

Isaiah – Chapter 27

The Serpent Slain and the Vineyard Restored

Isaiah 27:1-3, 6, 12-13 – 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. In that day, "A vineyard of wine, sing of it!... In the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, And they will fill the whole world with fruit. ... 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."

Context

Chapter 27 is the summit of the Apocalypse. Since chapter 24, we have seen the earth emptied, the banquet spread and death swallowed (25), and heard a song of the redeemed about the strong city and the raising of their own dead (26). Now, the whole greater section lands, and it lands on one subject: the restoration of Israel. The nation is named outright four times in these thirteen verses, Jacob and Israel taking root and filling the world with fruit (27:6), Jacob's iniquity pardoned (27:9), the sons of Israel gathered one by one (27:12), and the perishing and the scattered brought home to worship (27:13). Everything the apocalypse has been driving toward, the fallen city of man and the standing city of God, the death that is swallowed and the dead who rise, is gathered here into a single picture of a people put back in their promised place.

The chapter is built on the refrain we have followed perpetually in Isaiah, "in that day" (*bayom hahu*), which is repeated four times (27:1, 2, 12, 13) and carries three announcements. In that day God destroys Satan, the serpent of old (27:1). In that day God finishes His dealings with Israel and restores her fully to her God-given place, the vineyard kept and fruitful, the nation refined and pardoned (27:2–11). And in that day God restores Israel to her full land allotment, the whole span promised to Abraham, gathering His scattered people to worship on the holy mountain (27:12–13). Three declarations, one restoration.

The chapter is also a deliberate answer to something written much earlier. Back in chapter 5, Isaiah sang a love song about a vineyard that the LORD planted with every care and that yielded only wild grapes; He removed its hedge, broke its wall, withheld its rain, and gave it over to briars and thorns (5:1–7). Chapter 27 sings the vineyard again, on the other side of judgment, and every ruined feature is reversed. The vineyard that was abandoned is now watered every moment and guarded night and day; the wrath that tore down the hedge is gone; the briars and thorns are burned; and the vine that produced nothing now fills the whole world with fruit. What chapter 5 lost, chapter 27 restores.

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Structure of the Chapter

Isaiah 27 unfolds as three "in that day" announcements:

- 1: The serpent slain. The LORD's sword falls on Leviathan, the fleeing and twisted serpent, the dragon of the sea.
- 2–11: Israel dealt with and restored to her place. The vineyard kept and fruitful (2–6), the nation refined by measured discipline and pardoned (7–9), and, set against her, the city of man left forsaken (10–11).
- 12–13: Israel restored to her land. The LORD threshes His people out from the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt and gathers them one by one (12), and the great trumpet brings the perishing and the scattered home to worship at Jerusalem (13).

Two contrasts run underneath. One vineyard is watered and guarded (27:3) while one city is forsaken and grazed bare (27:10); one people fills the world with fruit (27:6) while another is a people without discernment whose Maker will not pity them (27:11). The restored vineyard and the emptied city are the last statement of the contest that has run through the whole book.

Exposition

The Serpent Slain (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" (27:1). Leviathan, *livyatan*, is named three ways in one verse: the fleeing serpent (*nachash bariach*), the twisted serpent (*nachash aqallaton*), and the dragon (*tanniyn*) in the sea. The three names are not three enemies but one enemy described to the full, the great adversary behind the sea of nations, struck down by the sword of the day of the LORD, the same sword gets lifted elsewhere over the whole earth (34:5-6, 66:16).

Who is this serpent? Scripture answers by its own vocabulary. The serpent that must have its head crushed goes back to the garden (Genesis 3:15), and the last book of the Bible closes the file with Isaiah's exact images: "the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan" (Revelation 12:9), and again, "he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him" (Revelation 20:2), until he is "thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:10). In Isaiah, the dragon is slain by the sword, and in Revelation, the dragon is cast into the fire; they are the same figure receiving the same sentence. The Apocalypse that opened by judging the earth closes by judging the influence behind the earth's rebellion. Before Israel can be finally restored, the serpent who has warred against her must be destroyed, and verse 1 announces that he will be.

