and he will graze on Carmel and Bashan” in the land which God has promised to the descendants of Abraham (v. 19).

Plus, “in those days and at that time,” God will “pardon those whom [He leaves] as a remnant.” And their forgiveness will be to such an extent that “search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none, and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found” (v. 20). I do not think that God is saying that He is going to make the Jews a morally perfect people. Instead, this is in line with the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:34, “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” Every mortal Jew who lives in the “great nation” promised by God in Genesis 12:1-2 and, therefore, in the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 will be a sinner with a circumcised heart. Every Jew will be an authentic believer in both God and His Messiah Jesus. As a result, all mortal Jews who live during the time when Jesus rules over them and over the world will have obtained eternal forgiveness. It is in this sense that their sins “will not be found.”

In chapter 51, verses 4-6 go on to talk about both Babylon’s judgment and Israel’s salvation,

51:4 “They will fall down slain in the land of the Chaldeans,
And pierced through in their streets.”

51:5 For neither Israel nor Judah has been forsaken
By his God, Yahweh of hosts,
Although their land is full of guilt
Before the Holy One of Israel.

51:6 Flee from the midst of Babylon,
And each of you save his life!
Do not be destroyed in her punishment,
For this is the Yahweh’s time of vengeance;
He is going to render recompense to her.

Verse 4 is at the last of four verses at the beginning of this chapter where God again declares that He is going to bring calamity, *ra’ah* (רָאָה), on Babylon (cf. the discussion of 51:1-2 above). Specifically her army “will fall down” throughout “the land of the Chaldeans” and die “in their streets.” However, v. 5 informs us that, while God is clearly bringing destruction on the Babylonian people, He remains faithful to His chosen people, the descendants of Abraham of both the northern Kingdom of “Israel” and the southern Kingdom of “Judah.” Neither of these two groups of Jews “has been forsaken” by God. And this is in spite of the fact that “their land is full of guilt” from their disobedience of God. He is “the Holy One of Israel,” and while they have rejected Him and worshiped foreign, pagan gods, He remarkably has not rejected them. Yes, He has judged and disciplined them so that they have been scattered into foreign lands, but His promise to make them a “great nation” according to the Abrahamic Covenant is still intact.

Thus, as a result of both the Jews’ sin and God’s commitment to them, He urges them to “flee from the midst of Babylon” in order that “each of [them] save [his] life” (v. 6). God must mean that both physically and spiritually He wants the people of Israel to get themselves out of Babylon. During the course of the city’s history, she will find herself more and more spiritually, morally, and even physically desolate until she is completely “destroyed in her punishment.” God “is going to render recompense to her” on account of the Babylonians’ fundamental immorality and opposition to and destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. Again, to be anti-Semitic is to be anti-God and eventually incur God’s wrath, condemnation, and destruction.

In vs. 9-10, Jeremiah finishes his comments about the Jews and their relationship with God,

51:9 We applied healing to Babylon, but she was not healed;
Forsake her and let us each go to his own country,
For her judgment has reached to heaven
And towers up to the very skies.

51:10 Yahweh has brought about our vindication;
Come and let us recount in Zion
The work of Yahweh our God!

God had commanded the Jews in exile to pray for the safety and prosperity of Babylon while they lived there. And they obeyed His command. But did this help? No. “She was not healed” (v. 9). In other words, God’s people’s prayers do not always result in God’s answering in the affirmative—even when He commands them and describes exactly how they should pray! From this we can conclude that prayer is not necessarily an exercise that will move God to act in the way that we want and the way which He may have even told His people to pray. Instead, it is for the purpose of reminding the one who prays that God is ultimately the source of all good things. If good occurs, then may God be praised and thanked for both this specific good and His overall purposes of one day bringing about the greatest good of all—the Kingdom of God. If a specific good for which we pray does not occur, then may God also be praised and thanked for His divine and sovereign plans

whereby all individual events in history will together result in the greatest good of the Kingdom of God.

And once again Jeremiah, on behalf of God, exhorts the Jews to leave Babylon far behind physically, emotionally, and spiritually and to go to their own country, the land of Israel. Thus, the prophet can say, “Yahweh has brought about our vindication” (v. 10). Yes, the Jews of both the northern Kingdoms of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah have disobeyed God, so that He has disciplined them heavily and driven them from the land of Israel. And they remain dispersed throughout the world even to this day. Nevertheless, He remains faithful to the Jews by means of both two specific actions on His part. First, He has and will destroy “Babylon,” i.e., all the Babylonian-like people in the world who have persecuted and even sought to destroy the Jews. Second, He has and will continue gathering the Jews back into their land, to the extent that He will also change all their hearts in the millennial kingdom after the return of the Messiah so that they exhibit authentic faith and belief.

In this manner, God will have brought about their “vindication.” The Hebrew word is *tzedaqah* (צִדְקָה), meaning I think in this case their justification, the same idea found in the New Testament. Jeremiah is saying that, in response to His own faithfulness (*hesed*, חֶסֶד) and their enemies’ mistreatment of them, God will put the Jews in a position where they stand to acquire His complete and eternal forgiveness, along with the blessing of life, first in the messianic kingdom when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel on the present earth, and then for all eternity on the new earth (cf. Revelation 20-22).

In the last two lines of v. 10, Jeremiah commands all his fellow Jews who enjoy this justification from God, “Come and let us recount in Zion the work of Yahweh our God!” Certainly, this is exactly what will take place during the entirety of the millennial kingdom when all living Jews will finally have genuine hearts of faith and obedience towards God. Therefore, for the duration of the kingdom, generation after generation of the people of Israel will believe in, worship, and obey God. And over and over they will tell each other and the rest of the world just how gracious God has been to them according to His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 to make them the most powerful nation in all human history. Thus ends the passages in Jeremiah pertaining to the Abrahamic Covenant. We move on now to Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 11:14-21

11:14 Then the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,

11:15 “Son of man, your brothers, your relatives, your fellow exiles and the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those to whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, ‘Go far from Yahweh; this land has been given us as a possession (הָיָא נְתַנָּה הָאָרֶץ לָנוּ לְמִוְשָׁה).’

11:16 “Therefore say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone.”

11:17 “Therefore say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “I will gather you (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered (נִפְצָוֹתֵיכֶם), and I will give you the land of Israel (וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת־אֶרֶץ־יִשְׂרָאֵל).”

11:18 “When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it.

11:19 “And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them.

And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

11:20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep (וְשָׁמְרוּ) My ordinances and do them.

Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

11:21 “But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads,” declares Adonai Yahweh.””

Ezekiel, whose name *Yehezqay'l* (יְחֶזְקֵאל) means “May God Strengthen,” was a priest and member of the tribe of Levi, as well as a contemporary of Jeremiah. However, instead of like the latter prophet who remained in Jerusalem during her calamitous days leading up to and including complete destruction by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., Ezekiel was one of the first, along with King Jehoiachin, his mother, his wives, his officials, and the leading men of Judah, to be taken into exile to the city of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar eleven years earlier in 597 B.C. It was therefore within the Jewish community in the capital city of the Babylonian Empire that Ezekiel proclaimed God’s dual message of present-day judgment as well as future judgment and blessing on His people.

In the first part of chapter 11, which I have not included, Ezekiel declares that the Jewish leaders, who have been taken into exile, have misled the people of Jerusalem, and that the result will soon be the city’s destruction. In vs. 14-15 above, we know that Ezekiel, his family, and all the rest of his “fellow exiles” have already been hauled off to Babylon. And God states that the people who have remained in Jerusalem consider themselves more righteous in the eyes of God, because He has given them “this land...as a possession.” In other words, the Jerusalemites think that they are being obedient to God, while the exiles must be heinous sinners who have made God so angry that He has driven them off the land. They therefore feel justified in commanding those in captivity, “Go far from Yahweh,” even to Babylon.

God’s response to these Jews is in v. 16,

11:16 “Therefore say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone.””

Perhaps God is saying this from the perspective of the far distant future, so that the translation is correct. But I think it is better to translate the verbs with present tenses like the following,

11:16 “Therefore say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Though I remove them far away among the nations and though I scatter them among the countries, yet I am a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they go.””

In this way, God is stating a general principle about the people of Israel, beginning with those who are now in Babylon with Ezekiel, and where this principle can be applied to even the Assyrian exiles of the northern Kingdom of Israel, who have been absent from the land for over a hundred years. In spite of their being driven from the land which God promised them in Genesis 12, He will remain with all the exiles wherever He disperses them and wherever they go in the world. But in what sense will He be with them? God says in v. 17,

11:17 “Therefore say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “I will gather you (אֶקְבֹּץ) from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.”

God will never forget His promise and oath of the Abrahamic Covenant to His chosen people, so that eventually He will regather them from the far reaches of the earth, if necessary, and bring them back to their land. Indeed, as he says in the above verse, “I will give you the land of Israel.” And nothing will stop Him from doing so. God further declares in vs. 18-20 with respect to the Jews,

11:18 “When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it.

11:19 “And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them.

And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

11:20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep (יִשְׁמְרוּ) My ordinances and do them.

Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

These are classic lines of the description of the nation of Israel during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 after Jesus returns. God is going to ensure that all living, mortal, sinful Jews become exactly as He has commanded and longed for them to be since He brought them out of Egypt and gave them the Mosaic Covenant—fully obedient with authentic faith. In fact, He “will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them” (v. 19). They will all be completely the same inwardly. They will have changed hearts and exhibit genuine belief in God (and in His Messiah, Jesus). Thus, He “will take the heart of stone out of their flesh,” meaning that He will cause them to stop rebelling him at the level of the inclinations. And He will “give them a heart of flesh,” which is to say that their hearts will be soft and inclined towards Him at the level of their fundamental desires. They will want to be obedient to God in a humble and repentant manner, not in just some sort of perfunctory, religious, and inauthentic way. They will no longer simply go through the motions of following God’s commandments, even focusing on the ceremonial and ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant (like the apostle Paul’s opponents in his letter to the Galatians), thinking that this is all He requires. Nor will any of them worship other gods or be abject atheists. Each and every Jew of the messianic kingdom will possess an earnestness and sincerity that will include a deep confession of their sins and a proper sense of unworthiness before God.

As a result, “they will remove all [the land’s] detestable things and all its abominations” (v. 18). Any altars for sacrifices to false gods or images that represent them which they have built in past years will be gone. Instead, with their new hearts, the people of Israel will “walk in [God’s] statutes and guard [His] ordinances,” which He has laid out in the Mosaic Covenant, so as to “do them.” And “then” God will finally be able to say, “They are My people, and I am their God.” Again, He has been looking forward for thousands of years to making this explicit statement about His relationship with the nation of Israel, but they have always put up a strong barrier of unbelief and disobedience that has prevented Him from do so. But, as the apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2:14-15, it is by means of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth that God had “destroyed the barrier of the dividing wall, the hostility” between Himself and sinners that was created by their sin, thus “making peace” between God and man.

And when will all this happen—the new hearts for the Jews, their being God’s people and His being their God, and their removing the idolatry from their hearts and worshiping the one, true God alone? I think that it will be when God fulfills the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants and makes the Jews a “great nation.” This will be at the same time when Jesus returns, restores the actual Kingdom of Israel with its capital in Jerusalem, and establishes his rule over not only the nation of Israel, but also the entire world. Consequently, we have here another passage that begins with God’s speaking to the prophet’s Jewish contemporaries, in this case at the beginning of the 6th century B.C., and ends with His referring to His inwardly renewed and regenerated chosen people of Israel at the end of the present age and still future to us.

However, in v. 21, God’s warning remains down through the years for those Jews who, on an existential level, continue to rebel against Him and whose hearts never become changed by Him,

11:21 “But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads,” declares Adonai Yahweh.””

God will have mercy on those Jews (and Gentiles) whose hearts and moral inclinations He has chosen to redirect towards Him and His commandments, and He will pay back with judgment and destruction those who remain stubbornly unwilling to humble themselves before Him and continue to worship and serve the creation instead of the Creator (cf. Romans 1:25).

Ezekiel 16:60-63

16:60 “Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) with you.

16:61 “Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both your older and your younger; and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant.

16:62 “Thus I will establish (נִבְרָא מִנִּי) My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am Yahweh,

16:63 so that you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you (בְּכַפְּרִי לָךְ) for all that you have done,” Adonai Yahweh declares.

For fifty-nine verses in chapter 16, God rebukes the people of Jerusalem for taking the good things which He has given them over the course of the city’s existence, from around 1000 B.C. when King David captured it from the Jebusites to now around 600 B.C., and they have used these good things to invite the surrounding pagan Gentile nations to teach them how to worship idols, so that they can be just like them. The Jews have “built a high place at the top of every street” where they have worshiped pagan gods (cf. 16:25). They have even killed and sacrificed their “sons and daughters” to idols, children whom they should have dedicated to Yahweh and brought up alive (!) while teaching them God’s promises of the Abrahamic Covenant and the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant. Instead, they have murdered these children in the name of gods who represent only the natural forces in the world, while God had commanded them to nurture their children in His name, the one who controls the natural forces and sovereignly rules over the entire cosmos. The important question is always in these circumstances, “What do such people deserve?” And the rational, biblical, and correct answer is, “God’s wrath, condemnation, and destruction,” all of which He will demonstrate towards Jerusalem and His people when the Babylonians execute His justice, finishing it in the year 586 B.C.

However, as we have seen before in Isaiah and Jeremiah, God changes His tone completely in the four verses of 60-63. He begins in v. 60, “Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.” The covenant of the days of Jerusalem’s youth I take to be the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12-22. God has promised that He will make this patriarch’s descendants a “great nation” on the land of Israel, and the only way that He can do this is if they continue to exist as a group of people in spite of the several judgments He brings on them during history, including the destruction in Ezekiel’s day of the Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians in the late 7th and early 6th centuries B.C. Consequently, He will “remember” this ancient covenant, while He will also “establish an everlasting covenant” with the Jews. I think that this is the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 such that God will provide a means of eternal forgiveness for them through the Messiah who sacrifices himself for them, rises from the dead, and eventually becomes their permanent and final Davidic king. And this person we now know is Jesus of Nazareth. As explained most clearly in the New Testament letter called Hebrews, he is the one by whom God makes with the Jews the “everlasting covenant” (*bereeth ‘olam*, בְּרִית עוֹלָם) of v. 60.

And the psychological result for the Jews is that they “will remember [their] ways and be ashamed” (v. 61). In other words, they will confess and repent of their sins with hearts that have been changed by the Spirit of God, so that they will exhibit genuine and profound humility before God. In addition, Jerusalem will receive here “sisters,” Sodom to the east across the Jordan River and Samaria in the north that was the capital of the Kingdom of Israel. God had spoken of these cities in vs. 44-47

as being like Jerusalem and her “sisters.” However, in the future, they will exist under the authority of Jerusalem, because, as described in other prophetic passages, Israel’s Messiah will rule over all the Jews and all the Gentiles.

God also says that this will all happen “not because of your covenant” (v. 61). I think that He means not because of how the nation of Israel typically try to obey the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, the Jews will no longer believe that they can make themselves worthy of God’s mercy and blessings, especially by following the ritual commandments which He has prescribed for them. They will recognize that any good thing they receive from Him comes strictly by means of His independent choice and undeserved grace. Therefore, as we saw in Ezekiel 11, even their new hearts by which they demonstrate genuine repentance, belief, and obedience will exist because God graciously causes them to.

God finishes this small section in vs. 62-63,

16:62 “Thus I will establish (וְהִקְמֹתִי אֶת־) My covenant with you,
and you shall know that I am Yahweh,
16:63 so that you may remember and be ashamed and
never open your mouth anymore (עוֹד) because of your humiliation,
when I have forgiven you (בְּכַפְּרִי־לָךְ) for all that you have done,” Adonai Yahweh declares.

