

The Eschatological Significance of Leviticus 26

William D. Barrick, Th.D.
Professor of OT
The Master's Seminary
Sun Valley, CA

At the outset of this paper I wish to draw attention to its incompleteness and imperfections. Many factors have contributed to this condition, not the least of which was the flooding of our household in the week prior to ETS. The reader will note that there is no formal conclusion. This paper is presented as a work in progress intended to incite its author and its readers to a more extensive study of Leviticus 26 and its eschatological significance.

The Book of Leviticus is not noted for its eschatological content. Its theological focus is on holiness.¹ As the people of God, the Israelites were called to holiness in their worship and in their daily living. Chapters 1—7 present the elements of a sacrificial system providing for an outward manifestation of individual and corporate covenant communion. The chief purpose of the sacrificial system was to exhibit continual fellowship between the people of the covenant and the God of the covenant.

Chapters 8—10 define the priestly ministry. The priests were the caretakers of the covenant relationship exhibited in the sacrificial system. Chapters 11—15 describe the purity Yahweh required of His people in order that surrounding nations might recognize Israel's identification with Him. The covenant community was summoned to a lifestyle distinct from neighboring nations. Chapter 16 reveals that the Day of Atonement provided the community with an annual renewal of the covenant. That day highlighted the sovereign rule of Yahweh over the nation of Israel. The divine Suzerain blessed His covenanted people by granting them His continued presence among them (16:16; cf. vv. 1-2).

Chapters 17—24 prescribe in detail the ordinances by which the covenant community was bound. This legislation affected their diet, social relationships, religious leadership, calendar, and center of worship. The calendar (chapter 23) focused on the seventh month with its three major observances (vv. 23-43). Eschatological overtones in the realm of kingship and kingdom were especially prominent in the New Year celebration (also known as the Feast of Trumpets, vv. 23-25).²

Chapters 25 and 26 emphasize the monotheistic and sabbatical principles that were the two great supporting pillars of the Sinaitic Covenant (cf. 25:55—26:3 and Exod 20:2-11). Gerstenberger admits that Isaiah 61:1-2 together with Luke 4:16-21 suggests that Leviticus 25 should be read eschatologically. He himself, however, found nothing

¹ Philip J. Budd, *Leviticus*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 34.

² For arguments against connecting the Old Testament New Year festival to an enthronement festival, cf. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 2 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), 2:502-6. See, also, Norman H. Snaith, *The Jewish New Year Festival: Its Origin and Development* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1947).

eschatological in the Levitical instruction concerning the year of Jubilee.³ On the other hand, Gordon Wenham correctly connected Christ's quotation of Isaiah 61:1 with Leviticus 25. קָרַר ("release") in Isaiah 61:1 is the same term employed in Leviticus 25:10.

It seems quite likely, therefore, that the prophetic description of the "acceptable year of the Lord" was partly inspired by the idea of the jubilee year. The messianic age brings liberty to the oppressed and release to the captives. ...

... The jubilee, then, not only looks back to God's first redemption of his people from Egypt (Lev. 25:38, 55), but forward to the "restitution of all things," "for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (Acts 3:21; 2 Pet. 3:13).⁴

The twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus has been the threefold victim of perpetual neglect: (1) In the synagogue it has been avoided because of its unpleasant subject matter.⁵ (2) In commentaries (past and present, Jewish and Christian) it has been given sketchy treatment. (3) In materials dedicated to the concept of covenant in the Old Testament its covenant affinities are rarely discussed. Occasional references, however, demonstrate that some biblical scholars are aware of its significance in the realm of covenantal studies. Thirty-five years ago Delbert Hillers placed this section of the Torah on a par with Deuteronomy 28:

In the first place, the prophets did employ much traditional material in composing their threats of doom. This is not a new idea by any means, but it is worth pointing out that the parallels gathered here fully support it. Secondly, this inherited material in the prophets is related to the Israelite tradition of curses as preserved in Deut 28 and Lev 26.⁶

The many similarities between Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 catapults the former pericope into the same sphere of significance as the latter. Meredith Kline tantalizingly suggested that the curses of Deuteronomy 28 were "anticipated in the promises and threats ... in Leviticus (chap. 26)."⁷ Assuming Mosaic authorship for both pericopes, it is perfectly consistent with the composition of the Pentateuch to assume that Leviticus 26 was written prior to Deuteronomy 28. It could be argued, therefore, that the latter passage is an exposition of the former.

Leviticus 26 consists of parenetic revelation given at Sinai on the threshold of Israel's wilderness wanderings. The pericope's relevance is best understood in the light of the apparent tension with the Abrahamic Covenant created by the promulgation of the Mosaic Covenant. After three disturbing apostasies at Sinai, Leviticus 26 explained the relationship between the two covenants and reemphasized the exclusive lordship of

³ Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Louisville, Ken.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 398.

⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 324. See, also, the extensive discussion of the eschatological implications of Jubilee in John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, vol. 4 in Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, Publisher, 1992), 446-48.

⁵ Bernard J. Bamberger, *Leviticus*, vol. 3 of The Torah: A Modern Commentary, 5 vols. (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1979), 290.

⁶ Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets*, *Biblica et Orientalia* 16 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), 78.

⁷ Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 124.

Yahweh. The chapter revealed that the Mosaic Covenant had not nullified the eschatological promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. Paul's teaching in Galatians 3:17 was anticipated by Leviticus 26 fifteen centuries earlier.

The blessings and curses in the chapter advance the respective emphases of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. The blessings are directly related to the Abrahamic Covenant's eschatological promises regarding land and blessing. The cursings represented the Mosaic Covenant's five-stage process designed to produce confession of guilt, humility, and restitution — elements that anticipated the New Covenant and its eschatological elements. The element of restitution involved the sabbatical principle so central to both the Mosaic Covenant and Leviticus 26. Indeed, the sabbatical principle is itself eschatologically significant. The Land-Giver and Exodus-Causer will always be loyal to His covenants and to His covenanted people. He is Lord of both space (the land) and time (the sabbaths). Yahweh's future loyalty and work on behalf of Israel were described by the Old Testament prophets. Along with Deuteronomy 27—28, Leviticus 26 anchored prophetic revelation's concepts of covenant.

Yahweh continues to be presented as the only deity, the sole Lord of all that exists. In particular the Lord remains the God who has created, blessed, sustained and judged Israel depending on whether the people have kept or broken the Sinai covenant.

The covenant principles found in the Law lead the prophets to approve or denounce the chosen nation's activities during their own lifetimes. The covenant blessings and consequences announced in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27—28 help the prophets assess Israel's past, and these same concepts give them hope that the Lord has not finished with sinful Israel. The God who forgave once can surely do so again, as Deuteronomy 30:1-10 indicates.⁸

An Outline of Leviticus 26

The following outline represents the contents of this significant chapter. The bulk of this paper's discussion will be in the third major division regarding penalty (26:14-45), especially the consequence of deportation or exile (vv. 27-38) and the contingency for repentance (vv. 39-45).

- I. Precept (26:1-2)
 - A. Prohibition of Idols (v. 1)
 - B. Preservation of Sabbaths and Sanctuary (v. 2)
 - 1. The Sabbath Observance (v. 2a)
 - 2. The Sanctuary Reverence (v. 2b)
- II. Promise (26:3-13)
 - A. The Prerequisite: Obedience (v. 3)
 - B. The Product: Blessing (vv. 4-12)
 - 1. Productivity (vv. 4-5)
 - 2. Peace (v. 6)
 - 3. Power (vv. 7-8)
 - 4. Population (v. 9)

⁸ Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 398.

5. Provision (v. 10)
6. Presence (vv. 11-12)
- C. The Premise: Yahweh's Salvation (v. 13)
- III. Penalty (26:14-45)
 - A. The Cause: Disobedience (vv. 14-15)
 - B. The Consequence: Retribution (vv. 16-38)
 1. Debilitation and Defeat (vv. 16-17)
 2. Drought (vv. 18-20)
 3. Devastation by Wild Beasts (vv. 21-22)
 4. Deprivation by Siege (vv. 23-26)
 5. Deportation (vv. 27-38)
 - a. Introduction (vv. 27-28)
 - b. Dehumanization – Cannibalism (v. 29)
 - c. Desolation (vv. 30-32)
 - d. Dispersion - Exile (v. 33)
 - e. Desertion of the Land (vv. 34-38)
 - (1) The Sabbath Rest (vv. 34-35)
 - (2) The Stricken Remnant (vv. 36-38)
 - C. The Contingency: Repentance (vv. 39-45)
 1. Repentance: Israel's Acceptance of Retribution (vv. 39-41)
 2. Remembrance: Yahweh's Acceptance of Repentance (v. 42)
 3. Repetition: A Summary Concerning Retribution (v. 43)
 4. Reaffirmation: Yahweh's Promise to the Exiles (vv. 44-45)

Retributive Dispersion/Exile (Lev 26:33)

The emphatic preverbal position of the direct object in the disjunctive clause presents the adversative: “but I shall disperse (פָּזַרְתִּיךָ Piel) you (וְאֶתְּכֶם) among the nations.” Dispersion (פָּזַר) is a subject common to this pericope and key sections in Ezekiel (e.g., 5:2, 10, 12; 6:8; 12:14, 15; 20:23). פָּזַר is often employed “in agricultural contexts of the winnowing process (e.g. Ruth 3:2; Isa. 30:24; 41:16).”⁹ Perhaps this figure points to a remnant by implication (cf. Zech 1:18-21 [Heb. 2:1-4] and 13:8-9).¹⁰ At Sinai Yahweh warned Israel about their complacency during the time of their residence in the land. Dispersion would disrupt their complacency.¹¹ The nation's apathy toward Yahweh and His covenants would make them landless again. They would return to the bondage out of which Yahweh had delivered them. Return to bondage would eventually

⁹ Ibid., 373.

¹⁰ In his study of the remnant, Hasel only refers to Leviticus 26 in passing. Summarizing the viewpoint of Othmar Schilling, he writes: “the origin of the prophetic remnant motif is grounded in the sanctions of the law, especially in Lev. 26 and its Deuteronomic parallels.” Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah*, 3rd ed., Andrews University Monographs: Studies in Religion, vol. 5 (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1980), 26; with reference to Othmar Schilling, “Rest’ in der Prophetie des Alten Testaments” (unpublished Th.D. Inauguraldissertation, Universität Münster, 1942). Hasel disagrees with Schilling because Schilling had ignored early references in Genesis and had accepted too early a date for Leviticus 26. The author of this paper would agree that the remnant motif is earlier than Leviticus 26, but would argue that the chapter had a significant effect upon the prophetic development of the theology of remnant.

¹¹ Budd, *Leviticus*, 372.

cure their selective amnesia. Brueggemann’s poignant observation applies here: “It is hard enough for landed people to believe land will be lost. It is harder to imagine Yahweh will do it”¹² (cf. Lev 26:32a, 33a).

The goal of the Abrahamic Covenant was to give an inheritance to the people of the covenant in accordance with Yahweh’s promise (cf. Gen 12:7; 13:14-17).¹³ Exile delays the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises. Therefore, it could be said that exile itself has eschatological implications. Exile and dispersion indicate that the ultimate fulfillment of the promise is yet future, or eschatological in nature.

“Yea, I shall unsheath (וְהִרִיקְתִּי *Hiph’il*) the sword (חֶרֶב) behind you (אַחֲרֵיכֶם).” In all four instances in the Old Testament where the idiom חרב אחרי (‘‘unsheath the sword behind’’) occurs (here; Ezek 5:2, 12; 12:14) it is preceded by the employment of זרה (‘‘disperse’’) and it is always a reference to Israel. חרב אחרי (‘‘unsheath the sword’’) is employed in three other passages but always in reference to the judgment of a nation outside Israel (Egypt: Exod 15:9, Ezek 30:11; Tyre: Ezek 28:7). In these occurrences neither זרה nor אחרי (‘‘behind’’) are employed.¹⁴ The idiom in Leviticus 26:33 is reserved for Yahweh’s dealing with Israel. Emptying (רִיק) His scabbard is an act of hostility. Yahweh will place the sword ‘‘behind’’ Israel for, on the one hand, they would be fleeing, and, on the other hand, the path of return would be blocked by the divine sword. Shades of Eden! As Adam and Eve were prevented reentry to Eden by the flaming sword of the cherubim (Gen 3:24), so Israel would be prevented reentry to Canaan by the avenging covenant sword of Yahweh.

