

Israel: Return in 'belief' or 'unbelief'?

In this article I discuss the establishment of the State of Israel a little over 60 years ago and the significance of this event. The Jewish People, after almost 2000 years of exile returned to Eretz Israel (The Land of Israel), the place where the great Kingdom of King David and his son Solomon had flourished.

This article addresses the theological question posed by some within Christendom as to whether this return is a move of G-d, and whether it is the last return that signals the arrival of the eschatological (end-times) Mashiach (Messiah) in the near future.

Given that, at least from the perspective of most within Christendom, the Jewish People in general are not 'believers' (that is, they do not accept that Yeshua (Jesus) is the eschatological Mashiach, does this invalidate the claim that this return is part of the 'end-times' events prophesied.

Also then, is the current return (aliyah) in 'unbelief' (according to Christendom) of the Jewish people the final return before the Messiah stands on the Mount of Olives (see Zechariah 14) or will there be some exile or partial exile sometime in the future with a consequent return to the Land of Israel in 'belief' (i.e. belief in Yeshua as the Messiah)?

There are a number of very significant biblical prophecies about the 'last days' which also describe a return of the Jewish people to the land of promise – to the Land promised to Abraham and Moses.

It is surely a very clear historical fact that the Jewish people were exiled from Israel in 70 and 135 AD.

Deuteronomy 30 ends a description of the Land Covenant with a prophecy and a promise that a day will come -- after the Jews have experienced the curses of the covenant -- when YHVH will restore them to their land once again: *"YHVH will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. **If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there YHVH your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. And your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it.**"* - Deuteronomy 30:3-5

For almost 1900 years the Jewish People wandered among the nations and suffered severe persecution, just as prophesied in Deuteronomy 28.

During this time, the Land of Israel became desolate as prophesied in Deuteronomy 29. But in this century, it appears that the Almighty has regathered the Jewish People from the four corners of the earth; re-established them in the Land, and transformed the Land of Israel from wilderness to milk and honey -- as prophesied in Deuteronomy 30.

The only prophecy that may be left to be fulfilled in the Land Covenant is the spiritual salvation of the gathered remnant (Deuteronomy 30:6-8).

Let's look again at Deuteronomy 30:5 and the following 3 verses:

"5 And YHVH your G-d will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.

6 And YHVH your G-d will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love YHVH your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

7 And YHVH your G-d will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you.

8 And you shall again obey the voice of YHVH and keep all his commandments that I command you today.

9 YHVH your G-d will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground. For YHVH will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers,

10 when you obey the voice of YHVH your G-d, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Torah, when you turn to YHVH your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

While I will present evidence further on in this article, for now I will present how I see the current state of play in terms of this prophecy. The Jewish People have been returned to the Land (at least those who have wanted to have

made aliyah). Also, the Jewish People have been very prosperous, both in and out of Israel, and the Land has blossomed. From the statistics we have, it would also appear that there are now more Jewish people in Israel than ever before. So it would seem that verse 5 of Deuteronomy 30 has already been fulfilled. But further note verse 9 which reads in part: *"9 YHVH your G-d will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground.."*

If you spend some time in Israel today, it will be abundantly evident to you that the Land has been very fruitful in producing both food and cattle. But also note the condition for this blessing – that is, that the people are obedient to the commandments of Torah. My personal experience, from speaking to many Jewish people and spending weeks touring the whole width and depth of Eretz Israel, is that the Jewish People in general are being Torah observant (clearly to different degrees and in different ways, based on whether they are ultra-orthodox, orthodox, reformed/conservative, or progressive).

Therefore, I would argue that this prophecy of the return is already to a very significant degree a done deal.

Also the Tanakh is clear that once the Jewish People are re-established in their land, *"they will never be rooted up again"* (Amos 9:14-15).

The prophecies of re-gathering may appear to fall into three categories. A few relate to the return from Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 25:10-12 and 29:1-10).

