

Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 Explained by Rabbi Tovia Singer

That was a very, very sophisticated question and I don't think many of our viewers will get it. So Leo asked, so Jeremiah chapter five is a raw chapter where God's people are being told that they're utterly corrupt and the consequences of their behavior. And it says that in fact that people who of a language you don't know will come and overtake you. It's vital that you know if you're going to approach the Book of Jeremiah that this great Prophet lived at the end of the First Temple Period and prophesied for the last 41 years of the First Temple Period. So it's not that he was just there, he was there for an enormous amount of time. Jeremiah was 15 years old when his prophetic career began and it continued until he was 56, okay.

I want to give you just the span, the mass[ive], in fact his prophetic career was identical in length to Moses. Jeremiah then goes to Egypt and his prophetic career ends, he continues but we know after that his writings don't continue.

So wow the question was so sophisticated so we have two chapters in the Torah that are very, very similar. They're called the Tochacha, they're chapters of rebuke, blessings and curses and they're not easy to read. Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy chapter 28.

They're similar, awfully similar and they both tell what will happen to the Jewish people. They describe [what] will happen to Jewish people if they're loyal to God and conversely if they're not loyal to God, what will happen to them. So Nachmanides notices something very striking about these two, what appears to be parallel passages is that Deuteronomy 28 is just much worse, it's not just longer in the size of it and it goes on and on but it's just much, much more intense. In terms of the punishment, the curses, it just goes on. Where and the chapter really doesn't end with nechoma [comfort] like but Leviticus 26 does. Leviticus 26 ends, comes to a close with exquisite description of that when the nation who has been punished, the Jewish people are in exile in the land of their enemies, what are they going to do? And I'm going to throw this in, it doesn't say they're going to believe in Jesus. But they're going to cry out, they're going to they're going to cry out to Me, they're going to repent and I'll hear them and I'll forgive them and I'll bring them back, not because they're so great but because of the promise I made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Okay so you have that kind of ending where there's comfort in it. Deuteronomy 28 doesn't have that feature although later on we'll find it as the Book of Deuteronomy continues. So Nachmanides points out that these chapters are a reminder of two exiles. One that is a more an easier going exile, that's the exile following the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonian empire; and in

contrast the second exile after destruction of the Second Temple by the Roman Empire which is much, much worse and the exile is much longer. After all, the exile that followed the First Temple, 70 years, and it was predicted. The exile of the Second Temple, well it's been thousands of years and it's just much worse.

The destruction of the First Temple was relatively speaking a cake walk compared to destruction of the Second Temple. The Second Temple destruction were just is much more horrible on ways that are beyond the scope. So Nachmanides is conveying that these two parallel passages should bring that to our memory and plus we see things in Deuteronomy 28 where it's just you you'll lose your mind at night; you'll wish it was day, day - night, you'll lose, you literally lose your mind from the what you're going to endure. It's much more intense, much more amped up. So Nachmanides is saying that these two chapters are to remind us of the two exiles of the Jewish people. One being the exile of Edom, the Roman Exile is just something much worse and it's not even completely over yet.

...Nachmanides is not saying that these are not parallel passages so the Babylonians were a foreign people who came and just attacked the Jewish people, subordinated the people of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem just a year after he became king of Babylon. So it was a very much a foreign people that came in the language you don't recognize and Jeremiah is certainly using that. But Nachmanides is not saying that, 'Alright that Leviticus 26

has no bearing on our exile and Deuteronomy 28 has no bearing on the first exile.' But rather it is a, rather it's a homily. So you know I think that's how you should look at it, okay. All right thank you for your question.¹

¹ Tenak Talk (TaNaCh), '1307 - Convincing an Athiest that G-D DOES Exist and The Torah IS His Word - with Rabbi Tovia Singer', (YouTube, 3/1/2022, 41:49) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gN_wmQRQ7zE>.