

## **Iconic Bible Chapters about Israel's Lost Tribes**

by Richard Hewitt (Risbek)

Chiang Mai, Thailand Symposium - May 10th, 2024

### **Abstract**

This list of iconic chapters about Israel's prophesied return is to help those investigating the scriptural significance of Israel's Lost Tribes. These chapters are concentrated in the Books of the Prophets, a section of the Tanakh known as the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. Each chapter also highlights messianic imagery. Hundreds of years later, Jesus applies this messianic imagery to himself.

### **Introduction**

The Prophets warned Israel and the nations about a coming judgment, which included exile. Israel's northern tribes didn't wake up, so judgment fell. I didn't include those warning/judgment chapters, because today I am simply presenting the most iconic chapters foretelling their future return from exile. This essay also won't take time to distinguish why many scholars don't view Israel's spectacular 1948 formation as the fulfillment of these particular prophecies. You can read the prophecies and make your own decision about Judah's return.

To understand the prophets' semantics, one must understand a brief history: Israel's 12-tribe confederation divided into North and South during the reign of King Solomon's son, Rehoboam (c. 980 BCE). Ten tribes in the north broke away from Rehoboam to follow Jeroboam from the tribe of Ephraim, which is one of Joseph's tribes. The northern kingdom is therefore called Ephraim and Joseph. They also kept the name Israel. Rehoboam's southern tribes were known by his prominent tribe, Judah, from whom today's Jews descend. The northern tribes, however, became "lost" sometime after Assyria deported them (c. 740 - 720 BCE). While reading, note the distinction between Judah (also known by their capital Jerusalem) and Israel (also known as Joseph, Ephraim, Samaria).

I recommend you read the following chapters, written primarily from the 8th - 5th Century BCE, before continuing this essay. Look for messianic symbolism and for God's promises about the tribes' predicted return. Be aware of the north-south divide and complimentary semantics. Finally, look for ways the symbolism from these chapters has been incorporated into the Messiah's teachings and actions. May the Spirit of Wisdom and Truth guide you as you read.

## Iconic chapters with QR codes and links

Isaiah 11



<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=isaiah+11&version=ESV>

---



<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2012&version=ESV>

---

Hosea 1-3



<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=hosea+1&version=ESV>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=hosea+2&version=ESV>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=hosea+3&version=ESV>

----

Isaiah 49



<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=isaiah+49&version=ESV>

Ezekiel 34



<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel+34&version=ESV>

---

Ezekiel 37



<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel+37&version=ESV>

---

Jeremiah 31



<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+31&version=ESV>

---

Isaiah 54



<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+54&version=ESV>

### Human and AI Observations

Most readers should jump to the short conclusion at the end, because the following observations, from me and AI, aren't scholastic. They are just our quick observations from each iconic chapter.

#### Isaiah 11

This prophecy starts at Isaiah 10:20, then detours into the destruction of Assyria, who had attacked Israel. It picks up again in Isaiah 11:1 and finishes at the end of Isaiah 12.

Starting with 11:1, we read that **a shoot of Jesse will come forward**, having the **Spirit of the Lord on him**. Jesse is King David's father, so we can assume that this reference refers to a descendant of the famous King David who lived a few centuries before Isaiah. Many other prophecies indicate the Messiah comes from David's lineage. During the era of the prophets, titles like David or Son of David are messianic references. Now, the term Second David is also used.

This essay is not a commentary, so I won't dive deep into the passage. This is the chapter with the famous imagery of "The wolf will dwell with the lamb" promoting messianic images of world peace. That is followed by the theme that no one will hurt or destroy on God's holy mountain. Why? Because **"the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord."**

Those familiar with the New Testament recognize that "Knowing the Lord" is key to the Messiah's message. Yeshua (Jesus/Isa) says, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Messiah Yeshua whom You sent." (John 17:3). This is the pattern we see in these iconic chapters: they also contain iconic messianic imagery that Jewish theology recognizes. Judaism concludes that the Messiah will bring the Lost Tribes back home. In each case, Yeshua uses the messianic imagery in reference to himself (Matthew 25:12).

