

The 5 Judgments of Leviticus 26

The Old Testament was not simply a list of “do’s and “do not’s.” It also prescribed sacrifice and offerings to atone for sin, it prescribed blessings for obedience, and it prescribed judgments for continuous rebellion.

The outworking of Israel’s history is according to the stated terms of the Covenant given through Moses. Consider what the prophet Jeremiah says:

Jeremiah 11:1-8

*The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying,
Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem;
And say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel; Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant,
Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God:
That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O Lord.
Then the Lord said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them.
For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice.
Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do: but they did them not.*

The judgments that Israel as a nation experienced were historically understood to be a result of disobedience to God’s covenant. Consider the words of Nebuzaradan, a captain of the guard in Babylon, in Jeremiah 40:

Jeremiah 40:2-3

And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The Lord thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.

Now the Lord hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you.

Daniel, at the end of the 70 years of desolations that God determined upon Jerusalem, prays accordingly:

Daniel 9:4-5

And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments...

Daniel 9:11-13

Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.

As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.

Judgment 1

Terror, consumption, ague (sickness); enemies will eat their crops; they will be destroyed and ruled by their enemies.

Leviticus 26:15-17

And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant:

I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.

And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.

In Judges chapter two, we see the first judgment described in Leviticus 26:16-17:

Judges 2:8-14

And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim:

And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.

And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

Judges 2:20

And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice...

In Judges 6, God raised up the Midianites and delivered Israel into their hands seven years, wherein they and the Amalekites destroyed their crops and their cattle, because Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD (Judges 6:1), and did not obey His voice (Judges 6:10).

Judges 6:1-10

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.

And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;

And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.

And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, That the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land;

And I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

Judgment 2

Broken power/Barrenness of the land

Leviticus 26:18-20

And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass:

And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.

...there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.
(Romans 13:1)

To break the pride of Israel's power implies that they had a power, that is, a ruler. At the end of judges, they had no king:

Judges 21:25

In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Israel requests a King

1 Samuel 8:4-5

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

During the time between Saul and Solomon is an interlude of mercy, and Israel prospers as a nation. Solomon, however, after ascending to the height of power, corrupts himself and breaks all the commandments made for a King in the Law. Therefore, God pronounces judgment upon the King (the power).

1 Kings 11:11-13

Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

In 1 Kings 12, we read of the northern tribes of Israel's rebellion against the King of Judah, Solomon's son Jeroboam, and the successive split in the kingdom between Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. Thus begins the commencement of the judgments found in Leviticus 26 again, with the pride of their power first being broken.

The second half of the second judgment pronounced in Leviticus 26:19-20 is found in 1 Kings 17, when, by the mouth of the prophet Elijah, under the reign of King Ahab, God sends no rain upon Israel, and makes their heaven as iron and their earth as brass, just as He promised for their disobedience.

1 Kings 17:1

And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

1 Kings 18:1

And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.

1 Kings 18:17-18

And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.

Judgment 3

Wild beasts

Leviticus 26:21-22

And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins.

I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate.

The third judgment in Leviticus 26:22 says that if Israel continued to walk contrary to Him, He would send wild beasts among them that would rob them of their children and destroy their cattle. In 2 Kings 2, right after God heals the water and the land of its barrenness through Elisha, God sends two she-bears to tear 42 children who mocked Elisha's baldness.

2 Kings 2:23-24

And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.

And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

These children had dishonored one of their elders, and disregarded the command in Leviticus 19:32, which states,

Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord.

Judgment 4

An avenging sword/famine

Leviticus 26:25-26

And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.

We see the Lord begin to place a famine on the land in 2 Kings, as well as the sword of Israel's enemies begin to come up against them:

2 Kings 6:24-25

And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.

And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver.

2 Kings 8:1

Then spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the Lord hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years.

After The Lord judges the house of Ahab by Jehu, the scripture says,

2 Kings 10:32-33

In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel;

From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan.

God began to bring a sword upon Israel, to avenge the quarrel of His covenant, and to shrink their borders.

Judgment 5

Starvation/destruction of the land/captivity

Leviticus 26:29-34

And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.

And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.

And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours.

And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it.

And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.

In 1 Chronicles 5, we see the northern tribes of Israel east of the Jordan river first get taken captive by Assyria:

1 Chronicles 5:25-26

And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them.

And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.

This began approximately in 740 BC

We see the overthrow and captivity of Samaria at the hands of Assyrian King Shalmaneser described in 2 Kings 17:

2 Kings 17:5-8

Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,

And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

This occurred approximately in 721 BC.

The Babylonian conquest of Judah ran from approximately 609-597, beginning first with Judah serving Babylon three years under king Jehoiakim.

2 Kings 24:1-2

In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him.

And the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servants the prophets.

We see Babylon take captives of the rulers and mighty men later in 2 Kings 24:

2 Kings 24:15-16

And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.

This culminated with the capture and destruction of Jerusalem.

2 Kings 25:1-2

And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about.

And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

2 Kings 25:8-11

And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem:

And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away.

Because of the absolute poverty the southern tribes of Israel experienced during the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah, women actually resorted to cannibalism:

Lamentations 4:10

The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

It is during this 5th period of chastisement that the prophetic books recorded in the Old Testament prophesied. A recurring theme in these prophets is final judgment upon Israel and the Lord then bringing back a faithful remnant to their land. It is during this time that the Lord Jesus Christ comes and performs His ministry to them.

These judgments were not arbitrary but fully consistent with God's revealed will in His Word.

Amos 3:7

Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

Look how Amos chapter 3 begins:

*Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,
You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. (v1-2)*

Israel was expected to know God's will because it was spoken to them and recorded in a book. God told them specifically what would happen if they obeyed and specifically what would happen if they disobeyed, and God faithfully kept His Word.

In Leviticus 26:40-42, God makes provision for their return to the land, on the basis of Abrahamic covenant. The promise of the land to Israel's fathers is mentioned again in Numbers 32:11, Deuteronomy 1:8, 6:10, 9:5, 9:27, 29:13, 30:20, and 34:4. Deuteronomy 1:8 makes clear that the promise of the land was not just to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but also to their seed after them:

Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.

In 2 Kings 13:23, during which time God was enduring the idolatry and rebellion of Israel, and during which time Israel was enduring the oppression of the Syrians, the scriptures say of the Lord:

And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.

Here is yet another reference to the covenant made with Israel's fathers in this psalm of David which was delivered to Asaph in **1 Chronicles 16:13-19**:

*O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones.
He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth.
Be ye mindful always of his covenant; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations;
Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac;
And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant,
Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance;
When ye were but few, even a few, and strangers in it.*

At the threat of the children of Moab and Ammon, king Jehoshaphat prays in the midst of the children of Judah,

And said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?
(2 Chronicles 20:6-7)

After Israel returned from Babylonian captivity, and after Ezra publicly expounded the Law of Moses and the children of Israel observed the feast of tabernacles for the first time since the days of Joshua, the children of Israel were assembled together for a fast, and confessed their sins and the sins of their fathers, and gave attention to the reading of God's Word, and the Levites stood up and prayed,

*Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;
And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous*
(Nehemiah 9:7-8)

The Psalms also, which are largely prophetic scriptures, allude many times to the promises made to Israel's forefathers.

Psalm 47:2-4

*For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.
He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.
He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.*

Psalm 105:6-11, 41-45

*O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.
He is the Lord our God: his judgments are in all the earth.
He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.
Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac;
And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant:
Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance...*

*...He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river.
For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant.
And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness:
And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people;
That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the Lord.*

