

32:32

Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, "blot me out of Your book which You have written." "It was customary to have registers of citizenship in which were entered the names of citizens both natural and adopted, and in the case of Israel, they were citizens of a covenant community."¹ What was the purpose of the book of the living? To record people who were a part of a community. Here's how it went basically: when you were born, you were written in the registry of the city in which you were born. If you died, your name was blotted out.

Was Moses asking to be removed from a book of the living in the covenant community of Israel?² Because if culture of the time matters; if the history behind a passage matters, you find out that the book of the living was a cultural norm that when you were a part of a community, your name was written in the book of the living and when you died then your name was blotted out (Isaiah 4:3). It seems unfair to the text to superimpose a previously unmentioned book later introduced in Revelation which would include all who would be saved.

It seems Exodus 17:14 gives us the license to say that this "blotting" of Israel (32:14) would be the blotting of the Amalekites: removing of them from under Heaven. Moreover, it seems that Moses' response was one of "God, if you're going to kill all them...kill me too!"

Romans 9:1-3, therefore, is Paul's personal application of Moses' own practice. We know Exodus is on Paul's mind when you look later in Romans 9 and find Pharaoh as recorded in Exodus 9, having his heart hardened. "Being accursed," therefore, introduces the idea of being separated from the covenant of Christ as much as Moses was asking to be removed from the Old Covenant (introduced in Exodus 24).

¹Ps. 69:28

¹James Freeman's "Manners and Customs of the Bible,"

²More to the debate about "literal books" and such in my commentary on Revelation (a complete appendix). There is also more in that appendix that helps us understand the Book of Life is a registry of the living in the New Jerusalem. Also, in that appendix is a discussion of a book of the new covenant of the living in Heaven (Hebrews 12) and how that rather "reads back into" Exodus 32 to a sort of earthly book of earthly participants of the old covenant.