

Who Will?

Deuteronomy 30:1-14

Pierre Cannings

I. He Will Return & Restore v. 1-5

a. Blessing and Curse v.1

- i. Bless - Bless/blessing has been most frequently understood in terms of benefits conveyed—prosperity, power, and especially fertility. This focus on the content of the benefit is now being viewed as secondary. The primary factor of blessing is the statement of relationship between parties. God blesses with a benefit on the basis of the relationship. The blessing makes known the positive relationship between the parties.
- ii. Curse - In the Mosaic Law, one means of divine enforcement of the covenant stipulations incumbent on Israel was the curse. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28–32 contain the sanctions portions of the covenant structure relative to their respective statements of the Law, and in these passages much is made of the many types of curses that will attend the Israelites if they abandon the covenant. Twenty-seven types of curses are found in these contexts, representing virtually all the miseries one could imagine occurring in the ancient world but these may be summarized by six terms: defeat, disease, desolation, deprivation, deportation, and death. Such curses are warnings of what God will cause to happen to Israel if they sin. Thus, Jeremiah speaks of the curse that attends the Law (e.g., Jer 11:3) as does Paul (Gal 3:13), with the ultimate curse being that of death, as Rom 6:23 implies. The close relationship between covenant and curse led to a metonymic use of “curse” for “covenant” in Deut 34:12 and Zech 5:3
- iii. Banished – to be scattered

b. He will Return v.2

i. Return

1. The total picture is of a repentant people being restored to their homeland, a very different picture from that which obtains in modern Israel, where there is little evidence of repentance and where great numbers of people are agnostic. Comparison with Ezekiel 36:24–36; 37:23–28 is of interest. Cf. Romans 11:25–27. In these passages God seems to be taking the initiative in restoring

his people and in cleansing them for his name's sake, apparently before they repent

2. In the day of Israel's exile, a day that would be inevitable apart from their full and preemptive repentance (29:28 [27]), Israel would reflect upon the blessings and curses of the covenant articulated in chaps. 27–28 (i.e., “these blessings and curses I have set before you,” v. 1). They would then take them to heart, return to the Lord, and obey him totally and unreservedly. The grammatical pattern suggests a lack of any true conditionality here. When the exile came to pass, so would these acts of repentance and restoration. The reason is that the Lord, who promised Israel to make them his people forever, would bring about a spirit of repentance and obedience among them (cf. Lev 26:40–45; Jer 30:3, 18–22; 31:23–24, 31–34; Ezek 34:11–16; 36:22–36). It was that prompting that would cause Israel to think upon their evil ways, to repent, and to enter once more upon faithful covenant compliance.

ii. Obey -to **cause to hear**:

1. Heart- For “heart” signifies the total inner self, a person's hidden core of being (1 Pt 3:4), with which one communes, which one “pours out” in prayer, words, and deeds (Gn 17:17; Ps 62:8; Mt 15:18, 19). It is the genuine self, distinguished from appearance, public position, and physical presence (1 Sm 16:7; 2 Cor 5:12; 1 Thes 2:17). And this “heart-self” has its own nature, character, disposition, “of man” or “of beast”
2. Soul- In a narrower sense the soul denotes man in his varied emotions and inner powers. Man is called to love God with all his heart and soul. Here the soul comes close to what today would be called the self, one's person, personality, or ego
3. According to Command- to **give an order, command**,
 - a. In the Bible, *mišwâ-entolē* emphasizes the authority of the God who commands rather than the content of the commandment as such. The commandment is the expression of God's will for his people. Rather than suggesting arbitrary demand or constraint, the terminology evokes God's moral authority

c. He will Restore v.3-7

i. Restore - used in a theological sense: to turn back to God (Yahweh) be devoted to God

1. Israel thus would think upon their plight in captivity and would return to the Lord and obey him (vv. 1–2). This done, the Lord would undertake his work of restoration because of his great compassion. From the ends of the earth he would bring back

those whom he had banished in judgment (v. 3; cf. 4:27–31). No distance would be so great as to cause him to overlook them or to prevent their return (v. 4; cf. Isa 43:6; 48:20; 62:11).

ii. Compassion- **someone with love, take pity on someone**

1. Gather - scattered flocks
2. Scattered

iii. Bring you Back

1. “*bring back thy captives*”: it is used commonly with reference to a decisive *turn*, or change, in a people’s fortune. Here, as also Jer. 29:14, 30:3, Ez. 29:14, the return from captivity is mentioned separately afterwards
2. Outcast- scattered; to push away, banish, or cast out. In five of seven passages the term refers to exiles from Israel who are to be regathered by the Lord (Ps 147:2; Is 11:12; 27:13; 56:8; Jer 30:17)

iv. Bring You Back

1. Land of Your Fathers

- a. The judgment of devastation and deportation would produce its desired salutary effects, for the people would come back to the land of promise again (v. 5a), they would prosper more than ever before (v. 5b), and they would be so transformed by the Lord as to be able to love him with all their being (v. 6). While the repossession of the land can be said to some extent to have been fulfilled by the return of the Jews following the Babylonian exile (cf. Jer 29:10–14; 30:3), the greater prosperity and population was not achieved in Old Testament times. In fact, it still awaits realization in any literal sense (cf. Hag 2:6–9; Zech 8:1–8; 10:8–12).

