

**ISAIAH 24**  
Slay the Dragon<sup>a</sup>  
(Isaiah 27:1-13)

Isaiah 27:1-13 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

## Israel's Redemption

**27** In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Levi'athan the fleeing serpent, Levi'athan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In that day:

“A pleasant vineyard, sing of it!<sup>c</sup>

<sup>3</sup> I, the Lord, am its keeper;

every moment I water it.

Lest any one harm it,

I guard it night and day;<sup>d</sup>

<sup>4</sup> I have no wrath.

Would that I had thorns and briers to battle!

I would set out against them,

I would burn them up together.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Or let them lay hold of my protection,

let them make peace with me,

let them make peace with me.”<sup>f</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In days to come Jacob shall take root,

Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots,

and fill the whole world with fruit.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Has he smitten them as he smote those who smote them?

Or have they been slain as their slayers were slain?<sup>h</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Measure by measure, by exile thou didst contend with them;

he removed them with his fierce blast in the day of the east wind.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Therefore by this the guilt of Jacob will be expiated,

and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin:

when he makes all the stones of the altars

like chalkstones crushed to pieces,

no Ashe'rim or incense altars will remain standing.<sup>j</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For the fortified city is solitary,

a habitation deserted and forsaken, like the wilderness;

there the calf grazes,

there he lies down, and strips its branches.<sup>k</sup>

<sup>11</sup> When its boughs are dry, they are broken;

women come and make a fire of them.

For this is a people without discernment;

therefore he who made them will not have compassion on them,

he that formed them will show them no favor.<sup>l</sup>

<sup>12</sup> In that day from the river Euphra'tes to the Brook of Egypt the Lord will thresh out the grain, and you will be gathered one by one, O people of Israel.<sup>m</sup> <sup>13</sup> And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.<sup>n</sup>

**Revised Standard Version (RSV)**

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<sup>a</sup> **Chapter 24** begins a four chapter oracle of judgment upon the whole earth, often called Isaiah's Apocalypse. The references and imagery in these Chapters are frequently inexplicable except in the context of Messianic and Eschatological prophecy. Much of the imagery in these chapters will reappear in later apocalyptic literature, including Revelation. In the prior chapters Isaiah delivered prophecies first against Judah, then Israel, then the surrounding nations, and now, finally, to all of Mankind. These four chapters describe the last days when God will judge the whole earth and eliminate evil from the world. While Chapter 24 predicts judgment upon everyone, high and low, there are hints that some, a remnant, will be left after the tribulation. In **Chapter 25** the focus shifts to the time after God's judgement, with the surviving remnant from all the nations worshipping the God of Abraham in Jerusalem. The Chapter is primarily in the form of a victory song celebrating the destruction of the City of Chaos, Is 24:10, the worship of the God of Abraham by the Nations (Is 24:15), and a victory over pride and arrogance (24:21-22). The Song of the Redeemed continues in **Chapter 26**, describing particularly the resurrection of the dead. The song resembles the Hallel Psalms Ps 113-118 which consist of a series of blessings on the Lord and other praise psalms such as Psalms 48, 76, 84, 87 and 122. There is a weariness in the heart of every person of good will, a weariness of the World in its fallen state. It shows itself in a reluctance to read the newspaper or watch the news and see yet another story of murder, senseless violence, scandal or human failure. There is a longing in the hearts of these people of good will for something better that Isaiah expresses for us. It is a strong city, Jerusalem recreated, into which we, both Jew and Gentile, by the Grace of God through faith, can be welcomed. Much of the imagery found in the Messianic Writings (the New Testament) can be found in Isaiah. Isaiah is using the events of his time, the Assyrian conquests of the places around Jerusalem but leaving Jerusalem unconquered, as a way to describe what God's ultimate judgment will be like. It is the person of Jesus Christ who brings all this longing for a better world, and this imagery together in His own person. In **Chapter 27**, the last in this section of the book, after the guilt of God's people is expiated by the Exile and Captivity, God will defeat the enemies of His people and re-establish them in the Land, referred to as His vineyard or garden (see, also, Gen 1-3). Those who do not trust in the Lord will be destroyed, but for the faithful there will be deliverance.

