

The Law



Week Fourteen

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
Leviticus 26

THE GOLDEN BOX

Leviticus places a high value on obeying the Ten Commandments, teaching us why we need them and how to apply them to our lives. It was the written result of God speaking to Moses from the tabernacle of meeting (Lev. 1:1), which contained the ark of the covenant.

God had chosen Israel to represent Him to the world, and He had placed His sanctuary in the midst of their camp. This small but beautiful tent building was divided into two rooms: the Holy Place and Most Holy Place. God's presence dwelled in the latter and hovered over the ark of the covenant, inside which lay the original Ten Commandments, written in stone by God Himself (Exod. 31:18; 32:16; 40:20). Placing the Ten Commandments at the very center of Israel's place of worship shows that God's law is central to understanding the sanctuary and the message of Leviticus.

Leviticus 26 begins with God reminding Israel of the first four commandments, which concern our relationship with Him (vv. 1, 2). We're often taught that having a relationship with God includes prayer, Bible study, and witnessing, and while it most certainly does, Leviticus adds obedience. Here is a list of the blessings God promises to everyone who is willing to "walk in My statutes and keep My commandments" (v. 3): rain for crops, productive harvests, protection from danger, peace in the land, victory over enemies, fertility, and freedom from oppression (vv. 4–13). The best blessing is arguably the final one, found in verse 12, where God says, "I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people." Those who obediently walk in God's law of love walk with Him!



inScribe

Write out Leviticus 26 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out Leviticus 26:40–46. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map it.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

How has Leviticus pointed out your sins?

How has Leviticus given your practical instruction on how to treat others and God?



Read more at
www.inversebible.org/stw14-3

TWO FUNCTIONS

Levitical laws can be categorized into three types of laws: First, there were the ceremonial laws, which were represented in the sacrifices that pointed to Jesus' coming (Lev. 7:37). These laws also included the feast days, which ended at the cross.

Second, there were the civil laws, or "judgments." These were based on the Ten Commandments and were used by Israel's judges to convict or acquit in Israel's court of law. Unlike the moral law, which was written by God Himself and kept in the ark of the covenant, these civil laws were written by Moses and placed beside it (Exod. 40:20; Deut. 31:26). They made the application of the Ten Commandments very practical so they could be used in Israel's legal system.

Third and most important was the moral law, known as the Ten Commandments, that identified sin (Lev. 4:1, 2) and what loving God and others should look like. God wrote this law on stone with His own finger and it is therefore eternal and unchangeable. This is the law we will focus on in our study this week. God's Ten Commandments can be read in Exodus 20:1–17. Ecclesiastes 12:13 says obeying this moral law is the "whole duty of man" (KJV). In other words, it isn't just Israel's duty to obey God's moral law; it's all humanity's duty as well (cf. Rom. 3:31; James 2:10–12).

Here are the two vital functions of God's moral law: First, by pointing out our sins, the moral law leads us to feel our need of repentance and a Savior (Rom. 3:20; 7:7; 1 John 3:4). In the first seven chapters of Leviticus we learn that when an Israelite realized he or she had broken the moral law of God, they were to make a sacrifice to God at the sanctuary so that they would be forgiven and restored to right standing with the Lord. The law clearly had a very important gospel function in Leviticus. The apostle Paul put it like this: "The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). Although the law itself provides no solution for sin, it does function as a mirror (James 1:23). It helps us see ourselves as God sees us.

The second function of the moral law is to show people how to treat God and each other. In fact, Leviticus goes out of its way to expound on the moral law to make it practical for everyday life. It's true that there are some laws (i.e., civil or judgment laws) that do not fully apply to us today since they were created specifically for the nation of Israel, but even these laws contain principles found in the Ten Commandments that we can learn from.

Faith in Jesus and His righteousness is no excuse for breaking God's commandments. The apostle Paul encourages God's people to uphold His law: "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish [uphold] the law" (Rom. 3:31). Without the Ten Commandments, Leviticus' existence makes no sense—and neither does that of the gospel, for that matter. After all, if there is no law, there is no sin, and if there is no sin, there is no need of a Savior.

