

## DEUTERONOMY

### Lesson 45 - Chapter 32 Continued

Last week we began our study of this so-called Song of Moses that forms the basis for Deuteronomy chapter 32. This work is very deep; it explains principles that are practical and prophetic, revealed and mysterious. It explains matters in a duality (meaning from two simultaneous perspectives): the perspective of physical earthly manifestations that mankind can know and sense and experience, and also the perspective of the spiritual heavenly manifestations that are invisible and largely unknowable to men.

Indeed verses 1 – 43 are a song; they are a poem that was to be set to music and sung and remembered as a song by all Israelites. This is a song that Yehoveh told Moses to write to be a witness AGAINST Israel when, in future times, Israel would fall away from God (with the result that Israel would suffer calamity and exile from their precious Promised Land).

This song is a warning, a hope, a condemnation and a pathway to redemption for God's people. And as we discussed recently it is written well in advance of its predictions coming to pass so that the people of Israel will fully understand that their destruction and their exile was not serendipity or fate; it was also not because God was unfaithful to them or that He was unable to defend them or that the enemy nations that wanted to conquer Israel were stronger or had more powerful gods than Yehoveh. Rather it is that Israel abandoned the Lord and what is happening to them is of His direct intervention. Israel is suffering God's divine wrath even though it might appear on the surface as though it was merely the evil decisions of surrounding nations.

Let me also point out that it has been and always will be gentiles (gentile nations) that do evil upon Israel. I've heard it implied that the Lord's use of gentiles to punish Israel is proof in itself that He now values gentiles (the Church, specifically) above Israel; or that the rest of the world has now been placed on a level playing field with Israel. In fact as we'll see in this song it is the evil NATURE of these gentile nations that God is harnessing for His own purpose, and that purpose is to punish His people the Hebrews. The irony is rich: since these nations are inherently wicked the Lord will in turn punish these same gentile nations for their wickedness and their terrible treatment of Israel that resulted.

This presents me with a perfect opportunity to explain what is happening today with Israel and the Middle East; it is nothing short of God working out His predetermined, pre-announced plan

of redemption. I chuckle (a little evil chuckle, I suppose) each time I view one of the countless news pieces or hear another politician or statesman or pundit explain why the Middle East is so chaotic and why his plan to salvage it will work when none other has. Even a goodly portion of the church chooses to endlessly “work towards peace and reconciliation” between the Israelis and the Palestinians, the Israelis and the Syrians, the Israelis and the Egyptians, the Israelis and the Jordanians, the Israelis and the Lebanese, the Israelis and the Saudis.....on and on. But always it is the Israelis and somebody. So the general worldwide belief is that it MUST be the Jews who are the problem and in a way entirely different from what they are thinking, they’re right!

Of course for them the problem with the Jews is that they have dared to exist; and especially in a place that these gentile nations don’t want them: the ancient Jewish homeland of Israel.

We have watched every sort of plan designed to bring peace to the region dissolve into carnage in no time at all. The DOA Roadmap to Peace of our previous American Presidential Administration naturally went no where; the current Administration has a new plan that is basically blame Israel for everything that happens and make friends with the Islamic enemies that surround Israel. The situation isn’t on its way to being solved; it’s just different than it was 5 years ago. Every UN plan to partition Israel or give away its land, compromise its security, give more aid, impose its will militarily, or win the hearts and minds of the fractured Muslim religion to convince them that peace is a better choice leaves countless more dead in its wake. Intractable is the word most often used to describe the Middle East; hopeless runs a close second, and insane probably next.

The bottom line is this: outside of believing God’s Word there is no context for understanding the Middle East. Outside of believing Yehoveh who created the nations and set mysterious divine beings (*benei elohim*) over them, but set Israel apart from the nations for Himself, there is no way to comprehend the source of the problem and how it will all play out. It is amazing that with the hundreds of billions of dollars thrown at the problem, the millions of lives sacrificed and destroyed, and the best minds on earth employed to strategize and formulate a solution that the ONE thing that no nation (including Israel) will consult for a solution is the Word of God who created the nations.