The summation of deportation’s effects on the land comes next in 33b: ‘‘thus your land shall be (וְהִיְתָה) for devastation (שְׁמָמָה) and your cities shall be (וְהָיוּ) ruins (חֲרָבָה).’’¹⁵ Yahweh consigns the land and its cities to a state of devastation. This declaration, in its conceptualization and its syntax, corresponds to the earlier statement of divinely confirmed blessing:

וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ-לִי לְעָם: and you yourselves shall be my people	-12b וְהָיִיתִי לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים so that I shall be your God
וְעָרֵיכֶם יִהְיוּ חֲרָבָה: and your cities shall be ruins	-33b וְהִיְתָה אֶרְצְכֶם שְׁמָמָה thus your land shall be for devastation

The deviations from strict correspondence in these two statements are instructive:

- (1) The circumlocutions for the possessives ‘‘your’’ (לְכֶם) and ‘‘my’’ (לִי) in 12b emphasize mutual identification in the covenant relationship.
- (2) The phrase וְהִיְתָה אֶרְצְכֶם in 33b may be an allusion to Genesis 1:2 (וְהָאֶרֶץ הִיְתָה תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ), ‘‘and the earth was empty and void’’. Such an allusion potentially serves three purposes:

¹² Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1977), 113.

¹³ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 468.

¹⁴ Cf. על in Ezek 28:7 and 30:11, and no preposition in Exod 15:9. The הַ, of both substantives is clearly assonant, drawing attention to the state of the land.

¹⁵ The alternation of the *qatal* and *yiqtol* of הִיְתָה is characteristic (cf. 12b).

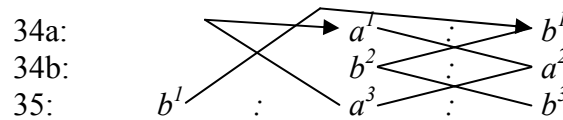
- (a) to remind Israel that Yahweh is historically the Lord, the Creator, of all the earth—not just the Giver of the promised land;
- (b) to emphasize the totality of the dispersion: the land would be without inhabitants; and,
- (c) to imply that the dispersion was but the commencement of something new which Yahweh would do.

The possibility of an allusion to Genesis 1:2 in Leviticus 26:33b is noteworthy for several reasons:

- (1) The re-creation or new creation of the earth is a key eschatological theme in apocalyptic Scripture (cf. Isa 65:17; 2 Pet 3:10-12; Rev 21:1). Eschatologically, judgment precedes emptying or emptiness followed by renewal and restoration (cf. Isa 24—26). Eichrodt recognized that “the thought of God’s activity as Creator and Giver in the *berit*... with the prophets—and even in P [including Leviticus 26] as well—was definitely primary.”¹⁶
- (2) Jeremiah 4:23 employs the very terms of Genesis 1:2 (תָּהוּ וּבְהוּ), “empty and void”) to describe the land of Israel following judgment.¹⁷
- (3) It is recognized also that removal from the land or “exile is the way to new life in new land.”¹⁸

The Sabbath Rest (Lev 26:34-35).

The following pattern of correspondences and emphatic logical development occurs in these verses:



Main clauses (a):

שְׁבַת־תִּיָּהּ אֶת- אִזְ תִּרְצָה הָאָרֶץ - a¹
 then the land shall enjoy *the restitution of* its sabbaths

שְׁבַת־תִּיָּהּ: אִזְ תִּשְׁבֹּת הָאָרֶץ וְהִרְצָת אֶת- a²
 then the land shall rest, yea, it shall enjoy *the restitution of* its sabbaths

אֶת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-שְׁבַתָּה בְּשַׁבְּתֵיכֶם תִּשְׁבֹּת - a³
 it shall rest on account of your sabbaths in which it did not rest

¹⁶ Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., trans. J. A. Baker, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, Penn.: Westminster Press, 1961), 1:63. The liberal theologians’ *ascription* of the creation narratives to “P” cannot be accepted but their *association* of the two bodies of literature is important to recognize and the reason for the biblical association must be sought in order not to miss the intended message therein. Cf. Ralph W. Klein, *Israel in Exile: A Theological Interpretation* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1979), 125-48.

¹⁷ A significant reference to the “presence” of Yahweh in judgment may be seen in Jer 4:26b if מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה (“from the presence of Yahweh”) can be interpreted thus (in spite of the bound form מִפְּנֵי: cf. the next phrase in that context).

¹⁸ Brueggemann, *The Land*, 122. Cf. Jer 24:4-10.

Temporal clauses (*b*):

כל ימי השמדה	- <i>b</i> ¹
all the days of its devastation	
ואתם בארץ איבויכם	- <i>b</i> ²
while you are in the land of your enemies	
כל-ימי השמדה	- <i>b</i> ¹
all the days of its devastation	
בשבחכם עליה:	- <i>b</i> ³
while you were dwelling upon it	

The schematization of the two verses helps to demonstrate the following points:

1. The triple chiasm and the repetition of *b*¹ keep the temporal clauses together in order to emphasize the time factor in these verses—it is about the time of Israel’s exile.
2. The repetition of שבת emphasizes the sabbatical principle.
3. Making ארץ the subject of all three main clauses emphasizes the centrality of the land and its relationship to the sovereign decrees of Yahweh.
4. The juxtaposition of רצה and שבת demonstrates their theological equivalence. Verse 34b is transitional, employing the epexegetical *waw* to join these two terms in the middle member of the construction. While 34a employs רצה, 35 utilizes only שבת, having made the full transition.

The initial אז (“then”) of v. 34 sets that verse apart from the preceding context. It serves, as it does sometimes in poetry, “to throw emphasis on a particular feature of the description.”¹⁹ The emphasis is upon the land’s רצה. רצה is variously translated “enjoy”²⁰ and “make or obtain restitution.”²¹ “Making restitution” could imply that the land shared in the guilt of Israel’s failure to observe the sabbatical years. This is unlikely since the context appears to make רצה practically equivalent to שבת. The more positive concept of “obtaining restitution” might indicate the basis for the land being able to enjoy rest. The land might be depicted as being “pleased” at receiving “its due portion.”²² The “due portion” is defined as “its sabbaths.” When will this take place? According to the immediate context, “all the days of its devastation” (v. 35). Devastation will bring about a forced sabbatical rest—a rest the land had been denied under Israel’s plows:

Then the land shall enjoy *the restitution of* (רצה, Qal *yqtl*)²³ its sabbaths all the days of its devastation while you are in the land of your enemies. **Then** the land shall rest;

¹⁹ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968 reprint), 23. Hereinafter cited as BDB.

²⁰ Cf. ASV, NASB, NIV, Septuagint, Targum Onqelos, Syriac, Latin.

²¹ Cf. BDB, 953 (the land makes the restitution); Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *Lexicon in Veteris Testamentum Libros*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), 906 (Qal = “obtain restitution,” Hiphil = “make restitution”); Karl Elliger, *Leviticus*, Handbuch zum Alten Testament 1/4 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1966), 377; NASB margin: “make restitution,” “satisfy.”

²² “Ihm gebührenden Anteil annehmen”—G. Gerleman, “רצה,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1976), 2:811.

²³ The italicized words are supplied in order to bring out the full scope of רצה.

yea, it shall enjoy *the restitution of* (שָׁבַת, Hiphil *qtl*)²⁴ its sabbaths. It shall rest all the days of its devastation on account of your sabbaths in which it did not rest while you were residing upon it (vv. 34-35).

The expulsion of Israel was necessitated by their defilement of the land.²⁵ Leviticus appears to focus on Israel's unholy and impure condition as that which led to Israel's ultimate collapse and deportation. The book shares this viewpoint with Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.²⁶ Idolatry and violation of the sabbath (Lev 26:2, 34-35) are specified here as the key areas of disobedience. Of these two, the sabbatical matter receives the greater emphasis in the context of this chapter. Second Chronicles 36:20-21 makes the same observation regarding the cause for the Babylonian exile:

The remnant *surviving* the sword were deported to Babylon so that they became servants for him [the king of Babylon] and for his sons until the ascendancy of the kingdom of Persia, so that the word of Yahweh through Jeremiah might be fulfilled until the land enjoyed *the restitution of* (שָׁבַת, Qal *qtl*) its sabbaths. All the days of its devastation it rested, so that seventy years might be completed.²⁷

The association made by the Chronicler is between the chronological extent of the exile (seventy years) and the theological nature of the exile (the enjoyment of restitution for non-observed sabbatical periods). Any attempt to account for exactly seventy years of violated sabbatical years and/or jubilees would be an exercise in futility. The Scripture is silent about such figuring and there are too many unknown factors²⁸ to make an exact accounting feasible.

The Stricken Remnant (Lev 26:36-38).

This section may be divided into two parts: (1) vv. 36-37a, indicated by the third person plural referring to the remnant, and (2) vv. 37b-38, identified by the second person plural referring to the exiles. The disjunctive *waw* with the accusative *casus pendens* serves to separate this section from the previous verses. "Those who are left from among you" are the prominent topic:

As for those who are left from among you, I shall bring timidity into their heart in the lands of their enemies. The sound of a driven leaf shall pursue them; yea, they shall flee as though in flight from before the sword and they shall fall without a pursuer—indeed, they shall stumble over each other as though in flight from before the sword except there will be no one pursuing them (vv. 36-37a).

The exiles will be sent into a panic by the mere rustling of leaves. In their paranoia they will strain their ears to catch the slightest sound that might indicate the presence of

²⁴ The alternation of the forms of שָׁבַת is characteristic of the elevated style of the pericope.

²⁵ Cf. Hans Eberhard von Waldow, "Israel and Her Land: Some Theological Considerations," in *A Light Unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers*, ed. Howard N. Bream, et al. (Philadelphia, Penn.: Temple University Press, 1974), 506.

²⁶ Jacob Milgrom, "Leviticus, Book of," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, ed. Cecil Roth (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), 11:147.

²⁷ The author's own translation. For a discussion of the problem of source and dependency in relationship to Leviticus and Jeremiah, see William D. Barrick, "Leviticus 26: Its Relationship to Covenant Contexts and Concepts" (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), 133-34.

²⁸ E.g., the number of times Israel was obedient in sabbatical observances; and, the exact dates for the Babylonian exile itself.

their enemies. With shattered nerves they will give place to their fears and cowardice. They will flee, only to fall over one another.²⁹ Not only will this wreak havoc with the trampling of the fallen, it will also add to their unbearable humiliation. Defeated by a non-existent enemy, they fall over their own soldiers in a stampede initiated by a stirring leaf.

Verses 36-37a are marked by the following forms of assonance:

וְרָדְךָ ... נִדְךָ ... רָדְךָ ... וְרָדְךָ
וְנָסוּ מִנִּסְתָּ
וְנָסוּ ... וְנָפְלוּ ... וְכָשְׁלוּ
וְאִין רָדְךָ ... וְרָדְךָ אִין

The assonance, conciseness, and the subject matter are reminiscent of the taunt-song best exemplified by Isaiah 14:4, Micah 2:4, and Habakkuk 2:6.³⁰ These taunt songs exhibit the following characteristics: assonance, conciseness, third person grammar in a second person context, a theme of judgment, an interrogative,³¹ and the use of מִשַׁל in the introduction. Leviticus 26:36-37a contains all but the last two characteristics.

