

The Blessings and The Curses

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By Joseph F. Dumond

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12th day of the Eighth month 5845 years after creation

The Eighth Month in the Sabbatical Year

The Second Sabbatical Year of the 119th Jubilee Cycle

October 31, 2009

Shabbat Shalom Brethren,

The curses of Lev 26 are basically what this web site is all about. So before there was an Israel and before they ever owned the land, I checked to see if the penalties for not keeping the Sabbatical years were handed out by Yahweh. I did show you that those penalties were in effect before there ever was an Israel as we have read about the penalties during the life of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

This has led to the Prophecies of Abraham and to the Book by the same name which is about to be published. Again these people will not believe this book the same as they do not believe any of the other things written in the Scriptures.

As I said last week we all get to choose what we will obey and thereby we also get to choose which punishments we will receive. I am choosing not to eat any children in the future by obeying Yahweh now because he also said the righteous will not be begging bread. If you have concluded that the laws are not for you and not for today then you have chosen to chow down on yours or your neighbor's child in the very near future. You have already made the choice.

If you have just learned of these things and want to be obedient then confess to Yahweh that you have sinned and did not know it. Then make an attempt to be as obedient as possible from now on.

This week I have an article I want you all to read very carefully. I found this article to be very timely and inspired.

The following article is for us all. It is very sobering for some and a blessing for others. Stephen Denke went with me to Israel last year. I consider him a good friend that I have now known for 4 years.

While I think of it, May Yahweh reach down and open your minds to the truth He is revealing in droves in these last days to many of His people. May you grow in His love and be obedient to His Torah from now on and forever. And may He bless your homes as each of you strives to obey and share His Torah with others. May He richly bless you as you obey.

Blessings and Cursings Intro by Stephen;

Greetings. my Web site, located at www.proclaimliberty.info. The article is entitled "Blessings and Cursings." Please go to the site if you wish to read the article. Personally, I think this is an extremely important Biblical subject that is usually not given enough attention. Most churches probably disregard it as ancient superstition. Nevertheless, It is especially important for children in their relationship with their parents and also people in their interpersonal dealings with those over them in authority.

I spoke on this subject using an earlier draft of the article at the 2009 Sukkoth gathering at the Liverpool, PA site. Admittedly, although I had a lot of material to speak from, I wasn't entirely pleased with my presentation. After returning home, I revised the draft to what now appears on the Web site. I also expounded further on the role of Balaam, the apostate prophet.

As we get closer to the annual pagan observance held on Oct. 31, we also need to be reminded then engaging in any of the many dark arts of the occult will bring a curse upon ourselves, perhaps even hastening death. Involving oneself in these practices is an abomination to YHWH.

We must constantly remain vigilant in keeping watch over what we say, knowing that we shall reap what we have sown. In this sense, it is vital that we set the blessings in motion and guard ourselves against bringing curses upon ourselves. Sha'alu Shalom and may YHWH keep you in the days ahead. Spd

Blessings and Cursings

One only need read through the first chapters of the Bible in the book of Genesis to understand that conferring blessings on to others was an important part of ancient Middle Eastern culture. The words one spoke were considered vitally important, almost as important as words spoken by the Almighty Himself or by one His angels. Whether as a blessing or a curse, words pronounced over another person could control that person's destiny and have ramifications for generations to come. Thus, it was always in a person's best interests to maintain good relations with those in authority, whether it be his parents, neighbors, teachers, rulers, or, most of all, with the Almighty Himself.

The idea of living a life filled with blessings and, hopefully, devoid of curses resonates powerfully within Judaism. Throughout the pages of the Shabbat siddur, the liturgy book commonly used for Sabbath worship services, are found various prayers and blessings, primarily in Hebrew, considered the language of the Heavlies. Rabbinic blessings have been devised for a plethora of situations and circumstances. So much so that in the musical Fiddler on the Roof, a rhetorical question is asked of the rabbi of the turn-of-the-prior-century little

Russian shtetl (rural village) where the play takes place: “Is there a blessing for the Czar?” His answer: “May G-d bless him and keep him...far from us!”

It has been said that one of the reasons for the financial success of many Jewish families is the generational practice of pronouncing blessings on the sons and daughters, often done at home at the “welcoming” ceremony held each week for the reception of the Sabbath called in Hebrew Kabbalat Shabbat: “Y’simcha Elohim k’Efraim v’chi Manasheh; Y’simaych Elohim k’Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, Leah.” In English: “May Elohim make you (sons) as Ephraim and Manasseh; may Elohim make you (daughters) as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah.”

