

Leviticus Chapter 26

Verses 1-46

This chapter is a collection of blessings on those who keep the law and of curses on those who do not.

A collection of such blessings and curses was the usual way to close a major legal text in biblical times.

The main section of Deuteronomy ends with a similar series of blessings and curses (Deut. Chapter 28).

We also find this pattern in (Exodus 23:25-33 and Joshua 24:20).

It is a pattern that occurs outside the Bible in literature spanning the first three millennia B.C.

Legal collections (such as the laws of Ur-Nammu, Lipit-Ishtar, and Hammurapi); Babylonian boundary stones; and Hittite, Aramean, and Assyrian treaties typically conclude with a section of blessings and curses.

Such threats could be implemented as part of the superstitious belief of people in the ancient Near East.

But for Israel, there was no doubt that the God who wrought the mighty act of deliverance at the Red sea and judged the Egyptians and Pharaoh, could carry out such ominous threats or blessings.

The covenant blessings for obedience (26:3-13), and curses for disobedience (26:14-39), are elaborated.

A provision for repentance is also offered (26:40-45).

Verses 1-2

Certain prohibitions precede the blessings proper (verses 3-13).

“Idols”:

The Hebrew term conveys the idea of “to be weak, deficient” and then is used primarily in Scripture to describe vain objects of worship, that is, the gods of this world, whether literal idols, riches, or deceitful men.

“Graven Image:

This was forbidden (in Exodus 20:4), and was a cultic representation of deity such as has been found at several sites in Canaan.

“Standing image”:

It was apparently made of stone and probably intended to comprise a tangible indication of the presence of El or Baal, the two principal deities of Canaanite religion.

The “image of stone”, or “figured stone”, would no doubt have contained some carved picture of a Canaanite deity.

There was one unearthed at Ugarit (Ras Shamra), depicting Baal hurling thunderbolts, which dates about 1800 B.C.

The “keeping of the Sabbath” and “reverence” for “my sanctuary” would be the best means of forestalling the corruptions of Canaanite religion.

Verses 1-2

A representative summary of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17), was set forth as the standard by which Israel’s obedience or disobedience would be measured.

Leviticus 26:1 "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up [any] image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I [am] the LORD your God."

“Idols ... graven image ... standing image ... images of stone”:

There were forms of pagan idol worship at that time.

Although idols today often look different than these, the LORD forbids His people in any age to worship any god other than Himself.

Israel’s neighbors used all of these devices for the worship of their gods.

This is just another way of stating part of the Ten Commandments.

Idols from the Scripture above, is translated from the word el-eel, which means good for nothing or of no value.

Another way of saying it would be "nothings".

One of the best examples in the Bible, about how important it is not to bow to an idol or a false god, is Daniel.

He even went to the lions' den rather than bow down.

Another very good example is Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; who were thrown into the fiery furnace, because they would not bow to an idol or false god.

God protected them, because they made a stand for the one true God.

None of them were harmed.

It is bad enough to make a false image, but to bow down to it would be even worse.

Would you (at the threat of death), still not bow down to a false god or idol?

In the end times, many will be faced with just that problem.

One thing that I have said so many times, that helps me so much is; we must worship the Creator and not any of His or our creations.

The Elohim God; God the Father, God the Word, and God the Holy Spirit, who are all one in Spirit are the only God to worship.

All others are false.

1 John 5:7 "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

Leviticus 26:2 "Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I [am] the LORD."

The seventh day Sabbaths, and the seventh year sabbaths; especially the former are meant.

In which religious worship was given to the one true and living God.

And therefore, the observance of them is strictly enjoined.

And hence this law follows closely upon the former, though Aben Ezra restrains it to the sabbatical years, or seventh year sabbaths, as he applies the sanctuary in the following clause to the jubilee year, which is said to be holy (Lev. 26:12).

Supposing that this refers unto and stands in strict connection with the laws of the preceding chapter, concerning the sabbatical (Lev. 25:1), and jubilee years (Lev. 25:8).

