

Charles A. Clough
Deuteronomy Series 2009-2012
Fellowship Chapel, Jarrettsville, MD

Lesson 71-- Deut 32:19-43 God's "Lawsuit"--Sentence and the Surprise Ending
24 January 2012

I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

1:1-5	Introduction to God's spokesman, the 1 st Prophet Moses
1:6-4:40	1st Exposition of the Torah = <i>motivation</i> to obey from (1) <u>past gracious actions</u> of Yahweh and (2) sovereign <u>destiny</u> of the nation (<u>future gracious actions</u> of Yahweh)
4:41-49	Editorial comment on context of 2 nd Exposition of the Torah
5:1-26:19	2nd Exposition of the Torah = <i>proper response</i> to Yahweh in heart and soul
27:1-29:1	3rd Exposition of the Torah = <i>inauguration of the covenant</i> in the land
29:2-30:20	4th Exposition of the Torah = prophetic fore view of <i>covenant performance</i>
	29:2-29:29 Israel's past, present and (near) future
	30:1-20 Moses' closing challenge
31:1-34:12	Handover procedures from Moses to Joshua and the new generation
	31:1- 29 Inauguration of Joshua
	32:1-43 The Prophetic Anthem of Israel--the investiture of the Covenant witnesses

Deut 32 is a poetic but legal "lawsuit" format that reveals God's "case" against Israel. This format underlies directly some later writing prophets (e.g., Isaiah, Hosea, Micah) and indirectly all of them.

- I. Court Procedure (**32:1-14**)
 - Call for witnesses (**32:1-3**)
 - Introduction of the case (**32:4-6**)
 - Faithfulness of Yahweh (**32:7-14**)
- II. Accusation (**32:15-18**)
- III. Sentence (**32:19-25**)
- IV. *Gracious Ultimate Assurance* (**32:27-43**)

II. THE PROPHETIC ANTHEM OF ISRAEL: THE INVESTITURE OF THE COVENANT WITNESSES (Deut 32:19-43)

A. Yahweh's Sentence Against Israel (**32:19-25**)

32:19-20 hide my face from them

This prophetically anticipates conditions centuries in the future.

Idiom for a rupture in _[personal]_ relationship; not just a legal impersonal procedure.

32:21 provoked Me to jealousy. . . provoke them to jealousy

Play on the word "jealousy"

by what is not God. . . those not a nation

Discipline matches the sin

not God. . . foolish idols (Heb: "hevel" = vanities cf. Ecclesiastes = no substance)

Either the _[objective]_ authority of Word of the Creator God or the _[subjective]_ "authority" of the individual finite, fallen mind.

1. No basis for belief in the uniformity of nature (so not available throughout mankind until AFTER the Diaspora when Greek thinkers developed the idea in a paganized fashion).
 - a. If nature has no Creator Who has comprehensively designed, given meaning to, and providentially administers every fact, then the world is ultimately _[mysterious and irrational]_.
 - b. Then all reputed "knowledge" of nature is really a mirage, a _[projection]_ of man's thoughts.
 - c. The naturalist is thus suspended between claiming nature is irrational yet also claiming that it is rational and understandable.
 - d. Apart from God's revelation, belief in the uniformity of nature cannot be justified.
2. No basis for confidence in the law of non-contradiction (also not recognized as a tool for all understanding until AFTER the Diaspora when Greek thinkers began to employ it in a comprehensive fashion).
 - a. If logic is derived from experience, then it is _[contingent]_ upon the next experience and not universal in space and time.
 - b. If logic is merely conventional social agreement, then it is _[arbitrary]_ and not universal in space and time.
 - c. Logic requires ultimate metaphysical unity (the rules never change) to co-exist with ultimate metaphysical diversity (discrete materials remain discrete)--a condition supplied by the Triunity of God.
 - d. The naturalist who denies the Creator-Logos Who is ultimately rational is thus again suspended between claiming nature is irrational yet also claiming that it is rational and understandable by the logical rules originating in his mind.

Unbelief is "hevel" = lacks substance.

not a nation. . . a foolish nation

Gentile conquerors (Assyrians, Babylonians): have no special standing with God like Israel (recall 2 key historical characteristics of Israel--contract with God and centuries-long line of self-consistent prophets)

Point: Israel goes after "hevel"/vanity with no basis for faith or life; so they become overwhelmed by a nation built upon vanity!!

