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Leviticus 26

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Leviticus 26.

FOCUS: LAWS REGARDING BLESSINGS AND PUNISHMENTS

Topics.

- Walk in my statutes and I will give you rain, and you will dwell securely.
 - Five shall chase a hundred, and a hundred shall chase ten thousand.
 - If you spurn my rules, I will make your heart to ache.
 - I will break the pride of your power, and your heavens like iron.
 - Wild beasts shall bereave you of children and destroy your livestock.
 - I will bring a sword upon you, to execute vengeance for the covenant.
 - Ten women shall bake bread in an oven and you shall not be satisfied.
 - If they confess their iniquity, I will remember the land.
 - When they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them.
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INTRODUCTION: the book of Leviticus is about ceremonial rules and civil laws that God gave to Moses after He had given him the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

- These are the statutes and rules and laws that the LORD made between him and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. (Lev. 26:46).

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Either on Mount Sinai or when he met with him in the Tabernacle (also called the tent of meeting) when they were in the wilderness near the Mountain. Moses was to give these ceremonial laws to the Levitical priesthood, they embrace rules concerning sacrifices, offerings and worship; the ordination of Aaron and his sons and their ceremonial cleanness; the Day of Atonement; feasts and holy days and the Year of Jubilee. The civil and social laws and laws of justice he was to give to the government of Israel to implement within their society.

The ceremonial and civil laws were not given to the secular world but are laws God gave to the nation of Israel. The central message is that God is holy and requires His people to be holy. The book also shows that God graciously provides atonement for sin through the shedding of blood. Most Jews and Christians recognise Moses as the author, writing sometime after the giving of the Law (about 1445 B.C.).

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: covers laws regarding the fiftieth jubilee year; redemption of land; the seventh sabbatical year Sabbath; the fiftieth year and the day of atonement. Laws for redeeming houses in walled cities; houses in villages and for Levite houses. Laws for redeeming, male and female Israelite slaves; laws for calculating the price of redemption and laws for slaves not redeemed.

The following statutes: are the laws the LORD gave to Moses on Mount Sinai to give to Israel. (V46).

LEVITICUS 26:1

- **Leviticus 26:1:** "You shall not make idols for yourselves or erect an image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the LORD your God.

This chapter contains a general enforcement of all the laws previously given by Moses and promises reward for obedience and threatening of punishment for disobedience. Some think this law against idolatry is mentioned here because of the Israelite sold to a stranger, spoken of in the latter part of the previous chapter, to stop him from being drawn into idolatry, but this is a universal law that honours and the glory of God, and the foundation of all Old and New Testament faith and godliness.

You shall not make idols for yourselves: these laws may be repeated here because idolatrous worship of every kind was very prevalent among the surrounding nations at this time. Idols here embraces any form of statue or pillar made of stone, cast metal or gold that symbolizes a god that people bow down to worship.

The prophet Isaiah wrote.

- All who fashion a god are only human craftsmen their idols profit nothing?" (Isaiah 44:9-10). The carpenter chooses a tree and cuts it down, part of it he kindles a fire and warms himself, another part he uses to bakes bread and part of it he makes an idol, falls-down and worships it as a god, and prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!" His heart cannot understand or discern and consider, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten, and shall I fall down before a block of wood to worship it?" His heart is deluded and has led him astray. (Isaiah 44:13-20).

The apostle Paul wrote:

- We know that an idol has no real existence, and that "there is no God but one. (1 Corinthians 8:4).

You shall not erect an image or pillar: hewn out of wood, stone or gold, or obelisks like those the ancient Egyptians erected that were full of hieroglyphics, and superstitious characters, and mystical writings expressing various aspects of a deity or god.

A standing image: refer to any idolatrous statue made in the likeness of man or beast or to any kind of stone statue or pillar which pagans erected to their gods, and to which they paid divine honours, and images like the golden calf Aaron set up.

- Aaron received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" (Exod. 32:4).

You shall not set up a figured stone: any type of sensuous representation of a god or deity or a stone, metal or gold memorial of a pagan deity set up in places of prayer were worshippers prostrated themselves to perform their devotions before deities they believed to be guardian divinities.

You shall not bow down idols in your land: this command also protects people from the corruptions and deceptive superstitions, delusions and fantasies that come from exalting and believing in non-existent gods and deities. Moses in the beginning of the law wrote:

- You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. (Exodus 20:4).

LEVITICUS 26:2

- **Leviticus 26:2:** You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.

Public worship of God required, the exclusion of all visible symbols of any form of deity as well as all idolatrous objects, and the keeping of holy times and the place appointed by the Law for His sacred services and worship. The word Sabbaths here includes the seventh day weekly Sabbath and all the Sabbaths of the Feast days.

THE BLESSINGS

LEVITICUS 26:3-5

Walk in My Statutes and I will Give You Rain and Security.

- **Leviticus 26:3-5:** "If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, ⁴then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. ⁵Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely.

