

DEUTERONOMY

Lesson 46 - Chapter 32 Continued 2

It has always been the chief purpose of Torah Class to demonstrate that far from the Old Testament being abolished or irrelevant, rather it is alive, vital to our understanding of God and His plan, and contemporary to our day. No section of the Torah better exemplifies that principle than the Song of Moses here in Deuteronomy chapter 32. Therefore we are going to continue slowly and thoroughly through this short section of Deuteronomy that some Bible scholars have called a canon within a canon, so full of meaning and instruction and theological value is it. This also affords me a time to draw together some divine principles that we have learned along the way.

We have learned during our time together that all the laws and commands of Torah stand upon the foundation of the 10 Commandments; and that the 10 Commandments have as their foundation the fundamental instruction to love Yehoveh our God with all our minds, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. In the same way so is God's immense, complex (and in many ways inscrutable) plan for mankind's redemption founded upon His justice system. And His justice system boils down to curses on the one hand and blessings on the other; curses for those who hate and disobey Him, blessings for those who love and obey Him. God's justice system forms the basis of what every Believer counts on for our redemption. When Jesus Christ went to His death it was so that God's justice system was satisfied and it is this same justice system that is on display in the Song of Moses.

Let's get our bearings before we go forward by remembering that this Song of Moses is to stand as a witness against Israel for all time. This powerful poem that speaks of God's wrath and His mercy is NOT a temporary or fading edict that the Lord is enacting. But the modern church knows little of the content or meaning of this Song because it has distanced itself from Israel and the Torah for more than 1800 years, refusing to take seriously God's laws and commands and ultimately erasing Israel and the Law from our thoughts and theology. Thus we tend to dismiss this prophetic Song of Moses as not for us or at the least it was for a past dispensation. And this mindset is primarily the result of Christianity looking at any divine scriptural pronouncement upon Israel and believing that if the pronouncement is a curse then Israel alone bears that curse, and if it's a pronouncement of blessing then the CHURCH has appropriated that blessing in place of Israel.

We have studied many New Testament chapters that not only dismiss such an erroneous and damaging doctrine but as with Romans 11 we find that the ONLY path available for gentiles to

BECOME part of Yeshua's so-called "church" is by essentially becoming something the Apostle Paul calls spiritual or true Israelites. Not IN PLACE OF earthly physical Israel (today's Jews) but ALONGSIDE earthly physical Israel. Further, the well known Biblical metaphor of grafting-in a branch from another but similar tree (gentiles) into the original tree (Israel) is used to demonstrate this spiritual transformation that a human being goes through when He chooses to follow Christ and accept His salvation all as the fulfillment of God's covenants to Israel and Israel alone.

Here's the thing: all throughout our study since Genesis 1:1 I have coined and used the term The Reality of Duality to (as best I can) illustrate this mysterious connection and parallelism between the spiritual world and the physical world, the heavenly and the earthly, the tangible and the intangible, the seen and the unseen. That parallelism is front and center within the Song of Moses. From a broader view what we find is that physical history and God's heavenly plan are circular; there is a starting point where everything was of the spiritual dimension only, then out of that developed a physical dimension, and then from that time forward the two dimensions (the spiritual and the physical) parallel one another like the right and left sides of a pair of railroad tracks. That is both are needed, they run side-by-side, they are NOT physically joined (rather they MUST by nature and function be distinct from each other) and yet they come from the same beginning, follow the same path, and arrive at the same point at the same time for the same ultimate goal.

What we also find is that while all existence began as purely spiritual (the Word was with God before the beginning of the physical universe), when mankind was yet but a thought in the Lord's mind, and when His laws and commands were divine ideals active only in the spiritual world because as of yet there was not a physical world, eventually those spiritual ideals transformed into physical realities upon Yehoveh's creation of the Universe. The idea of a created population of beings who could choose to love God or not were at one time only represented by the angels (and perhaps some other types of spiritual beings) of the spiritual world; but then a parallel population of beings (called humans) were created, the first being Adam. However humans were physical in their (our) essence; so now we have a parallel set of beings: angels of the spirit world and humans of the physical world. Both populations exist simultaneously, both were created to serve God, and both were given enough freedom to choose to side with or against the Lord and to stay with Him or leave Him by their own wills.

