

Deuteronomy 28:45-48

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-28/deuteronomy-2845-48/>

Moses reminds the Israelites that the described curses will come upon them if they fail to obey the LORD. These curses will cause absolute misery and poverty in Israel.

Moses continues giving a script to Israel for a ceremony they are to perform once they have crossed over into the Promised Land. The script contains blessings for obedience, and cursings for disobedience to the covenant. This followed the ancient form of a Suzerain-vassal treaty.

This section continues the cursings that were to be stated by six tribes standing on Mount Ebal once Israel had entered the land and conquered this part of Canaan (Deuteronomy 27:13). Moses here continues the script for this ceremony, as a part of his instructions to Israel just prior to entering the land (Deuteronomy 27:1-13).

Moses now reminded His covenant people that *all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed* (v. 45). The curses in view here are those described in vv. 15-44 as well as those that follow this section. Those *curses* are spoken of as agents that God would use to carry out His divine plan of judgment against His covenant violators. Such agents would be released to punish Israel because they would *not obey the LORD their God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded them* (see v. 15). These curses are all provisions of the covenant (or contract) that outline specific consequences for breaching the agreement into which Israel had entered (Deuteronomy 26:17).

Failure to obey *His commandments and His statutes* would result in *curses* that would *become a sign and a wonder* on that generation of Israelites and their *descendants forever* (v. 46). The terms *sign* and *wonder* are a word pair (a figure of speech called a hendiadys—two words that stress one idea). It could be translated “wondrous sign.” This hendiadys is often used in Scripture to describe the LORD’s powerful intervention to deliver His people from calamities and afflictions, such as those experienced in Egypt (Deuteronomy 4:34; 6:22). In this passage, however, this word pair is used to

describe the calamities that would fall on Israel. Israel's misery and lowly status would cause people to investigate the matter, trying to understand what could have been the reason for such calamities.

All of these curses would come upon Israel because they *did not serve the LORD their God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things* (v. 47). Since the Israelites did not serve the LORD when they enjoyed His abundant blessings, they would fall into extreme poverty. Israel's ingratitude would be the cause of their defeat.

Because they chose not to serve the LORD their Sovereign by obeying Him, Israel would *serve their enemies whom the LORD would send against them* (v. 48). This would result in desperate need of the necessities of life—*in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things*. Absolute poverty thus would fall on Israel because of disobedience to God's covenantal precepts.

Israel would not only experience misery but also humiliation. The Suzerain (Ruler) God would *put an iron yoke on their neck until He had destroyed them*. A yoke is a straight bar of wood that bound two or more draft animals so that they might draw the plough effectively (Numbers 19:2; 1 Kings 19:19). In the ancient Near East, the yoke symbolized servitude to kings and gods. Just as an ox would go where he is told because of the yoke, so would Israel do as they are told. They would become servants of other nations. Therefore, Moses told the Israelites that they would be reduced to a heavy servitude that would lead to their complete destruction.

All this was set forth in a ceremony to be performed by the entire nation, that they would understand the gravity of their choice whether or not to actually walk in the ways of the covenant into which they had entered with their Suzerain God.

Biblical Text:

⁴⁵ So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the Lord your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. ⁴⁶ They shall become a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever. ⁴⁷ Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; ⁴⁸ therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in

nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you.