

**Date** : 17 March 2024  
**Theme** : Guarding our covenant relationship with God  
**Topic** : Causes of covenantal curses  
**Key Passage** : *Deuteronomy 27*  
**Key Verse** : *...Be silent, O Israel, and listen! You have now become the people of the Lord your God. Obey the Lord your God and follow His commands and decrees that I give you today... Deuteronomy 27:9, 10*

## Introduction

The key verse above says that the people's solemn renewing of the covenant with God has resulted in God declaring that the people were His people (though they were His special people and He had chosen them before). When they declared He was their God and King, God's declaration... *You have now become the people of the Lord...*

Our study today on *Deuteronomy 27* is intriguing because it provokes many questions for today's audience. I believe many of us will find it difficult to agree (= to say *amen*) to the declarations in this chapter, resulting in not choosing God as our King and opening the door to curses.

*Deuteronomy 27* contains 12 *amens* to 12 curses caused by specific sins *Deuteronomy 27:15 - 26*. It is easy to understand *amen* to blessings, but why and how to say *amen* to curses? What is the problem we will have with *Deuteronomy 27*?

- Meaning: *Amen*  
Hebrew *amen* = firm, true, be it assured.
- What does saying amen to curses imply?
  - It is the people's declaration of God's wrath against ungodly and unrighteous sins. (The problem is our view of what is ungodly is based on societal norms).
  - It is the people's profession of faith in the truth of these curses. That those with such sins bring upon themselves a curse. and that it should be so. (Unfortunately, not many of us are prepared to stand our ground on God's truth).
- Why do we find *Deuteronomy 27* rather blatant and harsh?
  - In our present society where tolerance is the buzz word, Christians feel the church should not hold her views so strongly. We should live and let live. However, this view is increasingly challenging the church to accept all values as equally legitimate to prevent Christians from expressing or living out their convictions.

Thus, we find that when the word of God is clearly stated, our members within (not the people outside) question its interpretation with the mindset of the world's view of tolerance.

- We find *Deuteronomy 27* offensive to our ears because we prefer to use euphemism – a mild or indirect expression substituted for one considered to be too blunt when referring to a person's personal private life (that will be unpleasant and embarrassing to mention). So for unpalatable topics, we create flowery language to create an indirect expression; example, we say *passed on* (not died).
- In the market place of ideas, Christians are more afraid of the sensitivities of their friends towards a certain questionable behaviour than offending God and learning what the Word says.

## 1. What are the reasons for covenantal curses?

a) God is a Covenant-Keeper. He is faithful to bless and faithful to mete out the curses.

(The covenantal curses of Deuteronomy parallel ancient Eastern law techniques. A lengthy list of curses would be included in the covenant (very much worse than those listed in Deuteronomy), so that either party would understand the stakes of the agreement).

- God's blessing is an invitation to participate in His life-sustaining power. A curse happens when humans choose to reject His blessing of life, they automatically choose death.
- God's curse signifies the divine shattering of covenant relationship which is spelt out clearly in His laws. Rebellion to His laws leads to curses.

b) The rigid dichotomy of blessings - curses.

The covenant renewal ceremony requires the tribes to be assembled in two groups.

- 6 tribes assembled on Mount Gerizim to pronounce the blessings, 6 others on Mount Ebal, the curses.
  - On Mt. Gerizim (blessings) were descendants from Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel
  - On Mt. Eber (curses), were descendants of Jacob's concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah, sons namely Reuben and Zebulun, the oldest son and youngest sons of Leah.
  - Reuben had an incestuous relationship with his father's concubine, Bilhah. As a result, he became cursed with the loss of his right of the firstborn.

In these 2 groups, we see the blessings - curses dichotomy which corresponds to another dichotomy, obedience - disobedience. Blessings and curses are opposites as their respective causes, obedience - disobedience. They are mutually exclusive; one cannot obey and disobey the same rule simultaneously.

c) We must choose – whether blessing or curses

As Christians, we frequently want God's blessings without considering whether we are in a position to receive His blessing or whether, by default, we have left the domain of blessing. Without the exercise of faith, it is impossible to please God to receive His blessings.

- we cannot be blessed without the complete obedience of Noah.
- we cannot be blessed with a great name like Abraham, if we are not prepared to leave everything to obey God.
- or be blessed like Joseph, who was accused / blessed / accused as a slave and prisoner, long before he became a great public official.