The root cause of all Israel's blessings would be that God Himself was for them to such a magnitude that the whole of creation would be working for them. (i.e., their land would abundantly produce, their bodies would be free of every type of sickness and no enemy would come against them). If the people of Israel obeyed the LORD'S statutes and kept His commandments, the LORD would bless them with such perfect showers of rain their land would abundantly produce fruit trees, barely, wheat and wine. The barley and wheat would be so plentiful that the workers would still be harvesting it right up to the time of the grape harvest and the grape harvest would be so abundant that the workers would not have finished gathering and pressing out the grapes before the land was ready for sowing again. The picture here is of the increase being so great that the workers would have no idle time between the two harvests and the vintage. One blessing would immediately follow another blessing so that there would be scarcely enough time to receive them. The prophet Amos expressed such abundant blessings in the following manner:

- Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. (Amos 9:13).

You shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely: bread here is put forward for all provisions of food, it means that they would have plenty of food and meat to eat and be fully satisfied and refreshed.

You shall dwell safely in your land: they would have no need to go into other lands to gather or trade for food, and would be in no danger from enemies invading them and carrying off their abundance, without this promise of security, their prosperity would not be so great a blessing, since it would be a massive temptation for surrounding nations to invade and plunder their land.

LEVITICUS 26:6-9

Five shall Chase a Hundred, a Hundred shall Chase Ten Thousand.

- **Leviticus 26:6-9:** I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land. ⁷You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. ⁸Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. ⁹I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you.

Five of you shall chase a hundred: (v8) this expression corresponds to the phrase "A very small number, or a mere handful, shall be more than a match for a whole multitude." The same expression, with different percentages to the numbers, occur in the following verses:

- How could one have chased a thousand, and two have put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had given them up? (Deut. 32:30).
- One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the LORD your God who fights for you, just as he promised you. (Josh. 23:10).
- A thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, like a signal on a hill. (Isaiah 30:17).

Another way of expressing the words, "five of you shall chase a hundred," is that a small number of them will be more than enough to match the vast multitudes of them, or a small number of them will be far more powerful and superior than the vast number of their enemies.

A hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall: (v8) carries the same idea as the earlier part of the verse, signifying that a very few, under God's blessing, favour and power will be more than enough to get the advantage over a vast multitude.

I will confirm my covenant with you: (v9) meaning God will perform all that He has promised in His covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai. On the positive side, it carries the idea, that God will carry out all the blessings He has promised in this chapter and in the covenant, He made with Israel at Sinai if they obey His statutes, rules and commandments. On the negative side, should Israel forsake God's statutes, rules and commandments He will perform all the threats of punishment contained in this chapter and in the covenant.

LEVITICUS 26:10-13

You shall Eat the Old and Clear it Out to Make Way for the New.

- **Leviticus 26:10-13:** You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new. ¹¹I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. ¹²And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. ¹³I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect (upright in KJV).

You shall eat old store kept: (v10) carries the idea, the last harvest was so large that the people are still eating it when the new harvest is ready to bring into the storehouse.

You shall clear out the old to make way for the new: (v10) means that the land will multiply so abundantly that they will have to empty their barns to make room for the produce of the new harvest

I will walk among you: (v12) as He had done by the pillar of cloud during the day and fire, by night, and by His tabernacle as they journeyed through the wilderness.

- I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. (2 Sam. 7:6).

And by His Angel which went before them to protect, guide, instruct, and comfort them.

- Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you. (Judges 2:1).
- On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them. (Zech. 12:8).

The apostle Paul cites the words, "I will walk among you."

- What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (2 Cor. 6:16).

In the same way that the LORD said, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people," to the nation Israel, that He chose out of all nations of the earth to be His people, the apostle Paul cites the same words, (2 Cor. 6:16), in the context of believers in Christ being called out of the darkness of this world to be a separate people to the Lord God Almighty. It is interesting to notice that the words, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people," are conditional upon those God calls to be a separate people responding to the call to separate themselves from the darkness and sinful things of the world, for the LORD finishes the sentence saying:

- Then I will welcome you, ¹⁸and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

I will be your God: (v12) to love them and provide and supply them with all His blessings of goodness, mercy, grace and protect and defend them from their enemies.

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You shall be my people: (v12) carries the following two ideas:

1. I will own you to be a special, unique and peculiar people who I will make the glory of my Shechinah dwell among you, and from who my word will go out to the world.
2. I have called out of the mass of mankind, to make you a nation above all nations to be redeemed and saved and stand as a testimony to my name.

There is no other nation on earth that has history with their God as Israel does. Their history with the LORD their God goes back to the beginning of time no other nation or religion can claim such miracles and wonders or history no matter what god they may believe in.

The following verses show that the United Kingdom of Israel has always been God's special and unique nation unlike any other nation, of them God said:

- Israel was his son who he called out of Egypt and he loved them when they were a child (Hosea 11:1).
- He gave birth to Israel and carried them from the womb even to their old age. (Isaiah 46:3-4).
- Israel is his allotted heritage (Deut. 32:9) and the apple of his eye (Deut. 32:10).
- Israel is a people holy to him (Deut. 7:6) and his treasured possession (Deut. 14:2).

The LORD has not spoken this way with any other nation, but God has not only spoken of Israel differently, but always dealt with them differently to any other nation:

- To Israel God gave the Ten Commandments and showed his great power. (Ex. 20:1-17).

