

Deuteronomy Chapter 28

Verses 1-68: This portion includes the blessings and curses pronounced in Moab. This is done in the standard Near Eastern treaty pattern following the completion of the treaty stipulation (verses 5-26). The blessings are (in verses 1-14), whereas the curses comprise (verses 15-68). This is probably due to human nature. The threat of a severe judgment on the covenant-breaker seems to act as a stronger stimulus to correct behavior than any promise of blessing.

In his responsibility as leader and mediator, Moses had previously told the people the promise of God's blessing and the warning that they should not run to other gods when the covenant was given at Sinai (Exodus 23:20-33). After their rebellion against that covenant, Moses warned them (Lev. Chapter 26), of the divine judgment that would come if they disobeyed. Here, Moses gives an exhortation based upon the blessings and the curses of the covenant (see Lev. 26:1-45). The blessings and the curses in this chapter follow the same structure. First, Moses clearly explained that the quality of Israel's future experience would come on the basis of obedience or disobedience to God (28:1-2, 15). Second, the actual blessings and curses were succinctly stated (28:3-6, 16-19). Third, Moses gave a sermon-like elaboration of the basic blessings and curses (28:7-14, 20-68). Just as the curses were given more prominence in the ceremony of (27:11-26), so the curses incurred by disobedience to the covenant were much more fully developed here. The perspective of Moses was that Israel would not prove faithful to the covenant (31:16-18, 27), and so would not enjoy the blessings of the covenant; therefore, the curses received much more attention.

Verses 1-14: This chapter is a very large exposition of two words, the blessing and the curse. They are real things and have real effects. The blessings are here put before the curses. God is slow to anger, but swift to show mercy. It is his delight to bless. It is better that we should be drawn to what is good by a child-like hope of God's favor, than that we be frightened to it by a slavish fear of his wrath. The blessing is promised, upon condition that they diligently hearken to the voice of God. Let them keep up religion, the form and power of it, in their families and nation, then the providence of God would prosper all their outward concerns.

See (Joshua 21:45; 23:14-15; 1 Kings 8:56), for blessing fulfillment.

Verses 1-2: "Hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God": "Diligently obey" stressed the need for complete obedience on the part of Israel. The people could not legally or personally merit God's goodness and blessing, but their constant desire to obey, worship and maintain a right relation to Him was evidence of their true faith in and love for Him (compare 6:5). It was also evidence of God's gracious work in their hearts.

Deuteronomy 28:1 "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe [and] to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:"

“High above all nations”: If Israel obeyed the Lord, ultimate blessing would be given in the form of preeminence above all the nations of the world (see 26:19). The indispensable condition for obtaining this blessing was salvation, resulting in obedience to the Lord, in the form of keeping His commandments. This blessing will ultimately come to pass in the millennial kingdom, particularly designed to exalt Israel’s King, the Messiah, and His nation (see Zech. 13:1 – 14:21; Rom. 11:25-27).

Being shown the ways of righteousness and then choosing those ways would set Israel apart from “all nations of the earth” (Exodus 15:26). Israel’s responsibility was to magnify the character of God as a light to the Gentiles (Isa. 49:6). God always intended for salvation to extend to the ends of the earth.

In the last lesson, we got into the curses, if they did not keep the commandments of God. Now, we see the abundant blessings spoken on them, if they do keep the commandments. The wonderful blessings poured out upon them are conditional. They will receive the blessings, if they keep God’s commandment, and if they earnestly listen and heed God’s Word.

Verses 2-14: Israel would experience blessings in three areas if they would “keep the commandments of the LORD ... and walk in His ways”:

- (1) Military success and financial prosperity;
- (2) Prosperity in farming and family life;
- (3) As a testimony to “all people of the earth”.

Deuteronomy 28:2 "And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God."

After mentioned, which should come upon them from God from heaven. By the direction of his providence, and that freely and plentifully. And beyond their expectations and deserts, and continue with them.

"If thou shall hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God": Obedience to the law being the condition of their coming and continuance. For only temporal blessings in the land of Canaan are here intended, as follow.

"Hearken" is more than just casually listening. It means to hear intelligently. The voice of the LORD thy God is the spoken Word.