Turning from the remnant, verses 37b-38 describe the condition of the exiles lest they forget their own dire predicament: “Nor shall there be (וְלֹא-תִהְיֶה) *any* resistance (תִּקְוִיָּה)³² from you (לְכֶם) before your enemies.” There is a very obvious correlation between the last word of 37a (אִין, “there shall be no”) and the first construction of 37b (וְלֹא-תִהְיֶה, “nor shall there be”). It is an example of a carefully worded transition or hinge, flipping from one subject to the next by means of the same concept though employing different terminology.

The result of nonresistance is clear: “so that you shall perish (וְאָבְדְתֶם) *Qal*) among the nations; yea, the land of your enemies shall devour (וְאָכְלָה) you” (v. 38). The message is emphatic. There would be absolutely no escaping the judgment of Yahweh. Perishing (אָבַד, cf. Deut 28:22, 63) and being devoured (אָכַל, cf. Num 13:32 and Ezek 36:13-14 where land is the devourer) are parallel concepts as are also the nations (גוֹיִם)

²⁹ One cannot help but be reminded of eschatological passages like Isa 24:17-18, Amos 5:18-20, and Ezek 38:18-23.

³⁰ George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976 reprint), xiv, 344-45.

³¹ In Isa 14:4 and Mic 2:4 the interrogative is אִיךָ (“How?”) and in Hab 2:6 it is עַד-מַתַּי (“How long?”).

³² תִּקְוִיָּה (like בְּרִיךְ, “timidity,” in 36a) is a *hapax legomenon*. Targum Onqelos (תִּקְוִיָּה) and the Syriac Peshitta (*qwm*) both employ the same semitic root (קָוַם) as the MT. However, the Targum’s term may mean “rising” or “preservation” (Marcus Jastrow, compiler, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, 2 vols. [Brooklyn, N.Y.: P. Shalom Publishing Inc., 1967 reprint], 2:1690) and the Syriac may mean “opposition” (J. Payne Smith, ed., *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967 reprint], 495). The Septuagint indicates the ability to stand (Οὐ δύνησῆσθε ἀντιστῆναι, “you shall not be able to resist/stand against”) and the Vulgate bears the concept of bringing oneself to resist/oppose (*audebit resistere*). In the Qumran materials from Cave 1, the equivalent phrase employs מַעֲמַד (“resistance”—מַעֲמַד is never a synonym for תִּקְוִיָּה in the OT; cf. BDB, 765.). 1QM xiv.8 is the nearest syntactically: (“and there is no resistance from any of their mighty men/warriors”—Eduard Lohse, ed., *Die Texte aus Qumran*, 2nd ed., revised [München: Kösel-Verlag, 1971], 212-13; cf., also, 1QM xviii.13 and 1QH v.29). Lohse’s translation of מַעֲמַד in 1QM xiv.8 is identical to Elliger’s for תִּקְוִיָּה in Leviticus 26:37b: *geben Standhalten* (“give resistance/resist”—*ibid.*, 213; Elliger, *Leviticus*, 362, 377).

and the land of the enemies (אֲרֶזְ אֵיבֵיכֶם). It is not the land of Canaan which devours the exiled captives. The infertility of Israel's land (due to devastation) is not intended, either.³³ Nor, for that very fact, could the devouring refer to wars, depopulation, drought, famine, or the chastisements of Yahweh.³⁴ The context of Leviticus 26:38b refers to physical destruction so clearly that even the concept of spiritual stumbling (becoming entangled in sins)³⁵ must be ruled out as a viable interpretation. "Their falling under the pressure of the circumstances in which they were placed"³⁶ is too vague. What, then, is the meaning? The reference is to the *vanishing* of the exiles. They would be taken from the land Yahweh had given to them, would enter their enemies' land(s), and not return. They would die and be decimated in a strange land (cf. Amos 7:17, "but you yourself shall die upon unclean ground [or, in an unclean land, עַל-אֲדָמָה טְמֵאָה]"³⁷). When Yahweh brought them out of exile, they would be fewer in number than when they went into captivity.³⁸ This exile would be unlike the Egyptian bondage in which the nation multiplied greatly (cf. Exod 1:7). The entirety of the Abrahamic Covenant is set aside during Israel's exile:

- (1) Rather than possessing the land (Gen 12:1; 15:7, 18-21; 17:8), Israel would be dispossessed from the land (Lev 26:33-38).
- (2) National greatness (Gen 12:2) would be turned into humiliation, inferiority, and insignificance (Lev 26:29, 32, 36-37; Deut 28:43-44).
- (3) Blessing (Gen 12:2; 22:17) would turn to cursing (Lev 26:14-38; Deut 28:15-68).
- (4) Instead of being a blessing (Gen 12:2-3; 22:18), Israel would become a curse (Lev 26:32, 36-37a; Deut 28:25, 37).
- (5) Multiplication (Gen 12:2; 15:5; 17:4-6; 22:17) would be replaced by diminution (Lev 26:22, 29, 38; Deut 28:18, 20-22, 53-57, 62).
- (6) Success over Israel's enemies (Gen 22:17) would turn to defeat at the hand of their enemies (Lev 26:16-17, 32, 36-38; Deut 28:25, 31, 48, 52, 68).

Promise would be turned to privation. Covenant vengeance consisted of the removal of all privileges and protection together with all attendant prosperity.

³³ Cf. George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers*, International Critical Commentary, ed. by Samuel Rolles Driver, et al. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd., 1976 reprint), 151.

³⁴ Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1969), 207.

³⁵ Cf. Carl Friedrich Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel*, 2 vols., trans. James Martin, in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968 reprint), 2:104-5.

³⁶ Carl Friedrich Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 3 vols., trans. James Martin, in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971 reprint), 2:477.

³⁷ Cf. the use of ("land") in Amos 7:17 before and after this phrase.

³⁸ The problems involved in the numbers of captives taken from the land (cf. 2 Kgs 24:16; Jer 52:28-30) and the numbers of the returnees (cf. Ezra 2:64-65; Neh 7:66-67) must be viewed in the light of the remnant (cf. Ezra 1:4; Neh 1:2; Hag 2:3), the necessity of multiplication in exile to survive (cf. Jer 29:6), the male census figures (cf. 2 Kgs 24:16; Jer 52:28-30), and the later deportations of over 100,000 left in the land (cf. R. K. Harrison, *Old Testament Times* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970], 256; C. F. Keil, *The Prophecies of Jeremiah*, 2 vols., trans. James Kennedy, in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968 reprint], 2:330-31).

The Contingency: Repentance (Lev 26:39-45)

Divine retribution, according to verses 39-45, has the repentance of Yahweh's covenant people as its ultimate goal (vv. 39-41). Their repentance would allow the covenant relationship to be reinstated or reactivated by Yahweh. The reactivation of the covenant must be founded upon a clear understanding of their relationship to the land, the sabbatical principle, and the recognition of guilt by the transgressors (vv. 42-43). Thus, the land and the people may be restored to a right relationship with Yahweh, Lord of the covenant. Above all else, it must be remembered that Yahweh's covenant promise is sure. He revealed His commitment to restoration in order to reassure His people (vv. 44-45). Yahweh remains loyal to His covenant—even when His covenanted people are disloyal.³⁹

Repentance: Israel's acceptance of retribution (vv. 39-41). The same *casus pendens* employed in verse 36 is repeated here: “As for those who are left from among you.”⁴⁰ The languishing (מִקְרָה) ⁴¹ suffered by the guilt-ridden Israelites is emphasized here. This was their condition while in exile. Ezekiel best described both the resulting cry of the people and Yahweh's response:

Now you, O son of man, you say to the house of Israel: “Thus you speak: ‘Our transgressions and our sins are upon us so that we are languishing (אֲנִיחֵנוּ נְמִקִּים) in them. Therefore, how shall we live?’” Say to them: “‘As surely as I live,’ declares Lord Yahweh, ‘I do not delight in the death of the wicked, but rather in the turning (or, repenting) of the wicked from his way so that he lives. Turn (or, Repent)! Turn from (or, Repent of) your ways, O wicked ones! Yea, why will you die, O house of Israel?’” (Ezek 33:10-11)⁴²

Therefore, Leviticus 26:39a says of the remnant of Israel, “they shall languish because of their guilt (בְּעֹנֵם) in the lands of your enemies.” While in exile, the disobedient nation would suffer terribly in exile: “Yea, they also (וְאֵל) shall languish (מִקְרָה) because of the guilt (בְּעֹנֵת) ⁴³ of their fathers which ⁴⁴ shall be ⁴⁵ with them” (39b). By moving the verb (מִקְרָה) from the first word in its clause (39a) to the last word in its clause (39b), an inclusio brings emphasis upon the concept of languishing. “They will . . . fester and decay

³⁹ Cf. a similar concept in 2 Tim 2:13.

⁴⁰ In v. 36 הַנִּשְׁאָרִים (“those who remained”) is an accusative *casus pendens* (i.e., an accusative absolute) serving to isolate and give marked prominence to the object of the sentence. Cf. GKC §143c.

⁴¹ “Many will perish in a foreign land. Others will מִקְרָה, ‘languish away,’ slowly in the land of their enemies. מִקְרָה means ‘fester’ of wounds (Ps 38:6[5]). The noun of this root מִקְרָה means ‘rot’ (Isa 3:24; 5:24; BDB 596-97). In Zech 14:12 it describes the wasting away of the body, the flesh, the eyes, and the tongue. Here it pictures the slow but steady erosion of people's lives as they eke out a miserable existence in a foreign land (cf. Ezek 4:17; 24:23; 33:10)”—Hartley, *Leviticus*, 468.

⁴² The association of מִקְרָה with עָן is a feature shared by both Leviticus (5:1, 17; 7:18; 10:17; 19:8; 20:17, 19; 22:16; 26:41, 43) and Ezekiel (4:17; 24:23; 33:10). Cf. Budd, *Leviticus*, 374.

⁴³ Plural of intensity.

⁴⁴ I.e., the guilt. Cf. Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 2:477. The third masculine plural is in agreement with the plural of בְּעֹנֵת which is irregular and takes a feminine ending in the plural.

⁴⁵ Supplied in agreement with the time element of the main verb in the context.

as a generation, just as their fathers did.”⁴⁶ In 39b the preverbal adverbial phrases draw attention to themselves: “because of their fathers’ guilt ... with them.” Rashi’s explanation for this concept is that “it means that the guilt of their fathers will be with them as those who are holding fast to the practice of their fathers” (כשעונות אבותם).⁴⁷ Various theologians offer the explanation that corporate guilt (i.e., the concept of it) was rigid in Israel’s early history. In fact, corporate guilt was so rigidly maintained that the responsibility of the individual was ignored until the exile during which it was demonstrated that Yahweh was concerned more about the individual’s guilt. This change in theology was to have come about by experience and by the writings of the prophets.⁴⁸ Usually, therefore, Ezekiel 18 is praised as new light for Israel since it teaches individual responsibility.

Although their ancestral guilt had contributed to the reality of exile, 39a clearly establishes (prior to the mention of corporate guilt) that Israel would be subject to its own, current guilt. In other words, the generation of Israelites facing the day of retribution was also guilty. This may not identify the individual *per se*, but it does distinguish the guilt of separate generations. This same principle of distinguishing guilt also applies to the concept of individual guilt.

In Ezekiel’s day and in Moses’ day, the way out of the entrapment was repentance (שוב, Ezek 33:11) or confession (ידה, *Hitpa’el*, Lev 26:40a) of personal and corporate guilt: “If⁴⁹ they confess (וְהִתְוַדְּוּ) their guilt (אֶת-עֲוֹנֵם) and the guilt (וְאֶת-עֲוֹן) of their fathers” (40a). The order is significant. Even though corporate guilt had brought about their languishing in the awareness of the “specter of an irreversible destiny,”⁵⁰ Yahweh replied that personal guilt required attention first. The now-generation’s guilt, as opposed to the past-generation’s guilt, must be admitted if the repentance was to be genuine. Such a concept of personal guilt does not require a post-exilic date for Leviticus 26, any more than the emphasis on corporate guilt in Daniel 9:1-19 would require a Mosaic date for the composition of that pericope.

