**Deuteronomy 29:22-28**

[*https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-29/deuteronomy-2922-28/*](https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-29/deuteronomy-2922-28/)

*The LORD’s devastating judgment on the people and on the Promised Land would serve as a warning to the future generations of Israelites.*

The previous section addressed an individual or a group of people falling into idolatry and the LORD’s judgment of it, resulting in utter devastation (vv. 16-21). The present section describes a time when the *generation to come*(v. 22), meaning *your sons who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a distant land* would speak out *when they* saw *the plagues of the land and the diseases with which the LORD* *has* *afflicted it*.

When seeing all this, both native Israelites and foreigners would be puzzled about the reason for the devastation of the land of Israel. They would see that *all its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it* (v. 23). The term *brimstone* can also be translated as sulfur. It is a yellow mineral that burns with great heat. It can be found on the shore of the Dead Sea. It is often used to express the idea of punishment and destruction ([Genesis 19:24-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.24-25&t=NASB95); [Isaiah 30:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+30.33&t=NASB95); [Ezekiel 38:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+38.22&t=NASB95)). Used with *salt*, they would represent destruction of the fruitfulness of the land.

Thus, God’s judgment would be a complete reversal of His blessings. God had promised to give Israel a land flowing with milk and honey when they obeyed Him ([Deuteronomy 28:16-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+28.16-18&t=NASB95), [24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+28.24&t=NASB95), [38-40](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+28.38-40&t=NASB95)). However, when Israel fell under judgment, the land would no longer be productive or fertile. It would be *a burning waste,* meaning that it would be completely denuded of all its vegetation. Farmers would not be able to plant or grow anything on the soil. Even *grass* would not grow on it. This indicates that in addition to the natural consequences of sinking into the mire of a “strong exploit the weak” culture (as was exhibited by the surrounding nations) God would also pour on supernatural reversals. In this case, the fruitfulness of the land.

How could this happen to a land the LORD Himself called *a land flowing with milk and honey* ([Deuteronomy 6:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+6.3&t=NASB95); [11:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+11.9&t=NASB95); [26:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+26.9&t=NASB95); et al.)?

The land of Israel would thus become *like* *the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and in His wrath*. These four cities were all located in the Jordan valley. In [Genesis 19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19&t=NASB95), *Sodom and Gomorrah* were destroyed by the LORD because of the wickedness of the people:

“Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.”
([Genesis 19:24-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.24-25&t=NASB95))

Although the Genesis account does not state that *Admah* and *Zeboiim* were destroyed at this time, other verses assume they were included ([Deuteronomy 29:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+29.23&t=NASB95); [Hosea 11:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+11.8&t=NASB95)). Thus, the judgment upon Israel would be like that of those city states. The curse would render the land desolate, *unsown, and unproductive*, the opposite of “flowing with milk and honey.”

Seeing all of this devastation, *all the* *nations* that neighbored Israel would *say*, ‘*Why has the Lord done thus to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?*’ (v. 24). The question would come up in light of the overwhelming success in both conquering the Promised Land and then settling in it. Such blessings were in stark contrast to the destruction they were seeing at that time.

The answer (coming from an unnamed party) stated that the LORD judged His people *because they*[the Israelites] *forsook the covenant of the Lord, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt* (v. 25). The LORD has made it abundantly clear throughout Deuteronomy that obedience to the covenant He made with Israel *when He brought them out of the land of Egypt* would bring blessing, and disobedience would bring devastating judgment. That covenant in view here was made at Horeb (Mount Sinai) and was renewed and expanded on the plains of Moab.

The Suzerain God redeemed Israel and established a covenant relationship with them, whereby they would be His children and He would be their God ([Exodus 6:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+6.7&t=NASB95)). This additional covenant will be the same in this respect ([Deuteronomy 29:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+29.1&t=NASB95)). God sets forth quite clearly what will be the consequences for the choices of the people. Then God leaves it to them to choose.

It is important to note that God’s choice of Israel as His people was made unconditionally, because He loved them ([Deuteronomy 4:37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+4.37&t=NASB95): 7:7). The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable ([Romans 11:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.29&t=NASB95)). The Bible makes clear that Israel is, and always will be God’s people ([Romans 11:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.26&t=NASB95)). However, God’s blessing depends upon whether they keep the covenant to which they agreed. It will be their choice.

Unfortunately, future generations in Israel will refuse to live as loyal vassals to their Suzerain God. They *served and worshiped other gods*(v. 26). The word *worshiped* (Heb.*“*shāḥâ”) literally means “to bow down,” a sign of loyalty and acknowledgement of rulership. That they *bowed down* to them and offered sacrifices to pagan *gods whom they* had *not known and whom* the Suzerain God *had not allotted to them* was an act of disobedience to the first commandment in the covenant ([Deuteronomy 5:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+5.7&t=NASB95)).

As a result of their disloyalty, *the anger of the Lord burned against that land, to bring upon it every curse which is written in this book* (v. 27)*.*Israel’s wicked behavior, especially their strong desire for idolatry, would stir up God’s anger and He would bring curses on His covenant people, as written in the book of Deuteronomy. That this is stated in the past tense indicates certainty that this will transpire.

Moreover, these observers would say that the*Lord uprooted them from their land in anger and in fury and in great wrath, and cast them into another land, as it is this day* (v. 28). The verb *uprooted* (Heb.*“*nātash”) often refers to pulling a tree or a plant out of the ground. This vivid language describes the way the people of God would be captured and taken to a foreign land. They would be removed *in anger and in fury and in great* *wrath* from the Promised Land and thrown *into another land*, meaning they would be exiled to some other place. All these calamities would fall on Israel because of disobedience to God’s covenantal laws.

1 Chronicles retells the history of Judah, and includes an analysis of why Judah was exiled from the land. It is clearly stated that it was due to “their unfaithfulness” in keeping God’s covenant ([1 Chronicles 9:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Chronicles+9.1&t=NASB95)). Deuteronomy is taking place at approximately 1445 BC (see timeline in side bar ). The time of Judah’s exile to Babylon is still roughly 859 years in the future, as Judah’s exile is dated at 586 BC.

The phrase *as it is this day* should be understood from the point of view of these future observers at a time when these events had come to pass. This prophetic tense makes clear the certainty that God will visit these consequences if Israel chooses them, just as the covenant states.

**Biblical Text:**

**22Now the generation to come, your sons who rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from a distant land, when they see the plagues of the land and the diseases with which the Lord has afflicted it, will say, 23‘All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and in His wrath.’ 24All the nations will say, ‘Why has the Lord done thus to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?’ 25Then *men* will say, ‘Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. 26They went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they have not known and whom He had not allotted to them. 27Therefore, the anger of the Lord burned against that land, to bring upon it every curse which is written in this book; 28and the Lord uprooted them from their land in anger and in fury and in great wrath, and cast them into another land, as *it is* this day.’**