Verses 3-6: “Blessed”: These beatitudes summarize the various spheres where the blessing of God would extend to Israel’s life. God’s favor is also intended to permeate all their endeavors as emphasized further in the expanded summary in (28:7-14), on the condition of obedience (verses

1-2, 9, 13-14). They will know victory, prosperity, purity, respect, abundance, and dominance, comprehensive blessing.

These verses contain six blessings that extend to every sphere of life.

Deuteronomy 28:3 "Blessed [shalt] thou [be] in the city, and blessed [shalt] thou [be] in the field."

Not only in the city of Jerusalem, where the temple would be built, and there be blessed with the service, worship, and ordinances of God, but in all other cities of the land. Where they should dwell in title, large, and spacious houses, and their cities should be walled and fenced, and be very populous. Yet should enjoy health, and have plenty of all sorts of provisions brought unto them, as well as prosper in all kinds of merchandise there, as Aben Ezra notes.

"And blessed shalt thou be in the field": In the country villages, and in all rural employments, in sowing and planting, as the same writer observes. In all kinds of husbandry, and in the culture of the fields for corn, and of vineyards and oliveyards. All should prosper and succeed, and bring forth fruit abundantly.

This just says that wherever you are, if you are obedient to God, God can pour His blessing out on you in the field or in town. He is "omnipresent" (everywhere all the time).

Deuteronomy 28:4 "Blessed [shall be] the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep."

Their children, of which they should have many, and these live. Be healthful, thrive, and arrive to manhood, and increase and perpetuate their families. Grotius thinks this was eminently fulfilled in Mary, the mother of our Lord (see Luke 1:42).

"And the fruit of thy ground": Of their gardens, orchards, and fields. Grass for the cattle, and the wheat, barley, vines, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates for the use of men.

"And the fruit of thy cattle": Which being distinguished from oxen and sheep in the following clause, must be understood of camels and asses, which were used for the carriage both of persons and burdens, and were very serviceable. And were a considerable part of their substance in those countries (see Job 1:3).

"The increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep": Of their cows and oxen, and of their sheep and goats, which were very increasing creatures. And in the increase of which much of their outward happiness lay (see Psalm 144:13).

The Israelites thought it a great blessing to have children. The fruit of thy body is speaking of just that. This promises their children will come into this world with no defects. It is also saying their blessings will be on their children as well. The land will not withhold from them. If they keep God's commandments, it will not be cursed for them. It will produce abundantly. Their animals will produce greatly as well. They will be healthy animals too.

Deuteronomy 28:5 "Blessed [shall be] thy basket and thy store."

Which the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem restrain to the basket of firstfruits, and the cake of the first of their dough. But it intends any and every vessel in which they put their provisions for present use. And that that should never be empty of them, and they should always have a sufficiency.

"And thy store": What remained, and was laid up in their barns, cellars, and storehouses, for future use, or in proper places for seed.

This is just saying, they will have an abundance of food. The basket, we remember, is what they brought the fruit in.

Deuteronomy 28:6 "Blessed [shalt] thou [be] when thou comest in, and blessed [shalt] thou [be] when thou goest out."

"Comest in ... goest out": An idiomatic way of referring to the normal everyday activities of life (see 31:2). This is a fitting conclusion to the "blessings and curses" (verse 19), since it sums up everything.

Every moment of the day, going and coming, will be blessed.

Deuteronomy 28:7 "The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways."

As the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Edomites, and Ammonites were, especially in the times of David.

"They shall come out against thee one way": In a body, all together, in large numbers, marching in great order, to give them battle.

"And flee before thee seven ways": Be entirely routed, and flee some one way, and some another, even every way they could take to make their escape. The phrase is expressive of an entire victory, and of a complete rout and dispersion of an enemy.

God will fight for them. Though the enemy come against them, they will turn in fear and run away, when they see that God is protecting them.

Deuteronomy 28:8 "The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."

Barns, granaries, and cellar, where their corn, wine, and oil, were laid up. By preserving the corn from being devoured by vermin, and the casks of wine and oil from bursting and running out.

"And in all thou settest thine hand unto": In all their manufactures, occupations, and trades, in which they were employed. And in the culture of their vines, olives, and other fruit trees.

"And he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee": With health and long life in it. And with an abundance of all good things, it being a land flowing with milk and honey.