Corporate guilt cease to be a problem to the individual who has confessed his own guilt. Corporate guilt is not a straight-jacket or a bottomless pit. Escape from it is the same as for personal guilt: repentance. It is not a destiny. It is a lesson. It is a lesson in the history of the faith (or, lack of faith). The covenant not only brings blessing to Abraham’s descendants, it can also bring cursing, depending on each generation’s personal obedience or disobedience. Each generation has the same opportunity to rid itself of a sordid history of disloyalty to the divine covenant. Each has the opportunity to be personally loyal to the Lord of the covenant.

From 40b through 41b a parenthesis is encountered which serves to explain the nature of the guilt and the reason for the nation thus burdened: “because of their being unfaithful to me (בְּמַעַלְם אֲשֶׁר מָעַלְוּ-בִּי)⁵¹ and also because they walked in opposition to

⁴⁶ Budd, *Leviticus*, 374.

⁴⁷ חומש כולל חמשה חומשי תורה באותיות גדולות מאד (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., n.d.), 141.

⁴⁸ Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:413-43.

⁴⁹ Cf. GKC, 337 (§112kk-ll), 494 (§159g).

⁵⁰ A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. S. D. F. Salmond, in The International Theological Library (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961 reprint), 222. Cf. Davidson’s full discussion, 217-27.

⁵¹ This construction is a cognate accusative with an internal object (cf. GKC, 366-67 [§117p-q]). There is no retrospective pronominal suffix and אֲשֶׁר introduces the relative clause acting as an attribute for the

me (הִלְכֵנוּ עִמִּי בְקָרִי)⁵², I also walked in opposition to them (אֶלֶּךְ עִמָּם בְּקָרִי)⁵³ and I brought them into the land of their enemies” (40b-41b). The only new terminology or concept presented in this parenthesis is *מעל*, which may be translated “act unfaithfully.” It was employed of sacrilege in the case of Achan (Josh 7:1; cf. 22:20). It was also used of the breach of vows (oaths or covenants; cf. Ezek 17:20; Num 5:12). This latter concept appears to be that of Leviticus 26:40b, which deals with covenant treason.⁵⁴ Such a concept is also found in its employment in Ezekiel 14:13, 15:8, 20:27, and Daniel 9:7. All those contexts are similar to Leviticus 26 in both contents and concepts.⁵⁵

The protasis begun in 40a (וְהִתְוַדְּוּ, “if they confess”) is resumed here by means of a dual particle construction (אִו-אָ) containing the conditional אִו (“if/whether”) together with the temporal אָ (“then”): “If then their uncircumcised heart (לְבַבְכֶם הָעֵלִיל) is humbled (יִכְנֹעַ) and then (וְאָז) they make restitution (יְרִצוּ) for their guilt (אֶת-עֲוֹנֵיכֶם)” (41cd). The temporal reference comes *after* the exile and *at the time of* their confession of guilt. This is the result of Yahweh’s working in their heart (cf. v. 36a) while they are in exile. Exile would strip the nation of all pretense of being spiritual. Exile would be the irrefutable evidence that they were displeasing to Yahweh.

The covenant Lord demands heart-consecration which reflected the fulfillment of the consecration sworn in the circumcision oath. Circumcision is an oath-rite. To be uncircumcised would be to place oneself outside the juridical authority of Yahweh and a refusal to consign oneself to the ordeal of the Lord’s judgment for the final verdict on one’s life—eternal weal or woe.⁵⁶

Israel’s spiritual condition would be that of an uncircumcised heart (cf. Jer 9:25; Ezek 44:6-9; see, also, Jer 4:4). This would be the nation’s condition while living in exile among uncircumcised nations who are outside the covenant (cf. Ezek 44:7). Yahweh was, in effect, declaring to the nation: “If you want to live like the uncovenanted nations, then live among them!” Exile was a fitting and just punishment.

The confession of guilt (40a) must be sincere. There is no room for pride. The humbling of the nation meant that they would no longer be self-reliant, but rather, trusting Yahweh. *כנע* (“humble”) occurs 36 times in the Old Testament (19 of which are in Chronicles). In the spiritual sense (rather than the political or physical) it is used only

preceding noun. Note the employment of *qatal* in the relative clause. The emphasis of the expression could be rendered, “being treasonously unfaithful.”

⁵² The *qatal* may have been maintained as a fixed form for this particular phrase. Cf. vv. 23, 24, 27, 28. See below, fn 34.

⁵³ The only occurrence of this idiom with *yiqtol*. It is particularly significant since there is no *waw* involved either here or in the immediately preceding employment of the phrase in 40b, which uses *qatal*. When 41a is compared to 24a, it is clear that prepositive אֶל-אֲנִי is responsible for the *yiqtol* (with *qatal* in 24a it was postpositive).

⁵⁴ Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, trans. Ronald E. Clements, ed. Frank Moore Cross, et al., in *Hermeneia* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1979), 366.

⁵⁵ Cf. Dan 9:4-5 (confession, covenant, commandments, guilt, unfaithfulness), 11-14 (Deuteronomic Covenant), 15 (exodus history = covenant formula), 16 (guilt of the fathers).

⁵⁶ Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1968), 47-48.

18 times (14 in Chronicles, 3 in Kings, and Lev 26:41c).⁵⁷ The employment of כָּנַע in the spiritual sense is always in a context of an invasion of the land by Israel's enemies. Such invasions were in all cases the chastisement of Israel for sinful pride or idolatry. The nations, therefore, would be the instrument of humiliation for disobedient Israel.

The last phrase of verse 41 is the most difficult theologically. The phrase יָרַצַּנָּה אֶת-עֲוֹנוֹנָהּ ("make restitution for guilt") occurs only three times in the Old Testament (here, v. 43, and Isa 400:2). Wenham interprets the phrase in Leviticus 26:41 as meaning that Israel would "accept (the punishment for) the guilt."⁵⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, regarding the same reference, say that Israel "will take pleasure, rejoice in their misdeeds, *i.e.* in the consequences and results of them."⁵⁹ In other words, Israel would rejoice that God was just in awarding what was deserved. However, Delitzsch elsewhere (regarding Isa 40:2) distinguishes between "a satisfactory reception" and "a satisfactory payment."⁶⁰ He interprets Isaiah 40:2 in the latter sense. Edward J. Young takes the phrase in Isaiah 40:2 as a reference to the acceptance of "a sacrifice sufficient to atone for the iniquity."⁶¹ He further indicates that such a sacrifice is "more fully revealed in the fifty-third chapter of the book."⁶²

Young's view, therefore, is messianic in scope. He makes the concept in the phrase one of absolute soteriology wherein the only acceptable restitution for guilt must be made by God Himself in the person of Christ. It would be accurate to say that redemption or freedom from guilt is not the work of Israel, it is the work of Yahweh (cf. Isa 43:22-28).⁶³ However, the phrase is not a statement of *soteriological redemption*. It is a statement of *federal consequence*. Conversion or repentance must be manifested.⁶⁴ Conversion must demonstrate a turning away from sin. Conversion focuses on concrete commands, prescriptions, and rights, contempt for which had called down all the disasters of the past, and the strict observances of which was therefore essential in order to prove the seriousness of the new change.⁶⁵

The making of restitution for guilt, therefore, would be "an *evidence* of the repentance and expiation,"⁶⁶ not the *cause*. Such evidence of true repentance also

⁵⁷ Cf. Karl Elliger, *Leviticus*, Handbuch zum Alten Testament 1/4 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1966), 378 n 72.

⁵⁸ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 332 n 12.

⁵⁹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 2:478.

⁶⁰ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 3 vols., trans. James Martin, in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967 reprint), 2:140.

⁶¹ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965-72), 3:23.

⁶² *Ibid.*; cf. Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2:129.

⁶³ Walther Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline*, trans. David E. Green (Atlanta, Geo.: John Knox Press, 1978), 217.

⁶⁴ Cf. the concept of works as the evidence of faith in the epistle of James in the New Testament. The manifestation of conversion ought not to be limited to the active participation in "good works." It must also involve the passive acceptance of the righteous will of God regarding the effects of past sin.

⁶⁵ Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., trans. J. A. Baker, in *Old Testament Library*, ed. G. Ernest Wright, et al. (Philadelphia, Penn.: The Westminster Press, 1961), 2:470.

⁶⁶ G. Gerleman, "רָצָה," *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 2 vols., ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971, 1976), 2:811, "Zeichen der Reue und Busse" (emphasis added in translation).

involves the acceptance of the consequences of sin which are not removed immediately: “conversion and the necessity of continuing to bear God’s punishment are not mutually exclusive.”⁶⁷ An example of such federal consequences may be seen in the case of Rehoboam’s servitude to Shishak (2 Chron 12:1-12). The leaders of Israel “humbled themselves” (כָּנַע, as in Lev 26:41c), Yahweh granted them a stay of full execution, but left the nation in subjection to Shishak as a means of teaching the converted leaders the seriousness of disobedience to Yahweh and the pleasantness of walking in obedience (vv. 6-8, 12). The impact of exile would linger on. No matter when this repentance on the part of Israel would take place, the remainder of the exile and the land’s sabbaths would have to be fulfilled. Also involved in making restitution for their guilt would be the commencement of obedience to the demands of the law of Yahweh (e.g., regular observance of the sabbaths; cf. Neh 10:28-31 and Isa 58:1-14).

The protasis that is presented in 40a and 41cd consists of three parts: (1) acknowledging before Yahweh the breach of covenant (i.e., confession), (2) subjugating the mind and will (heart) to the God of the covenant (i.e., humility), and (3) obeying the life-changing commands of the law-giver (i.e., restitution). Thereby the covenant relationship may be reentered.

Remembrance: Yahweh’s acceptance of repentance (v. 42). The apodosis of the conditional sentence begun with 40a is in a carefully constructed form:

and I shall remember my covenant with Jacob,	וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב -42a
even my covenant with Isaac,	וְאֵף אֶת-בְּרִיתִי יִצְחָק -42b
yea, I shall remember my covenant with Abraham,	וְאֵף אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אַבְרָהָם אֲזַכֵּר -42c

and I shall remember the land.	וְהָאֲרֶז אֲזַכֵּר: -42d

The repetition formed by the verb זָכַר (“remember”) sets the tone of the apodosis. Six occurrences of the first person singular (three times as the subject of זָכַר and three times as a pronominal suffix on בְּרִית (“my covenant”)) indicate that Yahweh Himself will respond to Israel’s repentance. The threefold repetition of בְּרִית confirms (again) the pericope’s covenant context and of Israel’s repentance.

In addition to the repetitions, the following observations may be made concerning this apodosis: (1) The elevated style of 42abc approaches that of a tristich containing synonymous parallelism.⁶⁸ (2) זָכַר opens and closes the section in order to maintain the emphasis on remembrance.⁶⁹ “My covenant” is the object of זָכַר only four times in the

⁶⁷ Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:471. Punishment, in this sense, is not the mediate effect, but the immediate effect of the sin. Similarly, the New Testament believer, though forgiven by Christ, yet must die physically. His spiritual (second) death, however, is completely removed.

⁶⁸ This does not mean that the three proper names are synonymous. Those names are but modifiers of בְּרִית. The last phrase of v. 42 and the subsequent context confirm that only one covenant is in view. If this style is not poetic, it certainly is fastidiously developed so that the logical correspondences (parallelisms?) are undeniable.

⁶⁹ Note the typical *w^eqatal* followed by *yiqtol*. The absence of זָכַר in 42b aids the employment of the inclusion. Rashi indulges in fanciful speculation to explain the absence of זָכַר in 42b. He explains it on the basis of the presence of the ashes of Isaac on an altar before God.

