

# ISAIAH

## ISAIAH 52:6-12, ZION RESTORED; JERUSALEM REDEEMED, PART 2

At some point, God is going to intervene in human history and fulfill the plans He has for Israel. While verse 6 is the conclusion of the first five verses of this chapter, it also sets up the revelation of the restoration of Israel that immediately follows it. It not only concludes the previous verses, it introduces the verses 7-12.

Isaiah 52:6 <sup>6</sup>“Therefore [לָכֵן] My people shall know [יָדַע] My name [שֵׁם]; therefore [לָכֵן] in that day I am the one who is speaking, ‘Here I am [הִנְנִי].’”

Therefore, לָכֵן, is a marker of cause or reason for a statement or assertion. Motyer calls the use of “therefore” twice an expression of “emotional intensity” [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 329]. According to Young, the repetition of “therefore” is a literary device he called “resumptive force” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:328]. Whatever it may be called, the repetition of the word is a Hebrew method of placing emphasis on the revelation. Due to what has already transpired, the stage is set for the fulfillment of the covenanted, Kingdom promises. This is a declaration made by God through Isaiah that everything that needs to be done will be done in order to fulfill God’s plan for history.

In contrast to the unbelieving world’s blasphemous treatment of God’s name, the Israelites will come to know the true significance of His name, implying that the full realization of who He is and what He has done for them will become part of the nation’s consciousness. Know, יָדַע, means to know, to learn, to perceive, to experience, and to know people relationally. In this context, it particularly signifies, not only the hearing of His Word in person, but experientially knowing God which, in the Kingdom, will be an intimate knowledge of Him, because He will personally be among them.

They will know His name. In terms of knowing Yahweh, His name, שֵׁם, reveals His attributes and character. God the Son was the experiential, in the flesh revelation of God’s divine nature which was characterized as the manifestation of His name (John 17:6). His name is revealed by means of both general and special revelation. “‘To know the name’ is to know intimately the character of the person who bears the name. In this case Israel will know that Jehovah is mighty to deliver, her faithful and promise-keeping God” [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 398]. The full significance of His name will become visible to them when the King sits on His Kingdom throne in Jerusalem. At that time, Israel will be totally committed to God and the New Covenant will be fulfilled.

Jeremiah 31:33–34 <sup>33</sup>“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>34</sup>“They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Knowing God will be the result of true experiential knowledge. God is going to reveal Himself to Israel as their Redeemer. In the end, He will personally appear and all the world, "every eye," will see Him return (Mt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7).

"In that day" is often used as a prophetic marker pointing to the Day of the Lord and/or to the Messianic Kingdom. This is a reference to both since both represent a continuum during which God will be manifesting His power before Israel and the world. Here the context involves Israel, but the world is going to see His work in real time as well.

"Here I am" [הִנְנִי] is literally "Look I" or "Behold I." Behold is a call to pay attention because God is in their presence; they can see Him. "'Behold, I am here' announces his real presence with them in Zion, his readiness to use his power to act, and his purpose to fulfill all that he has promised. His mysterious plans and hidden directions for human history will all be revealed as he brings to fruition this era and opens the door to his kingdom where God and man dwell together in unity and perfect harmony" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 422]. God will manifest Himself in powerful, miraculous ways to the nation during the Tribulation and especially at the Second Coming. They will see Him act in a way that has not been seen since Egypt, and they will see Him for who He is. During the Exodus, Moses served as the mediator between God and the Israelites. At this future point in time, there will be no mediator between God and Israel; "God with us" (Immanuel, Is. 7:14) will no longer be a prophetic promise; it will be a reality.

The following verses are clearly fulfilled only in the Messianic Kingdom. Verse 7 is very similar to the revelation in Isaiah 40:9-11.

Isaiah 52:7 <sup>7</sup>How lovely [נְאֻדָּה] on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace [שְׁלוֹמִים] And brings good news of happiness [טוֹב], Who announces salvation [יְשׁוּעָה], And says to Zion, "Your God [אֱלֹהֵיכֶם] reigns [מְלִכָה]!"