This is just saying, their storehouses will be full to overflowing. There will be no need in the land. Everything they do will be blessed of God.

Deuteronomy 28:9 "The LORD shall establish thee a holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways."

Having separated them from all others, for his service, honor, and glory, should continue them as such, and settle them in the land, and confirm all their privileges, natural, civil, and religious. The Targum of Jonathan is, "the Word of the Lord shall establish thee." He that brought them out of Egypt, through the Red sea and wilderness, to the land of Canaan.

"As he hath sworn unto thee": And to their fathers (see Deut. 7:12).

"If thou shall keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways": By which tenure they held the land of Canaan, and their settlement and continuance in it. And enjoyment of all the good things thereof (see Isa. 1:19).

One of the main reasons for keeping His commandments, is to be like Him. He tells them just what to do in the following Scripture.

Leviticus 20:26 "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD [am] holy, and have severed you from [other] people, that ye should be mine."

Deuteronomy 28:10 "And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee."

"Called by the name of the LORD": Israel's obedience and blessing would cause all the people of the earth to fear Israel because they were clearly the people of God. This was God's intention for them all along, to be a witness to the nations of the one true and living God and draw the Gentiles out of idol worship. They will be that witness nation in the last days (see Rev. 7:4-10; 14:1), and in the kingdom (see Zech. 8:1-12).

We have discussed this before. They are actually afraid of the LORD of Israel, which in turn makes them afraid of Israel. The people of the earth would realize that the LORD is Israel's protection. To come against Israel, would be very foolish.

Deuteronomy 28:11 "And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee."

In all temporal good things, give them an affluence of them, even all things richly to enjoy. The Targum of Jonathan is, "the Word of the Lord shall, etc."

"In the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground": Increase their children, cattle, and substance, as before (Deut. 28:4).

"In the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee": The land of Canaan, often thus described.

This is saying again that everything will be in abundance to them, when they occupy the land of promise. Of course, it depends on their faithfulness to God.

Deuteronomy 28:12 "The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow."

The Lord has his treasures of snow and of hail, and of wind (Job 38:22). But here his good treasure, as appears by what follows, is his treasure of rain. In the Targum of Jonathan, it is said, there are four keys in the hand of the Lord of the whole world, which he does not deliver into the hands of any prince. The "keys of life, and of the grave, and of food, and of rain".

"The heaven, to give the rain unto thy land in its season": That is, he will open the heaven, where his good treasure of rain is laid up, and bring it forth or, the land of Canaan for the enriching of it. Or will open the windows thereof, and pour down the blessing (see Mal. 3:10). And that at the proper time, both in autumn and spring, the one is called the former, and the other the latter rain. The one was in Marchesvan, or October, and the other in Nisan, or March, as the Targum of Jonathan. The former rain for the fitting the earth for seed, or for watering it when sown, and the latter for the plumping of it before harvest.

"And to bless all the work of thine hand": In agriculture, for without the blessing of rain, all the labor of the husbandman would be too little purpose.

"And thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow" (see notes on Deut. 15:16). The connection of these words with what goes before may lead to observe this sense of them, that they should furnish other countries with corn, and not need any of theirs (see Ezek. 27:17).

They will have such an abundance they will have much to sell, and they will become rich. They will not need to borrow. They will have extra to loan other nations. Notice it is God who controls the rain.

Deuteronomy 28:13 "And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do [them]:"

“The head, and not the tail”: Israel was to be the leader over the other nations (“the head”), and not to be in subjection to another nation (“the tail”).

This is saying, with the help of God they will be superior to other nations. They had known what it meant to be the tail, when they were slaves in Egypt. Now they will be the master (head).

Deuteronomy 28:14 "And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, [to] the right hand, or [to] the left, to go after other gods to serve them."

Depart from them as a rule to walk by. Turn out from them as a path to walk in, neglect and disobey them, and go into practices contrary to them. Turning;

"To the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them": Which to do was to break the first and principal table of the law, that which nothing was more abominable and provoking to God.

In the book of Hosea, we saw that God thought of them as His wife. He does not want His wife to be unfaithful to Him. They must stay in the path of light, that He has placed before them. They must keep their eyes on the LORD. They must not look from side to side. To go to other gods, is committing spiritual adultery. God will not tolerate that. They must remain faithful to God, to be blessed.

