

# Deuteronomy 29:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law:

## Analysis

**And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant** (וְהִבְדִּיל אֵת הַבְּרִית לְכַעַת)—The verb hivdil ("separate") typically describes holy separation unto God (Leviticus 20:26, "I have separated you from the peoples"). Here it's perverted—separation le-ra'ah ("unto evil/calamity") rather than unto blessing. The apostate experiences anti-election, marked out for judgment rather than redemption.

**According to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law** (כָּל אֲלוֹת בְּרִית בְּפִתְוחָה בְּסִפְר הַתּוֹרָה)—The phrase emphasizes comprehensiveness (ke-khol, "according to all") and documentary authority (ha-ketuvah, "the written"). These aren't arbitrary punishments but covenant stipulations agreed upon. The sefer ha-torah ("book of the law") serves as legal evidence—a written treaty document both parties acknowledged (Deuteronomy 31:26).

This judicial separation recalls Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16), where God literally separated rebels from the congregation before earth swallowed them. It foreshadows Israel's exile—the northern kingdom's ten tribes "separated unto evil" through Assyrian conquest (722 BCE), Judah through Babylonian exile (586 BCE). Matthew 25:32-33 uses similar separation language for final judgment.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern treaties often specified separation or exile as covenant violation consequences. Vassal kings who rebelled faced deportation, their territories absorbed by the suzerain. Israel's later exile represents this curse's fulfillment—physical removal from covenant land. The phrase "book of the law" indicates Deuteronomy's written status by Moses' time. Ancient treaty documents were deposited in temples under divine witness; Israel's covenant was placed beside the ark (Deuteronomy 31:26).

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does judicial separation unto evil inform our understanding of reprobation in Reformed theology?
2. In what sense did Israel's exile represent this curse's historical fulfillment?

## Interlinear Text

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ישַׁרְאֵל שְׁבִטִּים וְהַבָּדִיל וְיְהֹוָה לְרַעַת מִכְלָה  
shall separate And the LORD him unto evil H3605 out of all the tribes of Israel  
H914 H3068 H7451 H7626 H3478

בְּסֵפֶר הַפְּתֻוחַת יְהֹוָה תְּבִרֵר אֲלֹוֹת כָּל  
according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book  
H3605 H423 H1285 H3789 H5612

פֶּתַח הַתּוֹךְ הַיְהּוָה  
of the law H2088  
H8451