Isaiah is granted some Messianic Kingdom revelation that is characterized by joy. The picture here is that of a messenger bringing good news to the Israelites, and the good news is that Zion is restored and God reigns over it. These conditions will only be fulfilled when the Messianic Kingdom is inaugurated. This represents the culmination of God's plan to restore the mediatorial Kingdom He originally created for Adam to be king over.

The characteristics of this time as they are revealed in this verse are noteworthy: lovely, good news, peace, happiness, salvation, and God's reign. There is nothing negative about this situation; it points only to something wonderful, something never before seen to this extent in Israel. Even Solomon's kingdom was a vague picture of the full extent of the Messianic Kingdom.

The identity of this messenger is not revealed, and it is not important. The important thing about this is the message of good news that He brings to the Israelites. Lovely, נְאֻדָּה, means to be beautiful, to be suitable referring to being in a state of having a lovely, befitting appearance. The sense is to be appealing to the eye. He is beautiful to see, not because of his personal characteristics, but because of the message he bears. It may be fitting to suggest that what is beautiful here is not something pleasing to the eye, but something

that is pleasing to hear in the form of a wonderful message. “The word *nā`wû* may originally signify something like *timely* or *seasonable* ... At the time needed, the messengers have appeared with their tidings of good” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:329].

There are four proclamations in this message.

The first is an announcement of peace, which is more than just the absence of conflict. Peace, *שָׁלוֹם*, is an all-encompassing concept related to “entering into a state of wholeness and unity, a restored relationship.... [It relates] to peace, prosperity, well, health, completeness, [and] safety.... *shalom* describes the state of fulfillment which is the result of God’s presence. This is specifically indicated in those references to the ‘covenant of peace’ ... This sort of peace has its source in God” [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. “שָׁלוֹם,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 930-931]. This peace not only involves the people of the world, but it relates to peace between Israel and Yahweh.

The second announcement is the proclamation of good news. “... brings good news of happiness” is not the best translation. טוב means a good thing, benefit, welfare, and pleasing. “Proclaiming good tidings” or “proclaiming good news” are better translations of the text.

The third proclamation is the presence of salvation. Salvation, *יְשׁוּעָה*, means deliverance, salvation, safety, or rescue, which may refer to either temporal or spiritual deliverance. This word, *yeshuah*, is also the name of the Savior. Not only is this good news for the Israelites, but it is good news for the world as well (v. 10). “The prophets look to the time when salvation will affect all nations and be everlasting. Isaiah foresees this salvation coming through the suffering servant.... [T]he acts of salvation in the OT build toward the final act of salvation which will include all people under its possible blessing (Isa 52:10)” [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. “,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 416].

The fourth proclamation is that God is going to reign over Zion. Reign, *מָלַךְ*, means to reign as king referring to being in a condition or state of being a kingly ruler with a focus on the person who reigns. It may also refer to the coronation of that king. This is particularly significant because it is God, *אֱלֹהִים*, who is going to reign over Zion. Not only that, it is “your God,” Zion.

“What does God’s rule entail? It entails a condition where all things are in their proper relation to each other, with nothing left hanging, incomplete, or unfulfilled (*peace*); it entails a condition where creation purposes are realized (*good*); it entails a condition of freedom from every bondage, but particularly the bondage resulting from sin (*salvation*). Where God reigns, these follow” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 368].

Isaiah 52:8 <sup>8</sup>Listen! Your watchmen lift up *their* voices, They shout joyfully together; For they will see with their own eyes [עֵינֵי בְּעֵינֵי] When the LORD restores [שׁוֹבֵב] Zion.

Other people, the watchmen, will join together in spreading the good news. This is a figurative picture based on the ancient practice of watchmen on the walls who announce people approaching the city.

The Israelites will all see the Lord return to Zion. Seeing “eye to eye” “does not mean, as with us, ‘with agreement’ but ‘with total clarity’” [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 330]. The literal reading of this is “eye in eye” [עַיִן בְּעַיִן]. “The phrase eye to eye does not mean the same as the common English expression, to agree upon something, but rather ... describes two people as being so close that they can look into another’s eyes. Their seeing is immediate and clear” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:331].