It is said that the father’s blessing on his children is the most valuable blessing that can be bequeathed. When a father bestows his blessing, it is as if the Almighty Himself is speaking. Such was the case when Isaac bestowed His blessing on Jacob. Even after he realized that he had been deceived, his words could not be undone. His blessing on Jacob passed on the blessings YHWH had given to his father, Abraham that had been passed on to him. Jacob further expounded on these blessings when he pronounced the primogeniture blessings on the twin sons of his first-born son Joseph, through his beloved wife Rachel, in GEN. 48 and then to each of his 12 sons in GEN. 49:1-28. His words were prophetic and would shape the world’s destiny.

Likewise, children bless themselves when they honor and obey their parents. As Paul discusses in EPH. 6:1-4, the 5th commandment “is the first commandment with promise”: where one is promised a long and happy life for doing so, DEU. 5:16. In view of the gravity of the situation and the power of a parent’s words to either bless or curse, children must never provoke their parents’ wrath, lest their parents speak words in anger against them, essentially speaking curses over them, which they undoubtedly will later regret.

When Ham sinned against his father, Noah, in GEN. 9:20-27, Noah directed a curse against Ham’s son Canaan, whose descendants would later be a thorn to the Israelites. It is not clear from the Scriptures why the curse was directed against Canaan and not Ham. Perhaps there is much more to the incident than the Bible tells us, having spared readers the sordid details. In any event, Canaan appears to be the youngest of Ham’s four sons, GEN. 10:6. Perhaps at that moment, Noah received prophetic insight and foresaw the trouble that Canaan’s descendants would cause the Israelites — descendants of Shem —and thus placed a curse on Canaan rather than on Ham, which would have affected all four of his sons.

Meanwhile, Noah pronounces blessings on his other two sons, Shem and Japheth, bestowing the best blessing for Shem. No blessing is recorded for Ham.

Jacob’s first-born son Reuben, through Leah, normally should have received the pre-eminent blessing of all of Jacob’s 12 sons. When it came time for him to pronounce blessings on his sons, in GEN. 49, some received blessings and others did not, each apparently receiving a judgment for their works, as a foreshadow of REV. 20:12. Apparently, because of the incident in GEN. 35:22 in which Reuben defiled Rachel’s handmaid Bilhah, apparently doing so as part

of a “sibling rivalry” to prevent his father from having more children through her (i.e. the Rachel-side of the family), Reuben, received essentially a non-blessing from his father.

Likewise, his brothers Simeon and Levi, also were rebuked for past incidents, including undoubtedly their slaughter of an entire city in GEN. 34, following the “rape” of their sister Dinah. When it came time for paternal blessings to be bestowed, these sons missed out because of past indiscretions. Sadly, their actions were to have consequences for their descendants down through the ages. Certainly, if one wishes to be blessed in life, he is expected to bring honor to his Father and glory to the family name, YHWH.

In our anticipation of receiving Father YHWH’s blessings, He too is to be blessed. “Barchu et Adonai ha-m’volrahch” — “Blessed is the Lord, the blessed One, for all eternity,” are by tradition the words chanted to begin Sabbath evening services. Thus, the Almighty and His providence and goodness are to be the constant focus of man’s benevolent words. As our earthly fathers have power to shape our lives just with their words, even more so with Our Heavenly Father. We should strive to please Him in all that we do; so that He will bless us in our labors and never pronounce a curse upon us.

In PRV. 18:21, we see that “death and life” are in the power of the tongue. By the words we speak, we choose whether to do good or to evil. Just as the Israelites embraced “life and death, the blessing and the curse” in DEU. 30:19 when they accepted YHWH’s covenant, so too are we under the same provision as their spiritual descendants — if not their actual physical progeny.

The passage continues: “therefore, choose life, that you may live, you and your seed.” Therefore, it would seem that our salvation from eternal death is determined by our very words. It is imperative then that we say the right thing at all times, especially knowing that a recording angel may be listening and writing down our words, ECC. 5:6.

“And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.” MAT. 12:36-37 (ASV, updated)

To see their children blessed in life, parents must be careful to speak only beneficial words over their children, never words that may have a detrimental lifelong effect. Furthermore, to receive their parents’ blessing, children must always act in a way that invites good words to be pronounced over them. If they wish to receive the benefits of their parents’ favor, they should never cause them grief or despair. To do so, is to grieve representatives of YHWH’s authority.

Such was the case of Esau, who grieved his parents, Isaac and Rebekah, by choosing Hittite wives for himself: Judith and Basemath, GEN. 26:34-35. Conversely, after deceitfully obtaining the birthright and blessing reserved for his brother, Esau, Jacob was sent by his mother to Haran, the place from whence she came. Not only does she send him there to save him from Esau’s vengeance, but namely to secure a proper wife, one raised in the worship of YHWH.