It is in this way that God “will establish” a permanent covenant with the people of Israel, and, as a result, they will know Him as their God with the name Yahweh. They will always keep in mind what God has done for them to forgive their sins completely and eternally, which we now know to be through Jesus’ death and resurrection—the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34. Therefore, they will not have to bring up the fact that they as a people were incredibly disobedient towards God in the past and feel ashamed for their past history of sins—because God has “forgiven” them! The Hebrew word here is from the root *kaphar* (כָּפַר), which means to atone, to make amends. But it is by Jesus’ death and then his resurrection that God Himself makes amends and compensates for their “all that [they] have done” in disobedience to Him, which is to say, for all their sins. Such is the manner by which God “will remember [His] covenant” which He made with Abraham and fulfill it by means of this new and “everlasting covenant” that involves the sacrificial offering of the Messiah, so that the greatness of the nation of Israel, as promised by the Abrahamic Covenant, will be based upon the forgiveness God renders through their king and Messiah.

As I said in the explanation of Jeremiah 31:31-34, it is important to grasp this detail, that Jesus of Nazareth’s role as crucified Messiah and then raised by God from the dead is central not only to the *eternal* salvation of all sinful human beings of genuine faith, but also to the *temporary* salvation of the nation of Israel from their enemies and their own unbelief during the messianic kingdom as described in both the Old Testament prophets and chapter 20 of the New Testament book of Revelation. In other words, Jesus is key to God’s fulfilling His first promise to Abraham to make his physical descendants, the Jews, a “great nation” on the land of Israel, as well as His second promise to Abraham to grant him (and all authentic believers like him) eternal life. It is also important to grasp that, just as God will be faithful by means of His *hesed* (חֶסֶד) to the people of Israel to ensure they become the most powerful nation in history, He will also exercise the same *hesed* towards both Jewish and Gentile believers to ensure that they persevere in their faith and enter into the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

Ezekiel 20:33-44

20:33 “As I live,” declares Adonai Yahweh, “surely with a mighty hand and
with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you.
20:34 “I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you (וְקִבַּצְתִּי)
from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and

- with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out;
- 20:35 and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples,
and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.
- 20:36 "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 Adonai Yahweh.
- 20:37 "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;
- 20:38 and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me;
I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they
will not enter the land of Israel (אֶל-אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל). Thus you will know that I am Yahweh.
- 20:39 "As for you, O house of Israel," thus says Adonai Yahweh,
"Go, serve everyone his idols; but later you will surely listen to Me,
and My holy name you will profane no longer with your gifts and with your idols.
- 20:40 "For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel,"
declares Adonai Yahweh, "there the whole house of Israel,
all of them, will serve Me in the land (בְּאֶרֶץ); there I will accept them
and there I will seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things.
- 20:41 "As a soothing aroma I will accept you when I bring you out
from the peoples and gather you (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) from the lands where you are scattered;
and I will prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations.
- 20:42 "And you will know that I am Yahweh, when I bring you into the land of Israel (אֶל-אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל),
into the land which I swore to give to your forefathers
(אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת-יְדִי לָתֵת אוֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָהָם).
- 20:43 "There you will remember your ways and all your deeds
with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves
in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done.
- 20:44 "Then you will know that I am Yahweh when I have dealt
with you for My name's sake, not according to your evil ways
or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel," declares Adonai Yahweh."

Similar to chapter 16, God spends the first thirty-two verses of this chapter both rebuking the elders of Jerusalem who now are in exile in Babylon for their own sins and describing the sins of the previous generations of Jews going back as far as those whom God rescued from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Even though He was being incredibly gracious to them in this latter foreign land where they suffered and in the wilderness through which He brought them back to the land which He had promised them in the Abrahamic Covenant, nevertheless, off and on and up to the Ezekiel's day, the people of Israel continued to worship false gods and reject Him, the one true God, indeed their God, who had committed Himself to them uniquely from the time of Abraham.

Unfortunately, at the center of their minds was perpetually the sinful thought and desire, "We will be like the nations, like the tribes of the lands, serving wood and stone" (v. 32b). This is always the greatest temptation of not only God's chosen people, but all sinners, to "be like" the people around them, to fit in with the surrounding culture, to avoid being viewed as different, strange, and simply wrong, which would probably result in being criticized, mocked as stupid and foolish, and finally cast out from society as undesirable pariahs. The Israelites of old wanted to fit in with the nations and peoples around them (the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, et al.) and to be accepted by them as much as we do in our modern world. But to conform to the world and its system of thinking and behaving is to reject God, because His moral requirements are always different from the world's. And the people of Israel have consistently brought God's judgment on themselves by ignoring this fact, which He is reminding those in Babylonian exile through the prophet Ezekiel around 600 B.C.

God is also informing them that they deserve His judgment and to be driven off the promised land. But, once again, starting in v. 33, He offers words of encouragement and hope, even though He does not get to the encouraging part until 39. In v. 33, Ezekiel writes,

20:33 “As I live,” declares Adonai Yahweh, “surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you.

In other words, God rules the Jews as their king even through His wrath and judgment, as certainly the elders in Babylon have experienced by virtue of the fact that they are exiles from their own land and not in Jerusalem. Then, God goes on to declare in vs. 34-38,

20:34 “I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out;

20:35 and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.

20:36 “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 Adonai Yahweh.

20:37 “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;

20:38 and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel (וְאֶל-אֶרֶץ-יִשְׂרָאֵל). Thus you will know that I am Yahweh.

The eventual outcome of this paragraph is that God is going to judge the nation of Israel even after He has scattered them among the rest of the nations. Thus, He will gather them out of these nations with the possibility that they will then be brought back to the land of Israel to live on it. However, there will be two kinds of Jews with whom God will “enter into judgment” (v. 35). As in the case when God did the same kind of thing “in the wilderness of the land of Egypt,” which is to say in the Sinai Desert outside Egypt, there will be those Jews who deserve His wrath and condemnation, so that they will meet with death and cease to exist on this earth. Consequently, these Jews will never reach the land which God has given them through the Abrahamic Covenant just as the rebellious generation who left Egypt did not either (V. 36).

God will make these future Jews “pass under the rod” that belongs to Him as their shepherd. But He will also “bring [them] into the bond of the covenant,” which, in the immediate context, refers to both the explicit blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 28 of the Mosaic Covenant. On account of their unbelief and rebellion in the light of God’s statements of condemnation in Deuteronomy 28, certain Jews will die before they have the opportunity to enter the land of Israel. In this way, He “will purge from [them] the rebels and those who transgress against” Him. He “will bring them out of the [foreign] land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel.” And it will be by this method of eliminating the disobedient Jews that the remaining ones “will know that [He is] Yahweh” (vs. 37-38).

God goes on to speak more positively and more conclusively in regard to the Abrahamic Covenant, starting in vs. 39-41,

20:39 “As for you, O house of Israel,” thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Go, serve everyone his idols; but later you will surely listen to Me, and My holy name you will profane no longer (לֹא תִחַלֵּל-שְׁמוֹ) with your gifts and with your idols.

20:40 “For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel,” declares Adonai Yahweh, “there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land (בְּאֶרֶץ); there I will accept them and there I will seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things.

20:41 “As a soothing aroma I will accept you when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) from the lands where you are scattered; and I will prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations.

Here in v. 39, because of the comprehensive language of the remaining verses, I think that the “house of Israel refers not to just the northern Kingdom of Israel and its exiles, but to the entirety of the Jewish people in Ezekiel’s day and afterwards. God tells them to go and do what they want to do in rebellion against Him, even “serve everyone his idols.” But this will not be the end of His relationship with them. “Later you will surely listen to Me,” He says. And He includes, “My holy name you will profane no longer with your gifts and with your idols.” The phrase “no longer” (*lo’...’od*, לֹא...עוֹד (*ouketi*, οὐκέτι in the Greek Septuagint)) I think denotes a finality to the kind of people the Jews will be. Never again will they worship false and pagan gods or reject God in some other worldly way, because they will finally and entirely be a nation where each individual has a changed heart and authentically believes and obeys God with sincere humility.

As God says in v. 40, “For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel,” which is the temple mount in Jerusalem, as opposed to the high places where the Israelites had brought their sacrifices to the false gods, “there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve” God “in the land.” Can God be more explicit? Every Jew on the land of Israel (and Jews will live on only the land of Israel) will worship and obey God with genuine faith. Indeed, it will be in this place which God promised them in Genesis 12:1-2 that He “will accept them.” He continues in the last line of v. 40, “There I will seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with your holy things,” which the people of Israel will bring to His temple in Jerusalem. I assume this means that the Jews will obey the Mosaic Covenant with circumcised hearts, even bringing their offerings and sacrifices to the temple in Jerusalem while also, of course, believing in Jesus as their Messiah and ultimate High Priest who obtains God’s eternal mercy for them.

In v. 41, God also says that He will “accept” the Jews who have not died in the midst of His most recent judgment when He brings them out and gathers them from the foreign nations where He had scattered them in previous generations because of their disobedience. In this way, He “will prove [Himself] holy among” them. This is to say that He will demonstrate the truth of the fact that He is the God of Israel, who has been committed to them from their inception when He made the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12-22. And this proof will be “in the sight of the nations.” All the Gentiles will have abundant evidence to conclude that God exists and that He has chosen the Jews uniquely as His people among all other ethnic groups. No will be able to deny this fact.

God finishes this message in vs. 42-44,

20:42 “And you will know that I am Yahweh, when I bring you into the land of Israel (אֶל-אֲדָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל), into the land which I swore to give to your forefathers (אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת-יְדִי לָתֵת אוֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָהָם).

20:43 “There you will remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done.

20:44 “Then you will know that I am Yahweh when I have dealt with you for My name’s sake, not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel,” declares Adonai Yahweh.”

Not only will the Gentiles see and understand that the Jews are God’s chosen people, but the Jews will know this too, when He gathers them from the distant corners of the earth and brings them back to their land, “the land of Israel,” which just happens to be “the land which [He] swore to give to [their] forefathers,” Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (v. 42). From a time four thousand years ago with respect to us, God has made it clear in the Bible that the land of Israel belongs to the people of Israel, and to no other people, unless Gentiles choose to live on the and worship God as He has required the Jews in the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Isaiah 56).

Even though the previous passage we looked at said that the Jews will not remember their sins of the past which resulted in their being expelled from their land, here in v. 43 God says that they will. He is not contradicting Himself, but merely saying that part of the process of any individual’s (or in

this case, group of individuals, i.e., His chosen people, the Jews) coming to genuine faith is his (or theirs) confessing their past transgressions in the midst of appealing to God for mercy and forgiveness. Yet, as the previous passage implies, they will not have to contemplate their past sins all the time. For a moment, they will definitely “loathe” themselves “in [their] own sight for all the evil things” they and the past generations of Jews have done. But we can infer that this loathing will end, and they will love themselves as God loves them. In addition, they will forgive themselves as God forgives them.

And when they have come to the realization that God has done such great things for them and caused them to become genuine in their faith in their hearts through the inner work of His Holy Spirit, the people of Israel will truly “know” Him and that He has done what He has done for His name’s sake (v. 44). God will have remained faithful to the Jews in order to uphold His own reputation. His *hesed* is always at stake, and He will make sure that He abides by His own promises. As here in Ezekiel, throughout the covenants God made with the Jews and the prophetic books, He has said over and over that the Jews’ disobedience will not prevent Him from fulfilling His promises and oaths to their forefathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is remarkable commitment on His part, but it is also an important mark of His character—that His promises are His promises, and no one, not even the people to whom He makes His promises, can construct a high enough and thick enough barrier to hinder Him from keeping His promises. This is what God means in the rest of v. 44, that He has not acted “according to” the “evil ways” and “corrupt deeds” of the “house of Israel.” He admits that they deserve for Him to reject them as a group of people (except of course the individuals among them who have genuine faith). Yet, He does not act in the way which what they deserve as a group. He does what they do not deserve. He shapes them eventually into the most powerful nation in history in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12-22.

Ezekiel 28:25-26

28:25 ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “When I gather (בְּקַבֵּץ) the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and will manifest My holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they will live in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob (וַיָּשְׁבוּ עַל-אֲדָמָתָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְעַבְדִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל).”

28:26 “They will live in it securely (לְבֶטָח); and they will build houses, plant vineyards and live securely (לְבֶטָח) when I execute judgments upon all who scorn them round about them. Then they will know that I am Yahweh their God.””

In Ezekiel 28:1-19 and 28:20-24, the prophet speaks on behalf of God against the ancient kingdoms of Tyre and Sidon respectively, northwest of Israel on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Verses 25-26 finish chapter 28, and God clearly is providing the Jews with another message of hope in regard to their future, indeed, their distant future. As He has said before, when He gathers “the house of Israel,” the Jews as a whole, “from the peoples among whom they are scattered,” then He will reveal and demonstrate to the entire world His “holiness.” He will show the Gentiles that He is different and set apart from all other so-called gods whom people (including His own chosen ones, the Jews, unfortunately) have worshiped and relied on for their well-being. They may even gone so far as to be atheists and denied the existence of God so that they have trusted in themselves for their lives and sustenance.

Whatever the case, at the end of the present realm, when God fulfills His promise to Abraham and Jesus returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, centered in Jerusalem and the land of Israel, no one will be able to deny that He exists and that He is the God of Israel, for He will have been faithful to the Jews all along, in spite of their disobedience towards Him.

Ezekiel 34

- 34:1 Then the word of Yahweh came to me saying,
 34:2 "Son of man, prophesy (נִבֵּא) against the shepherds of Israel.
 Prophesy (נִבֵּא) and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh,
 "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves!
 Should not the shepherds feed the flock?"
 34:3 "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool,
 you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock.
 34:4 "Those who are sickly you have not strengthened,
 the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up,
 the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost;
 but with force and with severity you have dominated them.
 34:5 "They were scattered (וְנִפְּצוּ) for lack of a shepherd,
 and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered (וְנִפְּצוּ).
 34:6 "My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill;
 My flock was scattered (נִפְּצוּ) over all the surface of the earth,
 and there was no one to search or seek for them."
 34:7 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of Yahweh:
 34:8 "As I live," declares Adonai Yahweh, "surely because My flock has become a prey,
 My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd,
 and My shepherds did not search for My flock,
 but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock.
 34:9 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of Yahweh:
 34:10 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Behold, I am against the shepherds,
 and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep.
 So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore,
 but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them."
 34:11 For thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Behold, I Myself will search
 for My sheep and seek them out.
 34:12 "As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep,
 so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places
 to which they were scattered (נִפְּצוּ) on a cloudy and gloomy day.
 34:13 "I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them (וְקִבַּצְתִּים) from the countries
 and bring them to their own land (אֶל-אֲדָמָתָם); and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel,
 by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land (וְהָאֶרֶץ).
 34:14 "I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground
 will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down
 on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.
 34:15 "I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares Adonai Yahweh.
 34:16 "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered,
 bind up the broken and strengthen the sick;
 but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment (בְּמִשְׁפָּט).
 34:17 "As for you, My flock, thus says Adonai Yahweh,
 'Behold, I will judge between one sheep and another,
 between the rams and the male goats.
 34:18 'Is it too slight a thing for you that you should feed in the good pasture,
 that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pastures?
 Or that you should drink of the clear waters, that you must foul the rest with your feet?
 34:19 'As for My flock, they must eat what you tread down
 with your feet and drink what you foul with your feet!"
 34:20 Therefore, thus says Adonai Yahweh to them,
 "Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.
 34:21 "Because you push with side and with shoulder,
 and thrust at all the weak with your horns until you have scattered them abroad,

- 34:22 therefore, I will deliver (וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי) My flock, and they will no longer be a prey;
and I will judge between one sheep and another.
- 34:23 “Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David,
and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.
- 34:24 “And I, Yahweh, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them;
I Yahweh have spoken.
- 34:25 “I will make a covenant of peace with them (וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית שְׁלוֹמִים)
and eliminate harmful beasts from the land
so that they may live securely (לְבִטָּחָה) in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.
- 34:26 “I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing.
And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing.
- 34:27 “Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase,
and they will be secure on their land (וְהָיוּ עַל-אֲדָמָתָם לְבִטָּחָה).
Then they will know that I am Yahweh,
when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them
from the hand of those who enslaved them.
- 34:28 “They will no longer be a prey to the nations,
and the beasts of the earth will not devour them;
but they will live securely (לְבִטָּחָה), and no one will make them afraid.
- 34:29 “I will establish for them a renowned planting place,
and they will not again be victims of famine in the land (בְּאֶרֶץ),
and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore.
- 34:30 “Then they will know that I, Yahweh their God, am with them,
and that they, the house of Israel, are My people,” declares Adonai Yahweh.
- 34:31 “As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men,
and I am your God,” declares Adonai Yahweh.