The Vineyard Restored (2–6)

"In that day, 'A vineyard of wine, sing of it!'" (27:2). The love song of Chapter 5 that turned to lament is taken up again, now with nothing to lament. "I, the LORD, am its keeper; I water

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it every moment. So that no one will damage it, I guard it night and day" (27:3). Let's read this line against Chapter 5 point for point. There, God broke down the wall and made the vineyard a waste (5:5); here, He keeps it. There, He commanded the clouds to withhold the rain (5:6); here, He waters it every moment. There, the hedge came down, and it was trampled (5:5); here, He guards it night and day so that no one damages it. The vineyard that was abandoned to its enemies is now under the constant care of its Keeper.

"I have no wrath. Should someone give Me briars and thorns in battle, then I would step on them, I would burn them completely" (27:4). The wrath that fell on the vineyard in Chapter 5 is spent; toward His vineyard God has no wrath left. The briars and thorns, the very pair Chapter 5 said would overrun the ruined vineyard (5:6) reappear, but now they are the vineyard's adversaries, and if they set themselves against the Keeper in battle, He marches through them and burns them up. "Or let him rely on My protection, let him make peace with Me, let him make peace with Me" (27:5). The doubled call to peace is reassurance to the vineyard: its Keeper's strength is there to lay hold of, and the settled condition of the kept vineyard is peace with its God. Whatever rises against it is burned; the vineyard itself rests in His protection.

Then comes the harvest Chapter 5 never saw: "In the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, and they will fill the whole world with fruit" (27:6). The vine that once yielded only wild grapes now takes root, blossoms, and covers the face of the world with fruit. The nation is named, Jacob and Israel so there is no mistaking the vineyard for anything but the people of God, and the fruit is not kept to one land but fills the whole world, the blessing promised through Abraham to all nations finally borne by a restored Israel.

The Refining of Jacob (7–9)

The song now looks back on how God dealt with His vineyard through the long discipline. "Like the striking of Him who has struck them, has He struck them? Or like the slaughter of His slain, have they been slain?" (27:7). The question expects the answer no. God did not strike Israel as He struck Israel's oppressors; her discipline was never the annihilation dealt to her enemies. "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" (27:8). The discipline was measured and purposeful, an exile driven by the east wind (*qadim*), not a final destruction. God contended with His people in measure, enough to correct, never enough to consume.

And the announcement of what the discipline is for: "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" (27:9).

The word rendered "forgiven" is *kupar*, atoned or covered, and "full price" translates *kol-peri*, literally "all the fruit," the complete result of the pardon. The complete result of

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God's dealing with Jacob is a nation stripped of its idols, the altar stones ground to chalk, and the Asherim and incense stands gone.

We handle this carefully, because the verse is easily misread. The measured discipline is not a payment Israel makes to earn her standing; it is the instrument God uses to bring the nation to the salvation He has promised her. This is the refining Paul has in view when he writes that "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26), and Zechariah when he says God will bring a third of the land through the fire, refine them as silver, and answer when they call on His name (Zechariah 13:8-9). It is realized at the end of the Tribulation, the day of Jacob's trouble, Daniel's Seventieth Week, when the refining burns away the unbelieving portion of the nation and leaves only the faithful remnant.

That remnant is not saved by the discipline; each one is saved by faith when they look on the One they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10). The discipline is the corporate tool God swings over the whole nation; faith is how each survivor stands. Verse 9 is the promise that when the refining is finished, the idols will be gone for good, and Jacob's sin will have been taken away (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The Forsaken City (10–11)

Over against the guarded vineyard stands the emptied city. "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" (27:10). This is the city of man in its last state, the city of chaos of 24:10, the ruined stronghold of 25:2, the lofty city trodden to dust of 26:5, now a solitary ruin where a calf wanders in to graze and strip the bushes. We leave the city unnamed, as the Apocalypse has left it throughout; it is the archetype of every proud city that set itself against God, and its end is empty pasture.

"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" (27:11). The dead branches are gathered for kindling, and the reason for the desolation is given plainly: this is a people without discernment. The Keeper waters His vineyard night and day; the Maker of this city withholds His compassion, because the city would not know the One who made it. Set the two side by side and the eschatological destiny contrast stands in a single frame: the vineyard once ruined is now kept and fruitful; the city once fortified is now forsaken and burned.