Verses 15-68: The curses are outlined as God warned His people of the price of the absence of love for Him and disobedience.

Verses 15-44 If we do not keep God's commandments, we not only come short of the blessing promised, but we lay ourselves under the curse, which includes all misery, as the blessing all happiness. Observe the justice of this curse. It is not a curse that is causeless, or for some light cause. The extent and power of this curse. Wherever the sinner goes, the curse of God follows; wherever he is, it rests upon him. Whatever he has is under a curse. All his enjoyments are made bitter; he cannot take any true comfort in them, for the wrath of God mixes itself with them. Many judgments are here stated, which would be the fruits of the curse, and with which God would punish the people of the Jews, for their apostasy and disobedience. We may observe the fulfilling of these threatenings in their present state. To complete their misery, it is threatened that by these troubles they should be bereaved of all comfort and hope, and left to utter despair. Those who walk by sight, and not by faith, are in danger of losing reason itself, when everything about them looks frightful.

Verses 15-19: The pattern of these verses (“But ... cursed”) is to prophesy the negatives of the positive blessings of (28:2-14). All that was promised for good in the first list now becomes a threat in the second list (Joshua 23:15; Mal. 2:2).

Deuteronomy 28:15 "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:"

As directed, exhorted, and encouraged to (Deut. 28:1).

"To observe to do all his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day": Both moral and ceremonial.

"That all these curses shall come upon thee": From the hand of God, certainly, suddenly, and unawares. Compare (Joshua 23:15-16).

"And overtake thee": Pursuing after thee, will come up to thee, and seize upon thee. Though they may seem to move slowly (see Zech. 5:3). Namely, the curses which follow. 'Manasseh Ben Israel' divides them into two parts. The first from here to (Deut. 28:45); which respects the destruction of the first temple, and the things that went before or related to that. And the second from there to the end of the chapter, which he thinks refers to the destruction of the second temple, and their present case and circumstances. And it must be owned that for the most part the distinction may seem to hold good. What is prophesied of that should befall the Jews for their disobedience being more remarkably and distinctly fulfilled in the one than in the other. Yet there are things in the whole which respect both, or that were fulfilled. Some under one dispensation, and some under another, and some that were fulfilled in both. But chiefly and more manifestly at and since their dispersion by the Romans.

If they are disobedient to God, not only will they not receive the wonderful blessings we have read about above, but they will receive curses.

Verses 16-19: These are parallels to the blessings (in verses 3-6).

Deuteronomy 28:16 "Cursed [shalt] thou [be] in the city, and cursed [shalt] thou [be] in the field."

In (Deut. 28:16), the curses are delivered out in form, as the reverse of the blessings in (Deut. 28:3). And by observing what the blessings mean. The sense of the curses may easily be understood, the one being directly opposite to the other (see notes on Deut. 28:3).

It will not matter where they are, nothing will work for them.

Deuteronomy 28:17 "Cursed [shall be] thy basket and thy store."

See notes on (Deut. 28:5; and 28:16).

Their basket for fruit will be empty.

Deuteronomy 28:18 "Cursed [shall be] the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep."

See notes on (Deut. 28:4; and 28:16).

They will not have children, that are so blessed to them. Even their animals will not produce offspring.

Deuteronomy 28:19 "Cursed [shalt] thou [be] when thou comest in, and cursed [shalt] thou [be] when thou goest out."

See notes on (Deut. 28:6; and 28:16).

Every hour of every day will be the same. It will not matter where they are, nothing will work out for them.

Verses 20-68: Three groups of punishment for disobedience are prescribed:

- (1) Internal calamities, such as death, despair, disease, and decline (verse 20-46);
- (2) External judgments, such as defeat before the enemy (verses 47-57); and
- (3) The transmission of judgement to Israel's descendants (verse 58-68).

Deuteronomy 28:20 "The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me."

"Until thou be destroyed": Moses was aware that the Israelites were apt to be unfaithful to God, so he portrays in extended warnings the disastrous results of the loss of their Land and their place of worship if they disobeyed God. Destruction was the ultimate calamity for Israel's sin (verses 20-21, 24, 45, 48, 51, 61, 63).

