

Disciplined – or disciplined? or, The fruits of obedience & disobedience

... He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. — HEBREWS 12:10

Analysis

A. (26:1-13) Future foretold – the blessings of obedience

Chapter 26 is structured very carefully. The key formula, used in several previous chapters of this Holiness Code, now appears once again: "I am the LORD your God" (vv. 1, 2, 13, 44, 45). As in chap. 19, here again we have a double formula at the beginning (vv. 1-2) and at the end (vv. 44-45) ... The largest section, by far, is that on the curses (vv. 14-39). The curses divide themselves into 6 parts, usually with the introductory clause of "if [after all this] you will not listen to me ..." (vv. 14, 18, 21, 23, 27), and the accompanying threat of "I will punish you for your sins 7 times over" (vv. 16, 18, 21, 24, 28). ... 4 foundational commandments (vv. 1-2), 6 blessings for obedience (vv. 3-13), 6 threatened curses for disobedience (vv. 14-39), promise of future restoration (vv. 40-45), and summary (v. 46). [Kaiser 1178]

[26:1-2] The opening verses summarize the first 4 commandments of the Decalogue and, therefore, rehearse in a nutshell a person's whole duty to God. Verse 1 prohibits all forms of idolatry because the Lord is God. The Hebrew word for "idols" in this first verse is ... [elilim], which technically means "nothings," "zeroes." Surely, the term alone is enough to drown the concept of any rivals to the living God with contempt. [Kaiser 1178]

[26:1,2] The Lord seeks our whole heart, our unaverted eye, our entire soul. "No idols," says he; any objects that sit on the throne of our heart, whether of silver and gold, or of flesh and blood, or of earth's common objects, like houses and lands, riches and honour, all these are [allulim, nothings], "things of nought" – utterly despicable in his view. ... Set up no rival, none that approaches near to God; not even father or mother, wife or child. And in order to cherish this state of soul, his Sabbaths must be kept and his sanctuary revered; the sinner must employ himself, amid holy scenes and at holy times, in bathing his soul in the love of God. If any one

"... the sinner must employ himself, amid holy scenes and at holy times, in bathing his soul in the love of God. If any one neglects the time set apart by God for this end – "the Sabbath" – how can such a one ever expect to feel steeped in the holy awe and love that is due to the Lord?"

A structure of 6's & 7's

neglects the time set apart by God for this end – "the Sabbath" – how can such a one ever expect to feel steeped in the holy awe and love that is due to the Lord? When a man goes to the region of the Alps, he requires time to see the relative magnitude of objects; he does not at one glance see their immense height and sublime elevation. It is often days ere he arrive at a proper estimate, because he is now in a new and unfamiliar region. So it is with Divine realities; you must spend time,

continuously and uninterruptedly, in order to have your soul truly affected. In like manner, also, the sanctuary must be frequented. It is the Lord's ordinance. Would you have refrained from taking the fruit of the forbidden tree, as a test of obedience, who will not reverence the sanctuary? Where is your childlike submission of will? Nay, where is your love to your Father, if you go not to the spot where he meets with his own so specially? All declension and decay may be said to be begun wherever we see these two ordinances despised – the Sabbath and the sanctuary. They are the outward fence around the inward love commanded by ver. 1. [Bonar 472-73]



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"All declension and decay may be said to be begun wherever we see these two ordinances despised – the Sabbath and the sanctuary. They are the outward fence around the inward love commanded ..."

[26:10] It was that quality of punctuality extended over a whole universe which seemed so wonderful to the Psalmist: 'The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season.' God's machinery for distribution is perfect, and its very perfection, with the constancy of the resulting blessings, robs Him of His praise, and hinders our gratitude. By assiduity He loses admiration. 'Things grown common lose their dear delight.' 'If in His gifts and benefits He were more sparing and close-handed,' said Luther, 'we should learn to be thankful.' But let us learn it by the continuity of our joys, that we may not need to be taught it by their interruption ... [Maclaren ii 286]