Old Testament: Genesis 9:15; Exodus 6:5; and Ezekiel 16:60. In Leviticus 26 the remembrance of the covenant is the opposite of the breach (לְהַפְרֵךְ, v. 44) of covenant.⁷⁰ (3) וְאֵף (‘‘yea, also/even’’) in 42bc continues the concept initiated in 42a and is not employed again at the commencement of 42d. This confirms the individual nature of 42d. (4) The names of the patriarchs in 42abc are the reverse of the usual order.⁷¹ The order certainly does not indicate comparative worth in an ascending fashion.⁷² It probably presents a backward look to the original promise to Abraham. The order would serve to confront Israel with the historical foundation of the nation and its covenant relationship to Yahweh. (5) The apodosis is concluded by 42d. It substitutes הָאָרֶץ (‘‘the land’’) for בְּרִיתִי (‘‘my covenant’’) since the central promise of the covenant was the land. It also utilizes the juxtaposition of these two terms since they are the only truly significant concepts in this context. The patriarchs are not the center of attention. The land, as given by Yahweh, is the focus of the verse. That land was granted by the covenant made with Abraham. (6) Verse 42d also duplicates the *yiqtol* of זָכַר at the end of the line (cf. 42c) to maintain the continuity of thought between 42abc and 42d. Therefore, 42d is a concise summary of 42abc.

Repetition: a summary concerning retribution (v. 43). Retribution is not primarily reformatory, curative, or preventative in nature. Retribution is primarily revelatory. The just punishment of the sinner (the covenant breaker) is a clear manifestation of the holiness and righteousness of Yahweh. Verse 43 emphasizes the reason for the retribution involving the land and people of Israel:

Nevertheless,⁷³ the land must be forsaken (תִּעְזֹב)⁷⁴ by them, so that it might enjoy the restitution of (וְתִרְצֶה) its sabbaths during its desolation (בְּהִשָּׁמָה)⁷⁵ without them.

⁷⁰ Willy Schottroff, *‘Gedenken’ im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament: Die Wurzel Zakar im Semitischen Sprachkreis*, 2nd ed., Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 15 (Neukirchen-vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967), 206.

⁷¹ This is a *hapax phenomenon* in the Old Testament. The triad (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) occurs as follows:
with זָכַר בְּרִית: Exod 2:24; Lev 26:42
with זָכַר: Exod 32:13 (יִשְׂרָאֵל for Jacob); Deut 9:27
with בְּרִית: 2 Kgs 13:23; 1 Chr 16:15-18 = Ps 105:8-11
with שָׁבַע אֶרֶץ (‘‘the land sworn/promised to’’): Gen 50:24; Exod 6:8; 32:13; 33:1; Deut 1:8; 6:10; 34:4
with שָׁבַע אֲדָמָה (same as אֶרֶץ שָׁבַע): Num 32:11; Deut 30:20
with שָׁבַע דָּבָר (‘‘the word/promise sworn to’’): Deut 9:5
with שָׁבַע הָיָה לְעַם לֵאלֹהִים (‘‘sworn to be a people/a god’’): Deut 29:12
with רָאָה (‘‘[God of ...] appeared’’): Exod 3:16; 4:5; 6:3
with אֱלֹהֵי (‘‘God of’’): Exod 3:6, 15, 16; 4:5; 1 Kgs 18:36; 1 Chr 29:18; 2 Chr 30:6 (where שׁוֹב אֵל [‘‘return to’’] precedes).

⁷² Cf. Rashi; H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Leviticus*, vol. 4 in *Midrash Rabba*, trans. Judah J. Slotki (London: Soncino Press, 1961), 462 (includes fanciful explanations for many aspects of v. 42).

⁷³ The disjunctive *waw* is employed here with the emphasized subject, using the preceding וְהָאָרֶץ (42d) as a springboard.

⁷⁴ *Yiqtol* here is interpreted as a jussive.

⁷⁵ The irregular syncope of the form may be due to an attraction to the preceding word for vocalic assonance: שָׁבַע(ת)תִּיהָ // בְּהִשָּׁמָה (unaccented *holem* is very minimal in pronunciation) rather than בְּהִשָּׁמָה. Cf. GKC, 182 (§67c).

However, they themselves must make restitution (וְהֵם יִרְצוּ) for their guilt (אֶת-עֲוֹנָם) simply because (יָעַן וּבִיַעַן)⁷⁶ they rejected my ordinances and they inwardly [deeply?] despised (וְגַעְלָה נִפְשָׁם) by statutes.

The structure of verse 43 (together with the preceding line, 42b) may be represented in the following fashion:⁷⁷

(1cs)	אֶזְכֹּר: I shall remember ↓	וְהָאָרֶץ and the land	-42d	
(3fs)	מֵהֶם by them	תִּעְזֹב shall be forsaken	וְהָאָרֶץ and the land	-43a
	מֵהֶם without them ★	אֶת-שַׁבְּתוֹתֶיהָ בְּהַשְׁמָה its sabbaths during its desolation	וְתִרְצֶה and it shall enjoy	-43b
(3mp)	אֶת-עֲוֹנָם for their guilt	וְהֵם יִרְצוּ shall make restitu- tion	וְהֵם and they ★	-43c
	בְּמִשְׁפָּטַי מָאָסוּ they rejected my ordinances	יָעַן וּבִיַעַן simply because		-43d
נִפְשָׁם: their soul	וְאֶת-חַקֹּתַי גָּעְלָה and despised my statutes			-43e

The following observations may be made concerning this structure:

- (1) The repetition of the assonance involving רָצַ in the first member of the first four lines emphasizes the main concern of retribution and restoration: the land (אָרֶץ).
- (2) The repetition of *guttural* + ז (אֶזְכֹּר and תִּעְזֹב) serves to heighten the correspondence between the opposites זָכַר (“remember”) and עָזַב (“forsake”). What Yahweh will remember, Israel will forsake.

⁷⁶ Cf. Paul Joüon, *Grammaire de l’Hébreu Biblique* (Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1965), 523 (§170f n. 1). This phrase occurs only here, Ezek 13:10, and 36:3. One יָעַן occurs in Ezek 20:16, 24, with a similar context. Its use is emphatic; cf. GKC, §158b.

⁷⁷ Some of the correspondences are conceptual, but most involve assonance which can be observed only in the Hebrew. The English translation cannot convey all the nuances (especially in the interlinear format).

- (3) The third person masculine plurals (מֵהֶם ... מֵהֶם יָהִים) bind the first three lines of v. 43 together. Just as 42d and 43a began the same (וְהָאָרֶץ), so 43a and 43b end the same (מֵהֶם). Then 43c picks up the last concept of 43b (with יָהִים) to maintain the continuity by means of anadiplosis. The logical progression is noteworthy:
- forsaken **by them** ⇒ enjoyed restitution **without them**
⇒ nevertheless, **they** must make restitution
- (4) In 43b and 43c the commencing verb is רָצָה. The צָר continues the assonance of 42d and 43a. The concept of restitution is a key element in 43bc.
- (5) The repetition of עָנַן in the last term of 43c and in the first two terms of 43d binds those lines together by assonance. The concepts presented by the three forms are also related: there is *guilt*, as is proven by the *cause* or *reason* for restitution. In other words, restitution would have to be made *because of guilt* which existed *because of* disobedience.
- (6) וְאִם-בְּחֻקֹּתַי תִּמְאָסוּ וְאִם-אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי תִּגְעַל נִפְשֵׁיכֶם produces in reverse order the same phrases found in v. 15: וְאִם-בְּחֻקֹּתַי תִּמְאָסוּ וְאִם-אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי תִּגְעַל נִפְשֵׁיכֶם. It is significant that both verbs in 43de are *qatal* even though they are preceded by their objects. This is the only such example occurring in Leviticus regarding חָקָה and its verbs. The same observation holds for מִשְׁפָּט and its verbs: when the noun precedes its verb, the *yiqtol* is employed; and when it follows its verb, the *qatal* is utilized (Lev 18:4, 5, 26; 19:37; 20:22; 25:18; 26:15). The only exception is 26:43. The departure from the usual syntax of the pericope must be for the purpose of bringing the concepts forcefully to the mind of the reader. Disobedience is the true and emphatic cause for the need of restitution. There is no question regarding Israel's guilt. There is no doubt that restitution is necessary.
- (7) The first person singular is the subject of the verb in 42d. Every line of verse 43 has some mention of the third person plural (referring to Israel). However, the third feminine singular (referring to the land) is the subject in 43ab, while the third masculine plural (referring to the people of Israel) is the subject in 43cde.

Therefore, verse 43 presents emphases concerning the land, responsibility/guilt, restitution, disobedience, and Israel. It is truly a negative picture in contrast to that presented by verse 42. The jussives (43abc), however, provide an element of anticipation and decree. *Operation Restitution* would be initiated by Yahweh on the basis of His covenant with Abraham. The Mosaic Covenant would have a role in the process by means of the sabbatical stipulations. The Abrahamic Covenant promised a land and a seed to inherit that land. The Mosaic Covenant promised a nation with a special relationship to Yahweh (Exod 19:5-6). As circumcision was instituted as the seal of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17:9-14), so the sabbaths appear to have been the seal of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Exod 20:8-11; Lev 25; 26:2; Neh 10:28-31; Isa 58:1-14). The emphasis on *land* in Leviticus 26 belongs to the sphere of the Abrahamic Covenant,

while the emphasis on *sabbatical restitution* belongs to the sphere of the Mosaic Covenant.⁷⁸

Eschatological Significance

Covenant

“Covenant” (ברית) is employed eight times in Leviticus 26 (vv. 9, 15, 25, 42 *ter*, 44, 45). It always denotes a binding relationship between Yahweh and His people Israel. This relationship provided Israel with a life which had a goal and with a history that had meaning. In all its occurrences in this pericope, “covenant” promotes the concept of the sovereignty of Yahweh, the covenant-giver. In six of the eight uses of the term, the first person singular suffix (“my”) is attached (vv. 9, 15, 42 *ter*, 44). Yahweh Himself is always the antecedent. The unilateral nature of the covenants is implied by this form of reference. Yahweh Himself established the covenants, and He alone. Yahweh’s personal intervention in the history of Israel is a central theme of the covenants. Such intervention is not limited to the past—it has its place eschatologically. His lordship is personal and absolute. The covenant lays hold of the people of Israel and demands unconditional surrender to the will of God. Loyalty to the covenant must be more than outward acquiescence, it must be an inward reality. The “uncircumcised heart” (v. 41) is the antithesis of this loyalty:

The covenant Lord demands heart-consecration which reflects the fulfillment of the consecration sworn in the circumcision oath. Circumcision is an oath-rite. To be uncircumcised would be to place oneself outside the juridical authority of Yahweh and a refusal to consign oneself to the ordeal of the Lord’s judgment for the final verdict on one’s life—eternal weal or woe..⁷⁹

The ultimate salvation of Israel is yet future (cf. Rom 9—11), therefore the covenant has eschatological implications.

The Abrahamic Covenant

Yahweh’s covenant with Abraham appears to underlie the references to “covenant” in verses 9, 42, and 44. The theme of a fruitful population is an echo of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 17:6, 7, 19, and 21 (cf., also, Exod 6:4 and Deut 8:18). Verse 9 may be employed as an example of the distinctions made within the passage concerning the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. The Abrahamic Covenant is characterized by the following elements:

- (1) The theme of promise,
- (2) emphasis on divine fulfillment, and
- (3) references to land, prosperity, and blessing and/or cursing.

On the other hand, the Mosaic Covenant is characterized by:

- (1) the theme of law,

⁷⁸ Onqelos evidently interpreted the retribution of v. 43 in the light of the blessings and cursings of the Deuteronomic covenant, since he substituted the following phrase for לֹשֶׁן חֶלֶף בְּרַכַּן אִתִּי: גִּעַן וּבְיָעַן וּבְיָעַן (“there are cursings instead of blessings distinguished against them”).

⁷⁹ Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1968), 47-48.

- (2) emphasis on human responsibility, and
- (3) references to sabbath, sanctuary, and divine sovereignty.