We have reached a section of Ezekiel, chapters 34-39, where the prophet predicts a future for the people of Israel where their Messiah will be ruling over them, and it will be a truly glorious time. Here in chapter 34, the prophet begins with God’s indictment of the leaders of the Jewish people and engages in this theme for ten verses. Verse 2 reads,

- 34:2 “Son of man, prophesy (הִנָּבֵא) against the shepherds of Israel.
Prophesy (הִנָּבֵא) and say to those shepherds, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh,
“Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves!
Should not the shepherds feed the flock?’

God addresses Ezekiel as “Son of man,” meaning simply that he is a human being. And He commands him to “prophesy.” The Hebrew word *hinnavay*’ (הִנָּבֵא) is often taken to mean “to predict the future,” so that a “prophet” (*navee*’, נָבִיא) is thought of as someone who foretell events which will occur in the future. However, the latter noun could easily be translated as “spokesman,” i.e., someone who takes God’s thoughts and proclaims them to a human audience. And the audience in the prophetic books of the Old Testament is mostly the Jews with various speeches to Gentile nations included. Therefore, to “prophesy” is simply to speak to other human beings on behalf of God, and His message may or may not involve the future. In fact, sometimes it pertains to the past and how the Jews have rebelled against God and disobeyed Him.

We can see that this is the case in the above passage. Ezekiel prophesies for God that the “shepherds of Israel,” i.e., the Jewish leaders, have been selfish by making themselves wealthy while their poorer subjects have suffered. This is what God is getting at in v. 3,

- 34:3 “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool,
you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock.

In addition, they have neglected to bring comfort and assistance to their fellow Jews who are struggling in their lives. As God says in v. 4, they have not “brought back” the ones who are “scattered,”

34:4 “Those who are sickly you have not strengthened,
the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up,
the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost;
but with force and with severity you have dominated them.

God also claims in v. 5,

34:5 “[The subjects of the Jewish leaders] were scattered (וְהִפְּזִינָהּ) for lack of a shepherd,
and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered (וְהִפְּזִינָהּ).

Indeed God says in v. 6,

34:6 “My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill;
My flock was scattered (נִפְּזָה) over all the surface of the earth,
and there was no one to search or seek for them.””

Does God mean the whole “earth,” or does the Hebrew word *'eretz* (אֶרֶץ) refer to only the land of Israel? I think that it is former, and by the time God has finished in this passage rebuking the leaders of the Jews for mistreating and misguiding His chosen people, He has also moved in time from the leaders who are with Ezekiel in exile in Babylon to those who will exist just before the Messiah comes to restore the Kingdom of Israel at the end of the present age.

And God continues in vs. 7-8,

34:7 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of Yahweh:
34:8 “As I live,” declares Adonai Yahweh, “surely because My flock has become a prey,
My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd,
and My shepherds did not search for My flock,
but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock;

The “beasts” who have “eaten” God’s flock, the Jews, are Gentile nations who have attacked, oppressed, persecuted, and even killed them—starting with the Babylonians in the immediate context and continuing throughout time to the Beast of Revelation. As a result, God declares in vs. 9-10,

34:9 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of Yahweh:
34:10 ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Behold, I am against the shepherds,
and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep.
So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore,
but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.””

In other words, God is not only “against” the bad shepherds and leaders of the Jews down through the ages, but He also for their followers. God will rescue His people from their leaders so that the latter no longer have the opportunity to fleece and ignore them.

God goes on in vs. 11-14,

34:11 For thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Behold, I Myself will search
for My sheep and seek them out.
34:12 “As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep,

so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered (נִפְצְצוּ) on a cloudy and gloomy day.

34:13 “I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them (וְקִבַּצְתִּים) from the countries and bring them to their own land (אֶל-אֶרֶצְהֶם); and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land (וְהָאֶרֶץ).

34:14 “I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

Since the leaders of Israel have been more interested in acquiring wealth for themselves than in assisting their fellow Jews in obeying God and returning to the land of Israel from Babylon and the far reaches of the world, God is going to do their job for them. In addition, He will “feed” them with both truth. The result will be that the Jews will obey the Mosaic Covenant as they should, and God will provide them with an abundance of all they need to live life. Once the Jews are reestablished on the land of Israel, it will produce everything that will make for a full and enjoyable life. In addition, God says in vs. 15-22,

34:15 “I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest,” declares Adonai Yahweh.

34:16 “I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment (בְּמִשְׁפָּט).

34:17 “As for you, My flock, thus says Adonai Yahweh, ‘Behold, I will judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the male goats.

34:18 ‘Is it too slight a thing for you that you should feed in the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pastures? Or that you should drink of the clear waters, that you must foul the rest with your feet?

34:19 ‘As for My flock, they must eat what you tread down with your feet and drink what you foul with your feet!’”

34:20 Therefore, thus says Adonai Yahweh to them, “Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.

34:21 “Because you push with side and with shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns until you have scattered them abroad,

34:22 therefore, I will deliver (וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי) My flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another.

God not only will give physical rest along with emotional, psychological, and spiritual healing to the Jews who have suffered in other parts of the world, He also will judge and destroy their selfish and power-hungry Jewish leaders who have mistreated them down through the years. And then, along with bringing the Jews back to the land which He promised them in the Abrahamic Covenant, God will finish the task of keeping His promise with two more steps, the first which He describes in vs. 23-24,

34:23 “Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.

34:24 “And I, Yahweh, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I Yahweh have spoken.

God will finish the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17 with the final and permanent king of Israel. This king will be an integral part of what it means for the Jews to be the “great nation” which God promised in Genesis 12-22. Even if there are other leaders among His people, they will look to the Messiah, this final king, for how they can best guide and instruct their subjects while they all finally live on the land of Israel.

And in vs. 25-30, God describes the second step of His fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant,

- 34:25 “I will make a covenant of peace with them (וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם)
and eliminate harmful beasts from the land
so that they may live securely (לְבִטָּחָה) in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.
34:26 “I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing.
And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing.
34:27 “Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase,
and they will be secure on their land (וְהָיוּ עַל-אֲדָמָתָם לְבִטָּחָה).
Then they will know that I am Yahweh,
when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them
from the hand of those who enslaved them.
34:28 “They will no longer be a prey to the nations,
and the beasts of the earth will not devour them;
but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid.
34:29 “I will establish for them a renowned planting place,
and they will not again be victims of famine in the land (בְּאֶרֶץ),
and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore.
34:30 “Then they will know that I, Yahweh their God, am with them,
and that they, the house of Israel, are My people,” declares Adonai Yahweh.

This “covenant of peace” in v. 25, which God will make with the nation of Israel, is most likely the same as the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and that God mentioned as an “everlasting covenant” in Ezekiel 16:60. He will also make the Jews themselves a “blessing,” referring to how they will finally become what He described in Deuteronomy 4, biblical teachers to the nations so that the Gentiles will look to Jerusalem, God’s “hill,” for the one who governs them and leads them, the Messiah. In addition, the land of Israel will experience abundant rain for the food that God’s chosen people need who are living there, so that they will never again go hungry (v. 26).

In addition, the Jews will live “securely” after God has released them from all the different kinds of oppression and persecution that they have suffered in foreign countries throughout the world (v. 27). No one will ever make them afraid for their lives or their freedom, and no one will even dare to insult them (vs. 28-29). Consequently, with hearts which have been changed by God, the entire nation of Israel from generation to generation of their being the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-2, will know that Yahweh is their God and that He is “with them” as their sovereign ruler and protector. This will be same as their knowing “that they, the house of Israel,” are His people (v. 30).

Thus, we see that chapter 34 emphasizes that God will keep the promises which He made in both the Abrahamic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant. The Jewish people will become the most powerful and central nation in human history, and the Gentiles will look to them for instruction about God and for leadership throughout the world. Plus, the Jewish Messiah, who is the final Davidic king, will rule over not only the Jews but also the Gentiles. In this way, Yahweh will be the God of the nation of Israel in His fullest sense, and the nation of Israel will become His people in their fullest sense.

Ezekiel 36

- 36:1 “And you, son of man, prophesy (הִנָּבֵא) to the mountains of Israel and say,
‘O mountains of Israel, hear the word of Yahweh.
36:2 ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Because the enemy has spoken against you,
‘Aha!’ and, ‘The everlasting heights (וְהַרְבֵּמוֹת עוֹלָם) have become our possession,’
36:3 therefore prophesy (הִנָּבֵא) and say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh,
“For good reason they have made you desolate and crushed you from every side,
that you would become a possession of the rest of the nations

- and you have been taken up in the talk and the whispering of the people.””
- 36:4 ‘Therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of Adonai Yahweh.
Thus says Adonai Yahweh to the mountains and to the hills,
to the ravines and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes and
to the forsaken cities which have become a prey and
a derision to the rest of the nations which are round about (אֲשֶׁר מִסְבִּיב),
- 36:5 therefore thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Surely in the fire of My jealousy
I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom,
who appropriated My land (נָתְנוּ־אֶת־אֶרֶצִי) for themselves
as a possession with wholehearted joy and with scorn of soul, to drive it out for a prey.”
- 36:6 ‘Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel (עַל־אֶדְמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל) and say
to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys,
“Thus says Adonai Yahweh, ‘Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy
and in My wrath because you have endured the insults of the nations.’
- 36:7 “Therefore thus says Adonai Yahweh, ‘I have sworn (אֲנִי נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יָדִי) that
surely the nations which are around you (אֲשֶׁר לָבָב מִסְבִּיב) will themselves endure their insults.
- 36:8 ‘But you, O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches
and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come (כִּי קָרְבוּ לָבוֹא).
- 36:9 ‘For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you will be cultivated and sown.
- 36:10 ‘I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel (כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל), all of it;
and the cities will be inhabited and the waste places (וְהַחֲרָבוֹת) will be rebuilt.
- 36:11 ‘I will multiply on you man and beast; and they will increase and be fruitful;
and I will cause you to be inhabited as you were formerly and
will treat you better than at the first. Thus you will know that I am Yahweh.
- 36:12 ‘Yes, I will cause men — My people Israel — to walk on you and possess you,
so that you will become their inheritance and never again bereave them of children.’
- 36:13 “Thus says Adonai Yahweh, ‘Because they say to you,
“You are a devourer of men and have bereaved your nation of children,”
- 36:14 therefore you will no longer devour men and no longer
bereave your nation of children,’ declares Adonai Yahweh.
- 36:15 “I will not let you hear insults from the nations anymore (עוֹד),
nor will you bear disgrace from the peoples any longer (עוֹד),
nor will you cause your nation to stumble any longer (עוֹד),” declares Adonai Yahweh.”
- 36:16 Then the word of Yahweh came to me saying,
- 36:17 “Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land,
they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their way before Me
was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity.
- 36:18 “Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood
which they had shed on the land (עַל־הָאֲרֶץ), because they had defiled it with their idols.
- 36:19 “Also I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the lands.
According to their ways and their deeds I judged them.
- 36:20 “When they came to the nations where they went,
they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them,
‘These are the people of Yahweh; yet they have come out of His land (וּמֵאֶרֶץ יְהוָה).’
- 36:21 “But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel
had profaned among the nations where they went.
- 36:22 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh,
“It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act,
but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.
- 36:23 “I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned
among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst.
Then the nations will know that I am Yahweh,” declares Adonai Yahweh,
“when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.
- 36:24 “For I will take you from the nations, gather (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) you from all the lands

and bring you into your own land (אֶל-אֲדָמָתְכֶם).

36:25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean;
I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

36:26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;
and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

36:27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes,
and you will be careful to observe (תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם) My ordinances.

36:28 “You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers (בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם);
so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

36:29 “Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness;
and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you.

36:30 “I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field,
so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.

36:31 “Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good,
and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.

36:32 “I am not doing this for your sake,” declares Adonai Yahweh, “let it be known to you.
Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!”

36:33 ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities,
I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places (הַחֲרָבוֹת) will be rebuilt.

36:34 “The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation
in the sight of everyone who passes by.

36:35 “They will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden;
and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.’

36:36 “Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, Yahweh,
have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate;
I, Yahweh, have spoken and will do it.”

36:37 ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “This also I will let the house of Israel
ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock.

36:38 “Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts,
so will the waste cities (הַחֲרָבוֹת הַהֵנָּה) be filled with flocks of men.
Then they will know that I am Yahweh.””

We skip chapter 35, which is a message against the Edomites and their injurious plans towards Israel, and we move on to Ezekiel 36, which, except for the fact that it does not include a reference to the Davidic Covenant, contains many details of what God has in store for the Jewish people in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant. We begin our analysis with the first three verses,

36:1 “And you, son of man, prophesy (הִנָּבֵא) to the mountains of Israel and say,
‘O mountains of Israel, hear the word of Yahweh.

36:2 ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Because the enemy has spoken against you,
‘Aha!’ and, ‘The everlasting heights (וּבְמִנּוֹת עוֹלָם) have become our possession,’

36:3 therefore prophesy (הִנָּבֵא) and say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh,
“For good reason they have made you desolate and crushed you from every side,
that you would become a possession of the rest of the nations
and you have been taken up in the talk and the whispering of the people.””

Again, God speaks to Ezekiel as a human being, a “son of man,” and commands him to “prophesy to the mountains of Israel.” The “mountains of Israel” stand for the entire land which God has promised the Jews as the descendants of Abraham. The people’s “enemy” have “spoken against” the mountains and the land, claiming that they have become their “possession.” The enemy here could be Babylon, but it is more likely Edom in the context of chapter 35. God states in v. 3 that Israel’s enemies have had “good reason” to “desolate” the land so that it has “become a possession of the rest of the nations,” instead of the people who own it from a biblical standpoint, the Jews. We can infer

that the “good reason” for God’s transferring the land from His chosen people to foreign nations is the former’s disobedience and rebellion against Him. And as a result, the Gentiles are “whispering” about the land, that God has abandoned it in the light of the people’s disobedience.

We continue with vs. 4-6,

36:4 ‘Therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of Adonai Yahweh.

Thus says Adonai Yahweh to the mountains and to the hills,
to the ravines and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes and
to the forsaken cities which have become a prey and
a derision to the rest of the nations which are round about (אֲשֶׁר מִסָּבִיב),

36:5 therefore thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Surely in the fire of My jealousy

I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom,
who appropriated My land (נָתְנוּ אֶת-אֲרָצִי) for themselves
as a possession with wholehearted joy and with scorn of soul, to drive it out for a prey.”

