

Deuteronomy 28:7-14

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Moses continues with the series of blessings. He now tells Israel that the Suzerain God will defeat their enemies, establish Israel as a holy people to Himself, and give them a leadership position over all the peoples of the earth, provided that they obey the terms of the covenant.

The blessings/beatitudes summarized in vv. 3-6 are now spelled out in greater detail. These blessings were to be stated by six tribes standing on Mount Gerizim once Israel had entered the land and conquered this part of Canaan (Deuteronomy 27:12). 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).

This section makes it plain that the Suzerain (Ruler) God (the LORD) was the source of all Israel's blessings. This is presented using six "the LORD will/shall" statements which describe what the LORD was going to do to ensure these blessings. Israel's part was to obey the commands of the covenant. The LORD promised to provide the blessings for their obedience.

The first statement declared that *the LORD shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you* (v. 7). The Israelites would always be victorious in battle because the LORD would fight for them. The enemy might *come out against* them *one way*, implying an organized attack by a disciplined group of soldiers who are intent upon conquering Israel. But because the LORD fought for Israel, they would *flee before* them *seven ways*, implying a disorganized, chaotic retreat. This happened exactly as stated in the book of 1 Samuel where Saul and Israel's army struck down the Ammonites (1 Samuel 11:11).

Related to the fourth blessing in v. 5, the second statement stated that *the LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you* (v. 8). For the *barns* (a farm building used to store grain and other crops) to be blessed meant that the Israelites would be prosperous raising

agricultural crops in the Promised Land. In fact, they would be successful in all their undertakings, as God promised to bless *all that they put their hands to*.

God also emphasized that this was a land *your God gives you*, meaning that God had granted the land to them. God granted the land to Abraham and his descendants as a reward for Abraham's obedience in leaving Ur and his family and coming to Canaan (Genesis 13:14-16, 15:7). It was now up to this generation to go in and possess that which God had granted.

Their *barns* being filled with grain was the result of the people living in complete obedience to the Suzerain (Ruler) God. This echoes God's statement in the book of Leviticus, where the LORD told His people that if they carefully observed His covenant stipulations, He would order His blessing for them *in the sixth year* and that it would *bring forth the crop for three years* (Leviticus 25:21). This was in preparation for them to obey the command to leave the land fallow one year in seven. If they obeyed, God would ensure they had ample production to avoid hunger while allowing the land to rest.

The third statement involved the Israelites' special relationship with the Suzerain God and their special position on earth. The Suzerain LORD told them that He *will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you* (v. 9). God's election of Israel was a direct result of His oath given first to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:15-16). God made clear that He had chosen Israel because of His love for their forefathers (Deuteronomy 4:37, 7:7-8).

As a people who belonged to God, the Israelites were to be set apart and be devoted to God's service. They were to be a *holy people to Himself*. To be *holy* means to be set apart for a special purpose. God intended for Israel to demonstrate to the world that the superior path is to choose to live under His law, trusting that His ways are for our best, and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. In doing this, the nation was to be a nation of priests (Exodus 19:6).

The Israelites would enjoy the privilege of being God's treasured possession only *if they keep the commandments of the LORD their God and walk in His ways* (Exodus 19:4-6). As with the other blessings set forth in this script for the ceremony to remind the people of the provisions of God's covenant with Yahweh, this blessing was a reward for obedience. The people had agreed to keep the covenant (Deuteronomy 26:17). This ceremony would remind them of the consequences they would have for obedience or disobedience.

Because of Israel's status as the LORD's chosen people, *all the peoples of the earth* would see *that* the Israelites were *called by the name of the LORD* (v. 10). Because they were unique, a "kingdom of priests", the *peoples of the earth* would *be afraid of* them and thus not oppose them in any way. Israel would enjoy God's protection. Their esteemed status in the eyes of other nations was intended to be a testimony to them, that they might also come to know God (2 Kings 5:1-19).

The fourth statement stated that *the LORD will make you abound in prosperity* (v. 11). To make someone *abound in prosperity* is to give him or her abundant material *prosperity*. The Suzerain (Ruler) promised to give Israel a surplus in everything, including *in the offspring of their body and in the offspring of their beast and in the produce of their ground*. The Israelites would have abundant children and their cattle and the young of their flock would increase exponentially in the Promised Land, *the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them*. They would also have ample food from growing their agricultural crops, the *produce of the ground*.