<sup>b</sup> (1) Is 24:21. The **Sword** of the Lord is a symbol of God's power and authority; Is 66:16; Jr 47:6. God's **Word** (written and incarnate) is also likened to a sword, Eph 6:17. God's sword is described here as strong, great and fierce. **Leviathan**, here used twice as a proper name, is actually a Hebrew common noun (לִיָּוִיָּתָן, *livyathan*) used for a snake, crocodile or sea monster; Jb 3:8, 41:1; Ps 74:13-14, 104:26. The Hebrew word, also used twice here and also in Gn 3:1, for **serpent** (נָחָשׁ, *nachash*) more specifically refers to a snake, though is also occasionally translated as dragon. The Hebrew for **dragon** (תַּנִּינִים, *tanniyn*) is used often in the Hebrew Scriptures referring to dragons, monsters, serpents or whales; Gn 1:21; Ex 7:9-12; Ps 91:13, 74:13, 148:7; Dt 32:33; Jb 7:12; Is 51:9; Jr 51:34; Ezk 29:3, 32:2; though it is most often translated as "jackal" when it appears in the writings of the prophets; Ps 44:19; Jb 30:29; Is 13:22, 34:13, 35:7, 43:20; Jr 9:11, 10:22, 14:6, 49:33, 51:37; Lam 4:3; Mi 1:8. Three separate monsters are described here, the fleeing monster of the air, the twisting monster (snake) on the ground and the monster of the Sea. In a sense God's Sword is defeating the powers and principalities of the land, sea and air – defeating evil forever. The image of a sea monster representing evil or chaos being destroyed by God was present in the mythology of the region, e.g. the *Epic Poems of Ugarit*, a Canaanite port city near the present city of Ras-Shamra and located close to the current Turkish-Syrian border, though unlike those tales, the Scriptures present Leviathan as part of God's creation not as a separate co-equal god. The same Ugarit texts use a phrase similar to "in that Day" to signify the final battle between their two divine forces. The Messianic Writings use the image of a dragon as an enemy of God's people, that is, Satan; Rv 12:9, 19:20, 20:2. In any event, Leviathan stands in for all the enemies of God and His people, who will be defeated in the last days. The Septuagint reads, "In that day God shall bring His holy and great and strong sword upon the dragon, even the serpent that flees, upon the dragon, the crooked serpent; He shall destroy the dragon."

<sup>c</sup> (2) The Jews are frequently referred to as God's **vineyard**; Ps 80:8; Jr 2:21. Verses 2-6 are effectively a reversal of Is 5:1-30 in which the **vineyard** is described as having failed, producing fruit which is not edible and wine which is not drinkable. In response God takes away the hedge, and His protection, from this unproductive vineyard, and enemies come and carry god's people away. But here the vineyard produces good fruit and great wine, God will set a watchtower in its midst and be prepared to burn any briars and thorns that grow up. God's enemies will be defeated and the blessings of the vineyard will fill the Earth indicating the universality of God. Even the gentiles will come to recognize God through the Jewish people, Gn 12:1-3.

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Following this same imagery, the Lord describes Himself as the vine from which salvation and “good fruit” come, Jn 15:1-8. The Septuagint reads, “In that day *there shall be* a fair vineyard, *and* a desire to commence a *song* concerning it.”

<sup>d</sup> (3) The **Lord will guard** and take care of His vineyard or garden; Is 58:11; 1Sm 2:9; Is 31:5; Jn 10:28. The Septuagint reads, “I am a strong city, a city in a siege; in vain shall I water it; for it shall be taken by night, and by day the wall shall fall.”