11:10-12 states that the Root of Jesse will be a banner for the peoples. Banners represent nations, and banners go before marching troops. All nations had previously been seeded with Israelites (Ezekiel 11:16). In verse 10, these nations rally to Jesse's Root. Isaiah 11:11, a pivotal verse often discussed in our symposiums and roundtables, says **"The Lord will redeem a second time, the remnant of His people who remain."** That remnant is Israel's lost tribes. Many believe Yeshua referenced this when he said he would gather another flock (John 10:16). And verse 12 revisits the theme of a banner being lifted up for the nations:

He will lift up a banner for the nations,  
and assemble the dispersed of Israel,  
and gather the scattered of Judah  
from the four corners of the earth

These nations now appear to be the dispersed tribes of Israel. The verse, like many others, blurs the line between the nations (Gentiles) and returning Israelites, who inoculated nations during the formative era of city states (1st millennium BCE).

11:13 is a famous verse about Ephraim and Judah finally making peace since Jeroboam and Rehoboam divided the nation in the 10th-century BCE. The last two verses mention God drying up the rivers to make a highway so **the remnant of His people may return**. That remnant is the scattered tribes of Israel who did not return with the Jews but will rally around the banner - the root of Jesse with the Spirit of the Lord, leading to peace.

### Jeremiah 31

Jeremiah 31 is perhaps the most iconic chapter of all. It is within a large section, chapters 30-33, devoted to Israel's return. Chapter 31 builds to a crescendo with a burst of messianic symbolism in verses 31-34:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make **a new covenant** with the **house of Israel** and the **house of Judah**, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though **I was their husband**, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: **I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts**. And I will be their God, and **they shall be my people**. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ **for they shall all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For **I will forgive their iniquity**, and I will remember their sin no more.”

“The house of Israel and the house of Judah”! There is a religious movement called the Two House movement based on verses like these. This section's emphasis on a new covenant (v. 30) acknowledges the shortcomings of the old. Yeshua referenced this “new covenant” when he said that his blood was the blood of the new covenant.

For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matthew 26:28)

Jeremiah 31 also highlights that all will know the Lord. As stated, Yeshua employs this value in his teachings. He expects his followers to know him. Those who don't know him are cast out.

On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then I will tell them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. (Matthew 7:22-23)

Yeshua taught that knowing him was knowing God the father:

If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. (John 14:7)

Since Yeshua references concepts from Jeremiah 31, I assume it was iconic for him too.

### **Hosea chapters 1-3**

Unlike the others, Hosea prophesied in the north, in Israel. Hosea chapters 1-3 capture God's broken heart about his broken relationship with Israel, His bride. The whole book of Hosea is devoted to this theme and is therefore a must-read for anyone diving into the Lost-Tribes topic. Promising reconciliation, God famously says:

Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in **the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God."** And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. (1:10, 11a)

Hosea, like Jeremiah, references the unification of Judah and Israel. He then gives us the backstory: God is the groom or husband and Israel is his adulterous wife. Despite her departure, He promises to take her back, saying:

And I will betroth you to me forever. I will be engaged to you in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will engage you to myself in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord. (2:19, 20)

Yeshua uses the analogy of himself as the groom. When asked why his disciples didn't fast, he answered:

Can the wedding guests fast while the groom is with them? While they have the groom with them, they can't fast. (Mark 2:19)

By calling himself the groom, Yeshua (Jesus/Isa) is painting a picture of himself as the Messiah whom the Script associates with God. This blurred line between Almighty God and the Anointed Messiah is consistent with the BCE prophets' portrayal of Messiah. We will note a few examples.

### **Isaiah 49**

Isaiah 49 has been my personal favorite "return chapter". I prompted ChatGPT (March, 2024) with the following: "What messianic imagery is in Isaiah 49? Write answer as an essay."

Here is the surprising response I got. I made a few personal adaptations like changing Jesus to Yeshua. Notice AI's recognition of the messianic imagery:

Isaiah 49 is a profound chapter about the Lost Tribes of Israel, rich with messianic imagery and considered one of the Servant Songs in Isaiah's book. Passages in this chapter describe the mission, suffering, and ultimate victory of the Lord's Servant, a figure identified as the Messiah. The chapter intricately weaves themes of preordained mission, the inclusion of Gentiles, the Servant's suffering, and the universal scope of salvation.

The chapter opens with a declaration of the Servant's calling and preparation:

"Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name" (Isaiah 49:1).

This verse emphasizes the Servant's mission as predestined by God, reflecting the belief that Yeshua's role as the Messiah was foretold before his birth. Furthermore,

"He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver" (Isaiah 49:2).

This imagery of a sharpened sword and polished arrow suggests that the Servant's words and actions will be powerful and precise, which resonates with Yeshua's impactful teachings.