- To Israel God declared his word, statutes and his rules. (Rom. 9:4)
- To Israel God gave the prophets, the worship and the promises. (Rom. 3:4)
- To Israel belonged the covenant, the adoption, the patriarchs and the glory. (Rom. 3:5)
- To Israel the oracles of God were entrusted. (Rom. 3:2)
- The people of Israel are the offspring of Abraham the father of faith. (Rom. 9:7)
- From Israel's race came the Christ the Saviour of the world. (Rom. 9:5)
- God declared his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation (Psalm 147:19-20).

The LORD has not given any other nations such great privileges. These are the many reasons the Jews (especially the religious leaders of Jesus generation) considered themselves to be the holy race with God and the Gentile nations to be the unclean race without God.

The thermometer of God's prophecy: it is true that Israel has been and still is a special nation to God, but since Christ death and resurrection salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Israel remains a clear sign of where we are in prophecy concerning Christ's return. It could be said that they are the thermometer of God's prophecy much like the mercury on a natural thermometer measures the heat of the day and moves up the vertical red line warning us of impending danger when the heat of the sun is reaching temperatures that are dangerous for the good health of the skin and our well-being. Likewise, Israel can be seen as the mercury of Bible prophecy in the sense that world events that come upon the nation of Israel (especially Jerusalem) are signs that give us some insight as to how close we are to that glorious breathtaking and world changing day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory. But God's focus during our present age for eternal salvation is upon creating a new nation in Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles. This new nation is also called a new creation in Christ, the body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the church and the Kingdom of God. Israel's love for the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob cannot be doubted. When their Messiah does return in glory and the LORD pours upon them a spirit of grace and they cry pleas for mercy when they look on him whom they had pierced, not only will the entire nation weep over the horrific crime they committed against him (Zech. 12:9-14), but the entire world and its oppressive systems of global finance and trade will be changed and its corrupt governments will be replaced for the better.

I am the LORD who brought you out of Egypt: (v13) the Hebrew slaves deliverance from the cruel bondage of Egypt made them a nation that God secured for Himself, that they might no longer be in a state of bondage to any nation. God's declaration, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Egypt," should have been a great encouragement and motivation for the people of Egypt to serve the LORD and walk in his statutes.

I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect: (v13), the expression, "I have broken the bars of your yoke," is often used to denote oppression and tyranny:

- You (Israel) shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and lacking everything. And he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you. (Deut. 28:48).
- In that day his burden will depart from your (all who dwell in Zion), shoulder, and his yoke from your neck; and the yoke will be broken because of the fat. (Isaiah 10:27).
- I will break the Assyrian in my land, and on my mountains trample him underfoot; and his yoke shall depart from them (Israel), and his burden from their shoulder. (Isaiah 14:25).

- The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they (God's people) shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. (Ezekiel 34:27).

NOTE: for the history of Israel, Assyria, Judah and Babylon, see the title: "The Land shall Enjoy its Sabbaths and they shall Make Amends," following (v43) (below).

Concerning the yoke of slavery, the apostle Paul wrote:

- For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (Gal. 5:1).

This is in the context of being under the bondage of being circumcised, and by extension under the bondage of all Jewish traditions and religious laws and customs to be saved or to maintain one's own salvation. Jesus by his death and resurrection has set us free from the yoke of adhering to holy days and strictly keeping religious customs and traditions. In fact, Paul goes on to say:

- Christ will be of no advantage to whoever trusts in circumcision, because if they trust in this single part of the ceremonial law, they must keep the whole law, and whoever believes they are justified by the law are severed from Christ and have fallen away from grace. (Gal. 5:2-5).

The LORD delivered Israel out of the bondage of Egypt (a symbol of the world), likewise the Lord Jesus Christ delivers all who come to him from the bondage of sin and the condemnation of the law and the inevitability of eternal death.

I have made you walk erect (upright in KJV): (v13) all of God's promises to break the bars of their yoke, to give rain in its due season, to increase the fertility of their land so that it abundantly produce and to keep them in peace and free from wars are all dependent upon them walking erect (i.e., uprightly), meaning faithfully obeying the commandments of the LORD.

THE CURSES

LEVITICUS 26:14-17

If you Spurn My Rules, I will make Your Heart to Ache.

- **Leviticus 26:14-17:** "But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, ¹⁵if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, ¹⁶then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic (terror in KJV), with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. ¹⁷I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you.

After God had set the blessing before Israel which would bring them great prosperity, happiness and peace if they walked in His ways, He now sets the curse before them, which would bring them poverty, war, and misery if they turned from His ways.

The two things that would bring God's curses upon them are:

1. Contempt of God's commandments (manifested by them breaking His covenant).
2. Contempt of God's corrections (manifested by the fact they do not learn obedience by the things they suffer).

If you spurn my statutes, I will also do this to you: (15-16) the root cause of all Israel's misery would be that God Himself was against them to such a magnitude that the whole of creation would be working against them (i.e., their land would not produce, their bodies would suffer horrific diseases and their enemies would conquer them).

I will visit you with panic (terror in KJV): (16) meaning many grievous afflictions and terrible things would come upon them not only bringing great anxiety, mental stress and worry upon them, but also eventually consume and destroy them.

Fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache: (16), meaning they will have such troubles and horrible sicknesses amongst their families that they will suffer great sorrow of heart. The book of Deuteronomy expresses it in the following manner:

- Among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. (Deut. 28:65).

