

**Killing Leviathan
Sea Monsters, Serpents and a Dragon? Really?
Isaiah 27:1 – 13**

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Isaiah 27:1

“In that day the LORD will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, With His fierce and great and mighty sword, Even Leviathan the twisted serpent; And He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea.” (NASB95)

Say what?

We are approaching the end of Isaiah’s apocalypse and after the high-level outline taking us through the Tribulation and on into the Millennium, we get a message about Leviathan, the “dragon who lives in the sea.”

I get that at times apocalyptic literature has imagery in it, but what is this?

לִיְיָתָן – (liwyatan) is translated as Leviathan. It means “serpent, dragon, leviathan.” (Brown, Driver and Briggs 1977, 531)

What is behind this?

Leviathan is a name that is not a one off. “Leviathan is mentioned by name six times in the Hebrew Bible (Job 3:8; 41:1; Pslams 74:14; 104:26; Isa 27:1). Most of these passages assert or allude to Yahweh’s power and control over the sea monster.” (Heiser 2017, 121)

We forget that there were other cultures in and around the Jewish nation of Israel. Remember, Israel had an idolatry problem. The gods of the surrounding nations were interesting to them and they were seduced into the worship of these foreign gods, contrary to the very explicit instructions from YAHWEH. We already covered their approaching end, those who are misled as well as those doing the misleading, back in Isaiah 24:21 – 22. But some of the names associated with these false gods do show up in the scriptures. Many times, those names are used as a strategy of YAHWEH creating a polemic that YAHWEH, not anyone else was the Lord of creation. He is Most High God, not Baal or whoever is the god du jour.

The Jews were familiar with the theological terms used in surrounding cultures. They were also aware of the other gods' names and associated allegations of supremacy. This is very real spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 6:10–13

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.” (NASB95)

Getting back to Leviathan, this is not a sea monster, but a way of remembering a concept, a world view. “If you asked an Israelite who Leviathan was or what it was, you would get an entirely different answer. Leviathan was a very well-known symbol of disorder and chaos, basically everything that could go wrong. All the stuff we need to fear in life, Leviathan was a symbol of that.” (Heiser, BI101 Introducing Biblical Interpretation: Contexts and Resources 2018)

Psalm 74:12–17

“Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters. You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. You split open springs and brooks; you dried up ever-flowing streams. Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the heavenly lights and the sun. You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth; you have made summer and winter.” (ESV)

Yahweh brought the world into order, making it habitable for humanity, his people as it were. The creation act as described in Psalm 74 was theologically crucial for establishing Yahweh's superiority over all other gods. Baal was not king of the gods, as the Ugaritic story proclaimed—Yahweh was.

Neither was Pharaoh, or any other Egyptian deity. By linking the exodus event—the taming of the chaotic waters so that Yahweh's people could pass through them untouched—with the creation story, the biblical writers were telegraphing a simple, potent message. Yahweh is king of all gods. He is lord of creation—not Pharaoh, who, in Egyptian theology, was responsible for maintaining creation order. (Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* 2015, 154)

In other words, a polemic, acted out in the physical, of the reality that exists in the spiritual. Done for the whole world to see; and it worked.

Joshua 2:10–11

“For we heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you left Egypt and how you annihilated the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, on the other side of the Jordan. When we heard the news we lost our courage and no one could even breathe for fear of you. For the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below!” (NET)

Coming back to our text in Isaiah. We see the term Leviathan clearly used not once but twice and tied to the serpent as well.

About the name Leviathan. “Etymologically it might be interpreted either as ‘the twisting one’ (cf. Arab *lawiyā*) or ‘the wreath-like’, ‘the circular’ (cf. Heb *liwyā*), both possibilities pointing to an original concept of Leviathan as a snake-like being.” (Uehlinger 1999, 511)

A snake like being. I remember something in the scriptures about there being problems in the past with a snake like being. A rebellious throne guardian name Lucifer who we met earlier in Isaiah 14.