The same construction is used in Numbers 14:14 when God’s presence was with Israel during the Exodus.

Numbers 14:14 <sup>14</sup>and they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, O LORD, are in the midst of this people, for You, O LORD, are seen eye to eye [עַיִן בְּעַיִן], while Your cloud stands over them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.

We have already studied verses in Isaiah that speak about the return of the Israelites back to the land for the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom. Highways will facilitate their return (Is. 11:16, 35:8), and angels will lead and guide them back from all over the world (Mt. 24:31). We know that the Lord will return to Petra and save the Israelites after which He will go to Jerusalem and continue the battle there (Zech. 14:1-8).

Some theologians insist that this is about the return from Babylon, but that is not possible. The return from the Babylonian captivity was a miserable time in the history of the nation as Ezra and Nehemiah prove in great detail. There was no Israelite king at that time and certainly God was not reigning on the throne in Jerusalem. “Unfortunately, some commentators have failed to perceive this prophecy as an eschatological reference to the establishment of God’s everlasting kingdom.... Isaiah is speaking about an eschatological fulfillment similar to the initial prophecy in 40:1-11. Faith in God’s future establishment of his reign is a legitimate motivation for trust in God today or in the midst of any crisis” [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 424-425].

Another refutation of the notion that this refers to the return from the Babylonian captivity is the fact that it is the Lord Himself returning to or restoring Zion and reigning from the throne. The Lord did not appear in Jerusalem after the captivity. At that time, Israel was only restored in the most basic, minimal sense that in no way fulfills the conditions that will prevail once the Lord actually returns and inaugurates the Messianic Kingdom. “The glorious appearance of God, which all flesh shall see, is to be clearly seen by the watchers of Zion. Yahweh, whom Israel regarded as having abandoned Zion, will now return to His holy city, there to reign in peace and good and salvation” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:331].

“When” is a temporal indication that the situation in question is in the future. The NASB translation, “restores,” is better translated “returns,” which reinforces the time element in this verse. Return, שׁוּב, means to turn back or to return referring to making linear motion back to a point previously departed. The sense is one of going to or coming back to a

place, condition, or activity where one has been before. Context and the grammatical construction (the preposition **בְּ** with the infinitive construct, **בְּשׁוּב**) argue for the word to be translated indicating a point in time. The actual restoration will not take place until the Lord has already returned and established the Kingdom. The word "returns" also emphasizes the fact that Yahweh has been in Zion before, which is fact, whereas the word "restores" skirts that issue altogether. Of all the English translations I routinely consult, the NASB is the only one that uses "restores" to translate this word in this context; all others use "return."

The joy the people are going to experience when this prophecy is fulfilled will really be indescribable. We have to remember that they had just experienced the most dangerous, destructive period in human history. The Israelites were persecuted and killed like no other time in history, and that is saying something given the horrors of Jewish life throughout the centuries and particularly during the Holocaust. To finally see their Messiah and be rescued from annihilation by Him will be just cause for such great joy.

Isaiah 52:9 <sup>9</sup>Break forth [**בְּצַח**], shout [**רִיזוּ**] joyfully together, You waste places of Jerusalem; For the LORD has comforted [**נָחַם**] His people, He has redeemed [**גָּאֵל**] Jerusalem.

After nearly continuous divine temporal discipline of the nation to one degree or another throughout the nation's history, Israel is finally going to be reconciled to God and placed in the position they were originally created to hold as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). The nation will be made whole temporally and spiritually. The land will become the fertile paradise it always had the capability, and the intention, of being. Peace and safety will characterize daily life. Spiritually, the nation will be living under the conditions of the covenant promises, and the nation and the people will be redeemed believers in their Messiah.

At this point in time, Jerusalem is in ruins. The city suffered under the military assaults of the antichrist and his armies (Rev. 13:7, and it suffered, along with the rest of the earth, the destructive effects of the judgments poured out on the earth by God. This included at least three earthquakes that struck the city (Rev. 11:13, 19; 16:18-19).