Setting aside God's revelation is like a fog that rolls in from the ocean and silently overtakes a fishing village: "vexation" gradually occupies every corner of a person's life, producing arbitrary decisions and pointless actions (Isa. 65:14).

"Vexation" here is saying, they will have confused thoughts and nothing will work right. They will fail at everything they try to do. They will die young in their misery.

Deuteronomy 28:21 "The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it."

Not only to come upon them; but to continue with them.

"Until he have consumed thee from off the land whither thou goest to possess it": Which shows that this respects not some particular seasons, when the pestilence came and continued awhile, and then ceased, as in the times of David. But when it became more general, and issued with other judgments in the utter consumption of them, as at the destruction of Jerusalem, both by the Babylonians and the Romans. At what times the pestilence raged and remained, until by that and other sore judgments the land was wholly depopulated (compare Jer. 14:12; 21:6; Ezek. 5:12; 6:11).

The pestilence here, is probably speaking of some disease that is contagious and sweeps through them, killing them.

Deuteronomy 28:22 "The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish."

An emaciation of their bodies, either through famine or wasting diseases, whereby the fluids are washed off, and men are reduced to skin and bones.

"And with a fever": A hot burning disease, which dries up the radical moisture, consumes it, and so threatens with death. Of which there are various sorts, and some very pestilential and mortal. Jarchi and Aben Ezra interpret it of a fire in the face. By which they seem to mean what is called St. Anthony's fire.

"And with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning": Either in the inward parts, as an inflammation of the lungs. Or in the outward parts, as carbuncles, burning ulcers, and the like.

"And with the sword": In the margin it is, "with drought"; so Aben Ezra interprets the word, which seems better to suit with what it is in company with. And designs either drought in human bodies, occasioned by fevers, inflammations, and extreme burnings. Or in the earth, through the force of the sun, and want of rain, which render the earth barren and unfruitful, and so cause a famine.

"And with blasting and with mildew": Whereby the corn that is sown, and springs up, comes to nothing. Being blasted by east winds, or turns pale and yellow by the mildew, and so withers away. The consequence of which is want of food, and so destruction and ruin (see Amos 4:9).

"And they shall pursue thee until thou perish": Follow hard after them, and come so close one after another upon them, until they are utterly destroyed.

"Consumption" has to do with lung disease. All of this is speaking of terrible illness. It is just saying, they will die from illness, or from attack from enemies (sword), or from famine (blasting and mildew). They have angered God, and He intends to destroy them one way or another.

Deuteronomy 28:23 "And thy heaven that [is] over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee [shall be] iron."

“Brass ... iron”: The heavens would be as bright as brass, but no rain would fall from them to water the ground. The earth would be as hard as iron, so any rain that would fall would run off and not penetrate (compare Amos 4:7).

We know that "brass" symbolizes judgement. This means that God is pouring out this judgement upon them. The earth seems like iron, because they cannot get it to respond.

Deuteronomy 28:24 "The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed."

That is, instead of showers of rain in their season, to water, refresh, and enrich the earth, and make it fruitful. And for want of them, and through the heat of the sun, being dried and parched, and its clods crumbled into dust. This should be raised up into the air by the force of winds, and let down again in showers of dust. Whereby the few herbs, plants, or green trees on it would be utterly destroyed. And so the Targum of Jonathan interprets it of the Lord's sending a wind that should raise the dust and earth upon the herbs of their fields. Such ploughing winds, that cast up the earth and sand, and dust, into the air. Whereby men and cattle are sometimes covered, are frequent in the eastern countries; of which (see notes on Jonah 4:8).

"From heaven shall it come down upon thee until thou be destroyed": That is, from the air, up to which the dust is carried by the wind, and then let fall in vast quantities, like showers, which are very destructive.

It won't rain, and their crops will die for need of water. Most famines start from a drought. The entire scene is to destroy those unfaithful to God.

Deuteronomy 28:25 "The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth."

And by them, as they sometimes were by the Philistines and others, before their utter destruction, when they sinned against the Lord. And by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Romans.

"Thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them": March out against them in a body, promising themselves victory, but be utterly routed. So that they shall flee every way they can for their safety (see Deut. 28:7).

