

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The blessings which God pronounces on the obedient, Deuteronomy 28:1-6. Particular privileges which the faithful shall receive, Deuteronomy 28:7-13. The curses pronounced against the ungodly and idolatrous, Deuteronomy 28:14-19. A detailed account of the miseries which should be inflicted on them, should they neglect the commandments of the Lord, Deuteronomy 28:20. They shall be smitten with the pestilence, Deuteronomy 28:21; with consumption, fever, etc., Deuteronomy 28:22; drought and barrenness, Deuteronomy 28:23, Deuteronomy 28:24; they shall be defeated by their enemies, Deuteronomy 28:25, Deuteronomy 28:26; they shall be afflicted with the botch of Egypt, Deuteronomy 28:27; with madness and blindness, Deuteronomy 28:28, Deuteronomy 28:29; they shall be disappointed in all their projects, Deuteronomy 28:30; deprived of all their possessions, and afflicted in all their members, Deuteronomy 28:31-35; they and their king shall go into captivity, Deuteronomy 28:36, and become a by-word among the nations, Deuteronomy 28:37. Their land shall be unfruitful, and they shall be the lowest of all people, Deuteronomy 28:38-44. All these curses shall come on them should they be disobedient, Deuteronomy 28:45-48. Character of the people by whom they should be subdued, Deuteronomy 28:49, Deuteronomy 28:50. Particulars of their dreadful sufferings, Deuteronomy 28:51-57. A recapitulation of their wretchedness, Deuteronomy 28:58-63. The prediction that they shall be scattered among all the nations of the earth, Deuteronomy 28:64-68.

Verse 2

All these blessings shall come on thee - God shall pour out his blessing from heaven upon thee. And overtake thee. Upright men are represented as going to the kingdom of God, and God's blessings as following and overtaking them in their heavenly journey. There are several things in this verse worthy of the most careful observation: - 1. If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. The voice of God must be heard; without a Divine revelation how can the Divine will be known? And if not known, it cannot be fulfilled. 2. When God speaks, men must hearken to the words of his mouth. He who does not hearken will not obey. 3. He who hearkens to the words of God must set out for the kingdom of heaven. The curse must fall on him who stands in the way of sinners, and will overtake them who loiter in the way of righteousness. 4. Those who run in the way of God's testimonies shall have an abundance of blessing. Blessings shall come upon them, and blessings shall overtake them - in every part of their march through life they shall continue to receive the fulfillment of the various promises of God which relate to all circumstances, vicissitudes, trials, stages of life, etc., etc., each overtaking them in the time and place where most needed.

Verse 3

In the city - In all civil employments. In the field - in all agricultural pursuits.

Verse 4

Fruit of thy body - All thy children. Increase of thy kine, etc.; every animal employed in domestic and agricultural purposes shall be under the especial protection of Divine Providence.

Verse 5

Thy basket - Thy olive gathering and vintage, as the basket was employed to collect those fruits.

Store - *ḥāṣṣâ* (mishereth), kneading-trough, or remainder; all that is laid up for future use, as well as what is prepared for present consumption. Some think that by basket all their property abroad may be meant, and by store all that they have at home, i. e., all that is in the fields, and all that is in the houses. The following note of Mr. Harmer is important: -

Commentators seem to be at a great loss how to explain the basket and the store mentioned Deuteronomy 28:5, Deuteronomy 28:17. Why Moses, who in the other verses mentions things in general, should in this case be so minute as to mention baskets, seems strange; and they that interpret either the first or the second of these words of the repositories of their corn, etc., forget that their barns or storehouses are spoken of presently after this in Deuteronomy 28:8. Might I be permitted to give my opinion here, I should say that the basket, *ḥāṣṣâ* (tene), in this place means their travelling baskets, and the other word *ḥāṣṣâ* (mishereth), (their store), signifies their leathern bags, in both which they were wont to carry things in travelling. The first of these words occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures but in the account that is given us of the conveyance in which they were to carry their first-fruits to Jerusalem; the other nowhere but in the description of the hurrying journey of Israel out of Egypt, where it means the utensils in which they then carried their dough, which I have shown elsewhere in these papers means a piece of leather drawn together by rings, and forming a kind of bag. Agreeably to this, Hasselquist informs us that the Eastern people use baskets in travelling; for, speaking of that species of the palm tree which produces dates, and its great usefulness to the people of those countries, he tells us that of the

leaves of this tree they make baskets, or rather a kind of short bags, which are used in Turkey on journeys and in their houses; pages 261,262. Hampers and panniers are English terms denoting travelling baskets, as (tene) seems to be a Hebrew word of the same general import, though their forms might very much differ, as it is certain that of the travelling baskets mentioned by Hasselquist now does.

