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Do Not Worship Other Gods

29: 16-29

Do not worship other gods DIG: What did Moses see in the future? Explain how spiritual adultery would become like a root of bitterness for Isra'el. What responsibilities of the revealed things of Torah place on the Israelites and their children? Was the threat of devastation inevitable? Why? Why not?

REFLECT: How does God hold you personally responsible for your secret sin? Can you spot a spiritual imposter? Are you on the lookout for false doctrine within the Church today? On a scale of one to ten, how much do you trust God when disaster strikes in your life? If you don't like your answer, how can you change that?

Isra'el's obedient or disobedient conduct would determine exactly what they received from God's hand. In other words, the threat of devastation was possible, but not inevitable.

The day before Moses died.

Moses describes the painful consequences, for the individual and for **the nation**, of failing to obey the covenantal stipulations (**to see link click Bi - The Stipulations of the Covenant**). **His** warning here suggests that **God's chosen people** had been tempted by **idolatry** and had committed spiritual **idolatry** in the past. That reality adds weight to **Moshe's** concern that **Isra'el** might do the same thing in the future. Thus, **Moses** looks to the future from the perspective of **his** time (**29:16-21**) and then looks back hypothetically from some future day (**29:22-28**).⁶³⁴ These verses echo **Moshe's** earlier warning that **Isra'el** should worship **ADONAI** alone (see **Cv - Beware of Idolatry**).

From Moshe's perspective, looking to the future (29:16-21): This short section contains several of the elements of the Near Eastern treaty pattern (see **Ah - Treaty of the Great King**), namely, the historical prologue (**verses 16-17**), a

statement of the general principle (**verse 18**), and the threat of **the curse** falling on the disobedient person (**verses 19-21**).

Moses reminded **the people** of the gross **idolatry they** witnessed while enslaved **in Egypt** and then while traveling through the wilderness. **You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold (29:16-17)**. This is what happens when you forsake the Word of **God**. It is human nature to worship something. Even if it is only themselves. However, to worship anything or anyone other than the one true **God** is **idolatry**. Therefore, **Moshe** asks **the Israelites** to be diligent in this regard.



Moshe warns individual **Israelites** against thinking that since **the nation** was involved in a **covenantal** relationship with **YHVH** that **their** own personal conduct was not essential to the fate of **the nation**.⁶³⁵ **Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from ADONAI our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison (29:18)**. Here we see the same **zeal** that **Paul** had. Both of these **men** were so very protective of the flock that **ADONAI** had entrusted to **them**. The sin of **idolatry** spreads from person to house to clan, as the **poisonous** branch with **bitter** fruit infects the whole tree, like the spreading of a false teaching within the body of **Messiah**. Later, Paul would have the same concern: **Now the Ruach clearly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, following deceitful spirits and the teaching of demons (First Timothy 4:1)**.⁶³⁶

The danger of **the people's** harboring an unfaithful group or individual is now seen. Such a person or persons would not be able to hide from the effect of **the curse**, **Ha'Shem** would hold each **person** accountable.⁶³⁷ **When such a person hears**

the words of this oath and they invoke a blessing on themselves, thinking, “I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way,” they will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry (29:19). This expression appears to be a proverbial observation employing a figure of speech called a *merism*, which suggests the totality by referring to two polar elements. Not only will the judgment fall on **the covenantal rebel**, but also on **the whole nation** because **they** allowed **themselves** to be swept away by **idolatry**. Like **their** father the Adversary, **they** are arrogant narcissists. **They** remove all true **blessings** and bring destruction.

To highlight the severity of the divine judgment this **person** will experience, **Moses** makes several powerful statements. **ADONAI** takes this very seriously, and **will never be willing to forgive them; His wrath and zeal will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will fall on them, and ADONAI will blot out their names from under heaven. ADONAI will single them out from all the tribes of Isra’el for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this scroll of the Torah (29:20-21).** John would echo the same sentiment at the end of **his** book (see the commentary on **Revelation Gd - If Anyone Adds to the Words of this Book, God Will Add to Them the Plagues Described**). **Moses** already understood those words and warned **Isra’el** about the sanctity of the Scriptures.

