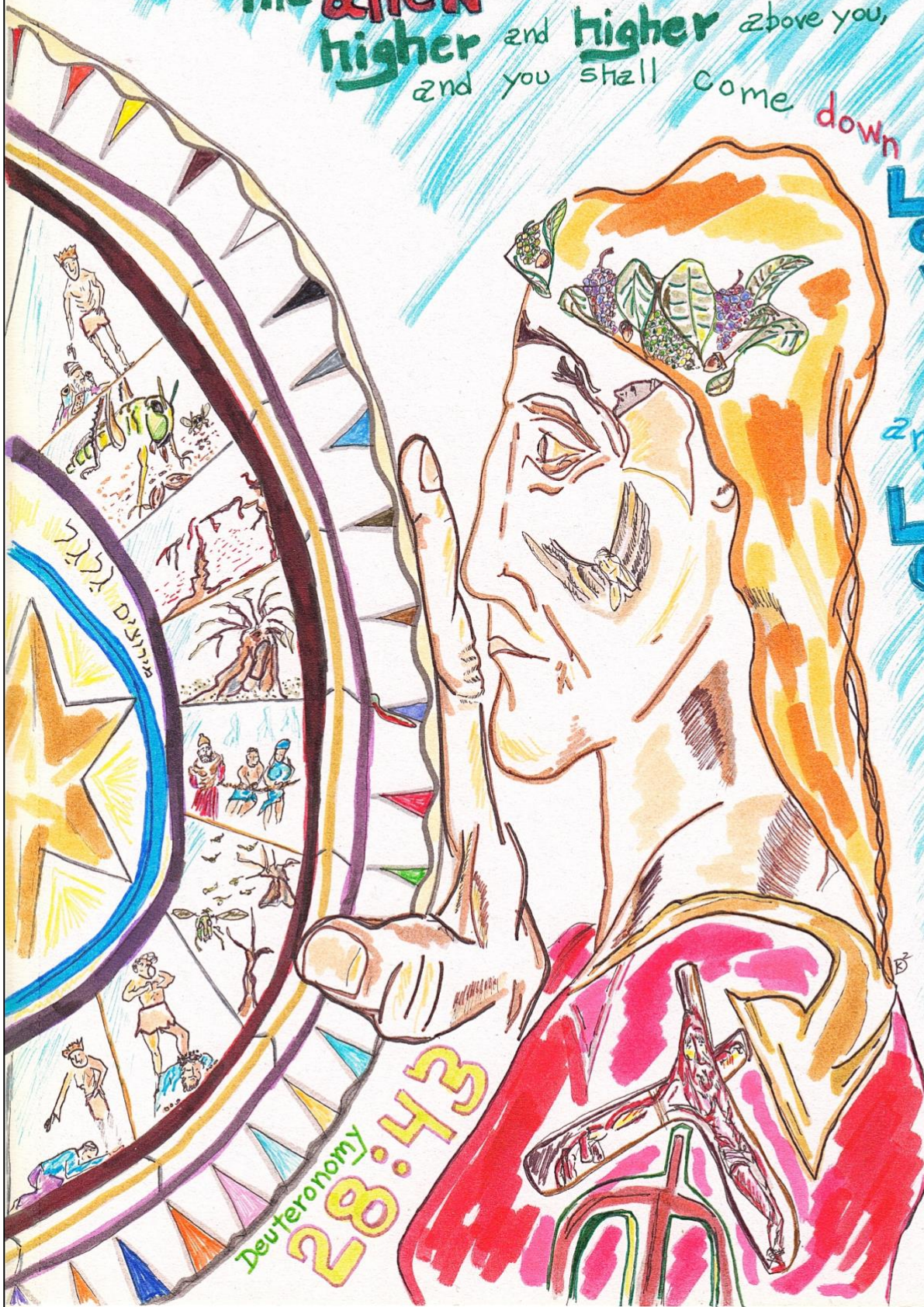


הַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ יַעֲלֶה אֵלֶיךָ מֵעֵלָה  
מֵעֵלָה; וְאַתָּה תֵרֵד, מֵטָה מֵטָה.

