

I The Mosaic Curses

(Deut. 28:15-69)

Reversal of Deut.
28:3-8, 10-13.

¹⁵But if you do not obey the Lord your God to observe faithfully all His commandments and laws which I enjoin upon you this day, all these curses shall come upon you and take effect:

¹⁶Cursed shall you be in the city and cursed shall you be in the country.^o

¹⁷Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

¹⁸Cursed shall be the issue of your womb and the produce of your soil, the calving of your herd and the lambing of your flock.

¹⁹Cursed shall you be in your comings and cursed shall you be in your goings.

נִדְּוִי נִדְּוִי

²⁰The Lord will let loose against you calamity, panic, and frustration in all the enterprises you undertake, so that you shall soon be utterly wiped out because of your evildoing in forsaking Me. ²¹The Lord will make pestilence cling to you, until He has put an end to you in the land which you are invading to occupy. ²²The Lord will strike you with consumption, fever, and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew; they shall hound you until you perish. ²³The skies above your head shall be copper and the earth under you iron. ²⁴The Lord will make the rain of your land dust, and sand shall drop on you from the sky, until you are wiped out.

²⁵The Lord will put you to rout before your enemies; you shall march out against them by a single road, but flee from them by many roads; and you shall become a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. ²⁶Your carcasses shall become food for all the birds of the sky and all the beasts of the earth, with none to frighten them off.

The sixth plague
of Egypt; see
Exod. 9:9-10.

²⁷The Lord will strike you with the Egyptian inflammation,^o with hemorrhoids, boil-scars, and itch, from which you shall never recover.

²⁸The Lord will strike you with madness, blindness, and dismay. ²⁹You shall grope at noon as a blind man gropes in the dark; you shall not prosper in your ventures, but shall be constantly abused and robbed, with none to give help.

Reversal of Deut.
20:5-7; cf. also
Isa. 65:21-23
where the same
images are invoked
as a source of
consolation.

נִדְּוִי נִדְּוִי

³⁰If you pay the bride-price for a wife, another man shall enjoy her. If you build a house, you shall not live in it. If you plant a vineyard, you shall not harvest it.^o

³¹Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it; your ass shall be seized in front of you, and it shall not be returned to you; your flock shall be delivered to your enemies, with none to help you. ³²Your sons and daughters shall be delivered to another people, while you look on; and your eyes shall strain for them constantly, but you shall be helpless. ³³A people you do not know shall eat up the produce of your soil and all your gains; you shall be abused and downtrodden continually, ³⁴until you are driven mad by what your eyes behold.

³⁵The Lord will afflict you at the knees and thighs with a severe inflammation, from which you shall never recover—from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head.

³⁶The Lord will drive you, and the king you have set over you, to a nation unknown to you or your fathers, where you shall serve other gods, of wood and

idolatry

W. 38-42:
agricultural
more local
character. C
1:2-8, 17-
Amos 4:6-
where these
images are
as a source
consolation

W. 47-51
relating to
enemy's i
and onsla

Vv. 38-42:
agricultural blights
more local in
character. Cf. Joel
1:2-8, 17-20 and
Amos 4:6-11,
where these
images are invoked
as a source of
consolation.

כח-ל

Vv. 47-57: curses
relating to the
enemy's invasion
and onslaught.

כח ל

cannibalism
crusade
chronicles

ibid.

stone. ³⁷You shall be a consternation, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples to which the Lord will drive you.

³⁸Though you take much seed out to the field, you shall gather in little, for the locust shall consume it. ³⁹Though you plant vineyards and till them, you shall have no wine to drink or store, for the worm shall devour them. ⁴⁰Though you have olive trees throughout your territory, you shall have no oil for anointment, for your olives shall drop off. ⁴¹Though you beget sons and daughters, they shall not remain with you, for they shall go into captivity. ⁴²The cricket shall take over all the trees and produce of your land.

⁴³The stranger in your midst shall rise above you higher and higher, while you sink lower and lower: ⁴⁴he shall be your creditor, but you shall not be his; he shall be the head and you the tail.

⁴⁵All these curses shall befall you; they shall pursue you and overtake you, until you are wiped out, because you did not heed the Lord your God and keep the commandments and laws that He enjoined upon you. ⁴⁶They shall serve as signs and proofs against you and your offspring for all time. ⁴⁷Because you would not serve the Lord your God in joy and gladness over the abundance of everything, ⁴⁸you shall have to serve—in hunger and thirst, naked and lacking everything—the enemies whom the Lord will let loose against you. He will put an iron yoke upon your neck until He has wiped you out.

⁴⁹The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, which will swoop down like the eagle—a nation whose language you do not understand, ⁵⁰a ruthless nation, that will show the old no regard and the young no mercy. ⁵¹It shall devour the offspring of your cattle and the produce of your soil, until you have been wiped out, leaving you nothing of new grain, wine, or oil, of the calving of your herds and the lambing of your flocks, until it has brought you to ruin. ⁵²It shall shut you up in all your towns throughout your land until every mighty, towering wall in which you trust has come down. And when you are shut up in all your towns throughout your land that the Lord your God has given you, ⁵³you shall eat your own issue, the flesh of your sons and daughters that the Lord your God has given you, because of the desperate straits to which your enemy shall reduce you. ⁵⁴He who is most tender and fastidious among you shall be too mean to his brother and the wife of his bosom and the children he has spared ⁵⁵to share with any of them the flesh of the children that he eats, because he has nothing else left as a result of the desperate straits to which your enemy shall reduce you in all your towns. ⁵⁶And she who is most tender and dainty among you, so tender and dainty that she would never venture to set a foot on the ground, shall begrudge the husband of her bosom, and her son and her daughter, ⁵⁷the afterbirth that issues from between her legs and the babies she bears; she shall eat them secretly, because of utter want, in the desperate straits to which your enemy shall reduce you in your towns.

⁵⁸If you fail to observe faithfully all the terms of this Teaching that are written in this book, to reverence this honored and awesome Name, the Lord your God, ⁵⁹the Lord will inflict extraordinary plagues upon you and your offspring, strange and lasting plagues, malignant and chronic diseases. ⁶⁰He will bring back upon you all the sickness of Egypt which you dreaded so, and they shall cling to you. ⁶¹Moreover, the Lord will bring upon you all the other diseases and plagues that

UZG
575, 16-
20

This verse will be invoked throughout *The Literature of Destruction* to convey a sense of unprecedented calamity.

more individualized

לִפְנֵי מִלְחָמָה

לִפְנֵי

Deut. 17:16; cf.
also Exod. 14:13.

are not mentioned in this book of Teaching, until you are wiped out.⁶² You shall be left a scant few, after having been as numerous as the stars in the skies, because you did not heed the command of the Lord your God. ⁶³And as the Lord once delighted in making you prosperous and many, so will the Lord now delight in causing you to perish and in wiping you out; you shall be torn from the land which you are about to invade and occupy.⁶⁴

⁶⁴The Lord will scatter you among all the peoples from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, whom neither you nor your ancestors have experienced. ⁶⁵Yet even among those nations you shall find no peace, nor shall your foot find a place to rest. The Lord will give you there an anguished heart and eyes that pine and a despondent spirit. ⁶⁶The life you face shall be precarious; you shall be in terror, night and day, with no assurance of survival. ⁶⁷In the morning you shall say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening you shall say, "If only it were morning!"—because of what your heart shall dread and your eyes shall see. ⁶⁸The Lord will send you back to Egypt in galleys, by a route which I told you you should not see again.⁶⁹ There you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but none will buy.

⁶⁹These are the terms of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to conclude with the Israelites in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb.

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