It appears that most of these prophecies concern what could be interpreted as two end time re-gatherings from all over the world -- one in 'unbelief' **before** the end-times Mashiach arrives to fully usher in the Coming Age (Isaiah 11:10-12 and Ezekiel 36:22-28) and the other in 'belief' **after** the Mashiach arrives (Deuteronomy 30:1-10 and Ezekiel 37:19-28).

However, it could also be that the differences between these prophecies of the return which don't mention the King Mashiach and those like Ezekiel 37 that do, that they are simply speaking and referring to a different time in this return (with the return initially being that of many Jewish People who were both zealous for Torah and others who were clearly non-religious and secular, but that through the growth of the Nation of Israel the degree of Torah obedience grows and in turn prepares the way for the arrival of the King Messiah).

It is also, of course vital to recognize that Hebraically 'belief' is only displayed in action. To believe is to act. It is not some mental ascent/agreement to a doctrine, but a living obedient and observance of the commandments (mitzvah) of Torah.

Let us consider these 'return' prophecies:

Isaiah 10-12 (a prophecy which already has had a partial fulfilment, but which awaits a final fulfilment)

*5 "Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger,
in whose hand is the club of my wrath!*

6 I send him against a godless nation, (this may well be a reference to the war of Psalm 83 which it appears is yet to be fulfilled)

*I dispatch him against a people who anger me,
to seize loot and snatch plunder,
and to trample them down like mud in the streets.*

*7 But this is not what he intends,
this is not what he has in mind;
his purpose is to destroy, (Ps 83:4)
to put an end to many nations. ...*

*20 In that day the remnant of Israel,
the survivors of the house of Jacob,
will no longer rely on him
who struck them down
but will truly rely on YHVH,
the Holy One of Israel.*

(the victory in this battle is because Israel, at least those who remain, turn to and trust HaShem, rather than their military might)

21 A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob

will return to the Mighty God. (note that this verse states that they return to G-d, or possibly to allegiance to a great leader or Mashiach, but it does NOT state that they necessarily return to the Land – this may well be after they after already in the Land)

22 Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea,

only a remnant will return. (again, it appears that this is a 'return' to HaShem, not necessarily to the Land, although the two are intimately linked today, because most who make aliyah are doing so at HaShem's leading)

Destruction has been decreed,

overwhelming and righteous. (possibly the destruction of Zechariah 14?)

23 The Master, G-d Almighty, will carry out

the destruction decreed upon the whole land.

Isaiah 11: 4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,

with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;

with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

This prophecy is either speaking of the Almighty Himself or a great end-times leader and King Mashiach. This Mashiach returns in power to judge the earth – see Psalms 2.

This prophecy flows from that of Isaiah 10 –there is no indication of a break or re-start – its appears to be chronologically describing a time shortly after the Assyrian/Arab attack when Yeshua returns and forcefully deals with the enemies of Israel and G-d¹.

5 Righteousness will be his belt

and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

6 The wolf will live with the lamb,

the leopard will lie down with the goat,

the calf and the lion and the yearling together;

and a little child will lead them.

(the Kingdom of God is inaugurated indicating that the return and Assyrian led attack of Isaiah 10 was the last days tribulation)

10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

11 In that day YHVH will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea.

(I believe that verse 10 here actually speaks of a period of almost 2000 years, in which Yeshua HaMashiach has been a banner or ensign, a vision and revelation that has brought many Gentiles to seek HaShem – even though this seeking has come through a very Hellenised and 'lost' church.

I think that verse 11 here refers back to the return prior to the Assyrian attack of Isaiah 10:6.

What is therefore meant by 'the second time' or a 2nd return. The exodus from Egypt surely doesn't count as a first return because the nation of Israel did not really exist before this. The nation only became a nation after Joshua entered Canaan.

Is this 2nd time referring to a second return from exile or only a 2nd return from exiles where the Jews had been scattered throughout many nations? Either way, this statement appears to exclude any possibility of a 3rd exile and return. In other words, if the current 1948/67 return is God ordained then there can be no future exile and return.)

