Introduction
We will look at several passages in Isaiah that repeat a theme of teaching concerning the specific role of Israel in God’s overall plans for mankind, as well as the example that they have and continue to serve to everyone.

1Bel has bowed down, Nebo stoops over; Their images are consigned to the beasts and the cattle. The things that you carry are burdensome, A load for the weary beast. 
2They stooped over, they have bowed down together; They could not rescue the burden, But have themselves gone into captivity. 
3“Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, And all the remnant of the house of Israel, You who have been borne by Me from birth And have been carried from the womb; 
4Even to your old age I will be the same, And even to your graying years I will bear you! I have done it, and I will carry you; And I will bear you and I will deliver you.

[Read 46:1-2]

Q: What is this a picture of and why?
A: This is a picture of the spiritual weight of idolatry on our lives, that the weight is as much as the real, physical weight of those idols on our shoulders. Note the words “bowed down”, “stoops over”, “burdensome”, “a load”, etc.

[Read 46:3-4]

Q: What is the contrast of the One True God to all the false gods?
A: God’s willingness to not be a spiritual burden on us, but in fact to actually bear the burden Himself. Note the words “borne”, “carried”, “I will bear you”, “I will carry you”, “I will deliver you.”

[Read Matthew 23:1-4]

Q: To what does Jesus liken the Pharisees’ implementation of religion?
A: (v.4) “They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders...” It’s the same effect as idolatry.

Application: How do we free ourselves from the spiritual burdens that keep us from truly worshiping and serving Christ? [Hint: See verse 3]

Point: Only when we return to Him can the burdens of our life—our sin—be relieved so that we can be restored to Him.

[Read 49:6]

Q: What does the reference in v.6 to “My Servant” mean?
A: The work of God to be fulfilled through Israel will come through the Messiah.

Q: What are the 3 things to be fulfilled by the Messiah through Israel?
• “To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel...”
• To be “a light of the nations”
• “…that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

Q: Have these all been accomplished? Is God’s work through the Messiah completed?
A: No. Parts of these began with Jesus’ First Coming, but they are yet to be completed, particularly the “resurrection”, so to speak, of Israel.
14 But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me, And the Lord has forgotten me.”
15 Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.
16 Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.

[Read 49:14-16]

Q: During what times might Israel come to believe that God has forsaken them?
A: During the times of God’s judgment when they’ve been dispersed from the land of Israel, such as the Babylonian captivity and the dispersion that began during the Roman Empire and continues to this day.

Q: Why would they think like that? Is there any basis on which they would draw that conclusion?
A: If we study judgments rendered by God on other nations/peoples, they very rarely survive. For instance, during Israel’s 490 years of captivity in Egypt, God provided the nations of Canaan the opportunity to repent and reconcile with Him. But because they completely rejected Him for false gods, He devoted them to complete destruction. It’s a very common result of idolatry, which is the major crime for which Israel is being punished.

Q: What does the reference mean in v.16, “I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands”?
A: It’s probably a reference to Exodus 13:9:

“And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the Lord brought you out of Egypt.”

They were supposed to inscribe God’s Word on their own self as a reminder and act of faithfulness to Him. Here God is using their own terms to describe HIS faithfulness and remembrance of His own Word to restore them, a very powerful object lesson of God’s love and grace in contrast to their unfaithfulness.

[Read 49:22-26]

Q: If Israel has been removed from the Promised Land and for so long been held in captivity that it has lost hope in God, what do they represent spiritually?
A: Israel is a type of resurrection.

Q: What is the stated purpose of this work?
A: (v.26) “And all flesh will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer...” The power of the resurrection reveals the Source of the power.

Point:
- The nation Israel should have never returned from Egypt, much less retained an independent, group identity.
- The nation Israel should have never come back from Babylon.
- The nation Israel should have never remained in tact under various foreign rulers.
- The nation Israel should have never come back from the Roman dispersion.
- Jews should not have retained their identity in the many and varied nations in which they’ve been living these nearly 2,000 years.
- Can you provide even one other example of this occurring throughout
And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued; For I will contend with the one who contends with you, And I will save your sons. 26 I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh, And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine; And all flesh will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, “Your God reigns!” Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices, They shout joyfully together, For they will see with their own eyes When the LORD restores Zion. 9 Break forth, shout joyfully together, You waste places of Jerusalem; For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. 10 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.

Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. 14 Just as many were astonished at you, My people, So His appearance was marred more than any man And His form more than the sons of men. 15 Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand.

human history?
- Within just 2 or 3 generations most Americans almost completely disassociate themselves from “the old country”.
- Conquered nations and people are more commonly absorbed and rarely return to their autonomous pre-conquered states after a single war, much less 20 centuries of exile.

Point: God’s repeated “resurrection” of Israel is a precursor as well as testimony to the resurrection of Christ, and the power and work of the resurrection in those who follow Him.

[Read 52:7-10]

Q: To what does this passage speak?  
A: The restoration—or resurrection, if you will—of Israel.

Q: Why will God do this?  
A: According to v.10, “That all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God.”

[Read 52:13-15]

Q: To what does this passage speak?  
A: The resurrection of the Messiah

Q: Why will/did God do this?  
A: (v.15) “…He will sprinkle many nations…”

Q: What does it mean to “sprinkle”?  
A: It’s the Old Testament ritual of making something pure by the sprinkling of blood, in this case Christ’s blood.

Point: The Messiah came through Israel and initiated a work that is still to be completed through Israel. This is why we cannot simply dismiss God’s work in Israel and the associated prophecies; they are the very real and visible evidence of the existence of God and His work on this planet to this day and for the future.
9"For this is like the days of Noah to Me, When I swore that the waters of Noah Would not flood the earth again; So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you Nor will I rebuke you.

10"For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, And My covenant of peace will not be shaken," Says the LORD who has compassion on you.

[Read 54:9-10]

Q: What awaits God’s people on the other side of judgment when they return to Him?

A: Grace, peace, compassion.

Overall Application:

• How does this speak to you about the role of the Gospel in your life?

• Are others seeing the power of the resurrection in your life, and therefore seeing the One who can resurrect their life?

• What is awaiting you on the other side of judgment?