The fifth commandment, the commandment to honor our parents, comes with a promise: “that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you, in the land which YHWH your [Elohim] gives you.” DEU 5:16 (ASV, updated). Sadly, this promise often seems forgotten in this age where youths are encouraged to rebel against their parents and “do their own thing.” By being rebellious against this Heaven-ordained authority, youths invite a difficult life for themselves, perhaps one that is even cut short by calamity.

In DEU. 21:18-20, the Torah teaches that rebellious youths, who act wantonly and in disregard of their parents’ correction, are to be brought before the elders of their city and stoned! Whereas society seems to view youthful rebellion as normal, YHWH views it as an evil that is to be put away from among the congregation.

Many Jewish blessings typically begin with the words “Baruch ata Adonai Elohenu Melech haolam” — “Blessed is the Sovereign (or Lord), our Mighty One (or G-d), King of the Universe.” From this beginning phrase forward, numerous variations of blessings have been devised, some Biblically kosher and others originating from man-made traditions and teachings.

Among those that have continued to this day is the blessing for the washing of hands: “Blessed are you Adonai, our Elohim, King of the universe, who has sanctified us in Your commandments, and commanded us to wash our hands. Amen.” Where is such a commandment found? Although EXD. 30:17-21 commands the washing of hands and feet before entering into the Tabernacle, the commandment is specifically designated only for Aaron and his descendants: the High Priests. Moses, who was himself a Levite and Aaron’s brother, also washed hands and feet upon His entrance in EXD. 40:30-31.

The washing of hands also was commanded in LEV. 15 for those who had become ritually unclean. Another handwashing commandment is found in DEU. 21:1-6. As you may recall, the washing of hands, namely before eating, became a subject of contention between the Pharisees and Yah’shua in MARK 7:1-9:

“And there are gathered together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of his disciples ate their bread with defiled, that is, unwashed, hands. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the marketplace, except they bathe themselves, they eat not; and many other things there are, which they have received to hold, washings of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels.) And the Pharisees and the scribes ask him, Why walk not your disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with defiled hands? And he said unto them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honors me with their lips, But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men. You leave the commandment of [Elohim], and hold fast the tradition of men. And he said unto them, Full well do you reject the commandment of [Elohim], that you may keep your tradition.” (ASV, updated)

At the heart of Yah’shua’s contention here is DEU. 4:2, which prohibits from adding or diminishing from the Law. Yah’shua further addresses the subject of defilement further in this

passage. Sadly, it seems that verse 19 has been deliberately mistranslated to indicate that while on the subject He suddenly declared all meats, whether kosher or not, to be fit for consumption. Nevertheless, this is contradicted by Peter in ACTS 10:14, where during a vision where he is told to eat unkosher flesh, he forthrightly refuses to eat anything that is “common and unclean,” in accordance with the Law of Moses. Surely, if Yah’shua had declared all meats clean during His ministry, Peter would never have made such a statement. One only needs to go down to verse 28 to see where Peter comes to understand the meaning of his vision: that he is not to separate himself from Gentile believers, who because they were not Jewish were considered “unclean.”

Understandably, as believers discover the false doctrines and traditions taught within many Christian churches, they seek to return to a 1st Century Nazarene style of worship. Nazarene believers were reported to have worshipped in Jewish synagogues until as late as the time of the Shimon Bar Kokhba Rebellion, 132-135 C.E. At that time, Nazarenes were disfellowshipped from the synagogues because they refused to recognize Bar Kokhba as the promised messiah, as promoted by Rabbi Akiva and others. In the synagogue service, the Shemoneh Esrei (Eighteen Benedictions) was modified to include an additional curse against heretics (Birkat Ha-Minim). Nazarenes could no longer participate in the liturgy without cursing themselves. Thus, believers in Messiah Yah’shua parted ways with the Jewish religious community and pursued a strictly separate identity.

Following the Jewish revolts in the Holy Land in 66-70 C.E., which resulted in the destruction of Herod’s Temple, and the failed Bar Kokhba-led insurrection in the 2nd Century, anti-Semitism swept throughout the Roman Empire. Being viewed as Jewish or connected to widely perceived Jewish practices became extremely unpopular. As a result, it would seem that the emerging Christian Church purposely distanced itself from its Jewish roots. Sadly, this anti-Jewish bias has persisted among Christianity’s various denominations down through the ages, even now with certain churches adopting a hard-line stance against the nation of Israel in favor of the Palestinian nationalistic movement.

Among the first blessings in the Bible is the one YHWH bestows on Abraham in GEN. 12:2-3, “And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great. And you will be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless you, and him that curses you will I curse. And in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” (ASV, updated)

When this passage is viewed as a blessing upon not only upon Abraham, but his descendants, primarily those who are his spiritual heirs by faith, ROM. 4:16-18; GAL. 3:6-14, 28-29. This blessing is repeated in GEN. 26:29 in Isaac’s blessing on Jacob. Thus, to curse Abraham’s descendants through Isaac and Jacob, whether they are ethnic Jews, descendants of the so-called “Lost Tribes of Israel,” or your grafted-in Gentile brethren in Messiah Yah’shua, is to invite a curse from the Most High.

