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The Diaspora

28: 58-68

The diaspora DIG: What would be the cause of Isra'el's divine judgment? Why is this eleventh curse the worst of all? What meaning does this chapter give to the "glorious and awesome name" of ADONAI your God? How could such a great God be so merciless? Why do the Jews suffer when the wicked Gentile nations escape suffering?

REFLECT: How many people with a trembling heart and failing eyes turn to the LORD for help? How would being "afraid night and day, and having no assurance for their lives" serve a similar purpose? How have you been disciplined in your lifetime by ADONAI, and what did you learn from it? What is the message today for the Church in these scriptures?

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.⁶²⁰

The fundamental cause for this divine judgment does involve Isra'el's conduct, but it also involved their attitude of heart - an adamant refusal to revere God's lofty character.



In **the eleventh curse**, **Moses** summarizes the curse of **YHVH**, the terrible details of the preceding verses give way to a broader picture; the effect of this final section, however, is no less terrifying, for little by little **Moshe** unfolds to **his** audience the manner in which every **blessing God's** covenant of love for **His people** could be reversed.

*Dear kind and loving heavenly **Father**, I worship **You!** **You** are completely holy and totally love at the same time. The question of how a loving **God** could promise harsh punishments is answered when I look at the reason behind the giving of each of these judgements. Your loving desire is to turn **Isra'el** away from the wrong path of disobedience and onto the right path of eternal joy in loving relationship with **You**. **You** love each of **Your children** dearly. **See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children (John 1:12) of God (First John 3:1a)! You** never want anything to hurt **Your children**, but **You** use **discipline** as a tool to bring **Your** child back onto the right road. **“My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as His son” (Hebrews 12:5b-6).** How important it is to listen to **Your** small **discipline**. Then **You** will not have to **discipline** more. If the **discipline** is ignored, then **You** must make the punishment harsher. How wonderful to have learned lessons in the past and know that **discipline** for that error is done for the lesson is learned. **No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it (Hebrews 12:11).***

*Praise **Your** patience in training **Your children** to be holy like you. Sometimes **You** use **discipline** when there is wrong and sometimes **You** use trials to purge out impurities. But **You** never **discipline** harsher than is needed, nor are **You** too soft. **You** know exactly how much pressure to use to form the character of **Your child** into a beautiful vessel for **You**. **In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. You** are a wonderful **Father!** I love **You!** In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

11. The diaspora (28:58-68): The two worst **curse**s were saved until the conclusion of **Moshe's** address on **curse**s for disobedience, and then specifically illustrated: **the siege** (see [Ej](#) - Military Siege) and **the scattering**.

The action on the part of the Israelites: If . . . you do not take care to do all the words of this Torah, the things written in this scroll, to fear this glorious and

awesome Name, ADONAI your God there would be consequences (28:58). Once again, this mitzvah is not threatening loss of salvation, but loss of **blessings**.

The action on the part of YHVH: Then . . . ADONAI will make your plagues and the plagues of your descendants extraordinary - terrible and prolonged plagues, severe and prolonged illnesses (28:59). The potential **curses** described in the verses below are not the fickle acts of an unknown or vindictive deity; they are the just acts of a righteous **God** whose covenant of love would have been rejected by **His own people**.

a. He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt that you were afraid of. Also, every illness and plague that is not written in the scroll of this Torah, ADONAI will bring on you, until you are destroyed. In the redemption from **Isra'el** diseases were heaped on **her enemies**, but because of the **curse** of covenantal treachery, **diseases will cling to Isra'el (28:60-61)**. 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.⁶²¹

b. You will be left few in number, now less than one percent of the world population, **instead of being like the stars of the sky in number (Genesis 15:5, 22:17, 26:4; Exodus 32:13; Deuteronomy 1:10, 7:7, 10:22)** - because you did not listen to the voice of ADONAI your God. Now just as ADONAI rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you, so ADONAI will rejoice over you to ruin and destroy you; and you will be uprooted from the land that you are going in to possess. Even though they were once enslaved in **Egypt**, the **Hebrews** greatly multiplied in numbers, now however, because of **her** future rebellion **she will be left few in number (28:62-63)**.

c. ADONAI will scatter you among all peoples from one end of the earth to the other. Through the patriarchs the **Jews** anticipated living in **the Land** of Promise, yet now, because of **her** mutiny against **her Creator**, **she** would be evicted from **the Land (28:64a)**.