The **alien** who is among you shall rise  
**higher** and **higher** above you,  
and you shall come down

down

LOW  
ER  
and  
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Deuteronomy  
28:43

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**Deuteronomy 28:38-44**  
**The Blessings and the Curses, Part IV**  
**November 28, 2021**

*<sup>38</sup> “You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. <sup>39</sup> You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. <sup>40</sup> You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil; for your olives shall drop off. <sup>41</sup> You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity. <sup>42</sup> Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land. <sup>43</sup> “The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. <sup>44</sup> He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.*

The people of Israel obviously failed to uphold the words of this law, because they were sent into exile. Can anyone here disagree with that? The Lord, directly through Moses, and through the prophets, warned Israel to pay heed.

They were given all the information they needed in advance to live rightly, and all of the warnings that explained what would happen if they didn't. They had only themselves to blame when the disasters that are stated came upon them.

Eventually, the prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the exile of the people came to pass. But along with those things, came their prophesied return to the land, just as they were told would come about. In fact, the things spoken were so precise that Daniel knew exactly when to pray for restoration –

“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans— <sup>2</sup> in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” Daniel 9:1, 2

As such, Israel couldn't say, “Well, we are finally getting what we deserve by being returned to the land.” No, the best they could say is, “Well, despite our unfaithfulness, the Lord has been faithful to us.” But once they were in the land, they again neglected the Lord. Hence, the bad spoken of in the law continued after their return...

**Text Verse:** *“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Consider your ways! <sup>8</sup> Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,’ says the LORD. <sup>9</sup> ‘You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. <sup>10</sup> Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. <sup>11</sup> For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and*

*the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands.” Haggai 1:7-11*

Despite their neglect of the Lord, He sent them prophets to tell them what to do, and He promised to bless them as they did it. It's all one giant lesson that, unfortunately, still has not been learned by them.

They were exiled a second time according to everything stated in the law. They only have themselves to blame for the past two thousand years of misery. Yes, it is more than common for them to blame those woes on pretty much anything else but themselves, but that is how it is.

And now that they are back in the land, they are certain that it was because they somehow deserve it, or because of their own smarts, power, or ability. They are just like their fathers at the time of Haggai. But their unfaithfulness does not, once again, negate the faithfulness of the Lord.

I say this sermon after sermon, and it is a word to them. But it is also a word to those in the church who completely fail to get it. They dismiss Israel of today, being back in the land today, as an aberration. Or they simply reject that there is any connection between the two.

A little more study (and trust in God's word) and a little less reliance on nonsense, and they would get it right, just as Israel should. How sad that we can't. But all of this serves a purpose. And we will see that purpose, once again, in today's verses. When everything is placed in relation to Christ, it all makes sense.

Along with that is His word that puts such things into their proper perspective. There are an immense variety of tools to help us do that. One of them will be seen in the verses today, parallelism. I will explain it now, and then we will get right into the passage.

Parallelism is a type of construction found in sentences where clauses or complete sentences carry the same grammatical structure. Parallelism can help explain what is actually being conveyed when words or thoughts are otherwise difficult to pin down. Further, the syntactical similarities can be used to provide rhetorical effect.

Now, we will proceed. Great things, such as parallelism, are to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

## I. Four Points of Loss (verses 38-41)

### <sup>38</sup> **“You shall carry much seed out to the field**

The words of this verse are set in contrast to those of verse 28:11 –

“And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you.”

It takes a certain amount of grain to sow an entire field. The thought of carrying out food that could be eaten, especially at the beginning of the harvest season when supplies would be dwindling, would be tough especially if things weren't going so well.

The weight of the bag would seem heavy – “I could have a lot of meals with this...” But one cannot reap unless he first sows. And so, much seed is carried out to the field. During the time of Israel's disobedience, it would be better to just eat the grain and die...

### <sup>38</sup> (con't) **but gather little in,**

What is promised as a blessing for obedience is now stated as a curse for disobedience. In it is a word found only this one time in Scripture, translated as “consume.” It is *khasal*, coming from a primitive root meaning to eat off.

