



FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM | *The Story of Israel*
the books of EXODUS & LEVITICUS & NUMBERS

CLASS INSTRUCTIONS

Every Class will have Biblical reading for preparation. However, *we will not read the whole text in classes.* Please **pre-read** before the class. *Take Home Review Sheets* for notes will be provided on a weekly basis.

Regarding Health and Safety, we will sit in comfortable distanced seating during class – and it is recommended that masks be worn to your seat and as you leave.

#FALL 2020

L E S S O N S C H E D U L E

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| 1. | 9/8 | Introduction to the Class and the Exodus of Israel |
| 2. | 9/15 | Bondage and the Rise of the Deliverer Exodus 1-2 |
| 3. | 9/22 | The Call of the Deliverer Exodus 3:1-4:23 |
| 4. | 9/29 | Liberation Begins Exodus 5:1-6:30 |
| 5. | 10/6 | The Prophet and The Power of God Exodus 7:1-10:29 |
| 6. | 10/13 | The Prophet and The Power of God (2) Exodus 11:1-12:51 |
| 7. | 10/20 | The March to Freedom Exodus 14-15 |
| 8. | 10/27 | The Journey of Complaint and the Testing of the People Exodus 16-17 |
| 9. | 11/3 | Jethro and Moses, the Law Giver Exodus 18-19 |
| 10. | 12/1 | Covenant Is Made with Ten Commandments: The Moral Code Exodus 20 |
| 11. | 12/8 | Covenant Ordinances (Ex. 21:1): Obedience and Disobedience (Lev. 26:14-46 with Deuteronomy 28-30) and Capital Crimes (Exodus 21). |
| 12. | 12/15 | Covenant Ordinances: Holiness (Ex. 22:31; Lev. 19:1-3; 20:7, 26): <i>"You must be holy" involves many things, including respect, Sabbath and the Tithe</i> (Ex. 22:29-30; 23:19; Lev. 27:30-34). |

Lesson 11**Covenant Ordinances (Ex. 21:1): Obedience and Disobedience** (Leviticus 26:14-46 with Deuteronomy 28-30) **and Capital Crimes** (Exodus 21).

The collection of the five books we call the Pentateuch has different forms and purposes. Genesis is history and Numbers is a narrative. Exodus is both plus the recording of the Nation's law. Deuteronomy is a second telling of the Law God gave to the next generation. Since the Book of Exodus ends with the erection of the Tabernacle, the question that needed to be addressed was, "How was Israel to use the Tabernacle?" The instructions given to Moses during the one month and 20 days between the setting up of the Tabernacle (Exod 40:17) and the departure of Israel from Sinai (Num 10:11) and recorded in the Book of Leviticus answers this. Thus, the Book of Leviticus completes Exodus and forms a historical bridge to Numbers, and beyond that to the Book of Deuteronomy.

The Levitical sacrificial system was part of the Mosaic covenant obligation that was given at Sinai and is completed in the book of Leviticus where the function of the Tabernacle which had been ordered in Exodus and how it reflects their covenant-relationship with Yahweh. Further, the Book of Leviticus opens with Yahweh calling to Moses from within the now completed Tabernacle (1:1). Thus, the laws of sacrifice, worship, and holiness contained in Leviticus follows the historical narrative concerning the construction of the Tabernacle (Exod 25-40), and the subsequent indwelling of Yahweh in the Tabernacle (Exod 40:34-35). A consideration of Exodus 40:2, 17, and Numbers 1:1 and 10:11 indicates that the events of the Book of Leviticus took place over a period of over one month, during which time Israel remained at Sinai.

The first part before our reading comes from the outlining of the divine blessings (4-13) as the result of keeping the conditions of the covenant in verses 1-3. In its broadest definition, God's blessings on Israel are conditioned by Israel's keeping of the Mosaic Covenant: "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, then I shall give you ..." (Lev. 26:3-4a). This obedience manifests itself in both positive and negative ways. Negatively, the Israelites must keep themselves from the idols and the idolatry of their heathen predecessors: "You shall not make for yourselves idols, nor shall you set up for yourselves an image or a sacred pillar, nor shall you place a figured stone in your land to bow down to it; for I am the LORD your God" (Lev. 26:1). Such idols would lead to false worship, worship directed to false deities, rather than toward the God who had saved them from bondage in Egypt. Positively stated, the Israelites should give heed to God's sabbaths and His sanctuary: "You shall keep My sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary; I am the LORD" (Lev. 26:2). God's people must not only abstain from making and worshipping idols, *they must actively observe God's sabbaths and revere His sanctuary.*