## 2. What are the sources of curses in *Deuteronomy 27*?

Most of the sins listed in *Deuteronomy 27: 15 - 26* are sins done in secret; out of sight of people but open in the sight of God.

a) Idolatry *Deuteronomy 27:15* (Commandment No. 1 No other gods)

Hidden idolatry...*sets it up in secret...*

Such covert idolatry would include pleasure, secret desires, or subtle social status sought above the worship of God.

b) Dishonour of parents *Deuteronomy 27:16* (Commandment No.5. Honour parents)

While disobedience may be overt and blatant, dishonour can be disguised in an hypocritical act of honouring parents, all the while secretly loathing them.

c) Removal of boundary marks *Deuteronomy 27:17* (Commandment No.10. No coveting)

The sanctity of boundary markers is important for the peaceful functioning of society. God's law provides for private ownership of property. Moving a neighbour's boundary mark, which shows complete disregard for the rights of others, invites a curse.

- d) Trickster *Deuteronomy 27:18* (Commandment No. 9. No defrauding)  
 Defrauding by leading the blind astray – as the elderly of their savings, or teachers misleading the unsuspecting young – bring a curse. Today’s fake news and deep fakes are such a phenomenon.
- e) Justice withheld *Deuteronomy 27:19* (Commandment No.9. No defrauding)  
 Taking advantage of the vulnerable in society, as the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows.
- f) 4 curses that pertain to sexual misbehaviour *Deuteronomy 27:21 - 23*  
 (Commandment No. 7. No adultery).  
 – Incestuous relationships with father’s wife, sister, mother-in-law  
 – Sexual deviancy with animals
- Why is this the case?  
 God created male and female and endowed mankind with the capacity for sexual pleasure. Satan knows this too well and thwarts this human “drive” for evil purposes. Sexual pleasure is a good servant but a bad master. Every God-given gift requires self-control and discipline.
- g) Murder – killing secretly *Deuteronomy 27:24* (Commandment No. 6 No murder)  
 Furtively living in wait (with malice aforethought) and intention to kill.
- h) A bribe to kill *Deuteronomy 27:25* (Commandment No. 6. No murder)  
 Taking a bribe that leads to the killing of the innocent (often in a judicial context; such “under the counter” actions undermine the impartiality of jurisdiction).
- i) God’s Law disobeyed *Deuteronomy 27:26*  
 All the previous 11 curses will come to anyone who does not wholeheartedly obey God’s Laws, both in public and in private.

### 3. How to protect ourselves from moving into the domain of curses?

- a) God sets the boundaries of protection from the curse by requiring us to tap into His wisdom.  
*Deuteronomy 27* sums it up when He said that the door of curse can be shut by obeying the words of His commandments.
- Pick ‘undressed’ stones, make a pillar. Plaster the pillar, write on it the 10 Commandments. Obey these Commandments carefully.
  - Make an altar - Worship Him.
- b) Know the cost of ignoring the causes of curses.
- c) Obedience is the proof of love for the Lord.  
 Just feeling love is not love. The Lord Himself said... *if you love Me, keep My commandments.*

#### Summary causes of curses

- a) Violation of spiritual principles, particularly the 10 Commandments.
- b) Curses uttered by agents serving Satan.  
 like witches, witch doctors, ‘false’ prophets, anyone speaking on behalf of the kingdom of darkness (Balaam is an example).
- c) Curses released by men authorised by God.  
 Examples, Joshua; The Lord Himself spoke to the fruitless fig tree. Paul spoke a curse on the man who tried to deceive the Proconsul in Acts and that man became blind.
- d) God Himself rebuked Mariam, Moses’ sister, when she criticised Moses.
- e) Self-cursing  
 Negative words uttered unwittingly against ourselves carry disastrous outcomes.
- like Rebekah (to Jacob), volunteering that any curse be upon her.
  - Jews (crying for Jesus’ crucifixion) volunteered that His blood be upon them.

f) A husband's words can be potent, including putting a death sentence on his wife. Example, Jacob (when his uncle accused him of stealing his idols), had said *The one who took them ought not to live*. (Jacob did not know that his wife Rachel had taken the idols). Upon reaching Bethlehem, when giving birth to Benjamin, Rachel died.

Husbands must learn to bless their spouses. The husband's role is to protect his wife from predators. But alas! this would not happen if the wife would not listen; or if the husband is ignorant of spiritual realm principles.

g) A father's words to his children carry weight. (Read Isaac or Jacob's blessings on their children). The habit of speaking blessing does not come naturally. Effort is necessary. Fathers must fill in with God's word to be effective. It is not motivational talk. It's more a prophetic utterance. Fathers who regularly pray for their children will know how to bless them.

**Application**

**Common signs of curses**

**My problem**

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| A. ....              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B. ....              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. ....              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D. ....              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E. ....              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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