The idea being set forth in these words is that at the beginning of the cycle, the farmers would take bags and bags of seed saved from the previous crop, and they would sow it into the field. However, at the end of the harvest, there would be little to show for all of the effort. This will be the case as noted by Isaiah because of the sins of the people:

“Woe to those who join house to house; They add field to field, Till there is no place Where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land! <sup>9</sup>In my hearing the LORD of hosts said, ‘Truly, many houses shall be desolate, Great and beautiful ones, without inhabitant. <sup>10</sup>For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, And a homer of seed shall yield one ephah.’” Isaiah 5:8-10

The disastrous nature of Isaiah's words is realized in what the homer and the ephah represent. The weights are described in Ezekiel 45 –

“The ephah and the bath shall be of the same measure, so that the bath contains one-tenth of a homer, and the ephah one-tenth of a homer; their measure shall be according to the homer.” Ezekiel 45:11

If an ephah is one-tenth of a homer, and if an entire homer yields only one ephah, then there is to be such a loss of grain in the harvest season that the yield will not be enough to even sow one-tenth of the land the next year, even if nothing was used for food or selling. The output speaks of total disaster. Of the reason for the disaster in this case, Moses says...

<sup>38</sup> (con't) **for the locust shall consume it.**

The locust plague upon the land is spoken of in several places. At times, it is symbolically used to represent invading armies. But the thought of the locust is generally that of destroyed produce –

“What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten;  
And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.” Joel 1:4

The reason for the coming of the locust has already been explicitly stated here in Deuteronomy 28:15, saying, *“if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.”* That is then reflected in the words of Amos –

“I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, Your vineyards, Your fig trees, And your olive trees,  
The locust devoured them; Yet you have not returned to Me,’ Says the LORD.” Amos 4:9

The symbolism here is that of the failure of the people under the law. A great harvest indicates obedience and prosperity. As the curse is promised, and as it is said to have come upon the people, it is an overall note of Israel’s failure. The harvest season fails to produce. This is in contrast to what Christ sets forth. Even before the completion of His ministry, His sowing of seed anticipated the magnitude of His harvest –

“Then He said to them, ‘The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” Luke 10:2

“Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! <sup>36</sup>And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup>For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ <sup>38</sup>I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.” John 4:35-38

The idea of the prosperity of the harvest after first sowing one's seed (Christ in His death, and those who follow Him) is reflected in the psalms –

“Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy. <sup>6</sup> He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him.” Psalm 126:5, 6

For now, along with the lack of harvest because of the great devourer of the fields, the locust, another calamity is noted...

<sup>39</sup> **You shall plant vineyards and tend *them*,**

A vineyard is planted in the hopes of gathering grapes. It is something that requires attention and care, but it is also dependent on the right conditions to be healthy, such as the right moisture for the type of vine.

Israel is told that they will, in fact, plant vineyards. They already knew the land was favorable for this when the spies were sent into the land many years before. Upon their return, they brought a cluster of grapes as evidence.

Thus, Moses acknowledges that this will be the regular practice of the people henceforth. However, in disobeying the Lord and in the failure to adhere to His word, there will be consequences...

<sup>39</sup> (con't) **but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the *grapes*;**

The translation adds two unnecessary articles: *v'yayin lo tishteh v'lo teegor* – “and wine no you shall drink, and no you shall gather.” To say “the wine” implies there is wine, and to say “the *grapes*” implies there are grapes to gather. But both thoughts are erroneous.

There will be no grapes to gather, and thus there will be no wine to drink. The words speak of complete futility concerning the effort put forth.

In this clause is a new word, *agar*, meaning “to gather.” It will be seen here and twice in the proverbs (6:8 and 10:5). It comes from a primitive root signifying “to harvest.” There will be no such gathering because of the lack of grapes...

<sup>39</sup> (con't) **for the worms shall eat them.**

It is singular: *ki tokelenu ha'tolaat* – “for shall eat them the worm.” Because of the singular, the *tola*, or crimson grub worm, is set forth as the destroyer. It will come forth and ravage the

efforts of the people. In the prophets, the vineyard is set forth as a people group. The fruit is the product of that group, and the wine is a cultural expression such as joy, debauchery, wrath, and so on.