Although v. 9 is in the midst of Mosaic Covenant material, it displays Abrahamic vocabulary, phraseology, and theme. Its message is pertinent to that brief span of time immediately following the revelation of the Mosaic Covenant at Mt. Sinai. In effect, the message was: the revelation concerning law is equal in authority to the older revelation concerning promise. In order to receive the promised blessings contained in the Abrahamic Covenant, Israel would have to obey the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant. In other words, the Mosaic Covenant would be the program by which Israelites would manifest their faith by faith's works (cf. Jas 2:14-26). Yahweh Himself will respond to Israel's repentance when it occurs. When Israel repents and turns back to Yahweh, the Abrahamic Covenant will be reconfirmed or renewed.

The blessings recited in Leviticus 26:4-12 are at least in part a fulfillment of the covenant made with Abraham. Those blessings fall into six categories:

- (1) productivity (vv. 4-5; cf. Gen 24:35, 27:28; 30:43)
- (2) peace (v. 6; cf. Gen 22:17)
- (3) power (vv. 7-8; cf. Gen 22:17)
- (4) population (v. 9; cf. Gen 12:2; 15:5; 17:6)
- (5) provision (v. 10; cf. productivity, above), and
- (6) presence (vv. 11-12; cf. Gen 17:7, 8).

All these blessings were associated with the land that Israel would receive from Yahweh. They are consistent with various statements and restatements of the Abrahamic Covenant. On the other hand, the covenant curses of Leviticus 26:14-38 are at least in part a removal of the Abrahamic blessings.⁸⁰

The basis for Yahweh's historical extraction of Israel from Egypt was the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. Gen 15:13, 14). While the nation resided at Mt. Sinai, they would remember that covenant as part of their theological heritage. They experienced the beginning of the historical fulfillment of its promises.

The Abrahamic Covenant demonstrated that Israel's national identity was not of their own making. That covenant provided them with the hope of landedness at a time when they were landless. Leviticus 26:1-13 revealed to Israel that the recent covenant given at Mt. Sinai (the Mosaic Covenant) did not nullify the Abrahamic Covenant. The central concept of the Abrahamic Covenant was the land of promise (v. 42). The Mosaic Covenant would not conflict with the landedness promised long before.

Even the phraseology of covenant disloyalty ("uncircumcised heart," v. 41) was a reflection of the impact of the Abrahamic Covenant on the theology and life of Israel. Circumcision was the outward manifestation of inward commitment to the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17:9-14). Personal commitment and accountability were implicit even in the unilateral pact that Yahweh made with Abraham while the latter was in a deep sleep (15:12-21). Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are not opposing concepts in the biblical covenants. Indeed, it was because Yahweh was the sovereign Lord that the human vassal must obey Him. Human accountability would be nonexistent (at least, nonbinding) if it were not for the divine character. Yahweh's Lordship as revealed in His covenant with Abraham is not altered by subsequent covenants. Since the sovereignty of

⁸⁰ See page 10, above.

God is not altered, neither are the promises of His covenant altered or nullified (cf. Gal 3:17).

The continuity of the Abrahamic Covenant throughout the Old Testament in deliverance contexts illustrates the eschatological implication of its presence in Leviticus 26. Arnold Fruchtenbaum demonstrated that this covenant ties the prophetic pronouncements together concerning the redemption of Israel.⁸¹

The Sinaitic Covenant

In Leviticus 26 attention is directed to the Mosaic Covenant by the prominence of the immediate historical context at Sinai and the legal nature of some of the terms used in the chapter (“statutes, commandments,” v. 3; “commandments, statutes, ordinances,” vv. 14-15; “statutes, ordinances, laws,” v. 46). The precepts of verses 1-2 have the Mosaic Covenant in view:

- prohibition of idols
- observance of sabbaths, and
- reverence for the sanctuary

Any remaining doubt is removed by the clear statements of verses 15, 45, and 46. This legal emphasis sets the stage for covenant vengeance in verse 25. It also promotes the sense of Yahweh’s Lordship which was already present in the Abrahamic Covenant. The covenant at Sinai was based upon the historical deliverance of Israel from Egypt. That deliverance was in accord with the prior covenant (vv. 13, 45). It was intended to identify more narrowly the people of Yahweh. The Abrahamic Covenant’s identification of the land of promise was supplemented by the refined definition of the people of promise. Just as the outward seal/sign of the Abrahamic Covenant was circumcision, so the seal/sign of the Sinaitic Covenant was the observance of the sabbaths (cf. Lev 25; 26:2, 34-35, 43). The seal/sign of each covenant affected the realm of the other covenant: the covenant of the land (Abrahamic) was related directly to the people by circumcision, and the covenant of the people (Mosaic) was related directly to the land by the sabbaths.⁸² Thus the two aspects of these covenants (the land and the people) were bound together. The land was for the people, and the people for the land.

The legislation connected with the Mosaic Covenant encouraged a serious mindset regarding submission to the divine overlord. It also produced humility with reference to the unworthiness of Israel to be the special people of God, the chosen people (cf. Deut 7:6-11). Right behavior by the people of Yahweh was the means of witnessing to the nations. By such behavior Israel participated in the testimony that Yahweh Himself initiated by means of their miraculous deliverance out of Egypt (cf. Lev 26:45). The legislation marked Israel as the people belonging to Yahweh, the Exodus-Causer.

⁸¹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (Tustin, Cal.: Ariel Ministries Press, 1993), 577-81.

⁸² A distinction between a covenant of the land and a covenant of the people should not be pressed to an extreme. The Abrahamic Covenant also identified the people of promise, referring to them as the descendants of Abraham. It became clear, however, that some of the descendants of Abraham (through Ishmael) would not be the people of promise. The Mosaic Covenant clarified the situation regarding the identification of the covenant people.

Disobedience to the absolute sovereign of Israel's history would also result in the removal of covenant blessings associated with the Mosaic Covenant. The following aspects of the Mosaic Covenant would be rendered inoperable by the exile:

- (1) Though previously a people above all the nations (Exod 19:5; Deut 26:18-19), Israel would be abhorred by Yahweh and treated as the tail of all the nations (Lev 26:30; Deut 28:43-44). The future "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24; Rom 11:25) reflect this curse.⁸³
- (2) The kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6) would become ceremonially unclean and their sacrifices unacceptable (Lev 26:31).
- (3) The holy nation of Israel (Exod 19:6) would be burdened with guilt (Lev 26:39) and characterized by a heathenlike uncircumcised heart (v. 41).
- (4) Israel's history of national deliverance (Exod 19:4) would turn into a history of national exile (Lev 26:33, 38).

Sinai was but the commencement of the relationship between God and Israel. God and the nation must identify with each other if the wilderness years were to lead to the promised land. The apostasies of Sinai⁸⁴ only served to remind the nation why Yahweh gave them legislation. They needed standards. Without the order those standards would produce, there would be chaos and anarchy. The nation must be prepared for their inheritance, the land. The means of preparation would be instruction, parenthesis. Instruction is the primary concept of תורה (v. 46). Leviticus 26's focus is on identification with the covenant deity/suzerain, Yahweh (cf. v. 45).

The Deuteronomic Covenant⁸⁵

The many parallels between Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27—30 present the reader with a problem of relationship. How is the Palestinian Covenant related to Leviticus 26? The similarities of structure (blessing and cursing), the revelation of the ultimate chastisement for breach of covenant (exile preceded by siege which deteriorates into cannibalism), and a time sphere subsequent to the impartation of the Mosaic Covenant demonstrate a relationship in content. However, similarity is not identity. No third covenant is ratified in Leviticus 26. No third covenant is described in terms of a relationship to the past covenant (Abrahamic) and the present covenant (Mosaic). The

⁸³ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 333.

⁸⁴ The golden calf incident provoked the public shattering of the covenant tablets (Exod 32:19). About 3000 died that day (v. 28). Two priests, sons of Aaron, also died at Sinai when they did not follow divine instructions concerning service at the altar (Lev 10:1-2). Later, a man was executed because of his blasphemous appropriation of the name of God (Lev 24:10-23).

⁸⁵ For the sake of discussion the Deuteronomic Covenant will be defined as the pact God established with Israel on the plains of Moab (Deut 27—30). That covenant was entered by Israel's oath (Deut 29), confirmed by sacrifices and public deposit at Shechem (Josh 8:30-35), and renewed by common consent at Shechem near the end of Joshua's ministry (24:1-28). Synonyms for this covenant include Palestinian Covenant and Covenant on the plains of Moab. Cf. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1953), 58-59; Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 214-17, 226, 230; S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: The Meridian Library, 1956), 71; *TDOT*, s.v. "בְּרִית," by M. Weinfeld, 2:256, 268-69; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 59-116; Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), 58-64, 134-42.

connotation of a future covenant may be present; however, that connotation would not have been identified with Deuteronomy 27—30 by those who received Leviticus 26. The former passage was revealed to the new generation of Israelites while they were camped on the plateau of Moab. The latter was revealed to their parents and grandparents while they were still at Mt. Sinai (Lev 26:46). Leviticus 26 may be considered a prophetic preview of the Deuteronomic Covenant only in the sense that the basic theological concepts of the Moab covenant are present in the pericope. However, Leviticus 26 does not specify that covenant *per se*. Leviticus 26 does not provide a formal prophetic announcement regarding any future covenant.

Revelation is progressive in nature. The seeds of one age become the flowers of yet another age. The seed of the Deuteronomic Covenant is present in Leviticus 26. The blessings and cursings of that chapter were transitional. They prepared Israel for the land while they were at Sinai prior to commencing their wilderness wanderings. Transitional revelation would be expanded and formalized in a covenant upon arrival at the threshold of the land (on the plateau of Moab). The title deed to the land (the Abrahamic Covenant), the constitution for the people of the land (the Mosaic Covenant), and the rights to the riches of the land (the Deuteronomic Covenant) would then provide the nation with all the revelation necessary to live within the land itself.

Land

Every gift to the nation of Israel was also a summons to an obligation before the covenant suzerain, Yahweh. The land grant to Israel involved the people's identification with Yahweh. The Land-Giver was summoning the people to service. The summons was both beneficial and binding. Benefits were conditioned upon obedience to the command of Yahweh. The enslaved nation was delivered from Egypt and became bond slaves belonging to Yahweh (v. 13). The prior bondage differed from the latter in that the latter brought blessing (vv. 2-12). No such rewards accrued as a result of Egyptian bondage.

The land grant predated the existence of Israel *per se*. Abraham received the land grant at the time of his own exodus from Mesopotamia. Israel's national identity was established under Moses at the time their exodus from Egypt. God in His sovereignty controlled the history of the land and the people. "From the roughly 160 cases in which biblical passages speak of Jahweh's giving the land to Israel, more than half contain references to 'the fathers.'"⁸⁶ It is significant, therefore that reference is made to "the ancestors" (v. 45) in a context related to the Mosaic Covenant. This establishes a continuity of covenants. Just as Abraham's descendants claimed the Abrahamic Covenant while they were at Mt. Sinai, so, in the future days, an exiled people would repent and claim the covenant made with their ancestors at Sinai. Willingness to identify themselves as Yahweh's people will qualify them for restoration to the land.

The land of promise is depicted as the setting for the fulfillment of both blessings (vv. 4-12) and curses (vv. 14-38). It is noteworthy that the worldwide extension of the Davidic kingdom is described in Psalm 72:16-17 in terms reminiscent of the blessings in Leviticus 26.⁸⁷ That would be one indication of the eschatological significance of this

⁸⁶ J. N. M. Wijngaards, *The Dramatization of Salvific History in the Deuteronomic Schools*, OTS 16 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 73.

⁸⁷ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1978), 161.

chapter. Another could be seen in the fact that a series of increasingly severe calamities affecting the reputation and the health of the nation of Israel should signal that divine judgment is underway. “Then that nation should know that it was the hand of God, and men should return to Him. This principle was first announced in Leviticus 26:3-33 and used in most of the prophets, especially Amos 4:6-12.”⁸⁸ Reward and retribution could not be fulfilled elsewhere. The landedness of Israel was essential for fulfillment. Israel could not receive landed prosperity without the land. On the other hand, Israel could not be exiled from the land until they had first possessed it.