The blessings which God promised Israel are directly related to her possession of the land of Canaan. They are largely, but not altogether, physical and material. They can be summed up in three categories: (1) PEACE from enemies; (2) PROSPERITY in harvest and in fertility; and (3) THE PRESENCE OF GOD (Lev. 26:11-12). One of the great issues at stake as an aftermath of Israel's "fall" in the worship of the golden calf (Exod. 32) was whether or not God would be present with His people (cf. Exod. 33:3, 14-16; 34:9). God's covenant with Israel promised His presence, but only if His people kept His statutes and ordinances (cf. Exod. 34:10ff.). The tabernacle and the sacrificial system was one of the prerequisites for God's presence, and thus it is easy to see why the Israelites must "revere His sanctuary" (Lev. 26:2).

The "cursings" of this chapter (and the retelling in Deuteronomy 28-29) are virtually a reversal of the promised blessings. While the cursings are presented differently, we can summarize them in terms of these same three categories: (1) FROM PROSPERITY TO POVERTY; (2) FROM PEACE TO PERIL; (3) FROM GOD'S PRESENCE TO HIS ABSENCE. Instead of prosperity, disobedience will bring poverty. Initially, Israel's crops will be consumed by raiding enemies (26:16). If Israel's disobedience persists, as it surely will, the rains will cease, Israel's crops will fail, and thus a famine will result (26:26). It is not stated but is likely implied that fertility will also cease.¹⁷⁴ Not only will new life be limited by infertility, but men will be killed by hostile animals (26:22). Pestilence will kill many (26:21, 25), and eventually this people will turn against one another, resorting to cannibalism (26:29).

Instead of peace and security, disobedience will bring about insecurity, peril, and fear. Initially, Israel will suffer from the raiding attacks of some of their neighbors, who will steal their crops (26:16). Then, Israel will be defeated by her enemies and delivered into their hands, so that they are ruled by them (26:17, 25). Finally, the Israelites will be driven from the land and will live, dispersed and scattered, in the land of their conquerors (26:31-32, 36, 38). The remnant who remain in the land will suffer as much as those who are taken away (26:39). The peace and security which they could have known is traded for insecurity, fear, and constant apprehension (26:36-37).

In place of the presence of God in the midst of His people, Israel will experience a growing separation from Him. He will first set His face against His people (v. 17). Then, because His people have been hostile against Him (26:21, 23), He will become their enemy (26:24, 28). He will drive them from His sanctuary (which they have not revered) to the land of their enemies, far from His (perceived) presence. In their absence, the land will enjoy the sabbaths which the Israelites never observed (26:34-35).

This text provides us with a pattern and principles for discipline. Note the following characteristics of the promises of blessing and cursing which can be identified from a study of Leviticus chapter 26.

- (1) The rules which God has laid down for Israel, as well as the results of obedience or disobedience, are clearly defined.
- (2) God's standards for Israel's conduct and the consequences for obedience or disobedience are given well in advance of punishment or blessing.
- (3) The motivation of Leviticus 26 is both negative and positive. The purpose of this chapter is to motivate Israel to keep God's covenant.
- (4) The purpose is always positive, as is the motivation of the God who prescribes these blessings and cursings. And, in the final outcome, God assures Israel that He will restore them, not based on their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, but on the basis of His faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (vv. 40-45). Israel is always assured of God's love and of His good intentions and purposes for His people.

The prophets explained the defeat and disasters of Israel's history as the fulfillment of God's warnings concerning disobedience to His commandments. They also promised a future deliverance, which was virtually a reversal of the cursings of our text. Note the parallels of this prophecy of Ezekiel (Ezek. 34:25-30; cf. also 37:22-38) and Isaiah (Isa. 49:1-3, 6, 8-11).

Thus, Leviticus 26 was intended to be a word of warning and of hope to the Israelites of old, and it will continue to be this until Israel is restored. But there are also very important applications of this text to contemporary Christians. It is the apostle Paul who points his readers to the undergirding principles of this passage and applies it to Christians. And he does this in the Book of Galatians, a book written to correct the errors of legalism, based upon an inaccurate interpretation and application of the Law of Moses. Paul taught that there was a principle underlying Leviticus 26 which is just as applicable to Christians as it was to the Israelites of old (c.f. Gal. 6:7-10).

