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Military Siege
28: 45-57

Military siege DIG: Who will carry out this judgment? Why would God use the goyim to discipline His people? What will be the net effect of the enemy laying siege to the cities of Isra'el? What does the eagle symbolize? What new perspective is introduced here? What are tongues (foreign languages) a sign of? Why do you think the Ruach Ha'Kodesh saved the two worst curses until the end? How were the horrors of the military siege carried out by the Arameans, the Babylonians, and the Romans?

REFLECT: Do you have an iron yoke around your neck in the affairs of this world? Are you serving yourself? Who are you serving? Do you need a new perspective on your life? Do you feel like you are under siege? From who? Do you need to repent of something? Where do you begin? With Whom do you begin? How can you turn your life into a blessing?

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 **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.[613]

9. The reason for the curses (28:45-48): All these curses will come upon you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed. 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.[614]

With these verses it is as though **Moshe** had reached a plateau in **his** presentation of covenantal **curses**. **He** has made it abundantly clear that the experience will be horrific and agonizing. **He** provides here a summary in the heart of **his** long presentation of **curses**. **Moses** pauses to provide the theological rationale for these terrible **curses** once again, namely, to punish **Isra'el** for **her** disobedience of the agreed-upon covenantal stipulations to serve as a warning to all future generations. **He** summarizes the impact of the **curses**, **hunger**, **thirst**, **nakedness**, and **poverty**, then **he** describes the gruesome details of **the** military **siege**.

These verses also introduce a new perspective. It no longer seems as though the covenantal **curses** are a mere possibility – now the fate appears to be a foregone conclusion. Not because **YHVH** wanted it or willed it, but that **the people** were determined to rebel against **Him** and so **they** had brought the destruction down upon **their** own heads.

The defeat envisioned by these verses is total. Using language similar to that found earlier in **28:2** and **15, Moshe** declares that those **curses** will pursue **Isra'el** like a relentless predator. **You will be destroyed because you did not listen to the voice of ADONAI your God, to keep His mitzvot and statutes that He commanded you. They will be a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever.** In **Isra'el's** exodus experience, the ten plagues had served as exciting **signs and wonders**. What a reversal in **Isra'el's** fate this experience of judgment represents. **Instead of serving ADONAI your God with joy and goodness of heart, out of the abundance of everything, you will serve your enemies, whom ADONAI will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and lacking everything.** That **service** to **pagan nations** will be like an **iron yoke**. **And YHVH will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you (28:45-48).** Notice the sad progression from **Isra'el's** conduct to **her** fate. **Instead of serving ADONAI . . . they will serve their enemies.** This fate represents a reversal of the **Exodus**, in other words, a return to bondage. One wonders why **God's people**, then and now, cannot understand that it is only eternal values that have ultimate worth. As the late missionary Jim Elliot said so powerfully, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."[615]

*Dear Wonderful Heavenly **Father**, All **Your** promises are totally trustworthy. They are all "Yes" and "Amen" **(Second Corinthians 1:20).** It is exciting to think of*

Your *promised blessings; but just as real are* ***Your*** *promised curses****. 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).*** *Though many point at* ***Isra'el*** *and* ***her*** *sins, it is so much wiser to look inward.*

Praise you dear ***Father*** *that entrance to* ***Your*** *holy heaven is not based on a person's looks, family line nor on good deeds, but on the heart that loves* ***You*** *as* ***Lord****.* ***But ADONAI said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or his stature, because I have already refused him. For He does not see a man as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but Adonai looks into the heart" (First Samuel 16:7).*** *Praise* ***You*** *that* ***You*** *see* ***the heart*** *motives behind the actions.* ***You*** *discern if the action is done out of pride for others to see or out of loving humility in service and honor for* ***You****.* ***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 love* ***You*** *and desire to lovingly serve* ***You****, no matter what it costs me now, for I will spend all eternity with* ***You*** *in complete peace and great joy.* ***For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).*** *In* ***Yeshua's*** *holy name and power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen*

10. The horrors of the military siege (28:49-52): The two worst **curses** were saved until the conclusion of **Moshe's** speech, and then specifically illustrated: **the** military **siege** and **the scattering** of **the Jews** to the Gentile nations (see **Fk – The Diaspora**). The central concept throughout this inventory of covenantal **curses** is the catastrophe of serving one's **enemies** rather than serving **YHVH**. The

description of military conquest at the hands of a foreign power represents the total reversal of all that **God** had done for **Isra'el**: no land, no cities, no possessions, no crops, no herds or flocks, and no loved ones. **Ha'Shem** will rise up against **His chosen people, a** fierce **enemy** who will epitomize covenantal **curse**.

