

Haftorah Readings for Gen. 2:4 – 3:21

Haftorah - Isaiah 51:6-16

Isaiah 51:6-8 - Highlights the degenerative effect of sin, death and the Fall. while offering a way out through trust in God.

Isaiah 51:9-10 - Art thou not it that hath cut/split Rahab (the proud one), and wounded (pierced) the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?

Speaks to the promise of Genesis 3:15 and the promised Deliverer's victory over the serpent.

A shape-shifting serpentine image of opposition to God

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.

Psalm 74:12-14 - Yet God is my king from of old, Who works deeds of deliverance in the midst of the earth. You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the sea monsters (dragons) in the waters. You crushed the heads of Leviathan; You gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

Job 26:13 - He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud (Rahab). By His breath (spirit) the heavens are cleared (and so made bright); His hand has pierced (or possibly "formed" or "twisted") the fleeing serpent. [The constellation -Job 1:1 - that is the image of the serpent in the Gen. 3:15 promise]

Job 9:13 (whole chapter is good) - God does not restrain his anger; under him the helpers of Rahab lie crushed.[NET]

Job looks for an arbiter (vs. 33-35) - "who might lay his hand on us both, who would take his rod away from me so that his terror would not make me afraid. Then would I speak and not fear him, but it is not so with me."

His cry is answered in Christ.

Christ is both God and man, and thus able to "lay his hand on us both."

[Also compare— Job 9:8 - he alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea...

with Matthew 14:25 - And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.]

God as Creator brings an ordered cosmos into being from chaos

It's a beautiful personification of O.T. poetry, the comparison of the sea to a restless, unruly creature, waging impotent war with heaven, and seeking to devour the land, but a creature whom Jehovah holds completely in His power, now stirring it to fury (see Isaiah 51:15) by His rebuke, and again stilling its commotions. — *Cambridge Bible Commentary*

Genesis 1:2 - And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:7 - And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

The separation of the sea from the dry land in a universal image of chaos yielding to an ordered cosmos. The sea monster/Serpent/Dragon is pictured in every ancient mythology. Tiamat in Sumerian myth; Yam in Canaanite myth, etc

Even in Egypt, an invocation to the god Ra from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, reads, "Hail, thou who hast cut in pieces the scorner and strangled the Apophis (the evil serpent)."

God then later brands Egypt as that same evil serpent.

Egypt is associated with Rahab (the proud one) and with the dragon:

Isaiah 30:7 - ...even Egypt, whose help is vain and empty. Therefore, I have called her "Rahab who has been exterminated." [NASB]

Psalms 89:9-11 - You rule the swelling of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them. You Yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain; You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm. The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; The world and all it contains, You have founded them.

God in fact re-enacts the first day of creation, through Moses at the Red Sea:

Genesis 1:9 - And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

Exodus 14:21 - Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided.

Ezekiel 29:2-4 - Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt and prophesy against him and against all Egypt. "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, The great monster that lies in the midst of his

rivers, That has said, 'My Nile is mine, and I myself have made it.' "I will put hooks in your jaws And make the fish of your rivers cling to your scales. And I will bring you up out of the midst of your rivers, And all the fish of your rivers will cling to your scales.

Also Babylon

Jeremiah 51:33-35 - For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor at the time it is stamped firm; Yet in a little while the time of harvest will come for her. "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured me and crushed me, He has set me down like an empty vessel; He has swallowed me like a monster (tanniyn - serpent, sea monster, dragon), He has filled his stomach with my delicacies; He has washed me away. May the violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon," The inhabitant of Zion will say; "And, May my blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea," Jerusalem will say.

See references to the Dragon:
Revelation 12:7-9;
Revelation 20:2

A picture of Christ, taking our sins, and pierced

Number 21:8-9 - Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live." And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.

John 3:14-15 - Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.

The rest of the Isaiah 51 passage contrasts humanity's weakness under the curse, and God's ultimate ability to protect and save - emphasizing God's creative power.

Haftorah - Isaiah 40:26 – 41:4

Isaiah 40:26 - Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

Contemplating the heavens emphasizes God's greatness and humanity's helplessness.

From that position of humility,

Isaiah 40:29-31 - He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall

utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Isaiah 41:1-4 - The “man from the east” is Cyrus, who God raised up to deliver captive Israel .

But who is ultimately supremely powerful?

Isaiah 41:4 - Who acts and carries out decrees? Who summons the successive generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, am present at the very beginning, and at the very end - I am the one.

Revelation 22:12-14 - Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to each person according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by its gates.

So, we're back to the Tree of Life, the Garden and Genesis.