The Threshing and the Trumpet (12–13)

The third announcement restores the land. "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" (27:12). Threshing beats the grain free from the chaff, and here the LORD threshes His own people out across the full span of the Promised Land, from the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt, the exact boundaries pledged to Abraham (Genesis 15:18).

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The gathering is careful and personal, "one by one," not a single soul of the Remnant of Israel is lost in the harvest. The Remnant is gleaned individually and settled across the whole allotment God swore to the fathers.

"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" (27:13). The great trumpet (*shofar gadol*) sounds, and the dispersed of Israel, the perishing in Assyria and the outcasts in Egypt, come home. The whole apocalypse concludes in glory, not on a battlefield but on the holy mountain at Jerusalem, in worship. The mountain where the LORD of hosts reigns (24:23), where the banquet was spread (25:6), is the mountain where the gathered nation finally bows. The day of the LORD ends in worship at Zion.

Synthesis with All of Scripture

The Prophets. Isaiah has said all of this before in plainer words, and his fellow prophets fill it in. The regathering of 27:12-13 is the second regathering of 11:11-12, where the LORD lifts a banner to the nations and gathers the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah "from the four corners of the earth," Assyria and Egypt named there as here. The refining of 27:7-9 is Zechariah's fire: "I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined... they will call on My name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God'" (Zechariah 13:9), the unbelieving portion consumed and the remnant brought through by faith. And the measured discipline that does not consume is Jeremiah's word over the same day, "Alas! for that day is great... it is the time of Jacob's distress, but he will be saved from it" (Jeremiah 30:7).

Jesus. The Lord takes up both the vineyard and the trumpet. He tells the vineyard of Isaiah 5 forward into the parable of the tenants, where the vineyard is taken from those who would not give its fruit and given "to a people producing the fruit of it" (Matthew 21:41-43), the fruitful vineyard of 27:6. And He makes Himself its center: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser... he who abides in Me bears much fruit" (John 15:1, 5), the Keeper of the vineyard standing among us. The trumpet of 27:13 is His own promise of the regathering: "He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds" (Matthew 24:31), Israel brought home at the coming of her King.

Revelation. John closes what Isaiah opens. The Leviathan of 27:1 is bound and then thrown into the lake of fire as "the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan" (Revelation 20:2, 10), struck at last by the One whose sword comes from His mouth (Revelation 19:15, 21). The worship on the holy mountain of 27:13 becomes the Lamb standing on Mount Zion with those who are His (Revelation 14:1). Isaiah names the enemy's death and the nation's worship; John sequences them and sets the times.

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The Apostolic Letters. Paul makes 27:9 the charter of Israel's future. Announcing that "all Israel will be saved," he grounds it on the covenant word, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob; this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins" (Romans 11:26–27), the very promise of 27:9 that Jacob's iniquity will be pardoned and his idols removed. The discipline is God's instrument, the pardon is God's act, and the outcome is a nation saved. And the serpent of 27:1 meets his end in Paul's benediction as well: "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Romans 16:20), Genesis 3:15 and Isaiah 27:1 kept as one promise to the end.

Hermeneutic Checkpoints

Start literal. A real adversary is judged, a real nation is restored, a real land is repopulated between real rivers, and a real gathering ends in real worship at a real Jerusalem. Nothing in the chapter asks to be spiritualized away, and the burden of proof sits on any reading that would.

Let the text interpret itself. Three of the chapter's hardest points are defined by Scripture itself. Leviathan is named "the devil and Satan" in Revelation 20:2. The vineyard is named "Jacob" and "Israel" in 27:6, so it is the nation, not a symbol we must supply. And the pardon of 27:9 is expounded by Paul in Romans 11:27 as the removal of Israel's sin at her national salvation. We do not reach for an inferred meaning where a stated one is on the page.

Symbol still equals substance. Leviathan is a figure, and the vineyard is a figure, but recognizing the figure does not dissolve the reality behind it. The serpent is a real adversary who really falls; the vineyard is a real people who are really restored. Symbolizing a figure never empties it.