like manner as they now carry meal, figs, and raisins, in a goat's skin in Barbary for a viaticum, they might do the same anciently, and consequently might carry merchandise after the same manner, particularly their honey, oil, and balm, mentioned Ezekiel 27:17. They were the proper vessels for such things. So Sir J. Chardin, who was so long in the East, and observed their customs with so much care, supposed, in a manuscript note on Genesis 43:11, that the balm and the honey sent by Jacob into Egypt for a present were carried in a goat or kid's skin, in which all sorts of things, both dry and liquid, are wont to be carried in the East. Understood after this manner, the passage promises Israel success in their commerce, as the next verse (the 6th) promises them personal safety in their going out and in their return. In this view the passage appears with due distinctness, and a noble extent. - Observations, vol. 2:; p. 181.

Verse 6

When thou comest in - From thy employment, thou shalt find that no evil has happened to the family or dwelling in thy absence.

When thou goest out - Thy way shall be made prosperous before thee, and thou shalt have the Divine blessing in all thy labors.

Verse 7

The Lord shall cause thine enemies, etc. - This is a promise of security from foreign invasion, or total discomfiture of the invaders, should they enter the land. They shall come against thee one way - in the firmest and most united manner. And flee seven ways - shall be utterly broken, confounded, and finally routed.

Verse 8

The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee - Every thing that thou hast shall come by Divine appointment; thou shalt have nothing casually, but every thing, both spiritual and temporal, shall come by the immediate command of God.

Verse 9

The Lord shall establish thee a holy people unto himself - This is the sum of all blessings, to be made holy, and be preserved in holiness.

If thou shalt keep, etc. - Here is the solemn condition; if they did not keep God's testimonies, taking them for the regulators of their lives, and according to their direction walking in his ways, under the influence and aids of his grace, then the curses, and not the blessings, must be their portion. See Deuteronomy 28:15. etc.

Verse 12

The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure - The clouds, so that a sufficiency of fructifying showers should descend at all requisite times, and the vegetative principle in the earth should unfold and exert itself, so that their crops should be abundant.

Verse 14

Thou shalt not go aside - to the right hand or to the left - The way of obedience is a straight way; it goes right forward; he who declines either to right or left from this path goes astray and misses heaven.

Verse 20

Cursing - This shall be thy state; vexation - grief, trouble, and anguish of heart; rebuke - continual judgments, and marks of God's displeasure.

Verse 21

[illegible]

Verse 22

Consumption - **𐤑𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕** (shachepheth), atrophy through lack of food; from **𐤑𐤕𐤕** (shacaph), to be in want.

Fever - כִּדָּאֲחַת (kaddachath), from כִּדָּאֲחַ (kadach), to be kindled, burn, sparkle; a burning inflammatory fever.

Inflammation - דַּלֵּקֶת (dalleketh), from דָּלַק (dalak), to pursue eagerly, to burn after; probably a rapidly consuming cancer.

Extreme burning - חָרַחֲרִי (charchur), burning upon burning, scald upon scald; from חָרַח (char), to be heated, enraged, etc. This probably refers, not only to excruciating inflammations on the body, but also to the irritation and agony of a mind utterly abandoned by God, and lost to hope. What an accumulation of misery! how formidable! and especially in a land where great heat was prevalent and dreadful.

Sword - War in general, enemies without, and civil broils within. This was remarkably the case in the last siege of Jerusalem.

Blasting - שִׁדְדָפוֹן (shiddaphon), probably either the blighting east wind that ruined vegetation, or those awful pestilential winds which suffocate both man and beast wherever they come. These often prevail in different parts of the East, and several examples have already been given. See Genesis 41:6 (note).

Mildew - יֶרָקוֹן (yerakon), an exudation of the vegetative juice from different parts of the stalk, by which the maturity and perfection of the plant are utterly prevented. It comes from יָרַק (yarak), to throw out moisture.

Of these seven plagues, the five former were to fall on their bodies, the two latter upon their substance. What a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!

Verse 23

Thy heaven - shall be brass, and the earth - iron - The atmosphere should not be replenished with aqueous vapours, in consequence of which they should have neither the early nor the latter rain; hence the earth - the ground, must be wholly intractable, and, through its hardness, incapable of cultivation. God shows them by this that he is Lord of nature; and that drought and sterility are not casualties, but proceed from the immediate appointment of the Lord.