"And shall be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth": This shows that Manasseh's case (2 Kings 21:1, observed Deut. 28:15); will not strictly and entirely hold good. Nor is there any necessity to adhere closely to it. It is enough that the things threatened and prophesied of were at one time or another fulfilled in these people. For neither the ten tribes, when taken captive by Shalmaneser, were carried into all the kingdoms of the earth, only to some particular places mentioned (in 2 Kings 17:6). Nor the two tribes by Nebuchadnezzar, who were carried by him to Babylon, and returned from thence again at the end of seventy years. But this was exactly fulfilled at their last destruction by the Romans, when they were sent by them into various countries, and have been ever since scattered about in each of the nations of the world. And yet it

must be owned that Strabo, who wrote before the last destruction of them, affirms, that it was not easy to find any place in the world which had not received them, and was not occupied by them.

Compare (2 Chron. 29:8; Neh. 1:8; Jer. 15:4).

When they have angered the LORD, He will not be with them in battle. In fact, He will help their enemies. They will be the ones running in fear.

Deuteronomy 28:26 "And thy carcass shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray [them] away."

Which was always reckoned a very grievous calamity, have no other burial than in the bowels of beasts and birds. It is reported, how that those that fled to avoid punishment were killed in the fields, where their carcasses lying unburied became a prey to beasts.

"And no man shall fray them away": The fowls and the beasts. None of their friends being left to do it, and their enemies would not show so much respect to them, and care of them.

Compare (Jer. 7:33; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20).

This is the very thing that happens, when the Babylonians come against them many years later. There will be so many dead, there will be no time to bury them. The fowls (vultures), and beasts shall eat the flesh off of the dead bodies.

Verses 27-42: One penalty for disobedience was that the plagues God visited upon Egypt would be visited upon Israel (28:59-61, including the painful "boil" (28:21; Exodus 9:9), "darkness", and "locust").

Deuteronomy 28:27 "The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed."

"With the botch of Egypt": The disease with which God afflicted the Egyptians prior to the Exodus (see Exodus 9:9; Amos 4:10).

"Botch" is a kind of leprosy common to Egypt. "Emerods" are tumors. Notice, that the plagues God sends on the people are incurable.

Deuteronomy 28:28 "The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart:"

At the calamities befallen them, and through the force of diseases on them.

"And blindness": Not of body, but of mind. With judicial blindness and hardness of heart.

"And astonishment of heart": At the miserable condition they and their families should be in.

This is just saying, that God will allow them to go insane. Their blindness will be both physical and spiritual. Their hearts will be constantly troubled.

Deuteronomy 28:29 "And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save [thee]."

That is, being in darkness through the loss of their sight. Otherwise the darkness and the light are alike to them, and they grope in the one as well as in the other. This comparison shows that the darkness and blindness of the Jews, threatened them, is to be understood not of the darkness of their bodily eyes, but of their minds. Not being able to understand, or form a judgment of things that are as clear as noon day. And being at the utmost loss what methods to take and pursue, when they are plain and manifest before them. But being infatuated and besotted, follow the lusts and counsels of their own hearts, which lead them wrong.

"And thou shalt not prosper in thy ways": In any steps they may take to extricate themselves out of their difficulties, distresses, and calamities. Or to bring themselves into easy and comfortable circumstances. Or get wealth and riches, and honor and esteem with men. But, on the contrary, become forlorn and miserable, poor and wretched, mean and despicable.

"And thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore": Continually, every day, all the days of their lives. Oppressed with taxes and tributes, with forced taxation and fines, and spoiled of their goods and substance under one pretense or another. Which has been generally their case in Popish countries. For this seems not to refer to the Babylonish captivity, where they built houses, and dwelt in them, and planted gardens, and ate the fruit of them. And in the peace of cities had peace themselves (Jer. 29:5).

"And no man shall save thee": From the oppressions, exactions, and spoils of their enemies, nor deliver them out of their hands. Whereas in process of time they had deliverance and salvation from the Babylonish captivity, by the means of Cyrus king of Persia.

When the LORD's judgement is upon you, no one can save you. They will not even be able to walk upright in the daytime. Desperation has set in.

Deuteronomy 28:30 "Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof."