Overview: if Israel spurns the LORD'S statutes: (v15) and broke His covenant He would set His face against them and they would:

- Be struck with panic, disease, fevers and heartache. (Lev. 26:16).
- Sow their seed in vain, because their enemies would eat their crops. (Leviticus 26:16).
- Be struck down before their enemies. (Lev. 26:17).
- Flee when no one was pursuing them and those who hate them would rule over them. (Lev. 26:17).

You shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it: (v16) meaning their enemies would invade their land and eat their ripe crops, before they had time to gather them into their storehouses. The prophet Micah expresses this same curse in the following manner:

- You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; you shall tread grapes, but not drink wine. (Micah 6:15).

In contrast to this Isaiah prophesied:

- The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: "I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink your wine for which you have labored; (Isaiah 62:8).
- They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. ²³They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them. (Isaiah 65:22-23).

LEVITICUS 26:18-20

I will Break the Pride of Your Power, and Your Heavens like Iron.

- **Leviticus 26:18-20:** And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins, ¹⁹and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. ²⁰And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.

I will break the pride of your power: (v19) this, threatening embraces the following four things:

1. Their wealth which they gained from the abundant harvests and fruitfulness of their lands mentioned in (v4-5).
2. The sanctuary which they were proud of, trusted in, and boasted of; which is referred to as "the pride of your power," which was destroyed, by Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon and then by the Romans.
 - Say to the house of Israel, thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, (the excellency of your strength in the KJV) the delight of your eyes. (Ezek. 24:21).
3. The strength of their weapons of war and their numerous mighty men of war and united armies.
 - Their religion and sacred ceremonies and ecclesiastical traditions that they prided themselves with and trusted to keep them safe.

I will make your heavens like iron: (v19) meaning the skies over them will be as metal, in that dew and rain will no longer fall from them.

I will make your earth like bronze: (v19) in that it would be so dry and hard (a result of the heavens being like iron) that they would not be able to cast or plough their seed into it, and nothing would spring out of it. No figure could have been better employed to convey the idea of severe and long-continued famine than the expression "I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze."

Your strength shall be spent in vain: (v20) meaning all the work and labour that they spent ploughing and sowing and tilling the ground will be futile and any effort they spend in establishing trade and building towns and cities will all come to nothing, in that their enemies will destroy all they put their hand to.

NOTE: for the history of Israel, Assyria, Judah and Babylon, see the title: "The Land shall Enjoy its Sabbaths and they shall Make Amends," following (v43) (below).

LEVITICUS 26:21-22

Wild Beasts shall Bereave You of Your Children and Livestock.

- **Leviticus 26:21-22:** "Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins. ²²And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads (highways in KJV) shall be deserted.

I will let loose the wild beasts against you: (v22) the Scriptures speak of poisonous and venomous animals that crawl in the dust (Deut. 32:24), lions (2 Kings 17:25), howling creatures, ostriches and goats (Isaiah 13:21-22) and hyenas and jackals (Isaiah 13:21-22). Amongst the wild animals that dwelt in ancient Israel were lions, bears, wolves and antelopes, the wild ox and deer's, ostriches, crocodiles and hippopotamus. Due to the vast growth of human population, only a fraction of these animals remains. Israel also has seven species of venomous snakes, of which the following three are most dangerous: the Israeli viper, the black adder and the Israeli mole viper, the most common of these venomous snakes is the vipers. When Israel was about to enter the land of Canaan the LORD said:

- I will not drive them (the Hivites, Canaanites and the Hittites) out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you. (Exod. 23:28-29).

Wild beasts were often used as a punishment against Israel when they turned from walking in His ways:

- They (God's sons and his daughters) shall be wasted with hunger and devoured by plague and poisonous pestilence; I will send the teeth of beasts against them, with the venom of things that crawl in the dust. (Deut. 32:24).
- He (Elisha) turned around, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys. (2 Kings 2:24).
- At the beginning of their dwelling (Babylonians in the land of Samaria) there, they did not fear the LORD, therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them. (2 Kings 17:25).
- Wild animals will lie down there (Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans), and their houses will be full of howling creatures; there ostriches will dwell, and there wild goats will dance. ²²Hyenas will cry in its towers, and jackals in the pleasant palaces; its time is close at hand and its days will not be prolonged. (Isaiah 13:21-22).
- I will send famine and wild beasts against you (Jerusalem which the LORD set in the center of the nations), and they will rob you of your children. (Ezek. 5:17).
- If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land (a land that sins against the LORD), and they ravage it, and it be made desolate, so that no one may pass through because of the beasts. (Ezek. 14:15).
- For thus says the Lord GOD: How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast! (Ezek. 14:21).

NOTE: wild beast in some contexts can be taken to be literal wild animals such as lions, bears, wolves etc., or figuratively, symbolically signify mighty monarchs and cruel oppressors, such as the kings of Assyria and Babylon were:

- Israel is a hunted sheep driven away by lions. First the king of Assyria devoured him, and now at last Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has gnawed his bones. (Jer. 50:17).

10

In the New Testament Jesus referred to the prideful, hypocritical religious leaders (the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes) as vipers and serpents.

- You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. (Matt. 12:34).
- You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? (Matt. 23:33).