The time of the restoration of all things:

Acts 3: 19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of YHVH, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom

¹ For more see my article on Psalm 83 - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Christian%20site/Psalm%2083.pdf>

heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Not only some followers of Yeshua, but many Jewish People both in and out of Israel believe that we are now in this time.

Romans 11:25-27 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

“ The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”

Tovia Singer, a Jewish Rabbi and Radio Broadcaster says that 1967 was a miracle of God never before witnessed in history, yet the Jewish people thought it was achieved in their strength and might – they had pride in themselves. In the Yom Kippur war of 1973 when many thousands of their soldiers lives were lost, many were forced to rethink their attitude and now saw God’s hand in their situation. This started a new thinking where their ‘eyes are locked on heaven’ – a new humility began.

A three step restoration:

*Hosea 3: 4-5 “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. **Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek YHVH their God and David their king. They shall fear YHVH and His goodness in the latter days.”***

We see a 3 step process here:

1. A return from a long time without a king (and therefore without a land and without a temple to give sacrifices at.)
2. A seeking after YHVH and His king (His Messiah)
3. A Fear of God in the last days i.e. a return to belief!

Thus the return has begun; and now, especially since 1967/73, there are a great many Jewish People with a **spirit of enquiry**, seeking God and His commandments.

Interestingly John Thomas in his Elpis Israel wrote in 1849 very accurately of the current return and how it would initially be a political or secular return.

This return follows an important biblical principle “first in the natural and then in the spiritual” Some example scriptures:

Jeremiah 3:14-17

*14 “Return, O backsliding children,” says YHVH; “for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. 15 And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. 16 “Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days,” says the LORD, “that they will say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of YHVH.’ It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore. 17 “At that time Jerusalem shall be called **The Throne of YHVH**, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts.*

Here we see this return, even the partial aliyah that is occurring, happening first before their hearts are turned to God.

Jeremiah 23 3-4

3 “But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4 I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,” says YHVH.

The 3 step procedure is very evident here – first the re-gathering or return; second the ‘feeding’ (in seeking YHVH they need to be ‘feed’ by teachers/Rabbis) and then finally, the fullness of their belief and ‘fear of YHVH’.

Ezekiel 34:13-16

13 And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says YHVH GOD. 16 "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."

Here we see again the re-gathering followed by the feeding.

Ezekiel 36:24-28

24 For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. 28 Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

This version mentions steps 1 and 3 – the re-gathering and then the cleansing and ‘fear of YHVH’ as a result of the repentance that comes from step 2; the seeking.

Even the ‘dry bones’ of Ezekiel 37 can be seen to fit this principal of first in the natural and then in the spiritual (with the breath entering the ‘dry bones’).

It may even be that step 2 involving seeking after the commandments (mitzvot) of God may fit the pattern that Sha’ul (the Apostle Paul) tells us in Gal 3 24 *“Therefore Torah is becoming our tutor to bring us to Messiah, that we might be justified by faith.”*

That is, the chosen people need to first study the Tanakh (OT) before they are ready to call for the Mashaich/Messiah to come. Who will one of these teachers be?

*Malachi 4:4-6 “ Remember the Torah of Moses, My servant,
Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel,
With the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of YHVH.
And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children,
And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”*

This was endorsed by Yeshua in Matthew 17:11 *“Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.”*

Many orthodox Jews also believe that they are living in the last days and that 1948/67 etc., are a fulfilment of prophecy. Part of the evidence for this is that many of their youth now come together once a month for a prayer meeting which involves singing and dancing around all 6 gates of Jerusalem and singing Psalms starting with Psalm 24:6!

6 This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him,

Who seek Your face. Selah

7 Lift up your heads, O you gates!

And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!

And the King of glory shall come in.

8 Who is this King of glory?

YHVH strong and mighty,

YHVH mighty in battle.

9 Lift up your heads, O you gates!

Lift up, you everlasting doors!

And the King of glory shall come in.

10 Who is this King of glory?

YHVH of hosts,

He is the King of glory. Selah

Paul quotes Isaiah 59:20 in Romans 11.

Is 59:20 "The Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," Says YHVH.

Note that once they Jews dwelling in Jacob turn from sin and to G-d and then Mashiach will come!