TEN PROMISES

There are a lot of questions that arise regarding God's law in Leviticus, the most common of which is how to tell which laws are obsolete and which are still relevant to us today. This is a great question, and the answer is quite simple: If the New Testament supports it, it is still in effect today. For example, since the New Testament teaches that animal sacrifices ended with the death of Jesus, we do not practice animal sacrifices today (Col 2:14–17; Heb. 10:1–4), and since the New Testament does not condemn mixing two types of fabric in our clothing, neither do we condemn it. Pretty straightforward, isn't it?

This simple understanding also applies to sins that required the death penalty in the book of Leviticus. Since the New Testament still calls them sins, we do today as well, but since the New Testament prescribed a different form of punishment (not capital punishment; 1 Cor. 5), we embrace part, but not the whole, of this type of commandment. However, we must never forget that ultimately, “the wages of sin” is still “death” (Rom. 6:23). The death penalty in Leviticus was a small type of the grand final judgment prophesied in the New Testament (Rev. 20:8), and this is why we must be quick to repent and put our faith in Christ. And for the record, all 10 of the commandments in Exodus 20 are found in the New Testament as well (Matt. 4:10; 12:34–37; 19:18, 19; Acts 17:29; Rom. 7:7; 13:9; Heb. 4:4, 9, 10).

Wanting just to preach Jesus and teach people to love is a noble and good desire. All who see the centrality of Jesus will be happy to know that rightly teaching the law of God is teaching Jesus and His love! In fact, the law is not only a description of Christ's character—it also defines true love. The first four commandments express love for God, and the last six express love for our fellow humans (Matt. 22:37–40). However, it's hard to imagine someone trying to teach another what love is while simultaneously rejecting God's definition of it. The end result of this is a false or sentimental form of love that reflects the world rather than the atmosphere of heaven, which is why we must keep God's law in its entirety.

The argument that the old covenant was done away with at the cross may be the most persistent of all the objections to following the law as found in Leviticus and throughout Scripture, but rather than getting rid of the law, the new covenant simply relocates it. The law under the old covenant was written by God on tablets of stone, but the law of the new covenant is written by the Holy Spirit (God) on the heart (Heb. 10:16). This, of course, means that now, with the law written on our hearts, we can and should obey it even more fully! This is exactly what Paul meant in Romans 8:4 when he declared that the “righteous requirement of the law” can be “fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Brace yourself: this next thought is pretty profound! Under the old covenant, the law of God is a list of good *commandments*, but under the new covenant, it is a list of good *promises* (Exod. 20:1–17): “I WILL keep the Sabbath holy”; “I WILL not steal”; “I WILL not kill”; “I WILL not commit adultery”; and on and on. Isn't that a beautiful thought?



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks seem to point to overall?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

What are the implications of the commandments becoming promises under the new covenant? How does that affect our relationship with God?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/stw14-4

inSpect



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Exodus 20:1–17

Psalms 1

Romans 8:4

Hebrews 10:16, 17

Galatians 5:22–25

What other narratives come to mind in connection with Leviticus 26?

Review your memorized verse from Leviticus 26.

(Cont. from inSight, p. 199):

“The leaders of the Sunday movement may advocate reforms which the people need, principles which are in harmony with the Bible; yet while there is with these a requirement which is contrary to God’s law, His servants cannot unite with them. Nothing can justify them in setting aside the commandments of God for the precepts of men” (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 587, 588).

THE NET OF THE LAW

Leviticus 26 is saturated in relational language (for example, vv. 25, 42). God wants His precious people to obey His commandments because they are built around the framework of a relationship. In other words, like a marriage relationship, which is a covenant, God wants His people to have a growing relationship with Him and to be faithful to Him alone because of that relationship.

God expresses His kindness throughout this chapter by offering opportunity after opportunity for His people to turn back to Him if they find that they have been unfaithful. Notice how often the phrase “and after all this, if...” or an equivalent is used (vv. 18, 21, 23, 27, 40–42, 44, 45). Although the intensity of the punishments for disobedience increases sevenfold (v. 24), the opportunities to confess and repent increase as well!

There are, of course, right and wrong ways to teach God’s law (1 Tim. 1:8). First, it is wrong to teach that obedience to His law can save us, because we know it cannot (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16). Only faith in Jesus, who for us kept the law fully, can save us and assure us of eternal life (Eph. 2:8, 9). This is simply because all of us have already broken God’s law and are therefore already guilty and sentenced to death (Rom. 3:9; 6:23). Keep in mind that to break one law is to break them all (James 2:10). Second, it is also wrong to teach that those who have received Jesus as their Savior can continue to break God’s law and expect to be saved. This a very common deception and one that the apostle Paul specifically warned against (Rom. 3:8; 1 Cor. 6:9–11).