That pattern of mankind refusing to consult the Creator on matters He alone controls and determines is an ancient one and all throughout history no one has been exempt from this temptation; a temptation that the God of Israel warns Israel to be aware of and to avoid. This warning is found in the Song of Moses.

We ended at verse 11 last week. Let’s reread Deuteronomy 32 beginning with verse 12.

### RE-READ DEUTERONOMY 32:12 – end

At this point after the Song has spoken so lovingly of God's protection and nurturing of Israel, and that is this display of amazing divine love that makes Israel's decision to give their worship and adoration to other gods all the more egregious, the Lord reminds them that it was He who has been guiding them from the beginning and it certainly wasn't with the assistance of some other divinity or god. As Hosea 13:4 says:

**<sup>CJB</sup> Hosea 13:4 *Still, I am ADONAI your God, from the land of Egypt; and you don't know any God but me or, other than me, any Savior. <sup>5</sup> I knew you in the desert, in a land of terrible drought.***

In other words there is no rational reason for Israel to even consider the help of an alternative spiritual source; the glory for Israel's deliverance should be Yehoveh's because they certainly got no help from any of these other gods as they were rescued from Egypt and placed into a wonderful land. Verse 13 says that it was Yehoveh who set Israel upon the high places of the earth (the high places refer to the central highlands of Israel). It was Yehoveh who sustained Israel and gave them all that they needed even from the most unlikely sources like honey from the rocks and olive oil from the cracks in the rocks. It was Yehoveh who caused Israel's flocks to grow and to produce milk and meat, and who ordered the fields to overflow with the finest wheat and foaming wine for His people. Actually what this phrase about wine says is "foaming grape-blood". Grape-blood or blood of the grape is an idiom for wine. In no way is wine compared to blood nor does it symbolize blood; wine is for joy, blood is for atonement. Foaming just enforces that what is being discussed is wine (alcoholic drink), not straight grape juice, because as grapes ferment into wine the vat foams and bubbles.

At verse 15 the focus shifts again; it leaves behind the theme of God's blessing and care for Israel and instead speaks of Israel's disloyalty towards such a good and benevolent God. Israel has grown fat and satisfied; they are quite self-assured, they feel they are without need, and in no time they forgot that the sole source of all they're shalom and abundance was the Lord God. Yet instead of thanking Him for their wonderful existence they credit the various deities that their neighbors bow down to (and were customary for the era).

How often have we heard sermons and participated in Bible studies where we encounter this destructive tendency of the Hebrews to divide their loyalties and include other gods; and we shake our heads in mock disgust agreeing with the prophets who tell us of this apostasy. Too often we are told that THIS is why God abandoned and rejected His set-apart people and gave their inheritance to the gentile church. Let me set the record straight; first the Lord God has not rejected His people and instead given His attention and favor to the church. Second we Believers are almost universally guilty of doing exactly the same thing that Israel is being

indicted for, are we not? Every time we pat ourselves on the back for our good fortune; credit our excellent marketing plan or new facilities for growing our synagogue or church; or whenever we place our own desires and wants and traditions ahead of what we know full well is God's way we divide our loyalties and give credit and glory to other gods.

The strange word at the outset of verse 15, **Yeshurun**, is Hebrew for "the upright"; it is an epithet for Israel. Israel forsook their Creator and turned away from the Rock. But the last couple of words of this verse are even more interesting and the English translations cover over a fascinating use of Hebrew language. Most Bibles will say as our CJB says, "And he (Israel) spurned the Rock of his salvation" or "he (Israel) condemned the Rock of his salvation". What it actually says in the original Hebrew is that "Israel spurned the Rock of Yeshua". That's right: the words "His Salvation" (God's Salvation) are in Hebrew "Yeshua", the given Hebrew name of our Messiah. If only the church would be willing to understand that the name "Jesus" is but an English translation of the Hebrew name Yeshua, so much more meaning would be added to Holy Scripture passages that are largely glossed over.

