

LEVITICUS

Lesson 41 - Chapters 26 and 27

As we finish up Leviticus 26 today let me begin by recalling for you that unlike all the earlier chapters of Leviticus where laws and ordinances were established chapter 26 says, *'here's what will happen if you obey all those laws and commands, and here is what will happen if you do NOT obey all those laws and commands'*. This is the chapter that outlines the blessings and the curses or, in our modern lingo, rewards and punishments. It is structured very much like our nation currently structures our system of civil and criminal laws. First when a new law is made the nature of the law (the do's and don'ts) are carefully detailed. AFTER that what happens when one disobeys that law is stated (the penalties, the punishments) be it jail time or fines or whatever. Of course the one thing we'll never find in our criminal law system is the blessings. The only two possibilities in our modern system of criminal jurisprudence are, A) something bad happens to you if you break the law, and B) NOTHING bad happens to you if you don't.

Even more important this chapter is speaking in terms of NATIONAL obedience and disobedience. It is speaking of Israel as a whole. It is so very key to understand that God shows us that He looks at humanity and deals with humanity in 3 different spheres of membership: as individuals (a membership of one), as a family or community, and as a nation. And when we're reading the Torah (or anywhere in the Bible for that matter) we MUST determine in which of these 3 spheres of membership any particular Scripture is operating.

For instance: our Salvation in Yeshua is individual. Our eternal future, and our present relationship with Yehoveh, is determined person-by-person not by what our family or community determines, or by what our nation decides. Our parents' faith does not insure our Salvation nor does their heathenism exclude us from Salvation. We can live in a Muslim dominated nation, under a Muslim government, in a Muslim family; but it our individual faith in Messiah that determines our personal relationship with God.

On the other hand what happened with Israel as a nation on so many occasions was primarily due to the actions of their leaders (their kings) who represent their nation. A nation is nothing but a confederation of individuals; but a nation (by definition) acts in a collective manner and thus has leaders who represent the collective. The leaders may not be the leaders many in the nation prefer but they are the leaders nonetheless. For instance the actions of Kings David and Solomon (who were by no means perfect) brought tremendous blessings upon Israel as a nation. The Lord saw their hearts were towards Him, they sought to serve God, and in balance they believed God. What happened after them when King Jeroboam took over and started worshipping other gods, and when he led his people astray, eventually led to chaos and civil war and the splitting of Israel into 2 Kingdoms; one of which was conquered by the Assyrians

and led to the dispersion of the 10 Israelite tribes that occupied that kingdom, and the loss of their Hebrew identities (at least until very recently).

In addition we also find instances in Scripture where individual tribes or families suffered long term curses for disobedience, the descendants of Ham being one broad example and the descendants of Dan being another. The descendants of Reuben losing their right to be the leaders of Israel is another case of disobedience to God and I could talk about scores of other examples. Conversely we'll find families that received long-term blessings for obedience to Yehoveh: the descendants of Shem, the descendants of the line of promise from Abraham, Judah to some degree, and others.

So the important God-principle is that there are certain blessings and curses that apply to individuals, others that apply to one's family or community, and still others that apply to one's nation as a whole. Naturally these 3 spheres of membership are somewhat intertwined. If a large number of individuals follow the Lord the probability is that their family will also follow the Lord. And if a large number of individuals and their families follow the Lord then the probability is that the community and nation will also. Unfortunately that principle works in the reverse as well.

Therefore we'll find that REDEMPTION also operates in a similar fashion. Yeshua redeemed us individual by individual when He came the first time.

Now listen to me very carefully on this: upon Israel being re-established as a nation (as has now occurred) the nations of the world (as an entity) will be judged or redeemed based on a single attribute: that nation's treatment of Israel. Let me say that again: **national** redemption....not the redemption of individuals....is based on how any particular nation deals with Israel. This is taken from very straightforward teachings in Joel, Obadiah, Amos, and Revelation among others. Of course a nation whose individual citizens do not trust in the Lord are unlikely to have leaders who trust Him; and therefore that nation will see no special value in Israel. And the nation who sees no special value in Israel will make decisions that are counter to God's instructions regarding His set-apart nation consisting of the people and the land.

And, by the way, because the people and the leaders of a nation adopt some mixture of trusting the God of Israel with tolerance of other "gods" (whether those "gods" be the false belief that ANY god is THE God, or that geo-political realities matter as much if not more than Gods laws and commands) those nations are not cut any slack just because Yehoveh is somewhere in that mix. That a nation would do those terrible things against Israel simultaneously with "calling on the name of the Lord" bring that nation to judgment just as surely as they worshipped ONLY Molech or Ba'al.