36:6 ‘Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel (עַל-אֲדֹמָתָא יִשְׂרָאֵל) and say

to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys,
“Thus says Adonai Yahweh, ‘Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy
and in My wrath because you have endured the insults of the nations.’

Through the words of the prophet, God assures the land of Israel, which includes the mountains, the hills, the valleys, and the abandoned cities, that “in the fire of [His] jealousy” for His land and for His people, He has “spoken against” the foreign nations, particularly Edom, for their mistreatment of the land and the people. In other words, while the Jews have deserved to be judged by God for their disobedience, to be driven off their land by their enemies, and for their enemies to possess their land instead, God will judge their enemies for mistreating His chosen people. No nation or group of people should ever harm the Jews, even if God motivates them to be His instruments of discipline and judgment against them. To oppress, persecute, and mistreat the Jews is to deserve and eventually attract and bring upon oneself God’s wrath, judgment, and destruction. This is what we see as God speaks against the Gentiles in v. 7,

36:7 “Therefore thus says Adonai Yahweh, ‘I have sworn (אֲנִי נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת-יְדִי) that

surely the nations which are around you (אֲשֶׁר לָכֶם מִסָּבִיב) will themselves endure their insults.

It will be an eye for an eye which will come upon the foreign nations who have so happily invaded the land of Israel and destroyed its cities and fields and taken possession of them. But there is good news for Israel, as God goes on to describe in vs. 8-12,

36:8 ‘But you, O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches
and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come (בְּנֵי קִרְבִּי לָבוֹא).

36:9 ‘For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you will be cultivated and sown.

36:10 ‘I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel (כָּל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל), all of it;
and the cities will be inhabited and the waste places (וְהַתְּרִבּוֹת) will be rebuilt.

36:11 ‘I will multiply on you man and beast; and they will increase and be fruitful;
and I will cause you to be inhabited as you were formerly and
will treat you better than at the first. Thus you will know that I am Yahweh.

36:12 ‘Yes, I will cause men — My people Israel — to walk on you and possess you,
so that you will become their inheritance and never again bereave them of children.’

God will cause the land to become exceedingly fruitful for the Jews, because “they will soon come” back to it (v. 8). Is God referring to the return of the Babylonian exiles around the mid-6th century B.C. or to God’s regathering His people on the land of Israel before and when Jesus returns to establish the permanent Kingdom of God on the earth? I think it is the latter, while there is the

possibility that God is hinting at the former, but only to point Ezekiel's listeners towards the distant future, which will culminate in the last days when Jesus returns. Therefore, the word "soon" here in v. 8 (literally the whole clause is "because they are on the verge to enter") means "for sure at a time when God prescribes and nothing will prevent Him from making the Jews' entering into their land happen exactly as He has planned."

This is in accordance with v. 9 where God assures the mountains and the whole land that He is "for" them and "will turn to" them, so that they "will be cultivated and sown" for the purpose of providing adequate food for His people, the Jews. As God goes on to say in v. 10, "I will multiply men [the people of Israel!] on" the mountains and the land, even "all the house of Israel, all of it." Here, certainly Israel means all thirteen tribes from Reuben to Ephraim and Manasseh to Benjamin. Thus, "the cities [of Israel] will be inhabited" and there will be no "waste places," so that both human beings and animals will dwell on the whole land. And this will be "as...formerly," when David was king and the kingdom was unified and prosperous under his rule (v. 11). But, as God also says in v. 11, He will "treat" the land (and the people!) "better than at first," meaning that the nation of Israel will be the kind of people whom God has always wanted them to be in their entirety—circumcised of heart and authentic believers in Him and now in His Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. "Thus [they] will know that [God is] Yahweh," which means too that Yahweh will be their God while they will be His people.

And the final clue in this paragraph that God is referring to the restored Kingdom of Israel under the Messiah is His saying to the mountains and the land, that He will "never again bereave them of children," which is to say that Jewish mothers will give birth to sons and daughters while living on the land, and this will go on for generation after generation without interruption and with anyone or anything coming along who or which would possibly stop it (v. 12).

These same ideas are also in the next three verses,

- 36:13 "Thus says Adonai Yahweh, 'Because they say to you,
 "You are a devourer of men and have bereaved your nation of children,"
 36:14 therefore you will no longer devour men and no longer
 bereave your nation of children,' declares Adonai Yahweh.
 36:15 "I will not let you hear insults from the nations anymore (עוֹד),
 nor will you bear disgrace from the peoples any longer (עוֹד),
 nor will you cause your nation to stumble any longer (עוֹד)," declares Adonai Yahweh."

The foreign nations look at the land of Israel and say that metaphorically it has consumed the Jews, because they, the Gentiles, have invaded it and destroyed its cities and fields. But this kind of action on the part of the other nations will cease forever. Never again will they and the land eat up the nation of Israel so that it is without new children who are born of Jewish mothers. God uses the two Hebrew words *lo'* (לֹא) and *'od* (עוֹד) three times in v. 15, which together also point us in the direction of interpreting Him as referring to the millennial kingdom of the Messiah (cf. Revelation 20). These words are translated above as "not...anymore" and "nor...any longer" (twice). This idea of finality is certainly in accord with God's promise to make Abraham's descendants a "great nation," so that their greatness will never be undone. It will be permanent and continuous under the Messiah's rule after Jesus returns.

Verse 16 begins a new message from God with a brief review of the Jews' unfortunate past and then an explanation of their glorious future. We begin with vs. 16-20,

- 36:16 Then the word of Yahweh came to me saying,
 36:17 "Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land,
 they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their way before Me
 was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity.
 36:18 "Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood

which they had shed on the land (עַל־הָאֲרֶץ), because they had defiled it with their idols.

36:19 “Also I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the lands.
According to their ways and their deeds I judged them.

36:20 “When they came to the nations where they went,
they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them,
‘These are the people of Yahweh; yet they have come out of His land (וְיִמְאֲדוּ יְצֵאוֹ).’

God most likely is referring to all the tribes who have descended from Jacob, that “when the house of Israel was living in their own land,” they acted in a corrupt and evil way, thus defiling the land (v. 17). As a result, God “poured out [His] wrath” on both the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah because of the “blood” of both their animal sacrifices to idols and the sacrifices of their children to these same false gods (v. 18). They performed these abominable acts on God’s holy land, the land of Israel. In addition, initially through the Assyrian exile in 722 B.C. and now by means of the Babylonian exile in the late 7th and early 6th centuries B.C., He “scattered them among” the Gentile nations, a dispersion which has continued down through the intervening centuries so that today the Jews live in “the lands” of the whole world. And this was because God has “judged” His chosen people for “their [evil] ways and their [immoral] deeds” (v. 19).

And as if their sinful behavior on the land which God promised to give the Jews was not enough, “they came to the nations” and “profaned [His] holy name” there simply by virtue of the Gentiles’ recognizing that they belong to Yahweh and that the land from which they have been driven belongs to Him also (v. 20). We can wonder if this is really a conscious understanding in the midst of an explicit conversation among the people of all the foreign nations in regard to the Jews and the land. Certainly, as long as even a small group of Jews in any Gentile country worship God and speak about Him publicly, even if their hearts are not fully changed by the Spirit of God, the surrounding citizens of each country cannot help but hear these people believe at some level that Yahweh is their God and the land of Israel is their land—because the Hebrew scriptures constantly mention these ideas! Thus, while being exposed to such information, the Gentiles themselves have to acknowledge what God says they do in v. 20, “These are the people of Yahweh; yet they have come out of His land.” Plus, a statement like this implies that the Jews belong in only one place on earth, on the land of Israel, even if the Gentiles (as we see in our own time!) do not want this to be the case.

God goes on in vs. 21-27,

36:21 “But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel
had profaned among the nations where they went.

36:22 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh,
“It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act,
but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.

36:23 “I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned
among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst.
Then the nations will know that I am Yahweh,” declares Adonai Yahweh,
“when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

36:24 “For I will take you from the nations, gather (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) you from all the lands
and bring you into your own land (אֶל־אֲדָמְתְּכֶם).

36:25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean;
I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

36:26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;
and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

36:27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes,
and you will be careful to observe (וְעָשִׂיתֶם) My ordinances.

The bottom line of vs. 21-23 is that God does not have a relationship with His chosen people, the Jews, primarily for their sake. Yes, He loves them, and He is committed to them according to His

hesed, so that He will never abandon them or destroy them completely. But truth be told, God loves Himself more than the nation of Israel, and He is more concerned about His reputation than He is theirs and their well-being. Therefore, anything that God does on behalf of the Jews to rescue them from their enemies and to fulfill His promises to them is primarily for Himself and to demonstrate that He is morally perfect and faithful to what He says He is going to do. This is what it means for God to be “holy.” He is certainly set apart and different (the basic meaning of “holy”) ontologically from human beings because He is uncreated while we are created. This alone makes Him “holy.” But He is also different morally. We sinful human beings lie, cheat, and steal. And we fail to keep our promises. In stark contrast, God never lies and always fulfills His promises and oaths. And what He has promised to do, He also guarantees that He will do it. Plus, He cares that both His chosen people, the Jews, and those who are not His chosen people, the Gentiles, see and know that He is “holy” and different in this way.

Therefore, God “will take [the Jews] from the nations, gather [them] from all the lands and bring [them] into [their] own land,” which is His land, the land of Israel (v. 24). In addition, He will “sprinkle clean water” on them to make them “clean,” meaning forgiven and inclined inwardly to worship only Him and never again false gods. And this will involve His giving them a “new heart” and a “new spirit.” He will change their “heart of stone,” which is hard and stubborn so that they have been disobeying Him, into a “heart of flesh,” meaning soft and inclined towards believing the biblical message and obeying His commandments, including those in the Mosaic Covenant, because it is their national covenant (cf. Ezekiel 11:19). This latter fact is what God means in v. 27, that He will “put [His] Spirit” within them and “cause [them] to walk” in the “statutes” which He gave them through Moses. As a result, they “will be careful” to guard His “ordinances” and the requirements which He has laid out for them in the Mosaic Covenant. This also confirms what God stated in Deuteronomy 30 and what the prophets declare will happen when the Messiah establishes the Kingdom of God on the land of Israel as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants.

God goes on with the same theme in vs. 28-31,

36:28 “You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers (בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם);

so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

36:29 “Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness;

and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you.

36:30 “I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field,

so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.

36:31 “Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good,

and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.

Verse 28 is the Abrahamic promise, that the land which God gave the Jews’ forefathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), originally the land of Canaan and now the land of Israel, will be exactly where they will live. This is where they belong. This is what they are to call home. And when they live there with new hearts and with authentic belief and faith, they will finally all together be God’s people. And, of course, He will be their God. Plus, God will rescue the Jews from the consequences of their “uncleanness” and sin (v. 29). He will save them from eternal condemnation as demonstrated by abundant, earthly food in the millennial kingdom where they will be the “great nation” He promised them. Never again will they experience deprivation and a famine on the land, which in past times had brought shame and disgrace to them among the Gentiles, because they were supposed to be God’s people and blessed by Him. They will also mourn over their past sins and repent (vs. 30-31).

Once again, God says,

36:32 “I am not doing this for your sake,” declares Adonai Yahweh, “let it be known to you.

Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!”

God will be acting primarily on His own behalf and to save His reputation among both the Jews and the Gentiles. And the former's mourning over their sin and repenting of it will be one way that God upholds His reputation—by including in the definition of the Abrahamic Covenant's "great nation" that the people of Israel are the kind of people who individually and collectively face squarely into their sin and long to be good instead of rebellious. And as God has already said,

36:33 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places (הַתְּהוֹמוֹת) will be rebuilt.

36:34 "The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by.

36:35 "They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.'

36:36 "Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, Yahweh, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, Yahweh, have spoken and will do it."

With complete forgiveness of their sins by God will come a change in the Jews' cities. Instead of being "waste places," they will be "inhabited" after being "rebuilt" (v. 33). Plus, the "desolate land will be cultivated." The Jews will grow plenty of food for themselves "in the sight of everyone who passes by" and who knows that the land used to be "desolate" (v. 34). Now it will be "like the garden of Eden" which God planted and where He provided abundant food for Adam and Eve, while "the waste, desolate, and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited" (v. 35). And anyone living outside the land of Israel and yet in the countries which surround it "will know" that it has been God, Yahweh, who has been the ultimate cause of their rebuilding "the ruined places" and making former "desolate" fields productive (v. 36). God completes this paragraph with the statement, "I, Yahweh, have spoken and will do it."

And the chapter ends with Ezekiel's saying,

36:37 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock.

36:38 "Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so will the waste cities (הַתְּהוֹמוֹת הַיְּהוּדִים) be filled with flocks of men.

Then they will know that I am Yahweh.'"

During the restored Kingdom of Israel after Jesus returns, all that the Jews have to do is ask, and God will make them numerous on their land. Just as the people of Israel are supposed to bring a huge number of sheep and goats to the temple in Jerusalem to be sacrificed to God by the Levitical priests, so also will God turn the former empty cities, which were destroyed by their enemies, into populous centers of life and faith. The upshot of all this for the Jews is that "they will know that" their God is Yahweh, who has kept the promise which He made to Abraham in Genesis 12-22 to make them the most powerful nation in human history.

Ezekiel 37:1-14

37:1 The hand of Yahweh was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of Yahweh and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones.

37:2 He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry.

37:3 He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

And I answered, "Adonai Yahweh, You know."

37:4 Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh.'

37:5 "Thus says Adonai Yahweh to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause

breath to enter you that you may come to life.

- 37:6 'I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am Yahweh.'
- 37:7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone.
- 37:8 And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them.
- 37:9 Then He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath (אֶל-הָרוּחַ), prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath (אֶל-הָרוּחַ), 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.'"
- 37:10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army (תָּהִיל וְגִדּוֹל מְאֹד-מְאֹד).
- 37:11 Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel (כָּל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל); behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.'
- 37:12 "Therefore prophecy and say to them, 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel (וְהִבֵּאתִי אֲתֶכֶם אֶל-אֶרֶץ מִתְּיֵשָׁרָאֵל)."
- 37:13 "Then you will know that I am Yahweh, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people.
- 37:14 "I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land (עַל-אֶרֶץ מְתֵיכֶם).
- Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have spoken and done it," declares Yahweh."

This famous dry bones vision is the first of two important passages in chapter 37. There are two options for how to interpret it. The first is that it is talking about actual bones of Jews who were believers in past years and died before God brought about the return of the Messiah Jesus, so that He is assuring them who read this passage before they die that He will resurrect them, change them into immortal and morally perfect beings, and cause them to participate in the restored Kingdom of Israel under Jesus' rule when he returns as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant for the Jews. The second option is that it is highly metaphorical, that the bones are analogous to the Jews' being spiritually dead and dispersed in foreign lands until God chooses to bring about a revival among them while gathering them into the land which He promised them and fulfilling His promise to unify them and make them the most powerful nation in history.

I think that the second option fits the data more accurately. We will proceed with this assumption and determine if I am correct. Ezekiel begins in v. 1,

- 37:1 The hand of Yahweh was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of Yahweh and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones.

God has brought Ezekiel by means of His Spirit to "the middle of the valley," and it is "full of bones." Is this an actual valley, maybe the valley of Kidron on the east side of Jerusalem, or a valley near Babylon where Ezekiel is living, or a valley in a vision which he is seeing in his mind? I think that the last option is correct. Ezekiel is imagining all this in his mind as the Spirit of God brings these images to him in a vision. In line with my assumption that the vision is filled with metaphors of spiritually dead Israel, I interpret the valley as the world of Gentile nations, and the bones are individual Jews, who, for the most part, are unbelievers and lacking both a changed heart and genuine faith. The bones aptly represent them as lacking biblical, spiritual life in their rebellion against God and their disobedience of the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, the bones are for the most part unbelieving Jews who are dispersed throughout the world of Gentile nations.