Yet when this startling and unexpected revelation happens here in verse 15 (whereby the Rock is called Yeshua) then it opens up a can of worms that many theologians would just as soon be left sealed. There is utterly no doubt that this is a reference to Jesus Christ, Messiah Yeshua, the Rock of our Salvation. Remembering that this speaks of a future time far from the time of Deuteronomy, we are told that Israel will spurn and even condemn the salvation that God provides for them.

I've mentioned a few times that Biblical prophecies are usually not one-time events. It has long been recognized by Bible scholars that most prophecies happen, and then happen again at a later time. The simplest example is of Israel being exiled not once but 3 times. Israel falling to idolatry, being restored, and then doing it all over again is infamous. Even the end-times saga of the anti-God (the Anti-Christ) entering the Holy Temple and setting up an image of himself and demanding that it be worshipped has already happened in Israelite history; but it will also happen again at time even future to us. The first time it was the Syrian Governor Antiochus Epiphanies around 167 B.C.; his army captured Jerusalem and then he established himself as a god in the Holy Temple. We read about this in the books of the Maccabees, and we also read of how the Jewish rebels led by Judah the Maccabee retook the Temple some years later, cleansed it, and relit the Golden Menorah. This event is celebrated with a religious festival that even Messiah acknowledged (Hannukah) and that fact is recorded in the New Testament Gospels. Hannukah is also called the Feast of Dedication (or better, re-dedication) because it was all about the rededication of the Temple to the God of Israel.

The point is that while YHWH would save Israel on several occasions in the centuries that followed, the SAVIOR Yeshua would be yet another manifestation of the prophesy about **Yeshurun** contained within the Song of Moses. Therefore we need to pay very close attention to what is about to come in the next verses of chapter 32 because it is all too easy for we

modern-day Believers (so far removed in time from when this Song was written) to forget that just as we are already redeemed by the grace of God, it was the same for Israel. This song was NOT written or intended for un-redeemed people; God was addressing it to the people He had redeemed from Egypt 40 years earlier, and they remained redeemed. The Israelites who would apostize and fall away from God in the coming years after Moses' death (as this song predicts) were also part of the redeemed. So please grasp that this song is not talking to pagans or to seekers; it is speaking to the redeemed of the Lord. In times past it was directed only towards Israel but as I have shown you, the Biblical patterns and principles never change. So since about 30 A.D. the redeemed of God include all the disciples of Jesus; you and me.

Verse 16 begins to explain with a little more detail exactly what the concept of "abandoning God" amounts to, just as at the beginning of this song we got some detail of exactly what "loving God" means in God's eyes. Let me say it again so that there is no mistake: only those who HAVE God can ABANDON God (you can't let go of something you've never had). Pagans and seekers are never accused of abandoning God because they never had Him in the first place. Those who have God are the redeemed. And the first step towards the abandoning of God is to incorporate "alien things" in our lives: things that have no place in the redeemed lifestyle of a Believer. Here in verse 16 the reference was more specifically to the universal cultural practices of that day that included burning incense and praying to foreign gods, or owning wooden or stone idols; but that's not all. It also says Israel provoked Him (meaning they angered God) with abominations. What are abominations? In Hebrew the word is **to'evah** and it means consorting with any unusually unclean thing that the Torah has told the Israelites are not for them. It is referring to the use of unclean foods, unclean sacrifices, unclean sexual activity, the improper mixing of seeds or animals, the improper mixing of threads in a garment, homosexuality, and so on. Recall that particularly in Exodus and Leviticus (but in the other books of Torah as well) that there were certain sins that were considered extraordinarily bad in Yehoveh's eyes and these were labeled as abominations.