Your roads (highways in KJV) shall be deserted: (v22) because no one dares to travel on them for fear of the vast number of wild beasts and venomous creatures roaming the land and due to the lack of trade and commerce because of the bareness of their cities, towns and villages. Isaiah speaks of highways lying waste and traveler ceasing, and cities being despised, because covenants are broken and there is no regard for man. (Isaiah 33:8).

LEVITICUS 26:23-25

I will Bring a Sword upon You, to Execute Vengeance.

- **Leviticus 26:23-25:** "And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me, ²⁴then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. ²⁵And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant (avenge the quarrel of my covenant in KJV), and if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

Due to Israel's increased and continual defiance, God places himself in a hostile position against them by increasing their calamities, no longer are

they the objects of his love and care, but due to their rebelliousness and disobedience the LORD is now walking contrary to them as they are walking contrary to Him. Jeremiah prophesied:

- In vain have I struck your children; they took no correction; your own sword devoured your prophets like a ravaging lion. (Jer. 2:30).

I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance: (v25) (avenge the quarrel of my covenant in KJV), the quarrel of the LORD's covenant simply means the breaking of the covenant He made with Israel at Mount Sinai. The sword, symbolizes war, it means that because of their rebellion against His covenant the LORD will bring mighty and powerful armies against them that will invade their land, destroy their cities and slaughter the people.

If you gather within your cities: (v25) the LORD is basically saying that there will be no escape, even if they flee from their towns, villages and fields into their fortified cities protected by soldiers in the garrisons for fear of the approaching enemy, or after being defeated by their enemy they will then become a prey to pestilence, and those who do survive the pestilence will be so weak that they will willingly surrender themselves into the hands of the relentless enemy. Ezekiel prophesied:

- The sword is without; pestilence and famine are within. He who is in the field dies by the sword, and him who is in the city famine and pestilence devour. (Ezek. 7:15).

LEVITICUS 26:26

Ten Women shall Bake Bread and You shall Not be Satisfied.

- Leviticus 26:26: When I break your supply of bread (broken the staff of your bread in KJV), ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.

The, staff of their bread, means the root of their life, for bread is put forward for all food including meat and drink. When God cuts off their supply of bread/food, which would be a natural result of pestilence being rampant in their cities and enemies surrounding them, making it impossible to venture out of the city walls to gather food.

- When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread. (Psalm 105:16).
- Behold, the Lord GOD of hosts is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah support and supply, all support of bread, and all support of water. (Isaiah 3:1).
- When I send against you the deadly arrows of famine, arrows for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, and when I bring more and more famine upon you and break your supply of bread. (Ezek. 5:16).
- Son of man, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it and break its supply of bread and send famine upon it and cut off from it man and beast. (Ezek. 14:13).

Ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven: (v26) ten or many families, for the women took care for the bread and food of all the family. This means that the famine will be so great that only one oven will be needed to bake bread for ten families, in contrast to ordinary times when each family would use one oven each.

They shall deliver you your bread by weight: the shortage of food is so great that the food will have to be weighed out for each person and no one will eat as much as they require. Parallel to this picture of misery is the appalling scene described by Ezekiel:

- Moreover, he said to me, "Son of man, behold, I will break the supply of bread in Jerusalem. They shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay. ¹⁷I will do this that they may lack bread and water, and look at one another in dismay, and rot away because of their punishment. (Ezek. 4:16-17).

You shall Eat the Flesh of Your Sons and Daughters.

- **Leviticus 26:27-32:** "But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me, ²⁸then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins. ²⁹You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. ³⁰And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars (images in KJV) and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you. ³¹And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas. ³²And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it.

You shall eat the flesh of your sons and daughters: (v29) because of extreme hunger, this revolting picture is described in the most vivid way in the following verses:

- You shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you. ⁵⁴The man who is the most tender and refined among you will begrudge food to his brother, to the wife he embraces, and to the last of the children whom he has left, ⁵⁵so that he will not give to any of them any of the flesh of his children whom he is eating, because he has nothing else left, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in all your towns. ⁵⁶The most tender and refined woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she is so delicate and tender, will begrudge to the husband she embraces, to her son and to her daughter, ⁵⁷her afterbirth that comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears, because lacking everything she will eat them secretly, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your towns. (Deut. 28:53-57).

It was fulfilled, first in the siege of Samaria by the Syrians spoken of in the following verses:

- And the king asked her, "What is your trouble?" She answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' ²⁹So we boiled my son and ate him. And on the next day I said to her, 'Give your son, that we may eat him.' But she has hidden her son." (2 Kings 6:28-29).

Next in the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon before the Babylonish seventy-year captivity. Jeremiah bewails the scene in the following verse:

- The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food during the destruction of the daughter of my people. (Lament. 4:10).

I will destroy your high places: (v30) high places refers to elevated spots dedicated to false worship, they could be enclosures on the tops of mountains, or circular open areas that are on hills and surrounded by trees used for practising the rites of idolatry. Throughout the Scriptures there are many occasions when Israel worshipped at idolatrous high places, that should have been destroyed for the following two reasons:

1. The only place the people of Israel were to offer sacrifice was at the tabernacle and later the temple of God.
2. The destruction of these high places of idolatrous worship not only manifested to Israel, but also to all heathen nations how utterly worthless the pagan deities worshipped there were.