<sup>e</sup> (4) In the Day of the Lord, He will no longer have wrath for His vineyard, but the wicked who do not make peace with God (Is 27:5; Ps 118:18) will be burned up as **thorns and briars**; 2Sm 23:6; Is 10:17; Is 33:12; Mt 3:12; Heb 6:8. This could also be read as God’s promise to uproot and destroy any evil that grows up in the vineyard. The Septuagint reads, “There is no woman that has not taken hold of it; who will set me to watch stubble in the field? Because of this enemy I have set her aside; therefore on this account the Lord has done all that He appointed.” The Septuagint and Masoretic texts of vs. 3-4 are divided differently between the verses. The Catholic, New Jerusalem Bible translates vs. 3-4, “I, Yahweh, am its guardian, from time to time I water it; so that no harm befall it, I guard it night and day. <sup>4</sup>I do not have a wall. Who can reduce me to brambles and thorn-bushes? I shall make war and trample on it and at the same time burn it.” In this rendering, the beginning of verse 4 is in the voice of the vineyard itself with the Lord replying that He would make war upon any that would try.

<sup>f</sup> (5) When we make **peace** (שָׁלוֹם, *shalom*) with God, we can rely upon His protection; Is 12:2, 25:4; Jb 22:21; Is 26:3-12; Hos 6:1; Jn 15:1-6; Rm 5:1; 2Co 5:20 and will not be burned up like thorns and briars. The Septuagint reads, “I am burned up; they that dwell in her shall cry, Let us make peace with Him, let us make peace . . .” The Septuagint puts these words in the mouth of people being burned up and seeking salvation while the Masoretic text has these words in God’s mouth.

<sup>g</sup> (6) In days to come the Jewish people will return to the Land, which will blossom and bear fruit; Is 37:31; Is 35:1-2; Hos 14:5-6; Is 4:2. The introductory phrase here translated “In days to come” (הַבָּיִת, *haBäiyim*) is not the same as the phrase translated “In that day” in verses 1 and 13 (הַהוּא בַיּוֹם, *Bayôm hahû*) and might also be translated “He shall cause them” indicating God’s action in bringing God’s people back to the Land. The Hebrew word translated as **world** here (תֵּבֵל, *tebel*) is one normally used for the world as a whole and not limited just to the Land of Israel; 1Sm 2:8; 2Sm 22:16; 1Ch 16:30; Jb 18:18, 34:13, 37:12; Ps 9:8, 18:15, 19:4, 24:1, 33:8, 50:12, 77:18, 89:11, 90:2, 93:1, 96:10-13, 97:4, 98:7-9; Pr 8:26; Is 13:11, 14:17-21, 18:3, 24:4, 26:9, 26:18, 34:1; Jr 10:12, 51:15; Lam 4:12; Nah 1:5; thus recalling the promise of Gn 12:1-3 that the Jewish people would be a blessing to the nations and that its fruit will cover the whole world. The use of this word for world suggests a Messianic or eschatological reading of the text and that the gentiles will come to God through the Jewish people. The Septuagint reads, “. . . they that are coming are the children of Jacob. Israel shall bud and blossom, and the world shall be filled with his fruit.” The Septuagint leaves room for gentiles as the adopted “children of Jacob” to join with the physical descendants of Jacob in bearing fruit (Jn 1:12; Lk 3:7-9; Rm 8:15-17, 8:22-23; Eph 1:5-6, 3:4-6; Gal 4:1-7).

<sup>h</sup> (7) Verses 7-11 recap the way God has treated His people. Though the Hebrew is difficult, in these verses God says that He did punish Israel, but He punished them less than He punished those nations who were the enemies of Israel. There would be some, recalling the Holocaust, who would disagree with that assessment. But this judgment cannot really be made until the day that God judges the Earth and its inhabitants. In can be said, however, that after more than 3000 years as a people, the Jews have survived invasion, exile, captivity, persecution, discrimination, pogrom and holocaust, and yet are still a people. The greatest threat to the Jewish people today may not be these persecutions but rather their full integration and assimilation in Western societies. The **enemies of God and His people will be destroyed**, perhaps specifically referring to the Assyrians as an example; Is 10:12-17, 30:31-33, 31:8-9, 37:18-19, 37:35-38. The Septuagint reads, “Shall he himself be thus smitten, even as he smote? And as he slew, shall he be thus slain?”