Thus, it goes without saying that we must never engage in any type of hate-speech or anti-Semitism. To revile a brother in the faith and bring railing accusations against him is tantamount to inviting YHWH’s indignation upon yourself. Sadly, many congregations have

driven away several of their own members by gossiping, slandering, and speaking shameful things against them. This ought not be!

“Humble yourselves in the sight of [YHWH], and he shall exalt you. Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law: but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. Only one is the lawgiver and judge, even he who is able to save and to destroy: but who are you who judges your neighbor?” JAS. 4:10-12 (ASV, updated)

Hate speech is one of the characteristics of an abusive ministry. Former members are regularly disparaged. They may even be called heretics destined for the Lake of Fire simply for leaving the church to seek a membership elsewhere. Curses may even be pronounced upon them from the pulpit in an attempt to frighten other members from walking away as well. When abusive leaders condemn believers to damnation, do they in turn seal their own eternal fate? The answer seems to be found in 1JN. 3:14-15,

“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not lives in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life living in him.” (ASV, updated)

Many zealous believers have left churchianity to join Messianic fellowships in hopes of rediscovering the Hebraic or Jewish roots of their faith. Many also leave their former affiliations determined to find pure religion, as practiced by the 1st Century Nazarenes. Sadly, after leaving the leaven of false doctrine in the Christian churches they left, they are astonished to encounter more of the same, leaven derived from false man-made Jewish religious traditions.

While many of the prayers and blessings in the Jewish liturgy are Biblically based, one has to remain watchful of those that are not in agreement with our Nazarene Faith. One must strive to “be Berean” at all times to guard against Scripturally unsound teachings.

Another problematic traditional Jewish blessing is the one spoken during the lighting of Chanukah candles. Translated into English, it reads: “Blessed be the Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments and enjoined us to kindle the Chanukah lamp.” Obviously, such a statement is not found within the inspired Word of YHWH, especially in view that the story of the struggle for Jewish independence from Hellenistic rule occurred around 165 B.C.E., during the inter-Testamental period. An account of the Jewish struggle against pagan assimilation is recorded in the Apocrypha, but not in the Bible. So, where is the proof that the Almighty gave such a commandment?

If we view the inspired Scriptures, the 66 books of the Bible, as the exclusive source of Truth, then we must reject such traditions as not being in agreement with the Word of YHWH. Our faith is founded on the sure foundation of Sola Scriptura, the Scriptures alone. As Yah’shua told the Pharisees in MARK 7:9, quoted above, they were inclined to reject YHWH’s commandments in favor of keeping their traditions — that is, their own man-made commandments. In so doing, they were in violation of Torah, namely DEU. 4:2, which forbids adding to the Law.

Sadly, there are some believers who have engendered such a love for the Jewish people that they have swallowed many of the errors of their rabbinic religion, favoring traditional teachings over the Written Word. Even worse, some have even let their affection for all things Jewish to lead them to reject their belief in Messiah Yah'shua and the authority of the Nazarene Testament in favor of embracing Judaism. In going in this direction, many evidently feel that they have returned to the Source of their faith and the blessing found therein. As we see in PSA. 40:4, one is blessed for putting his trust in YHWH and turning not aside to lies. Throughout the Great Law Psalms 19 and 119, the incomparable excellence of YHWH's Word is declared. Those who keep His commandments are blessed. In the keeping of YHWH's ordinances is "great reward." Thus, we see that to obtain YHWH's favor and reap His blessings, our obedience is expected. Yah'shua reiterated this thought in MAT. 19:16-22, where the rich young man inquired what was necessary to enter into eternal life, the ultimate blessing from On High: "but if you would enter into life, keep the commandments."

One is blessed for keeping justice, performing righteousness, abstaining from evil, and keeps His appointments with the Most High, according to ISA. 56:1-2. In verse 6, this blessing is extended to the foreigners that join themselves to the worship of YHWH, that love His name, that observe His Sabbaths and keep His covenant.

In their time, the Pharisees had added so many commandments upon Commandments, making the Torah seemingly impossible to keep. Yah'shua quoted from the Ten Commandments, which serves as a type of index to YHWH's Law. The commandments he cited, though, reflected man's interpersonal relations with others, which Yah'shua later summarized in MAT. 22:39 as the second great commandment. The first and greatest commandment, though, is to "love [YHWH] your [Elohim] with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," MAT. 22:37, quoting DEU. 6:5. Yah'shua urged this man to engender so great a love for YHWH that He would be willing to sacrifice his own wealth.