[26:10ff] If ever men complain of languishing vitality in their religious emotions, or of a stinted supply of food for their truest self, it is their own fault, not His. He means that there should be no parentheses of famine in our Christian life. It is not His doing if times of torpor alternate with seasons of quick energy and joyful fullness of life. So far as He is concerned the flow is uninterrupted, and if it come to us in jets and spurts as from an intermittent well, it is because our own fault has put some obstacle to choke the channel and dam out His Spirit from our spirits. We cannot too firmly hold, or too profoundly feel, that an unbroken continuity of supplies of His grace – unbroken and bright as a sunbeam reaching in one golden shaft all the way from the sun to the earth – is His purpose concerning us. Here, in this highest region, the thought of our text is most absolutely true; for He who gives is ever pouring forth His own self for us to take, and there is no limit to our reception but our capacity and our desire; nor any reason for a moment's break in our possession of love, righteousness, peace, but our withdrawal of our souls from beneath the Niagara of His grace. As long as we keep our poor vessels below that constant downpour they will be full. ... it remains true that we are here to learn, that our education is to go on all our days, and that here on earth it can only be carried out by our parting with the old store, which may have become musty by long lying in the granaries, to make room for the new, just gathered in the ripened field. The great central truths of God in Christ are to be kept for ever; but we shall come to grasp them in their fullness

only by joyfully welcoming every fresh access of clearer light which falls upon them; and gladly laying aside our inadequate thoughts of God's permanent revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ, to house and garner in heart and spirit the fuller knowledge which it may please Him to impart. [Maclaren ii 287,291]

[26:13] The history of Israel is a parable and a prophecy as well as a history. The great central word of the New Testament has been drawn from it, viz. 'redemption,' i.e. a buying out of bondage. The Hebrew slaves in Egypt were 'delivered.' The deliverance made them a nation. God acquired them for Himself, and they became His servants. The great truths of the gospel are all there. ... When Jesus promised freedom through the truth, the Jews indignantly spurned the offer with the proud boast, which the presence of a Roman garrison in Jerusalem should have made to stick in their throats: 'We were never in bondage to any man.' A like hardy shutting of eyes to plain facts characterises the attitude of multitudes to the Christian view of man's condition. Jesus answered the Jews by the deep saying: 'He that committeth sin is the servant of sin.' A man fancies himself showing off his freedom by throwing off the restraints of morality or law, and by 'doing as he likes,' but he is really showing his servitude. Self-will looks like liberty, but it is serfdom. The libertine is a slave. [Maclaren 291-92]

Are we guilty of
"withdrawal of our
souls from beneath the
Niagara of His grace"?

B. (26:14-46) A less favoured future gets much more space

Kidner points to what he terms "a controlled crescendo of divine wrath" in this section. The fourfold repetition of '7 times' and the lengthening paragraphs are among the literary means to emphasize both the advancing degrees of disaster, and at the same time the forbearance of God in postponing final judgment.

[26:21-22] Instead of man's original lordship over the creatures, lo! the beasts of the field rise up against rebellious man. This strange foe advances to their dwellings; and the cattle grazing before their door, and their little children playing on the grass, are devoured before their eyes by this new assailant. [Bonar 482]

Fruit of man's rebellion
– a rebellious creation

[26:23-25] The sword goes through the land! Instead of peace and safety, the blood of Israel is shed by violent hands. The blood that ratified their covenant with God had been despised; therefore, lo! their, own blood must be shed to avenge the broken covenant. [Bonar 483]

[26:29] This is the wrath of the Lamb! Israel felt this fury. In the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, of which the siege of Samaria in former days was a feeble prototype, mothers ate their children, according to Lam 4:10; and in their final siege by Titus, the same scene of horrid and terrific despair was exhibited. It seems a type of what shall take place in hell – all natural ties for ever broken; and nearest relations reproaching and accusing and tormenting each other, finding no other food but to upbraid others with their ruin. [Bonar 485]

[26:30] The word used for the "idols," [gillulim], is the worst word imaginable in Hebrew. Ezekiel used this word 39 times as he drew a parallel between human

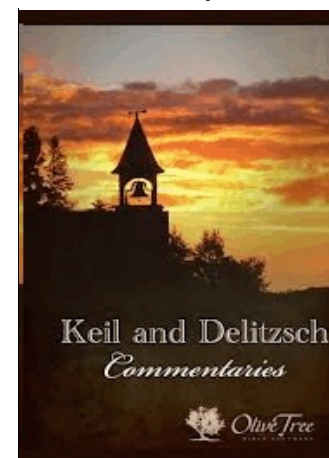
excrement and the form of the idol images. It is the most contemptuous term possible in the Hebrew language. [Kaiser 1181]