The Song goes on to explain that they also sacrificed to demons, non-gods, and gods they had not known; even new gods who had only come recently (gods that Israel's patriarchs and ancestors had not paid homage to). This is not a list of parallel terms for false gods; this is a list of alien things to which Israel wrongly made sacrifices. I find the list most informative because it includes a number of kinds of gods (if you would). The list includes demons, which are certainly not figments of peoples' imaginations. The subject of Demons is long and complex one and we'll not address that just yet. But know that these are real spiritual entities that by definition oppose God. They are evil spiritual entities and we read of Yeshua Himself dealing with these evil spirits on more than one occasion. Really, though, even the term "demon" is not quite right here. The Hebrew word used is **shed**. And it generally refers to spirits of the dead. We'll find reference in the Bible to the **shedim** of **Sheol**, the spirits from the place of the dead. I'm not suggesting that this ONLY refers to evil spirits as being the spirits of dead people; but the whole idea is that since death is the ultimate uncleanness, to deal with a spirit of the dead is about the worst sort of consort with an evil entity that can be imagined.

Now let me pause here for just a moment; the practice of consulting the spirits of the dead is currently rampant and popular enough that it wouldn't surprise me if someone here had a family member who thought it profitable to go to a spiritual medium and try to contact the spirit of a dearly departed family member. We have entire TV programs, now, devoted to those who do all they can to commune with the spirits of the dead and by all accounts some are successful. This is EXACTLY what is being talked about here in verse 17 and it is not humorous and it is not to be undertaken by Believers. Don't ever be involved with such a thing as the Lord finds it among the most offensive things you can do, and He counts it as your having abandoned Him in favor of that spirit of death.

The next term we encounter is "non-gods" but it is more literally translated as "no-gods" (*lo-elohim*). This is referring to the figments of people's fertile imaginations (or better, fertile evil inclinations). They think they're dealing with a god or some kind of spiritual being but they are not; they are simply confusing their own perverted thoughts with reality. Then there is a kind of spiritual entity with which the Hebrews might apostatize and worship called "gods they had never known"; these are foreign gods that had nothing to do with Israel. And finally, as one commentator put it, there is this kind of god who is recent; or to use an American vernacular they are gods-come-lately. I'll not pretend to know with absolute certainty all the grizzly details surrounding these spiritual entities that are real, or the spiritual fantasies that don't actually exist. However as we have learned from Job, Daniel, and other passages in the Bible there are mysterious divine beings (*benei elohim*) that have been created by Yehoveh and placed in authority over the various nations and their associated land holdings. Though they are not fully independent beings, nor are they self-created, some obviously have turned against God and do NOT do His will. There is much thought going back thousands of years among the Hebrew sages that some of these divine beings (who must have had tremendous power at their disposal) allowed themselves to be taken for gods and wanted to be worshipped; and it would be easy to see how pagans especially could view these "sons of God" as actual gods rather than as subservient spiritual beings.

Yet there is also an implication of territoriality here and of course we know that it was common among the ancients to think that ALL gods were territorial; and we're told explicitly in Genesis that the Lord set "sons of God" (*benei elohim*) over the various nations (the lone exception being Israel). So while these divine beings are in no way real gods they do exist, they are territorial by definition, and some of them may prey on peoples' superstitions and evil inclinations and allow themselves to be worshipped as gods. We find several instances in the OT and NT of angels warning folks NOT to worship them (even though their appearance and their powers must have been awesome). Even the Apostles warned against doing the same towards them after they had performed some kind of miracle and people instinctively fell down before them overwhelmed. So to think that one of these "sons of God" who presided over some nation or another preferred to be taken for the god of that nation, rather than as a servant of the Lord, is not a stretch.

Then the song returns in verse 18 to accuse Israel of a very unnatural thing: to forget the one who gave them life. It was the Rock who created them and the Rock who brought them to the Promised Land. It speaks of God who fathered them, but also God who gave them birth. It makes God the mother and the father of Israel. Can you imagine forgetting who your birth parents are? Can you imagine rejecting them outright and giving the credit for your very existence to someone else? Therefore in addition to everything else that Israel has done this means that the Israelites are also breaking the Commandment to honor their father and mother (who from a spiritual standpoint is Yehoveh). And recall that the penalty for dishonoring your parents is the most severe: death.

