

The 1843 Chart and the 2520 years

By Gerhard Pfandl

The 1843 chart was used by the Millerites with good success, but not everything on the chart is correct. One of the issues concerns the 2520 years. Please note, Judah was not taken into captivity in 677 BC; King Manasseh (687–643 BC) was taken to Babylon for a period of time, but he was restored to the throne and cleaned house before he died (2 Chron 33:14-16). Judah continued as a kingdom until 586 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians.

The year-day principle cannot be used in Leviticus 26:28. The New American Bible correctly translates "I will increase the chastisement for your sins sevenfold." The Hebrew text only has the word "seven," there is no reference to a time period. "Seven (fold or times)" is a proverbial expression for the full, complete measure of discipline (it is also used in Lev 26:21, 24, 28, Ps 79:12). Seven was an appropriate number of completeness in view of the importance of "seven" in the Israelite religion. The year-day principle can only be used for time periods in apocalyptic books Daniel and Revelation. Outside of these books God always clearly spelled it out when he applied a day for a year (Num 14:34; Ezek 4:6).

As far as Ellen White is concerned she never used the 2520 years to show the correctness of the 1844 date. The 2520 calculation from 677 to 1843 was very popular among the Millerites and some of our own pioneers, but Ellen White in all her writings does not mention it once.

This should tell us that God did not want this figure used. The fact that she supported William Miller does not mean that she endorsed everything he said or that she approved of every detail on the chart used by the Millerites. In 1864, James White wrote an article in the Review (see below) in which he rejected the use of 2520 as a prophecy of 2520 years.

The prophetic period of Lev. xxvi, or what has been supposed to be such, has been no small object of study among prophetic expositors. It has been supposed that the expression, "seven times," in verses 18, 21, 24, 28, denoted a prophetic period of 2520 years, and that this period covered the time during which the throne of Israel should be and remain subverted and trodden down by oppressing powers. To rightly fix the commencement and termination of this period became therefore a matter of consequence. Where does it commence? and where does it end? have been questions of much study, and perhaps some perplexity.

These are not the questions, however, that we propose here to discuss; for there is a question lying back of these, which demands to be answered first; namely, Is there any prophetic period brought to view at all in Lev. xxvi? We claim that there is not, and will offer a few of what are to us very conclusive reasons for this position:

1. A series of judgments is threatened against Israel, in case they hearkened not unto God to do his commandments, before the expression, seven times, is introduced. Verses 14-17. In these judgments is included being slain before their enemies, being reigned over by those that hated them, and fleeing when none pursued them. Now if the seven times were meant to cover the period of God's special judgments against Israel, especially of their captivity by foreign powers, these seven times should have been mentioned in connection with the first threatening of judgments of this kind. But this, as we have seen, is not the case.

2. After the threatening of these judgments, God says, verse 18, "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins."

Then follows an enumeration of the judgments to come upon them in fulfillment of this, different from the items of the first threatening, and increasing in severity.

3. If they would not for this hearken, seven times more plagues were threatened against them, "according to their sins." Verse 21. Then again follows an enumeration of judgments to correspond, more severe still than any preceding.

4. If they would not be reformed by these things, God threatened to punish them seven times more for their sins. Verse 24. And in like manner with the foregoing, an enumeration of the judgments to be inflicted in fulfillment, immediately follows, more fearful still.

5. And if they would not hearken to God for all these things, he makes a final threat that would walk contrary to them in fury, and chastise them seven times for their sins. Verse 28. And an enumeration of the judgments to be inflicted, again immediately follows, outdoing all before, in their terrible severity. Included among them were the eating of the flesh of their sons and daughters, making waste their cities, bringing the land into such desolation that their enemies should be astonished at it, scattering them among all nations, and drawing out a sword after them in all the lands of their dispersion. With fearful minuteness all this has been fulfilled, even to the eating the flesh of their own children, as in the terrible sieges that preceded the downfall of Jerusalem.

Thus we have, first, a series of judgments threatened against Israel, without the expression, seven times, and then the declaration four times made, that God would punish them seven times for their sins, each one on condition that the former did not lead to repentance, and each one containing its own specific enumeration of judgments, distinct from those that preceded, and regularly increasing in the severity of then denunciations. Now what is meant by this repeated expression of seven times? We reply, It denotes, not the duration of the punishment, but its intensity and severity. It is well expressed in the language of verse 21, thus: "I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins." The number seven denoting perfection, we are undoubtedly to understand by this expression, the fullness of their punishment; that the measure of their national sins, would in every case be fully equaled by the measure of their national calamities. {January 26, 1864 JWe, ARSH 68.8} And this position is fully sustained by the original, as a brief criticism will show.

In references to the Hebrew, we learn from the Hebrew Concordance that the expression, seven times, in Lev. xxvi, comes from sheh-vag; and this word is expressly set down by Gesenius, in those texts, as an adverb, also in Ps. cxix, 164; Prov. xxiv, 16. In Dan. iv, 16, 25, the expression, seven times, twice occurs, where beyond question it means duration. Nebuchadnezzar was to be driven from men, and make his dwelling with the beasts of the field, until seven times should pass over him. There can be no mistaking that here the expression means a certain space of time; but here we find, not the adverb as in Lev. xxvi, but the noun, gid-dahn, defined by Gesenius, "Time, in prophetic language, for a year." In Dan. vii, 25, where a prophetic period is brought to view in the expression, "a time and times and the dividing of time," the same word is used. In Dan. xii, 7, where the same period is again brought to view, and in about the same language, we have another word, moh-gehd, defined by Gesenius, "Appointment of time. Spoken of a space of time, appointed and definite. In the prophetic style for a year." It will be seen by this definition, that this word is synonymous with the one used in Dan. vii, 25, as above referred to. Now if a period of time is meant by the expression, seven times, in Lev. xxvi, one of these words should and would most assuredly have been used. And

the fact that neither of these words is there used, but another word, and that an adverb, places it beyond question that no such period is there intended.

The Greek is equally definite. The Septuagint has in Lev. xxvi, heptakis, which is an adverb, signifying seven times. In Dan. iv, 16, 25, for Nebuchadnezzar's seven times we have not heptakis, the adverb, but heptakairoi, a noun and its adjective. And in all cases where the word time occurs, denoting a prophetic period, as in Dan. vii, 25; xii, 7; Rev. xii, 14, it is from the noun kairos. Such a thing as a prophetic period based on an adverb is not to be found.

So then, there is no prophetic period in Lev. xxvi; and those who imagine that such a thing exists, and are puzzling themselves over the adjustment of its several dates, are simply beating the air. To ignore, or treat with neglect, a prophetic period where one is plainly given, is censurable in the extreme. It is an equally futile, though not so heinous, a course, to endeavor to create one where none exists. (James White, "The Seven Times of Lev. Xxvi," *Review and Herald*, January 26, 1864).

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