



ANSWERING THE “IF” QUESTION OF LIFE

Leviticus 26–27

Leviticus ends with a prophetic preview of Israel’s history. They would be secure in their land and enjoy God’s blessings when they obeyed Him but would suffer devastation and exile if they disobeyed. Israel serves as both a warning and an encouragement to us to follow the Lord.

If you have flown on a commercial airline, you’re familiar with that little card that spells out the safety instructions. Most passengers ignore it as they look out the window or read a magazine. No one pays much attention to the flight attendant going through the emergency instructions. But let me tell you, if an emergency were to take place, everybody would be scrambling for that little card, wondering what to do next.

So it is with God’s instruction card for Israel. It’s called the book of Leviticus, and in it, God tells His chosen people exactly *what* to do and what *not* to do to walk in fellowship with Him. God also spells out the benefits of obedience and the consequences of disobedience.

Now, here in Leviticus chapter 26, we have some basic commands that pretty much summarize the law presented in this manual for the Levites. Here in the first two verses, the Lord says, “You shall not make idols for yourselves” and “You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary.”

The Lord then proceeds to list the blessings if the people obey Him. And these blessings look ahead to when the nation is going to dwell in the promised land.

But keep this in mind—these blessings of promise

will be given to the nation *if* they make God their priority—if they obey the Lord. In fact, if you decide to circle the word *if* in chapters 26 and 27, you will circle it thirty-two different times. *If* you walk with Me, God says, then these blessings will follow:

- In verse 4, God says, “I will give you your rains in their season ... and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.”



Clay tablet from Ugarit with imprint of the stamp seal of King Muršili II



- In verses 5 to 10 God promises peace and security, victory over their enemies, and even removal of predatory animals from the land.
- God promises in verse 11, “I will make my dwelling among you.” This refers to God’s unique presence in the tabernacle. This Hebrew word for “dwelling” comes the word *shekinah*, which describes the Lord’s glorious, shining presence in the tabernacle.

This list of blessings for obedience ends in verse 13 with the Lord’s reminder: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.”

There’s a timeless truth in all of this for the believer today. If you’ve trusted Christ as your Savior, you are part of His chosen people today, and that will never change now that you are saved.

But let me tell you, if you want fellowship with God today, if you want His wisdom today, if you want a sense of His presence, there’s a big *if* you need to answer when you get out of bed in the morning. You must decide *if* you will obey the Word of God—*if* you will walk according to God’s will; *if* you will follow God’s wisdom rather than the wisdom of the world. In other words, that *if* question needs to be answered every day.

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Now God’s promises to Israel also include a warning of consequences if they disobey. The list begins in verse 14.

It’s important to remember that these punishments are from God and have a disciplinary purpose for the nation. God will use these consequences to warn the people. And if they don’t listen—if they ignore God’s instruction card for living—these consequences are

going to become more severe. In fact, they’re given to us here in six steps.

First, verses 16-17 say the nation’s disobedience will bring disease and defeat in battle. If they don’t repent, then secondly, God will bring famine and drought. God says in verse 19, “I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.” We’re going to see this happen over in the book of Judges, where it stops raining and famine devastates the land.

If they still don’t repent, God will take a third step of disciplining them; in verse 22, the Lord says, “I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock.”

If the people still don’t turn back to God, the Lord promises in verse 25 the fourth step in His discipline. God will allow “a sword” to fall on them to “execute vengeance for the covenant.” In other words, enemy nations will devastate the land, and food will become scarce.

The fifth step is tragically severe. Enemy nations will surround them and literally starve them into submission. God says in verse 29, “You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.”

If they still don’t repent and follow God, Israel will be removed from their land and carried into exile. This sixth and final act of discipline is accompanied by further devastation. In verse 31 the Lord promises, “I will lay your cities waste,” and in verse 33, “I will scatter you among the nations.”

Now the final verses of chapter 26 remind the people of God’s enduring faithfulness—He isn’t going to forget His covenant with the children of Abraham. That covenant is unconditional; it’s written in permanent, nonerasable ink, so to speak. But the blessings of the covenant made with Israel here at Mount Sinai are conditional and result from obedience.

We know from the record of Scripture that God will ultimately bring the nation to repentance and restore them in the land under King Jesus, when He returns and rules the nations of the world in His coming millennial kingdom.



Now, in the meantime, the Lord is building another nation. It's not a physical nation like Israel but a spiritual nation of believers called the bride of Christ, the church. It's made up of believing Jews and Gentiles from all around the world.

But the principles we can draw from Leviticus 26 are still applicable to us today. *If* we walk with God in obedience, we experience the blessing of fellowship with Him; *if* we don't follow Him, God has many ways of getting our attention.

Now we come to the final chapter in Leviticus—chapter 27. Here the Lord gives Israel instructions about making vows, or promises, to God. These vows take the form of dedicating to God their houses, their land, their cattle, their own bodies—virtually anything they have.

In some instances, they can substitute financial offerings. And you need to understand that these vows were not required by the Lord; they were voluntary expressions of commitment and thanksgiving. This all might seem strange to us, but these vows gave God's people a way to express their dedication to Him.

And with that, this manual for the Levites—God's manual on how the nation of Israel was to walk with God—comes to a close.

Leviticus ends with these words in verse 34:

*These are the commandments
that the LORD commanded*

Moses for the people of Israel on Mount Sinai.

This book is the instruction card on how to live a holy life. For Israel, they will soon travel on from Mount Sinai, into the promised land.

As you and I move forward in life, let's make sure we're taking God's instruction card, His Word, along with us. If we will—there's that little word *if* again—if we will obey the Lord and follow His Word, life can become a wisdom journey.

Once you receive God's grace through faith in Jesus His Son, you experience His discipline when you sin, not His wrath (Hebrews 12:3-11). How does this truth impact your motivation to follow God daily through His word?

For believers, obedience brings blessing, and disobedience brings discipline. How have you seen this principle illustrated in your own life? Why is it a good idea to wisely share with your yet to be saved friends and family that God is disciplining or blessing you?

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