

Daily Bread with Brother Haw-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Leviticus 26: 40-46

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. Let's continue to read Leviticus chapter 26. We will read verses 40–46 today.

If the Israelites do not listen to God's words and fail to follow His commandments, statutes, and ordinances, they will face five layers of curses from God: from sickness and fruitless labor, to the heavens and earth ceasing to serve mankind, to harm inflicted on people and livestock, to being attacked by enemies and suffering from plagues and famine, and finally, to being exiled to foreign lands and scattered among the nations. These five progressively severe punishments are not God's revenge against Israel but His discipline in love. The purpose is to lead the Israelites to repentance. Therefore, God's words do not stop at curses; the curses are merely a means to bring the Israelites to repentance. After speaking of the curses, God introduces the final segment, focusing on the repentance of the Israelites and God's remembrance of them.

Verse 40: “But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me,”

When the Israelites do not listen to God's words, God will impose progressively severe punishments. However, when the Israelites confess and repent, they must not only acknowledge their own sins but also the sins of their ancestors. This signifies that sin is inherited and resides within human nature. We often think that sin occurs because of carelessness and that by being more cautious next time, we can avoid sinning. Yet, we fail to realize that sin is inherent in our nature and flows through our very bloodline. When the first ancestor, Adam, sinned for the first time, sin entered the world and came to dwell within human flesh.

Paul declares in Romans 7:18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find." Therefore, dealing with sin is not a matter of determination but a matter of life; the life inherited from Adam has already been corrupted. Here, God requires the Israelites to acknowledge their own sins and the sins of their ancestors so that they may come to understand human depravity. God then points out the sin committed by the Israelites—specifically, the sin of transgressing against Him. This refers to a particular sin, as mentioned in Leviticus 26:1: that there must be no other gods apart from the LORD, nor any idols made for themselves. Failing to regard the LORD as the one and only God is the root of all sins.

If a person has many pursuits, preferences, and affections outside of God, these people, things, and matters outside of God will gradually replace God's position and become idols. When it reaches this point, the person has transgressed against God. Because of the sin of transgressing against God, actions that violate His commandments arise. Therefore, a person must acknowledge two things: first, their sin of transgressing against God, and second, that their actions are in opposition to Him. In New Testament terms, this means acknowledging both the inner sinful nature and the outward sinful deeds. This dual nature of sin exists in everyone—an inner sinful nature and outward sinful actions.

Verse 41: “and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt,”

Because the Israelites first transgressed against God and acted in opposition to Him, the curses foretold by God would come upon them. If the Israelites did not repent in time, God's curses would progressively intensify until they reached the fifth layer of curses. Since the Israelites opposed God in their actions, God also opposed them in His actions, bringing them into the land of their enemies—subjecting them to the fifth layer of curses. God had already, through Moses in Leviticus, foretold the principles by which He operates. Later, after the Israelites

entered the promised land and established the nation of Israel several centuries later, the forewarnings in Leviticus became their history. This happened because the Israelites did not keep God's commandments and broke His covenant.

In the history of Israel, we see that the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel were taken into captivity by Assyria in 722 BC, and the remaining two tribes of the southern kingdom of Judah were taken into captivity by Babylon in 586 BC. Thus, all the Israelites were brought into the land of their enemies and scattered among the nations. Yet, in this utterly hopeless situation, God promised that if their uncircumcised hearts were humbled, He would remember them. We know that the true meaning of circumcision is the cutting off of the flesh. It was precisely because their hearts had not been circumcised, remaining led by the lusts of the flesh, that they fell into the sin of transgressing against God. If their hearts were humbled, acknowledging that they had first transgressed against and offended God, and recognizing that the punishment God imposed upon them for their sins was just, reasonable, and lawful, then if they submitted to God, He would remember them.

In the history of Old Testament Israel, there indeed appeared such a generational prayer, recorded in Daniel Chapter 9. Before the fall of the southern kingdom of Judah, in 605 BC, King Jehoiakim of Judah and some members of the royal family and nobility were taken into captivity in Babylon. Among this first group of captives was a young man named Daniel.

Due to God's care and protection, Daniel remained in Babylon throughout his life, bearing a beautiful testimony for God. Although he began as a captive, he eventually rose to become the prime minister of Babylon. Later, when the Medes and Persians united to destroy the Babylonian Empire, the Medes made Babylon their capital and established the Chaldean Empire. Daniel became the chief official of the Chaldean Empire, and by that time, he was already an elderly man in his 80s.

When Daniel read the prophecy of the prophet Jeremiah and realized that the desolation of Jerusalem would last for 70 years, he understood that, having been taken to Babylon in 605 BC, he had already been in Babylon for 67 years. With the 70-year period nearing its end, Daniel fasted, wore sackcloth, and sat in ashes,

praying and confessing his sins before God. This is recorded in Daniel Chapter 9. I believe this is one of the most touching and God-moving prayers in the Old Testament. If the saints have time, they should carefully read this prayer. You can refer to Daniel 9:5 in your daily Bible reading: "We have sinned and done wrong, we have acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances." In his prayer, Daniel clearly pointed out that the Israelites were taken into captivity because they had violated God's commandments and ordinances.

Then in Daniel 9:8, it says, "O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You." We see that Daniel not only prayed for himself but also interceded for the king, the leaders, and the ancestors of Israel, coming before God to confess their sins. Then in Daniel 9:11, it says, "Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore, the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us because we have sinned against Him."

By this verse, we should recognize that Daniel was well-acquainted with Leviticus 26, especially the section concerning God's curses, and he acknowledged that the sufferings Israel experienced were what they deserved. Therefore, he fasted, wore sackcloth, and sat in ashes, earnestly confessing and repenting on behalf of the nation of Israel. He also deeply believed that God still loved the people of Israel and would remain faithful to the covenant He made with their ancestors. Daniel's prayer was based on verse 42, as he appealed to God's faithfulness to His promises.