But it gets even more mysterious because just as angels could at times manifest a physical side (even though their natural state is as spirit beings) so does physical man have a spiritual side (even though our natural state is as physical beings). And we find in God's plan of redemption that while the spiritual and the physical realms are infinitely different yet over time the plan is that in some mysterious way the two realms will eventually merge. As we follow the Bible from Genesis to Revelation we see that in the beginning all things were of the spiritual sphere, then the physical sphere was added but kept separated from the spiritual; in fact barriers were set up between the spiritual and the physical. Then the spiritual Law as practiced in Heaven was one day given to physical mankind on Mt. Sinai (the Torah). However the Law

on earth was practiced as primarily a series of physical rituals and traditional observances that only mimicked and illustrated their heavenly origin because at the time man had no capacity to do anything more than that.

In God's time the PURPOSE of the Law for mankind began to be unveiled as it made a definite turn away from the purely physical and earthly ways it was being practiced and towards a return to its original spiritual heavenly form upon the advent of the Messiah and shortly thereafter the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in men. The monumental events of Yeshua bringing the physical Law to a spiritual fulfillment and then the spirit of God indwelling physical man marked significant and recognizable milestones in the as yet unfinished process of the spiritual and physical realms merging (at some time in our future) into one united realm.

The Kingdom of God that we read of in the Bible and hope for in our hearts is actually that united physical and spiritual realm that is coming. Once the Holy Spirit became present in men it was said that God's Kingdom (the united realm of the spiritual and the physical) was now present on earth (the wild-haired John the Baptist went around pronouncing that the King of God was at hand just prior to Yeshua's mission). Yet even today it is a Kingdom that is not fully gestated; it is a Kingdom that is *becoming*. It is a Kingdom that is partially but not fully formed and currently it is represented by physical humans (Believers) who are in the process of being perfected by God so that we CAN fully merge with the perfect spiritual. It is a process whereby our natural physical essence and being are becoming more spiritual and less physical. In fact Holy Scripture tells us of a time in the future when humans will have an altogether different kind of body and essence than we have now; it will be a spiritual body (for lack of a better term) that is impervious to time and decay (similar to angels). It is a kind of body that will be able to travel around this (eventually) merged world of the physical and the spiritual realms. And this is because as the circle of man's history and God's redemptive history finally, after many 1000's of years, comes to its fullest meaning and completion we essentially arrive back to the starting point when ALL that existed was spiritual in nature, when there was but a single realm that all beings existed in (not separate spiritual and physical realms), and before there were such things as evil, sin and death.

I took you on this path to start things off today because I want you to think long and hard on what the Song of Moses is really all about. I want you to understand why it is that some of the greatest Christian and Jewish theological minds have spent a lifetime of study centered on unveiling the depths of only the last 4 chapters of Deuteronomy. What fascinates me most, however, is how the predictions of the Song of Moses culminate for us in the Book of Revelation. And I say this not as uplifting sermon-rhetoric or as a good analogy. Open your Bibles to Revelation 14. We're going to read starting in Revelation 14:14, and then continue on into Revelation 15.

READ REVELATION 14:14 to 15:4

What is it that Revelation 15:3 says is being sung by those who are described as God's armies as they defeat the beast, its image, and those who took on the number of its name?

Two songs: The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32, exactly what we are studying) and the Song of the Lamb. The idea of course is that God's warriors are singing the Song of Moses as a victory song, and as a remembrance of God's age-old promises of redemption and judgment that were made long before Moses passed away. So now we see that the Song of Moses is not passé once Messiah came, or in our day, or even at the time of Armageddon, or is it only for Israel. Rather it applies to the whole world and at this event in Revelation 15 the Song of Moses applies to the apostate world that has decided to be against God and instead has thrown in with the satanically controlled Anti-Christ (the Beast). And as the Song of Moses explains there will be pitiless destruction for those who oppose God and His people, and there will be unlimited mercy and salvation for those who stand with God and ARE His people. And ironically, God will use the wicked as a tool to punish His people **in order that** they return to Him and be saved; and then He will destroy those same wicked for having harmed His people in the punishment process!