"And reverence my sanctuary":

By attending in it, and on the worship in it, with reverence and godly fear (see Lev. 19:30).

"I am the LORD":

Who had a right to such religious worship, and to command such things, in which he ought to be obeyed, his sabbaths kept, and sanctuary revered.

"And reverence my sanctuary":

By attending in it, and on the worship in it, with reverence and godly fear (see Lev. 19:30).

Notice first of all who this all belongs to; God.

It is His sabbath.

It is His sanctuary.

Even we are His.

To not obey His wishes would be to disobey the very God that made us.

It is so little for Him to ask that we keep His Sabbaths.

Sabbath, for the physical house of Israel, was Saturday.

We Christians do not forget either, but we practice firstfruit remembrance on Sunday.

To not reverence, then, brought swift punishment.

The best example of that, was the fire coming from the altar and killing Aaron's 2 sons.

We do not see this type of manifestation of disapproval in our sanctuaries today from God.

Perhaps, it is because God has moved out of many of these sanctuaries where He is not revered.

The sanctuary should be a place set aside where we can go and meet with God.

Jesus opened the way for all believers to come to God.

Sanctuary means a consecrated place.

Reverence means to hold in very high esteem.

If this sanctuary belongs to God, then the way we can please God in it, is to do what He desires in this special place of His.

Have we come to church to please Him or to please ourselves?

Why do we go to church?

Have we come to humbly bow before our LORD?

Have we come to fellowship with Him, and to be a sweet, sweet sound in His ear?

Did you come to church to meet with the LORD in His Word?

If you came to be entertained, or so the neighbors could see you at church, or for any other fleshly reason, you should have stayed at home.

The Sanctuary should be a place set aside 24 hours a day 365 days a year where you can go and fellowship with God.

The sanctuary has one purpose; we should not use it for worldly things.

The sanctuary is holy.

Verses 3-13

There are three divisions of blessings (verses 4, 6, 11), and each is prefaced with "I will give".

They include material prosperity (verses 3-5), victory over the nation's enemies (verses 6-9), the assurance of God's presence in the land (verses 11-12), and the dignity of personal freedom (verse 13).

The mention of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt would be a guarantee that the great King who initiated the covenant with His people would be able to perform all that He promised.

The assurance of God's presence encouraged Moses in Exodus chapters 3 and 6 and was a source of strength for many generations (Isa. 11:1-16; Ezek. 36:28; 37:24-27; see Matt. 28:20 and Hebrews 13:8).

Leviticus 26:3 "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;"

Both moral, ceremonial, and judicial, which had been delivered unto them, and now completely recorded in this and the preceding book.

For what follows in the two next are chiefly repetitions of what are contained in these.

Leviticus 26:4 "Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit."

Among Yahweh's blessings if the Israelites walked in His ways would be "rain".

Agrarian Israel would be dependent on rainfall from heaven rather than a great river, as Egypt was on the Nile.

If the rains did not come at the right times, the people experienced crop failure and famine (compare 1 Kings chapters 17 and 18).

Everyone wants to receive the blessings of God, but few want to admit that there is a part we each have to pay, to receive these blessings.

The "if" (in verse 3 above), hinges on a great deal.

You might even say, that life and death hinge on that "if".

Blessings if you keep them, and curses if you do not.

I can just hear some of you saying right now, but we are not under the law.

We are not, but after we receive the gift of salvation through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must walk in that state of being saved.

We cannot choose to go back into the world.

Notice in the verse above, "walk in my statutes".

You see, the believers' life is a walk.

Just as these of the physical house of Israel must walk keeping God's statutes, we must walk in the salvation we have received.

We read so much today about not having to keep the commandments of God to be saved.

Look with me at a few New Testament Scriptures, which all say that we must keep His commandments.

Matthew 19:17 "And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? [there is] none good but one, [that is], God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

John 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

John 15:10 "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

1 John 3:22 "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

1 John 5:2 "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments."

There are many more, but I will give just one more.