Genesis 3:1–5

“The two were naked, both Adam and his wife, and they did not feel shame. Now the serpent was wiser than all the wild animals that were upon the earth that the Lord God made. And the serpent said to the

woman, “Why is it that God said, ‘You may not eat from every tree of the garden?’ ” The woman said to the serpent, “From every tree of the garden we may eat, but from the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden God said, ‘You will not eat from it, nor may you touch it, in order that you might not die.’ ” The serpent said to the woman, “You certainly will not die; for God knows that in the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be as gods who know good and evil.”” (Lexham Press 2020, Gen 3:1-5)

First of all, ‘Leviathan’ is a name and as such identifies an individual being. In KTU 1.5 i:1 || 27, it designates a ‘fugitive serpent’ (bṭn brḥ, cf. Heb nāḥāš bārīaḥ in Isa 27:1 and Job 26:3) smitten by the victorious weather-god Ba‘alu (→Baal). Two closely related epithets, ‘wriggling serpent’ (bṭn ‘qltn, cf. Heb nāḥāš ‘āqallātōn in Isa 27:1) and ‘Mighty one(?) with the seven heads’ (šlyṭ d.šb’t rašm), are usually understood to refer to Leviathan, too, and the former is certainly used in this sense in Isa 27:1. (Uehlinger 1999, 512)

KTU 1.5:1:1-8 Mot’s Message to His Messengers

1–4 “When you killed Litan, the Fleeting Serpent, Annihilated the Twisty Serpent, The Potentate with Seven Heads, The heavens grew hot, they withered.

4–6 But let me tear you to pieces, Let me eat flanks, innards, forearms.

6–8 Surely you will descend into Divine Mot’s throat, Into the gullet of El’s Beloved, the Hero.” (Smith and Parker 1997, 141)

In Genesis 3, the problem is the serpent, the נָחָשׁ (nahas) in the Hebrew.

Now in Mesopotamian sources the serpent has an identical function, and what is more important, he forms with the cherub a couple of guardians at the entrance of the temples, a trace of which is found in Gn 3:24 where God places “the cherubim and the flaming sword to keep the way to the tree of life”. (van Dijk 1968, 115)

Isaiah 27:1

“In that day the LORD will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, With His fierce and great and mighty sword, Even Leviathan the twisted serpent; And He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea.” (NASB95)

Leviathan, as we have learned, is also, for the Jew of Isaiah’s time, a synonym for chaos. This concept is also tied to the serpent.

The word is the same word as used back in Genesis 3. This is all tied together for us in the New Testament.

Revelation 20:1–10

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of

the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (NASB95)

Isaiah is providing his synopsis of this very moment. “In that day.” This is not a description of various nations being destroyed per some commentators; this is chaos, evil personified in the dragon, being taken down and destroyed. The Greek term dragon shows us more of the concept that Isaiah is hitting on.

Drakōn is the Greek word (Latin draco) which is used in LXX (33 occurrences), NT and Pseudepigrapha for a large monster which often appears as opponent of God or his people. It is often related to the sea and can be identified or associated with a snake (Serpent). In the NT the word only appears in Revelation (13 occurrences). (van Henten 1999, 265)

But here in Isaiah, it is the Hebrew term translated dragon תַּנִּין (tannin) - sea-monster, sea-dragon, serpent, crocodile. (Koehler, et al. 1994-2000, 1764)

Tannin occurs in the OT in reference to a sea monster subdued or slain by Yahweh (whether as a proper name or as a common noun meaning “sea monster” or “dragon” is unclear). The term is found also in the sense of “serpent” and (arguably) “crocodile”; further, it appears five times in the plural (tannînim) with the meaning “sea monsters/dragons” or “snakes”. (Heider 1999, 834)

Dragon is a term used repeatedly in Revelation for Satan.