From MAT. 23:2-3 comes the understanding that although the scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, we are to do all that they say when teaching from the Torah, but we are not to do after their works: "for they say and do not." Yah'shua then proceeds to pronounce woes, essentially curses, upon them for their unScriptural attitudes. This is in contrast to the blessings pronounced during the Sermon on the Mount, in MAT. 5-7. Yah'shua's approach to Torah observance was that one is blessed for keeping the commandments with a pure heart. One should wish to exceed the commandments out of a sincere love for YHWH and his neighbor, not because of man-made legalistic requirements. To enter into the Kingdom, our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, MAT. 5:20. These were the local religious authorities of those times: educated persons who also were intimately familiar with the Scriptures — some reportedly could even recite the entire Torah from memory. Thus, Yah'shua is saying that our obedience is to be derived more from our spiritual attitude than our Scriptural knowledge.

Nevertheless, it is expected that one has at least a basic understanding of the teachings in the Torah to receive the blessings of the Law and avoid the curses for disobedience. The teachings of the Torah begin with the greatest of commandments, to love YHWH with all our

being, DEU. 6:4-5 and quoted in MARK 12:28-30, and continue with the commandment to love our neighbor as our self, LEV. 19:18, and the Golden Rule to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, MAT. 7:12, LUKE 6:31, which corresponds to a traditional Jewish summarization of the Torah taught by the Pharisees.

The blessings and curses of the Law are spelled out in DEU. 26-30, along with their ramifications. As Moses instructed before his death, the Israelites stood and gave witness to the blessings and curses upon Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, six tribes on each, as they entered into the Promised Land, JOS. 8:30-35. Since then, these blessings and curses have been in effect, not only on the Israelites then as they entered into their inheritance but for all succeeding generations since. Presuming that our ancestors were among those assembled people, we are under these same blessings and curses. They are inescapable.

As summarized in the booklet Blessings and Curses by Dr. Derek Prince (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2003; 63 pages), our forefathers agreed to the following conditions in exchange for their obedience and that of subsequent generations:

Blessings:

- Exaltation – being lifted up on high
 - Health
 - Fertility
 - Prosperity
 - Victory
 - YHWH's favor
- Curses:
- Humiliation
 - Inability to reproduce in any area of your life
 - Mental and physical sickness
 - Family breakdowns
 - Poverty
 - Defeat
 - Oppression
 - Failure
 - YHWH's disfavor

Many of the Baby Boomer generation grew up living under conditions of profound national wealth. Subsequent generations have largely known nothing but ease and convenience. However, we have also seen a rise in the curses of the Law and can expect to see worse unless this nation repents and returns to the high Biblically based moral standard under which it once embraced.

These curses, as established in the Torah, exist primarily as a warning call to the people that they have strayed from obedience to YHWH. To continue in this direction is to court further disasters. Sadly, the Israelite people and their descendants have repeatedly forgotten this

primary lesson throughout history, thereby repeatedly repeating in the mistakes of prior generations.

On a personal level, people often inadvertently place themselves under curses by their own words. Quarrels, arguments, and bitter contentions can lead to spiteful and nasty utterances. It is natural to feel resentment toward those who mistreat you and to respond to others' denigrating comments with hateful words.

Nevertheless, if we understand from GEN. 3:12 that Abraham's descendants are under a reciprocated blessing and curse system — "And I will bless them that bless you, and him that curses you will I curse" — then we only curse ourselves by cursing others. Thus, Yah'shua says in LUKE 6:27-28, "But I say unto you that hear, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that spitefully use you." This means that we should not return insult for insult, slander for slander, or recrimination for recrimination. Instead, we should find within ourselves to say something good about those persons, even though they may hate us. In so doing, we receive a blessing from Above and perhaps also turn enemies into friends.

Among abusive churches, former members and those deemed as enemies may be reviled openly from the pulpit or secretly behind office doors. The head pastor may feel it is his duty to disparage these persons to keep his congregation in line and under his control. Thus, they may feel themselves exempt from what the Scriptures say on the subject, in effect putting themselves above the Law. In so doing, such persons set themselves up as judges of the Law and will be held to a higher accountability, JAS. 3-4. Sadly, these self-serving servants abuse the authority given unto them and lord over their congregations, as warned against in 1PE. 5:13.

Addressing how brethren should treat one another, Peter further says the following in the same book in chapter 3, verses 8 and 9:

"Finally, be you all likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tenderhearted, humble minded: not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but contrariwise blessing; for hereunto were you called, that you should inherit a blessing." (ASV, updated)

He then quotes PSA. 34:12-16, which says in part: "Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; Seek peace, and pursue it." (vs. 13-14)

As YHWH used prophets to point out the sins and misdeeds of Israel's rulers, so you too must act on His calling when the Holy Spirit moves upon you. With a spirit of meekness and in accordance with the Scriptures, you must be willing to bring these matters to the attention of an abusive minister. For such correction to be rejected would invite a heavier judgment from On High.