Verse 42: "then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land."

When the Israelites confess and repent, God will remember the covenant He made with their ancestors. In the Bible, when referring to the covenant God made with the ancestors, the order is usually from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob, because God's covenant with Israel began with the calling of Abraham, was established through Isaac's inheritance, and was realized through Jacob's life of transformation.

However, in this verse, the order is reversed, starting with Jacob, then Isaac, and finally Abraham. Perhaps when people find themselves in captivity, their restoration must begin with Jacob's experience, meaning the work of the Holy Spirit must first bring transformation in the individual, leading to practical change. In this change, they will then inherit the blessings given to Isaac, and only in the end will they be restored to the calling God gave to Abraham, that all nations might be blessed through him.

Here, in addition to the covenant God made with the ancestors, it is also specifically mentioned that God will remember the land. In chapters 23-25, we read about the regulations for the feasts, where the Sabbath and the seven annual feasts were established for people to find rest, and the Sabbatical year was set for the land to rest. Only when both the people and the land rest, can the Year of Jubilee be brought about, a time when all people are set free, returning to their own families and restoring their inheritance. After the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they continually neglected to observe the Sabbatical year, and as a result, the land could not find rest before God. Therefore, God remembered the land and sought restitution from Israel, granting the land 70 years of rest.

Verse 43: “The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; they will accept their guilt, because they despised My judgments and because their soul abhorred My statutes.”

When the Israelites were taken captive to Assyria and Babylon, they left the land of Canaan, and naturally, the land became desolate. From a human perspective, the land was desolate, but for the land itself, it was only when there were no people disturbing it that it could enjoy its rest. Dear brothers and sisters, humans are selfish and short-sighted, always measuring things from their own interests. God is the Creator and Sovereign of the universe, and His commandments, statutes, and judgments are the laws that allow all things to achieve harmony and sustainability. People tend to expand their boundaries and exceed God's laws, which is the result of the self-exaggeration found in human sinful nature. Only when the sinful nature

of man is dealt with can there be peace, harmony, and the beautiful scene where all things coexist.

God allowed the Israelites to be taken captive to foreign lands in order for the land to enjoy its rest. In this process, God also wanted the Israelites to recognize their own sin, the sin of offending God, and understand that the punishment for their iniquity was what they rightly deserved. Because they had despised God's laws in their hearts, they had also shown contempt for God's statutes in their actions.

Verse 44: "Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. "

God knows the thoughts of the Israelites. Although they had rejected God's laws and despised His statutes, and though He allowed them to be taken captive to enemy lands, God did not loathe them, nor would He abandon them. He would not destroy Israel nor break His covenant with them. God is a covenant-keeping God who shows mercy. He has always been waiting for the Israelites to return to Him.

In the Old Testament, after Israel was defeated and taken captive to Babylon, through Daniel's intercessory prayer and repentance for the entire nation, Israel experienced a return. This led to the eventual restoration of Jerusalem in three stages after the 70 years of exile: the rebuilding of the temple, and the reconstruction of Jerusalem's walls. This was the short-term fulfillment of the prophecy in that passage.

After Daniel's prayer, God gave him the great prophecy of the 70 weeks (70×7), where the first 69 weeks have already been fulfilled, including the coming of God's Son, Jesus Christ, who completed the redemption. However, due to Israel's unbelief, in AD 70, Jerusalem was once again destroyed, and the Second Temple was burned. The Israelites were scattered among the nations again. Yet, God did not destroy Israel or break His covenant with their ancestors. In 1948, the miraculous restoration of the nation of Israel took place, and the direction of world

events is now heading toward the final seven years prophesied in Daniel, which will be the ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy. Today, God's treatment of Israel remains unchanged.

Verse 45: “But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord”

Because God remembered the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, where they were slaves. God did not want Israel to remain in slavery; He desired to be their God. In Leviticus 26, God's blessings and curses for Israel have already been partially fulfilled several times throughout Israel's history. However, the full and complete fulfillment of this chapter will not occur until the second coming of Jesus Christ, when it will be fully realized.

For New Testament saints, although the principles of blessings and curses still apply, they are even more blessed than the Israelites. This is because not only do we have the Bible, which is the full word of God, but we also have the indwelling Holy Spirit, who writes God's words on the tablet of our hearts. The Holy Spirit constantly reminds us to desire the Lord's word, to meditate on it, and to live it out in our daily lives. This makes the New Testament saints even more privileged, as we have both the written word and the living presence of the Spirit to guide and empower us.

Verse 46: “These are the statutes and judgments and laws which the Lord made between Himself and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.”

The term "statutes" in the Chinese Union Version refers to God's law. The statutes, laws, and commandments were given to the Israelites by God at Mount Sinai through Moses. These laws are recorded in the Bible and are also intended for us,

New Testament saints. God desires that His people listen to His word and obey His commandments, statutes, and ordinances, as doing so will lead to a life full of blessings. If we happen to stumble and fall into difficulties, we must recognize that this is God's discipline, a reminder for us to repent quickly. As long as we are willing to turn back, God, full of grace and mercy, will always accept us again.

Let's pray together: Lord, thank You. Through the blessings and curses in chapter 26, help us understand that we must never take Your word lightly. Through our daily Bible reading, may Your word dwell richly in our hearts and frequently remind us to live out a beautiful testimony as Your children in our daily lives. We ask You to grant each of us a humble heart, so that when we fall into trouble, we can quickly reflect, confess, and repent. You are faithful and, for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, You will forgive us. Bless our daily lives, we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

