

Deuteronomy 28:64-68

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-28/deuteronomy-2864-68/>

Moses then described what life would be like in exile, where they would serve other gods, live in constant fear for their lives, and be sold into slavery.

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 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).

The previous section ended with the LORD stating that the Israelites would be *torn from the land* (see v. 63) as a result of their disobedience. In this section, Moses described what kind of life they could expect during their exile. First, Moses told them that the *LORD* would *scatter* them *among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth* (v. 64). Israel's exile would be worldwide, not nearby. This principle, which was given to the generation that left Egypt (Leviticus 26:33), applied also to the generation entering the Promised Land.

In these foreign lands, they would *serve other gods*, probably both forcibly and by personal choice. They might be allowed to worship their LORD, but they would not be able to gather together to worship in His presence. They would instead worship insignificant and powerless gods made of *wood and stone, which they or their fathers had not known*. They might lose their faith in the LORD because He caused them so much suffering. They may have thought that He was unable to protect them and restore them to the Promised Land. Earlier in Deuteronomy Moses had told Israel that these gods were *the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell* (Deuteronomy 4:28). But those gods would be unable to help Israel in times of trouble.

Moses further told Israel that *among those nations* they would *find no rest* (v. 65). This *rest* was connected to possession of the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 3:20) and safety from their enemies (Deuteronomy 25:19). Not having this rest resulted in a lifestyle of constant fear and uncertainty.

Also, while living in exile, *there would be no resting place for the sole of their foot*. The phrase *sole of your foot* is another reference to the Promised Land, and losing it meant that they would live in constant turmoil. Israel would find no peace or security because they would be removed from the Promised Land, the *resting place* the Suzerain (Ruler) God had given to His covenant people (Deuteronomy 12:9).

The Suzerain *LORD* would also *give Israel a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul*. In other words, the Israelites would suffer both physical ailments and deep depression, again lowering their quality of life while in exile. In Deuteronomy 2:25, the Suzerain *LORD* had promised to make all nations everywhere under heaven tremble in fear of Israel. Now Israel would tremble because, as vassals, they refused to give undivided allegiance to their Suzerain (Ruler) God. Their eyes would fail (possibly because of old age due to a long exile) as they would long eagerly for the time when God would restore them to their former prosperous life in Canaan (Jeremiah 14:6). They would *despair*.

Consequently, Israel's *life* would *hang in doubt before* them (v. 66). They would always wonder if they would live to see the next day. They would *be in dread night and day*, meaning that there would be no letup to their *dread* and that they would *have no assurance of their life*. Stated differently, an Israelite's life would always be filled with stress because they would not know what might happen to them the next day.

Such an intensely stressful situation would prompt Israel to have a desire for time to pass quickly. It would get so bad that Moses told them that *in the morning you shall say, 'Would that it were evening!' And at evening you shall say, 'Would that it were morning!'* (v. 67). This daily ritual would occur *because of the dread of your heart which you dread, and for the sight of your eyes which you will see*. The Israelites would be filled with fear and anxiety with no hope of returning to normal life when they saw the terrible conditions to which they had been subjected. They would indeed long for the day or night to be over.

In this last curse, Moses warned that *the LORD will bring you back to Egypt in ships* (v. 68). This shows to what extent the covenant blessings would be reversed if Israel disobeyed God's covenantal laws. They would never see Egypt again if they lived in obedience to their Suzerain (Ruler) God (Exodus 14:13; Deuteronomy 17:16).

He would cause Israel to return to Egypt, not by using the route of the exodus but surprisingly *in ships*. Israel's deliverance from Egypt was a miraculous and gracious act of God who, for forty years, protected them and provided for them until they reached the Promised Land. However, in this curse, Israel's deportation to Egypt would be *in ships*, meaning that they would be back in Egypt in a matter of days.

The situation would be so bad that they would *offer themselves for sale to their enemies as male and female slaves, but there would be no buyer*. The Israelites would try to sell themselves, but there would be no takers. Instead, Israel would suffer greatly at the hands of people when the *LORD* would send them back to Egypt.

Although the Israelites would be deported as slaves, they would lose their value and would not be sold for anything. The Egyptians would have such low esteem for Israel that they would not want to buy them as slaves. Therefore, they would have to work for free. They would then experience the worst kind of slavery they had ever known in their existence.

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. None of this affected God's choice of Israel to be His own. He chose Israel because of His love (Deuteronomy 4:37; 7:7-8). But it did have to do with their blessing. In order to secure God's blessing, they must walk in His ways.

Biblical Text

⁶⁴ Moreover, the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known. ⁶⁵ Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. ⁶⁶ So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you will be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life. ⁶⁷ In the morning you shall say, 'Would that it were evening!' And at evening you shall say, 'Would that it were morning!' because of the dread of your heart which you dread, and for the sight of your eyes which you will see. ⁶⁸ The Lord will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way about which I spoke to you, 'You will never see it again!' And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.