The waste places of Jerusalem are figuratively said to be crying out because of the national deliverance that has just been experienced. "Break forth" and "shout" are commands to express the joy the nation is feeling about this turn of events. The use of the imperatives together represents emphasis. This is a time when the joy and the nation's gratitude to God are going to be emphatically, intensely expressed. They will not be able to contain it; it will simply burst forth.

Break forth, **בְּצַח**, means to cause to break or to burst forth, to break forth with, or to start abruptly. It is used in connection with people bursting forth with joy. Isaiah uses this word four times to personify the earth's joy bursting forth. In Isaiah 44:23, the heavens, the lower parts of the earth, the mountains, and the forests are all said to be shouting for joy. Isaiah 49:13 and 55:12 are similar, and all four verses are connected to the inauguration of the Kingdom and the joy that will be experienced at that time not only by Israel, but by the world.

Shout, רָוַח, means to give a ringing cry, to emit a tremulous and stridulous sound, to call loudly or shrilly, or to rejoice referring to making loud public melodic and rhythmic words with a focus on the joy it expresses. The word is used throughout the Old Testament to describe the joy the nation feels at the saving acts of God on their behalf, and the shouts are of praise for Him. The verb form is intensive.

Comfort and redemption are important themes for this period of time, and they are both used numerous times by the prophet Isaiah. Both of these words, as used here, are perfect verbs meaning they are revealing completed action. When Isaiah penned these words, they were prophetic perfect verbs meaning they had not been completed yet, but their fulfillment at the hands of God is so certain that they are considered complete. At the time the nation bursts forth with shouts of joy the redemption will have been completed, and they are about to experience the comfort the fulfillment of their covenant promises and the presence of their Messiah King will provide them. Ultimately, comfort is a necessary result of redemption, but comfort is also a Messianic Kingdom concept wrapped up in all the covenant promises that will be fulfilled when all Israel is saved.

Comfort, נָחַם, means to console or to comfort. The nation's Messiah King will be with them comforting them with His presence and with the fulfillment of the covenant promises.

Redeemed, גָּאַל, means to redeem, to act as kinsman, i.e., the kinsman-redeemer. Redeemed pertains to an object or person who has been delivered from danger by being purchased from indenture or slavery with a focus on the relationship to the new master. In terms of the nation, this relates to temporal, physical danger and to spiritual danger, and Israel will be delivered from both at the end of the Tribulation.

“These two verbs are at the very center of the message of this part of the book. They speak of restoration to fellowship, deliverance from bondage, encouragement in despair, strength in weakness, forgiveness in guilt, purpose in uselessness, and more. If this is not cause for unrestrained joy, what is? Yes, the waste places of Jerusalem will be rebuilt, but much more to the point, the waste places of the people of Israel, and of the people of the world, will be rebuilt. Break forth, shout joyously!” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 370].

The salvation that Israel will experience is totally the work of God. Israel is powerless to not only help her own cause, but to save the nation in any way.

Isaiah 52:10 <sup>10</sup>The LORD has bared His holy arm In the sight of all the nations, That all the ends of the earth may see The salvation of our God.

Baring the arm is an idiom for preparing for battle, but notice that it is not just any arm that is preparing for battle. It is Yahweh's holy arm that is preparing to act on Israel's behalf. The arm of the omnipotent One is, of course, incapable of defeat. There is no arm that has the strength to compete with the strong arm of Yahweh represented by the bare arm that is prepared to do battle. Baring the arm relates to removing whatever clothing or other accoutrements that might interfere with the use of that arm as it wields a weapon.

God's redeeming strength will not be exercised just because He can do it; He has a purpose. First, it is part of His plan to redeem Israel. Second, it is part of His plan to judge Israel and the world. Third, it is part of His plan to save some Gentiles. Fourth, it is part of His plan to bring about the conditions necessary for the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom and the fulfillment of His covenant promises to Israel. For much of the book of Isaiah, these things have been promised—judgment and salvation—and the time will come for those promises to be fulfilled.