I will cut down your incense altars (images in KJV): (v30) embraces:

- Idolatrous sun images, pillars of the sun-god and the host of heaven.

- Altars to Baal and the Asherim (an ancient Semitic goddess, sometimes identified with Ashtoreth and Astarte, worshiped by the Phoenicians and Canaanites).
- Metal images of various gods and various upright wooden objects or poles serving as a sacred symbol of Asherah.
- All forms of carved and metal images and images of wood, stone and gold set up as places of prayer and worship.

I will cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols: (v30) nothing could show a greater contempt for the idol-worshippers and the idols than the picture here given. The carcasses of the apostate Israelites who have been destroyed by war, famine and pestilence, will be mixed up with the shattered remains of their gods. Ezekiel gives a similar picture in the following verses:

- Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain before your idols. ⁵And I will lay the dead bodies of the people of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones around your altars. (Ezek. 6:4-5).

This picture shines a spotlight upon these loathsome, contemptible, worthlessness, lifeless and powerless gods, rather than being able to help them they lie broken and thrown down with the dead bodies of those who worshipped them. We read of a similar threatening in the following verses:

- Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain before your idols. ⁵And I will lay the dead bodies of the people of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones around your altars. ⁶Wherever you dwell, the cities shall be waste and the high places ruined, so that your altars will be waste and ruined, your idols broken and destroyed, your incense altars cut down, and your works wiped out. ⁷And the slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I am the LORD. (Ezek. 6:4-7).
- At that time (when the land becomes a waste), declares the LORD, the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of its officials, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be brought out of their tombs. ²And they shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which they have loved and served, which they have gone after, and which they have sought and worshiped. And they shall not be gathered or buried. They shall be as dung on the surface of the ground. (Jer. 8:1-2).

These were partly fulfilled by Josiah.

- He (Josiah king of Judah) also burned the bones of the priests on their altars and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. (2 Chron. 34:5).
- And he (Josiah) sacrificed all the priests of the high places who were there, on the altars, and burned human bones on them. Then he returned to Jerusalem. (2 Kings 23:20).

I will lay your cities waste: (v31) not only will high places with their idols outside the cities be destroyed, and the carcasses of the deluded worshippers be scattered among their broken ruins, but the cities of Israel themselves will be destroyed and brought to ruin and desolation as the following verses show:

- A lion has gone up from his thicket, a destroyer of nations has set out; he has gone out from his place to make your land a waste; your cities will be ruins without inhabitant. (Jer. 4:7).
- I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a lair of jackals, and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant." (Jer. 9:11).
- Wherever you dwell, the cities shall be waste and the high places ruined, so that your altars will be waste and ruined, your idols broken and destroyed, your incense altars cut down, and your works wiped out. (Ezek. 6:6).
- The inhabited cities shall be laid waste, and the land shall become a desolation; and you shall know that I am the LORD." (Ezek. 12:20).

- Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." (Neh. 2:17).

The destruction of Judah's and Israel numerous and flourishing cities was the result of their continual rebellion against the LORD and their refusal to listen to the word of their prophets that God sent to warn them of their impending doom. The LORD laid Israel's cities waste by allowing their enemies to besiege them, and after weeks, months and sometimes years of vast armies surrounding the city to bring their inhabitants to starvation and weakness, they would then enter-into the city, and plunder, burn and destroy the houses and reduce them to utter ruin, as Babylon did to their most holy city Jerusalem.

I will make your sanctuaries desolate: (v31) the sanctuaries here can embrace the following:

- The temple first built by Solomon, and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and the second temple rebuilt by Zerubbabel, and adorned by Herod, and believed to be reduced to ashes by Titus Vespasian. Though the temple is one temple, it is divided into three sections, the Most Holy Place, the Holy Place and the outer court, and therefore is here expressed in the plural number.
- Any place the people believed to be a sacred place of worship, such as the two golden calves Jeroboam set up in each end of the land of Samaria that became Israel's central worship centres in Samarian and in this sense their sanctuaries.

I will not smell your pleasing aromas (savour your sweet odours in KJV): (v31) the smell of their pleasing aromas refers to:

- The sweet-smelling aroma of their burnt and food sacrifices being offered up on the brazen altar in the outer court and the pleasing aroma of the fat of their other offerings
- The sweet-smelling aroma and fragrance that arose from the incense made of various sweet spices, that was daily offered to God on the golden altar of incense in the Holy Place of the sanctuary.

14

When these were offered up with a sincere and honest heart and in faith and obedience, they were a sweet and acceptable aroma to the Lord their God, meaning, the LORD would accept their sacrifices and offerings and their worship and prayers. When they were offered up with a heart filled with pride, hypocrisy, unbelief, unfaithfulness and disobedience the LORD would not smell them, meaning, He refused to accept their sacrifices and offerings and worship and prayers.

- Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins; the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary! ⁴Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place; they set up their own signs for signs. (Psalm 74:3-4).
- They (Israel's enemies) set your sanctuary on fire; they profaned the dwelling place of your name, bringing it down to the ground. (Psalm 74:7).
- What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. (Isaiah 1:11).
- We (inhabitants of Jerusalem) are put to shame, for we have heard reproach; dishonor has covered our face, for foreigners have come into the holy places of the LORD'S house. (Jer. 51:51).
- The high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword. (Amos 7:9).

