

Isaiah 27:6-13 + 28:1, 5

This Haftarah uses the first few verses of this week's Torah reading in Exodus 1 - the list of those who came down to Egypt with Jacob - to expand on the fate of his people Israel, their backsliding and exile, and their eventual redemption in the days of Messiah.

Isaiah 27:6 - "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit."

But let's start at the beginning of the chapter to set up the Haftarah: The final defeat of Leviathan.

Isaiah 27:1 - "In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea."

piercing = straight or "bar-like" "swift"
Crooked = double or two - duality

Targum of Jonathan - [Punishment] On the king who aggrandized himself like Pharaoh the first king, and upon a king who was as haughty as Sennacherib, the second king.

Rashi adds - I say that these are three important nations: Egypt, Assyria, and Edom. He, therefore, stated concerning these as he said at the end of the section (v. 13), "And those lost in the land of Assyria shall come, as well as those lost in the land of Egypt," and since the nations are likened to serpents that bite.

Rashi - "and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea" - That is Tzor (Tyre) that is the head of the children of Esau, and it is situated in the heart of the seas, and so Kittim are called the islands of the sea, and they are the Romans.

Leviathan

"Leviathan" is a transliterated Hebrew word (*livyathan*), meaning "twisted," "coiled." In **Job 3:8** it denotes the dragon which, according to Eastern tradition, is an enemy of light; in **Job 41:1** the crocodile is meant; in **Psalms 104:26** it "denotes any large animal that moves by writhing or wriggling the body, the whale, the monsters of the deep." This word is also used figuratively for a cruel enemy, as some think "the Egyptian host, crushed by the divine power, and cast on the shores of the Red Sea."

Psalms 74:13-14 - "You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the sea monsters in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness."

Job 41:1 - "Canst thou draw out Leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about."

His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal.”

Isaiah 51:9 - “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Jehovah, Awake, as [in] days of old, generations of the ages, Art not Thou it that is hewing down Rahab [Egypt], Piercing a dragon!”

In Jewish apocrypha and pseudepigrapha such as the 2nd century B.C. Book of Enoch, Behemoth is the primal unconquerable monster of the land, as Leviathan is the primal monster of the waters of the sea [along with a later invention, Ziz the primordial monster of the sky]. Leviathan lives in "the Abyss", while Behemoth the land-monster lives in an invisible desert east of the Garden of Eden (1 Enoch 60:7–8). A Jewish rabbinic legend describes a great battle which will take place between them at the end of time: "...they will interlock with one another and engage in combat, with his horns the Behemoth will gore with strength, the fish [Leviathan] will leap to meet him with his fins, with power. Their Creator will approach them with his mighty sword [and slay them both]." Then, "from the beautiful skin of the Leviathan, God will construct canopies to shelter the righteous, who will eat the meat of the Behemoth and the Leviathan amid great joy and merriment." The remainder of the hide will be spread on the walls of Jerusalem; and the whole world will be illuminated by its brightness.

Illumination

How can the skins of these defeated monsters illuminate?

If these monsters represent the shameful and evil acts and tendencies in our own lives which struggle against God, then their end is expanded in **Ephesians 5:13** - "Everything that the light reveals becomes itself light!"

(The A.V. renders “doth make manifest”, as in the middle voice, but the verb is in the passive voice. It occurs nearly 50 times in the New Testament, and never as middle. Hence correctly, “everything that is made manifest” is light. - *Vincent Word Studies*)

See also **John 3:20-21** - “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”

Everyone’s deeds (except for Jesus) have been evil. They themselves were thus once darkness,’ but having been ‘reprov’d’ by God’s Spirit, had become ‘light in the Lord.’ i.e. these would become no longer works of darkness, but transformed into the nature of light itself. Repentance would turn the sins into illuminating illustrations of God’s grace. In that sense, these evil deeds were “wrought in God.” We meant it for evil, but God meant it for good (**Genesis 50:20**).

Isaiah 26:12 - “LORD, You will establish peace for us, Since You have also performed for us all our works.”

Consider David, who said his sins were continually before his face (**Psalms 51:3**). Like

the skins of Behemoth, they illuminated the darkness of his own heart, whenever he turned his eyes on himself, and they reoriented him back toward the New Jerusalem and the realization that his sins were removed “as far as the east is from the west” (**Psalm 103:12**).

A similar transformation was shown when instruments of sin and rebellion - the censors used by Korah and his conspirators in an attempt to usurp Moses' authority - were made into broad plates to cover the altar, and were hallowed “as a sign unto the children of Israel.” (**Numbers 16:38-39**)

A Banquet

According to a midrash, Behemoth and Leviathan were created on the fifth day (Yalk., Gen. 12). The leviathan is prominent in the haggadic literature in connection with the advent of the Messiah. Referring to **Job 40:30** (Hebr.), "and the pious ones shall make a banquet of it," R. Johanan says that at the time of the resurrection a banquet will be given by God to the righteous, at which the flesh of the leviathan will be served (B. B. l.c.).