A Messianic Jew makes gives an interesting perspective on exiles and returns of the Jewish people:

Ladder of Exile and Redemption:

There is a ladder of God's blessing and punishment, which has four major stages:

- 1. Full conquest and kingdom dominion*
- 2. Economic and military defeat reducing the borders*
- 3. Division of the nation in two*
- 4. Exile*

In our generation God is restoring the nation of Israel. In so doing, He reverses the process of the exile. Restoration (or national redemption) is the opposite of exile.

Therefore the process of restoration has the same four stages in reverse:

- 1. Return from exile*
- 2. Half the nation restored*
- 3. Expansion of military and economic influence*
- 4. Full kingdom conquest*

Here is how that restoration ladder has been partially fulfilled in the last century:

- 1. The return from exile started in 1881 at the first Aliyah of the "BILU" movement and continues unto today.*
- 2. Half of the nation was restored in 1947 and at the UN partition and establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. I believe that the UN partition and Israel statehood were a fulfillment of prophecy and part of the restoration process.*
- 3. In 1967 and 1973, territory was expanded through military conflict. From 1977 until the present there has also been economic growth in Israel.*
- 4. Ultimately, as the nation returns to its Messiah and the Messiah returns to His nation, the full kingdom will be restored.²*

This biblically derived perspective certainly supports the contention of a return in unbelief.

Jeremiah 31:10 "Hear the word of YHVH, O nations,

And declare it in the isles afar off, and say,

'He who scattered Israel will gather him,

And keep him as a shepherd does his flock.

18 ... Restore me, and I will return,

For You are YHVH my God.

(Note the restoration and re-gathering is by God and then the people return to Him.)

Ezekiel 36:8 But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come. 9 For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. 10 I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. 11 I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better for you than at your beginnings. Then you shall know that I am YHVH.

(Note that this prophecy makes it clear that only sometime **after** God has re-gathered the people and rebuilt the cities, only **then** will they truly and fully know their G-d i.e. only then may they acknowledge their Messiah)

16 Moreover the word of YHVH came to me, saying:

17 "Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity.

18 Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it.

19 So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries;

(This and many other statements here make it clear that this exile is the last one which involved scattering throughout the entire world.)

² <http://www.secondark.org/articles/WhyIsrael.htm>

I judged them according to their ways and their deeds.

20 When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, ‘These are the people of YHVH, and yet they have gone out of His land.’

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

*22 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says YHVH the Almighty: **“I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.***

(Again G-d clearly declares here that the return is not because His chosen people have returned to Him but because of His own purposes to keep his promises and declare His power over all.)

*23 And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am YHVH,” says YHVH the Almighty, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. 24 **For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.***

(Again the cleansing, the restoration of fellowship though repentance only comes **sometime** after the return **not** before. This cleansing through the sprinkling of clean water seems to indicate a previously unbelieving attitude by many of the Nation of Israel.)

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

28 Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

34 The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by.

35 So they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.’

(The historical evidence of the last 60 years most emphatically declares the accuracy of this prophecy.)

36 Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, YHVH, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, YHVH, have spoken it, and I will do it.”

37 ‘Thus says YHVH GOD: “I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase their men like a flock.

*38 Like a flock offered as holy sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. **Then they shall know that I am YHVH.”***

(Notice that only **after** these miracles of restoration to the Land will they as a people, acknowledge their God. Any serious study of the events of the last 100 odd years will indicate many examples of God’s miraculous intervention to enable the restoration of the Jewish People to the Land of promise.)

Joel also makes it very clear that the end-times judgment is preceded by a return of the Jewish people to their Land: Note also this prophecy says nothing of a return in belief but a return orchestrated by God.

*“For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,
2 I will also gather all nations,
And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
And I will enter into judgment with them there
On account of My people, My heritage Israel,
Whom they have scattered among the nations;
They have also divided up My land.*

Now regarding Zechariah:

*Zech 13: 8 In the whole land," declares YHVH,
"two-thirds will be struck down and perish;
yet one-third will be left in it...*

...