This is all done in the sight of the nations; everyone will see God at work and know exactly what is going on, and they know who is doing it when it takes place. Do not confuse knowing it with allowing that knowledge to change behavior; it will not. The world will know exactly what is happening to it, and the world will still reject the God behind it all.

Revelation 6:15–17 <sup>15</sup>Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; <sup>16</sup>and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; <sup>17</sup>for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Psalms 98:1–2 <sup>1</sup>O sing to the LORD a new song, For He has done wonderful things, His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him. <sup>2</sup>The LORD has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

The next two verses are sometimes referred to as the revelation of a second Exodus, which is an accurate description. The prophet Jeremiah compared this return to Israel to the Exodus out of Egypt describing it as what could be called a second Exodus without explicitly calling it that. He also refers to it as a much more significant return to the land.

Jeremiah 16:14–15 <sup>14</sup>"Therefore behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when it will no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' <sup>15</sup>but, 'As the LORD 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.

Isaiah 52:11–12 <sup>11</sup>Depart [סִירִי], depart, go [יֵצֵא] out from there, Touch nothing unclean; Go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, You who carry the vessels of the LORD. <sup>12</sup>But you will not go out in haste, Nor will you go as fugitives; For the LORD will go before you, And the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

Most theologians relate Isaiah 52:11–12 to the Babylonian captivity, which is obviously a type of the second Exodus that itself will culminate in a return to Israel in order to inaugurate the Messianic Kingdom, but it is not the same event and the facts point more to the latter than to the former. Restricting the revelation to the Babylonian captivity ignores the eschatological context of what has come before. Such a restriction to the meaning, "completely ignores the eschatological setting of 52:1–10, which provides the context for 52:11–12" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40–66*, 426, n. 289]. "Despite the call to leave

Babylon, this should be viewed as a precursor to the events described throughout chaps. 51-52 which describe Israel's ultimate restoration at the end of days" [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, "Isaiah" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1086].

When the Israelites returned from Babylon, they needed decrees and letters from the Persian king to ensure safe passage back to Jerusalem to do the work of resettling the land (Ezra 6:6-12, 7:11-24; Neh. 2:7-8). After the Babylonian captivity, not all the Jews returned (Ezra 6:13), but they will all return when the Messiah King assumes His throne in Jerusalem. This order is for all of the Israelites, and it is not restricted to "those who are willing to go to Jerusalem" (Ezra 6:13) as the return out of Babylon was restricted. The Lord is commanding all of them to return. There will be no obstacles to this final return as there was when the Israelites returned from the first Babylonian captivity (cf. Ezra and Nehemiah). There will be obstacle free highways upon which the Israelites will travel to Jerusalem (Is. 11:13, 35:8), and there will be angels to guide them back (Mt. 24:31).

The verse begins with three commands: "depart, depart, go." This is an emphatic Hebrew grammatical construction. This sentence also has a less forceful request or command to refrain from touching something unclean. This could have been translated "An unclean thing you may not touch," or "An unclean thing let not you touch." The second sentence in the verse also begins with the command to "go" and ends with the command to "purify" themselves. That is six commands in one verse, which is quite emphatic.

Depart, סוּר, means to turn aside and to depart. The primary meaning is to turn aside from what one is doing. It frequently involves the moral and spiritual direction one is taking, which has significance here because at this point in history, the Messiah King is present and no unbeliever will enter the Kingdom.

Go, יָצָא, means to go out, to go forth referring to leaving an area with linear movement. The sense is to go forth, go out, or move to a new area.

The Israelites are commanded to leave what is left of the world at the end of the Tribulation and make their way back to Israel. At this point, the world system has been destroyed and the world is in need of restoration. Israel will be the lead nation for that restoration project, and all the people need to be back in the land to enjoy the fulfillment of the covenant promises.

