

The Lessons Believers Can Learn From Israel's Fallen Moral State Under Moses

Have you ever noticed how difficult it is to lose weight but how easy it is to put it on? Spirituality and godliness are not easier disciplines to master than weight loss.

Moses refers to Israel as *Jeshurun* (*Yeshurun*, יֵשׁוּרֻן). But *Yeshurun* grew fat and kicked—you are grown fat, thick and sleek—then he forsook God who made him, and scorned the Rock of his salvation (Deut. 32:15).

Moses used the name *Yeshurun* to contrast Israel's great spiritual potential with their fallen condition. It is a word derived from the root *yashar* (יָשָׁר), which means to be "upright." *Yeshurun* means "upright one," and the word is used as a term of endearment for Israel. The people of God are to be morally upright and straight before the LORD.

The Greek (LXX) version of the Torah translates the word as "beloved one." In the Song of Moses (Deut. 32), however, the term *Yeshurun* is used sarcastically to describe an apostate Israel that was once upright but is no longer so.

Moses foretold that when the children of Israel entered the land of Canaan, God would give them all the bounty of the land. The people of Israel were destined to enjoy "the produce of the field ... honey from the rock ... oil ... curds of cows, and milk of the flock, with fat of lambs, and rams ... and goats, with the finest of the wheat—and of the blood of grapes ... wine" (Deut. 32:13-14).

Moses predicted that Israel's success in the land would result in apathy toward God and a desire for materialism. All that good eating was going to spawn an ungrateful and rebellious

spirit. There is a tradition in Judaism which says, "A full stomach leads to sin."

Prosperity often places a greater obstacle between us and God than poverty does. The poor man looks to God for help continually. The prosperous man can find it easy to forget about God. Perhaps this is why Jesus teaches us, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3), which is to say, "Blessed are those who have the humble attitude of a poor man."

The Song of Moses goes on to portray *Yeshurun*, the upright one, as fat and slovenly—a reference to Israel's fallen moral state. The image is like that of a former Olympic athlete who has become rotund and lethargic.

Improvement and maintenance in our spiritual lives requires daily effort and commitment. Backsliding requires no effort at all. The moment we stop moving forward in our walk with God, the flesh begins to pull us backward.

This can be compared to a swimmer who was swimming upstream. It took effort, but so long as he continued to swim, he made steady progress. When he stopped to rest by floating in the water, though, he immediately began to drift downstream. In only a short time, all his progress was lost.

To stay spiritually in shape, we need to press on every day. If we do, we will be upright, worthy of the name *Yeshurun*. If we are spiritually lazy, though, and allow the flesh to rule us, we will quickly become like the fat, flabby *Yeshurun* described in Deuteronomy 32. {eoa}

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