NOTE: for the history of Israel, Assyria, Judah and Babylon, see the title: "The Land shall Enjoy its Sabbaths and they shall Make Amends," following (v43) (below).

I will Devastate the Land, so Your Enemies shall Be Appalled.

- **Leviticus 26:33-39:** And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it. ³³And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste. ³⁴Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths. ³⁵As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, the rest that it did not have on your Sabbaths when you were dwelling in it. ³⁶And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies. The sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight, and they shall flee as one flees from the sword, and they shall fall when none pursues. ³⁷They shall stumble over one another, as if to escape a sword, though none pursues. And you shall have no power to stand before your enemies. ³⁸And you shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. ³⁹And those of you who are left shall rot away in your enemies' lands because of their iniquity, and also because of the iniquities of their fathers they shall rot away like them.

I myself will devastate the land: (v32) the focus now moves to the land, meaning the whole country of Judea and Israel's, cities, towns, villages, fields and vineyards etc. The LORD says that He will:

- Bring the land of Israel to such ruin, that their enemies not only settle in it, but will also be shocked and horrified as they look upon its utter ruin.
- By war, lay Israel's cities waste and scatter the people of Israel among the nations.
- While the people of Israel are in captivity in the land of their enemies, the land of Israel will enjoy its Sabbaths.
- Those who survive the first wave of warfare will rot away in their enemies' lands.

15**All of this was fulfilled during the following two events:**

1. When the vast armies of Assyria invaded the land of Samaria in which the ten tribes of Israel dwelt and destroyed their cities, their worship centers and laid the land waste and took the people captive.
2. When the mighty armies of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded the land of Judah in which the two tribes of Judah dwelt, and not only destroyed their cities, but also invaded Jerusalem and burnt its houses, plundered the sacred vessels of gold from the temple and took the people captive. Later, Babylon conquered Assyria, which meant that the ten tribes of Israel and the two tribes of Judah were under Babylonian rule. They remained under Babylonian authority for seventy years during which their own land enjoyed its Sabbath days of rest.

The following verses speak of these events, the LORD declares that He will give:

- Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people in this city (Jerusalem) who survive the pestilence, sword, and famine into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of their enemies, into the hand of those who seek their lives. He shall strike them down with the edge of the sword. He shall not pity them or spare them or have compassion.'. (Jer. 21:7).

Your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled: (v32) meaning that they will be astonished that such a fruitful country, a land flowing with milk and honey, especially since the God over the land had promised that rain would fall in its due season, the trees of the field and the grape

harvest would abundantly yield their fruit, they would eat to the full and dwell in their land in peace and securely. (Lev. 26:4-10). However, these blessing were not an entitlement, but a reward for their obedience, while the utter desolation was a result of their continual disobedience as it stated in the covenant Israel entered-into with the LORD at Mount Sinai. The LORD who promised to abundantly bless the land in every way for obedience, also promised to reduce it to the most astounding desolation for disobedience, so much so, that their very enemies would be amazed at it.

- I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a lair of jackals, and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant." (Jer. 9:11).
- You shall be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and a horror, to the nations all around you, when I execute judgments on you in anger and fury, and with furious rebukes—I am the LORD, I have spoken— (Ezek. 5:15).
- I will make the land a desolation and a waste, and her proud might shall come to an end, and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that none will pass through. ²⁹Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have made the land a desolation and a waste because of all their abominations that they have committed. (Ezek. 33:28-29).

NOTE: for the history of Israel, Assyria, Judah and Babylon, see the title: "The Land shall Enjoy its Sabbaths and they shall Make Amends," following (v43) (below).

PROMISED BLESSING CONTINUED

LEVITICUS 26:40-42

If they Confess their Iniquity, I will Remember the Land.

- **Leviticus 26:40-42:** "But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, ⁴¹so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴²then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

Uncircumcised hearts: (v41) circumcision was the outward sign that the men of Israel were in a covenant relationship with God. Likewise, uncircumcision was a sign that a man was not in a covenant relationship with God, which means that the expression, "Uncircumcised hearts," carries the idea that Israel as a nation had broken their covenant relationship with God.

- To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it. (Jeremiah 6:10).
- Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart." (Jeremiah 9:26).

Stephen expressed the same idea in the following way:

- You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. (Acts 7:51).

The apostle Paul said:

- For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. (Rom. 2:25).
- No one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God. (Rom. 2:28-29).

Here the path for the backslider to return to the LORD is laid out in the following three steps:

1. Confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in that they walked contrary to the ways of the LORD. The word confess here embraces the idea of acknowledging to themselves and to God that they have sinned, it carries the idea of being consciously and mentally aware of the sin one has done before the LORD and in Israel's case of the sin the nation has done before the LORD.
2. Laying aside pride and humbling oneself before the LORD in repentance and sorrow for the offences one has been before the LORD and the dishonor their behavior and speech has brought to His name.
3. Making amends for all the harm that they have caused, meaning where possible replace or pay for any loss that they may have caused to another and apologize to those they have deliberately hurt through gossip and slander and tell others the truth.

No matter how far a person (in Israel's case the nation) may have fallen, if they follow these three steps with an honest and sincere heart the LORD will no longer walk contrary to them as they have walked contrary to Him but restore them to His favour and blessing and in Israel's case, remember their land and His covenant with Jacob, Isaac and Abraham.