The Servant's mission extends beyond Israel to encompass all nations.

"And now the Lord says—he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself... It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob... I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:5-6).

These verses explicitly broaden the mission to include the nations (Gentiles), aligning with Yeshua's messianic message of salvation for all humanity, not just the Jewish people.

The imagery of the Servant's suffering and subsequent vindication is compelling.

"This is what the Lord says—the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel—to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: 'Kings will see you and stand up, princes will see and bow down, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you'" (Isaiah 49:7).

The Servant's initial rejection and later exaltation parallels Yeshua's rejection by his own people and his eventual recognition as Lord of every nation.

"This is what the Lord says: 'In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances'" (Isaiah 49:8).

This portrayal of the Servant as a covenant for the people points to Yeshua establishing a new covenant through his blood, spilled on Passover.

The universal scope of the Servant's work is evident in verses 9-12, which describe the freeing of captives, providing for the needy, and regathering God's people from all over the world.

"They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill. They will neither hunger nor thirst nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them" (Isaiah 49:9-10).

This imagery highlights the inclusive and universal nature of the Messiah's mission, which many believe is fulfilled through Yeshua's ministry and the global spread of his message.

The chapter further emphasizes God's unwavering compassion and assurance:

"Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones... See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me" (Isaiah 49:13-16).

These verses reassure that God will not forget his people, and the metaphor of engraving on the palms can be seen as a foreshadowing of the nails, where Yeshua bears the marks of his love for humanity.

Finally, verses 22-26 depict a dramatic reversal where the scattered and lost children of Israel return and are cared for by foreign nations, while their oppressors face judgment. This rich tapestry of messianic imagery not only affirms the servant's central role in God's salvation history but also provides a source of hope and inspiration for believers across generations.

Wow! Even AI can see all the messianic symbolism in these iconic chapters and connect that imagery to Yeshua! But AI still isn't properly distinguishing between Jews (Judah) and returning Israelites (Ephraim). Nonetheless, the response was impressive.

### **Ezekiel 34**

Ezekiel 34 has been another favorite of mine. It starts powerfully displaying God's love for his stubborn "Lost Sheep" and His commitment to gather them from all nations and shepherd them despite all their ailments. (The bold lettering is my emphasis.)

"For thus says the Lord God: Look, I, **I myself will search for my sheep** and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, **so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them** from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And **I will bring them out from**

**the peoples** and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And **I will feed them on the mountains of Israel**, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. **I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep**, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy... (Ezekiel 34:11-16)

The distinction between God, the divine shepherd, and the second David is lost a few verses later:

“Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: Behold, I, myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, **my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd**. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken. (Ezekiel 34:20-24)

Hundreds of years later, Yeshua refers to himself as the Good Shepherd. Yeshua is obviously drawing on Ezekiel's messianic language:

**I am the good shepherd**. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. **I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father**; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. (John 10:11-16)

Yeshua knew the Prophets well. In the context of these amazing chapters, Yeshua's statements are extremely suggestive to his religious audience. They knew he was

claiming to be the Messiah. He also aligned his disciples with the Ezekiel 34 prophecy when he told them not to go to anyone but “the Lost Sheep of Israel” (Matthew 10:6)

### **Ezekiel 36**

Ezekiel Chapter 35 detours from the promising return of Israel’s tribes into the judgment of Israel’s oppressive neighbor, Edom. Ezekiel 36 loops back to the theme of return, promising that the Israelite cities will be rebuilt and repopulated with Israelites who had profaned God’s name among the nations. God vows to cleanse them, give a new heart, and inject them with His Spirit:

And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. **I will sprinkle clean water on you**, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And **I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit** I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And **I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes** and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36:23-28)

Typical of these iconic “return” chapters, this one also has a prophecy about the messiah’s work, restoring hearts of stone and giving His Spirit to his cleansed children. This New Human is the mark of Messiah’s people. They are not marked by a religion or circumcision or anything other marker than the New Spirit and New Heart.

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)

### **Ezekiel 37**

Ezekiel 37 has two important visions, both iconic in their own way. In the first vision, Ezekiel, who is called the Son of Man, sees a valley of dry bones scattered everywhere. He is told to speak life over the bones. He then tells the breath or spirit to breathe life into them. The bones, which are the scattered children of Israel, come together and then come to life.

A messianic interplay can be seen in Ezekiel’s title, “Son of Man” (37:9).

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live."

