

## Jeshurun Grew Fat and Kicked (Song of Moses, part 2) – Deuteronomy 32:15-29

**Introduction** – Recall that Moses is teaching this song for Israel to sing – for a long time. The theme announced in vv4-6 was in two contrasting parts: the goodness of God, and the faithlessness of Israel. Despite God's generous and abundant provision (vv13-14), ungrateful Israel will become self-reliant and disloyal. And so this part of the song declares God's response to Israel's unfaithfulness as well as His secret intentions in their rebellion all along. The song can be applied in a host of situations, personal, familial, national, in all times and places. But most importantly, in the time of the New Testament, its fulfillment is applied to the rejection of the Messiah and God's perfect plan for the salvation of the world.

**Kicked and Rebelled** (vv15-18) – Blessings from God are real blessings, not tricks; they are to be received with gratitude before Him. But they frequently bring insolence and rebellion (v15). Jeshurun is a pet-name for Israel, meaning "upright one" which she was supposed to be, having been specially chosen by Yahweh. And the suppressing of the truth and the true God always leads to idolatry, and their idolatrous connections were demonic (vv16-17). Paul gives the same warnings to the Corinthians for the New Testament Christians can fall into the same errors (1 Cor 10:1-22). They sacrificed to gods they did not know and to new, faddish ones as well (v17). We think we are too sophisticated to be idolaters, and yet we are a nation who has turned away from *"the Rock who begot you...who fathered you"* v18, easily applied figuratively to our nation or individually to the ransacked wombs in our land. *Have material blessings been received with gratitude or has the Giver been despised and self-indulgence become the state of affairs? Have spiritual blessings been embraced, protected, and built upon, or has such liberty produced licentiousness and scorn before our Rock?*

**Spurned by a Jealous God** (vv19-25) – In response, God spurned Israel and their provocations (v19). He turned His face away from them (removed His blessings and blessed presence) to see what would become of them (v20). Their lack of faith was a perversity (idolatry and spiritual adultery are often connected in the scriptures) – and notice that the OT required that Israel be children by faith (and not by works, i.e. Hab 2:4). They provoked God with their "no-gods" and so God promises to provoke them with a "no-people." But His provocation is a provocation unto jealousy, and to those with ears to hear, you can see He is promising salvation to other peoples. Judgments follow and none are spared (vv22-25).

*God will not be mocked by Israel, freely revealing His glory in His mercy or in His just wrath. What will become clear is that God freely intends to overwhelmingly choose mercy in the long run. Yet there will be judgment upon those who remain in their proud unbelief.*

**What Stayed His Hand?** (vv26-29) – In this merciful plan, His total destruction is stayed, for God does not want their enemies to gloat (vv26-27). A remnant remains lest the Gentiles take credit for their victory – and we see this in later judgments upon Assyria and Babylon (Isaiah 10:12-19, 47:6-8). The reference to *"a nation void of counsel"* (v28), applies to the enemy cited in v27, but it also includes Israel. There is probably an intentional ambiguity as whether vv28-29 refers to Israel or her enemies. What is clear is that all should be humbled (Rom 3:23). And this leads us to one of the central doctrines in the book of Romans as well...

**Where the Song is Quoted in Romans 10:19** – Paul instructs the church at Rome that all are under sin, Gentiles and Jews (Rom 1-3) and that the only justification for either is through the atoning propitiation of Jesus Christ (Rom 3:24ff). Recall that Paul had been talking about the potency of the gospel in Romans 10:1-17 where he had quoted Deuteronomy 30, affirming the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ (Rom 10:5-7) and the fact that Jesus, the gospel, was in their mouth and heart to be confessed and believed (10:8-13). That faith comes through preaching when the people hear Christ (vv14-17). Paul says, all have heard in one way (v18, quoting Psalm 19:4), but Israel did not listen and God sought to provoke them through taking Christ to the Gentiles (vv19-21, quoting the Song of Moses and two verses in Isaiah 65).

**Inscrutable Wisdom** – The Jews put Jesus to death out of envy-jealousy (Matt 27:18). But God planned the rejection of His Son, using that rebellion to bring salvation to the world (Acts 2:22-24, 4:27-28). That rejection continued as the church was first persecuted by the Jews (i.e. Acts 8:1, 3-4). Jesus was found by those who were not a nation, by a foolish nation (consider what our European ancestors were doing at the time the gospel was brought to them). But God has not cast away the Jews forever (Rom 11:1). Rather, just as He prophesied in the Song of Moses - *"through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness"* (Rom 11:11-12).

Of course, the church must learn the same lesson. There is no place for growing fat and self-indulgent; there is no place for taking one's salvation for granted and going after false gods, false religions, false worldviews, idolatrous practices and politics. The warning is clear – anyone can be cut out; God's just wrath is real and hard. But the good news is just as clear – God's intentions always lean towards mercy, mercy towards those who call upon Him, mercy to others through the rebellion of some, mercy to the prodigal who is brought back.