HISTORY OF ISRAEL, ASSYRIA, JUDAH AND BABYLON

LEVITICUS 26:43

The Land shall Enjoy its Sabbaths and they shall Make Amends.

- **Leviticus 26:43:** But the land shall be abandoned by them and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my rules and their soul abhorred my statutes.

The land shall enjoy her Sabbaths: means that the land being desolate shall have the blessing of rest, during which it can replenish itself. This prophecy was fulfilled when Israel was exiled in the land of Babylon and scattered throughout the nations, for seventy years. God uses secular nations, kings, and people to achieve His plans and purposes, sometimes to bless and other times to bring judgment. He used Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon as His servant, (Jer. 25:9) and his armies to bring judgment on Israel. Many times, God through the prophets warned Israel that they would be invaded and destroyed because of their gross sin and rebellion against God. But they set their heart diamond hard against God.

The history of Israel and Assyria and Judah and Babylon: God sent prophet after prophet to warn Judah and Israel of impending doom if they did not change their wicked ways, but they set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets (Zech. 7:12). The LORD through the faithful prophets told them to surrender themselves to the King of Babylon and God would nurture them while in Babylonian captivity and deliver them. But they continued to rebel against the word of the LORD and turned to other gods and entered into gross sin, so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring the curses of the covenant upon them. The curses of the covenant are found in (Deut. 28:15-68) and the blessing of the covenant in (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) and pillaged the temple. Zedekiah was blinded and carried to Babylon, and the great bulk of the population was taken in chains there with him (around 587 B.C.). Later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. They went into captivity to the Empire of Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and were even sacrificing their own

children to pagan gods. They were under Babylonian rule for the next seventy years. Archaeologists have found that at this time all the cities of Judah were completely-destroyed and that the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon was ended. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated. Many of the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist, but the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

Now here is the good news: while in captivity God molded them like a master potter molds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Near the end of the seventy years the new generation humbled themselves and prayed the following prayer: -

- LORD we confess we have multiplied our transgressions before you, our sins testify to our wickedness, we are so sorry for denying you and not following your ways. We have wickedly oppressed others for our own gain and spoken lies, cheated the innocent out of justice and grossly lacked in righteousness. God we are truly sorry we have blinded the public from the truth and worse still made anyone who did forsake the iniquity we indulged in feel like they were our enemies." (Isaiah 59:12-15).

Sometime later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) and took by His right hand (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon took his armies and conquered the mighty Empire of Babylon. After this great victory Cyrus gave written permission to Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again). Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a golden time of prosperity and peace followed. Sadly, Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory:

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

LEVITICUS 26:44-45

When they are in the Land of their Enemies, I will Not Spurn Them.

- **Leviticus 26:44-45:** Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God. ⁴⁵But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD."

Here the mercy and love and longsuffering of God is manifested

The LORD'S words, "yet for all that," (v44) means that even though Israel's sins were extremely great, and they remained exiles in foreign lands for a long time, it was no proof that God had finally cast them off, or given them over to destruction, and annulled His covenant made with their fathers.

For I am the Lord their God: (v44) neither the desperateness of their condition, nor the greatness of their sins, would cause God to wholly make void His covenant with them and their ancestors, but will in due time remember them for good, and for His covenant's sake show them mercy and return them to their land. The words, "I am the Lord their God,"

means He is always their God, and will keep His covenant forever. From these verses those in exile to Babylon not only took great comfort that God had not utterly forsaken them, but also assured themselves that though rejected and ruined, they would be gathered again to their own land and restored. Among the nation of Israel individual people were not always afflicted according to their obedience or disobedience, but when the nation is in focus, it is a different story, the effect of national obedience was national prosperity and blessing, likewise the effect of national wickedness was national judgment and punishments, this was because Israel was under a unique covenant with the LORD. However, gross national wickedness and godliness will end in the ruin the nation, especially where the word of God and the Gospel is being openly scorned, mocked and rejected. Sooner or later sin will bring ruin to all people everywhere.

LEVITICUS 26:46

The Laws God made with Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai.

- **Leviticus 26:46:** These are the statutes and rules and laws that the LORD made between him and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai.

It may appear to those who lack spiritual discernment and who have no understanding of biblical prophecy that the affairs of the world are randomly turning this way and that and that all is mass confusion, but this chapter shows that God is involved in human affairs and Bible prophecy shows that the plan and purpose He set in motion before time began is being worked out on earth and nearing their final glorious end.

In conclusion: it should be noticed, long before the LORD brought these disasters upon Israel He sent them prophet after prophet to warn them of the impending doom and to turn from their wicked ways, and all the warnings spoken of in this chapter were given to Moses on Mount Sinai to give to the people so that they knew if they did not listen to the Lord their God and rebelled against His commandments, and spurned and abhorred His statutes, and His rules so that they broke His covenant (v14) they would know that these punishments would come upon them. The LORD knowing by His eternal foreknowledge the rebellious nature of Israel strongly forewarns them saying:

- If in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins. (v18).
- If you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins. (v21).
- If by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. (v23-24).
- If in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me, then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins. (v27-28).

How true were the following words of the prophet Zechariah:

- They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets, therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. (Zech. 7:12).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