I tell you these things because they ARE the context of Leviticus 26 and because we are in the process of being disciplined as I speak (AS A NATION) for the exact thing that Joel, Obadiah, Amos and others warned us against: dividing up the land of Israel. Saying we're doing that dividing in the name of world peace is precisely equivalent to worshipping Yehoveh and Ba'al at the same time; it is double-minded and lacks faith. I also tell you this because you're

unlikely to hear it in too many churches or synagogues but guess what: now it is YOUR responsibility to go and tell others!

Let's re-read the last portion of Leviticus 26 to get our bearings.

RE-READ LEV. 26: 32-end

It fascinates and perplexes me how readily members of the Church recognize and can recite the various disciplines and judgments of Yehoveh upon Israel over their long history; and then turn right around and refuse to see the disciplines that have, and currently are, and will fall upon us as individuals and families, as a community of Believers and as a nation. We even see quote after quote from the world of Islam noting how Israel's woes, and lately the USA's weather and economic calamities, are divine in their source. And here in verse 32 we see that exact phenomenon prophesied: it explains that even Israel's enemies will understand that the desolation of the land and the apostasy of the Hebrew people has come as divine punishment by their own God, with the implication that Israel won't think so at all.

Then in vs. 34 the subject of the Sabbaths is brought up. Interesting. It was only in the previous chapter that God set down the laws for the Sabbath years (the cycle of 7 years with the first 6 being regular years and the 7th a Sabbath year) and then the cycle of 50 years with there being 7 cycles of 7 years (and the following year being Jubilee itself a most special Sabbath year). So this verse **anticipates** that Israel will NOT obey the law of Sabbath years. That Israel will NOT use the land for 6 years and then give it a 1-year rest. That Israel will NOT obey the laws of Jubilee and every 50 years give the land what amounts to 2 consecutive years of Sabbath rest. And this stubborn refusal to observe those Sabbaths and the Jubilee is part and parcel with the reason Yehoveh will lay His heavy hand of discipline on His people: at least partly its for the benefit of the land itself.

The explicit explanation here is that the REASON the land will be desolate and go unused (because Israel has been sent away, into exile) is to make up for all those Sabbaths that were missed. In other words what seems as though it is God's CURSE upon the land (making it desolate) is in fact a kind of blessing for the land. It is, in a certain way, a means of reinvigorating the land. The Hebrew word used in the phrase at the end of verse 34 where it says: **".....and the land shall be repaid its Sabbaths".....is hirtsah**. It comes from a root word that means to expiate, or to make-up-for.

I have said on several occasions that God's laws don't come and go. They're not like men's laws that change with the times or the whims of voters or our leaders. Rather God's laws ARE the fabric of the Universe. When Yehoveh made the Sabbath year and Jubilee Laws it was because the rules concerning them are how the Universe operates. Example: we have civil laws that say that certain workers, when operating in high places, must wear safety belts. WHY? Because they can fall and be seriously injured or even die if they don't obey this law. Now what if gravity didn't exist? What if, because gravity didn't exist, planet Earth's inhabitants kind of just bobbed around like we see the astronauts on the Space Station doing. To an astronaut living in outer space the term "falling" essentially has no meaning, does it?

Our law about safety belts for workers working in high places is responding to another and more powerful law that God established: the law of gravity. A law that is part of the Universe; a law that no man can break or abolish.

When the Lord establishes a law, it is like gravity: even if we can't see it, it's there, it effects most aspects of our lives, and one way or another it has to be accounted for. To ignore the law of gravity is to invite death. When God ordained the Sabbath years for the benefit of the land it was because the land NEEDED those Sabbath years. How the land operated and gave up it's produce depended on those Sabbath years. If the man who works in a high place wears his safety belt, then he can work within the dangers of gravity and gravity won't get the best of him. If he doesn't then eventually it will. If the land gets its Sabbaths then it operates like it is designed and gives up much abundance for the people. If the land does NOT get its Sabbaths then it gets tired. The land needs exactly as many Sabbaths as God ordained...not one more nor one less. And the Lord will make SURE that it DOES get it's Sabbaths, one way or another. That is the nature of the God-principle being set forth here in Leviticus 26.

So did the consequence of ignoring God's laws ever finally catch up to Israel as a nation? You bet it did. In Ezekiel 4:4-6, around 9 centuries following the giving to Moses of the Torah, God suddenly instructs Ezekiel to lay on his left side for 390 days, one day for each year of the iniquity of Ephraim-Israel, then 40 days on his right side, one day for each year of the iniquity of Judah (the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom.....the two houses of Israel). This is a total of 430 days/years as a sign to Israel of their coming punishment. At this point Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, has already carried away the first three installments of exiles (including Daniel) to Babylon, the first occurring in the year 606 B.C.