In v. 2, the prophet continues,

37:2 He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry.

Ezekiel now indicates that God caused him to wander around the collection of the dry bones, and he notices that they are “very dry,” meaning that the Jews as a whole out in the world are very much stuck in their disobedience of God and incapable of making themselves spiritually alive. No sinful human being can change his inwardness and cause himself to become an authentic believer in God and His Messiah, Jesus. In Ezekiel’s visions, this is the inner condition of these Jews in the world.

In v. 3, Ezekiel states,

37:3 He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”
And I answered, “Adonai Yahweh, You know.”

God asks the prophet if it is possible for the “bones” to “live,” i.e., for them to acquire spiritual life and become biblically obedient Jews? I think that Ezekiel’s answer is an unequivocal, “Yes,” when he responds, “Adonai Yahweh, You know.” Of course God knows, because He is the only one who can make these spiritually dead Jews change into authentic believers.

Ezekiel thus continues in v. 4,

37:4 Again He said to me, “Prophecy over these bones and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh.’”

God is ordering Ezekiel to “prophecy over these bones” and tell them something very important from Him, which is in vs. 5-6,

37:5 “Thus says Adonai Yahweh to these bones, ‘Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life.

37:6 ‘I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am Yahweh.’”

As I said, it is God and God alone who can cause people who are abject rebels against Him to change inwardly and become authentic believers. This is what God means by injecting “breath” into these Jews so that they “come to life” with “sinews” on them, along with “flesh” and “skin.” They will become complete and whole human beings in the sense that they will be genuine in their faith and obedience to God. God will regenerate and revivify them, thus causing them to obey Him as He has longed for the Jews to do since their inception as His chosen people from the time of Abraham and especially Moses when He rescued them from slavery in Egypt.

Ezekiel obeys God in v. 7,

37:7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

He speaks to the bones as God has directed him, and the next thing he sees is the bones “rattling” as they come together. The description of the bones continues in v. 8,

37:8 And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them.

Then, in v. 9, God gives a commandment to Ezekiel,

37:9 Then He said to me, “Prophecy to the breath (אֶל־הָרוּחַ), prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath (אֶל־הָרוּחַ), ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Come from the four winds,

O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.””

I think that the “breath” from the “four winds” is the Spirit of God which inhabits the whole earth and causes God’s plans and purposes to unfold and succeed as He desires. The “slain” are those Jews who were disobedient to God on the land of Israel and then scattered throughout the world, starting with the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles in the 8th and 6th centuries B.C., continuing with the Roman expulsion of the Jews from their land in A.D. 132-135, and including periodic migration of Jews from one place to another due to unfortunate circumstances such as persecution, warfare, or economic hardship—none of which will occur when God fulfills His promise to Abraham and makes them the most powerful nation in history on the land of Israel during the millennial kingdom.

In v. 10, Ezekiel does as God commands,

37:10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army (תָּיֵל גָּדוֹל כְּאֶדְ-מֵאֵד).

Thus, Ezekiel reports in v. 10 that he spoke as God had told him, and “breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.” In other words, the scattered and spiritually dead Jews gain an inwardness of a changed heart, and there are many of them, like an army that is large enough to defeat any enemy that might come against them. And indeed, they will defeat their own sin and tendency to rebel against God by becoming spiritually alive inside so that they can genuinely repent of their sin and pursue proper moral obedience to God.

In v. 11, God provides a description of this revived army of people,

37:11 Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel (כָּל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל); behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.’

The bones are “the whole house of Israel,” who have complained that their “bones have dried up” and their “hope has perished” such that they “are completely cut off.” Even though these Jews have formerly lacked genuine faith, in Ezekiel’s visions they have enough awareness of themselves as Jews, scattered throughout the Gentile world, to recognize that their situation looks hopeless in regard to God’s promise of their living on the land of Israel and becoming the “great nation” of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12-22. To them, it appears as though they are “completely cut off” from the land and from God’s promises. They are dwelling in countries outside the land in the far reaches of the world with what looks like no hope of the entire ethnic group of Jews ever returning to the land and inhabiting it together as God has promised.

In the light of the Jews’ despair, God instructs Ezekiel in v. 12,

37:12 “Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel (וְהֵבֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל).’

It is possible that, in line with the first option I mentioned at the beginning of this explanation, God means that He will literally open the graves of dead Jews who have been authentic believers while they were alive and that, after resurrecting them, He will bring them into the land of Israel as immortal and morally perfect human beings—like Jesus with whom they will reign over the mortal, sinful Jews of the millennial kingdom. However, in the context of the surrounding chapters in Ezekiel, I am inclined to think that God is metaphorically referring to reviving spiritually dead Jews whom He has scattered to the four corners of the world because of their disobedience to Him as God’s chosen people. It is in this way that He has brought judgment on the people of Israel and disciplined them—yet, with His faithfulness and commitment to His promises in mind. Therefore,

God is saying here in v. 12 that, in the process of changing the Jews' inwardness and hearts, He will gather them back into the land which He promised them so that they may live on it in complete safety and security.

God continues in v. 13,

37:13 "Then you will know that I am Yahweh, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people.

As He has said before, God is stating here that the Jews will finally "know that [He is] Yahweh," when He causes so many of them to become authentic believers because, as He also says, they are "My people." The Jews are the only ethnic group on earth towards whom God will act in such a magnificent way on such a large scale.

And He encourages them further in v. 14,

37:14 "I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land (עַל-אֲדֹמָתְכֶם). Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have spoken and done it," declares Yahweh."

God once more declares that He will use His Spirit to cause the Jews in foreign lands to "come to life" spiritually by changing their inwardness, and, in the process of doing so, He will also "place" them on the land which belongs to them and has belonged to them since God first promised it to them through their forefather Abraham in Genesis 12. This will be the fulfillment of all the covenants which He has made with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants.

To summarize, here is how I interpret the elements of this vision in the context of the rest of Ezekiel –

1. The valley is analogous to the world and Gentile nations.
2. The bones are individual Jews who are, for the most part, unbelievers.
3. The bones' coming to life and becoming complete human beings is analogous to the Jews' in foreign lands being regenerated.
4. The slain Jews are those who were disobedient to God on the land of Israel and then scattered throughout the world.
5. The exceedingly great army is a multitude of regenerated Jews.
6. The statement by the Jews in foreign lands, "Our hope has perished and we are completely cut off" means that they have no hope of returning to the land and becoming the "great nation" of the Abrahamic Covenant.
7. God's opening the graves and the Jews' coming out and into the land of Israel is analogous to the spiritually dead Jews' in foreign lands becoming regenerated Israel with God's Spirit within them who physically return to the land of Israel.
8. Then the Jews will know that God is their God who fulfills His promises, especially the one to Abraham to make them a "great nation" on the land which He gives them.

Ezekiel 37:15-28

37:15 The word of Yahweh came again to me saying,

37:16 "And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, 'For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.'

37:17 "Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand.

37:18 "When the sons of your people speak to you saying,

'Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?'

37:19 say to them, 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand."

37:20 "The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.

37:21 "Say to them, 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) them from every side and bring them into their own land (אֶל-אֲדָמָתָם);

37:22 and I will make them one nation in the land (בְּאֶרֶץ), on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.

37:23 "They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.

37:24 "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep (וְשָׁמְרוּ) My statutes and observe them.

37:25 "They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant (עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְעַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב), in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever (עַד-עוֹלָם); and David My servant will be their prince forever (לְעוֹלָם).

37:26 "I will make a covenant of peace (בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם) with them; it will be an everlasting covenant (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary (אֶת-מִקְדָּשִׁי) in their midst forever (לְעוֹלָם).

37:27 "My dwelling place (מִשְׁכָּנִי) also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

37:28 "And the nations will know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies (מְקַדֵּשׁ) Israel, when My sanctuary (מִקְדָּשִׁי) is in their midst forever (לְעוֹלָם)."

In this second passage of chapter 37, Ezekiel presents a message to his contemporary Jews in Babylon that involves two sticks that are brought together. The message begins in vs. 15-16,

37:15 The word of Yahweh came again to me saying,

37:16 "And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, 'For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.'

We see that, initially, the prophet takes one of the sticks and writes on it, "For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions." I think that Judah refers to the Jews of the southern Kingdom of Judah who are in the process of being taken into exile by the Babylonians. In addition, Ezekiel's statement on the stick calls these same Jews "the sons of Israel," who are probably the members of both the tribe of Levi and the tribe of Simeon, who have been living in the midst of the tribe of Judah and are now finding themselves to be exiles with them in Babylon. These latter two tribes are "his companions," meaning the companions of the people of Judah. Even though they all three are technically "sons of Israel" as descendants of Jacob, God distinguishes between Judah and the other two by referring to Levi and Simeon as "the sons of Israel."

Then in v. 16 God instructs Ezekiel to take a second stick and write on it, "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions." We recall that when Jacob blessed his twelve sons in Genesis 49 around 1900 B.C., he replaced Reuben with Joseph as his firstborn. But, in

Genesis 48, Jacob had also adopted Joseph's sons Manasseh and Ephraim and replaced the former with the latter as the firstborn. Therefore, when the kingdom split after Solomon and under the reign of his son, Rehoboam, around 900 B.C., the descendants of Joseph and his son Ephraim had become the primary "tribe" of the northern Kingdom of Israel. This allows us to interpret "all the house of Israel, his companions," which Ezekiel includes when he writes on the second stick, as the other ten nine tribes of the northern kingdom. Again, even though all the tribes of the northern Kingdom of Israel are equally "the house of Israel," God distinguishes Ephraim and Manasseh from the other ten by referring to the latter tribes as "all the house of Israel." Indeed, these other tribes are just as much descendants of Jacob as are Joseph and Ephraim.

Next, in vs. 17-22, God tells Ezekiel what He wants him to do with the two sticks and the reason why,

- 37:17 "Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick,
that they may become one in your hand.
37:18 "When the sons of your people speak to you saying,
'Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?'
37:19 say to them, 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph,
which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions;
and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick,
and they will be one in My hand."
37:20 "The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.
37:21 "Say to them, 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Behold, I will take
the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone,
and I will gather (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) them from every side and bring them into their own land (אֶל-אֲדָמָתָם);
37:22 and I will make them one nation in the land (בְּאֶרֶץ), on the mountains of Israel;
and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer
be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.

God first commands the prophet to join the sticks together into one of his hands (v. 17). And the meaning of this exercise is that He is going to "take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and...gather them from every side and bring them into their own land, and...make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel, and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms" (vs. 21-22). We know that the Jews of the northern kingdom were scattered into the Assyrian Empire in 722 B.C. and that those of the southern kingdom were exiled into the Babylonian Empire between 605 & 586 B.C. We also know that later in history many of these original Jewish exiles migrated to the far corners of the earth, even up to the time of our modern world, where many of them remain. Even though there is a widespread belief that the tribes of the northern kingdom have left no trace of their continued existence, I think that we can assume that these Jews in foreign lands descend from all twelve, indeed thirteen (counting Ephraim and Manasseh), tribes of Israel. Otherwise, it makes no sense that God uses the imagery of the two sticks to declare that He is going to "take the sons of Israel," i.e., all thirteen tribes, and "gather them...and bring them into their own land" as "one nation."

Thus, with these two sticks and Ezekiel's bringing them together in his hand, God is stating unequivocally that, at the end of the present age when Jesus returns, He will gather Jews from wherever they have gone to live in this world and will lovingly cause them to congregate and become unified under the leadership of "one king" on the land of Israel. God originally split the Kingdom of Israel, i.e., of all twelve/thirteen tribes, because of Solomon's sins against Him. He is saying here in Ezekiel 37 that this will never happen again. Indeed, when Jesus becomes the earthly, messianic king of the Jews, he will obviously be morally perfect (as he has always been) and will rule with moral perfection—in complete contrast to all the previous Davidic kings.

God also says in v. 23 of the returning Jews,

37:23 “They will no longer defile themselves with their idols,
or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions;
but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned,
and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.

In other words, the entire regathered nation of Israel will be Jews of changed hearts and authentic belief, faith, and obedience. It is not that they will be morally perfect like their king, Jesus, but they will at least be genuine, repentant sinners who eschew the idol worship of their ancestors who suffered the exiles of Assyria and Babylon. God “will cleanse them” and thus forgive them completely as a result of Jesus’ death and resurrection and as a result of their genuine belief in him. This will make them all God’s people, and finally He “will be their God.”

Then, to clarify, God says several things more. First, in v. 24,

37:24 “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd;
and they will walk in My ordinances and keep (יִשְׁמְרוּ) My statutes and observe them.

God will fulfill the Davidic Covenant and provide the Jews with their final and permanent king who has descended from David. This will be Jesus when he returns so that “they will have one shepherd.” Plus, the entirety of His chosen people “will walk” in and “keep” and “observe” (literally “do”) the Mosaic Covenant as God has required since He made this covenant with the Israelites in the Sinai Desert around 1500 B.C. However, they have never fully obeyed it. In addition,

37:25 “They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant (עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְעַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב),
in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they,
and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever (עַד-עוֹלָם);
and David My servant will be their prince forever (לְעוֹלָם).

Not much new is being said here. God promised the land of Israel to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Jews of the restored kingdom when Jesus returns “will live on it, they, and their sons and their son’s sons, forever,” or ‘*ad ‘olam* (עַד-עוֹלָם), meaning into perpetuity, which will be for as long as God wants the present earth to exist before He destroys it and creates a new and eternal earth according to Revelation 20 & 21. In the same way, “David,” i.e., Jesus as David’s final royal descendant, who will be God’s “servant,” will rule over them “forever” (*le‘olam*, לְעוֹלָם) which will be during the remaining time of the present earth. Plus, God says in vs. 26-28,

37:26 “I will make a covenant of peace (בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם) with them;
it will be an everlasting covenant (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) with them.
And I will place them and multiply them,
and will set My sanctuary (אֶת-מִקְדָּשִׁי) in their midst forever (לְעוֹלָם).

37:27 “My dwelling place (מִשְׁכָּנִי) also will be with them;
and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

37:28 “And the nations will know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies (מְקַדֵּשׁ) Israel,
when My sanctuary (מִקְדָּשִׁי) is in their midst forever (לְעוֹלָם).”

This “covenant of peace” is the covenant of *shalom* on the land of Israel, which is what we have already seen, for example, in Jeremiah 31:31-34 as the New Covenant. This covenant comes about through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth at his first appearance and provides complete and eternal forgiveness for the Jewish nation. Therefore, this covenant is “everlasting” (*‘olam*, עוֹלָם) on this earth for Israel and will also be effective into eternity for all authentic believers in God and in Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles (v. 26). In other words, Jesus’ death and role as High Priest as implied by Jeremiah 31:34 will serve as the means of God’s forgiveness of believing Jews

and Gentiles during the temporary, messianic, and millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 as well as the means of His forgiveness of both Jews and Gentiles on the new and eternal earth of Revelation 21.

God also says that He will “place” the Jews and “multiply them,” meaning that they will continue to live on the land of Israel for generation after generation during the millennial kingdom, because this will be their one and only permanent country for as long as Jesus rules over them on this earth (v. 26). In addition God “will set [His] sanctuary in their midst forever” (v. 26). The Hebrew word for “sanctuary” is *miqdash* (מִקְדָּשׁ), which means holy place, or the place that is set apart from all others. I interpret this holy place not as the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, but as Jesus himself, because he is the icon of God within the creation (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15). And he will be God’s “holy place” among the Jews “forever,” which is literally *le’olam* (לְעוֹלָם), meaning for as long as God desires.