Now as I have taught you over the years it is a Biblical fact that God's prophecies happen and then they happen again (sometimes more than once). And this is because of the circular nature of history that repeats itself. This Song of Moses predicts the 3 exiles of Israel but then as the process of God transforming the world into the Kingdom of God moves along in time so does the Song of Moses transform to deal not only with physical Israel but with SPIRITUAL Israel as well. The song of Moses explains not only the destruction of those physical populations (nations and people) who oppose God, but on another level it explains the destruction of those populations of evil spirit beings (demons, fallen angels) who oppose Him. But we are also witnessing in the Song of Moses God's discipline upon His people AND God allowing His people to walk away from Him. This is also prophetic and like the destruction of God's enemies and the exiles of Israel this will repeat and finally come to a complete fulfillment at the end of days.

I hope you can receive this: we have often been taught that God will NOT punish His own nor will He allow His own to walk away from Him. There is utterly NO Scriptural backing to that claim; it is just a manmade doctrine and tradition that gives us false comfort. The Song of Moses makes us witnesses to redeemed people becoming un-redeemed....it says so plainly. We are warned over and over again in the NT against our doing the same thing, because the consequences will be the same. God punishes those who have been His but have fallen away IN HOPE that His people will come back to Him when they have borne enough pain and finally understand their folly; but if they don't, then they don't. Their fate, even eternally, is sealed. It's their choice, not even God's own servants become mindless robots that lose the freedom of choice....ANY choice. Goodness, even the angels in heaven (who enjoy a modestly less amount of freedom than we do) had the choice to serve God or to rebel, as is explained by the existence of Satan and his armies.

Can ANYONE keep you from accepting Messiah? Can anyone or any demon or anything block your path to salvation? The New Testament says no. Conversely can anyone or anything FORCE you into accepting Messiah? No again. The choice, either way, is always on the individual and no one else outside of that individual. And as it says in the book of John, no one and no thing can TAKE you from God's hand once you're there; but **you** do have the choice. Obviously the reference to "no one" means somebody other than you in every circumstance. We love to talk about our freedom in Christ, and our unfettered free will, but does that freedom and free will end when it comes to the ability of walking with Messiah or walking away from Him, as opposed to when we first had the freedom to accept Him or deny Him?

Jesus' brother James (the head of the church before the Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.) reiterates this principle in his only recorded letter to the church congregation of Jerusalem:

^{CJB} James 5:19 *My brothers, if one of you wanders from the truth, and someone causes him to return,²⁰ you should know that whoever turns a sinner from his wandering path will save him from death and cover many sins.*

The brothers in this passage are Believers (that's the only people being addressed in this entire letter). The one who wanders from truth had the truth at one time; after all you can't wander away from somewhere you weren't already at. The person who turns from God goes back to being a sinner (according to James), and the death he's saved from is certainly not his physical death because saved or condemned all men are appointed to die once. The death is referring to spiritual eternal death, the death of the unrighteous. We have in these words of James the example of a Christian brother who knew God's truth but turned from it, thereby turning away from His redemption, and is on a path of spiritual death unless somehow another brother can get him to come to his senses and return to God. Nothing could be more straightforward. This wandering brother is doing exactly what is spoken of and predicted in the Song of Moses. Certainly he has an opportunity to come back to God; but he will die as a sinner with no hope unless he does, regardless of his previous status.

Let's resume our study of this incalculably deep and relevant Song of Moses at verse 22. We'll do some bite-sized chunks this week.

RE-READ DEUTERONOMY 32:22 – 33

This first part speaks of the insatiable fire of God's anger and wrath upon Israel. Let me put that in proper context so we can be clear: Yehoveh is declaring war upon His own redeemed people because they have now shunned their redemption in favor of adding false gods and non-gods to their worship. I don't mean to be repetitive but we need to grasp that Israel did NOT completely renounce God in the sense that they said "I don't believe that Yehoveh is my God". Rather the usual route to apostasy was that they kept right on professing their allegiance to the God of Israel, even observing His festivals and sacrifices and ritual baths and so on to some degree, but at the same time they began incorporating other gods and non-authorized worship practices into their lives. They mixed and matched, a little of this and a little of that. Their mindset was apparently not to burn any bridges; let's give the God of Israel and each of these other gods just enough of our allegiance so that we can keep our options open. Well the Lord stymied that and said to do such a thing is to abandon Him in His eyes; and HE is the sole judge of who He accepts as righteous or not so what each Israelite thought was their status before Him was irrelevant.