In the case of King Solomon, who allowed the idolatry of his many wives to pollute the land, the Almighty's judgment was delayed until after his death. Under his son Rehoboam, though, the kingdom was divided and the glory diminished. The pattern of division and then fragmentation,

often leading to disintegration, is one that has recurred throughout history when people have brought a curse upon themselves.

In Obadiah verse 15, the prophet reiterates a Golden Rule-like theme pertaining to how judgment is to occur: "As you have done, it shall be done unto you; your dealing shall return upon your own head." This pertains all the more as we see The Day of YHWH drawing near.

An example of a true prophet who brought upon calamity by speaking the wrong thing was Balaam, NUM. 22-24. Balak, king of Moab, invited Balaam, son of Beor, to come from Pethor in Mesopotamia, possibly located along the same route taken by Abraham when he left that land to come to the land of Caanan. Evidently, although Balaam was a prophet of YHWH, he had the ability of a diviner. It seems that he had the uncanny ability to speak words put into his mouth from the Most High. It would seem that his ability was unlike those who practiced occultic divination, in which a connection is made to the demonic realm, as prohibited in the Torah, DEU. 18:10-14.

Balak evidently offered to reward him handsomely for cursing Israel, hoping to accomplish through supernatural means what he was unable to do in battle. It would seem that he thought Balaam could be influenced by money and position on the words he was to say. In the end, it would seem that Balaam was influenced in the words he spoke since he revealed the Israelites' weakness for carnal pagan religion.

The Jewish Encyclopedia noted that Balaam was a magician who possessed the peculiar prophetic ability to discern the exact time when the Almighty was angry and then pronounce a curse at that very moment. In rabbinic literature, he is referred to as rasha, meaning "the wicked one." "He is pictured as blind in one eye and lame in one foot and his disciples, or followers, are distinguished by three morally corrupt qualities: an evil eye, a haughty bearing (or, behavior), and an avaricious spirit."

YHWH forbade Balaam to speak anything contrary to the words He would have him say. Nevertheless, it would seem that Balaam still intended to use the opportunity for his own gain. In the famous incident recorded in NUM. 22:21-35 where Balaam's ass, or donkey, spoke to him to warn him of the angel with his sword drawn standing in the way, we see that the heavenly being nearly killed Balaam because, as he said, "your way is perverse (or, 'contrary') before me" (v. 32). Apparently, Balaam intended to speak the words YHWH gave to him while somehow still appeasing Balak.

Interestingly, in NUM. 24:9, Balaam in his prophetic utterance repeats the eternal blessing YHWH had placed on Abraham's descendants: "Blessed be everyone that blesses you, And cursed be everyone that curses you." Knowing this, Balaam should have made it clear to Balak that his desire to have Israel cursed was in opposition to the Almighty's wishes and that any attempt to do so would yield disastrous results.

Balaam ended up blessing Israel on three occasions instead of cursing them as Balak requested. Nevertheless, it seems that he also revealed the people's vulnerability for sexually indulgent idolatrous practices of the Moabite people at Baal-Peor, NUM. 31:16. Translated as

“Lord of the Opening,” it is fairly obvious from the connotation that sexual licentiousness was performed at this place, dedicated to this particular idol, or demon. Balaam apparently realized that the Israelites had a certain pagan proclivity toward spiritual adultery. It seems this weakness has been exploited by Satan against YHWH’s people throughout history to their detriment.

Later, we see that Balaam was counted among the dead in the battle against the Midianites, NUM. 31:8. It would seem that he was slain before he was able to fully enjoy the rewards he had received for his services. In his avarice, it would also seem that he provided the Midianites with the same forbidden information that he had given to the Moabites. Such was his disregard for the prophetic blessings he had pronounced upon Israel and his lack of fear for YHWH’s wrath, even after his encounter with the sword-drawn angel.

The memory of the Israelites encounter with Balaam is mentioned in three places in the Nazarene Testament:

- In 2 Peter 2:15, the apostle speaks out against false prophets and teachers who introduced destructive heresies, following the way of Balaam, “who loved the hire of wrongdoing.” Moreover, Peter describes them as “having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way, they have gone astray.” (v.14-15a)
- Jude also warned of lawless men who would lead people astray through their teachings. As with Peter, he described them as being “like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love-feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.” (vs. 10b-13)
- John, in REV. 2:12-15, refers to the fallen prophet in his letter to the assembly at Pergamum— a location described as “where Satan’s throne is”: “you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teachings of the Nicolaitans.” (vs. 14-15)

We see here that the teaching of Balaam — to commit spiritual adultery — is likened to the teachings of the Nicolaitans. The word Nicolaitans denotes “victory over the people.” How did they gain this victory over the people? Apparently, a perversion of the Bible’s glad tidings was taught where people were encouraged to live “Lawlessly,” or in opposition to the Torah, under the guise of prophetic illumination, 2 Peter 2:1-2.