And God will dwell among the people of Israel and in them, I assume, by means of His Spirit, so that “they will be [His] people” and “[He] will be their God” (v. 27). Thus, the Gentile nations who surround Israel and in the rest of the world will recognize that Yahweh is the God of the Jews and that He has set them apart to be His people on the land of Israel. They will also know this because God has already stated that He will “set” His “sanctuary” in the midst of the Jews during the entire millennial kingdom. And this “holy place” will be Jesus as the human icon of God.

Therefore, this second passage in Ezekiel 37 clearly indicates that God will fulfill His promises to Abraham and David to make the Jewish people a “great nation,” and that part of their greatness will be that they have a king of the Davidic Covenant ruling over them and providing them with permanent, even eternal, forgiveness.

Ezekiel 38-39

38:1 And the word of Yahweh came to me saying,

38:2 “Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal [chief prince of Meshech and Tubal], and prophesy against him

38:3 and say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal [chief prince of Meshech and Tubal].

38:4 “I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords;

38:5 Persia, Ethiopia and Put with them, all of them with shield and helmet;

38:6 Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north (בֵּית תֹּגַרְמָה) with all its troops — many peoples with you (עַמִּים רַבִּים אִתְּךָ).

38:7 “Be prepared, and prepare yourself, you and all your companies that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them.

38:8 “After many days (מִן־יָמִים רַבִּים) you will be summoned; in the latter years (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַשָּׁנִים) you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely (לְבִטָּחָה), all of them.

38:9 “You will go up, you will come like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you.”

38:10 ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “It will come about on that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא), that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan,

38:11 and you will say, ‘I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely (לְבִטָּחָה), all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates,

38:12 to capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world (עַל־טֹבֶהַר הָאָרֶץ).’

38:13 “Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish with all its villages will say to you, ‘Have you come to capture spoil? Have you assembled your company to seize plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to capture great spoil?’”

- 38:14 “Therefore prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “On that day when My people Israel are living securely (לְבִטָּחָה), will you not know it?”
- 38:15 “You will come from your place out of the remote parts of the north (מִן־רִבְּתֵי צָפוֹן), you and many peoples with you (וְעַמִּים רַבִּים אִתְּךָ), all of them riding on horses, a great assembly and a mighty army;
- 38:16 and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It shall come about in the last days (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים) that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog.”
- 38:17 ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Are you the one of whom I spoke in former days through My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days for many years that I would bring you against them?”
- 38:18 “It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel,” declares Adonai Yahweh, “that My fury will mount up in My anger.
- 38:19 “In My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.
- 38:20 “The fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all the creeping things that creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence; the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse and every wall will fall to the ground.
- 38:21 “I will call for a sword against him on all My mountains,” declares Adonai Yahweh. “Every man’s sword will be against his brother.
- 38:22 “With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him (וְעַל־עַמִּים רַבִּים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ), a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone.
- 38:23 “I will magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am Yahweh.”
- 39:1 “And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal [chief prince of Meshech and Tubal];
- 39:2 and I will turn you around, drive you on, take you up from the remotest parts of the north (מִן־רִבְּתֵי צָפוֹן) and bring you against the mountains of Israel.
- 39:3 “I will strike your bow from your left hand and dash down your arrows from your right hand.
- 39:4 “You will fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field.
- 39:5 “You will fall on the open field; for it is I who have spoken,” declares Adonai Yahweh.
- 39:6 “And I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety (לְבִטָּחָה); and they will know that I am Yahweh.
- 39:7 “My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore (עוֹד). And the nations will know that I am Yahweh, the Holy One in Israel.
- 39:8 “Behold, it is coming and it shall be done,” declares Adonai Yahweh. “That is the day of which I have spoken.
- 39:9 “Then those who inhabit the cities of Israel will go out and make fires with the weapons and burn them, both shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, war clubs and spears, and for seven years they will make fires of them.
- 39:10 “They will not take wood from the field or gather firewood from the forests, for they will make fires with the weapons; and they will take the spoil of those who despoiled them and seize the plunder of those who plundered them,” declares Adonai Yahweh.
- 39:11 “On that day I will give Gog a burial ground there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea, and it will block off those who would pass by. So they will bury Gog there with all his horde, and they will call it the valley of Hamon-gog.

- 39:12 “For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land (לְמַעַן טַהַר אֶת־הָאָרֶץ).”
- 39:13 “Even all the people of the land (כָּל־עַם הָאָרֶץ) will bury them; and it will be to their renown on the day that I glorify Myself,” declares Adonai Yahweh.
- 39:14 “They will set apart men who will constantly pass through the land (בְּאֶרֶץ), burying those who were passing through, even those left on the surface of the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search.
- 39:15 “As those who pass through the land (בְּאֶרֶץ) pass through and anyone sees a man’s bone, then he will set up a marker by it until the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-Gog.
- 39:16 “And even the name of the city will be Hamonah. So they will cleanse the land (הָאָרֶץ).”
- 39:17 “As for you, son of man, thus says Adonai Yahweh, ‘Speak to every kind of bird and to every beast of the field, ‘Assemble and come, gather from every side to My sacrifice which I am going to sacrifice for you, as a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood.
- 39:18 “You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, as though they were rams, lambs, goats and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan.
- 39:19 “So you will eat fat until you are glutted and drink blood until you are drunk from My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.
- 39:20 “You will be glutted at My table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all the men of war,” declares Adonai Yahweh.
- 39:21 “And I will set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them.
- 39:22 “And the house of Israel will know that I am Yahweh their God from that day onward.
- 39:23 “The nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity because they acted treacherously against Me, and I hid My face from them; so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and all of them fell by the sword.
- 39:24 “According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I dealt with them, and I hid My face from them.””
- 39:25 Therefore thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Now (עַתָּה) I will restore the fortunes (אֲשִׁיב אֶת־שָׁבוֹת) of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name.
- 39:26 “They will forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they perpetrated against Me, when they live securely (לְבִטָּחָה) on their own land (עַל־אֲדָמָתָם) with no one to make them afraid.
- 39:27 “When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations.
- 39:28 “Then they will know that I am Yahweh their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them to their own land (וְכִנְסֵתִים עַל־אֲדָמָתָם); and I will leave none of them there any longer (עוֹד).
- 39:29 “I will not hide My face from them any longer (עוֹד), for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” declares Adonai Yahweh.

These are two unusual chapters in the light of what we have seen already in the prophets—that God, after He has driven His people Israel off the land which He gave them and into foreign countries, will gather them back into the land of Israel where the final Davidic king will rule over them permanently and, from that moment on, they will experience abundant prosperity and success for many generations without ever being invaded or harmed by their enemies again. Accordingly, Ezekiel 39, especially verses 25-29, seems to affirm that God will grant permanent and uninterrupted *shalom* to the Jews. However, chapter 38 indicates that this will be only after they have been gathered

back into the land, are “living securely,” *and then invaded and attacked by a large army coming from the “remotest parts of the north.”* In addition, the peace and prosperity arrive only after there is a “great earthquake” along with major geographical and topographical changes which take place throughout the land of Israel. But will these natural catastrophes affect only the invading army, or will they also do great damage to the Jews, even killing many of them? It may very well be the latter, because Ezekiel 39:10 states that the invading army will have “despoiled” and “plundered” the Jews before they collect the “spoil” and “plunder” of the army. Thus, the Jews will suffer at the hands of the invading army, and they may very well suffer the effects of the natural catastrophes, after which they will experience the magnificent relief of continuous and permanent *shalom* and well-being. However, in either case, God will destroy the hostile, Gentile army, making their corpses available for food to predatory birds and animals. And for “seven years” the Jews will use their discarded weapons as fuel for burning.

How do we reconcile these chapters with what we have learned from other passages in the prophets about God’s gathering His chosen people back into the land of Israel in order to make them the “great nation” of the messianic kingdom in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant? I think that there are at least three possibilities—

- 1) The other passages are merely a summary and lack all the details of Ezekiel 38-39, so that, even though there may be a relatively small number of Jews already living on the land of Israel, God gathers a very large multitude of them only once from foreign countries immediately before Jesus returns, and they all begin living on the land in relative security. However, very soon after the large return of Jews to the land and before they all live securely on it completely and permanently, they go through a major invasion by a coalition of Gentile armies led by Gog of Magog, and many of the Jews die because of both the armies and natural catastrophes. Then, the surviving Jews become the “great nation” of the Abrahamic Covenant such that God will change them all inwardly through His Spirit and provide them with their permanent king, the Messiah, whom we know is Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, the ultimate point of these other passages is the same as that of Ezekiel 38-39—that eventually God will fulfill His promise to Abraham to make his descendants the most powerful nation in history after disciplining them during the course of their history, especially from the time of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities and even after this one and final gathering of them into the land immediately before Jesus returns.
- 2) The other passages are merely a summary and lack all the details of Ezekiel 38-39, so that God gathers the Jews over the course of a long period of time, even a hundred years, before Jesus returns. During this time on the land of Israel, they gain a level of security, safety, and prosperity that the whole world recognizes. However, they are still vulnerable, and, immediately before Jesus returns, they go through a major invasion by a coalition of Gentile armies led by Gog of Magog, and many of the Jews die because of both the armies and natural catastrophes. Then, God will continue gathering the Jews from foreign nations so that these new Jews and any who survived the armies and natural catastrophes become the “great nation” of the Abrahamic Covenant. And God will change them all inwardly through His Spirit and provide them with their permanent king, the Messiah, whom we know is Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, the ultimate point of these other passages is the same as that of Ezekiel 38-39—that eventually God will fulfill His promise to Abraham to make his descendants the most powerful nation in history after disciplining them during the course of their history, especially from the time of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities and after however long it takes Him to gather them into the land for the last time.
- 3) There are two gatherings of the Jewish people from foreign lands. The first gathering involves only some of the dispersed Jews, and they will gain a level of security, safety, and prosperity

that the whole world recognizes. However, they are still vulnerable, and they go through a major invasion by a coalition of Gentile armies led by Gog of Magog, and many of the Jews die because of both the armies and natural catastrophes. But afterwards, as spoken of in the other passages in the prophets, God will produce a second gathering of the Jews whom He has chosen from foreign nations, and these with any surviving Jews on the land from the first gathering will become the “great nation” of the Abrahamic Covenant. And God will change them all inwardly through His Spirit and provide them with their permanent king, the Messiah, whom we know is Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, the ultimate point of these other passages is the same as that of Ezekiel 38-39—that eventually God will fulfill His promise to Abraham to make his descendants the most powerful nation in history after disciplining them during the course of their history, especially from the time of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities and after the final two gatherings of the Jews into the land.

The subtle difference between the second and third options is that all the prophets are referring to a gathering of the Jews over an extended period of time in the second option in contrast to their referring to only a second rather quick gathering of the Jews in the third option. I am inclined to think that the second option is correct, not least because of what we have seen within the last one hundred years. There has been an extended and lengthy regathering of the Jews into the modern state of Israel and back into the land which God gave to Abraham. And they have been living relatively securely, fending off many attacks by surrounding nations and even by people within their land, while also making themselves quite successful economically, politically, and militarily within the Middle East. There are also some clues within Ezekiel 38-39 that I think lead us in the direction of concluding that the second option is the right one, and I will point these out as we encounter them in our analysis.

The first six verses of chapter 38 state,

- 38:1 And the word of Yahweh came to me saying,
 38:2 “Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him
 38:3 and say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.
 38:4 “I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords;
 38:5 Persia, Ethiopia and Put with them, all of them with shield and helmet;
 38:6 Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all its troops — many peoples with you.

Ezekiel reports in v. 1 that God has declared a message to him. In v. 2, He again calls him “Son of man,” because he is a regular human being. And He tells Ezekiel, “Set your face toward Gog and the land of Magog.” There are two possibilities for who is Gog and where the land of Magog is located. One is that this land is located as far north as Russia so that Gog is the leader of the people and nation of this land. The other is that it is definitely north of Israel, but closer than Russia. It is Turkey, and Gog is their ruler. The key is how to interpret exactly the phrase in v. 6 “from the remote parts of the north,” *yarketay tzaphon* (יִרְכֹּתַי צָפוֹן) in Hebrew and *ap' eschatou borra* (ἀπ' ἐσχάτου βορρᾶ) in the Greek Septuagint. Certainly, in our day, Russia is the most distant country north of Israel, and Moscow is in fact almost due north of Jerusalem. However, in the book of Ezekiel, God was speaking at the beginning of the 6th century B.C., and “remote” was not as distant in those days as it is in ours. Therefore, the area of modern-day Turkey would have easily fit the requirement of the phrase “remote parts of the north,” and I think that interpreting it this way within Ezekiel’s contemporary geographical context makes more sense than reading our own world into His statements.

Also, as it is translated in the NAS95, God identifies Gog in v. 2 as “the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.” However, the phrase “the prince of Rosh” (*nesee’ rosh*, נִשְׂעִי רֹשׁ) could also mean “the chief prince” or “the head leader,” and I think this is correct. Therefore, instead of associating Rosh with Russia, which is quite common among modern interpreters, God is intensifying the sense of the Hebrew word *nesee’* (נִשְׂעִי), which means prince or leader, because the word *rosh* (רֹשׁ) itself means head or beginning. In other words, when combined with the word *nesee’* (נִשְׂעִי), *rosh* (רֹשׁ) indicates that Gog is at the top of the chain of command. Thus, Gog is not the only leader of Meshech and Tubal, but he is the head of the leaders of these other nations and countries. And God tells Ezekiel to “prophesy [speak on His behalf] against him” in particular.

And so Ezekiel does in vs. 3-4, telling Gog that God is going to “put hooks” into his “jaws” and bring him out of his country with his army, who will be heavily and magnificently armed, so that it appears as though he will be invincible in whatever campaign God has planned for him. The fact that he will have hooks in his jaws means that nothing will stop God from accomplishing His purposes and using Gog and his army exactly the way He wants. Ezekiel also says in vs. 5-6 that “Persia, Ethiopia, and Put,” along with “Gomer” and “all its troops” and “Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north” will accompany him and his army. Notice that these other nations who join Gog are from all four directions. Persia is in the east. Ethiopia is in the southwest. Put, perhaps identified with Libya in northern Africa, is in the west. And Gomer along with Beth-togarmah are probably in the north.

God continues with his message through Ezekiel in vs. 7-9,

38:7 “Be prepared, and prepare yourself, you and all your companies that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them.

38:8 “After many days (מִיָּמִים רַבִּים) you will be summoned; in the latter years (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַשָּׁנִים) you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely (לְבֶטֶחַ), all of them.

38:9 “You will go up, you will come like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you.”

He commands Gog in v. 7 to get himself and his multinational armies ready. It will be “after many days,” indeed “in the latter years” or, literally, “in the last of the years” (*be’ahreeth hashaneem*, בְּאַחֲרֵית הַשָּׁנִים) (*ep’ eschatou eton*, ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου ἐτών in the Greek Septuagint) that God will call upon Gog to carry out His plans. And these are that he “come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste.” This could very well refer to the lengthy time period between the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (along with the expulsion of all the Jews from their land in A.D. 135) and the present. It is certainly during this time that the land of Israel has been more like a “continual waste.” And then, “in the last of the days” would be relatively soon after some of the Jews have been gathered back into the land and the modern-state of Israel is created, both of which have taken place during the past century. It would therefore be after the Jews have reestablished themselves to a large degree on the land which God promised to Abraham and “they are living securely, all of them,” or at least they are living much more securely than they ever have (v. 8). However, this is still not as safely and securely as they will live after Jesus returns. But before he returns, God will call upon Gog to “go up” and “come like a storm,” so that he “will be like a cloud covering the land” of Israel with his multinational armies (v. 9).