Interestingly, the land itself was treated as a separate participant in the covenant. It could be the recipient of the restitution of sabbaths that it had been denied (vv. 34-35, 43). It was a land belonging first to Yahweh. As its sovereign Lord, He had authority to grant it to Israel. He presented the title deed to Abraham’s descendants. Any intermediate generation who were disloyal to the covenant would be subject to expulsion from the land (vv. 33-44). Yet, the land would remain, kept in store for the future generation who would obey the precepts of Yahweh. The generations may come and go, but the land would abide as the Abrahamic Covenant’s material entity. By means of sabbaths Yahweh intended to preserve the fruitfulness of the land for the ultimate possessors (cf. Lev 25). Therefore, disobedience to Yahweh’s sabbatical legislation was considered a sin against the land. Even more, it was a sin against future generations since such a breach of the covenant resulted from greed. Such greed would rob the land of its fruitfulness and rob future generations of its provision.

Landedness made it possible for the people to be tempted in the areas of self-sufficiency, idolatry, and sabbath breaking. Such temptations could be resisted by remembering the history of the people and the land. Remembering the covenant deeds of Yahweh would remind the people that the land they enjoyed was an unearned gift. The exiled people, remembering the Lord of the land, would confess their guilt and make restitution (vv. 40-41). Their remembering and acting upon that memory would, in turn, result in Yahweh remembering the land (v. 42). He would then preserve the covenant blessings for His people.

At Mt. Sinai, the land represented hope. In the wilderness, the land represented hope. In the land, when the hope was fulfilled, the land presented the people with a challenge. They were challenged to exercise faith in the God of the covenant. Such faith had not been exhibited by those who apostasized at Sinai and who died in the wilderness.

John Jelinek observes that some theologians note the absence of land as a theme in the New Testament and assume that the Old Testament promises have been displaced. He rightly concludes that “we are not justified in emasculating the OT by the virtues of the NT.”⁸⁹ If language means anything, Israel must yet possess the promised land following their future national repentance.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 251.

⁸⁹ John A. Jelinek, “The Dispersion and Restoration of Israel to the Land,” in *Israel, the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God’s Promises*, ed. H. Wayne House (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 236. Jelinek’s attention to Leviticus 26 is a welcome contribution to the study of the eschatological significance of the pericope.

Heilsgeschichte

Heilsgeschichte (“salvation history”) was the foundation of the Mosaic Covenant (vv. 13, 45). Yahweh is the God of history. He is the sovereign Lord of time and of place. Divine election and deliverance are the main factors in Israel’s history. Nothing that Israel possessed was a result of her own work. Yahweh as Creator and Giver had graciously and mercifully associated Himself with this nation. As the Lord of history, He controls all history. He can move entire nations in order to chastise disobedient Israel and return her to the land in the time of her repentance. The God of history can prepare the nations for receiving the exiled people (cf. Joseph, Gen 50:20). The nations would swallow up the scattered Israelites (Lev 26:33) and would make them vanish (v. 38). Yet, Yahweh would preserve a remnant so that a new history could begin. Israel must trust the God of history who controls all time, places, and nations.

Breach and Preservation of Covenant

Israel might breach (פָּרַח, vv. 15, 44) the covenant, but Yahweh could not (v. 44). The “uncircumcised heart” (v. 41) of disobedient Israel reflected her disloyalty to the divine covenants. Yahweh could never be disloyal. He is always faithful because He is “Yahweh their God” (v. 44).

Breach of covenant occurred when Israel disobeyed the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant (v. 15). Idolatry and sabbath breaking, especially, constituted breach of covenant (vv. 1-2). Such an action was willful. It would result in the nullification of blessings associated with the Abrahamic Covenant and identification associated with the Mosaic Covenant. Any infraction of Mosaic legislation was deemed rebellion against the sovereign will of the suzerain-legislator, Yahweh.

Yahweh, however, “remembers” (זָכַר) His covenants. He preserves the covenants. The covenants contained both blessing and cursing. Blessing and cursing were initiated by promise, and implemented by legislation. Promise emphasized divine sovereignty; legislation highlighted human responsibility. When Israel was unfaithful, Yahweh yet remained faithful. The suzerain’s faithful preservation of the covenant is in sharp contrast to the vassal’s failure to submit. Covenant history confirms both divine dependability and human culpability.

The Abrahamic Covenant was identified as a covenant with roots in the history of Israel. It involved Jacob, and before him, Isaac. Before Isaac, it was granted to Abraham. Verse 42 presented this confirmation of prior history.⁹⁰ As the Abrahamic Covenant was preserved (and would continue to be preserved), so also the Mosaic Covenant would be preserved for future generations (v. 45). Yahweh’s deeds in history illustrate His faithfulness to preserve the covenant in spite of the failure of one generation to be faithful to it.

Prohibition of Idolatry

It is a serious crime to defy the Creator of the universe and the God of all history. The ultimate reason for the prohibition of idolatry is succinctly expressed in the *Selbstvorstellungsformel* (“self-introduction formula”):⁹¹ “for I am Yahweh your God.”

⁹⁰ See above, 4.

⁹¹ John van Seters, “Confessional Reformulation in the Exilic Period,” *Vetus Testamentum* 22 (1972): 455.

This formula is the key phrase in Leviticus 18—26.⁹² The contrast is self-explanatory. Yahweh's inherent and exclusive authority makes idols worthless, powerless, anthropocentric, and void of any spiritually redeeming value. There is no room for divided loyalties. Yahweh insists upon exclusive lordship in the lives of His people. Awareness of Yahweh's existence, identity, and presence was central to the covenant relationship that Israel enjoyed.

The idolater chooses the way of the uncircumcised nations (cf. v. 41), therefore he will be eaten up by those nations (v. 38) among whom he will be exiled (v. 33). His guilt, his treason, will cause him great anguish (v. 39). The only way to be restored to Yahweh's favor will be by confession, humility, and restitution (vv. 40-41). Idolaters must confess their filthy idolatry. Humility must be produced by the realization that they cannot manipulate Yahweh. Restitution must consist in allowing Yahweh and His land priority in their lives. Only when this occurs will Israel be restored finally and permanently to the land from which they were expelled in A.D. 70.

Observance of Sabbaths

"Sabbaths" is plural throughout the pericope (vv. 2, 34-35, 43). The reference is undoubtedly intended to include both weekly sabbaths and annual sabbaths (including the year of jubilee) that are mentioned in the preceding context (chapters 23—25).

Sabbath observance is theologically rich. It specially signified God's dominion over Israel.⁹³ In His sovereignty Yahweh established the nation, granted them their land, and claimed His demand upon their time.⁹⁴ The sabbaths were also a means of reminding Israel of their deliverance from bondage.⁹⁵ "Any OT theology must pay attention to the way in which the faith of the OT hears the commandment of its God in its liturgical ordinances."⁹⁶ Israel's liturgical calendar was Yahweh-oriented. Yahweh is the God of time as well as the God of space. The sabbath honored the Lord of time. The sabbaths taught the Israelites to trust the Lord of all things for their provisions. Lordship was the core of the sabbatical principle. By trusting the Lord to provide for the seventh day, the seventh year, and the forty-ninth and fiftieth years, Israel gave tangible witness to His power and wisdom. He who provided in the wilderness had already proclaimed the sabbatical principle while Israel was still at Mt. Sinai. The instruction for God's people was simple: "Trust me to provide. I am Yahweh. I will not lead you where I cannot care for you." God never demands what man is unable to do. He provides the way of service. He blesses the path of obedience. Sabbath in the OT was more than an expression of the vertical relationship to the Lord of all creation. It was also an expression of concern and care for those who were fellow participants in the covenant (cf. Lev 25).

⁹² Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 250.

⁹³ Matitiah Tsevat, "The Basic Meaning of the Biblical Sabbath," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84 (1972): 455.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 64.

⁹⁶ Walther Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline*, trans. David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978), 125.

The sabbatical principle was the test, the seal/sign, of the obedience demanded under the Mosaic Covenant (Exod 33:17-21). The legal covenant represented the legislative authority of Yahweh. The sabbath represented Yahweh's authority over time. It was the legislation of time.

Even the land needed restitution when the time that Yahweh demanded for it was not granted by Israel (Lev 26:34-35, 43). Yahweh is Lord of the land as well as the people. The land was a promised possession in a time-space continuum. Breach of the sabbatical principle regarding the land was evidence of rebellion against the Lord of time and space. The violation of the land by denying its just recompense was a violation of Yahweh's gift of fruitfulness. It was robbery because it denied continued fruitfulness for future generations of Abraham's descendants. The liberty proclaimed in the sabbatical principle was an echo of the *Heilsgeschichte*. The God of history delivered Israel from servitude in Egypt so that the people would be free from oppression. To deny that freedom was to deny the Lord who brought them out of Egypt (v. 13; cf. 25:38, 42, 55).

Presence and Sanctuary

The presence of Yahweh is referred to by means of "presence" (פָּנִים, v. 17), "walk among you" (הִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתוֹךְ, v. 12), "sanctuary" (מִקְדָּשׁ, v. 2), and "tabernacle" (מִשְׁכָּן, v. 11). His presence works both weal (vv. 11-12) and woe (v. 17). His presence is both edifice-oriented⁹⁷ (vv. 2, 11) and people-oriented (vv. 12, 17). His presence is holy (note the employment of the root קִדְּשׁ "holy" in מִקְדָּשׁ, "sanctuary"). The reference to holiness is particularly striking because it is in a context of precepts prohibiting of idolatry and commanding observance of sabbaths. Yahweh is holy because He is set apart from idols and His presence is distinct from idols. Also, He is holy because sabbatical time is set apart for Him.

The implication of verses 14-45 is that when disobedient Israel is confronted by the punishment-dealing presence of Yahweh, He has ceased to "walk among" them or to tabernacle among them. Indeed, He is pictured as "walking in opposition" to them (vv. 24, 28).

Even though His presence or sanctuary is not with the exiles among the nations (at least not in the same fashion as when they were obedient and in the land), yet Yahweh will preserve His covenant with them (v. 44).

Promise

Promise here is being used in a very broad sense of the term. It is being employed to cover both the promise to bless and the promise to curse. It is in the sense of fulfillment or commitment as much as in the sense of hope or expectancy.

Promise in Leviticus 26 is identified with the solemn divine self-introduction (*Selbstvorstellung*) of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (vv. 1, 2, 13, 44, 45; cf. v. 42). It is a promise preceding the history of deliverance from Egypt (the Abrahamic Covenant) and the entrance into Canaan (the Mosaic and Palestinian covenants). It is not a reference to something inward and spiritual, but a reference to the tangible aspects of

⁹⁷ By "edifice-oriented" the writer does not mean that Yahweh is edifice-limited. The edifice was merely an accommodation to focus attention upon Yahweh's presence among His people. Cf. Ezek 10:3-19; 11:22-23; 43:1-5.

covenant life: productivity, peace, population, presence, and land. The promise includes a pledge to bless Israel for their loyalty to the covenant and to curse Israel for their disloyalty. Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, promises His own loyalty to His covenant with His people. He has not finished His design for Israel—His promises will yet be fulfilled:

Even Israel's failure, however, would not imperil the purposes of God, for, as New Testament revelation makes clear, the Lord Jesus Christ—the suffering Servant of Isaiah—is in Himself a “new Israel,” as is His Body the church. . . . But praise be to God, His promise to Israel is not abrogated—not by Israel's Old Testament disobedience or by the subsequent role of the church. For He will regenerate His ancient people and thus qualify them in ages to come to bring to fruition the grand design for which He had called and elected them (Lev. 26:40-45; Deut. 30:1-30; Jer. 31:27-34; 33:19-26; Ezek. 36:22-38; Rom. 11:25-32). This is the theology of the Pentateuch.⁹⁸

Blessing and Curse

The blessings and curses of Leviticus 26 are quite similar to those of Deuteronomy 27—28 as well as to those of the Esarhaddon vassal treaties and the Sefire stelas. The similarities involve both formal structure and traditional phraseology and vocabulary. By their very contexts in the biblical materials, the blessings and curses are distinctly covenantal.⁹⁹ The blessings are directly related to the promised blessings and/or privileges of both the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants. Likewise, the curses are directly related to the nullification or removal of those same blessings and/or privileges.¹⁰⁰

The blessings and curses do not in themselves indicate the presence of the Deuteronomic Covenant in Leviticus 26.¹⁰¹ Any preview of that covenant in the pericope must maintain a continuity with the two previous covenants. In other words, a third covenant (whether here or in Deuteronomy 27—30) does not nullify the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants.