<sup>i</sup> (8) The Hebrew here is difficult. **Measure by measure** could also be rendered “by a frightening sound.” The reference to wind is not to the Hebrew used for wind, breath or spirit (רוּחַ, *ruach*), but is another word (קָדִיִּים, *qadiym*) derived from the direction “East” and indicating an easterly wind; Gn 41:6, 41:23-27; Jb 15:2, 38:24; Ps 78:26; Hos 12:1, 13:15; Hab 1:9; see also, Jr 4:11; Ezk 19:12. Many commentators believe this verse refers to the **chastening of God’s people through the exile in Babylon**; Is 50:1, 54:7; Jr 10:24, 18:17; Ezk 17:10. The Septuagint reads, “Fighting and reproaching he will dismiss them; did you not meditate with a harsh spirit, to slay them with a wrathful spirit?”

<sup>j</sup> (9) The sins of the Jewish people will be cleansed through the **Captivity in Babylon**; Is 1:25, 48:10; Dn 11:35, 28:49-52; but see, Is 22:14. The Apostle Paul projects this into a future time when there will be a revival among the Jews who will come to believe in the Messiah; Rm 11:25-12:1 and when “all Israel will be saved” recalling the “full fruit” of this verse. The price of God’s pardon of the Jews will be the destruction of alters and worship places to other gods and an end to **idolatry**; Ex 34:13-14; Dt 12:2-3, 16:21; 2Ki 10:25-26, 18:4; Is 2:20, 17:7-8, 30:22, 31:7. It was not until the return from Babylon that this form of idolatry was finally banished from God’s people. This also is our price for salvation, that we would have faith in the one true God only. The Septuagint reads, “Therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be taken away; and this is his blessing, when I have taken away his sin; when they have broken to pieces all the stones of the alters as fine dust, and their trees shall not remain, and their idols shall be cut off, as a thicket afar off.” The last phrase in the Septuagint is the beginning of the next verse in the Masoretic text.

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<sup>k</sup> (10) The **fortified city**, the city of chaos and of God's enemies (Is 24:10, 25:2, 26:5), will be destroyed so that it is only home to lonely animals; Is 13:20-22, 17:2. The same was true of Jerusalem during the time of the Captivity; Is 5:17, 7:24-25, 32:13-14. The Septuagint reads, "The flock that dwelt *there* shall be left, as a deserted flock; and *the ground* shall be for a long time for pasture, and there shall flocks lie down to rest."

<sup>l</sup> (11) The Apostle Paul uses this metaphor, of a **people without discernment** or understanding to describe those descendants of Abraham who do not follow the Messiah, and who pursue the Lord but not with understanding (Rm 10:2-4; Is 1:3; Dt 32:18, 32:28; Rm 1:18-23; Jr 8:7), and are broken or pruned off the **Olive Tree of Israel** to be burned (Rm 11:17; Is 18:5) so that the gentiles could be grafted in. Yet Paul also promises that when the full measure of the gentiles have been grafted in (Rm 11:25) "all Israel" will be saved (Rm 11:26; Is 30:8-18, 43:1-7, 43:15, 44:1-2, 44:21-24). In Isaiah 27, the Jews are exiled to Babylon for the same reason (Is 5:13, 9:17), so they would return to the Lord and be redeemed. The word for compassion or mercy (רַחֵם, *racham*) here is the root for the Yiddish word *rachmones*. Even the Creator will no longer have mercy or compassion for those who reject Him because they do not understand who He is, Rm 1:18-25. The Septuagint reads, "And after a time there shall be in it no green thing because of *the grass* being parched. Come here, you woman that comes from a sight; for it is a people of no understanding; therefore He that made them shall have no pity upon them, and He that formed them shall have no mercy upon them."

