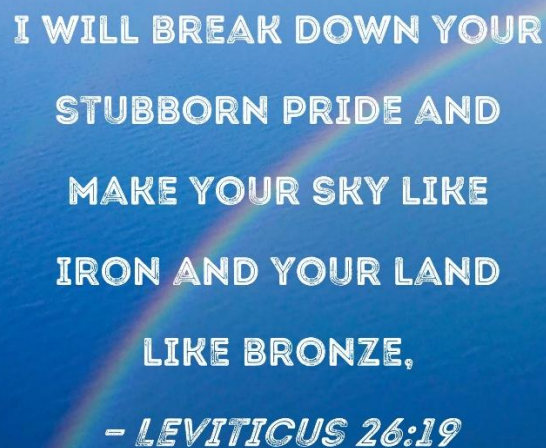


Bible Study Notes

What is “the pride of your power” in Leviticus 26:19?

By Craig M White

Version 1.0



I WILL BREAK DOWN YOUR
STUBBORN PRIDE AND
MAKE YOUR SKY LIKE
IRON AND YOUR LAND
LIKE BRONZE,
- LEVITICUS 26:19



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Authored by Craig Martin White.

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NB: All Scriptures used in this Bible Study are taken from the ESV unless otherwise stated.

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Associated Bible studies

- Birthright Blessings Delayed for 2,520 Years by Tom Robinson.
- *Is the Enslavement of the House of Israel Feasible in the 21st Century?* by Craig White.
- *Just What do you mean ... “Ezekiel’s Message”?* by Craig White.
- *What Will Israel be doing in the World Tomorrow?* by Craig White.
- *What Will the Beast be Like?* by Craig White.

“.. and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.”
(Leviticus 26:19, ESV)¹

Introduction

Leviticus 26:19 serves as a warning, describing the consequences of Israel's disobedience to the His Covenant. It outlines Divine discipline designed to reduce the nation's pride in self-reliance and turn their hearts back to God. This happened in the ancient days in the build up to and then the captivities of Israel and Judah to Assyria and Babylonia.

Given the dual nature of prophecy, this terrible warning is relevant to the modern-day descendants of Israel - especially the Anglo-Kelts of North America, British-Isles and Australasia.

In the first instance, let us consider the background: Leviticus 26 contains blessings for obedience (vv. 1-13) and curses for disobedience (vv. 14-39). Verse 19 is one of the punishments God would bring if Israel persisted in rebellion and sin.

There is a certain “pride” that God is going to break. Good pride such as that which takes pride in one’s appearance, family, success or nation is not what this is getting at.

What is this negative sort “pride” and how will it be broken?

During my readings I found that the historical and cultural background reveals that the structure of Leviticus 26 mirrors the "suzerain-vassal treaties" of the ancient Near East. In these historical pacts, a king would lay out clear blessings for loyalty and strict curses such as agricultural ruin and military defeat - for rebellion. This is mirrored in Leviticus 26.

The phrase "pride of your power" in this context signifies Israel’s misplaced confidence its power derived from its resources. Following military successes and agricultural prosperity, they attributed their achievements to their own strength rather than to God. God cautions that He will "break " this dependence on their own wealth, military prowess, or human capabilities without giving Him the glory. While the imagery of the sky resembling iron and the earth likened bronze is poetic, it is obviously using agrarian metaphors to warn Israel of drought. If the sky is likened to iron, it produces no rain. If the ground is likened to bronze, it becomes hardened, which would reduce seed germination. This in turn results in widespread famine and consequent disease epidemics. Apparently, similar expressions can be found in Ugaritic literature.

The curses intensify due to God’s progressive discipline - if there is no repentance, additional discipline is enforced until the outcome is national devastation and exile into foreign lands.

¹ The phrase in Hebrew is עֲזָרְךָ יִיאָז (ge'on 'uzzekem) which literally is יָאָז (ge'on) = pride, arrogance, exaltation, majesty and עֶז (oz) = strength, power, might.
The phrase עֲזָרְךָ יִיאָז (ge'on 'uzzekem) occurs repeatedly in Ezekiel: 24:21; 30:6; 30:18; 33:28.