By the year 588 B.C. the third and last of the people of Israel were carried away to Babylon, the Temple was destroyed, and the land was lying mostly desolate. In this account II Chronicles 36:21 makes this amazing statement; that the purpose of Ephraim-Israel, then Judah, being exiled was, ***"to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept the Sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten (70) years."*** The remarkable point here is that the 430 years contains exactly 70 Sabbath years! The land, by God's audit, had been deprived of precisely 70 Sabbath years (because the Israelites had just blown off those laws concerning the required Sabbath years) and so it was time for the land to be repaid its Sabbaths. It was inevitable that this would have to happen because the Sabbath years needed by the land of Israel is a law of the Universe, like gravity. Every "jot and stroke" of God's word was fulfilled in their seventy bitter years of exile; the land was due 70 years of rest, it got 70 years of rest; but the Israelites paid dearly for every one of those years they had skipped. We might postpone the consequences for violating God's laws for a time, but it will catch up with us because it is simply built in to the way the Universe operates.

What follows next in Leviticus 26 is a description of the exiles the Israelites will suffer over the centuries. And basically, here is the condition of the people of Israel during these times:

- 1) They will be feint of heart. The word used here for faintness, is in Hebrew ***morekh***. And it literally means, "to be soft". The same word is used in Deuteronomy to describe

those who are not fit for military service.....because they are cowards. What an indictment! It says that the Israelites will be hauled off to other lands; they'll roll over and do whatever they're told because they have no inner fortitude. Why don't they have inner strength? Because Yehoveh **took** the courage that at one time existed in their hearts and replaced it with a submissive kind of fear AS A PUNISHMENT for their disobedience.

2) They'll stumble over each other as though someone is chasing them. The implication being that no actually IS chasing them. The idea is one of chaos, paranoia, and disorganization. One pictures that terrible day not long ago in Iraq when someone screamed "BOMB!" among a crowd of people who were marching across a bridge though, in truth, there was no bomb. People began pushing and shoving and stumbling over one another. The crush of humanity was so bad that the concrete and steel guardrails fell apart and hundreds of people tumbled into the Euphrates, 60 feet below. Still others suffocated from the crush and more yet were literally trampled to death. When all was over almost 700 people died; but as it turns out there was no danger, it was all imagined. That is the sense of this passage.

3) Israel won't be able to stand up in an attack. They'll back down in the face of their enemies. The history of Israel in exile is an inexplicable predisposition to appease rather than fight. It is a belief that they have no hope, so why bother. It is a belief that they haven't the ability to fight and win.

4) As a result of the first 3 attributes they'll perish in whatever foreign country they wind up in. You know it's one thing to die in your own bed at home. Some people, as they feel death is near, long to go back to the area they were born and raised; the familiarity brings a kind of comfort. But when you're in a foreign place where you inherently don't belong and the natural people of that foreign place ALSO feel you don't belong there it's a whole other matter. That, perhaps, is one the greatest fears of a soldier, to die in a foreign land. That's the exact threat that God is putting before His people.....that they will die in a foreign land. That they're last moments will not be peaceful, but will be agitation and anxiety.

5) For those who do NOT die in the foreign places that they will find themselves in they will be heartsick. The English sense of this phrase is a condition of sadness. But that's not really it. The Hebrew word used here, **yimmakku**, most literally translates to "they will melt away". We'll hear in Zechariah and Ezekiel of God's people's eye's melting in their sockets and wasting away because of transgression. In both cases the idea is not a literal melting.....some have tried to depict Ezekiel especially as a nuclear bomb attack.....rather it is a Hebrew idiom; and it means to have a deep and disturbing sense of dread that will not go away.

6) In addition to the general sense of doom and dread for the Jewish people, they will also be lamenting the iniquities of their fathers. Maybe this gives the best illustration of the primary effect of a national judgment, which is what is being discussed here. They come to the conclusion that they are suffering over the collective sins of previous

generations as well as the collective sins of their own generation. And of course the question is how does one ever escape from such a curse of God?

