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Disease and Drought

28: 15-24

Disease and drought DIG: What would trigger these curses? Paraphrase the curses in 28:16-19 in modern terms. What areas of life are covered? How do they relate to the blessings in 28:3-6? How is the word confusion significant? What is striking about the contrast? What if God were merely a God of blessing? Is the phrase “until you are destroyed” overstated? Why? Why not?

REFLECT: What would be your response to ADONAI if you faced these curses today? Are the modern-day curses any less horrible? Why do people continue to rebel against God? How do these curses fit with your understanding of YHVH? If not in the form of curses, how do you experience God’s discipline today? To what lengths would you go to escape these curses?

Whereas blessing was pronounced for obedience in every undertaking of your hand (28:8), now there is the prospect of cursing in every undertaking.

Basic statement of the covenantal curses (28:15): Moshe clearly defines the people on whom the **curses** will fall, namely, those who do not obey the stipulations of the covenant (**to see link click [Cr](#) - The Specific Stipulations of the Covenant**). **But if you will not listen to the voice of ADONAI your God, to take care to do all His mitzvot and statutes that I am commanding you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you (28:15).** The presence of this curse language, also found in various ancient Near Eastern treaties, emphasizes the seriousness of spiritual adultery in **Isra’el’s** relationship with **YHVH**.⁵⁹⁶

Specific conditional curses of ADONAI (28:16-19): The **blessings** of **verses 3-6** and the **curses** of **verses 16-19** are concerned with the same issues but reflect opposite results, depending upon **Isra’el’s** obedience or disobedience.

Disobedient **Isra'el** will find history inverted. Instead of the Abrahamic blessing of national growth and greatness, it will wither away to insignificance and exile from **the Land**.⁵⁹⁷

Cursed will you be in the city, and cursed will you be in the field (28:16).

Cursed will be your basket and your kneading bowl (28:17).

Cursed will be the fruit of your womb, the produce of your soil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock (28:18).

Cursed will you be when you come in, and cursed will you be when you go out (28:19).

Moshe then elaborated on the **specific conditional curses** in **verses 28:16-19**, which were an elaboration of the **specific conditional blessings** of **28:3-6**. Here, in **28:20-68**, **Moses** pronounced **eleven curses** that **Isra'el** would suffer if **she** did not live wholeheartedly in accordance with **God's mitzvot** (see **Ez - Statutes, Mitzvot, and Ordinances**). Each individual **curse** essentially had one goal: to turn **Isra'el** from disobedience.⁵⁹⁸

1. Horrible destruction (28:20): Disobedience to **God's mitzvot** would result in a series of calamities. **ADONAI will send on you cursing**, causing total **confusion** (Hebrew: from the root *mehumah*, meaning *panic* and *turmoil*). The word **confusion** is significant, and refers to **confusion** that can be caused by war (**First Samuel 14:20; Isaiah 22:5; Ezekiel 22:5; Zechariah 14:13**). Normally the climax of a Holy War (see **Ag - The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**) was the *panic* sent by **Ha'Shem** into the enemy. *Mehumah* is something like the term **Jeremiah** used, **magor-missabib**, or *terror on every side* (**Jeremiah 20:3**) to describe the *panic* that resulted from the coming invasion of the Babylonians (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Da - Jeremiah and Pash'chur**). The contrast is striking. In the day of **cursing** it will be **Isra'el** that is overtaken by *panic*, not **her** enemies. **And frustration in every undertaking of your hand that you will do (28:20a)**. **God** sent the **curses**, but **Isra'el** invited **them** by **her** deeds. The cause of all this, and the essence of **Isra'el's** rebellion was that **she** would chase after foreign gods and reject **YHWH**.⁵⁹⁹

Until you are destroyed and perish quickly, because of the evil of your deeds by which you have abandoned Me (28:20b). The statement **until you**

are destroyed occurs six times in this chapter (here, **verses 24, 45, 48, 51, 61**) like repeated hammer blows. This experience of covenantal cursing would bring **Isra'el** to the brink of extinction, and provides a sad contrast to what **God** intended for **His chosen people**. The fact that **YHVH** did not exterminate **Isra'el** when he drove them out of **the Promised Land** (covenantal **curse**) later in **her** history (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**) indicates that this verb is somewhat overstated. The strength of the language, however, prevents one from minimizing the full extent of this threat.⁶⁰⁰

2. Disease (28:21-22): ADONAI will make the plague cling to you, In other words, the **curses** would be impossible for **the Israelites** to escape **them**. **Until He has put an end to you from the Land that you are going in to possess.** **Moshe** then listed seven (the number of completion) afflictions, pointing to the broad nature of the **curses**: **ADONAI will strike you with weakness, fever, inflammation, fiery heat, the sword, blight and mildew.** The first three are clearly human diseases (**weakness, fever, and inflammation**), three others describe climatic or agricultural conditions (**fiery heat, blight, and mildew**), while **the sword** obviously refers to invasion and war. **They will pursue you until you perish (28:21-22).**



3. Drought (28:23-24): The once fertile **land** would be without **rain**. **Your sky above your head will be like bronze, and the earth beneath you like iron,** unable to support life. **ADONAI will make** the once blessed **land** a lifeless desert; instead of **rain, sand and dust will come down on you from the heavens.** **Your strength will be spent in vain, for your land will not yield its increase, nor will the trees of the land yield their fruit. If you keep walking contrary to Me and will not listen to Me, then I will multiply the curses on you seven times like your sins, until you are destroyed (Leviticus 26:19-21;**

Deuteronomy 28:23-24). The dryness of the **cursed land** stands in marked contrast to the blessed described in **28:12**. The obvious point is that the farmer would not be able to break up **the earth**, which would not be able to receive the farmer's seed, and **the heavens** would not provide any **rain**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, **You** are so kind and merciful and **You** so desire to bless **Your children**. Many wonder why a loving **God** would send **disease** and death. **Your** word clearly gives the answer. Though **You** long to bless all, **You** cannot bless when there is sin. **You** use **discipline** to turn the person away from the sin and back to following you. **“My son, do not take lightly the discipline of ADONAI or lose heart when you are corrected by Him, because ADONAI disciplines the one He loves and punishes every son He accepts.” . . . Now all discipline seems painful at the moment - not joyful (Hebrews 12:5b-6)**. If they do not listen, then the punishment gets worse, but if they do listen - then **peace**. **But later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Hebrews 12:11)**. **You** long so much to bless **Your** people, it must break your heart when **You** see sin and you must punish. **Yeshua** cried out in anguish because of **His** love for **Isra'el** and their stubborn hearts that were unwilling to follow **Him** as their **God**. **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing (Matthew 23:37)!** I want to walk so close to you dear **Father**, that I hear your whispers and I follow right away. I love **You**. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*