Thus begins a section of the Song of Moses with the most dreadful implications; it speaks of a redeemed people who have made the decision to abandon their Redeemer, and in response God's decision is to turn them over to evil. Let me put that in more modern terms: they are walking away from their salvation. And let me be very clear; this is a salvation that was already theirs and one they were already enjoying. The problem was that in the midst of their salvation they decided to share themselves with abominations. In addition to their union with God they brought themselves into union with evil, unclean things. Did they honestly think that God would remain in union with THEM under such circumstances? Apparently so. And how many of us honestly believe that we can pray the prayer of salvation, call on the name of the Jesus, and then participate in all kinds of abominations; that we can come into union with all sorts of unclean things that we know we should not and that the Lord will but wink and look the other way. <sup>CJB</sup> **Matthew 7:22 *On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?'<sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!***

Verse 19 says it straightaway: for abandoning Me I will scorn my sons and daughters, says the Father. I will hide my face from them. Face is *panim* in Hebrew, and it is an idiom; it means face in the sense of "presence". God will remove His presence from His people. Where is God's face (His presence) in His people, today? We are told that the presence of God that is with us is the ***Ruach HaKodesh***, the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is in us then by definition God is present with us. If the Holy Spirit is NOT present **in** us then by definition God is NOT present **with** us. And He says now that I have removed my presence from My people let's just see what becomes of them. This is a rhetorical statement of course (God obviously knows what will happen). It means that since these people think they know so much, and think that all their blessings have come from another source anyway, it's going to be a rather large shock to them when God's presence, protection, and blessings that have become so taken for granted that they are now worthless to them are pulled away. And of course this same pattern and idea is well expressed in the NT verses I just read in Matthew 7 where the utterly shocked people (who were in their own minds safe and sound Believers) hear Yeshua tell them that despite the fact that they openly professed that He was Messiah, even invoking His name to do some works, they were actually "workers of lawlessness" (they didn't follow God's laws) and therefore Yeshua disavowed them. Let me be clear: these people thought that they could pray

the prayer, talk the talk, live among the community of Believers but then go along as they please with no regard to God's commandments (that is the meaning, of course, of lawlessness). As we saw earlier such a thing as this is regarded by God as abandoning Him. Folks this isn't allegory; it also isn't my rules, it is merely what Holy Scripture says. It doesn't matter to Yehoveh that WE don't think we abandoned Him when we added these evil things to our lives, and when we decided to come into union with unclean things that He has declared forbidden for us. The Lord sets up the definitions and boundaries; it's not a matter of negotiation. Freedom in the Lord is not freedom to be disobedient or freedom to bring His presence (that resides within us) into contact with sin and defilement. To this matter the Apostle Paul speaks over and over.....

As a consequence of Israel's unfaithfulness to Yehoveh, God resolves to discipline Israel by removing His protection and then subjecting them to attack from enemies and to all sorts of natural disasters. The Lord is reversing the Holy War protocol. Instead of Israel attacking and winning with God paving the way, they will be attacked and lose because He isn't in it. Instead of abiding in safety and shalom in the land of their rest, Israel will be sent back to the land of their servitude under place under the authority of a cruel master.

Verse 21 makes a word play to make a point. It says that since Israel vexed God (aroused His jealousy) by abandoning Him and turning their affections to **lo-elohim** (non-gods), He will now vex them by removing His presence and turning them over to a **lo-ammi** (a non-people). In other words God will punish Israel in like kind. The gods Israel turned to were not spirit beings loyal to Yehoveh, so He will turn Israel over to a conquering people who are not loyal to Yehoveh. The term "non-people" is perhaps better understood in our modern vernacular by saying, **a people not mine**. A non-people are gentiles in this sense, especially in that era. The **ammi** (people) were the Israelites, while the **lo-ammi** (non-people) was everybody else. So it's not necessarily a particular nation (like Edom, or Canaan, or the Hittites) were being referred to as the non-people in question, its just gentiles in general.

It is in the writings of the prophets from centuries later that we read of this prophetic warning finally coming about. Turn you Bibles to the book of Hosea. We'll only spend a few minutes today with this.