Then God describes how He will put hooks into Gog’s jaws,

38:10 ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “It will come about on that day (בְּיֵמֵי הַהוּא), that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan,

38:11 and you will say, 'I will go up against the land of unwallled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates, **38:12** to capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world.'

Because He is the transcendent author of the entire story of this vast universe and this tiny planet and its human history, including the story of each and every individual, God will cause "thoughts" to "come into" the mind of Gog so that he "will devise an evil plan" (v. 10). He will say to himself, "I will go up against" the people of Israel who think that they are living "securely" with no one to harm them (v. 11). And he will be able to think this way because the Jews will have such an outstanding military and defense system that they consider themselves to be invincible. However, Gog believes that he is invincible, because God has caused him to desire "to capture spoil and seize plunder" from "the people who are gathered from the nations" (v. 12). The Jews have returned to their land and made it as habitable as anyone would want it to be. And Gog wants what they have.

God also identifies His chosen people as those "who live at the center of the world," literally "at the navel of the earth" ('*al tabur ha'arets* (עַל־טַבּוּר הָאָרֶץ); *epi ton omphalon tays gays* (ἐπὶ τὸν ὀμφαλὸν τῆς γῆς) in the Greek Septuagint). In other words, no matter what other country may be occupying human beings' minds as the center of their attention because of its power, prosperity, and international influence, God always considers Jerusalem and Israel to be His center of attention. Consequently, the most important place in the world throughout all human history has been and will continue to be Jerusalem and the land of Israel, which God promised to Abraham and his descendants who have come through Isaac and Jacob. God is saying in v. 12 that Gog, the Jews' last great enemy to invade their land before Jesus' return, will recognize to some degree that he will be entering "the navel of the earth" as far as God is concerned. But, because God wants to use him for His purposes in Jewish history, this will not deter him from opposing God and His chosen people. Indeed, it may even motivate him all that much more because of the height of his pride and arrogance. He will think that he is God and has the right to the land which belongs to Him.

In addition,

38:13 "Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish with all its villages will say to you, 'Have you come to capture spoil? Have you assembled your company to seize plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to capture great spoil?'"

Other nations, who will not be participating militarily with Gog, will nevertheless be aware of his plans, and they will encourage him to follow through with them, most likely hoping to benefit from his success in conquering Israel and obtaining much economic wealth. Examples of these nations are Sheba in the southwest corner of the Arabian peninsula, Dedan in northwest Arabia, and Tarshish near the Aegean Sea. Then God adds this summary of what He has said to Gog so far,

38:14 "Therefore prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog, 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "On that day when My people Israel are living securely, will you not know it?"

38:15 "You will come from your place out of the remote parts of the north (מִן־רֶכֶתִּי צָפוֹן), you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great assembly and a mighty army;

38:16 and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It shall come about in the last days (בְּאַחֲרֵי־יְמֵי) that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog."

In this summary, God includes an international purpose for what He is doing with Gog and his massive army from many Gentile nations. Their invasion of Israel will be "so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog" (v. 16). But exactly how will

the other nations know that it is God who is at work through Gog and that He is being “sanctified,” i.e., set apart,” by means of him and his army? God explains in vs. 17-23,

38:17 ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Are you the one of whom I spoke in former days through My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days for many years that I would bring you against them?”

38:18 “It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel,” declares Adonai Yahweh, “that My fury will mount up in My anger.

38:19 “In My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.

38:20 “The fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all the creeping things that creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence; the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse and every wall will fall to the ground.

38:21 “I will call for a sword against him on all My mountains,” declares Adonai Yahweh. “Every man’s sword will be against his brother.

38:22 “With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone.

38:23 “I will magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am Yahweh.”

The “prophets of Israel” of whom God speaks are Ezekiel and others who have declared “in former days” that He would bring Gog against His chosen people on the land of Israel (vs. 17-18). And God will become furious and angry with Gog in His “zeal” and “blazing wrath,” so that there “will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel” (v. 19). This is where we have to wonder if this natural disaster will kill even some of the Jews, that is, those who are demonstrating stubborn and hard hearts of disobedience towards Him. Certainly, the situation will become so catastrophic and frightening that “the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all the creeping things that creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence.” I think God is speaking of the entire earth here and not just the land of Israel. What will happen in the Middle East will become known throughout the world, and all its creatures will shake in terror at the presence of God’s wrath towards Gog and his collection of armies.

In addition, “the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse and every wall will fall to the ground” (v. 20). This may be only in Israel, and the real purpose for all these natural events is that God “will call for a sword against [Gog] on all [His] mountains,” i.e., on the mountains of Israel where Gog’s troops are situated. The effect will be that “every man’s sword will be against his brother,” meaning that the armies under Gog’s leadership will turn against each other and destroy one another (v. 21). As God goes on to say in v. 22, “With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone.”

Thus, the destruction of Gog’s multinational army will be horrendous and complete. As a result, God will “magnify..., sanctify..., and make [Himself] known in the sight of many nations, and they will know” that He is Yahweh (v. 23). This is how God will become “sanctified” (v. 16) through Gog in the eyes of the other nations. He will grab him in his mind and cause him to choose to invade the land of Israel—only to destroy him and his army so as to demonstrate who is really in control in this world and who is the God of the Jews who protects them from their enemies and prevents them from being destroyed completely in accordance with His promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation.”

We now move on to chapter 39. God begins in vs. 1-6 by reviewing His stance towards Gog,

39:1 “And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal;

- 39:2 and I will turn you around, drive you on, take you up from the remotest parts of the north (מִן־קֵצֵי צָפוֹן) and bring you against the mountains of Israel.
- 39:3 “I will strike your bow from your left hand and dash down your arrows from your right hand.
- 39:4 “You will fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field.
- 39:5 “You will fall on the open field; for it is I who have spoken,” declares Adonai Yahweh.
- 39:6 “And I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am Yahweh.
- 39:7 “My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore (וְלֹא־אֶתֵּלֵּא אֶת־שְׁמִי בְּעוֹד). And the nations will know that I am Yahweh, the Holy One in Israel.

Again, I think that Gog is the “chief prince of Meshech and Tubal,” but most of the information in these verses we have basically seen in chapter 38. Gog and his Gentile armies will invade the land of Israel and die on its “mountains.” The one new piece of information in these verses is that God will feed the dead corpses of Gog’s army “to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field,” for they “will [also] fall on the open field” (v. 4). And this outcome is absolutely guaranteed for Gog and his army because God has declared it. No one can prevent the transcendent Creator of all reality to complete His plans and purposes. Indeed, in this case, Israel’s arrogant and presumptuous enemies will actually contribute to His plans, while all the time thinking that they are thwarting them as they set out to destroy His chosen people. But no one can accomplish this goal, not even those whom God sovereignly causes to try!

In addition, God will punish the people back home on the land of Magog. He “will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety,” i.e., the people of the nations in the Middle East and near the Mediterranean Sea and other seas whose armies participated in the invasion of Israel. In this way, all the people who have had anything to do with trying to destroy the Jews in this situation will come to the realization that this is impossible, because they will finally truly know that their God is Yahweh who has chosen them and who protects them—even though they have received His just and measured discipline over the years on account of their sin against Him (v. 6).

And it will not only be the nearby Gentile nations who will know that it is God who is accomplishing His plans and purposes, but also the Jews, God’s “people Israel,” who will too. They will observe what God is doing with Gog and the foreign armies, so that His “holy name,” His purposes and activities that identify Him as the one, true God who has chosen the Jews, will become “known” among them. Plus God will never again allow His “holy name” to “be profaned anymore” by either the Jews or the Gentiles (v. 7). I think that God means that it will be after the destruction of Gog and his army that the Jews will all become the “great nation” of the Abrahamic Covenant with their final and permanent king, the Messiah (and Jesus is his name), ruling over them and the whole world.

And because God’s Anointed One, the Messiah, will exercise authority over the entire world, the Gentile nations will never again spurn Him completely and accomplish any harm against the Jewish people as they have always been able to do in times past. This will be the age of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 after Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel and establishes on this earth the first stage of the Kingdom of God.

God continues in vs. 8-16 with a lengthy description of the situation involving the demise of Gog and his army,

- 39:8 “Behold, it is coming and it shall be done,” declares Adonai Yahweh.
“That is the day of which I have spoken.
- 39:9 “Then those who inhabit the cities of Israel will go out and make fires with the weapons and burn them, both shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, war clubs and spears, and for seven years they will make fires of them.

- 39:10 “They will not take wood from the field or gather firewood from the forests, for they will make fires with the weapons; and they will take the spoil of those who despoiled them and seize the plunder of those who plundered them,” declares Adonai Yahweh.
- 39:11 “On that day I will give Gog a burial ground there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea, and it will block off those who would pass by. So they will bury Gog there with all his horde, and they will call it the valley of Hamon-gog.
- 39:12 “For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land (לְמַעַן שְׂתַר אֶת־הָאָרֶץ).
- 39:13 “Even all the people of the land (כָּל־עַם הָאָרֶץ) will bury them; and it will be to their renown on the day that I glorify Myself,” declares Adonai Yahweh.
- 39:14 “They will set apart men who will constantly pass through the land (בְּאֶרֶץ), burying those who were passing through, even those left on the surface of the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search.
- 39:15 “As those who pass through the land (בְּאֶרֶץ) pass through and anyone sees a man’s bone, then he will set up a marker by it until the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog.
- 39:16 “And even the name of the city will be Hamonah. So they will cleanse the land (וְהָאָרֶץ).”

First, in v. 8, God states unequivocally that “it is coming and it shall be done,” and He is referring to “the day of which” He has “spoken.” This is another declaration by God that no one and nothing is going to thwart His plans and purposes in the last days of the present age before the return of Jesus. We also notice in v. 10 that the Jews will “take the spoil of those who despoiled them and seize the plunder of those who plundered them.” This is to say that the invading army of Gog will cause a significant level of suffering for the Jews and destruction on the land of Israel before God kills every last enemy soldier. Nevertheless, afterwards, the people of Israel will use the discarded weapons of the defeated Gentile army for firewood and fuel (v. 9). And this will happen for “seven years,” meaning for a long time which will be not too long and not too short, but just the right length of time according to God’s plans. In addition, vs. 11-15 inform us that the Jews will bury the dead soldiers of these foreign armies “for seven months,” again meaning for a time period that is exactly as God desires. And the “burial ground” within the land of Israel will be a “valley” that is “east of [or “towards”] the sea,” whether the Mediterranean Sea, or the Sea of Galilee, or the Dead Sea. But it is not clear which sea God means. But because of the “horde” or multitude of corpses being buried, this valley will be called “Hamon-Gog,” i.e., the multitude of Gog.

By burying the foreign army of their enemies who obviously opposed and rejected their God Yahweh, the people of Israel will “cleanse the land” (v. 12). And all the Jews will participate in this burial process, so that they will all become “renown” and famous as a result of this event in which God glorifies Himself (v. 13). The responsibility to cleanse the land will be so extensive that, at the end of the initial seven months of burying, the Jews will appoint men to scrutinize every inch of ground looking for the smallest bone from one of the dead soldiers and will mark it where it lies. Then it too will be buried in the valley (vs. 14-15). There will also be a city in the valley which they will call Hamonah, meaning Multitude, to commemorate such a wonderful event of salvation by God on behalf of His chosen people, the Jews, on the land of Israel (v. 16).

But just in case the reader has forgotten, God repeats in vs. 17-20 a previous portion of his message through Ezekiel,

- 39:17 “As for you, son of man, thus says Adonai Yahweh,
 ‘Speak to every kind of bird and to every beast of the field,
 “Assemble and come, gather from every side to My sacrifice
 which I am going to sacrifice for you, as a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel,
 that you may eat flesh and drink blood.

39:18 “You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, as though they were rams, lambs, goats and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan.

39:19 “So you will eat fat until you are glutted, and drink blood until you are drunk, from My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.

39:20 “You will be glutted at My table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all the men of war,” declares Adonai Yahweh.

It would seem that the birds and animals pick the bones clean of the dead, foreign soldiers. Or at least they do so to a great extent so that the burying process mentioned above is rather light. It involves mostly or perhaps only bones. The “flesh of mighty men” and the “blood of the princes of the earth” who helped Gog lead these armies into Israel become the “food” of “every kind of bird” and “beast of the field” as though the corpses “were rams, lambs, goats and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan” (v. 18). And the birds and animals who will enjoy this feast “will eat fat until” they are “glutted” and will “drink blood until” they are “drunk.” Indeed, God says that this will be His “sacrifice” which he has “sacrificed” for the predatory birds and animals, so that they are eating at His “table” (vs. 19-20). God will thus render on offering to the birds and animals of Gog and his multinational armies, which offering will satisfy their hunger to such a great extent that they will become incapable of eating any more.

God begins to finish the message of chapters 38 & 39 with vs. 21-24,

39:21 “And I will set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them.

39:22 “And the house of Israel will know that I am Yahweh their God from that day onward.

39:23 “The nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity because they acted treacherously against Me, and I hid My face from them; so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and all of them fell by the sword.

39:24 “According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I dealt with them, and I hid My face from them.””

There are two groups of people to whom God desires to demonstrate His glory, power, and moral character. In v. 21, the first group are the “nations” of Gentiles, those people who are not descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. By virtue of His “judgment” and justice which He has “executed” and by His “hand” which He has “laid on them,” the nations will see His “glory”—the fact that He is dead serious about destroying anyone who opposes His chosen people, the Jews, especially by trying to destroy them. As a result of defeating and putting an end to Gog and his multinational armies who invade Israel to capture the land and eliminate the Jews, God will “set” the glory of His moral justice and faithfulness to the Jews “among the nations.” There will be no question who God’s chosen people are—the Jews, whom He will rescue from the invading armies. And there will be no question who is ultimately in charge of history—God, indeed, the God of the Jews.

There will also be ample evidence for the “house of Israel,” the Jews on the land of Israel, to conclude that God is being faithful to His promises to Abraham to make his descendants the most powerful nation in the world. Thus, they “will know that [He is] Yahweh their God from that day onward” (v. 22). I assume the last phrase, “from that day onward,” refers to the millennial kingdom. In other words, these Jews will become participants in the first generation of this kingdom and will acquire changed hearts by the work of the Spirit of God within them.

Nevertheless, “the nations will know [as they review the history of the Jews] that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity because they acted treacherously against” God. Indeed, “all of them,” whom God intended for this to happen, “fell by the sword” (v. 23). Certainly, not all the Jews were killed during the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles, and during any future exiles such as that by the Romans in A.D. 70 and A.D. 132-135. God’s purpose has always been to preserve a remnant, so that the Jews who are present “in the last of the days” will observe the invasion and defeat of Gog and his army and then participate in burying their soldiers and burning their weapons. Thus, God “dealt

with” the Jews and even “hid” His face from them “according to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions.” Yet, He remains faithful and merciful to the nation of Israel in order to fulfill His promise to Abraham.

God continues His conclusion to this passage in vs. 25-27,

- 39:25** Therefore thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Now (עַתָּה) I will restore the fortunes (אֲשִׁיב אֶת־שָׁבוֹת) of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name.
- 39:26** “They will forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they perpetrated against Me, when they live securely on their own land (עַל־אֲדָמָתָם) with no one to make them afraid.
- 39:27** “When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” declares Adonai Yahweh.