Victory over sin does not happen without preparation, strategy, and effort on our part, but the good news is that Jesus gives us both opportunities for repentance and the power through His Spirit to live righteous and holy lives even in a fallen world (Rom. 8:4). When we struggle, He offers forgiveness, and when we resist temptation, He enables us to win the victory (James 4:7, 8; 1 John 1:9; Rev. 12:11). We are all sinners in desperate need of God’s kindness, and He provided that kindness in the form of forgiveness for our sins and power to withstand temptation. Those who teach that we cannot overcome are in direct contradiction of the words of God Himself.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is the Golden Gate Bridge. Several lives were lost when construction first began, which delayed the project’s completion, but when they constructed a giant net to protect the workers from falling to their death, production increased, and the bridge was built much more quickly and safely. As we are working to build a Christian character that reflects the character of God as revealed in the law, we can have confidence that the blood of Jesus and His righteousness makes us eternally safe and saved!



inVite

Meditate on Leviticus 26 again and look for where Jesus is.



How can we avoid taking advantage of God’s forgiveness and grace?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer Response:



Read more at www.inverseible.org/stw14-6



Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?

After this week's study of the
chapter, what are some personal
applications you are convicted
of in your life?

What are practical applications
you must make in your school,
family, workplace, and church?



Read more inSight from the
Spirit of Prophecy at
www.inverseible.org/stw14-7

IMMUTABLE, UNCHANGEABLE, AND ETERNAL

“Many ministers are teaching their people, and many professors and teachers are instructing their students, that the law of God has been changed or abrogated; and those who regard its requirement as still valid, to be literally obeyed, are thought to be deserving only of ridicule or contempt” (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911], p. 583).

“No error accepted by the Christian world strikes more boldly against the authority of Heaven, none is more directly opposed to the dictates of reason, none is more pernicious in its results, than the modern doctrine, so rapidly gaining ground, that God’s law is no longer binding upon men. Every nation has its laws, which command respect and obedience; no government could exist without them; and can it be conceived that the Creator of the heavens and the earth has no law to govern the beings He has made? Suppose that prominent ministers were publicly to teach that the statutes which govern their land and protect the rights of its citizens were not obligatory—that they restricted the liberties of the people, and therefore ought not to be obeyed; how long would such men be tolerated in the pulpit? But is it a graver offense to disregard the laws of states and nations than to trample upon those divine precepts which are the foundation of all government? (*The Great Controversy*, p. 584).

“Those who teach the people to regard lightly the commandments of God sow disobedience to reap disobedience. Let the restraint imposed by the divine law be wholly cast aside, and human laws would soon be disregarded” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 585).

“Already the doctrine that men are released from obedience to God’s requirements has weakened the force of moral obligation and opened the floodgates of iniquity upon the world. Lawlessness, dissipation, and corruption are sweeping in upon us like an overwhelming tide” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 585).

“The vilest of criminals, when thrown into prison for their offenses, are often made the recipients of gifts and attentions as if they had attained an enviable distinction. Great publicity is given to their character and crimes. The press publishes the revolting details of vice, thus initiating others into the practice of fraud, robbery, and murder; and Satan exults in the success of his hellish schemes” (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 585, 586).

“Courts of justice are corrupt. Rulers are actuated by desire for gain and love of sensual pleasure. Intemperance has beclouded the faculties of many so that Satan has almost complete control of them. Jurists are perverted, bribed, deluded. Drunkenness and revelry, passion, envy, dishonesty of every sort, are represented among those who administer the laws. ‘Justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.’ Isaiah 59:14, KJV” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 586).

(Cont. on p. 117.)



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



Is there a difference between biblical and secular activism? What are those differences, and what role does the law of God play in your answer?

How can young Adventists live and lead in a way that displays the beauty of God's character as revealed in the Ten Commandments?

What are the three types of laws found in Leviticus, and how should each impact us today?

How should the law of God be used, and how should it not be used?

How is it not contradictory to teach that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus, not by lawkeeping, while also teaching that we should obey God's law?

Have you gained victory over a particular sin? How did you do it, and how would you encourage someone who desperately wants to be free to do the same?