This is the dragon who lives in the sea. יָם (yam) – YAHWEH controls the sea. The dragon cannot escape. Leviathan will be eventually exterminated (Isa 27:1). The sea will dry up at the precise moment when heaven and earth are reconstructed (Rev 21:1). (Stolz 1999, 741)

The theological statement, of God being in control of chaos, as embodied by the sea, is buried in the disciples comment in Mark 4

Mark 4:41

“And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”” (ESV)

God is the sole sovereign of the universe, and while evil and destruction now seem to threaten the principles of justice upon which his order is founded, they will not prevail. God will triumph and those who have kept faith with him through dark days will triumph with him. But the true monster which must be destroyed, the one before which God’s people find themselves helpless, is not some primordial chaos; it is the monster of moral evil. That, too, God will destroy, and his people may await that day with joy. (Oswalt 1986, 491)

The threefold description Leviathan ... serpent ... monster is matched by the threefold description of the Lord’s sword: fierce (hard, unrelenting), great (equal to any task) and powerful (dominating). Hostile supernatural forces infest the whole creation, coiling on land, monstrous in the sea. Thus has sin corrupted the ‘very good’ work of God (Gen. 1:31), but, however great and wherever concealed, the sword of the Lord will find and slay them in that day. (Motyer 1999, 202)

Isaiah 27:1 is the high-level description of what John details in Revelation 20. In that day, the cause of chaos, the serpent, the dragon...Satan and all his minions...are done. Sorry, but no dinosaurs here. Just familiar terminology for the 6th century BC Jew for chaos, evil and creation. So, this being the book of Isaiah, it’s time for another song.

Isaiah 27:2–3

“In that day, “A vineyard of wine, sing of it!” “I, the LORD, am its keeper; I water it every moment. So that no one will damage it, I guard it night and day.”” (NASB95)

Since chapter 24 we have been in that day. The day of the Lord. This tune has a title “A vineyard of wine.” Yes, Isaiah has sung about vineyards and wine once before back in chapter 5. There we learned in verse 7 that the vineyard, which was not producing anything, was Israel and Judah was His delightful plant. The Lord’s people ruined His vineyard. But now we are “in that day.” We are going to learn what the Lord will make of His people in that day. This is about the vineyard people. Thus a song.

Recall that in chapter 5, the last time Isaiah sang about a vineyard, “we saw the Lord looking for grapes and finding only wild grapes, for Israel after the flesh bore no fruit for God. Now all is changed, and we see vines loaded with luscious grapes, thus giving satisfaction to the heart of the Owner.” (Ironsides 1952, 161)

This verse uses a word that is correct depending upon the source being used. The translation in the NASB uses the word wine. The ESV lets us know there is more to this vineyard, this people than meets the eye. It all depends on a letter. It has no impact at all on doctrine or belief.

Isaiah 27:2

“In that day, “A pleasant vineyard, sing of it!” (ESV)

The Hebrew word for “pleasant” is **המֵד** (BDB 326) *hemed*, which is in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, but the MT and the DSS have the **ר** (*resh*) not the **ד** (*dalet*). The Hebrew word for “wine” is **המָרוֹס** (BDB 330) *המָרוֹס hamar*. (Utley 2001, 277)

It is a vineyard of **המֵד** (*hemed*) - loveliness, beauty. (Koehler, et al. 1994-2000, 325)

Unlike the vineyard of chapter 5 which was unproductive, this vineyard is the Lord’s delight. One He will protect.

Isaiah 27:3

“I, the LORD, am its keeper; I water it every moment. So that no one will damage it, I guard it night and day.” (NASB95)

The Lord is now the one who is the husbandman. He is the one who will maintain the vineyard. Ezekiel also covered the same topic about who will rule the nation in the future.

God is not done with Israel. The church has not replaced them.

Those who believe the church has replaced Israel in terms of the promises adhere to what is called, replacement theology. It is not what the Bible teaches.