7) Then in a odd way all of these dark and gloomy feelings and circumstances give way to the very thing that answers the question I just posed: how does one escape from this condition? And the answer is given in verse 40: *They shall confess of their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers.* Is that not EXACTLY what we're exhorted to do in the NT? To confess....and of course to repent.....which is implied in this verse. And, just WHAT is it they are to confess? That they and those before them.....that is, those of their nation, Israel..... were COLLECTIVELY HOSTILE to Yehoveh. They trespassed against His Holiness. Again, not approaching this as single individuals but as a collective of individuals, a nation. The whole principle being demonstrated here is that when a national judgment is occurring every last person of that nation bears the burden. It doesn't matter that YOU as an individual didn't agree with the things your nation or it's leaders did in hostility to God. This is demonstrated time and time again with the prophets who WERE righteous before the Lord, who REFUSED to participate in the iniquities of their nation, but who suffered right along with those who were NOT righteous. In a national judgment the righteous are FULLY expected by Yehoveh to confess the sins of the nation to which we are attached just as though it was us who directly committed these offenses.

In one of the most ironic quirks of faith history (at least it seems so to me) we have a Church who honestly feels that all that really matters on a spiritual level is the individual. That ALL of God's redemptive grace and dreadful wrath is about individuals. Conversely, we have a Judaism that honestly feels that all that really matters on a spiritual level is the nation as a whole. That ALL of God's redemptive grace and dreadful wrath is about the national collective. And both are wrong and I hope you're seeing that. This is why it seems so strange to the average modern gentile Believer to pray for forgiveness for things he didn't directly do, on behalf of his nation. To actually take personal responsibility for seeking the Lord for forgiveness for the sinful acts of his nation. Not by praying, "oh, God, forgive what those other guys did". Rather, "oh, God, forgive **me** for I am part of the nation that did these things against you". Do you see the difference?

And it seems equally strange to religious Jews to pray for redemption for an individual. For what good is it that one person is redeemed if the whole nation perishes? After all if the whole nation is redeemed then by definition every person IN that nation is redeemed....that's the logic.

8) Now that Israel recognizes its hostility towards God and confesses it, THEN.....while in the MIDST of their exile....their hearts will become humble. In other words they've finally reached the bottom of that pit; they've run out of excuses, they realize they have utterly no hope and they cannot extricate themselves from their self-made predicament. Once they have been emptied of their pride THEN will Yehoveh remember His covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even more it says the Lord will remember

the land; that is He will remember that long ago He made Israel the permanent leaseholders of the Land of Canaan.

Now we come to the part that WE should repent over; a part that most of us at one time rejected and hopefully do so no longer. A part that a large segment of our community....the community of Believers....still harbors. Yehoveh says to the nation of Israel in verse 44: **NAS Leviticus 26:44** *'Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God.*

Rather, for the sake of the covenants He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Yehoveh will have mercy and the covenants He made with Israel WILL remain intact.

Yehoveh did NOT reject Israel. He never sent them away **permanently** into exile nor to be destroyed. More He did not replace them. Exile was a form of national discipline, not a national destruction. Its purpose was to bring Israel to a place of confession and repentance that they would AVOID eternal judgment, and instead to eventually even be restored to their own land.

When we are disciplined and punished by the Lord as individuals its purpose is to guide us back to the straight path so as to AVOID judgment. When we are disciplined as a nation it is to guide us back NATIONALLY to the straight path, so as to AVOID destructive judgment. But notice the steps towards this that we covered today. Until we recognize that the disasters that have befallen us are God's hand of judgment, and until we recognize our personal part in the national hostility we have demonstrated towards Him (in our national disobedience), and until we confess it and repent of it and are humbled before Him then we STAY under His hand of discipline EITHER until we do repent.....or.....Heaven forbid....until the Day of the Lord when He comes to permanently judge the world.

The horrors we read of in Revelation are NOT about discipline. The time for discipline is over in Revelation. Now comes the judgment for those who refused to accept His discipline and change. By the way, the original setting and context for most of those unimaginable events of Revelation that have become so popular in the modern Evangelical Church with its insistence that the Old Testament is irrelevant or abolished, are contained in the covenant curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

Let's move on to Leviticus chapter 27, the final chapter of Leviticus.

It is interesting that the final few matters talked about in the book of Leviticus revolve around the funding of the sanctuary. From a Biblical perspective the operation of the sanctuary.....what at this point in Israel's history was a portable tent, the Wilderness Tabernacle....but later would be a fixed building, the Temple...could be funded from a number of sources. And this chapters deals with the several major categories of sanctuary funding: pledges of silver and animals, consecration of real property like houses and land, giving of firstborn animals and firstfruits of crops, and donation of property and tithing.