<sup>m</sup> (12) The area described is the maximum extent, historically, of the Land in the time of David, stretching from the borders of Egypt, roughly the location of the Suez Canal today, to the Euphrates River in the Northeast. In that Day, the Lord will seek out, **thresh**, the **faithful remnant** from among the sons of Abraham to redeem and bring back to the land (Is 11:11, 17:6, 24:13; Dt 30:1-4; Neh 1:8-9) promised to Abraham for his descendants (Gn 15:18). The image is of God personally picking up the good fruit one by one. In addition to the sons of Abraham, the Lord will also gather those who have been grafted in through faith in the Messiah (Rm 11:17-24; Is 56:8). This Day when the Lord will accomplish these things will be, however, a great and terrible day in which God's wrath will be shown to those who are not faithful (Jl 2:1-2; Mt 24:29-31; Mk 13:24-27; Lk 21:27-28; Mt 13:24-30; Rv 14:15-16). The Septuagint reads, "And it shall come to pass in that day *that* God shall fence *men* off from the channel of the river as far as the Brook of Egypt; but gather one by one the children of Israel."

<sup>n</sup> (13) In that Day the **Ram's Horn** (שׁוֹפָר, *shofar*) will be blown (1Ch 15:24; Zec 9:14; Jl 2:1-2; Mt 24:29-31; 1Co 15:51-52; 1Th 4:16; Rv 11:15), and those who are perishing in Assyria and outcasts in Egypt will be **gathered to Jerusalem** to worship the Lord (Is 19:21-25, 49:7; Heb 12:22). The Hebrew4Christians web site explains some of the significance of the shofar, [http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Fall\\_Holidays/Elul/Shofar/shofar.html](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Fall_Holidays/Elul/Shofar/shofar.html). The text here is not clear as to whether faithful gentiles will be included in this gathering, though other parts of this chapter, and the rest of Isaiah, indicate that they would (Is 2:1-5, 11:9, 27:6, 66:23). The Ram's Horn is usually blown on the **Feast of Trumpets** or **Rosh HaShana**, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month of Tishri, Nu 29:1-2; Lv 23:23-25. It is also blown at the end of the **Day of Atonement** or **Yom Kippur** which follows on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Tishri. Every 49, or perhaps 50 (there is some ambiguity) years, beginning when the *Shofar* is blown at the end of *Yom Kippur*, Lv 25:8-13, the Jews were told to celebrate a Year of Jubilee in which debts are forgiven, families were returned to their ancestral land, and slaves would be freed. It is also a year in which God's mercy should be especially visible. Isaiah describes the Year of Jubilee, the Year of God's Favor, in Is 61:1-2, which Jesus reads in Lk 4:16-21, asserting that this prophecy was fulfilled by Him in their presence. Some commentators believe that Is 27:13 refers to this Jubilee, when the Messiah inaugurates a permanent time of Jubilee. The time of Jubilee, with its debt forgiveness, also recalls the Messiah's words from the Cross, usually translated as "It is finished" but more literally translated as "Paid in full" indicating a release from debt (Jn 19:30). Other commentators point out that "In that Day" could also be translated, "In days to come" perhaps indicating not a specific day or time of the Lord's coming, but just a future time in which the Lord will bring something to pass. Some have suggested that this particular prophecy came to pass during the revival of Nehemiah described in Neh 8 when the Scriptures were read in the presence of the regathered people of Jerusalem. Trumpets, *shofar*, are also described as having been blown at Neh 12:34, though the chronology is unclear and this event may not have been on the same occasion as described in Neh 8. Even assuming that this was a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, such fulfillment would not preclude the prophecy also applying eschatologically in light of its context among what are clearly end-time prophecies. The Septuagint reads, "And it shall come to pass in that day *that* they shall blow the great trumpet, and the lost ones in the land of the Assyrians shall come, and the lost ones in Egypt, and shall worship the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem." Some have suggested that, metaphorically at least, we will, at the marriage feast of the Lamb, eat Leviathan. Maranatha!