Compare the banquet in **Revelation 19** - the Marriage Supper of the Lamb - during which the participants could be said to be “eating” Leviathan and Behemoth, in the sense that the satisfaction of Christ's victory over evil provides the sustenance and joy of the wedding banquet.

Revelation 19:7 - “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”

In the cabalistic literature, the "piercing leviathan" and the "crooked leviathan" (Isa. 27:1) are interpreted as referring to Satan-Samael (the opposer) and his spouse Lilith ("Emek ha-Melek," p. 130a) Perhaps they are analogous to the Beast and the Great Whore in Revelation.

Revelation 12 represents the woman giving birth to her child menaced by the dragon. Set in the heavens, this image reflects the constellations Virgo and Draco and depicts a recurring cycle of victory and struggle.

Revelation 12:9–11 - “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

In **Revelation 13**, the dragon operates through a Beast that comes up from the sea (**13:1**), and another coming up out of the earth (**13:11**) perhaps echoing the Leviathan and Behemoth creatures.

Isaiah 27:6 - "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit."

Isaiah 27:7 - "Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him?"

Rashi - Have you seen My might, that like the smiting of the one who smote Jacob, I smote him. They drowned them [the male children] in the water, and I drowned them in the water [of the Red Sea].

Isaiah 27:8 - "In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind."

Rashi - Not "shooteth forth," or talking about divorce, as in the NET. Rashi sees this as still talking about God's dealing with Egypt. "when they sent them out, it strove with it" - When Egypt sent Israel out, Egypt strove with it.

"He spoke with His harsh wind on the day of the east wind." - On the day (concerning which Scripture states) Ex. 14:21: "And the Lord led the sea with a strong east wind."

Isaiah 27:9 - "By this (in the same way) therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalk stones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up."

Rashi - Better "if he makes all the altar stones *of his high places* like crushed chalk-stones."

The next two verses are interpreted entirely differently by early Jewish sources and by modern commentators.

Isaiah 27:10 - "Yet the defenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof."

Rashi sees this not talking about Jerusalem destroyed, but the destruction of Israel's enemies, a result of Israel's repentance:

"For a fortified city is solitary": For, when they do this (repent), a fortified city of Ishmael (or Esau) will be solitary and the dwelling will be forsaken by its inhabitants and abandoned like a pasture. "there a calf shall graze": Ephraim shall inherit it, for he is called a calf, as it is said (Jer. 31:17): "Like an untamed calf."

Isaiah 27:12 - "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel."

Rashi - "that the Lord shall gather" I say... that these two expressions - beating and gathering - coincide with one another, like one who beats his olive trees and goes back and gathers them or others gather the olives from the ground where they fell, so will the Holy One, blessed be He, commence the gathering, as it is said: "A great shofar shall be sounded."

"from the flood of the river": These are those lost in the land of Assyria.

"to the stream of Egypt": Those are the ones exiled in the land of Egypt.

Isaiah 27:13 - "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem."

To "gather together in one" the dispersed believers of Israel:

See **Isaiah 11:11-12; Isaiah 49:12; Ezek. 37:11-12, 14, 21-22, 25; Zech. 10:8-10**

The regathering would be to Messiah, son of David:

Hosea 3:5 - "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days."

Rashi - The children of Israel rejected three things during the reign of Rehoboam; the Kingdom of Heaven, the kingdom of the House of David, and the Holy Temple, as it is written: "What portion have we in David" (I Kings 12:16) which may be understood literally; "to your tents O' Israel" (ibid.), do not read, "to your tents" but "to your gods" - "now see your own house, David" (ibid.), refers to the Holy Temple. Israel shall not be shown any omen of good until they repent by seeking out all three; "Afterwards shall the children of Israel return, and seek their Lord their God," which refers to the Kingdom of Heaven; "and David their king" is self explanatory; "and shall come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness," which refers to the Holy Temple.

But the only way to seek the Temple and the Kingdom of David now is to seek Messiah!

Matthew 8:10-12 - "When Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those following Him, 'Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west to share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

Luke 13:28-30 - "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves are thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will recline at the

table in the kingdom of God. And indeed, some who are last will be first, and some who are first will be last.”

Isaiah 56:8 - “The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, ‘Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered.’”

John 10:15-16 - “And I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them in as well, and they will listen to My voice. Then there will be one flock and one shepherd.”

John 11:49-52 - “And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that *also he should gather together in one* the children of God that were scattered abroad.”

Final Haftarah verses:

Crowns lost and gained -

Isaiah 28:1 - “Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!”

The people of Ephraim (the 10 Northern Tribes) grew fat through self-indulgence and self-seeking, according to the Rabbis, indulging especially in fine wines. They cite **Deuteronomy 32:15** - “And Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked ... and forsook God.” Eventually, Ephraim was defeated and taken captive by Assyrian in 722 B.C.

Isaiah 28:5 - “In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people.”

Pride vs. giving glory to God

The Targum paraphrases it, “in that day shall the Messiah of the Lord of hosts be for a crown of joy.”

“The Rabbins expound this of the King Messiah, in time to come, when both the kingly and priestly glory should be restored; the one being signified by the ‘crown of glory,’ the other by the ‘diadem of beauty.’” - *Gill's Exposition*