[26:31] Their cities lie waste at this day, and their "sanctuaries," i.e. their temple with its courts, and there are no sweet-smelling offerings presented to the Lord in Judah's land. No one can discover more than the mere foundations of ancient edifices, and few even of these. Jerusalem's walls and temple exist only in fragments of foundation-stones; Bethel is a field overspread with demolished walls; Samaria's foundations, and a few of her shattered columns, are all that remain to her of former glory. No one has found Tirzah. Hundreds of ruined towns can be discovered by the name still lingering over the ruins, but by that alone. Shiloh is now Seilwan, and presents no dwelling or town, but only a few ruins. [Bonar 486, writing 150 years ago, but though now archaeology has dug up much of this buried past, it is still true that most of the ancient sacred sites are dead – even if now unburied!]

[26:34,35] It is evident from this, that the keeping of the Sabbaths and sabbatical years was suspended when the apostasy of the nation increased – a result which could be clearly foreseen in consequence of the inward dislike of a sinner to the commandments of the holy God, and which is described in 2 Chronicles 26:21 as having actually occurred. [Keil ii 476]

[26:40-42] "I am Jehovah;" therefore, he remembers his covenant with Abraham. As he manifested that name on the first exodus (Exod 6:3), though for a long time before he had shewn only his all-sufficiency, so shall he manifest it by his acts at the final exodus of Israel from all the lands of their dispersion. Here we have, so to speak, a permanent fact, or truth, on which to rest the proof of Israel's restoration to their own land. It is this: the covenant with their fathers contained a grant of the land; and the God of Israel is Jehovah. Whenever Israel serves the Lord, Israel obtains all that that grant contains. If they confess, then, lo! they must return home also. Israel's repentance and Israel's restoration to their old estates go together. When, as in Micah 7:9, the Jews confess and accept, or admit as righteous, what they suffer, then their restoration is at hand. It is true, they may return before they repent; but the land is not theirs until they repent. And I think this is the meaning of Ezekiel 36:37. "I shall yet FOR THIS be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." It is Israel's prayer to the Lord, when repentant, to settle them in their land and restore to the land its fruitfulness. See the whole chapter. V. 42 is very remarkable in the Hebrew. It is literally, "I will remember my covenant, Jacob," &c. There is no "with." May God not be speaking here to these patriarchs whose God He is at this moment, and saying, "I will remember my covenant, O Jacob, made with thee! and my covenant, O Isaac, with thee; and will remember my covenant, O Abraham, with thee, and the land wherein thou wast a stranger?" The land, too, wherein his own Son was a Man of Sorrows – can that land ever be forgotten? The cross was there; shall not the throne be there too? [Bonar 490-91]

[26:42] "I will remember my covenant, O Jacob; my covenant, O Isaac; my



Which came first?
Sabbath neglect – or
social decline?

[26:42] "I will remember my covenant, O Jacob; my covenant, O Isaac; my

covenant, O Abraham." But in the biblical context, remembering is more than a cognitive activity; remembering is equivalent to doing. [Kaiser 1181]

C. (27:1-34) **APPENDIX: Legislation regarding vows – Liberty of sacrifice & simplicity (the voluntary response to the liberty we have in God's jubilee system)**

[27:28-29] For we must, in addition, recall the fact that these corrupt communities, which by this law of the ban were devoted to utter destruction, were in no out-of-the-way corner of the world, but on one of its chief highways. The Phoenicians,

for instance, more than any people of that time, were the navigators and travellers of the age; so that from Canaan as a centre this horrible moral pestilence was inevitably carried by them hither and thither, a worse than the "black death," to the very extremities of the known world. Have we then so certainly good reason to call in question the righteousness of the law which here ordains that no person thus devoted should be ransomed, but be surely put to death? Rather are we inclined to see in this law of the theocratic kingdom, and its execution in Canaan – so often