A similar warning is issued in the book of Deuteronomy:

“Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. And if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God.” (Deuteronomy 8:17-20)

The wealth from the land and ensuing funding of successful military operations resulted in pride. Let us explore all of this a bit more deeply.

NB: this is not an article or paper – rather these are my notes on the subject assembled in a way to help understand the matter.

What Commentaries Reveal

Below is a selection of extracts from Commentaries on the subject which help us to comprehend what is being discussed in Leviticus:

1. Enduring Bible Commentary online:

“b. I will break the pride of your power: The core problem with chronic, **continued disobedience is pride in one’s own power.** This pride must be broken.” [emphasis mine]

2. Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers:

“(19) And I will break the pride of your power. - That is, the strength which is the cause of your pride, the wealth which they derive from the abundant harvests mentioned in [Leviticus 26:4-5](#), as is evident from what follows immediately, where **the punishment is threatened against the resources of this power or wealth.** Comp. [Ezekiel 30:6](#); [Ezekiel 33:28](#).) The authorities during the second Temple, however, took the phrase “the pride of your power” to denote the sanctuary, which is called “the pride of your power” in [Ezekiel 24:21](#). the expression used here, but the identity of which is obliterated in the Authorised Version by rendering the phrase “the excellency of your strength.” Hence the Chaldee Versions paraphrase it, “And I will break down the glory of the strength of your sanctuary.”” [emphasis mine]

3. Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

“19. *the pride of your power*] the pride with which ye rely upon your prosperity and the fruitfulness of your land. **The expression is found elsewhere only in Ezekiel**, where in [Ezekiel 7:24](#) LXX., [Ezekiel 24:21](#), [Ezekiel 33:28](#) it refers to the fall of the nation and the destruction of Jerusalem; in [Ezekiel 30:6](#); [Ezekiel 30:18](#), the phrase is applied to Egypt.” [emphasis mine]

4. Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament

"First stage of the aggravated judgments. - If they did not hearken **עַד הָאֵל**, "up to these" (the punishments named in [Leviticus 26:16](#), [Leviticus 26:17](#)), that is to say, if they persisted in their disobedience even when the judgments reached to this height, God would add a sevenfold chastisement on account of their sins, would punish them seven times more severely, and break down their strong pride by fearful drought. Seven, as the number of perfection in the works of God, denotes the strengthening of the chastisement, even to the height of its full measure (cf. [Proverbs 24:16](#)). **וְאֵלָּא עַד**, lit., **the eminence or pride of strength, includes everything upon which a nation rests its might**; then the pride and haughtiness which rely upon earthly might and its auxiliaries ([Ezekiel 30:6](#), [Ezekiel 30:18](#); [Ezekiel 33:28](#)); **here it signifies the pride of a nation, puffed up by the fruitfulness and rich produce of its land**. God would make their heaven (the sky of their land) like iron and their earth like brass, i.e., as hard and dry as metal, so that not a drop of rain and dew would fall from heaven to moisten the earth, and not a plant could grow out of the earth (cf. [Deuteronomy 28:23](#)); and when the land was cultivated, the people would exhaust their strength for nought." [emphasis mine]

What these show us is that the land produces resources that makes them wealthy and self-reliant. It also means that they can fund wars and be successful against other nations. A more detailed item from Bible Hub on the matter is located in the **Appendix. Meaning of "break your stubborn pride."**

Relevant Academic Works

Academic works (in addition to commentaries) have also delved into this passage.

Several Academic Works

1. William Barrick. (1999). "Inter-Covenantal Truth and Relevance: Leviticus 26 and the Biblical Covenants," *The Master's Seminary Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 95-110.

This article examines Leviticus 26 as a covenant chapter and discusses how the blessings and curses function within Israel's covenant relationship with God. It is one of the better academic treatments devoted specifically to Leviticus 26.