...when I see the curse pronounced, I admit it is on the Jews; but then when the prophet spreads his wing, and soars into the empyrean, and brings down some of the sunshine of heaven to light up their future destiny and their approaching history, I cannot selfishly take that for myself and deny it to the Jews; for I believe that the very people that God has thus cursed because of a great sin, are the very people that he will bless with a blessing richer than eye hath seen, or ear hath heard, or heart hath ever conceived. (Cumming 1862, 194)

Ezekiel 34:11–15

“For this is what the sovereign LORD says: Look, I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will seek out my flock. I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered on a cloudy, dark day. I will bring them out from among the peoples and gather them from foreign countries; I will bring them to their own land. I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams and all the inhabited places of the land. In a good pasture I will feed them; the mountain heights of Israel will be their pasture. There they will lie down

in a lush pasture, and they will feed on rich grass on the mountains of Israel. I myself will feed my sheep and I myself will make them lie down, declares the sovereign LORD.” (NET)

This song shows us that there is a future for Israel. What we see in this song is a continuation of the reversal that began back in chapter 24. What Paul said was coming, is now taking place. The remnant of Israel, His vineyard, is in place.

Romans 11:25–27

“I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ. And so all Israel will be saved. As the Scriptures say, “The one who rescues will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel away from ungodliness. And this is my covenant with them, that I will take away their sins.”” (NLT)

Isaiah 27:4–6

“I have no wrath. Should someone give Me briars and thorns in battle, Then I would step on them, I would burn them completely. Or let him rely on My protection, Let him make peace with Me, Let him make peace with Me. In the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, And they will fill the whole world with fruit.” (NASB95)

Unlike chapter 5, here in chapter 27 we are “in that day.” “The time will come when his wrath against her will be spent (4a). Then her enemies (briars and thorns) will encroach no more. At the end of the song the LORD speaks like a lover whose love for his beloved is so intense that he almost wishes someone would attack her so that he might have the satisfaction of defending her (4)! But the impression left is that the nations will in fact choose the wiser course of reconciliation (5).” (Webb 1996, 113)

At the end of the age, YAHWEH has no wrath towards His people. Even after reading of the events of the last 3 chapters, we see His grace is still being extended in the present, even in this glimpse of the future from Isaiah. But for the enemies of the vineyard, briars and thorns, they will be burned completely. “So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 13:40–42, NASB95)

He speaks of the ease wherewith He could accomplish His wrath upon His enemies. They would perish before Him like the moth. Why set up, then, a contest so unequal as this? God is saying in the text that this is not what He is wanting. In the language of the next verse, He would rather that this enemy of His, not yet at peace with Him, and who may therefore be likened to a briar or a thorn, should take hold of His strength, that He may make peace with Him—and as the fruit of his so doing, He shall make peace with Him. (Exell n.d., 504)

Isaiah 27:5

“Or let him rely on My protection, Let him make peace with Me, Let him make peace with Me.” (NASB95)

The invitation is to make peace with YAHWEH. As we learned earlier in Isaiah 26:1 – 4, peace with God means the one who is now reconciled to Him has the peace of God. “The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You.” (Isaiah 26:3, NASB95)

Peace would be possible for any enemies of God’s people. In the Hebrew text the emphasis is on “with Me” in the first “Let him make peace with Me” and on “peace” in the second. (Constable 2003, Is 27:5)

2 Corinthians 6:2

“For God says, “At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.” Indeed, the “right time” is now. Today is the day of salvation.” (NLT)

Isaiah 27:6

“In the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, And they will fill the whole world with fruit.” (NASB95)

YAHWEH is looking forward to the days about to take place for the nation. The days they will experience under the rule of Messiah and His rule and reign. This makes clear that the great reversal has been accomplished. No one will invade the vineyard any longer, but the vineyard will invade the world. The entire planet will experience the joy of being filled with the fruit that comes from the nation which has the Lord dwelling in it. The promise made to Abraham is fulfilled.

Genesis 12:2–3

“And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (ESV)

Eden has been restored. God is dwelling with man and does so from Jerusalem in the Temple that Ezekiel described for us in Ezekiel 40 – 48.