Obedience and Disobedience

“Obedience to Yahweh, the one God, who delivered Israel out of slavery and is jealous of his own uniqueness, defines the fundamental nature of the OT faith.”¹⁰² Obedience reflects respect for who and what Yahweh is personally and historically (Lev 26:1-3, 13-15, 39-45). Obedience involves the acceptance of the lordship of Yahweh in one's life in time and space (cf. vv. 2, 34-35, 43). Obedience produces participation in the covenant blessings (v. 9). The precepts reveal the will of God for Israel. The will of man must be yielded to the will of Yahweh in order to be loyal to the covenants (cf. v. 41).

⁹⁸ Eugene H. Merrill, “A Theology of the Pentateuch,” *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 87.

⁹⁹ *Contra* Ronald E. Clements, *Prophecy and Tradition*, in *Growing Points in Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 16-17.

¹⁰⁰ See above, 5-6, 8-9.

¹⁰¹ See above, 9-10.

¹⁰² Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology*, 116.

Disobedience is the denial of the identity of Yahweh in history, covenant, and law. It is breach of covenant faith (v. 15). It is acting unfaithfully, disloyally, and treasonously (v. 40). It is blatant opposition to God (vv. 21, 23, 27). It is nonperformance of His commands (v. 14). It involves rejecting His statutes and despising His ordinances (v. 15). It is a matter that is concerned with the inner man (vv. 15, 41, 43; note “soul” and “heart”). Disobedience has frightful consequences. Even cannibalism is not beyond the capability of the disobedient (v. 29). It causes the unacceptability of the sacrifices which were the outward manifestation of faith (v. 31). Disobedience is worthy only of death (vv. 25, 33, 37, 38) and exile (vv. 33, 44). Death is separation from the body; exile is separation from the land.

Retribution and Chastisement

The application of the curses/penalties of verses 14-45 are highlighted by two factors: (1) the gradation of the punishments in five stages of severity (vv. 16-17, 18-20, 21-22, 23-26, and 27-38)¹⁰³ and (2) the recurring refrain, “seven times for your sins” (vv. 18, 21, 24, 28). The stages of chastisement are emphasized also by the occurrence of the term “discipline” (כִּסּוּף, vv. 18, 23, 28). The entire process, from start to finish, was intended as a means of restoration. However, the primary purpose was not restoration, but the glorification of the covenant God, Yahweh (cf. vv. 44, 45).

Retribution may be terminal (cf. vv. 25, 30, 38), but chastisement may result in restoration through repentance (cf. vv. 39-45). Both are involved in Leviticus 26. Divine retribution will come upon those who fail to confess their sins. Chastisement will be administered to those who confess their sins.

In the refrain, “seven times”¹⁰⁴ implies the sabbatical principle and “for your sins” indicates breach of covenant. “Sin” is also a term applied to breach of covenant in the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon.¹⁰⁵ Leviticus 26 emphasizes the seal/sign of the Mosaic Covenant, the sabbaths. Since the sabbaths were related to the land (vv. 34-35, 43), the Abrahamic Covenant is at least implied. Yahweh would judge His people for their nonobservance of the sabbaths, for their worship of idols and for the resulting defilement of the people among whom He dwelt (cf. vv. 1-2, 29-31). Divine judgment is not a betrayal of the covenants (v. 44). On the contrary, judgment declares that disobedience is sin and that sin in rebellion against the Lord. Eventually, Yahweh’s judgments would increase to such an intensity and nature that there would be no doubt that He had exercised His covenant rights to exact retribution from those who defy His authority. “Many of the horrifying judgments described in Rev. 6ff. find their original setting in the covenant curses of Lev. 26 and Deut. 28.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ For an excellent discussion of the form, structure and setting of vv. 14-45, see John Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 4 (Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1992), 457-62.

¹⁰⁴ Seven is more than just a symbolic number: “It is an appropriate and evocative number in view of the importance of the seventh in Israelite religion” (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 331). Cf., also, Karl Elliger, *Leviticus*, HAT 1/4 (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1966), 375: “Natürlich ist ‘sieben’ eine schematische Steigerungszahl” (“‘Seven’ is naturally a stylized number of intensity”).

¹⁰⁵ See D. J. Wiseman, *The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon*, Iraq 20/1 (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1958), 42 (col. iii 160), 50 (col. iv 272), 52 (col. iv 292), 58 (col. v 397).

¹⁰⁶ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 334. Cf., also, Hartley, *Leviticus*, 475.

Exile

Exile (“scattering among the nations,” v. 33) was the ultimate penalty for breach of covenant. It meant removal from the land of promise. The landedness for which the nation had hoped would dissolve into the landlessness which had characterized their sojourn in Egypt. Servitude would once again engulf them. With their “uncircumcised heart” (v. 41) they would be placed among the uncircumcised—those who were outside the covenants. Exile was a living death, a living separation from the land of abundant life. Exile meant removal from the setting in which Israel could experience the blessings of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. Exile, however, need not be terminal. Exile, landlessness, could be a condition that could give rebirth to hope (vv. 39-45). Landlessness was not synonymous with divine rejection or abhorrence (v. 44). As at Sinai, and in the wilderness, landlessness presented the people with a goal for life and a meaning for history. The landless ones must cast their cares upon the one who would guide them out of bondage to freedom. Even in the land of their enemies, Yahweh was still their God (v. 44). The covenant relationship *per se* knows no geographical or political boundaries. Yahweh’s loyalty is unaffected by the landedness or the landlessness of His people. He is above the circumstances of history, working for the repentance of His covenanted people so that His covenants might one day be fulfilled completely.

Repentance

The Hebrew word for “repentance” (שׁוּבוֹ) does not occur in Leviticus 26. However, the concept of repentance is found in a threefold turning of the exiled people to Yahweh:

- (1) They would confess their guilt and the guilt of their fathers (v. 40), recognizing their personal and corporate culpability.
- (2) They would humble their “uncircumcised heart” (v. 41), bringing it into subjection to the precepts of Yahweh. Submission to the divine Suzerain is required of a covenanted people. They must submit to Yahweh’s lordship. Their submission must not be mere external compliance externally in religious exercises; it must be internal and real.
- (3) They would make restitution for their guilt (v. 41), accepting the federal consequences of sin. Such restitution is not soteriological redemption. It is the evidence, not the cause, of repentance and expiation.

The impact of sin will be felt until the land has enjoyed its restitution. Exile will continue after repentance until the penalty has been fulfilled. Getting right with God does not insure immediate blessing and a solution to uncomfortable circumstances. It does guarantee a restoration to the covenant relationship whereby promised blessings might be renewed once the land is regained.

Is Israel’s repentance a precondition to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom? Fruchtenbaum responds with a clear affirmative, employing Leviticus 26:40-42 as the first piece of scriptural evidence.¹⁰⁷ The future restoration of Israel is also predicated upon the fulfillment of prophecies concerning a worldwide dispersion. The return from the Babylonian Exile does not fulfill those announcements since the people were restored from but one nation, not from among all nations. Leviticus 26:33 and 39

¹⁰⁷ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 781-91.

speak of a scattering among “the nations.” Are these references generic—merely referring to exile among Gentiles—or, are these references specifying a universal dispersion?

The restoration of Israel from its worldwide dispersion will depend upon their repentance (cf. Jer 3:11-18; Zech 12:1-10; Hosea 5:13 – 6:3). That this did not take place prior to the return from Babylonian Exile may be seen by the words of Jesus Himself 600 years later:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!
How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”¹⁰⁸

Leviticus 26 and the New Testament

The employment of verses 11-12 in 2 Corinthians 6:16 is the only concrete example of the influence of Leviticus 26 on the revelation contained in the NT.¹⁰⁹ The passage from this pericope was employed in order that Paul might better emphasize the concept of identification with God. It is unfortunate that Wenham did not deal with this NT usage in his commentary.¹¹⁰ Wenham, however, does observe that the blessings and curses of Leviticus 26 are expressed at least in principle by Christ’s teachings in His pre-cross ministry. The chastisement of Israel because of covenant disloyalty was a reality among the Jews of Christ’s day. Jesus also spoke of the eschatological reality of that chastisement. Wenham claims that “many of the horrifying judgments described in Rev. 6ff. find their original setting in the covenant curses of Lev. 26 and Deut. 28.”¹¹¹ This is true insofar as they are directly related by the Book of Revelation to the nation of Israel. Application of the covenant blessings and curses to the Gentiles is unwarranted (with the exception of the blessing for all peoples mediated by Abraham’s descendants; Gen 12:3). Technically, the covenants were made with Israel alone.¹¹²

The principles of God’s dealings with NT believers by means of reward and/or chastisement are basically the same as the principles by which He dealt with Israel under the covenants. This must not be construed, however, as meaning that the NT saints are under the same covenant relationship as Israel. The similarity is due to the same God, not to the same covenant. The very nature of God demands the federal consequences of sin be exacted from His people in all ages (cf. Gal 6:7-10; 1 Cor 11:30). The same God

¹⁰⁸ Matt 23:37-39 (NASB); the statement of Israel at the end of this passage is a quotation from Ps 118:26.

¹⁰⁹ Paul’s quotation of Lev 26:11-12 is paraphrastic. His emphasis was on the concept of identification with God (Lev 26:12b). The apostle’s omission of Lev 26:11b is a clue to his intention. That phrase does not serve any purpose in Paul’s discussion in the context of 2 Cor 6. Since he would omit Lev 26:11b (“and my soul will not despise you”), he paraphrased 11a (“I will set my dwelling place in your midst”—cf. 2 Cor 6:16, “I will dwell among them”). Having established the concept and the context, Paul proceeded to quote Lev 26:12. Elaborate discussions of conflation of OT texts, “pearl stringing,” pre-Pauline usage, and 4Q LXX Lev^a are made unnecessary by the simple reading of the NT text alongside the MT.

¹¹⁰ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 329-30, 333-34.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 334.

¹¹² Cf. the postscript of Lev 26: “These are the statutes and the ordinances and the laws which Yahweh established between himself and the Israelites on Mt. Sinai through Moses” (v. 46). This same exclusivity is expressed in Exod 19:5-6 and Rom 9:4.

provides lessons for believers in every era based upon His historical deeds (cf. Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11-13). The same God blesses in tangible ways those who are faithful (cf. 2 Cor 9:6-15). The same God is loyal even in the face of His people's disloyalty (cf. 2 Tim 2:11-13; Phil 1:6). The same God is Lord (cf. 1 Cor 12:3). The same Lord requires confession, humility, and restitution (cf. 1 John 1:9; 1 Pet 5:5-7; Phile 1-25). The same God promises that obedient service will be rewarded (cf. 1 Cor 15:58). The same God demonstrates that the believer has been delivered from bondage into a servitude that is totally unlike the bondage of fear and the curse (cf. Rom 6:12-23; Heb 2:14-15; Acts 26:18; Col 1:12-13).

The Lord who by means of Leviticus 26 revealed to Israel the continued authority and perpetuity of the Abrahamic Covenant after the ratification of the Mosaic Covenant, also confirmed that testimony in Galatians 3:17. NT believers must recognize that the authority of one covenant does not annul the authority of a previous one. Any exceptions are clearly revealed by God (e.g., Heb 7:11-14). The epistle to the Galatian churches teaches that Abrahamic faith in Yahweh was not replaced by law under Moses. Therefore, faith is still binding upon any man's relationship to the God of Abraham.