ADONAI will raise up a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, just as the eagle swoops down (28:49a). The comparison of this attacking nation to **an eagle's swooping down** signifies the suddenness, speed and power of the attack. In Scripture, the image of **the eagle** is often used to describe military invasion by different nations, including **Babylon (Jeremiah 48:40, 49:22; Ezeki'el 17:3), Egypt (Ezeki'el 28:7);** and **Assyria (Hosea 8:1). The Assyrians** captured the northern kingdom of Isra'el in 722 BC, and **the Babylonians** invaded the southern kingdom of Judah in 606 BC and destroyed **Jerusalem** and **the Temple** in 586 BC (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gb – The Destruction of Solomon's Temple on Tisha B'Av in 586 BC**). Many thousands of **Jews** were taken captive to **Babylon** and forced to live in the land of idols. That cured **them** of idol worship once-and-for-all! Perhaps the image here in **Deuteronomy** was meant to cover all the invasions that brought chastening to **the Jewish people**, including **the Roman** invasion of 70 AD. The things described here in **verses 49-57** certainly happened during both the Babylonian and **the** Roman **sieges** of **Jerusalem**.[616]

A nation whose language you will not understand (28:49b). Centuries later, **Isaiah** would declare that the hearing of **the Assyrian tongue** would be **a sign** of **their** own **unbelief**. **Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues** (Hebrew: *uvelashovn*, meaning *languages*) **God will speak to this people (Isaiah 28:11).** This passage is referred to in the B'rit Chadashah where Paul quotes from **Isaiah** and says: **Tongues** (Greek: *glossai,* meaning *languages*)**, then, are a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers**, specifically unbelieving **Jews**, the unbelievers of **this people (First Corinthians 14:21-22).** The purpose of **tongues,** or *languages*, in a Messianic congregation or church was not to bring unbelievers to faith. It had the same purpose it had in **Isaiah 28**. **It is a sign of Jewish unbelief.** It was not to bring them to **Messiah**, because Paul, quoting from this verse says that even then **they will not listen (First Corinthians 14:21b). Therefore, tongues are a sign of cursing** because of **Jewish unbelief**, **a sign of blessing** because the Church Age had begun, **and a sign of authority** (from apostles, prophets, or a nation, authenticating that it was **God** who was speaking). **Peter**, for example, had the keys to the Kingdom and would be responsible for

ushering in the three major ethnic groups to the faith in the first century, **Jews**, **Samaritans**, and the **Gentiles (Acts 10:44-46)**.

This **sign** would be the same for **the Babylonians** and **the Romans** as it was for **the Assyrians**. As a result, just as **Isra'el's** disobedience in **Deuteronomy** led to the use of **tongues** as **a sign of Jewish unbelief** *in the Land*, so **Isra'el's unbelief** in the rejection of **Messiah** led to the use of **tongues** as a sign of Jewish **unbelief** *in the first century Church*.[617]

Moses demonstrates how the nation of **Isra'el**, which had been offered great glory by **YHVH** will experience the horrors of destruction by military **siege**. **A brazen-faced nation that will not respect the old or be gracious to the young. They** will devour the cattle and the crops, leaving nothing behind for **Isra'el** to eat. **It will devour the fruit of your livestock and the fruit of your soil, until you are destroyed. It will not leave behind for you grain, new wine, or oil, the increase of your herds or the young of your flock, until it ruins you. It will besiege you within all your town gates throughout your land, until your high and fortified walls – that you trusted in – come down. It will besiege you within all your gates throughout your land that ADONAI your God has given you (28:50-52).**

This last indictment, **in fortified walls that you trusted in,** was **Isra'el's** fundamental problem. **YHVH** repeatedly demanded that **His** covenantal **nation trust Him**, have **faith** in **Him, believe** in **Him**. **He** demonstrated **His** stupendous power and willingness to intervene on **their** behalf numerous times. Nevertheless, on too many occasions **the chosen nation** turned **her** back on **ADONAI (Numbers 13-14)**, mistakenly placing **her** confidence in political alliances or false gods. **Their** refusal to **trust the LORD** led to **their** rebellion, idolatry, and eventually to experiencing these covenantal **curses**.[618]

The horrors of **the siege** would come to a head in cannibalism. **The enemy** would **devour the fruit of your livestock and the fruit of your soil (28:51),** but **the Israelites** would **eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters that ADONAI your God has given you, in the siege and stress with which your enemies will distress you (28:53).** The two illustrations that follow make the cannibalism seem even more terrible because it is mentioned almost casually.

The most tender and delicate man among you – his eye will become evil

against his brother and the wife of his bosom and the rest of his children that he has left. He will not give to a single one of them from his children's flesh that he will eat, because nothing else is left for him in the siege and stress with which your enemy will distress you within all your town gates (28:54-55).

The tender and delicate woman among you, who never ventured to set the sole of her foot on the ground out of delicateness and tenderness – her eye will become evil against the husband of her bosom and her son and daughter. For in secret, she will eat her afterbirth that issues from between her legs and the children she bears, for lack of anything else in the siege and stress with which your enemy will distress you within all your gates (28:56-57). This **curse** was literally fulfilled when **the Arameans** besieged **Samaria (Second Kings 6:24-29)**, when **the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem** in 586 BC **(Lamentations 2:20** and **4:10),**[619] and when **the Romans besieged Jerusalem** in 70 AD (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Mt – The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple on Tisha B'Av in 70 AD: Atrocities in the City**).