From a distant future perspective, looking back (29:22-28): **Moses** believed that **the curses** described in **Chapters 27 and 28** would fall on **Isra’el**. **Your children who follow you in later generations and foreigners who come from distant lands will see the calamities that have fallen on the land and the diseases with which ADONAI has afflicted it. The whole Land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur - nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. The Land flowing with milk and honey (6:3) will be stripped of any evidence of fertility and abundance - a reversal of God’s provision for the Promised Land.⁶³⁸ It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and their allies Admah and Zeboyim, which ADONAI overthrew in fierce anger.** Because of **Isra’el’s** future spiritual adultery, **YHVH** will bring such severe judgment against **His people** that future **Israelites** and **pagans** will ask in bewilderment: **Why has ADONAI done this to this Land? Why this fierce, burning anger (29:22-24)?**

And the goyim will answer: It is because this people abandoned the covenant of ADONAI, the God of their ancestors, the covenant he made

with them when he brought them out of Egypt. They went off and worshiped other gods and bowed down to them, gods they did not know, gods he had not given them. Even though the incomparable **God**, the only **God** of the universe, chose to establish a **covenantal** relationship with **the nation of Isra'el, His chosen people** abandoned that unique relationship and pursued **gods** that had done nothing for **them. Therefore, ADONAI's anger burned against this Land, so that he brought on it all the curses written in this book. In furious anger and in great wrath ADONAI uprooted them from their land and thrust them into another land, as it is now (29:25-28).** All this for the opportunity to worship lifeless and powerless pieces of wood and stone.⁶³⁹

Reflection: Although **Chapters 28** and **29** are clearly forward-looking, it would be incorrect to regard them as **near historical prophecy** in the strictest sense of the term. They represent the threat of **covenantal curse** and in this last section in particular (**29:22-28**), a hypothetical future scenario. Will **Isra'el's** experience of **covenantal curse** result in every disease or calamity listed in **Chapter 29**? Will **the Land** of Promise be absolutely void of vegetation? No. **Isra'el's** experience in the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles certainly did not bring about those disastrous results to the degree envisioned in these passages. It seems that this last section of **Chapter 29** presents what *might happen* to **Isra'el**, not what *would happen* inevitably. **Isra'el's** obedient or disobedient conduct would determine exactly what they received from **God's** hand. In other words, the threat of devastation was not a sure thing. It was possible, but not inevitable.⁶⁴⁰

Live faithfully in the light of God's revelation (29:29): Then **Moses** rests **his** case. **He** doesn't really know exactly what will happen in the future to **Isra'el**, but **he** does what every godly person should do. **He** or **she** should completely rely on **God. The secret things belong to ADONAI our God, but the words revealed to us in the Torah belong "to us and to our children," that we may follow them forever (29:29).** **YHVH** is the ultimate judge; **God** knows the heart of each individual. This verse interrupts the flow of the text. It comes suddenly, and it seems that **ADONAI** allows the human writer, **Moses**, to express **his** deep feelings, and **his** faith as **he** gives it all to **God. For who has known the mind of ADONAI (Romans 11:33-34)? As Job would say: Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him (Job 13:15 NKJV).**⁶⁴¹

There are 10 places in the Hebrew Bible that have dots above the letters, and **Deuteronomy 29:29** where we read, **"to us and to our children,"** is one of

these places. **These are, according to ancient Jewish tradition, places that hold secrets within these words. “Secrets” means that in the plain meaning of these words not all that is intended is revealed or visible.** This principle is true about any coded texts, but they are not often marked with a specific mark, like dots above the letters. So, this idea is not new in any context and in any texts. **Yeshua** was teaching in **parables** precisely for the same reason. This is what **Yeshua** told **His apostles** when **they** asked **Him** why **He** was using **parables** to teach: **He** answered, saying: **Because it has been given to you to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but it has not been given to them (Matthew 13:10-11).** Yes, **God** has **secret** things, things that **He** chose not to reveal to us. But why do we, as finite, limited, and weak humans want to enter into **the secrets** when we don’t even understand the revealed things of **God** that are explicitly written for our instruction and faith?

Why do we, who don’t even know the basics, want to delve into what **God** forbids us, and into something that has no practical daily application for us? Why enter into the dark, unclear, unexaminable dangerous field full of landmines? It is important to leave the things that are not clearly delineated and clearly spelled out in the Word of **God**. To leave them until **the LORD** reveals **His secrets** loud and clear. However, **YHVH** did not leave **Moshe** in the valley of despair at that time. Next, **God** gave **him** the hope of **the restoration** of **the wayward nation** (see [Fp - Restoration After Repentance](#)).

*Dear Great Heavenly **Father**, We praise **You** for **You** are Awesome! Praise **You** that when life looks bleak, lonely and sad – there is a hope that is sure! **Your** Word is that hope. **Yeshua** is **Your** Word and **He** is in heaven preparing an eternal home for all who love **Him**. **In My Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am you may also be (John 14:2-3).***

*We love **You** and long for the day when we will join the living creatures and elders in heaven in praising and worshiping **You**– for **You** are so worthy! **And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the One seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before the One seated on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever. And they throw their crowns down before the throne, chanting, “Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power” (Revelation 4:9-11a).** In **Yeshua’s** holy name and **His** power of*



resurrection. Amen