What we find as we read this chapter is that, in general, the goal was for the priesthood who operated the sanctuary to obtain silver so as **to purchase** whatever was needed for maintenance and operation. Therefore we will see a schedule of relative values drawn up in which various pledges of land and animals....even PEOPLE.....could be exchanged for silver. That is the idea was that a vow would be made to give thus and so as an offering to the sanctuary and then the giver would turn around and REDEEM...buy back.... whatever it was he had given. How much would it cost to redeem these things? What was the fair value of the items first given then redeemed? That is one of the matters this chapter deals with.

So let me be clear: the rules and regulations contained in chapter 27 are constructed in such a way as to make it the NORM that MOST of what the Sanctuary received for its operation was silver.....something easier to exchange.... rather than animals and field crops.

Before we read chapter 27 let me just point out a couple of things: first doesn't this general method of giving of our wealth to the sanctuary sound eerily familiar to us? That where we worship.....synagogue or church.....is typically funded in like manner? Churches and synagogues tend to lump all giving to the institution together and call it tithes or offerings; but Leviticus breaks down the way the institution is funded into more detailed categories among which tithing is but one.

Second, just so you'll be thinking about it as we read it next week, recognize that the subject of tithing, per se, is NOT discussed with any detail in the New Testament. It is only lightly alluded to and the number of times the word "tithe" is even used in the NT you can count on one hand. Even more when it is used, except for one time, it is in the context of making a point about a Torah principle or speaking about the merit of one of the Patriarchs.

The point is this: absolutely NO command is given in the New Testament to tithe....anything! And whatever allusion is made is in the context of a quote from an Old Testament passage. And many Believers have taken this lack of a direct NT command to mean that Christians have no requirement to tithe and thus support the work of the church. Of course I can't think of any **churches** that would subscribe to this notion. Now I don't want to detour and discuss tithing in depth but let me just throw out a couple of thoughts for you to ponder. And I'll begin by giving you the bottom line: tithing and giving to support the institution was ASSUMED in the NT. In other words the NT was not to be taken (as some do) that if Jesus didn't directly mouth the command we don't have to do it. The Torah that He followed and told others in Matthew 5 to do likewise had NOT been abolished; and Yeshua said that every jot and stroke remained intact until heaven and earth disappeared. The commands of God had already been established to teach the principle of tithing and scores of other principles as well to the disciples of the God of Israel.

The New Testament is not a portion of the Bible in which everything from the previous portion.....the Law and the Prophets.....was supposed to be repeated in order to validate it. It is one of the more curious...and frankly revealing.....traditions of the church to teach that the requirement to tithe is directly from that part of the Bible that it otherwise counts as obsolete and downright negative. As I reminisced over the many sermons I have heard on the subject of giving, in the rare case that a NT passage IS quoted to valid tithing it is invariably from the

book of Luke; chapter 11 vs. 42, which says this: **NAS Luke 11:42** *"But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.*

And the thought is that while tithing is of course still in effect that justice and the love of God should be the reason for the tithe....that it CERTAINLY shouldn't be done only according to commands and laws..... "legalistically". Right?

Well let's take a look at the **other** Gospel that employs this same quote, in the book of Matthew.....because THIS verse is usually avoided: **NAS Matthew 23:23** *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.*

Uh, oh. Here we have Yeshua stating straight out that not only is tithing **expressly** a provision of the law, but also justice and mercy and faithfulness are "the weightier provisions **of the law**". And that " these are things you **should have done** WITHOUT neglecting the others". In other words we have a complete validation of the law ("you should do these things, and you should also do the others") referring to the ordinances of the Law. So now we see why this is not a particularly popular verse.

And, then, from here forward in most sermons all teaching on tithing is usually from the Old Testament.

This is but one good example of what I have been teaching you over our years together: that it is ASSUMED that the New Testament reader already has a good background in these fundamental matters covered by the Law. After all the Torah was 1300 years old by the time Yeshua arrived on the scene. It was still the basis for the lifestyle of the Jewish people. Jesus doesn't **explain** tithing because there is no need to explain it; it was common knowledge. He also didn't COMMAND tithing because there was no need; its requirement was already long established and accepted. Every Jew knew what tithing meant, and understood the many forms of giving, and how the giving system operated, and what it's purpose was, and what was expected of them as God's people. By the way Yeshua also doesn't explain that it is necessary to breathe in and out to continue living; nor does He explain what the term "the law" means; everybody knew what that meant.....it meant the Torah. When I speak to you and use the term "Bible" I don't first pause and explain each week what a Bible is. I assume that since you're here you already know.

Next time we meet we'll study Leviticus 27 and complete our study of the book of the Priests of Israel. The week after that we'll begin the very fascinating book of Numbers.