Verse 24

The rain of thy land powder and dust - As their heavens - atmosphere, clouds, etc., were to be as brass - yielding no rain; so the surface of the earth must be reduced to powder; and this, being frequently taken up by the strong winds, would fall down in showers instead of rain. Whole caravans have been buried under showers of sand; and Thevenot, a French traveler, who had observed these showers of dust, etc., says, "They grievously annoy all they fall on, filling their eyes, ears, nostrils, etc." - Travels in the East, part 1, book ii., chap. 80. The ophthalmia in Egypt appears to be chiefly owing to a very fine sand, the particles of which are like broken glass, which are carried about by the wind, and, entering into the ciliary glands, produce grievous and continual inflammations.

Verse 27

The Lord will smite thee with the botch - שֶׁחִין (shechin), a violent inflammatory swelling. In Job ii., one of the Hexapla versions renders it ἰμῆρ ἰμῆρτι, the elephantiasis, a disease the most horrid that can possibly afflict human nature. In this disorder, the whole body is covered with a most loathsome scurf; the joints are all preternaturally enlarged, and the skin swells up and grows into folds like that of an elephant, whence the disease has its name. The skin, through its rigidity, breaks across at all the joints, and a most abominable ichor flows from all the chinks, etc. See an account of it in Aretaeus, whose language is sufficient to chill the blood of a maniac could he attend to the description given by this great master, of this most loathsome and abominable of all the natural productions of death and sin. This was called the botch of Egypt, as being peculiar to that country, and particularly in the vicinity of the Nile. Hence those words of Lucretius: -

Est Elephas morbus, qui circum flumina Nili

Nascitur, Aegypto in media; nec praeterea usquam.

Lib. vi., ver. 1112.

Emerods - עֲפָלִים (ophalim), from עָפַל (aphal), to be elevated, raised up; swellings, protuberances; probably the bleeding piles.

Scab - (brg garab) does not occur as a verb in the Hebrew Bible, but (gharb), in Arabic, signifies a distemper in the corner of the eye, (Castel), and may amount to the Egyptian (ophthalmia), which is so epidemic and distressing in that country: some suppose the scurvy to be intended.

Itch - חֲכָלִי (cheres), a burning itch, probably something of the erysipelatous kind, or what is commonly called St. Anthony's fire.

Whereof thou canst not be healed - For as they were inflicted by God's justice, they could not of course be cured by human art.

Verse 28

The Lord shall smite thee with madness - חֲכָלִי (shiggaon), distraction, so that thou shalt not know what to do.

And blindness - חֲכָלִי (ivvaron), blindness, both physical and mental; the חֲכָלִי (garab), (Deuteronomy 28:27), destroying their eyes, and the judgments of God confounding their understandings.

Astonishment - חֲכָלִי (timmahon), stupidity and amazement. By the just judgments of God they were so completely confounded, as not to discern the means by which they might prevent or remove their calamities, and to adopt those which led directly to their ruin. How true is the ancient saying, Quos Deus vult perdere, prius dementat! Those whom God is determined to destroy, he first infatuates. But this applies not exclusively to the poor Jews: how miserably infatuated have the powers of the continent of Europe been, in all their councils and measures, for several years past! And what is the result? They have fallen - most deplorably fallen!

Verse 29

Thou shalt be only oppressed, etc. - Perhaps no people under the sun have been more oppressed and spoiled than the rebellious Jews. Indeed, this has been their portion, with but little intermission, for nearly 1,800 years. And still they grope at noon day, as the blind gropeth in darkness - they do not yet discover, notwithstanding the effulgence of the light by which they are encompassed, that the rejection of their own Messiah is the cause of all their calamities.

Verse 30

Thou shalt betroth a wife, etc. - Can any heart imagine any thing more grievous than the evils threatened in this and the following verses? To be on the brink of all social and domestic happiness, and then to be suddenly deprived of all, and see an enemy possess and enjoy every thing that was dear to them, must excite them to the utmost pitch of distraction and madness. They have, it is true, grievously sinned; but, O ye Christians, have they not grievously suffered for it? Is not the stroke of God heavy enough upon them? Do not then, by unkind treatment or cruel Oppression, increase their miseries. They are, above all others, the men who have seen affliction by the stroke of his rod; Lamentations 3:1.