In the fifth statement, the Suzerain *LORD will open for Israel His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to their land in its season and to bless all the work of their hand* (v. 12). The Canaanites worshiped Baal, the storm god, and they would use many different rituals to convince Baal to send rain upon their crops.

However, it was the LORD Himself Who controlled *His* (not Baal's) *good storehouse*, a reference to the *heavens* (sky). He would open His *storehouse* in the sky—the place where the rain is kept. Opening the heavens would *give rain* to the Israelite land so that it might yield crops in abundance. Such an abundance (surplus) would enable Israel to *lend to many nations* and they would have no need to *borrow* (Deuteronomy 15:5).

Many of the blessings from obeying God's covenant law would be natural cause-effect; a society based on love-of-neighbor would naturally prosper much greater than an exploitive society. But in this case, God promised supernatural intervention in weather patterns to add blessing to such natural consequences, if Israel obeyed His commands.

The sixth statement proclaimed that the Suzerain God would also *make Israel the head and not the tail* (v. 13), an image picturing Israel being in control among the nations (*the head*) rather than being controlled by

the nations (*the tail*). This means that the Israelite nation would occupy a position of authority among the nations in Canaan as well as the other nations surrounding them. They would rule others and would not be ruled. This again was conditional upon obedience in keeping their part in following the covenant.

The LORD would elevate Israel high above all the other nations so that they would *only be above*, and *not underneath*. There would never be a time when an obedient Israel would submit to other nations—they would only submit to their Suzerain LORD. This would be the case if Israel obeyed the covenant, as they had promised to do (Deuteronomy 26:17).

As seen in the previous verses, there was one condition to receiving this blessing—Israel must obey the terms of the covenant. All these blessings would come upon Israel if they *listen* (Heb. “*shāma*,” “to hear”) *to the commandments of the LORD their God*, referring to the Law as seen in Deuteronomy 5-26. Once they heard these commandments which Moses said *I charge you today*, they were *to observe them carefully*. This phrase *to observe them carefully* might be translated literally from the Hebrew as “to watch and to do.” Israel is to be careful to listen to God’s word, study His ways, but also to actually do what God commands. They are to both understand as well as to accomplish.

This is similar to the proposition to New Testament believers stated in Revelation. A great blessing is promised to any believer in Jesus who reads, understands, then does what God instructs.

“Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near.”

(Revelation 3:3).

The admonition in Revelation has a direct parallel to these blessings set forth for Israel in Deuteronomy. Jesus instructs New Testament believers to overcome the world, along with its rejection, even as He overcame, and promises a great blessing of reigning with Him in His kingdom to all who do so (Revelation 3:21). The book of Revelation promises great blessing for those who are faithful witnesses, and do not fear loss, rejection, or death from the world.

To emphasize the importance of complete obedience to the laws of the covenant, Moses warned the people not to *turn aside from any of the words which* Moses commanded them *today* (v. 14), *to the right or to the left*. The phrase *not to turn aside to the right or to the left* is used also in Deuteronomy 5:32 and many other places. It is a picturesque way to tell the Israelites to not waver to another path but to follow the one straight path in an unwavering manner. They are to worship the LORD and keep their part of this covenant. If they do so, they can count on God to keep His part of the agreement.

This straight path would enable Israel to serve God wholeheartedly and would preclude them from going *after other gods to serve them*. Serving and worshiping other gods is of the essence of disobedience. The Israelites had been warned numerous times in Deuteronomy against doing this (5:7, 6:14, 7:4, 8:19, 11:16, 13:2) and will be warned many times in the future (e.g., 28:36, 64; 30:17).

It is important to remember that all of these covenant provisions were a matter of consequences for choices made. None of this affected God's choice of Israel to be His people. He chose Israel to be His people based on His love for them (Deuteronomy 4:37, 7:7-8). God's love is not conditional, as His gifts are irrevocable (Romans 10:29). But His blessings are based on the consequence of our choices. These principles are also true for New Testament believers.

Biblical Text:

⁷The Lord shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways. ⁸The Lord will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you. ⁹The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. ¹⁰So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they will be afraid of you. ¹¹The Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. ¹²The Lord will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. ¹³The Lord will make

you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I charge you today, to observe *them* carefully, ¹⁴ and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.