**The choice:
Canaanite 'genocide'
– or global
corruption, spiritual
pandemic**

held up as an illustration of the awful cruelty of the old theocratic regime – not only a conspicuous vindication of the righteousness and justice of God, but a no less illustrious manifestation of His mercy; of His mercy, not merely to Israel, but to the whole human race of that age, who because of this deadly infection of moral evil had otherwise again everywhere sunk to such unimaginable depths of depravity as to have required a second flood for the cleansing of the world. [Kellogg 558]

[27:28] Sacrifice was the heart of OT worship, and Leviticus gives more precise directions about sacrificial procedures than any other part of Scripture, and also lists the occasions when animals had to be offered (chs. 1-7, 12-17, 22-23). ... this chapter in effect recapitulates and reminds us of the great themes that have engaged our attention in the rest of the book. Lev. 27 points out that holiness is more than a matter of divine call and correct ritual. Its attainment requires the total consecration of a man's life to God's service. It involves giving yourself, your family, and all your possessions to God.

"Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." [Wenham 343]

[27:30-33] What Abraham gave to Melchisedec, and Jacob vowed at Bethel, has ever appeared most natural for men to set aside for the Lord regularly – the tenth of all. Among the Israelites, there were several kinds of tithe, and yet all were cheerfully paid; the tenth for the Lord, paid to the Levites (Num 18:21), and the next tenth, consecrated and feasted on at Jerusalem, or given away to the poor (Deut 12:6, and 28:29). [Bonar 507]

[27:32] Our conclusion must be that if a tenth was the minimal amount under the law, how can Christians do any less? Perhaps we should consider not how little but how much we can give, seeing how richly blessed we are in

**But what of the tithe?
Wasn't Israel obligated
to give 10%?
Shouldn't Christians do
at least as much?**

Christ. [Kaiser 1191]

D. **EXCURSUS: Leviticus 26 as history as well as prophecy**

The fundamental importance and instructiveness of this prophecy is evident from the fact that all later predictions concerning the fortunes of Israel are but its more detailed exposition and application to successive historical conditions. Still more evident is its profound significance when we recall to mind the fact, disputed by none, that not only is it an epitome of all later prophecy of Holy Scripture concerning Israel, but, no less truly, an epitome of Israel's history. So strictly true is this that we may accurately describe the history of that nation, from the days of Moses until now, as but the translation of this chapter from the language of prediction into that of history.

**Leviticus 26
– framework of all
biblical prophecy,
Israel's future history**

The facts which illustrate this statement are so familiar that one scarcely needs to refer to them. The numerous visitations in the days of the Judges, when again and again the people were given into the hands of their enemies for their sins, and so often as then they repented, were again and again delivered; the heavier judgments of later days, first in the days of the earlier kings, and afterwards culminating in the captivity of the ten tribes, following the siege and capture of Samaria, 721 B.C.; and still later, the terrible siege and capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, 586 B.C., to the horrors of which the Lamentations of Jeremiah bear most sorrowful witness; what were all these events, with others of lesser importance, but an historical unfolding of this 26th chapter of Leviticus?

And how, since Old Testament days, this prophecy has been continually illustrated in Israel's history, is, or should be, familiar to all. As apostasy has succeeded to apostasy, judgment has followed upon judgment. To a Nebuchadnezzar succeeded an Antiochus Epiphanes; and, after the Greco-Syrian judgment, then, following the supreme national crime of the rejection and crucifixion of their promised Messiah, came the Roman captivity, the most terrible of all; a judgment continued even until now in the 1800 years of Israel's exile from the land of the covenant, and their scattering among the nations – 1800 years of tragic suffering, such as no other nation has ever known, or, knowing, has yet survived; sufferings which are still exhibited before the eyes of all the world today in the bitter experiences of the four millions of Jews in the Empire of the Czar, and the persecutions of Anti-Semitism in other lands.