These 3 curses were in contrast to the exemptions from military service granted (in 20:5-7). The exemptions were possible because God would grant His people victory in battle. Disobedience to the Lord, however, would mean that God would no longer fight for His people. Those normally exempted from military service would be forced to fight and be killed. Consequently, the soldier's betrothed wife would be violated and his house and grapes taken by the foreign invader (compare Jer. 8:10; Amos 5:11; Zeph. 1:13).

The very things that mean the most to him shall be taken away. Their enemies shall take from him the things that mean the most. His wife to be, will become someone else's wife. All of his work in his vineyard and in his fields, someone else will gather. He will build a house, and someone will take it away from him.

Deuteronomy 28:31 "Thine ox [shall be] slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof: thine ass [shall be] violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee: thy sheep [shall be] given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue [them]."

Shall be taken from the herd, and out of the field or stall, by the enemy, and killed for the soldiers to feed on. And not the least part of it given to them.

"Thine ass shall be violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored unto thee": No leave shall be asked to take it, but without their consent, and against their will. It should be taken away by the soldiers to carry them and their burdens, and it may be the booty and spoil of them, and never returned more.

"Thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue them": Not given them by themselves, but they should be suffered to fall into their hands. And they should never be able to get them out again, nor any for them. These, strictly and literally taken, suppose them to be in their own land, when those things would be done. Where they were possessed of farms, and fields, cattle, being much employed in husbandry. But they may be put for any kind of substance they would be possessed of, which they should be stripped of under one pretense or another. Which has been frequently their case in their present dispersion in several countries. When Popish princes have wanted money, they have made very exorbitant demands on the Jews in their countries, and sadly squeezed and oppressed them. And who were not able to resist them, and never had any restoration made to them.

He will be helpless to retain even the animals the LORD entrusted to him. The reason is, God's protection will be removed and he is prey for his enemies.

Deuteronomy 28:32 "Thy sons and thy daughters [shall be] given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail [with longing] for them all the day long: and [there shall be] no might in thine hand."

This also was not true in the Babylonish captivity; for then their sons and daughters went with them, and continued with them, and returned again. But has been oftentimes verified since their captivity by the Romans. Frequently their sons and daughters have been taken from them by force, to be brought up in another religion. By the edicts of kings and popes, and by the canons of councils, and particularly of the fourth council of Toledo.

"And thine eyes shall look and fail": With longing.

"For them all the day long": Expecting every day their children would be returned to them, at least wishing and hoping they would. Their hearts yearning after them, but all in vain.

"And there shall be no might in thy hand": To recover them out of the hands of those who had the possession of them, or fetch them back from distant countries, whither they were carried. By an edict of the Portuguese, the children of the Jews were ordered to be carried to the uninhabited islands. And when, by the king's command, they were had to the ships in which they were to be transported, it is incredible. The Jewish historian says, what howlings and lamentations were made by the women; and there were none who pitied them and comforted them, or could help them (compare 2 Chron. 29:9).

When his enemies come against him and take his children, he will be helpless to stop them. It will break his heart, longing to see his children.

Deuteronomy 28:33 "The fruit of thy land, and all thy labors, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed always:"

The same was prophesied of by Jeremiah, concerning the Babylonish captivity, and was fulfilled in it (Jer. 5:17). And has been also verified in the frequent pillage and spoil of this people, in their present state. For though they have no land to till, from whence to gather fruit, yet they are employed in manufactures and merchandise, the fruit and benefit of which they have been frequently stripped of.

"And thou shall be only oppressed and crushed always": This seems best to agree with their present case; for in their former captivities they were not always oppressed and crushed, but had respite and deliverance (see notes on Deut. 28:29).

He will labor without getting any benefit from it. The enemies that come against him shall spoil him, and take all he has.

Deuteronomy 28:34 "So that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."

On account of the shocking things seen by them. Their dreadful calamities, oppressions, and persecutions, such as before related. Not only violent diseases on their bodies, which were grievous to behold, as well as their pains were intolerable, and made them mad. But to be deprived of a betrothed wife, a newly built house, and a newly planted vineyard. To have an ox slain, and an ass taken away by their enemies, and their sheep given to them before their eyes. To have their sons and daughters taken from them, and brought up in another religion. And to be stripped of their substance; these have made them stark mad, insomuch that they have sometimes destroyed themselves and their families.