Isaiah 27:7

“Like the striking of Him who has struck them, has He struck them? Or like the slaughter of His slain, have they been slain?” (NASB95)

So a question that would be in the mind of Isaiah’s readers is now also posed by God. Does God judge Israel more than other nations?

Did the Lord strike Israel as hard as the nations? Did the Lord ever slaughter those of Israel as those of the nations?

Amos 3:2

“I have chosen you alone from all the clans of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for all your sins.” (NET)

The scripture is clear that He would punish Israel if they chose not to be faithful to Him. He sent prophet after prophet to let them know of their sin and give them time to repent, but they refused resulting in the northern kingdom already being in exile at the time of Isaiah writing this and difficult times to come for Judah leading ultimately to exile as well.

Psalms 118:18

“The LORD severely punished me, but he did not hand me over to death.” (NET)

On all such occasions, divine wrath could have exacted a full penalty from Israel but forbearance intervened—and even when the major exile came, it was cushioned with a promise of return. Chastisement was truly his fierce blast, never negligible, for divine wrath is real and divine standards non-negotiable. (Motyer 1999, 203)

Anytime we think we can engage in negotiations with God over His word, we have engaged in a fools errand. “For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.” (Malachi 3:6, ESV)

They would return but continue to have loyalty issues with YAHWEH. Ultimately, they would be exiled across the world. But as prophesied by Ezekiel, they are now back in the land. But when this was written, Israel was in exile and for Judah, exile was coming.

Isaiah 27:8

“You contended with them by banishing them, by driving them away. With His fierce wind He has expelled them on the day of the east wind.” (NASB95)

Unlike Assyria, who was destroyed and disappeared into the dustbin of history, Israel would not be destroyed. There would be a remnant.

Romans 11:1–6

“So I ask, “God has not rejected his people, has he?” Of course not! I am an Israeli myself, a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he chose long ago. Do you not know what the Scripture says in the story about Elijah, when he pleads with God against Israel?

“Lord, they have killed your prophets and demolished your altars. I am the only one left, and they are trying to take my life.” But what was the divine reply to him? “I have reserved for myself 7,000 people who have not knelt to worship Baal.” So it is at the present time: there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if this is by grace, then it is no longer on the basis of actions. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace.” (ISV)

Despite the promise that God’s contention with his people would be of a more measured sort than that meted out upon her destroyers, there is no denying her punishment would be severe. Like the searing wind roaring out of the east, her fate would come upon her and sweep her away. (Oswalt 1986, 498)

Read through the book of Daniel or Ezekiel and you learn that the exile was not all peaches and cream.

Esther even shows us the determination of some enemies to destroy the people, but YAHWEH steps in and protects them.

Esther 3:12–14

“The king’s scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and all that Haman commanded was written to the regional authorities of the king, to the governors who were over each province, and to the officials of each people. This order was translated in the name of King Ahasuerus into the language of each province and bore the seal of the king’s signet ring. Letters were sent by couriers to all of the king’s provinces to annihilate, to kill, and to destroy all the Jewish people, both young and old, women and children, and to confiscate their goods on a single day—the thirteenth day of the twelfth month of Adar. A copy of the letter was to be issued as an edict in every province and published to all the people, telling them to be ready for that day.” (ISV)

Esther 7:8–10

“When the king returned to the banquet hall from the palace garden, Haman was prostrate on the couch where Esther was. The king asked, “Will this man even assault the queen with me in the house?” The king had no sooner spoken than they covered Haman’s face. Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs attending the king, observed, “Look there! A pole is standing 75 feet high at Haman’s house that he prepared for Mordecai, whose report benefitted the king!” The king said, “Hang him on it.” So they hanged Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai, and then the king’s anger subsided.” (ISV)

Even in exile, YAHWEH was still looking out for His people, and does so with poetic justice. The next verse provides the intent of YAHWEH.