Though a bit lengthy, this is well-expressed in Isaiah 5 –

“Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill. <sup>2</sup> He dug it up and cleared out its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, And also made a winepress in it; So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes. <sup>3</sup> ‘And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. <sup>4</sup> What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes? <sup>5</sup> And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. <sup>6</sup> I will lay it waste; It shall not be pruned or dug, But there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds That they rain no rain on it.’ <sup>7</sup> For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.” Isaiah 5:1-7

The vineyard is Israel and Judah, the people of God. Jesus then takes this example, and shows that what the Old Covenant failed to do, He would accomplish in the giving of the New Covenant –

“Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. <sup>34</sup> Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. <sup>35</sup> And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup> Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. <sup>37</sup> Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ <sup>38</sup> But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup> So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. <sup>40</sup> “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?” <sup>41</sup> They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.” Matthew 21:33-41

Jesus’ words speak of the leaders of Israel under the law. In saying that he would give the vineyard to other vinedressers, He was not saying that the church would replace Israel. Rather, He was referring to the covenant arrangement.

Israel and Judah would be led under a new type of leader (Jeremiah 31:31) of which the Gentiles would participate in as well – sharing in the commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:12). As for “the worm,” which destroyed the vineyard, it is a picture of Christ –

“But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. <sup>7</sup>All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, <sup>8</sup>‘He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!’”  
-Psalm 22:6-8

The symbolism was clearly seen when we looked at the book of Jonah where the *tola*, or crimson grub worm, pictured Christ destroying the plant that grew as shade over Jonah’s head. The vineyard of God’s people under the law would be destroyed, but the vineyard of God’s people would remain, tended to by new dressers of the vine.

**<sup>40</sup> You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory,**

This is to be taken as an axiom. Moses has already said that the land is filled with olive trees –

“So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, <sup>11</sup>houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant...”  
-Deuteronomy 6:10, 11

This implies that the olive trees are well-established. Unlike vineyards that need a lot of attention, olive trees need some pruning and the like, but they should generally be hardy enough to produce olives once they are up and running. They are considered to be rather low-maintenance plants.

When Israel moves in, they will have olive trees, and the trees should produce accordingly. However, in their disobedience...

**<sup>40</sup> (con’t) but you shall not anoint *yourself* with the oil;**

*v’shemem lo tasuk* – “and oil no you shall anoint.” This is a new word, *suk*, meaning to anoint. It comes from a primitive root signifying “to smear over.” Hence, it is the act of anointing.

As before, there will be the hope of harvest, and the heartbreak of having none. To anoint oneself is to enjoy the luxury of the olive upon the body. It is a blessing beyond just eating, but of tending to the body in a way that both blesses the individual and excites those around as well –



“Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. <sup>3</sup>Therefore wash yourself and **anoint** yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.” Ruth 3:2, 3

Such will not be the case for disobedient Israel. And Moses explains why...

<sup>40</sup> (con't) **for your olives shall drop off.**

It is singular: *ki yishal zetekha* – “for plundered your olive.” Pretty much every translation, including the Greek, gives the sense of the olives simply failing – dropping off, casting off, and so on.

However, that might require the verb *nashal* to be used in a way not intended. As such, this may be a form of the verb *shalal*, which means “plunder,” “spoil,” “booty,” and so on.

I would prefer this, rather than them simply “dropping off” for a particular reason. If you’re still awake, and if the Lord hasn’t come for us at the end of the next verse, I will enlighten you as to why.

No matter what, there will be no anointing from the olive. In the Bible, the olive clearly evinces the idea of a witness. For example, this is said of the “two witnesses” of Revelation 11:3 who are then explained in Revelation 11:4 –

“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.” Revelation 11:4

But these two witnesses are more fully explained in Zechariah 4 –

“So I said, ‘I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. <sup>3</sup>Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.’ <sup>4</sup>So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, ‘What are these, my lord?’”

-Zechariah 4:2-4

“Then I answered and said to him, ‘What are these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?’ <sup>12</sup>And I further answered and said to him, ‘What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?’ <sup>13</sup>Then he answered me and said, ‘Do you not know what these are?’ And I said, ‘No, my lord.’”

<sup>14</sup> So he said, 'These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.'" Zechariah 4:11-14

The olive goes from the idea of being a witness, to the idea of anointing and being anointed. This then is explained in the same metaphor by Paul concerning the failure of the Old Covenant to the supremacy of the New (the Christ) covenant. This is seen in who the "witness" is that is "anointed" to convey its message.

"For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. <sup>17</sup> And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup> do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

<sup>19</sup> You will say then, 'Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.'

<sup>20</sup> Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. <sup>22</sup> Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"

-Romans 11:16-24

The words of Paul neither indicate that the Jews have been replaced by the church, nor do they indicate that there is one gospel to the church and one to Israel.