**A view of Israel from
1890, just before the
return home – and the
holocaust**

Existing, rather than living, under such conditions for centuries, as a natural result, the Jewish people became few in number, as here predicted; having been reduced from not less than seven or eight millions in the days of the kingdom, to a minimum, about two hundred years ago, of not more than three millions. And, strangest of all, throughout this time the once fertile land has lain desolate, for the Gentiles have never settled in it in any great number; and in place of a population of 500 to the square mile in the days of Solomon, we find now only a few hundred thousand miserable people, and the most of the land, for lack of cultivation, in such a condition that nothing can easily exceed its desolation. And when we have said all

this, and much more that might be said without exaggeration, we have but simply testified that vv. 31-34 of this chapter have in the fullest possible sense become historical fact. For it was written (vv. 32-34): "I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And you will I scatter among the nations, and I will draw out the sword after you: and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths."

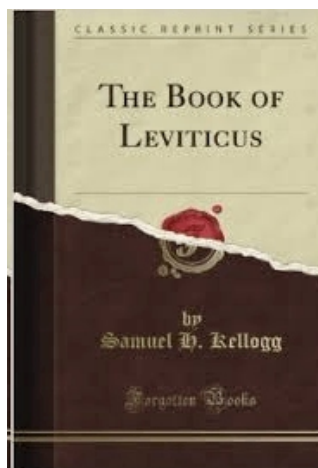
**The land finally keeps
sabbath – for 70
years, then 1800!**

These facts make this chapter to be an apologetic of prime importance. It is this, because we have here evidence of foreknowledge, and therefore of the supernatural inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God in the prophecy here recorded. The facts cannot be adequately explained, either on the supposition of fortunate guessing or of accidental coincidence. It was not indeed impossible to forecast on natural grounds that Israel would become corrupt, or that, if so, they should

experience disaster in consequence of their moral depravation. For God has not one law for Israel and another for other nations. Nor does the argument rest on the details of these threatened judgments, as consisting in the sword, famine, and pestilence; for other nations have experienced these calamities, though, indeed, few in equal measure with Israel; and of these one has a natural dependence on another.

But setting aside these elements of the prophecy, as of less apologetic significance, two particulars yet remain in which this predicted experience has been unique, and antecedently to the event in so high degree improbable, that we can reasonably think here neither of shrewd human forecast nor of chance agreement of prediction and fulfilment. The one is the predicted survival of exiled Israel as a nation in the land of their enemies, their indestructibility throughout centuries of unequalled suffering; the other, the extraordinary fact that their land, so rich and fertile, which was at that time and for centuries afterwards one of the principal highways of the world's commerce and travel, the coveted possession of many nations from a remote antiquity, should during the whole period of Israel's banishment remain comparatively unoccupied and untilled.

As regards the former particular, we may search history in vain for a similar phenomenon. Here is a people who, at their best, as compared with many other nations, such as the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Romans, were few in number and in material resources; who now have been scattered from their land for centuries, crushed and oppressed always, in a degree and for a length of time never experienced by any other people; yet never merging in the nations with whom they were mingled, or losing in the least their peculiar racial characteristics and distinct national identity. This, although now for a long time matter of history, was yet, *á priori*, so improbable that all history records no other instance of the kind; and yet all this had to be if those words of ver.



44 were to prove true: "When they be in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly." With abundant reason has Professor Christlieb referred to this fact as an unanswerable apologetic, thus: "We point to the people of Israel as a perennial historical miracle. The continued existence of this nation up to the present day, the preservation of its national peculiarities throughout thousands of years, in spite of all dispersion and oppression, remains so unparalleled a phenomenon, that without the special providential preparation of God, and His constant interference and protection, it would be impossible for us to explain it. For where else is there a people over which such judgments have passed, and yet not ended in destruction?"

No less remarkable and significant is the long-continued depopulation of the land of Israel. For it was and is by nature a richly fertile land; and at the time of this prediction – whether it be assigned to an earlier or a later period – it was upon one of the chief commercial and military routes of the world, and its possession has thus been an object of ambition to all the dominant nations of history. Surely, one would have expected that if Israel should be cast out of such a land, it would at once and always be occupied by others who should cultivate its proverbially productive soil. But it was not to be so, for it had been otherwise written. And yet it seems as if it had scarcely been possible that through all these later centuries of the history of Christendom, the land could have thus lain desolate, except for the so momentous discovery in 1497 of the Cape route to India, by which event – which no one could in so remote days have well anticipated – the tide of commerce with the East was turned away from Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, to the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans; so that the land of Israel was left, like a city made to stand solitary in a desert by the shifting of the channel of a river; and its predicted desolation thus went on to receive its most complete, consummate, and now long-realised fulfilment.