However, based on everything above, we should not use this passage to suggest:

- (1) Christians, on the basis of his keeping God's will (perfectly), will face the same curses. This was a national covenant – not a personal one.
- (2) The "gospel of the good life" looks upon a text like ours and says, "If we but do the right things, we will prosper." There is some truth to that – but look at the life of prophets, Apostles and Jesus above all. They underscore that this is a principle that undergirds faith – it does not mean that if you are not prospering, you must be sinning.
- (3) The positive possibilities attitude school of Christian thought. This school of thought, which has its origins in pagan thinking, would have us believe that thinking only positive thoughts, thoughts of success and prosperity, will assure us of experiencing success and prosperity. Moses must have been mistaken, then, to have introduced such "negative" thinking into the Old Testament.
- (4) That New Covenant Grace sets aside all judgment, and thus the need to be concerned about avoiding sin. The underlying assumption is that the goodness and grace of God results only in blessing, and never in discipline. The goodness and grace of God are constantly emphasized in our text and in the Old Testament, and yet His goodness requires God to discipline His wayward

children. Christian liberty and the grace of God are never to be used as a pretext, an occasion for sin (cf. Rom. 6:1ff.; 1 Pet. 2:16).

In Exodus 16:12-34, the institution of the “lex talionis” (law regarding retaliation) into the Mosaic law for the nation of Israel and the ruling authorities is introduced. Most law students say it was an advancement for the cause of justice that prevented personal actions of retaliation and revenge. The injured person or relative of the injured person could go to the governing judicial authority in Israel to seek justice. But what should the appropriate punishment be in the case of murder or maiming? This is where the law comes into play: “a life for a life,” “an eye for an eye,” “a tooth for a tooth.” **The punishment must fit the crime – no more than the crime but also no less. It was strict but fair.** Designed to prevent and deter such crimes, it was there to remove punitive actions from the hands of the victim and his family and put them into the hands of the governing judicial system.

Genesis 34 records **an actual incident** like this between Jacob’s family and the family of Shechem. After Jacob’s daughter Dinah is physically abused, Dinah’s brothers, Simeon and Levi, seek revenge by first deceiving Shechem’s family into getting men circumcised, and then they take the retaliatory action of killing all the males. Of course, it is clear in Genesis 49:5-7 that God did not approve of this action.

This is irony and abuse of how people misunderstand this law. It is misunderstood now the same way it was misunderstood at the time of Jesus. A law that was designed to prevent actions of personal retaliatory revenge is used to justify it! The misunderstanding of the law would say if someone slaps you on the cheek, slap him back (after all “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”). If someone sues you, sue him back. If you are forced to go a mile by a Roman soldier, resist and fight back. Jesus is trying to confront that type of teaching and mindset.

God wants actions of personal revenge taken out of our hands. Governmental authorities should intervene, if appropriate, and even if that doesn’t work, we need to turn them over to God Himself. As Paul states in Romans: Repay no one evil for evil... . Beloved do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord (Romans 12:17, 19).

The lex talionis is stated explicitly three times in the Old Testament. First here, in Exodus 21:22-25, it is cited in a way **that protected a pregnant woman and her child from death** or injury that might occur if two men were in a fight. Second, in Leviticus 24:17-22, it is applied generally to any case where a crime of murder or intentional maiming occurred. This is the most vivid for the judicial authorities. Last, in Deuteronomy 19:15-21, it occurs in a passage to prevent perjury and using the court to execute or punish an otherwise innocent individual.

Seven crimes called for capital punishment in the Old Testament law (false prophet - Deuteronomy 13:5; idolatry - Deuteronomy 17:7; disobedience to authority - Deuteronomy 17:12; stubborn and rebellious son - Deuteronomy 21:21; harlotry - Deuteronomy 22:21; adultery - Deuteronomy 22:22-24; and kidnapping - Deuteronomy 24:7).

One law called for flogging (Deuteronomy 25:1-4). Potentially, a witness could intentionally and falsely accuse someone of a capital crime and try to use the court system to execute an individual not guilty of the crime. However, there were two safeguards: 1) one testimony would not be sufficient in the court, it would have to be two or three witnesses; and 2) there had to be a careful investigation by the priests and judges. And if it was proven that the witness was false, that he was intentionally trying to harm someone, then the punishment that would have fallen on the innocent party would fall on the false witness according to the lex talionis. This is clear because of the phrases, “do to him as he thought to do to his brother” and “you shall put away the evil from among you,” which always occurs in contexts of capital punishment in Deuteronomy. Also, there is the statement of “Your eye shall not pity” and “the life for life” law.

NEXT WEEK | 12/15 | Covenant Ordinances: Holiness (Ex. 22:31; Lev. 19:1-3; 20:7, 26): *“You must be holy” involves many things, including respect, Sabbath and the Tithes* (Ex. 22:29-30; 23:19; Lev. 27:30-34).