"The exiles are emphatically commanded to speedily leave Babylon. To the worldly-minded, long residence had many loathe to leave it, as will also be the case with the LORD's people in mystical Babylon (the satanic world system) just prior to the Messiah's destruction of it at His second advent" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1292]. While I agree with Unger that the Babylonian captivity is a type of this end-times return to Israel, these verses are not referring to that time period. There were no commands personally issued by God to the nation to go back out of the Babylonian captivity; returning from Babylon at that time was optional as noted earlier. While it was God's desire for them to go back, the decree to allow their return was issued by a Persian king and not by God, and it was not in the form of a command. Their return was allowed and encouraged, but it was not commanded, and many of the Israelites



living in Babylon did not, in fact, go back. They will; however, go back to Israel at the time in question here in Isaiah which is at the end of history as we know it.

“As in the Exodus out of Egypt and the Exodus away from Babylon, so in Israel’s yet-future return, the righteous remnant is exhorted to get away from the evil places where they will be living” [John A. Martin, “Isaiah” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 1106]. I would not call the return to Israel out of the Babylonian captivity an exodus. The first Exodus out of Egypt involved the entire population of Israelites in Egypt. The second Exodus out of the world and into Israel will also involve the entire population of Israelites. The return to Israel out of the Babylonian captivity only involved a minority of the Israelite population living outside Israel in Babylon; therefore, I would not call that an exodus. As Jeremiah 16:14-15 noted, there is the Exodus out of Egypt and there is an Exodus out of the world, and those are the only two Exodus events the Word of God acknowledges.

The commands to touch not the unclean things and to be pure are opposite sides of the same coin. It represents the holy versus the unholy and separation from one to the other.

Most people think that carrying the vessels of the Lord is a reference to the priests carrying the Temple utensils and vessels out of Babylon back to the land, but the Scriptures do not record them doing that. The only person recorded as actually touching them prior to and during the return was Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah, who brought them back to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:8-11). Nothing was recorded concerning the role of the Levites in bringing those Temple items back to Jerusalem.

That is almost beside the point here. God’s original assignment to Israel was to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6). In Isaiah 52:1, we learned that the nation was going to be clothed in what must be nothing other than priestly garments. This suggests that all of the Israelites will in some way be priests. We cannot say they will all be Levitical priests, because not all are of that tribe, of course, and only the Levitical priests can represent the nation before Yahweh. Additionally, there will be a Levitical priesthood operating in the Messianic Kingdom according to the order of Zadok (Ezek. 40:46, 43:19, 44:15, 48:11) which, of course, not every believing Israelite belongs to. In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter referred to the believing remnant as “a royal priesthood.” What does it mean for the nation to be a priesthood? “Israel’s status as *holy nation* was based on her election. A purpose of the election was for Israel to be a *kingdom of priests*. While Israel had a priestly tribe, the Tribe of Levi, the nation as a whole was also to be a priesthood. The historical function of a priest was to represent man to God. The Tribe of Levi represented Israel before God; and Israel was to represent the Gentile nations before God. This was perhaps the primary purpose of Israel’s national election and all other reasons are subservient to this one” [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, 569-570]. Election has to be understood as an appointment to service and not as a choosing from among other options. Israel was not chosen; Israel was specifically created. And, as Fruchtenbaum noted, their primary purpose was to be God’s priestly nation to the world.

We know that the Israelites left Egypt in haste for “they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay” (Ex. 12:39), which is why they ate unleavened bread; they did not have time to leaven their bread and let it rise. That is the revelation in Exodus, but leaven represents sin and that issue cannot be discounted; however, it was not mentioned in this

verse. They also left Egypt as fugitives in the sense that Pharoah and his army were in hot pursuit (Ex. 14).

Those sorts of things will not be issues when the remnant is returning to Israel at the end of the Tribulation. No one will ever again be trying to kill them and prevent them from returning. No one will ever again be chasing them down to persecute them. Those things are now in the past. All of them will safely arrive in the land. The Lord is going to go before them, and He will be their rear guard. This is reminiscent of the Exodus out of Egypt when the glory of the Lord was with the nation throughout their journey in the cloud by day and the fire by night (Ex. 13:21, 14:19). "There is now no opposing power that can keep them in bondage. Indeed, to the contrary, they come under every possible divine care (*before ... rear*)" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 331].