We would do well to remember that in the New Testament when it draws the distinction between Israel and the world, or between Believers and the world, the world represents the wicked and apostate. The world is those people and things that do not belong to and do not obey God. And we are warned that a Believer is no longer OF this world even though we are IN this world. And because of that divine principle we are not to join ourselves to things of this world, but to stay separate and be joined exclusively to God. "The World" is just the New Testament way of saying "those who do **not** belong to God"...or in Hebrew, *lo-ammi*, no people, not my people. Therefore as Believers when we begin to mix and match our union in Messiah with the ways of the "world", we become *lo-ammi*, not His people; we are abandoning God in God's eyes.

The most recent example of brazen apostasy of some Believers is this new prosperity doctrine that is all the rage. There is NOTHING wrong with the world seeking wealth as its reason for existing and its number one goal because they have little else to hope for. But when a Believer sets aside God's laws and commands for the express purpose of gaining wealth that's a problem. Worse, though, is for the institutional church to make gaining wealth as not only a supposed holy endeavor but also as the scorecard for determining the spiritual health of the local church body and the individual Believer. In fact the entire Bible from beginning to end, goes to great length to explain that while material wealth is not wrong in itself that material wealth is NOT God's definition of prosperity nor are the wicked always poor and the righteous always materially rich. So every aspect of the prosperity doctrine that is preached in our nation is virtually the opposite of Biblical principles and we should shun it.

In our last lesson we discussed this reference to God's wrath being a fire that burns to the depths of Sheol and that this is without doubt (on one level) a reference to Hell. Further that it is the Lord who both kindled and now stokes the fires of Hell because they are there for Him to use for destruction of the wicked.

As verse 23 makes so plain, “**L** will heap disasters on them”. Folks, here is another common doctrine to be re-examined. I have heard it said ad nauseum that God does NOT cause evil or calamity to befall people. Rather it is Satan who does that because God is only a God of love. You won’t find that in the Holy Scripture. Another standard doctrine is that when it comes to God’s redeemed (like you and me) that His only punishment ever might be to simply allow natural catastrophes to happen to us that He might have supernaturally blocked if we weren’t being disciplined. Well, again, that simply doesn’t reflect the Biblical writings. The Song of Moses is but one of many places in the Bible that the Lord makes clear that HE will CAUSE calamity to happen to those who rebel against Him.....worshipper and non-worshipper alike. And of course here in the Song of Moses we get a listing of just what the Lord will CAUSE to happen and it is even equated to the Lord using up all of His war arrows against Israel. Shooting an arrow is not a naturally occurring disaster; it is done in anger and meant to harm. And God full well means to harm His people when they fall away from Him to the degree and manner that Israel did.

He says He will visit horrible famines, deadly plagues, and that Israel’s former Promised Land will be overrun with dangerous and poisonous creatures. In addition their enemies will attack them (that’s the idea of speaking about swords); the terror of it all will be so great that everyone, infants, young people, unmarried girls (that’s a maiden), and the elderly will literally die of fright and anxiety. We don’t have time to go there right now but check out the middle chapters of Revelation as the Beast does His dirty work and then as God pours out His wrath in the 21 judgments (7 seal, 7 bowl, and 7 trumpet judgments) and we get exactly this same picture using nearly identical words.

So here we have the downside to God’s justice system. Here in the Song of Moses we have the curses of the Law playing out, just as in Revelation we also see the curses of the Law running their course. Justice is not justice if there is no right and no wrong. If there is no reward for the righteous and no destruction of the wicked, then there is no justice. If there is only mercy and never punishment, where’s the justice? Don’t ever think that God’s justice system has given way to a grandfatherly wink and nod at sin and rebellion whether for Believer or pagan.

But at verse 26 we begin to see the other side of the justice coin; the side that is opposite of wrath. Verse 26 shows us that side of God that we probably all wish was the only side of Him that there is: mercy and love. There we are told that God considered wiping Israel out entirely but decided not to because of His concern that the enemy He sends after Israel will give itself the credit for victory. In other words, while mercy and love are being displayed to a degree, it happens more as a natural result of the Lord salvaging His reputation (a theme we see on numerous occasions in Scripture). As but one example, 1stSam 12 says, “**....for the sake of His great name (reputation), He will never abandon His people...**”. The point of this is that the Lord has a dual purpose in visiting His wrath upon Israel: purpose #1 is to punish His people, Israel, for their unfaithfulness to Him with the hope that the discipline will cause them to return to righteousness. Purpose #2 is to demonstrate His power and omnipotence to the other

nations of the earth; if He allowed the attacking nation to take the credit then the fear is that other nations would not see that Israel's demise was Yehoveh's doing. Thus the nations would think Him weak and unable to defend Israel (as their God) rather than powerful and almighty and able to wield His power over all nations and all things. God's name and His holiness supersede all.