32:22 burn to the lowest hell

Metaphor perhaps originated in post-flood tectonic volcanism (it is not a gradually "evolving" concept of the underworld).

32:23-25 disasters. . . arrows. . . hunger. . . pestilence. . . beasts. . . sword outside. . . terror inside

Comprehensive sentence of discipline.

B. Gracious Ultimate Assurance (32:26-43)

Major difference here with similar pagan "lawsuit" proceedings. The story doesn't end in Israel's total destruction. There's an [interplay] between God's holiness and His grace that in the end compromises neither. How can this be with sinful Israel? Somehow there must be atonement for sin plus righteousness in Israel that satisfies God's holiness.

32:26-27 I would have said I will dash them in pieces. . .had I not feared the wrath of the enemy

Here is an example of how the sovereign God "interacts" with man. Previous example in **Exodus 32:1-14** where God threatens to utterly destroy Israel in His conversation with Moses which prompts Moses the Levite to successfully intercede on Israel's behalf.

In **Deut 32:26-43** God's threat again is mitigated by another factor: His glory.

lest they should say "Our hand is high; And it is not the LORD who has done this"

The perverted interpretation of pagans: autonomous reasoning.

32:28-33 O that they understood this. . .one. . .thousand. . .

Israel should not have such a perverted interpretation.

their rock is not like our Rock even as our enemies judges

The pagan nations will be aware of the God of Israel and His uniqueness (recall Rahab's words to Joshua). Also note here the oscillation between the 3rd and 1st plural pronouns once again showing how God's speech interweaves with the prophet's speech.

Sodom. . .Gomorrah. . .

Here is the key question Israel must ask: why is God allowing evil to triumph over the theocracy? They should clearly understand that God indeed is doing so, not like **Jeremiah 44:5-19** (Lesson 66). esp., **44:17-18**.

32:34-35 laid up in store with Me

Yahweh is sovereign over the pagan conquerors; they are not ultimately in control. Yahweh raises them up to do His bidding and will put them down so they will NOT have the last word. **vengeance is Mine**

All "justice" emanates from God. Criminal procedures in society by civil authorities are but derivatives of His judgments (see **Rom. 12:19-13:4**).

their foot shall slip in due time

Arrogant pagan conquerors will get their just due also.

32:36 For the LORD will judge His people and have compassion

Here's why: the "mission" of the pagan conquerors will have accomplished its purpose--to drive Israel to repent. Once that purpose is fulfilled, the pagan conquerors have no mission left.

their power is gone

Israel is prostrate

32:37-38 Where are their gods. . .who ate the fat of their sacrifices. . .let them rise and help you

Sarcasm using a *reductio ad absurdum* argument. Today there's room of such argument against the social elite who propose increased centralization of power in their hands. How has socialism and its deification of civil power solved man's problems? How has secular education improved the well-being of youth?

32:39 Now see that I, even I, am He. There is no God besides Me.

This is the truth that Israel must be driven to acknowledge, i.e., the 1st commandment!!

His Word alone provides the metaphysical and epistemological foundation for life.

32:40 For I raise my hand to heaven

A gesture of swearing an oath (cf. **Gen. 14:22**). Yahweh will come to Israel's aid (Abrahamic contract) once Israel reaches repentance.

32:41-42 sword. . . judgment. . . vengeance to my enemies. . . my sword shall devour flesh from the heads of the enemies leaders

God will judge the Gentile conquerors all the way up to their top leaders, perhaps implying the demonic powers that inspired them.

32:43 Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people. . .

Concluding exhortation to the world to recognize that God has chosen to work exclusively using Israel as His channel to bless the world!

avenge the blood of His servants. . . vengeance to His adversaries. . . atonement for His land and His people. . .

Basis in Abrahamic covenant: bless them. . . curse him.

III. CONCLUSION

The prophetic anthem of chapter 32 focuses on the ethical key to Israel's (and the world's) historical experiences.

- Not about economics, sociology, or military might.
- It centers on whether their relationship with God is one of enmity or friendship which in turn is subservient to God's ultimate glory at the culmination of history.