*Zech 14:2 For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem;
The city shall be taken,
The houses rifled,
And the women ravished.
Half of the city shall go into captivity,*

(Note this is ½ the city **not** the whole Land – therefore this ‘exile’ is NOT a removal of the Jews from the Land but an imprisonment of those in the holy city.)

*But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.
3 Then YHVH will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle.
4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives*

My reading of this is that the 2/3rds of Zec 13:8 are not exiled but may be killed and the ½ of the city are taken prisoner. Yes they may even be removed as prisoners from the Land of Israel.

If this prophecy is fulfilled in the near future then the current populations give us some idea of what these fractions mean. The population of Israel is around 8 million & Jerusalem around 750,000. Therefore the 2/3rds is around 5 million and the ½ of the city is about 370,000. This would mean some 2 million would still remain.

In the previous Babylonian exile only a very small proportion remained. By definition an exile of a people from a land surely means the majority are removed but based on these numbers only some 370,000 of 8 million are taken prisoner and possibly removed. I wouldn't read this then as an exile.

What about prophecies in the New Testament:

Firstly, Jesus Himself spoke of the scattering and latter-day re-gathering of the Jewish people:

Luke 21:

20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. 22 For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. 24 And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

I agree that v 24 appears quite plainly to be speaking of an exile and this prophecy appears to have been fulfilled in 70/135 CE.

Even FF Bruce though, states in his Bible Commentary (p 1221) that it is difficult to separate the impending from the remote; that is the fall of Jerusalem from the future end of the 'time of the gentiles'.

I believe this verse spans approximately 1900 years or longer. (This is not to deny a future further fulfilment of the prophecy regarding Jerusalem.)

What about those prophecies that appear to speak of a return in 'belief':

Ezekiel 37:19-28:

*19 say to them, 'Thus says YHVH the Almighty: "Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.'" 20 And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.
21 "Then say to them, 'Thus says YHVH the Almighty: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; 22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again. 23 They shall not defile themselves*

anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; **but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.** (Again note that God returns them to the land and **then** they again become His people.)

24 "David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them.

25 Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever.

26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore.

27 My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

28 The nations also will know that I, YHVH, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore."'''

Jer 30:18 "Thus says YHVH:

' Behold, I will bring back the captivity of Jacob's tents,

And have mercy on his dwelling places;

The city shall be built upon its own mound,

And the palace shall remain according to its own plan.

19 Then out of them shall proceed thanksgiving

And the voice of those who make merry;

(Note that it is **after** God has brought them back that they give thanks, not before.)

The next scripture is the most challenging in that, on the surface, it seems most emphatic on prophesying of a return in belief.

Deuteronomy 30:1-10:

1 "Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where YHVH your God drives you,

2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul,

3 that YHVH your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where YHVH your God has scattered you.

4 If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you.

5 Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

6 And YHVH your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

7 "Also the LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you.

8 And you will again obey the voice of the LORD and do all His commandments which I command you today. 9 YHVH your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the LORD will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers,

10 if you obey the voice of YHVH your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to YHVH your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

A website called "Bible Revelations" quotes Duet 30:2 as below:

Deut. 30:2 "...if you Return to YHVH your God, if you obey His Voice with all your heart and soul in everything I enjoin on you today (i.e. the Laws, Statutes, Precepts and Commandments of YHVH), then YHVH your God will bring back your captives ('shav et Shevoet' - restore you, set you free from bondage, reconcile you to His Covenant relationship)". <http://www.revelations.org.za/Captivity.htm>

One point here is that they argue that 'bring back the captives' does not necessarily mean a literal return but a restoration to relationship. As this is the only passage that I can find that does not seem to declare a return in unbelief to the Land before a return to YHVH; this reading would therefore be more consistent with the rest of the scriptures that speak of the final return. Of course it is also possible that both a return in belief and unbelief could occur at the same time. During the last 60 years, when Jewish people (and righteous Gentiles?) scattered throughout the world have had their eyes opened to the Messiah and have then returned to the Land they may be in effect be fulfilling Deut 30:1-10.