Keep the method consistent. Whoever reads the land boundaries of 27:12 as real acreage must read the regathered nation of 27:13 as a real people, and whoever takes the serpent's judgment literally must take the vineyard's restoration literally. The song binds the serpent, the vineyard, and the land into one "in that day," and the method cannot go figurative in the middle and literal at the ends.

A foreshortening checkpoint. The chapter sees the serpent's final destruction (Revelation 20), the Tribulation refining of Israel (the day of Jacob's trouble), and the millennial regathering to Zion as one range of peaks. We hold the sequence firmly and the timetable loosely; the New Testament supplies the valleys, spacing across time what Isaiah compresses into a single day, every peak equally literal.

Tying the Threads Together

The Messianic Hope. The Hope stands here as the Keeper and the Deliverer. The One who waters the vineyard every moment and guards it night and day (27:3) is the true Vine among His people (John 15:1), and the One who removes ungodliness from Jacob is the Deliverer

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who comes from Zion (Romans 11:26-27). Behind the whole scene is the oldest promise of all, the crushing of the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15), announced in 27:1 and finished in Revelation 20. Every restoration in this chapter is His work, and it costs Him the war with the serpent to secure it.

The Motif of the City. The contest of cities gives its last word. The fortified city of man, the city of chaos from 24:10 forward, ends as a forsaken pasture where a calf grazes and women gather sticks for kindling (27:10-11). Against that emptiness stands the holy mountain at Jerusalem, where the gathered nation comes to worship (27:13). The city that trusted its own walls is abandoned by its Maker; the mountain that is the LORD's own becomes the gathering place of the redeemed. The city of man is grazed bare, and Zion is full.

The Holy One of Israel. His holiness and His faithfulness stand together, as they have through every judgment of this Apocalypse. He is the Keeper who has no wrath toward His vineyard yet burns the briars that assault it (27:4), the God who contends with Jacob only in measure and never to consume (27:8), and the Maker who withholds compassion from the city that would not know Him (27:11). The same hand that grinds the idols to chalk gathers the outcasts one by one and sets them worshiping on His mountain. Holiness that burns the thorn and faithfulness that keeps the vine are one nature, and this chapter sings both to their end.

The Little Apocalypse

A Bird's-Eye View of Isaiah 24–27

The Strong City

City of God with "salvation" for walls, providing perfect peace.

Hiding from the Indignation

Remnant commands to hide "for a little while" until punishment finishes.

Euphrates

Brook of Egypt

The Resurrection of the Dead

Isaiah declares, "Your deed will live; their corpses will rise."

The Earth & Host of Heaven

Nations

Judah & Davidic House

The Widening Courtroom

The trial moves from concentric circles to a global & cosmic trial.

LGH Interpretive Method

Literal-Grammatical-Historical. Symbols point to concrete, future events.

Messianic Hope (King)

Motif of the City (Zion vs. Chaos)

Holy One of Israel (Character)

Three Unifying Threads

Includes Messianic Hope (the King), the Motif of the City (Zion vs. Chaos), and the character of the Holy One of Israel

Chapter 27 – Restoration and Worship

The Great Trumpet Sounds

Scattered Israel gathered "one by one" from the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt to worship the LORD in Jerusalem.

Leviathan Slain

Dragon judged with a fierce sword, removing spiritual power of rebellion.

In that day

Chapter 24 – The Universal Verdict

Everlasting (Noahic) Covenant Broken

The Earth Lays Waste: LORD

distorts surface, scatters inhabitants.

The Social Leveling

All social distinctions Battered; no one exempt from divine decree.

The Vineyard Restored

A reversal of Isaiah 5; vineyard watered and "fills the whole world with fruit."

Chapter 25 – The Victory Banquet

Death is Swallowed Up

The "mourning shroud" destroyed, moment of bodily resurrection.

Moab vs. The Mountain

Hand of LORD rests on Zion; Moab "troddon down" in dung pit.

A Feast for All Peoples: Lavish banquet on Mount Zion for the "gleaned remnant" of all nations.

The City of Chaos (Qiryat Tohu)

Every unnamed city collapses into "nothingness" contrasting with Zion.

Gemini Notebook