**Israel
"a perennial
historical miracle"**

**Critical arguments have
no effect on the
evidence of inspiration**

So, then, stands the case. It is truly difficult to understand how one can fairly escape the inference from these facts, namely, that they imply in this chapter such a prescience of the future as is not possible to man, and therefore demonstrate that the Spirit of God must, in the deepest and truest sense, have been the author of these predictions of the future of the chosen people and their land.

And it is of the very first importance, with reference to the controversies of our day regarding this question, that we note the fact that the argument is of such a nature that it is not in the least dependent upon the date that any may have assigned to the origin of this chapter. Even though we should, with Graf and Wellhausen, attribute its composition to exilic or post-exilic times, it would still remain true that the chapter contained unmistakable predictions regarding the nation and the land; predictions which, if fulfilled, no doubt, in a degree, in the days of the Babylonian exile and the return, were yet to receive a fulfilment far more minute, exhaustive, and impressive, in centuries which then were still in a far distant future. But if this be granted, it is plain that these facts impose a limitation upon the conclusions of criticism. That only is true science which takes into view all the facts with respect to any phenomenon for which one seeks to account; and in this case the facts which are

to be explained by any theory, are not merely peculiarities of style and vocabulary, etc., but also this phenomenon of a demonstrably predictive element in the chapter; a phenomenon which requires for its explanation the assumption of a supernatural inspiration as one of the factors in its authorship. But if this is so, how can we reconcile with such a Divine inspiration any theory which makes the last statement of the chapter, that "these are the statutes which the Lord made ... in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses," to be untrue, and the preceding "laws" to be thus, in plain language, a forgery of exilic or post-exilic times?

The Promised Restoration

26:40-45.

"And they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, in their trespass which they trespassed against Me, and also that because they have walked contrary unto Me, I also walked contrary unto them, and brought them into the land of their enemies: if then their uncircumcised heart be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember My covenant with Jacob; and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them; and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they rejected My judgments, and their soul abhorred My statutes. And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God: but I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord."

This closing section of this extraordinary chapter yet remains to be considered. It is the most remarkable of all, whether from a historical or a religious point of view. It declares that even under so extreme visitations of Divine wrath, and howsoever long Israel's stubborn rebellion and impenitence should continue, yet the nation should never become extinct and pass away. Very impressive are the words (vv. 43-45) which emphasise this prediction: "The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them; and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they rejected My judgments, and their soul abhorred My statutes. And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God: but I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord."

As to what is included in this promise of everlasting covenant mercy, we are told explicitly (ver. 40) that as the final result of these repeated and long-continued judgments, the children of Israel "shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, in their trespass which they trespassed" against the Lord. Also they will acknowledge (ver. 41) that all these calamities have been sent upon them by the

**"I will remember
the land ... I will
not reject them ...
I am Yahweh
their God"**

Lord; that it is because they have walked contrary unto Him that He has also walked contrary unto them, and brought them into the land of their enemies. And then follows the great promise (vv. 41, 42): "If then their uncircumcised heart be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember My covenant with Jacob; and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land."

These words are very full and explicit. That they have had already a partial and inadequate fulfilment in the restoration from Babylon, and the spiritual quickening by which it was accompanied, is not to be denied. But one only needs to refer to the covenants to which reference is made, and especially the covenant with Abraham, as recorded in the book of Genesis, to see that by no possibility can that Babylonian restoration be said to have exhausted this prophecy. Since those earlier days Israel has again forsaken the Lord, and committed the greatest of all their national sins in the rejection and crucifixion of the promised Messiah; and therefore, again, according to the threat of the earlier part of this chapter, they have been cast out of their land and scattered among the nations, and the land, again, for centuries has been left a desolation.