His anger will rise, but will not help him.

Deuteronomy 28:35 "The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head."

"Sole of thy foot ... head": Diseases of the skin would afflict the people cursed by God. The disease mentioned here is like that from which Job suffered (see Job 2:7).

We must remember that the botch is Egyptian leprosy. Egypt is a type of the world, and leprosy symbolizes sin. The sins of the world have covered him from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Leprosy of different parts of the body symbolize different types of sin. Leprosy on the head symbolizes a perverted mind. This leprosy is probably speaking of a literal leprosy brought on by sin.

Verses 36-37: The horrors of God's judgments in these curses are unrelenting, with "typical blessings" being inverted with absurd results. Instead of leaving a pagan nation for the freedom to worship Yahweh, Israel would be carried from safety and taken to an unknown "nation" so thoroughly pagan that the new intensity would make the people forget their memories of past terrors.

Deuteronomy 28:36 "The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone."

"Thy king which thou shalt set over thee": Though they had no king at the time of entering the Land, Moses anticipated that Israel would have a king over them when this curse came, a future king of Israel who would be taken with them into exile.

"Unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known": The Israelites would be taken captive to a nation other than Egypt, where they had recently been in bondage. This future nation would be particularly steeped in idolatry (compare 2 Kings 17:41; Jer. 16:13).

This is speaking of a captivity brought on by their sins, such as their Babylonian captivity. All of the things above mentioned, happened in that siege and captivity.

Deuteronomy 28:37 "And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee."

To neighboring nations, that shall hear of their overthrow and captivity, and that shall see the miserable condition they are brought into.

"A proverb and a byword among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee": Both for the wickedness committed by them, and for the ill usage of them by the nations among whom they should be, as they were in the Babylonish captivity (see Jer. 24:9). And now are, it being common to say, "do you think I am a Jew?" Or, "none but a Jew would have done such a thing" (compare 1 Kings 9:8; 2 Chron. 29:8; Jer. 19:8; 25:9, 18; 29:18).

They will be no longer feared and greatly admired, because of their relationship with God. The whole world will know God has turned His back on them.

Deuteronomy Chapter 28 Questions

1. What does verse 1 say the LORD will do for them, if they hearken unto the Word of the LORD, and obey His commands?
2. What does "hearken" mean?
3. The voice of the Lord thy God is the _____.
4. Blessed shalt thou be in the _____, and blessed shalt thou be in the _____.
5. What does "omnipresent" mean?
6. What did the promise to bless the fruit of thy body include?
7. What is the basket in verse 5 speaking of?
8. What will happen to their enemies, if they obey God?
9. What is meant by their storehouses being blessed?
10. Who are their enemies actually afraid of?
11. What do all of these blessings depend upon?
12. Who controls the rain?
13. They will have so much, they will _____ to other nations.
14. The LORD shall make them the _____, and not the _____.
15. When had they known what it was to be the tail?
16. In the book of Hosea, God thought of Israel as His _____.
17. To go after other gods, is committing _____.
18. If they do not obey God and keep His commandments, what will happen to them?
19. Where will they be cursed?
20. What will happen to their basket?
21. What will happen to their children and their animals?
22. What is "vexation" in verse 20?
23. What is the pestilence in verse 21?
24. What is "consumption"?
25. What will they die from besides illness, if they are unfaithful to the LORD?

26. What does "brass" symbolize?
27. What does verse 23 mean?
28. Famines usually start with a _____.
29. Who will be running in fear, if they do not follow God?
30. Verse 26 speaks of so many of them being killed, they will not be able to _____ their bodies.
31. What happens to their flesh?
32. What is "botch"?
33. What is "Emerods"?
34. The plagues God sends on the people are _____.
35. Verse 28 says, the LORD shall smite them with what?
36. Their blindness will be both _____ and _____.
37. What will happen to his betrothed wife?
38. The person, who turns from God, will even have his sons and daughters given to another _____.
39. What happens to the few crops he does produce?
40. This leprosy on his entire body indicates he is full of _____.
41. Why had they been feared and greatly admired, before they turned to sin?