Word Study: Curse

WORD STUDY – CURSE
Jeremiah 17:5: “Thus said the Lord; ‘Curse be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm whose heart, departeth from the Lord.”

Curse – Hebrew: ‘aror – Curse, to remove the influence of God. Thank goodness this verse was written in Hebrew and not English. Just because some English speaking lexicographer decided that “aror” means curse in English, everyone jumps on the band wagon declares that God curses people or invokes evil on people according to our English definition of the word curse.

Curse in Hebrew is aror which comes from the idea of a situation where God is not present. To curse someone is to demand that God removes His protective covering, His Succoth or arm of protection from that person.

In Jeremiah 17:5 the word “aror” is in a passive voice. Hence, this is not an action of God, but a result of what will happen if we trust in the arm of the flesh. A good example of this is Hezekiah in Isaiah 38. The Babylonians are at Judah’s door step ready to be evangelized, hungry for God Jehovah and what does Hezekiah do with these potential converts? He starts to show off his wealth and power. Let me digress, in Isaiah 38 we learn Hezekiah is about to die. God grants him 15 more years and as a sign He pulls a time travel stunt on Ahaz’s sundial holding back 40 minutes. Hezekiah was not the only one to marvel at this sign. The Babylonians were devoted star gazers and when things got a little messed up in the skies due to God’s little time relativity trick, the Babylonians figured that this is one God we need to check out to help us in our fight against the Assyrians.

Can you dig it, here God does this great miracle, grants Hezekiah an extended life and even gives him the opportunity to team up with a mega-nation and make a name for God and what does Hezekiah do? He shows off what a powerful and anointed
king he thinks he is. Hezekiah was trusting in the “arm of the flesh” and we learn in Jeremiah 17:5 that God will curse such a person.

“Arm of the flesh” is “basar (arm, strength) zera’o (flesh, human initiative).” Which means to plant or conceive in the flesh. To depend on the strength of human initiative). The problem is not looking to the flesh to pull you through. I mean God uses secular work, human skills and knowledge. He uses the physicians, lawyers, politicians etc. But is out “zera’o (arm, strength)” in Jehovah or in “basar (flesh, human initiative).” If our strength (zera’o) lies in the flesh (basar) then God will curse us.

How often we venture out on our own strength and think nothing of it, little realizing that we are cursed or we are going this venture without God.

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Devotional Malachi 2:2

Good Morning Yamon Ki Yesepar and Nevim Arith Hayomim:

Malachi 2:2: “If you will not hear and you will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of Host, I will even send a curse upon you and I will curse your blessings, yea, I have cursed them already, because you do not lay it to heart.”

“There are two things a preacher should never have, a real estate license or a teacher’s certificate.” ~ Anonymous

Malachi was a prophet who prophesied after Haggai and Zachariah. His prophecy was about 420 B.C. or about 400 years before the birth of Christ. The Nation of Israel had just returned from their captivity and were in the second return under Nehemiah from Persia. It is believed that the prophets
The name was not Malachi, but that the name was simply a description of the prophet, “My messenger.” The identity is really unknown and very little is known of Malachi except that he may have been a Levite and a priest.

He directed his prophesy to the priest who had become laxed in their duties. The priesthood had become a job or just a family business. As each generation of priest passed on to the new generation they lost their devotion to God and just performed their duties. Indeed, if many had a real estate license or a teacher’s certificate they would have left the priesthood to pursue a different career. The priest were offering up sacrifices that were not without blemish or spot, but were offering up the lame, blind and sickly sacrifices figuring no one would notice. They did so because they did not want to upset the people who brought such sacrifices. They wanted to be a priest of the people and cut people a little slack rather than be the harsh examiners of the sacrifice and demand a better offering.

The syntax of verse 2:2 suggest that the “curse” God would send would be on the blessings He gave. The word “curse” is “arar” which really means to loath. In other words, God is not saying He will remove their blessing, but he will cause them to loath the blessing. The blessings of a priest is found in his service to God. Because they did not perform the service with their ‘hearts.” God put a dread and/or loathing on their service such that the service was just a job or a duty to perform.

I have met many ministers, Sunday School teachers, and Christian workers who feel trapped in their ministry. They would love to minister some other way. They look longingly at the worship team wishing they could lead the worship service rather than teach a bunch of screaming kids in Children’s Church. Yet, if they had their chance on the worship team, that too would become a chore and filled with dread, because God put a curse or a dread on the blessing that
such service could bring. An assistant pastor may long to preach more than just to fill in on certain Sundays when the senior pastor is not available. Yet, given the opportunity to preach every Sunday, it would turn into a chore and dread because God would put a loathing on them.

So why would God put a loathing on someone who is performing a service to Him? This verse tells us that the priest would not hear or “lay it to heart” to give glory to God’s name. The syntax is a little difficult here. The word “lay” is “shuv” which is a picture of putting on a garment or overcoat. This could very well read in the Hebrew that the priest would not let the glory of God surround their hearts. You can’t give “glory” to God, because He is the glory. What you do is receive His glory and let it surround your heart. When you do your heart will only see God and nothing else will matter. You do not care what people think. It doesn’t matter if people think you are so holy that you could pose for a holy card, or such a rascal that people wonder if your are saved to begin with. It does not matter if people are jealous of your position and fire you from you ministry or if they lift you up in honor for your work. When your heart is surrounded by the glory of God, you live to serve Him. For to live is Christ, to die is gain as the Apostle Paul so pointed out.

What happened to the priest is that they began to care what people thought of them, they cared if they were honored or fired from their ministry. They became defensive if someone criticized them. They were not letting the “glory” surround their heart. They left their heart exposed so it could see the praise or condemnation from others. As a result they compromised their duties. Because of that God took away the pleasure and joy of ministry and replaced it with a loathing and dread to perform His service.

The words of an old poem have been haunting me the past few days;
“I will trade my sunshine for rain,
Comfort for pain,
If through sorrow I could be more like you,
That’s what I will be willing to do.”

I’m safe just writing these little devotionals and sending them out through e-mail where most people usually ignore it or save it for a time when they have to read it but somehow never get around to reading it. I do this because I feel God’s pleasure when I write and since my audience is a select audience and few do read them, I am safe. But as I contemplate publishing a book using the Esoteric Hebrew and going public, I begin to see that my heart is not surrounded by the glory of God. I find I worry about the backlash, the criticism from those who will condemn the use of the Esoteric Hebrew. I could very well become like the priest and accept a blind lamb in place of a lamb without blemish or spot just so I am not criticized. If I do that the joy of writing will become a chore. If I publish a book just to get honor or praise, I will begin to loath writing and study. The blessing I receive from my studies will become a curse, I will begin to loath it. If I surround my heart with the glory of God, I will then publish a book that is without blemish or spot and the criticism or honor will not matter, all that matters is doing that which brings pleasure to God.

If your ministry is something you have come to dread or loath, perhaps you might consider whether it is God’s “curse” on your work for not surrounding your heart with His glory.