Revelation 14:12 "Here is the patience of the saints: here [are] they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

Notice in the verse above from Leviticus, just what some of these blessings are.

It will rain at the right time and just the right amount.

You will have a bountiful harvest of not only the fields, but of fruit as well.

Looking at that spiritually shows me that the fruit of the spirit as well, will be abundant in your life.

Leviticus 26:5 "And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely."

Signifying that there should be such plentiful harvests of barley and wheat.

The first of which began in March, as would employ them in threshing them out unto the time of vintage, which may be supposed to, be in the month of July.

For on the twenty ninth of Sivan, which was about the middle of June, was the time of the first ripe grapes, as appears (see notes on Num. 13:20).

And that they should have such quantities of grapes on their vines, as would employ them in gathering and pressing them until seedtime.

Which was usually in October (see Amos 9:13).

"And ye shall eat your bread to the full":

Which is put for all provisions.

And the meaning is, they should have plenty of food, eat full meals.

Or however, what they ate, whether little or much, should be satisfying and refreshing to them, having it with a divine blessing.

"And dwell in your land safely":

Would have no need to go out of it into other lands for the sake of food, and would be in no danger from enemies invading them and carrying off their substance.

Plenty without safety would not be so great a blessing as with it, since, though they had it, they might be deprived of it, wherefore security from enemies is promised.

We see in this that the harvest will be so great, that they will just have time to get in all the harvest, before it is time to plant again.

There will be a tremendous abundance of food.

Look in Egypt when Joseph did exactly what God had told him to do, there was a bountiful abundance of food in Egypt, when all the surrounding countries were starving.

Obedience to God, brings bountiful blessings then or now.

Notice the statement, "dwell in your land safely".

Proverbs 16:7 "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

Verses 6-10

After promising abundant food (in 26:4-5), God promised a time of "peace and protection, both from natural predators and human enemies.

Leviticus 26:6 "And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make [you] afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land."

"Evil beasts"

Dangerous animals such as lions and bears existed in that area.

Joseph's brothers claimed that such an animal had killed him (Gen. 37:20).

This peace spoken of here, can only come from the King of Peace.

This peace, is freedom from fear of people or animals.

There will be no terror by night or day.

Faith is the opposite of fear.

If we have faith in God and His Word, it brings perfect peace.

When there is no war, then men have more time for hunting wild beasts.

The world today needs to see the last part of this come true.

There will be no war.

Jesus said it the best in the next Scripture.

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

The only real peace, then or now, is in God.

Leviticus 26:7 "And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword."

"Chase your enemies":

God provided victories repeatedly in the conquest of Canaan (compare Joshua chapters 8-12).

Leviticus 26:8 "And five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword."

Which, had it been in proportion to the other number, should have been two thousand, as in (Deut. 32:30), where there is a proportion observed.

This is only a proverbial expression, signifying that a very few, under the blessing of divine Providence, should get the advantage over a large number, and oblige them to retire.

And pursue them closely: instances we have of large bodies of the enemy being defeated by a small number of Israelites (Judges 7:21), and even many by a single person or two (1 Samuel 14:13).

"And your enemies shall fall before you by the sword" (see notes on Lev. 26:7).

The enemy will run from them, because the enemy cannot fight them and God too.

The enemy will be well aware that this type of victory is from God.

Psalms 91:7 "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; [but] it shall not come nigh thee."

The protection here is supernatural.

The enemy knows it cannot win against God, so they run.

Leviticus 26:9 "For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you."

“Make you fruitful, and multiply you ... establish my covenant with you”:

What God commanded at Creation and repeated after the Flood was contained in the covenant promise of seed (Gen. 12:1-3), which He will fulfill to the nation of Israel as promised to Abraham (Gen 15:5-6).

A covenant is more than just an agreement.

A covenant is made by passing through the opening between an animal cut in two.

So a covenant is sealed with blood.

The "if", we spoke of earlier, has been explained in detail.

God will keep his side of the agreement, "if" the people keep their side of the bargain.

Blessings come from obedience to God.

