

Deuteronomy 28:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee.

Analysis

And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee. The Hebrew shammah (astonishment) conveys horror and desolation—Israel's covenant unfaithfulness would make them a shocking spectacle. Mashal (proverb) and sheninah (byword) indicate they would become proverbial examples of divine judgment, cautionary tales told among nations.

This curse reversed the Abrahamic promise that Israel would be a blessing to nations (Genesis 12:3). Instead of nations seeking Israel's God through their prosperity, they would mock Israel's God through their misery. Jeremiah witnessed this fulfilled: "Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land?" (1 Kings 9:8-9). The answer always pointed to covenant violation—their shame evangelized God's holiness negatively.

Historical Context

This prophecy was fulfilled spectacularly in the Babylonian exile (586 BC) and again in the Roman destruction (AD 70). Lamentations 2:15-16 records nations mocking Jerusalem's fall. Even today, phrases like "wandering Jew" reflect this ancient curse's enduring legacy.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does becoming a negative example among nations reverse God's intended purpose for Israel?
2. What does Israel's historical experience teach about the seriousness of covenant obligations?

Interlinear Text

יְהִי יֵת	לְשֹׁמֶה ה	לְמִשְׁלָל	וּלְשֹׁנִיָּה	בְּכָל
H1961	And thou shalt become an astonishment	a proverb	and a byword	H3605
	H8047	H4912	H8148	
הָעַמִּים יִם	אֲשֶׁר	יִנְהַגְךָ	יְהוָה ה	שָׁמָּה:
among all nations	H834	shall lead	whither the LORD	H8033
H5971		H5090	H3068	

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 25:9 (References Lord): Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.

Jeremiah 24:9 (Parallel theme): And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.

2 Chronicles 7:20 (Word): Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations.

Zechariah 8:13 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.

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