

Deuteronomy 28:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

Analysis

Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out—The Hebrew *bevo'ekha* (בְּבוֹאֲךָ, when you come in) and *uvtse'tekha* (וּבְצֵאתְךָ, when you go out) form a merism encompassing all activities and movements. This construction appears in blessing contexts as well (Psalm 121:8; Deuteronomy 28:6), indicating comprehensive divine oversight of daily life. Under curse, no journey succeeds, no homecoming brings rest, no enterprise prospers—whether going out to work, war, or worship, or returning home from any endeavor.

The phrase may also allude to military campaigns (going out to battle, returning in victory or defeat—see verse 25's elaboration) and civic activity (entering city gates for commerce or justice). Some scholars see connection to birth (coming into life) and death (going out of life), suggesting curse affects one's entire lifespan. The comprehensive formula means covenant violators find no refuge in any circumstance—activity or rest, public or private, beginning or ending. This contrasts sharply with verse 6's blessing on coming in and going out, showing that the same activities yield opposite results depending on covenant faithfulness.

Historical Context

Ancient Israelites lived communal, public lives centered around city gates (where legal/commercial transactions occurred) and fields (where agricultural labor happened). 'Coming in' and 'going out' described the daily rhythm of work and

rest, public and domestic life. Military contexts used this language for deploying to battle and returning (Joshua 14:11; 1 Samuel 29:6). Under covenant curse, Israel experienced failed military campaigns (Judges 2:14-15), unsuccessful harvests despite labor (Haggai 1:6), and dangerous travel conditions. The phrase's comprehensiveness mirrors ancient Near Eastern treaty curse formulae, where vassal rebellion resulted in comprehensive judgment.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the 'coming in/going out' pattern show that covenant relationship affects every transition and activity in life?
2. In what ways do you experience God's blessing or discipline in both your daily departures and returns?

Interlinear Text

אָתָּה וְאָר וּר	בְּבֹאָךְ	אָתָּה וְאָר וּר
Cursed	shalt thou be when thou comest in	Cursed
H779	H935	H779
	בְּצֵאתְךָ:	
	shalt thou be when thou goest out	
	H3318	

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 28:6 (Parallel theme): Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