Sadly, when teachers of the Scriptures enjoin believers to engage in pagan or occultic practices, they bring calamity upon themselves. Introducing such “destructive heresies” brings a reproach against the Truth and a backlash from unbelievers.

From Balaam's example, we see that a true prophet or teacher can be subverted by his own desire for lucre or self-aggrandizement. With one's own words comes goodness or evil. In Balaam's case, his words resulted in the deaths of 24,000 Israelites, NUM. 25:9. Even more would have died if not for the righteous act of Phinehas the priest, who acted quickly and decisively to put a stop to the sin coming into the camp. His action prevented the spread of a curse.

Strangely, some misguided believers may point to Balaam's example to justify their own involvement with augury, divination, necromancy, fortune telling, spell casting, and various other mystical, New Age, Qabalistic, and occultic practices. Interestingly, the word rendered "divination" in NUM. 23:23 is Strong's Hebrew #7081 qecem, which is also translated elsewhere as "witchcraft." The same word appears in DEU. 18:10 in the Torah's prohibition against occultic practices.

Dr. Prince defines divination as follows: "Divination is the knowledge branch of the occult, including all kinds of revelation that claims a non-Christian spiritual source. Its commonest form is fortune-telling, offering supernatural knowledge of the future. It also includes astrology, automatic writing, cabala, "channeling," clairaudience (hearing voices), clairvoyance, crystal ball gazing, diagnosis by color therapy or a pendulum, divining, ESP, handwriting analysis, horoscopes, iridology, mediums, mind reading, numerology, omens, palmistry, phrenology, seances, tarot cards, tea leaf reading, telepathy, and "witching," as well as all books that teach occult practices."

Those who engage in these forbidden activities are pronounced "an abomination unto YHWH," DEU. 18:12. Furthermore, under YHWH's commandments, they are to be put away from among the people, EXD. 22:18; DEU. 13:6-11. Thus, we see that one is cursed for dabbling in these forbidden practices — and in so doing has even invited death upon himself.

To claim to be a true believer while also practicing witchcraft and the dark arts, which the Almighty has expressly forbidden, is heretical, anti-Torah, and anti-YHWH. One cannot serve two masters: Yah'shua, the Light of the World, and Satan, the prince of darkness.

Despite what the Scriptures expressly teach on the subject, it seems there are self-proclaimed Scripturally based teachers, pastors, and rabbis who, incredibly, promote certain occultic practices as acceptable. Evidently, they justify these practices as corresponding to the Urim and Thummim, EXD. 28:30, NUM. 27:21, worn by the High Priest and used anciently by Israel's rulers to inquire of YHWH's judgment, especially during periods of national crisis or when there was no prophet to consult, as in 1SA. 28:6.

While this specific tool was imparted to Israel as a part of the service of the Tabernacle, and later Temple, by no means was it something to be used trivially or for personal fortune telling. Moreover, it certainly was not something to which the common people had access.

Although Balaam may have been considered a true prophet before his encounter with Balak, in the end it seems he succumbed, so to say, to the "dark side." While he was specifically told not

to speak prophetically, or divine, against Israel, the Bible makes clear that this is in effect what he did – and presumably was paid handsomely as a prophet for hire for doing so. The Bible’s teaching about the love of money being the root of all kinds of evil, 1Ti. 6:10, surely is demonstrated here.

Interestingly, the NUM. 22-24 narrative between Balaam and Balak leaves off at Peor, a place presumably of abominable paganism. Had Balaam avoided this place, perhaps he never would have uttered the words he was prohibited from speaking. Likewise, it would seem that if YHWH’s people will avoid all semblances of pagan practices, they also will avert curses from coming upon themselves and instead receive blessings for obedience. As is commonly said nowadays, “Don’t even go there!”

Dr. Bree Keyton, in her spiritual warfare manual *Stripes, Nails, Thorns, and the Blood* (San Diego, CA: Black Forest Press, 2002, 28 pages), says the following about those who embrace occultism:

“It is well known that many people enter the world of the occult seeking power. Often the person feels angry and restricted by the commandments of a holy (Elohim). When a person dabbles in the occult, it can stem from ignorance, or it can be generated by defiance against what they have been taught; however the end result is that it fosters rebellion against the one true (Elohim), YHWH. The person will be defiled and embittered through this (unrighteous) link, by the filth of whoring after other gods.

Eventually their conscience becomes SEARED BY A HOT IRON (emphasis author’s), and they no longer can distinguish between right and wrong, so that wrong actually seems right to them.”