Verse 32

Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people - In several countries, particularly in Spain and Portugal, the children of the Jews have been taken from them by order of government, and educated in the Popish faith. There have been some instances of Jewish children being taken from their parents even in Protestant countries.

Verse 35

With a sore botch - חֲכָלִי (shechin), an inflammatory swelling, a burning boil. See Deuteronomy 28:27.

Verses 36-45

Can any thing be conceived more dreadful than the calamities threatened in these verses?

Verse 48

Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies - Because they would not serve God, therefore they became slaves to men.

Verse 49

A nation - from far - Probably the Romans.

As the eagle flieth - The very animal on all the Roman standards. The Roman eagle is proverbial.

Whose tongue thou shalt not understand - The Latin language, than which none was more foreign to the structure and idiom of the Hebrew.

Verse 52

He - Nebuchadnezzar first, (2 Kings 25:1, 2 Kings 25:2, etc.), and Titus next; shall besiege thee - beset thee round on every side, and cast a trench around thee: viz., lines of circumvallation, as our Lord predicted; (see Matthew 24:1, etc., and Luke 21:5, etc.); in all thy gates throughout all thy land - all thy fenced cities, which points out that their subjugation should be complete, as both Jerusalem and all their fortified places should be taken. This was done literally by Nebuchadnezzar and the Romans.

Verse 56

The tender and delicate woman - This was literally fulfilled when Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans; a woman named Mary, of a noble family, driven to distraction by famine, boiled and ate her own child! See a similar case 2 Kings 6:29 (note); and Leviticus 26:29 (note).

Verse 57

Toward her young one - and toward her children which she shall bear - There seems to be a species of tautology in the two clauses of this verse, which may be prevented by translating the last word, *shilyathah*, literally, her secondines, which is the meaning of the Arabic (*sala*), not badly understood by the Septuagint, *ἡ ἐκτὸς τῆς μήτρας*, the chorion or exterior membrane, which invests the fetus in the womb; and still better translated by Luther, the after-birth; which saying of Moses strongly marks the deepest distress, when the mother is represented as feeling the most poignant regret that her child was brought forth into such a state of suffering and death; and 2dly, that it was likely, from the favorable circumstances after the birth, that she herself should survive her inlaying. No words can more forcibly depict the miseries of those dreadful times. On this ground I see no absolute need for Kennicott's criticism, who, instead of *shilyathah*, against her secondines, reads *shelah*, and she shall boll, and translates the 56th and 57th verses as follows: "The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter. 57. And she shall boil that which cometh out from between her feet, even her children, which she shall bear, for she shall eat them, for want of all things, secretly." These words, says he, being prophetic, are fulfilled in 2 Kings 6:29, for we read there that two women of Samaria having agreed to eat their own children, one was actually boiled, where the very same word, *bashal* is used. See Kennicott's Dissertations on 1 Chronicles 11, etc., p. 421.

Verse 64

The Lord shall scatter thee among all people - How literally has this been fulfilled! The people of the Jews are scattered over every nation under heaven.

Verse 65

No ease - a trembling heart, and failing of eyes - The trembling of heart may refer to their state of continual insecurity, being, under every kind of government, proscribed, and, even under the most mild, uncertain of toleration and protection; and the failing of eyes, to their vain and ever-disappointed expectation of the Messiah.

Verse 68

And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again - That is, into another state of slavery and bondage similar to that of Egypt, out of which they had been lately brought. And there ye shall be sold, that is, be exposed to sale, or expose yourself to sale as the word *hithmaccartem* may be rendered; they were vagrants, and wished to become slaves that they might be provided with the necessaries of life. And no man shall buy you; even the Romans thought it a reproach to have a Jew for a slave, they had become so despicable to all mankind. When Jerusalem was taken by Titus, many of the captives, which were above seventeen years of age, were sent into the works in Egypt. See Josephus, Antiq., b. xii, 100:1,2, War b. vi., c. 9, s. 2; and above all, see Bp. Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies.

The first verse of the next chapter, in some of the most correct Hebrew Bibles, makes the 69th of this; and very properly, as the second verse of the following chapter begins a new subject.

This is an astonishing chapter: in it are prophecies delivered more than 3,000 years ago, and now fulfilling.

O God, how immense is thy wisdom, and how profound thy counsels! To thee alone are known all thy works from the beginning to the end. What an irrefragable proof does this chapter, compared with the past and present state of the Jewish people, afford of the truth and Divine origin of the Pentateuch!