But for all this, God's covenant with Israel has not lapsed, nor, as we are here formally assured, can it ever lapse. To imagine, with some, that because of the new dispensation of grace to the Gentiles which has come in, therefore the promises of this covenant have become void, is a mistake which is fatal to all right understanding of the prophetic word. As for the spiritual blessing of true repentance and a national turning unto God, Zechariah, after the Babylonian captivity, represents the prediction as yet to have a larger and far more blessed fulfilment, in a day which, beyond all controversy, has never yet risen on the world. For it is written (Zech. 12:8-14; 13:1): "In that day ... I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look unto Me whom they have pierced: and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn ... all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." And that this great promise, which implies by its very terms the previous "piercing" of the Messiah, is still valid for the nation in the new dispensation, is expressly testified by the Apostle Paul, who formally teaches, with regard to Israel, that "God did not cast off His people which He foreknew;" that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance;" and that therefore the days are surely coming when "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. xi. 2, 29, 26).

And while nothing is said in this chapter of Leviticus as to the relation of this future repentance of Israel to the establishment of the kingdom of God, we only speak according to the express teaching both of the later prophets and of the apostles, when we add that we are not to think of this covenant of God concerning Israel as of little consequence to our faith and hope as Christians. For we are plainly taught, with regard to the present exclusion and impenitence of Israel (Rom. 11:15), that "the receiving of them" again shall be as "life from the dead;" which, again, is only what long before had been declared in the Old Testament (Psalm 102:13-16); that when God shall arise and have mercy upon Zion, and the set time to have pity upon her

***"God did not cast off
His people whom He
foreknew"***

**– Moses' faith, the
Psalmist's, and the
faith of Paul**

shall come, the nations shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth His glory.

And while we may grant that the matter is in itself of less moment, it is yet of importance to observe that the very covenant which promises spiritual mercy to the people, as explicitly assures us (ver. 42) that, when Israel confesses its sin, God "will remember the land" as well as the people. All that has been said for the present and unchangeable validity of the former part of this promise, is of necessity true for this latter part also. To affirm the former, and on that ground maintain the faith and expectation of the future repentance of Israel, and yet deny the latter part of this promise, which is no less verbally explicit, regarding the land of Israel, is an inconsistency of interpretation which is as astonishing as it is common. For the restoration of the scattered nation to their land is repeatedly promised, as here, in connection with, and yet in clear distinction from, their conversion, by both the pre- and post-exilian prophets. And if, for reasons not hard to discover, the promise concerning the land is not in so many words repeated in the New Testament, its future fulfilment is yet, to say the least, distinctly assumed in the prediction of Christ (Luke 21:24), that Israel, because of their rejection of Him, should be "led captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem be trodden down of the Gentiles," – not for ever, but only – "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Surely these words of our Lord imply that, whenever these "times of the Gentiles" shall have run their course, their present domination over the Holy City and the Holy Land shall end.

Nor is such a restoration of Israel to their land, with all that it implies, inconsistent, as some have urged, with the spirit and principles of the Gospel. Many a Gentile nation is greatly favoured of the Lord, and, as one mark of that favour, is permitted to abide in peace and prosperity in their own land. Why should it be any more alien to the spirit of the Gospel that penitent Israel should be blessed in like manner, and, upon their turning unto the Lord, also, like many other nations, be permitted to dwell in peace and safety in that land which lies almost empty and desolate for them until this day? And if it be urged that, admitting this interpretation, we shall also be obliged to admit that Israel is in the future to be exalted to a position of pre-eminence among the nations, which, again, is inconsistent, it is said, with the principles of the Gospel dispensation, we must again deny this last assertion, and for a similar reason. If not inconsistent with the Gospel that the British nation, for example, should today [1890s] hold a position of exceptional eminence and world-wide influence among the nations, how can it be inconsistent with the Gospel that Israel, when repentant before God, should be in like manner exalted of Him to national eminence and glory?

While in itself this question may be of little consequence, yet in another aspect it is of no small moment that we steadfastly affirm the permanent validity of this part of the promise of the covenant with Israel as given in this chapter. For it is not too much to say that the logic and the exegesis which make the promise to have become void with regard to Israel's land, if accepted, would equally justify one in affirming the abrogation of the promise of Israel's final repentance, if the exigencies of any eschatological theory should seem to require it. Either both parts of this promise in ver. 42 are still valid, or neither is now valid; and if either is still in force, the other is in force also. These two, the promise concerning the people, and the promise concerning the land, stand or fall together. [Kellogg 528-540]

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