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” 1Ti. 4:1-2 KJV

Sadly, it seems that such people have so much scar tissue over their hearts that they have become insensitive to what the Scriptures tell them. Their own feelings and subjective opinions become more important as they justify their actions. In the end, they do that which seems right in their eyes, as in JDG. 21:25, bringing judgment upon themselves.

Some justify their condition as having resulted from past emotional wounds. Instead of turning to YHWH for comfort and healing, they become bitter and vindictive.

When one is specifically called to obey YHWH’s commands and affirms that he will do so, to do otherwise is rebellion. In 1SA. 15:22-23, the prophet Samuel declares to King Saul that rebellion is equated in YHWH’s eyes with qecem: witchcraft,

“And Samuel said, Has YHWH as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of YHWH? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim.

Because you have rejected the word of YHWH, he has also rejected you from being king.”
(ASV, updated)

Is it any wonder that the end of Saul’s reign was fraught with tragedy? Ironically, the night before his death, he sought out and consulted the witch of En-dor, 1SA. 28, confirming his rebellion against YHWH’s Torah and sealing his own judgment.

When believers act in disobedience to the Torah, they not only invite a curse upon themselves but may also provoke YHWH’s anger. When people speak things they ought not say, they curse themselves with their own words. In so doing, they bring unnecessary trouble and hardship into their lives. It may seem like they are living from one calamity after another, unaware that this vicious cycle will only continue until the curse is removed.

If one is living under a curse, what can be done to set himself free?

Using the example in MARK 16:66-72 where Peter denied Yah’shua three times while in the court of the High Priest, it would seem that Yah’shua reinstated Peter to His Apostolic position in JOHN 21:15-17 when He asked him three times whether he loved Him.

For each one of his denials, Peter was led by Yah’shua to undo his words with a proper confession.

In Blessings and Curses, Dr. Prince comments on this unusual incident: “This establishes a pattern for all who need to be released from the snare of a bad confession. We must repent, revoke, and replace. First, we must acknowledge that we have spoken wrong words and repent of them. Second, we must unsay, or cancel, what was wrong. Third, we must replace our previous wrong confession with the right one. These three steps, taken in faith, can release us from the snare.”

Yah’shua died under a curse by being hanged on a tree, DEU. 21:23. Through His death, He exchanged the curse of the Law so that we may receive its blessings. And, as stated in 2 CO. 8:9, He became poor for our sakes that we might become rich: endowed with blessings innumerable. As we read through the book of Revelation, we see repeatedly where YHWH’s faithful ones are called “blessed.” YHWH wishes to richly reward His servants for their faithfulness.

Satan would have us believe that we are trapped within curses of sin and beyond being blessed. In the name of Yah’shua, however, we have authority over Satan and can break any curses that are holding us back from the freedom in which YHWH wishes for us to live. The key to living a blessed life of liberty is to repent of our sins, embrace obedience, and turn each one to YHWH with all of his heart, giving thanks always for all He has done for us.

To avoid being cursed by others, it is best to strive to remain at peace with everyone if possible, ROM. 12:18. But, as in PSA. 120:7, it seems that there are always some who are not inclined to be peaceable. Modern-day witches, wizards, warlocks, and Satanists are known to target believers with curses and spells intended to cause division and destruction. In such

instances, the believer must put on the garments of a spiritual warrior to defend himself from the onslaught of attacks:

“Finally, be strong in (YHWH), and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of (Elohim), that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of (Elohim), that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; with all taking up the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of (Elohim),” EPH. 6:10-17 (ASV, updated)

To defeat the power of curses, it is essential that we use the sword, the Word of YHWH, to cut away at lies, deceptions, and religious traditions to reveal truth. While we should attack the Devil with the sword, Dr. Keyton urges that we should fight using the fruits of the Spirit and allow this power from On High to bring conviction. The Bible should never be used to browbeat and belittle others. Rather, it should be used to help heal them of their sinful condition. Within the Bible lies the authority to defeat the Adversary.

As the believer grows in faith, he increasingly encounters greater hatred against him from the forces of Satan. Regrettably, so often it seems that other believers, perhaps weak in the faith, are used to bring strife, contention, division, and opposition against brethren. Satan wants believers to turn against each other in animosity and speak hateful words to curse one another. This ought not be! The Adversary works hard to see that believers remain divided, rather than united and building up one another.

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” As indicated in PSA. 133, YHWH’s blessing is upon brethren who dwell together in unity. The effect is like the refreshing of the earth in the spring and the renewal of life throughout the land.

Therefore, let us claim the victory over the forces of curses, sin, and bondage. Let us choose life and live for the blessings YHWH wishes for us and remain free of the curses Satan would have us under.