The point is that Israel continued with the law and is no longer a suitable witness to what God is doing in Christ. Christ has come, and those who received him (predominantly Gentiles) are now the witness. Someday, the matter will swing back in the other direction when Israel is brought into a right (New) covenant relationship with the Lord.

The two witnesses of Zechariah and Revelation, Enoch and Elijah it is believed, reflect this union. Enoch is not a Hebrew, Elijah is. Both testify to the work of God in Christ for all people. As I noted, a minute ago, this idea of being a witness (the olive tree) goes to the idea of anointing and being anointed (the olive oil) –

"Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, <sup>22</sup> who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee."

-2 Corinthians 1:21, 22

Israel is currently broken off as a witness, and they lack the anointing of the Spirit. All of this is seen in the curses of Deuteronomy 28 as is spoken forth by Moses. Next...

**41 You shall beget sons and daughters,**

Israel has continued on for millennia. The fact that they have testified to the truth of the words of Moses now. They will have sons and daughters. Were it not so, there would be no Israel. However, in times of disobedience, it would be quite often the case that they would be deprived of them. Moses, in advance of such times, calls out the warning...

**41 (con't) but they shall not be yours;**

The sense is wrong. In begetting children, it means that they are their children. Rather, it reads: *v'lo yihyu lak* – “and no shall be to you.” Even though they belong to those who beget them, they will not be with their begetters. It is the state of being deprived of one’s continuance. Thus, there is the sense of complete desolation in this regard. The name ends. And there is a tragic reason for this...

**41 (con't) for they shall go into captivity.**

*ki yeleku ba'shviy* – “for they shall go in the captivity.” The word “captivity” is brought alive. It has become the foe of the people, carrying away their sons and daughters. The chances of ever returning to one’s family, home, city, and country are infinitesimally small, and they grow smaller with each day that passes. As Moses has already said of this earlier –

“Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, and your eyes shall look and fail with longing for them all day long; and there shall be no strength in your hand.” Deuteronomy 28:32

Moses reaffirmed and explained what he has already stated. Israel cannot say they were not warned. As far as this verse, the idea of begetting sons in a new way, and with a new and unbreakable bond of sonship is found in Christ through the New Covenant –

“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup> He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup> But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:10-13

“And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all, <sup>50</sup> nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die

for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.’ <sup>51</sup> Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.” John 11:49-52

The number of verses that speak of this unbreakable and eternal bond between a Parent and His children is abundant. What Israel could not be assured of, meaning keeping their children under the Mosaic code, was only reflective of their state as children of God.

On the other hand, what God has done in Christ in the New Covenant is reflective of our eternal security in the arms of our heavenly Father. Thank God for Jesus.

As you are still awake (well, most of you), and as the Lord has obviously not come for us, and because we have now completed this verse, I promised you an explanation of the verb concerning the olives noted in the previous verse. Why do I think it is *shalal*, plundered, and not *nashal*, to drop off? The reason is the parallelism used by Moses in the verses we have so far looked at –

- a. You shall carry much seed out to the field
- b. but gather little in
- c. for the locust shall consume it

- a. You shall plant vineyards and tend them
- b. but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes
- c. for the worms shall eat them

- a. You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory
- b. but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil
- c. for your olives shall drop off (rather: your olive shall be plundered)

- a. You shall beget sons and daughters
- b. but they shall not be yours
- c. for they shall go into captivity

In seeing the results of the four actions, it is apparent that the word “plundered” is most probable. Each has had an external action taken against it – the locust consumes, the worm eats, your olive is plundered, your children go in the captivity. Therefore, the word *shalal* is probably the best choice for the Hebrew.

It would be improper to be dogmatic about this, but the parallelism calls out for this rendering. In this, you can see the importance of looking at such passages in this light. When you study

the word, look for these internal cues, and you will be in the sweet spot of at least knowing that you may have a particular insight not readily seen in a cursory reading of what is before you.

Of these past four verses, Micah calls out the curses of all four of them to the people, but in a different order: children, grain (sowing), olives, and then the produce of the vine –

“You shall eat, but not be satisfied; Hunger shall be in your midst. You may carry some away, but shall not save them; And what you do rescue I will give over to the sword. <sup>15</sup> You shall sow, but not reap; You shall tread the olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; And make sweet wine, but not drink wine.” Micah 6:14, 15

The sad state of not attending to the law, even after being warned through the prophets, is the lot of Israel. Someday, they will see the futility of the law and understand their need for Christ Jesus who has set before redeemed man a new and better hope.