Isaiah 27:9

“Therefore through this Jacob’s iniquity will be forgiven; And this will be the full price of the pardoning of his sin: When he makes all the altar stones like pulverized chalk stones; When Asherim and incense altars will not stand.” (NASB95)

The purpose for the punishment for the nation was for the purpose of discipline and purification. The idolatry problem will be resolved, once and for all. “God punished Israel “by measure;” His punishment is a way to salvation: therefore it ceases as soon as its purpose is secured; and so would it cease now, if

Israel would thoroughly renounce its sin, and, above all, the sin of all sins, namely idolatry. “ (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 298)

...since the captivity in Babylon, no people in the world have such a rooted aversion to idols and idolatry as the people of the Jews. (Henry 1994, 1128)

What Moses told the people to do prior to entering the promised land, they finally did. “Instead, this is what you must do to them: You must tear down their altars, shatter their sacred pillars, cut down their sacred Asherah poles, and burn up their idols.” (Deuteronomy 7:5, NET)

Leviticus 26:44–45

“And not even when they are in the land of their enemies, not even then will I discard them, nor will I be utterly provoked toward them to the extent of utterly destroying them so as to turn away from my covenant with them, for I myself am the Lord their God. And I will remember their former covenant, when I led them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, in the presence of the nations to be their God; I myself am the Lord.” (Lexham Press 2020, Lev 26:44-45)

Isaiah 66:8

“Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.” (NASB95)

Ezekiel 36:8–12

“But you, mountains of Israel, will grow your branches, and bear your fruit for my people Israel; for they will arrive soon. For indeed, I am on your side; I will turn to you, and you will be plowed and planted. I will multiply your people—the whole house of Israel, all of it. The cities will be populated and the ruins rebuilt. I will increase the number of people and animals on you; they will increase and be fruitful. I will cause you to be inhabited as in ancient times, and will do more good for you than at the beginning of your history. Then you will know that I am the LORD. I will lead people, my people Israel, across you; they will possess you and you will become their inheritance. No longer will you bereave them of their children.” (NET)

But there will be a period of punishment due to their sins. More specifically, due to their idolatry in violation of the covenant made with YAHWEH. The northern kingdom is already gone. The south is just starting down the path and as we saw earlier in the book of Isaiah, there was still a chance that repentance would change the course, however King Ahaz changed all of that.

As Isaiah is looking forward to the day the remnant are restored along with all the resurrected OT saints, he comes back to the reality of what is coming up for Jerusalem in less than 150 years from his time.

Isaiah 27:10–11

“For the fortified city is isolated, A homestead forlorn and forsaken like the desert; There the calf will graze, And there it will lie down and feed on its branches. When its limbs are dry, they are broken off; Women come and make a fire with them, For they are not a people of discernment, Therefore their Maker will not have compassion on them. And their Creator will not be gracious to them.” (NASB95)

The fortified city is Jerusalem. The punishment to be received by Judah will not destroy the people, but the city of Jerusalem will become desolate and become pasturage again.

The thought is that the once fortified and hence enclosed city has now become an open pasturage which is accessible to all who wish to enter it. This pasturage is described as driven away, banished, which evidently means that it is a pasturage whose inhabitants have been banished or driven away. It is thus forsaken, and like a wilderness. (Young 1969, 248)

Isaiah 7:25

Isaiah had already warned about this being part of the end game for their sin. “As for all the hills which used to be cultivated with the hoe, you will not go there for fear of briars and thorns; but they will become a place for pasturing oxen and for sheep to trample.” (NASB95)

In verse 11, Isaiah continues talking about Jerusalem by comparing it to a tree. By using this metaphor, he brings back the ideas discussed in chapter 5 about the first vineyard that was no longer producing. Dry limbs are an indicator of a lack of water and nutrients to provide for the growth of the tree. All they are good for is to be gathered up and burned. How did this happen?

