



## FIVE CYCLES OF DISCIPLINE

1. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are the sanctions of the Sinaitic Covenant—rewards for obedience and penalties for disobedience. The blessings are found in Leviticus 26:3–13 and Deuteronomy 28:1–14; the curses in Leviticus 26:14–46 and Deuteronomy 28:15–68.
2. The blessings and curses have to do with the health, prosperity, security, and greatness of the nation Israel.
3. These blessings and curses were given before Israel occupied the Promised Land.
4. The quality of life in Israel depended on their loyalty to God and obedience to the covenant.
5. Blessings and curses are common in ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties. The curses include annihilation, epidemic, sterility, drought, famine, dethronement, and exile.
6. Five Cycles of Discipline are found in Leviticus 26: as disobedience increases, judgment increases sevenfold—culminating in national destruction and exile. These cycles are not clearly distinguished in Deuteronomy 28.
  - a. First Cycle: verses 16–17
  - b. Second Cycle: verses 18–20 (7 times worse than the First Cycle)
  - c. Third Cycle: verses 21–22 (49 times worse than the First Cycle)
  - d. Fourth Cycle: verses 23–26 (343 times worse than the First Cycle)
  - e. Fifth Cycle: verses 27–46 (cf. Deut. 28:63–68) (2407 times worse than the First Cycle)
7. The curses in Deuteronomy 28 may be divided into three groups:
  - a. sword, pestilence, and famine (verses 15–46)
  - b. invasion by Israel's enemies (verses 47–57)
  - c. exile and dispersion (verses 58–68)
8. These curses are national judgment for breach of covenant.
9. In Deuteronomy, verses on cursing outnumber blessings four-to-one. Of sixty-eight verses in chapter 28, fourteen are blessings and fifty-four curses.
10. The curses are the reverse of the promised blessings: instead of five chasing a hundred, they will flee when no one pursues (comp. Lev. 26:8 with 26:36 and Deut. 28:3–6 with 28:16–19).
11. The curses are all natural results of the sword, pestilence, and famine.
12. These curses are read every year in the synagogue in a low tone of voice.
13. The history of Israel must be read in the light of these blessings and curses.
14. God will not forsake His people completely because of the Abrahamic Covenant (Lev. 26:40–45).