*Here am I and the children God has given Me  
Because of the work I accomplished before Him  
We are united as an eternal family  
When before, such a state seemed tenuous, even grim*

*What the law could never do because it was weak  
I accomplished with My own glorious right hand  
For any who will an eternal relationship seek  
Come to Me and it shall be so; the union shall stand*

*Here am I and the children God has given Me  
Because I prevailed over the law that was set against you  
When they nailed My body to that tree  
It was in fulfillment of what I was sent to do*

*Come and partake of the wonder of this family  
Come and be My children; yes, come unto Me*

## **II. Lower and Lower (Verses 42-44)**

The words of our three final verses today are pretty much the opposite of the blessings stated in verses 12 and 13 –

“The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but

you shall not borrow. <sup>13</sup> And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them.”

-Deuteronomy 28:12, 13

For now, instead of the Lord opening His good treasure from the heavens, He will open His stores of destroying insects...

**<sup>42</sup> Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land.**

The translation is deficient for several reasons: *kal etsekha uperi admatekha yeyaresh ha'tslatsal* – “Every tree yours, and fruit your ground shall possess the cricket.” The word tree is singular, the word “land” is better rendered as “ground,” and the word “locusts” is both singular (with an article), and it is a different creature than what was just seen in verse 38. It is *ha'tslatsal*, or “the cricket.”

It is a new word, *tslatsal*, that comes as a reduplication of the word *tsalal*, meaning to tingle or quiver. By reduplicating it, one gets the sense of whirring or chirping. This word will be seen six times and the other uses will help give the sense – cymbals, fishing spears (harpoons which rattle together), and whirring wings (Isaiah 18:1).

I chose “cricket,” to disassociate it from the locust, but it could be some insect that buzzes, like flies. Whatever they are, they are identifiable by their sound, and they would consume the vegetation readily. Because the word also means “cymbals,” one would think “cricket” to be a good choice.

As far as what they do, the word used is *yarash*. It signifies to possess or inherit. As such, it means that it has taken over the trees and fruit as a possession. There are other words that signify “consume,” and so the thought may be that they come and eat the fruit to the point it is useless without actually eating it all.

As far as trees, there are types of mole crickets that can damage root systems. Hence, I am still going with them as the offender. As I am not a renowned entomologist, please do not buzz with excitement over my translation. In the end, it may be moth-eaten or swatted down like a fly.

What seems obvious is that, like the trees and fruit of Israel when the people did not heed the Lord’s words, man under law is simply unable to flourish or to bear proper fruit. Paul says just this in Romans 7 –

“Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. <sup>5</sup> For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.”

-Romans 7:4, 5

Next, in contrast to being “above only, and not beneath,” as it said in verse 13, Moses says...

<sup>43</sup> **“The alien who *is* among you shall rise higher and higher above you,**

*ha’ger asher b’qirbekha yaaleh alekha malah maelah* – “The stranger who in your midst shall rise above you, upwards, upwards.” In verse 13, Moses’ words were simply put and not superlative. When they were right with the Lord, Israel would be above, but they would not consider themselves overly exalted.

In other words, no matter how “above” they were in relation to others, they were always under the Lord. But Moses’ words now are in the superlative. In not putting the Lord first above them, the stranger who was in their midst – meaning right among them – would be exalted above them and continue to rise above them. At the same time...

<sup>43</sup> (con’t) **and you shall come down lower and lower.**

*v’atah tered matah matah* – “and you shall go down, lower, lower.” Again, Moses speaks in the superlative. Israel won’t just go down, but they will continue to go down. There will be no hope of ever rising from their undignified state. One cannot first help but think of Christ’s contrast to this –

“(Now this, ‘He ascended’—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” Ephesians 4:9, 10

Christ voluntarily placed Himself under the law. In doing so, He descended even to death. But in His fulfillment of the law, He has ascended to the highest point of all. For those in Christ, the same is true. To be “in” Christ (in Your midst, O God), means to be raised with Him –

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:4-6

In contrast to them are those who hold to the law for their justification, trusting in “self,” because the law is of deeds. As Jesus says, “Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?” (Matthew 23:33).