Topics covered include structure of Leviticus 26; covenant blessings and curses; relationship between Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants; national judgment and restoration.

2. Jacob Milgrom. (2001). *Leviticus 23–27. Anchor Yale Bible*, Vol. 3B.

Milgrom's commentary is generally regarded as the most important modern scholarly commentary on Leviticus.

For Leviticus 26:19 he discusses:

- The Hebrew phrase **עַד הָאֵל** (*ge'on 'uzzekem*).
- Connections with drought curses.
- Ancient Near Eastern treaty sanctions.
- The relationship between national pride and covenant judgment.

3. Gordon Wenham. (1979). *The Book of Leviticus. New International Commentary on the Old Testament.*

Wenham interprets the phrase primarily within the covenant-curse context and emphasizes:

- Agricultural prosperity as a source of pride
- Military confidence
- National security dependent upon Yahweh

4. Others:

- Casey Strine. (2012). "The Role of Repentance in the Book of Ezekiel," *Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 63, No. 2, pp. 467-96.
- Elizabeth Keck. (2012). "The Glory of Yahweh in Ezekiel and the Pre-Tabernacle Wilderness," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 201-18.
- Gili Kugler. (2024). "Ezekiel's God in Pursuit of Recognition: A Catalyst for Self-Transformation," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Vol. 49, No. 2, pp. 204–17.
- John Hartley. (1992). *Leviticus (Word Biblical Commentary)*.
- John Kessler. (2016). "Patterns of Descriptive Curse Formulae in the Hebrew Bible, with Special Attention to Leviticus 26 and Amos 4:6–12" in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, pp. 943-84.
- Roy Gane. (2004). *Leviticus, Numbers. NIV Application Commentary*.

These represent a small number of available studies – the only real issue is that none of them understand how this relates to the Anglo-Kelts and few know that this prophecy is of a dual nature. Nevertheless, they provide excellent insights and background to this passage, helping us to a deeper and more meaningful understanding.

Scholarly Debate

Academic commentators categorise their interpretations of "the pride of your power" into three perspectives from what I can make out in poring through the writings, though there would be scores more than I would have time for:

- Military and political strength.
- Agricultural prosperity and economic security.
- The Temple/Sanctuary as Israel's glory. Some rabbinic and Jewish interpreters associated this with the sanctuary referred to in Ezekiel 24:21.
- General national self-confidence and self-reliance. This seems to be the majority academic agreement. The phrase encompasses Israel's sources of national security and confidence, which include military, economic, agricultural, or religious aspects. The term is inclusive of all the aforementioned which results in military and political power. We can see that prophetically, the House of Israel suffers from this sin today.

In a prophetic sense, this aligns with the teachings of Herbert W Armstrong and the old Worldwide Church of God. In the end-times God will severely restrict good weather in the Anglo-Keltic nations, resulting in drought, famine and disease epidemics, making it impossible for these nations to fight for survival against aggressor forces. The result will be military defeat, conquest and the scattering of the remnant of Israel around the world in captivity and slavery.

What the Churches of God Teach

Herbert W Armstrong and the old Worldwide Church of God understood this passage well and used in it their messaging. This was almost unique among the thousands of denominations out there.

Mr Armstrong applied this verse prophetically to modern descendants of Israel (especially the American and British Anglo-Keltic peoples), arguing that "the pride of your power" referred primarily to national military, economic, and geopolitical strength derived from their resources that God would eventually break because of national disobedience to Him and His commandments (linked to the 2,520-year prophecy)².

This historical interpretation of Leviticus 26 was a central element of the prophetic teaching of the old Worldwide Church of God. He and the Church understood its multi-layered application: to ancient Israel; spiritually to Christians; and to the descendants of Israel in the last days.

1. Herbert W Armstrong and the old Worldwide Church of God

Mr Armstrong, along with other evangelists, elders and writers, used this verse as part of their prophetic warning ministry. Several examples are listed below.