In v. 25, God says that He will forgive the Jews, indeed “the whole house of Israel,” which can happen only by means of Jesus’ death and resurrection that allows him to qualify as their advocate according to Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews in the New Testament. In this way, God “will be jealous for [His] holy name,” meaning that He has promised and sworn that the Jews are His chosen people, and it would ruin His reputation if He did not follow through on His promise and oath (v. 25). The complete fulfillment of His promise is to make them a “great nation” following this one, last attack by their enemies, by Gog and his coalition of armies. God says explicitly, “**Now** I will restore the fortunes of Jacob” [emphasis mine]. I interpret the “**Now**” as referring to the moment that God delivers His chosen people, the Jews, by defeating and destroying Gog and his armies. This corresponds with the remaining statements in vs. 26-29.

Therefore, when God has completed His final judgment of the Jews and His complete judgment of Gog and his allies, the remaining Jews “will forget their disgrace and all their treachery” against Him (v. 26). The people of Israel will put behind them their previous unbelief and related disobedience and become Jews of authentic faith and genuine humble submission to God. And they will finally and permanently “live securely on their own land with no one to make them afraid” (v. 26). We remember that they were living securely on the land before Gog and his army attacked them (38:8). But this must have been only a relative and not a complete security. Now, however, after Gog’s army has been killed, they will truly “live securely.” And there will never again be an interruption of this quality of life for them. Plus, they will never have any cause to be afraid as it is implied that they must have been as they observed the armies of Gog descending upon them “from the remotest parts of the north.” This, then, is an important clue that option #2 above is correct—that God has been gathering His people back into the land of Israel and making them relatively secure and successful until Gog and his armies invade and kill many of them. Then, after the destruction of these armies, God will provide the Jews with complete and permanent security and prosperity. Plus, the other prophetic passages, along with v. 27 below, indicate that God will continue gathering Jews from foreign lands as Jesus is in the process of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth.

In addition, God says in v. 27, “When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations.” The question is, does this gathering refer to the same one as that which God mentioned in 38:8, a gathering of the Jews from foreign lands that occurs before the attack by Gog and his armies? Or does it refer to or at least include a second gathering after Gog’s invasion and the destruction of his armies? I suggest that it is the latter as a continuation of a long period of time of gathering, even a hundred years as we have seen in our own day. This makes sense also because of previous passages in the prophets we have seen and because of what God is describing in this passage.

For example, here is one passage from Jeremiah (23:1-8) and one from Ezekiel (11:16-20) which we have looked at previously and which predict a time of complete and permanent safety for the Jews and humble and obedient faith within them—

Jeremiah 23:1 “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares Yahweh.

23:2 Therefore thus says Yahweh God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares Yahweh.

23:3 “Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock (וְאֶנִּי אֶקְבֹּץ אֶת־שְׁאֵרֵי־צֹאֲנִי) out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply.

23:4 “I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares Yahweh.

23:5 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh,
“When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch (צֶמַח צְדִיק);
And He will reign as king (וְהָיָה מֶלֶךְ) and act wisely
And do justice and righteousness in the land (וַיַּצְדִּיק).”

23:6 “In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell securely (וְיָבִטָה);
And this is His name by which He will be called,
‘Yahweh our righteousness.’

23:7 “Therefore behold, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when they will no longer say, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,’

23:8 but, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel (אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל) from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ Then they will live on their own soil (וְיָשְׁבוּ עַל־אֲדָמָתָם).”

Also, Ezekiel 11:16-20,

Ezekiel 11:16 “Therefore say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone.”

11:17 “Therefore say, ‘Thus says Adonai Yahweh, “I will gather you (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel (וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת־אֲדָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל).”

11:18 “When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it.

11:19 “And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them.

And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

11:20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep (וְשָׁמְרוּ) My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. ””

We see that these two passages speak of the same things as the last two verses of Ezekiel 39,

39:28 “Then they will know that I am Yahweh their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again to their own land (וְכִנְסֵתִים עַל־אֲדָמָתָם);
and I will leave none of them there any longer.

39:29 “I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” declares Adonai Yahweh.

In other words, as soon as the armies of Gog have been destroyed, God will have finished disciplining the Jews, and they all will “know” that He is “their God.” They will acknowledge their sin in the past which moved God to force them to “go into exile among the nations.” But now, He has “gathered them again to their own land.” In addition, God will “leave none of them there [in the foreign lands] any longer” (v. 28). Because He has permanently gathered them back into the land, every Jew from this point on and during the ensuing generations of Jews of the millennial kingdom will live only on the land of Israel. Brooklyn, Los Angeles, Eastern Europe, Argentina, etc. will be devoid of Jews.

Plus, every Jew during the millennial kingdom will have a changed heart of genuine faith. God says that He will never “hide” His “face” from the Jews, meaning that they will never experience His judgment such that they have to leave their land. And the reason why is because He “will have poured out [His] Spirit on the house of Israel” (v. 29). They will finally have become the kind of people He promised to Abraham when He used the phrase “great nation.” And part of their greatness will be the fact that they all are genuine believers in God and His Messiah, Jesus, during the entire time of the restored Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel.

For reference sake, here are nine additional passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel that describe the coming time of complete and permanent security which God will provide His chosen people after He gathers the Jews back into the land of Israel.

1) Jeremiah 29:8-14

Jeremiah 29:8 “For thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream.

29:9 ‘For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,’ declares Yahweh.

29:10 “For thus says Yahweh, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit (אֶפְקֹד) you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.

29:11 ‘For I know the plans (אֶת־הַמַּחְשָׁבֹת) that I have for you,’ declares Yahweh, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity (מַחֲשָׁבוֹת שְׁלוֹם וְלֹא לְרָעָה) to give you a future and a hope (לְתֵת לָכֶם אַחֲרִית וְתִקְוָה).

29:12 ‘And you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

29:13 ‘You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart (בְּכָל־לִבְבְּכֶם).

29:14 ‘I will be found by you,’ declares Yahweh, ‘and I will restore your fortunes (וְשִׁבַּתִּי אֶת־שְׁבִיתְכֶם) and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,’ declares Yahweh, ‘and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.’

2) Jeremiah 31:7-14,

Jeremiah 31:7 For thus says Yahweh,

“Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,

And shout among the chief of the nations (בְּרֹאשׁ הַגּוֹיִם);

Proclaim, give praise and say,

‘Yahweh, save Your people,

The remnant of Israel (שְׁאֵרֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל).’

31:8 “Behold, I am bringing them from the north country (מִמֶּזְרֵיץ צָפוֹן),

And I will gather them (וְקִבַּצְתִּים) from the remote parts of the earth (מִמְדִּבְתֵּי־אֶרֶץ),

Among them the blind and the lame,

The woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together;

A great company, they will return here (וְשׁוּבוּ הֵנָּה).

31:9 “With weeping they will come,

And by supplication I will lead them;

I will make them walk by streams of waters,

On a straight path in which they will not stumble;
For I am a father to Israel,
And Ephraim is My firstborn."

31:10 Hear the word of Yahweh, O nations,
And declare in the coastlands afar off,
And say, "He who scattered Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) will gather him (יִקְבְּצֵנּוּ)
And keep him (וְשִׁמְרוֹ) as a shepherd keeps his flock."

31:11 For Yahweh has ransomed Jacob (יַעֲקֹב)
And redeemed him (וַיִּגְאֹלֵהוּ) from the hand of him who was stronger than he.

31:12 "They will come and shout for joy on the height of Zion,
And they will be radiant over the bounty of Yahweh —
Over the grain and the new wine and the oil,
And over the young of the flock and the herd;
And their life will be like a watered garden,
And they will never languish again (וְלֹא-יִסְיִפוּ לְדָאֲבָה עוֹד).

31:13 "Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance,
And the young men and the old, together,
For I will turn their mourning into joy
And will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow.

31:14 "I will fill the soul of the priests with abundance,
And My people will be satisfied with My goodness," declares Yahweh.

3) Jeremiah 32:36-44,

Jeremiah 32:36 "Now therefore thus says Yahweh God of Israel concerning this city of which you say,
'It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine and by pestilence.'

32:37 "Behold, I will gather them (הִנְנִי מְקַבְּצֵם) out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My
anger, in My wrath and in great indignation; and I will bring them back (וְהִשְׁבֵּתִים) to this place and
make them dwell in safety (לְבִטָּחָה).

32:38 "They shall be My people, and I will be their God;

32:39 and I will give them one heart and one way (לֵב אֶחָד וְדֶרֶךְ אֶחָד), that they may fear Me always
(כָּל-הַיָּמִים), for their own good and for the good of their children after them.

32:40 "I will make an everlasting covenant (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) with them that I will not turn away from them,
to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from
Me.

32:41 "I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully (בְּאֵמֶת) plant them in this land with all
My heart and with all My soul (בְּכָל-לִבִּי וּבְכָל-נַפְשִׁי).

32:42 "For thus says Yahweh, 'Just as I brought all this great disaster (כָּל-הָרָעָה הַגְּדוֹלָה הַזֹּאת) on
this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them.

32:43 'Fields will be bought in this land of which you say, "It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is
given into the hand of the Chaldeans."

32:44 'Men will buy fields for money, sign and seal deeds, and call in witnesses in the land of
Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in
the cities of the lowland and in the cities of the Negev; for I will restore their fortunes,' declares
Yahweh."

4) Jeremiah 46:27-28,

Jeremiah 46:27 "But as for you, O Jacob My servant, do not fear,
Nor be dismayed, O Israel!
For, see, I am going to save you (הִנְנִי מוֹשִׁיעֲךָ) from afar,
And your descendants (וְאַתָּה-יִרְעֶךָ) from the land of their captivity;
And Jacob will return and be undisturbed

And secure, with no one making him tremble.

46:28 "O Jacob My servant, do not fear," declares Yahweh,
 "For I am with you.
 For I will make a full end of all the nations (אֶעֱשֶׂה כָּלָה בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם)
 Where I have driven you,
 Yet I will not make a full end of you;
 But I will correct you properly (וְיִסְדֶּיךָ לְמִשְׁפָּט)
 And by no means leave you unpunished."

5) Ezekiel 20:33-44,

Jeremiah 20:33 "As I live," declares Adonai Yahweh, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you.
 20:34 "I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out;
 20:35 and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.
 20:36 "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 Adonai Yahweh.
 20:37 "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;
 20:38 and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel (וְיִשְׂרָאֵל). Thus you will know that I am Yahweh.
 20:39 "As for you, O house of Israel," thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Go, serve everyone his idols; but later you will surely listen to Me, and My holy name you will profane no longer with your gifts and with your idols.
 20:40 "For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel," declares Adonai Yahweh, "there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land (בְּאֶרֶץ); there I will accept them and there I will seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things.
 20:41 "As a soothing aroma I will accept you when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) from the lands where you are scattered; and I will prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations.
 20:42 "And you will know that I am Yahweh, when I bring you into the land of Israel (אֶל־אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל), into the land which I swore to give to your forefathers (אֶל־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יְדִי לָתֵת אוֹתָהּ לְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם).
 20:43 "There you will remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done.
 20:44 "Then you will know that I am Yahweh when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel," declares Adonai Yahweh."

6) Ezekiel 28:25-26,

Ezekiel 28:25 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "When I gather (בְּקִבְצִי) the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and will manifest My holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they will live in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob (וְיָשְׁבוּ עַל־אֶרְצָתָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְעַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב).
 28:26 "They will live in it securely (לְבִטָּחָה); and they will build houses, plant vineyards and live securely (לְבִטָּחָה) when I execute judgments upon all who scorn them round about them. Then they will know that I am Yahweh their God.'"

7) Ezekiel 34:11-30,

- Ezekiel 34:11** For thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.
- 34:12** "As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered (וּפְצָצוּ) on a cloudy and gloomy day.
- 34:13** "I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them (וְקִבַּצְתִּים) from the countries and bring them to their own land (אֶל-אֲדָמָתָם); and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land (וּבְאֶרֶץ).
- 34:14** "I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.
- 34:15** "I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares Adonai Yahweh.
- 34:16** "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment (בְּמִשְׁפָּט).
- 34:17** "As for you, My flock, thus says Adonai Yahweh, 'Behold, I will judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the male goats.
- 34:18** 'Is it too slight a thing for you that you should feed in the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pastures? Or that you should drink of the clear waters, that you must foul the rest with your feet?
- 34:19** 'As for My flock, they must eat what you tread down with your feet and drink what you foul with your feet!'"
- 34:20** Therefore, thus says Adonai Yahweh to them, "Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.
- 34:21** "Because you push with side and with shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns until you have scattered them abroad,
- 34:22** therefore, I will deliver (וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי) My flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another.
- 34:23** "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.
- 34:24** "And I, Yahweh, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I Yahweh have spoken.
- 34:25** "I will make a covenant of peace with them (וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם) and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely (לְבִטָּחָה) in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.
- 34:26** "I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing.
- 34:27** "Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land (וְהָיוּ עַל-אֲדָמָתָם לְבִטָּחָה). Then they will know that I am Yahweh, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them.
- 34:28** "They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely (לְבִטָּחָה), and no one will make them afraid.
- 34:29** "I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land (בְּאֶרֶץ), and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore.
- 34:30** "Then they will know that I, Yahweh their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people," declares Adonai Yahweh.

8) Ezekiel 36:23-38,

- Ezekiel 36:23** "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst.
Then the nations will know that I am Yahweh," declares Adonai Yahweh,
"when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.
- 36:24** "For I will take you from the nations, gather (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) you from all the lands and bring you into your own land (אֶל-אֲדָמְתְּכֶם).
- 36:25** "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean;
I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.
- 36:26** "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;
and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.
- 36:27** "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes,
and you will be careful to observe (תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם) My ordinances.
- 36:28** "You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers (בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם);
so you will be My people, and I will be your God.
- 36:29** "Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness;
and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you.
- 36:30** "I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field,
so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.
- 36:31** "Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good,
and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.
- 36:32** "I am not doing this for your sake," declares Adonai Yahweh, "let it be known to you.
Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!"
- 36:33** "Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities,
I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places (הַחֲרָבוֹת) will be rebuilt.
- 36:34** "The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation
in the sight of everyone who passes by.
- 36:35** "They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden;
and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.'
- 36:36** "Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, Yahweh,
have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate;
I, Yahweh, have spoken and will do it."
- 36:37** "Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "This also I will let the house of Israel
ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock.
- 36:38** "Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts,
so will the waste cities (הַחֲרָבוֹת הַשָּׂרִים) be filled with flocks of men.
Then they will know that I am Yahweh."

9) Ezekiel 37:21-38,

- Ezekiel 37:21** "Say to them, 'Thus says Adonai Yahweh, "Behold, I will take
the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone,
and I will gather (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) them from every side and bring them into their own land (אֶל-אֲדָמְתָם);
- 37:22** and I will make them one nation in the land (בְּאֶרֶץ), on the mountains of Israel;
and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer
be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.
- 37:23** "They will no longer defile themselves with their idols,
or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions;
but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned,
and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.
- 37:24** "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd;
and they will walk in My ordinances and keep (וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ) My statutes and observe them.

- 37:25 “They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant (עַל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְעַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב),
 in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they,
 and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever (עַד־עוֹלָם);
 and David My servant will be their prince forever (לְעוֹלָם).”
- 37:26 “I will make a covenant of peace (בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם) with them;
 it will be an everlasting covenant (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) with them.
 And I will place them and multiply them,
 and will set My sanctuary (אֶת־מִקְדָּשִׁי) in their midst forever (לְעוֹלָם).”
- 37:27 “My dwelling place (מִשְׁכְּנִי) also will be with them;
 and I will be their God, and they will be My people.”
- 37:28 “And the nations will know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies (מְקַדֵּשׁ) Israel,
 when My sanctuary (מִקְדָּשִׁי) is in their midst forever (לְעוֹלָם).”