Though speaking to the leaders of the law, being leaders implies having followers. If you reject Christ, you, by default have placed your hope elsewhere. The only way for Israel to get out of the bind they are in is to come to the One who can raise them to Himself.

And finally, instead of lending to other nations and being the head, as stated in the blessings, the curse will bring the opposite...

**<sup>44</sup> He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him;**

The word “he” is in the emphatic position. “HE shall lend to you.” The one who was in the midst of the people, and who was the borrower, is the one who now has risen above Israel, and he is the lender.

So much will this be the case that there is no time when Israel would lend to him. Whatever Israel possessed, it would be unneeded by the stranger who had risen above them. Likewise...

**\*<sup>44</sup> (fin) he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.**

Again, “he” is in the emphatic position, “HE shall be the head.” It is an embarrassment of the highest sense. The great and exalted nation of the Lord has become the very tail of everything that is going on because they have rejected the Lord who established them.

The words of this final verse seem to recall the words of Isaiah –

“For the people do not turn to Him who strikes them, Nor do they seek the LORD of hosts. <sup>14</sup> Therefore the LORD will cut off head and tail from Israel, Palm branch and bulrush in one day. <sup>15</sup> The elder and honorable, he is the head; The prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail. <sup>16</sup> For the leaders of this people cause them to err, And those who are led by them are destroyed.” Isaiah 9:13-16

Israel was promised to be the head, but in not seeking the Lord, they would be the tail. And even the head of Israel, its leaders, would be a part of the tail. In failing to come to Christ and remaining under law, one can only expect this position, and the fate of being cut off.

In contrast to this is Christ, who fulfilled the law, He is now the Head. It is a term used of Him repeatedly in the epistles, such as –



“And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” Colossians 1:18

As such, those who are in Christ, even though once strangers to the covenants, are raised to an exalted position in Him.

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup> that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:11-13

This is what it means to be a part of what God has done in Christ, or to reject what He has done in Him. The law is a tutor. It was given as such, and it was never to be considered a means to an end, except as it is fulfilled in Christ.

However, Israel is responsible to this law until they are willing to exalt the One to whom the honor of this law belongs. It is only in Messiah that a true and right understanding of what it means to be right with God is realized.

God promised the covenant blessings, and He was faithful to provide them as long as Israel was living even remotely in accord with what they were commanded. And God is just in bringing upon them the curses when they are not.

All of this is a lengthy lesson for the world to read about and then to choose what is good and right. The law is good and holy, but it cannot make man – who is already infected with sin – good and holy. But its fulfillment can. Thank God for Jesus who lived it out, died under it, and established a new and better hope for us through His shed blood.

And thank God for Jesus who proved it by coming out of that tomb and giving us an everlasting hope. The contrast is made, and it is complete – the law or grace. Choose wisely. Christ has done it all for you, if you will just reach out to Him.

And remember to pray for Israel who is the subject of these verses, in the sense that they are obligated to what is said until they get it right. Until they do, they will have many woes to go through, and many will never see the good that God has prepared for them. Pray for their eyes to be opened when you pray for the lost in your own life.

**Closing Verse:** *“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; <sup>31</sup> but Israel, pursuing the law of*

*righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. <sup>32</sup> Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law.” Romans 9:30-32*

**Next Week:** Deuteronomy 28:45-51 *More bad for Israel here in these verses, and that ain't no jive...* (The Blessings and the Curses, Part V) (81<sup>st</sup> Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **The Blessings and the Curses, Part IV**

“You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in  
-----for the locust shall consume it

You shall plant vineyards and them you shall tend  
But you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes  
For the worms shall eat them, this shall be their end

You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory  
Hoping for a great crop  
But you shall not anoint yourself with the oil  
For off shall your olives drop

You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours  
For they shall go into captivity at My hand  
Locusts shall consume all your trees  
And the produce of your land

“The alien who is among you shall rise  
Higher and higher above you  
And you shall come down lower and lower  
Because you were neither faithful nor true

He shall lend to you  
But you shall not lend to him, your finances shall fail  
He shall be the head  
And you shall be the tail

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word  
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You

May we carefully heed each thing we have heard  
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone  
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise  
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown  
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...