### READ HOSEA 1:1 – 2:3

Hosea lived and wrote during the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Israel had been a divided nation (since the death of King Solomon) for about 175 –200 years. There were two Kingdoms now where the tribes of Israel lived, the Northern and the Southern. The Northern Kingdom most Bibles call "Israel", although that is really a little off the mark. It was actually called Ephraim or Ephraim-Israel because 10 Israelite tribes lived there and Ephraim was the ruling



tribe. The Southern Kingdom was called Judah because of the 2 tribes that lived there (Benjamin and Judah); Judah was the larger and more powerful ruling tribe.

Ephraim-Israel was a political disaster area; it had a whole series of evil kings that led the people into every kind of apostasy. They even reached the point where (much as it is with Israel today) a goodly portion of the population (and their leadership) desired to no longer be a people set apart for God but instead to be a people that looked and acted very much like their neighbors. Judah was only moderately better; at least the dynasty of David had continued to rule and in general Judah did display a desire to remain the people of God (despite their ongoing flirtations with idolatry).

Hosea was warning the Hebrew people (specifically the Northern Kingdom) that the Lord was going to finally bring about what He had threatened in the Song of Moses. And sure enough in the book of Hosea we see this illustration of God's reasons for bringing His wrath upon Ephraim-Israel metaphorically acted out in His instructions to His prophet Hosea to marry a whore (this equates to God's marriage-like union to Ephraim-Israel who was playing the whore with its pagan neighbors the illegitimate lover). Then this whore-wife of Hosea produces 3 children: **Yizre'el** (meaning God sows), **Lo-Ruchamah** (meaning no pity, no mercy), and **Lo-Ammi** (meaning not my people). The idea is that in the Song of Moses God says that the whoring of Israel will bring about **God sowing** calamity among Israel (**Yizre'el**), and that He will show **no mercy** on His people (**lo-ruchamah**), and Ephraim-Israel will be turned over to a **non-people** resulting in they're even becoming a non-people (**lo-ammi**) in the course of time. In other words they lose their identity as God's people as a result of consorting with a non-people. Of course we just studied the meaning of the source of that judgment here in the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. The Lord is turning Ephraim-Israel over to a non-people where the members of Ephraim-Israel would also become a **lo-ammi** (a non-people) as they melded themselves into the gentile milieu of the Assyrian Empire.

In Hosea chapter 2 however (just as we'll see later in the Song of Moses), for the protection of His own Holy name (meaning His reputation) Yehoveh will have mercy on Ephraim-Israel and eventually He will once again call them **ammi** (My people), and **ruchamah** (pitied, given mercy); the reversal of their redemption is re-reversed back TO redemption.

Let's get back to Deuteronomy 32 and we'll finish up for today.

Now we get another startling reference that is unmistakable; verse 22 says that a fire has flared in God's wrath and that this fire will burn down to the depths of Sheol, down into the bowels of the earth, even under the base of mountains and hills. Sheol is the netherworld; it is the grave and to a degree what comes of the body and/or spirit once a person is dead and buried. And this says that all those who God has turned away from (in this case Israel) will be sent to a grave (Sheol) that is full of fire that has come from His wrath. The imagery of an

underworld full of fire ought to be familiar to us all.

But have you ever considered WHERE the fires of Hell came from? Who started the fire? Who keeps it burning? What is the purpose of that fire? Hell is a place of torments and Satan and His demons may be exiled there for a time but it's not Club Med for them; they hate it. They want to inhabit Heaven. It was GOD who booted Satan and his rebellious legions out of Heaven, it was God who kindled the fires of Hell, and those fires are a physical manifestation of His spiritual wrath. The fires of Hell (what lies beneath Sheol) are stoked by the Lord God Almighty just as it says here in Deuteronomy. And the fire's purpose is to consume the unrighteous dead, and eventually even the unrighteous spirit world. The fire is for eternal destruction.

We'll continue with the Song of Moses next week.