In verse 28 it is ironic that whereas a few verses earlier Moses said that Israel no longer had any common sense or they wouldn't have abandoned God, now He applies the same thing to Israel's enemies. That if they had any wisdom at all they would know that they were but a tool in Yehoveh's hand. It is just as Moses warns Israel that when they prosper because of the Lord's blessings they should not congratulate themselves for their good fortune as though they are their own masters.

Rather, says the Lord, these nations that will feel pulled towards attacking Israel should ask themselves how it is that they could have accomplished such a thing when in reality Israel was bigger and stronger. The enemy should have suspected that Israel's "Rock", *tsur*, the mountain of their salvation, Yehoveh, simply gave Israel up and turned them over to their enemies. Why should they think that? Because the enemy's so-called "rock" (their god) is of no equal to the God of Israel and by now it ought to be self-evident.

So up to this point in the Song of Moses the Lord has first stated what He has done for Israel, next how they committed adultery against Him, and after that how He is going to cause great calamities upon Israel as a punishment. This punishment will include famines, wars, diseases, crop failures and then finally exile from the Promised Land at the hand of an attacking enemy. Next the Song of Moses explained that the Lord decided that for the sake of His own reputation He wouldn't do what Israel rightly deserved, which is to be wiped out entirely and never to be considered a people again.

In verse 32, now that the enemies of Israel have attacked them, mocked them, and boasted that it was by their own might that they have conquered Israel, God decides to judge the enemy for being so merciless to His people and so oblivious to the sovereignty of the God of the Universe. So the Lord has determined that the enemy that He has used to strike Israel will suffer the same fate as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah did so many centuries earlier.

It is interesting to me that what is being described in verses 32 through 34 is this: the same grapevines and fields in Canaan that produced abundant and healthy food for Israel will now produce nothing but bad for the conquering horde. The poisonous grapes reference is a metaphor, not literal (the grapevines were not literally going to produce snake poison). It is a simple fact of history that after Joshua led Israel into Canaan, from that time forward whenever Israel was exiled the Holy Land deteriorated rapidly. The vines and orchards of the Promised Land stopped producing, the fields became swamps in some areas and hard dry land in other

areas, and the pasturelands couldn't support nearly as many cattle and sheep as they did for the Hebrews. The occupiers enjoyed the fine grapes, fruits and olives and such that Israel had cultivated for awhile, but in no time at all the deterioration began and Israel basically became a place suited only for nomads and merchants to wander through and later for armies to congregate because of its strategic location between the African and Asian Continents and as a trade route crossroads.

One can see pictures going back to the mid 1800's (when photography was first invented) of the lands of Israel that at one time were lovely and fruitful, but at the time of the photograph the land was occupied mostly by Arabs and thus it was nearly barren and lifeless. One can also read accounts of the Crusaders' disappointment at the condition of the place upon their arrival and their struggle to make their individual plots of land, given to them by the Pope as a reward for their participation in the Crusade, usable for food production.

After WWI as many Jews started emigrating to Palestine to start a new life away from the rampant anti-Semitism of Europe they arrived to a place where farming and ranching were nearly impossible at first; but in a relatively short time the deserts bloomed, the swamps became fields of wheat and barley, the orchards and vineyards were replanted and tended, and Israel has today become a net provider of food to surrounding nations. In fact the Gaza Strip that was not long ago turned over to the Palestinians was one of the prime farming areas in all of Israel. But since that turnover food now has to be imported to Gaza for the Palestinians to survive because they can't grow enough in the rapidly deteriorating fields and orchards. Naturally the blame is laid at Israel's feet, as illogical as that sounds. But in an ironic sort of way they are right: because when God's people are not on God's land, the land goes fallow for those who do not belong there.

We'll stop here for today and begin at verse 34 next time.