d. And there you will serve other gods - wood and stone - that you and your fathers have not known. While living in **Egypt**, the **Israelites** found fulness of life in serving **YHVH**, but because of **her** spiritual adultery **she** would live the empty life of worshipping false **gods (28:64b)**;

e. Among these nations you will find no rest, and there will be no rest for the sole of your foot. But there ADONAI will give you a trembling heart and failing eyes, and a despairing spirit. The rest from enemies that came with possession of **the Land** would then become restlessness in a foreign **land**. The reference to three anatomical and psychological terms - **mind, eyes** and **heart** - emphasizes the internal and far-reaching nature of this distress. **Their** lives will be so consumed by instability that **they** will have absolutely no confidence in the future.⁶²² **In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and at evening you will say, "If only it were morning!" - from the fear of your heart that you will fear and the sight of your eyes that you will see.** During the conquest of the Transjordan **the** Gentile **nations** feared **Isra'el**, but after **her** revolt against **her Protector, she** will be overwhelmed by **fear (28:65 and 67).**

f. Your life will hang in the balance before you; you will be afraid night and day, and you will have no assurance of your life. The dread and fear that the goyim would feel at the approach of Isra'el (2:25 and 11:25), would then be on her. Isra'el had been promised long life in the Promised Land, but because of their rebellious heart, they would have no assurance of life (28:66). Their lives would be as if hanging from a thread, which threatens every moment to break.⁶²³

g. As a final step of covenantal reversal, **the Israelites** will come full circle. **YHVH** will send **His chosen people back to Egypt**, where they came into existence as **a nation. ADONAI will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way that I said to you, "You will not see it again."** There you will sell yourselves to your enemies as **slaves and maids, but there will be no buyer (28:68).** The **ships** may have been Phoenician, engaged in slave traffic (**Ezeki'el 27:13; Joel 3:6; Amos 1:9**). Forty years ago, **Isra'el** had been freed from slavery **in Egypt**, but refusal to be loyal to the covenant would mean that **she** would return to a state of bondage. But even **in Egypt no one** would **buy** such **slaves**. It is a vivid climax to a continuous picture of unspeakable suffering. Thus, **her** history will be annulled. Such will be the end of **Isra'el** if **she** failed to observe **all the words of this Torah, the things written in this scroll, and to fear this glorious and awesome Name, ADONAI your God (28:58).**

The Jews were not only a disciplined **people, they** were also a dispersed **people (Second Kings 17:6 and 25:21)**. After the Babylonian captivity (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**), they were permitted to return to **their Land**, rebuild Jerusalem and restore the Temple (see the commentary on **Ezra-Nehemiah Ag - The First Return**). **Isra'el** had **their** Temple, **their** priesthood, and **a nation**, until the Roman invasion in 70 AD. After that, **they** were, once again, **a scattered**

people, found in almost every **nation** on the earth. **They** had no homeland, no Temple, and no priesthood. Yet, not matter in what **nations** they settled, then never lost **their national** identity. It would not be until May 14, 1948, that **Isra'el** would once again become **a nation** in **the Land**.

During those times of severe suffering, more than one **Jew** asked **ADONAI**, “Why do **Your people** suffer when **the wicked Gentile nations** escape suffering? How can a holy **God** use godless **goyim** to discipline **His people**?” This is one of the themes of the book of **Habakkuk**, and it is discussed in several psalms (**Psalm 37, 73-74, 77, 79-80**). But the fact that **Isra'el** is **God's chosen people** and **the apple of His eye (32:10)** explains why **He** disciplines **her**, for the greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility. **Only you have I known from among all the families of the earth. Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities (Amos 3:2)**. Divine election isn't an excuse for human rebellion. **From everyone given much, much will be required (Luke 12:48b)**.

There is a sobering message here for the Church (made up of **Jews** and **Gentiles** as in **Ephesians 2:14**) in today's world. Like **Isra'el** of old, we are **God's chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for God's own possession (First Peter 2:9-10)**. We are here to declare the virtues of **the Lord** and declare the Good News of the gospel. If we fail to glorify **God** and obey **His Word**, **He** will discipline us just as **He** disciplined **Isra'el** (see the commentary on **Hebrews Cz - God Disciplines His Children**). **For the time has come for judgment to begin with the house of God. If judgment begins with us first, what will be the end for those who disobey the Good News of God (First Peter 4:17)?** If **God** disciplines **His** own **people** for **their** sins, what will **He** do to those who don't belong to the family and have resisted **His** will? But judgment will begin in **God's** family, and the only way we can avoid it is to turn from our sins and obey **His** will.

The church that thought **it** was **rich**, **Yeshua** said was **poor** (see the commentary on **Revelation Bf - The Church at Laodicea**), and **the church** that thought **it** was **poor**, **Messiah** said was **rich** (see the commentary on **Revelation Ba - The Church at Smyrna**). What will our **Lord** reveal about our churches when the fire of discipline falls?