One of the blessings they were to receive, was children.

We see above, they will have many children.

We have mentioned in these lessons before, that the Hebrews thought it to be a curse not to have children.

Leviticus 26:10 "And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new."

What is very old, corn of three years old, as Jarchi and Kimchi interpret it.

Such plenty should they have that it would be so long consuming.

"And bring forth the old because of the new":

Out of their barns and granaries, to make room for the new, which they should have great quantities of, and scarce know where to put them.

And therefore, should empty their treasures and garners of the old, and fill them with new.

Or they should bring them forth out of their barns into their houses, to make use of themselves.

Or into their markets to expose to sale, being under no temptation to withhold against a time of scarcity in order to make more of it (see Prov. 11:26).

Now all these temporal blessings promised may be emblems of spiritual things, and might be so understood by such who were spiritually enlightened.

As of the rain of divine grace, and the blessings of it, and of the doctrines of the Gospel, sometimes compared thereunto (Deut. 32:2).

And of great fruitfulness in grace and good works, and of internal peace in the minds of good men, and of their safety and security from spiritual enemies.

Of fullness of spiritual provisions, even of things new and old, and which are laid up for them (SOS 7:13).

Thus, promises of a spiritual nature more manifestly follow.

Verses 11-13

God's covenant promise to His people included His presence among them (Exodus 6:2-9), visually represented by the "tabernacle" (Rev. 21:3).

Leviticus 26:11 "And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you."

Which God had directed them to make, and they had made, and also erected.

But here he promises to fix and establish it among them, that so it might continue as a place for the public worship of him.

And where he would take up his residence, and grant them his presence.

So the Targum of Jonathan, "I will put the Shekinah of my glory among you."

"And my soul shall not abhor you":

Though in themselves, and because of their sins, loathsome and abominable.

The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan are, "my Word shall not abhor you."

And the whole may have respect to Christ, the Word made flesh, and tabernacling among them.

The tabernacle being a type and emblem of the human nature of Christ, in which the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily, and is the true tabernacle which God pitched and not man (John 1:14).

In (verse 10 above), God promised that before their food from the last year is gone, they will have another bountiful harvest.

God promised also to tabernacle with them, if they would follow His commandments.

Revelation 21:3 "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God."

God's desire is to fellowship with mankind, but He is holy.

If we are to fellowship with Him, we must be holy too.

Leviticus Chapter 26 Questions

1. What does Leviticus 26:1 prohibit?
2. What does the word mean that idol was translated from?
3. Who faced the lions' den, because he would not bow down to an idol or false god?
4. Who were the three men who faced the fiery furnace, rather than bow to a false god or idol?
5. What happened to these brave men?
6. What is worse than making a false god?
7. What does the author keep reminding all of us that helps us understand this?
8. Who are the three that bear record in heaven?
9. "Ye shall keep my _____.
10. "And _____ my sanctuary.
11. Who does the Sabbath and the sanctuary belong to?
12. What is a good example of the swift punishment of those who did not reverence the sanctuary?
13. Wonder why there is not swift punishment in sanctuaries now for lack of reverence?

14. What does sanctuary mean?
15. What are some good reasons for coming to church?
16. What are some reasons for coming to church, that probably would not please God?
17. How many hours should the church sanctuary be set aside for God to meet with His people?
18. What does God promise to reward them with, if they walk in His statutes and keep His commandments and do them?
19. There are blessings, if you _____.
20. There are curses, if you do not _____.
21. The believers' life is a _____.
22. Are Christians obligated to keep God's commandments?
23. "If ye love me, _____ my commandments.
24. What is meant by the threshing reaching unto the vintage?
25. What do we read in Proverbs 16:7 that brings the blessing of your enemies living at peace with you?
26. The peace spoken of in verse 6, can only come from whom?
27. How many shall five chase?
28. How is a covenant made?
29. What seals the covenant?
30. What is meant by old store?
31. Where does Revelation 21:3 say that the tabernacle of God is?
32. How can we fellowship with holy God?