“...For they are not a people of discernment, Therefore their Maker will not have compassion on them. And their Creator will not be gracious to them.” (Isaiah 27:11b, NASB95)

When God accuses his people of this sin, the problem is not a lack of available information, but a refusal to take to heart what God has revealed. Isaiah refers to God as their Maker and their Creator because Israel’s idolatry represents a denial of the true nature of the one who made them and reduces him to the level of the creation (cf. Rom 1:18–23). (Briley 2000-, 252)

The bottom line, the cause of the nation’s distress is a lack of understanding, a lack of true knowledge. It is intentional.

Hosea 4:6

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.” (ESV)

Several hundred years earlier, Solomon provided what the requirement was to be for someone who is diagnosed with the problem of discernment, understanding and knowledge.

Proverbs 2:1–5

“My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.” (ESV)

Because Judah has placed themselves willingly into such a predicament where they know the truth but lack the knowledge and understanding to act on it, when judgement comes, for those being judged, grace is no longer available.

Jeremiah 11:10–14

“They have gone back to the evil ways of their ancestors of old who refused to obey what I told them. They, too, have paid allegiance to other gods and worshiped them. Both the nation of Israel and the nation of Judah have violated the covenant I made with their ancestors. So I, the LORD, say this: ‘I will soon bring disaster on them which they will not be able to escape! When they cry out to me for help, I will not listen to them. Then those living in the towns of Judah and in Jerusalem will go and cry out for help to the gods to whom they have been sacrificing. However, those gods will by no means be able to save them when disaster strikes them. This is in spite of the fact that the people of Judah have as many gods as they have towns and the citizens of Jerusalem have set up as many altars to sacrifice to that disgusting god, Baal, as they have streets in the city!’ So, Jeremiah, do not pray for these people. Do not cry out to me or petition me on their behalf. Do not plead with me to save them. For I will not listen to them when they call out to me for help when disaster strikes them.” (NET)

Isaiah 27:12–13

“In that day the LORD will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel. It will come about also in that day that a

great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.” (NASB95)

We start by going back to the day of Messiah’s return. The remnant of Israel will be regathered after all the events of the tribulation. It will be done so one by one.

Isaiah 60:4

“Lift up your eyes round about and see; They all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar, And your daughters will be carried in the arms.” (NASB95)

Isaiah 11:11–12

“Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea. And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.” (NASB95)

The emphasis here in verse 11 is that the gathering up to worship in Jerusalem is the entire Jewish people who are in all the land. “On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.”” (Genesis 15:18–21, NASB95)

As promised, all of the remnant is in all of the land.

Isaiah 27:13

“It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.” (NASB95)

The great trumpet referred to here would bring to the mind of Isaiah’s readers the trumpet used to announce the year of Jubilee. It was to be sounded on the Day of Atonement. Something they had not done along with not celebrating the sabbath years either.

Leviticus 25:8–12

“You must count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, and the days of the seven weeks of years will amount to forty-nine years. You must sound loud horn blasts—in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, on the Day of Atonement—you must sound the horn in your entire land. So you must consecrate the fiftieth year, and you must proclaim a release in the land for all its inhabitants. That year will be your jubilee; each one of you must return to his property and each one of you must return to his clan. That fiftieth year will be your jubilee; you must not sow the land, harvest its aftergrowth, or pick the grapes of its unpruned vines. Because that year is a jubilee, it will be holy to you—you may eat its produce from the field.” (NET)

The picture here is of the end of the age. Jesus Christ has returned. Joel also spoke of this trumpet and tied more of it together for us.

Joel 2:15–16

“Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.” (ESV)

The ultimate Day of Atonement has arrived.

Just as eschatological judgment falls on real people, so here does eschatological blessing. Isaiah relates the eschaton to the map of his own world. From the ends of the earth, and even from the supreme

oppressors themselves (Egypt the first, Assyria the contemporary), there will be those whom the atonement trumpet calls to Zion. The gathered Gentiles will worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem. They will be united to the Lord in worship, full participants in the holy community and welcomed in Jerusalem as members of the strong city itself (cf. Eph. 3:6). (J. A. Motyer 1996, 226)

Revelation 21:5–7

And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.” And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.” (NLT)

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