Conclusion:

Based on the scriptures relating to returning in 'belief' of 'unbelief' discussed here, I would argue that the evidence is very strong overall that the return over the last 60 odd years, at least began primarily in 'unbelief' and that this return is being fulfilled before our very eyes!

If you are a follower of Yeshua HaMashiach should you be like the first disciples who asked the Master before his ascension, "... will you restore the Kingdom now?" Surely we ought to be beseeching the Almighty to pour out His mercy upon the Nation of Israel, to protect them against a world of hatred, and to encourage them to call out 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the One True G-d', and in so doing bring the Mashiach, in all his glory, to restore Shalom to the Land of Israel, and throughout the world,

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September 2007 – updated July 2014

Appendix:


1. An excerpt from <http://www.secondark.org/articles/WhyIsrael.htm>

Pluralism and Zionism:

Although the restoration of Israel and the re-gathering of the exiles is a common theme in Jewish religious prayer and in rabbinic writings, the first 100 years of modern Zionism was overwhelmingly secular.

Note: The Sephardic "Shas" revolution of the late 1980's brought a major influence of religion into the political sector. Of course long before that, the charismatic Ashkenazi chief Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook (1865-1935) laid the spiritual and theological foundations of combining religious orthodoxy with the political Zionist state, which was unprecedented in his day.

Why was it, in the sovereign hand of God, to empower such secularists as Theodore Herzl and David Ben Gurion, to be the leaders of the modern restoration of Israel? I believe that their view of a modern state with pluralistic values, particularly freedom of religious expression, was an essential factor in God's "permission" to re-gather our people and restore our nation.

As we look back 2,000 years ago, there is no escaping the conclusion that there must be some connection between the crucifixion of Yeshua and the start of the exile. While tens of thousands of religious Jews did accept the message ("myriads" - Acts 21:20), the apostolic community was generally rejected and persecuted by the religious establishment. The rejection of the message of the early Messianic Jews from 33 to 70 AD is parallel to the rejection of the messages of Ezekiel and Jeremiah in the years leading up to 586 BC. 

Theodore Herzl was a liberal humanist Jew in Western Europe. He encountered anti-Semitism in Paris in 1894 in the famous case of falsely accused Jewish French army captain, Alfred Dreyfus. His encounter with anti-Semitism caused him to see the need for a Jewish state. His liberal background caused him to envision that state as a modern pluralistic one. His history-changing book, *The Jewish State* (published in German in 1896), described that simple formula: a modern state, both pluralistic and Jewish.

The freedom of religious expression in the modern Zionist movement broke the curse of the rejection and persecution against the early Messianic Jews, and thus reversed the cause of the exile in the first place. This opened the door spiritually to start the process anew for the restoration of the nation of Israel.

It was not necessary for the government leaders to accept the gospel in order for God to start to restore the nation. It is the job of the community of faith to preach the gospel; it is the job of the government to provide a structured and just society that enables the gospel to be shared freely. (Notice the connection between I Timothy 2:2 and 2:4.) No Jewish people, No Messiah. No Messiah, No new covenant. No new covenant, no physical creation. Therefore: No Jewish people, No physical creation.

Jeremiah 31:35, 36

Thus says YHVH, who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar... If those ordinances depart from before Me, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever.

Jeremiah describes two articles of this new covenant:

1. Forgiveness of sins through Messiah
2. Preservation of physical creation dependent on the existence of the Jews.
(It would be worth reading the whole passage in context, Jeremiah 31:31-37.)

If that were the case, one would think that every Christian would be committed to protecting the Jewish people from extinction, sharing the gospel with them and getting them back to Israel.

If that were the case, one would think that all of the forces of evil would be aimed at exterminating the Jewish people, keeping them away from the gospel, and trying to attack the nation of Israel.

2. The URL below has an article detailing *10 Bible prophecies which were fulfilled in 1948 when Israel became an independent, united nation for the second time in history, and for the first time in 2,900 years.*

<http://www.100prophecies.org/page3.htm>

References:

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