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Defeat and Deportation

28: 25-37

Defeat and deportation DIG: How do these curses affect the blessings mentioned earlier in 28:1-14? What would cause these curses? Did Isra'el have control of the outcome? Why? Why not? What five statements make it clear that YHVH is orchestrating these events? What was ironic about Isra'el's defeat in battle? Why wouldn't anyone be able to save her?

REFLECT: What do these verses teach you about the exceptional ways God treats His people? Looking back on your life, when were you disciplined for living in the world and refusing to glorify God? Have you recovered? What caused you to repent, turn around, and go in a different direction? What did you learn from that experience?

If Isra'el refused to serve the living God, she would be cast into a strange land to serve lifeless gods of wood and stone.

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**. In **28:20-68**, **Moses** pronounced **eleven curses** that would **Isra'el** would suffer if **she** did not live wholeheartedly in accordance with **God's mitzvot (to see link click Ez - Statutes, Mitzvot, and Ordinances)**. Each individual judgment essentially had one goal: to turn **Isra'el** from disobedience.⁶⁰¹

As with the previous file (see **Fg - Disease and Drought**), the basic thesis of this section is that **God's** rebellious **nation** will *not* enjoy covenantal blessings. While the preceding file concerned disasters of a domestic nature, this section gives attention to the calamities caused by invading armies. Five statements in this section make it clear that **YHVH** is orchestrating these events. **He** causes **Isra'el's defeat (28:25, 35)**, **strikes her with boils (28:27)**, afflicts **her** with **madness** and **blindness (28:28)**, and **drives her to an unknown nation (28:36)**.⁶⁰²

4. Defeat in battle (28:25-26): Unlike the absolute victory **YHVH** promised in **28:7** (see

Fd - Blessings for Obedience), where **the enemy flees** in total disarray, **Isra'el** will approach **their** enemy as a unified force but **flee** away, totally shattered, in **seven** groups. **She** will become a land filled with corpses, a banquet for various scavengers. **ADONAI will bring you to defeat before your enemies. You will go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. You will become a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your carcass will be food for every bird of the heavens and beast of the earth,** the ultimate dishonor. Denial of burial in the ancient Near East was a misfortune more fearful even than death (**Jeremiah 7:33, 16:4, 36:30; Psalm 141:7; Ecclesiastes 6:3**).⁶⁰³ **And there will be no one to frighten them away (28:25-26).** One cannot escape the irony here: **Isra'el**, a **nation YHVH** intended to feed from **the Land He** had promised **them**, would become the food supply for a variety of carnivorous beasts if **they** committed spiritual adultery and worshiped other gods.

5. Physical and mental diseases from Egypt (28:27-29): Depicting a reversal of **the Exodus**, **YHVH** promises that **Isra'el** will experience some of the agony of the “ten-plague-like” **curse**s paralleling those that **Egypt** faced. In the same way that **the Exodus** symbolized **Ha'Shem's** power and **His** intention to redeem **His chosen people**, it will also serve as an example of **His** overwhelming judgment. **ADONAI will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with hemorrhoids, with scabs and with itching, from which you cannot be healed. ADONAI will strike you with madness, with blindness, and with confusion of heart.** All three of these terms occur in **Zechariah 12:4** to describe **horses and their riders struck** by panic when in battle. **You will grope at noon as the blind person gropes in darkness, and you will not prosper in your ways. You will be only oppressed and robbed all the time, and there will be no one to save you (28:27-29).** In such a disorganized state, **they** will be unsuccessful in **their** own efforts and will be easy prey for **robbers**. Once again, **no one** will be able to rescue **them**.⁶⁰⁴

6: Oppressed and Robbed (28:30-35): There follows a series of **curse**s which would come as a result of defeat in battle. The protections guaranteed by obedience to the Torah would break down and **you will become engaged to a woman, but another man will sleep with her. You will build a house, but you will not dwell in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will not put it to use. Your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will not eat of it. Your donkey will be stolen in front of you, and it will not be returned to you.** When **YHVH** is no longer protecting the **Israelite** army, **your sheep will be given to your enemies, and you will have no one to save you. Your sons and daughters will be sold into slavery and given to another people while your eyes look on, longing for them all day long - but your hand will be powerless. A people you do not know will eat up the produce of your soil and all your labor, and you will**

be only oppressed and crushed all the time.⁶⁰⁵ In the ancient Near East, stealing someone's **ox** or **donkey** was a proverbial example of **oppression**. If **the Israelites** would abandon **their God**, they would know nothing but **oppression**, and the experience of **their** traumatic losses would drive many to insanity.⁶⁰⁶ **You will be driven mad by the sight that your eyes will see.** Then **Moses** returns to the threat of horrible skin conditions. **ADONAI will strike you on the knees and thighs with severe boils, from which you cannot be healed - from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head (28:30-35).**



7. Exile (28:36-37): For the first time in the **curse** section (see **Ff - Curses for Disobedience**), **Moses** refers to the threat of conquest by a foreign power and deportation to some unknown land, away from those things and places **they** knew and loved. Some of **the Israelites** who were gathered on the plains of Mo'ab could still remember **their** slavery in Egypt, and now the threat of a similar experience is held before **them** again. Disobedience to the covenant could lead to the **curse** of deportation from the Promised Land; the covenant with **YHVH** would be exchanged for slavery to an earthly power.⁶⁰⁷ Rather than **Isra'el's** being a prominent **nation**, respected by the surrounding goyim (**26:18-19** and **28:1-3**), **ADONAI** would **bring them and the king set over them to a nation they and their fathers had not known - and there they would serve other** lifeless **gods of wood and stone.** **YHVH** would cause **Isra'el** to become a **horror (Jeremiah 18:16 and 49:17), a proverb (First Kings 9:7), an object of gossip and ridicule among all the peoples where ADONAI would drive her (28:36-37).**⁶⁰⁸ The Babylonian exile is not in view here (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gu - Seventy Years**

of Imperial Babylonian Rule). Captivity was a regular feature of warfare in the ancient Near East. **Isra'el** had suffered deportation from the Egyptians, Syrians, and Assyrians long before the Babylonians had ever appeared. In any case, the Hittite treaties of the fourteenth century BC included deportation among the **curses**.⁶⁰⁹

*Dear Heavenly **Father, You** are both awesome and holy. How it must have broken **Your** heart to have to send **Your first-born Isra'el (Exodus 4:22)** into Assyrian captivity (**Second Kings 17:6-18**) and then to exile the Southern Kingdom of Judah for 70 years in Babylon. **They** were disciplined because of sin. We must remember that though **You** are merciful and gracious (**Ephesians 2:8-9**) and forgive our sins, **You** do not close **Your** eye to the sin nor ignore it. It is when we repent from our sin that **You** forgive. **Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Messiah Yeshua for the removal of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Ruach ha-Kodesh (Acts 22:38).***

Your** gift of forgiveness is very real for all who choose to love and follow **You**. **For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves - it is the gift of God. It is not based on deeds, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).** Faith is loving **You**, following **Your** way and repenting from wrongs. Also, **Your** wrath is very real for all who ignore **You**. **He who trusts in the Son has eternal life. He who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36).** You look for a heart of love, not a number of good deeds done. The heart is so much more important than the action. **Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord!" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, and drive out demons in Your name, and perform many miracles in Your name?" Then I will declare to them, "I never knew you. Get away from Me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matthew 7:21-23)! I praise **You** for being so perfect and the best **Father!** In **Yeshua's** holy name and in **His** power of **His** resurrection. Amen