2. Prosper Commentators who want to see in this verse a post-exilic expansion have overlooked the fact that blessings not unlike these are written into the secular treaties of the second millennium BC.⁴ The fact of Yahweh’s *delight* in prospering Israel is reminiscent of Jeremiah 32:41. The broad picture of the blessing and healing of the people in a coming day has a strong parallel in the whole of Jeremiah 32.

3. Multiply- to **be friendly towards, deal well with**

v. Circumcise Your Heart

1. Circumcise - *Will circumcise (10:16) thy heart*] *i.e.* remove its dulness of spiritual perception (29:3 (4)), so that it may display again the activity and willingness

⁴ See ANET, p. 206, for a typical Hittite treaty.

- a. Just as circumcision of the flesh symbolized outward identification with the Lord and the covenant community (cf. Gen 17:10, 23; Lev 12:3; Josh 5:2), so circumcision of the heart (a phrase found only here and in Deut 10:16 and Jer 4:4 in the OT) speaks of internal identification with him in what might be called regeneration in Christian theology. Paul equated circumcision of the heart with spiritual renewal, especially in the Epistle to the Romans. He argued that circumcision has value for the Jew who obeys the law (i.e., who keeps covenant), but as a mere outward, physical sign it has no value at all to the disobedient (Rom 2:25–27).
 - b. Under a slightly different figure Israel’s restoration to full covenant blessing was described by Jeremiah and Ezekiel as the engraving of the covenant stipulations upon the fleshy tablets of the heart. In the last days, Jeremiah said, the Lord will make a “new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,” one whose statutes will be put “in their minds” and written “on their hearts.” The result will be that he will be their God and they will be his people (Jer 31:31–33). Ezekiel spoke of this hope as the giving of a new heart and spirit following the return to the land, a return to be marked by prosperity and abundance for the nation (Ezek 36:24–30).
2. The heart of your descendants
 3. Love your God
 - a. With all heart and soul
 - i. that thou canst talk of it familiarly with thy lips (cf. 6:7, 11:19), and meditate upon it in thy heart (cf. 6:6, 11:18); thou art consequently placed in a position for giving it practical effect.⁵
 - b. So that you can live
- d. He will Curse Your Enemies
 - i. Cursed The *curses* (*’âlâ*) which formerly rested on Israel will be transferred to those nations who brought about Israel’s destruction and exile. Even the wicked agent of Yahweh will not escape the justice of God (cf. Isa. 10:5–23).
 - ii. Those who persecuted you

II. He will Prosper You v. 8-10

- a. Obey the Lord again
 - i. All His Commandments
- b. Then Prosper
 - i. Prosper Abundantly
 - 1. Prosper- and have left over, more than enough, priority
 - 2. Abundantly - a good outcome, multiply
 - ii. In all the work of your hand
 - 1. Offspring body
 - 2. Offspring of Cattle
 - 3. Produce Ground
 - iii. Rejoice over you for Good and Fathers
- c. If you Obey
 - i. If- The syntax of v. 10 is different, however, for the dependent clause is highly conditional. The question here is not *when* Israel would obey and turn to the Lord but *if*. That is, the issue here (as opposed to vv. 1–6) is not the eternality of the covenant relationship itself—a matter never denied in Scripture—but the benefits and blessings attached to covenant obedience in the present. If Israel historically did all that the Lord required by way of covenant observance (v. 10), they could expect all the results listed earlier
 - ii. Keep His Commandments
 - iii. Statutes- regulations for life
 - iv. If You Turn
 - 1. With all Your Heart and Soul

III. Who Will? v. 11-14

- a. It is not the Difficult
 - i. Out of Reach
- b. It is not Far
 - i. Not in Heaven
 - 1. *is not in heaven*,—in an inaccessible height, which none can scale; *neither is it beyond the sea*,—in some distant region, which none can visit, for the purpose of fetching it thence, and bringing it to Israel’s knowledge
 - 2. Observe it
 - ii. Not beyond the Sea
 - 1. Observe it
- c. Word is Near
 - i. In your Mouth
 - ii. In Your Heart

- iii. Though originating in the transcendent glory of heaven, the word of the Lord need not be pursued there by a messenger sent to inquire of God's covenant expectations (v. 12). Nor need such an envoy be sent to some distant place on earth to learn of God's revelation (v. 13). Instead, Moses said, the word is "very near you" (v. 14a), so near, in fact, that it was in their mouth and heart (v. 14b). Paul cited this passage to speak of the accessibility of Christ and the gospel (Rom 10:6–8).
- iv. Some biblical references represent Wisdom as being inaccessible (Job 28:12ff.), but the Law lay at everyone's door. In this Israel saw a special evidence of God's love for her (4:6–8; Pss. 19:7–11; 119). The Law could be in the mouth of every man as he repeated it over and allowed it thus to enter his heart and flow out into his life. God's will expressed in the covenant did not require deep searching among the mysteries of the universe, for it was as near as hearing and seeing and had been revealed plainly to Israel (29:29).