The prophet Daniel also uses the phrase "Son of Man" when he describes a glorious being:

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. (Daniel 7:13)

Daniel's use of the title, "son of man" coming on the clouds, is a picture of the Messiah. Later, Yeshua uses the title for himself, which was one way of saying he is the messiah who will bring life and unity back to the scattered and "dead" bones of Israel.

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10)

This first vision in Ezekiel 37 also states that God's Spirit will be with Israel when they return. Those of us here at this symposium, who believe we are Israelites who have returned to God, have an obligation to be filled with God's Spirit.

The second vision in Ezekiel 37 is about two sticks, one called Judah and the other Joseph. Each is named after either Judah or Ephraim. God will unite the two:

say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand. (Ezekiel 37:19)

The Israelites will return and be united with Jews (Judah). The text also states that David will be their unifying king and that God will make an everlasting covenant of peace with his people when he brings them back and unites them. As stated earlier, all this is messianic imagery. The Messiah and Israel's return are interlinked.

### **Isaiah 54**

The next section is from Gork, X.com's AI (March, 2024). The prompt was: "Write an essay on the messianic symbolism in Isaiah 54." Gork's essay didn't highlight verse 13, which says "Your sons will learn from God." That is an important messianic verse. Additionally, I would have added verse 7, "For a brief moment I forsook you, But with

great compassion, I will gather you.” Verse 7 reveals God’s own turmoil and broken heart. Nonetheless, Gork catches the Divine Love Story between Israel and God.

Here is Gork’s response:

#### Title: The Messianic Imagery in Isaiah 54: A Divine Love Story

In the vast and complex narrative of the Bible, Isaiah 54 stands out as a chapter rich in messianic imagery, offering a profound glimpse into the relationship between God and His people. This chapter is a love story, a divine romance, where God is portrayed as the faithful husband and Israel as the beloved bride. The imagery used is deeply symbolic, drawing on the ancient tradition of covenantal love to illustrate the unbreakable bond between the Divine and His chosen people.

The chapter opens with a call to rejoice and sing, a call to the barren woman to enlarge her tent and prepare for a multitude of children. This imagery is reminiscent of the promise made to Abraham, that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. It also echoes the New Testament's depiction of the Church as the bride of Christ, with the promise of a multitude of spiritual children.

The chapter then moves into a declaration of God's enduring love. The imagery shifts from a marriage to a divorce, with God as the husband who has temporarily abandoned His wife. This imagery is powerful and poignant, reflecting the historical reality of Israel's exile and God's apparent absence. Yet, the chapter ends with a promise of reconciliation and restoration. God, the husband, will return to His wife and renew His covenant of love.

This imagery of God as the faithful husband and Israel as the beloved bride is deeply messianic. It anticipates the coming of the Messiah, who will restore the relationship between God and His people. In the New Testament, this imagery is fulfilled in the Messiah, who is described as the bridegroom and the Church (or His Community) as His bride. The love story of Isaiah 54 is a foreshadowing of the divine love story that will be fully realized in the coming of Yeshua.

The chapter also contains imagery of a new creation, with the promise of a new Jerusalem and a new covenant. This new creation is also a messianic theme, anticipating the renewal and restoration that will come with the Messiah. The promise of a new Jerusalem is a promise of a new world, a world where God's love and justice will reign supreme.

In conclusion, the messianic imagery in Isaiah 54 is a powerful and poignant depiction of the relationship between God and His people. It is a love story, a story of a faithful husband and a beloved bride. It is also a story of restoration

and renewal, anticipating the coming of the Messiah who will restore the relationship between God and His people and usher in a new creation. This chapter is a testament to the enduring love of God and His unwavering commitment to His people.

Not a bad summary for Artificial Intelligence.

### **Conclusion**

Other chapters like Isaiah 56, Zechariah 9-11, smaller sections that are not full chapters, and many other portions of scripture could be added to this essay, but you get the point: both Canonized Jewish scripture and AI engines conclude that God has prioritized the return of Israel's tribes in conjunction with the Script's anointed servant, the Messiah, who was chosen to bring these tribes back to God. Yeshua (Jesus/Isa) blatantly uses this imagery from these iconic "return chapters" to boldly proclaim himself as the anointed Messiah, which raises the question of whether Yeshua is gathering Israel's "lost sheep" for God. That is another essay that will examine what the nations see Yeshua doing in our day.

These chapters are presented with the hope that the audience and readers will study these chapters and develop their own insights from within their own cultural context.