Herbert W Armstrong, *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy* (1967):

"We had great pride in that national power—in our national prestige ... What's happened to the PRIDE of our POWER? We have already lost it! God said 'I will break the pride of your power!' And He did! ... The PROPHECIES do not stop with revealing the unprecedented multiplied intensity of punishment already beginning to descend down upon America and Britain. The prophecies record also the RESULT of that intensified punishment. The result will be a corrected people. The result will be an eye-opening realization of what we have done to ourselves. The supreme PUNISHMENT will teach us, at last, our lesson! The punishment will break our spirit of REBELLION! It will lift us up from the cesspool of rottenness and evil into which we have sunk. It will teach us THE WAY to glorious PEACE, PROSPERITY, HAPPINESS, ABUNDANT WELL-BEING!" (pp. 182, 187-88)

Herbert W Armstrong, *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* (1980):

"You need to OPEN YOUR EYES to the fact that Britain's sun already has SET! You need to WAKE UP to the fact that the United States, even still possessing unmatched POWER, is afraid-fears-to use it, just as God said: "I will break the PRIDE of your POWER"; that the United States has stopped winning wars-that America was unable, with all its vast power, to conquer little North Vietnam! The United States is fast riding to the GREATEST FALL that ever befell any nation! The handwriting is on the wall! You need, now, to UNDERSTAND the remainder of this prophecy of Leviticus 26-and also of Deuteronomy 28-and the

² For detailed information, refer to [Birthright Blessings Delayed for 2,520 Years](#) by Tom Robinson.

many other prophecies relating to them and events soon to VIOLENTLY affect YOUR life!" ...

"There is no other people that even remotely fulfills this great prophecy! But the American and British Commonwealth peoples fulfill it precisely! As the "pride of our power" continues to be BROKEN, as the British continue to lose their foreign sea gates and possessions around the earth, as America signs away ownership of the Panama Canal-control over this vital sea gate-as our gold supply drains away from this nation, weather upsets increase, this focal prophecy alone represents giant PROOF as to where the modern "remnant" of the peoples of Israel resides today!" (pp. 202, 211).

Herbert W Armstrong, "Obituary of the British Empire", *Plain Truth*, September 1966, pp. 3-6, 45-47:

"Much of the prophecy of Leviticus 26 applies to OUR TIME, NOW! In verse 19 God says, 'I will break the pride of YOUR POWER.' In the days of Theodore Roosevelt ..." (p. 46)

Garner Ted Armstrong, "America is Losing a War!" *Plain Truth*, December 1957, pp. 19-23:

"Do not allow yourself to be lulled to sleep by the seemingly secure present. There are two major factors in Biblical prophecy which sweep away this false hope. The first is the BREAKING of our own strength! Notice's God's warning to us--- Israel-America today! "I will BREAK the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass, and your strength shall be spent in vain" (Lev. 26:19-20)." (p. 22)

He applied this verse to the future decline of the United States and Britain, predicting economic and national weakening. This is one of the earliest examples I found applying the verse directly to modern Anglo-American nations.

***The Modern Romans* booklet (1975):**

"It's not that America (and Britain) have no power. It's just that we have lost pride in our power. We are uncertain how to use our power. But notice what God said He would do if we refused to obey Him (which we have): 'And I will break the pride of your power ...' (Lev. 26:19)." (pp. 73-74).

There are many other examples such as:

- Garner Ted Armstrong. (1977). "Weather in Chaos—What It Means," *Plain Truth*, April, pp. 4-5, 39-40.
- News Bureau (1977). "Human Survival: Living in the Shadow of Worldwide Famine," *Plain Truth*, February, pp. 40-43.
- Roderick C. Meredith. (1984). "Prophecy Reveals Where We're Headed Now!" *Plain Truth*, March, pp. 19-21.
- Ronald D Kelly. (1963). "Hunger! A Greater Threat Than the "H" Bomb," *Plain Truth*, August, pp. 15-17, 38-41.

These statements leave little doubt that Mr Armstrong and the Church interpreted "the pride of your power" primarily as American and British military, geopolitical, and national power, and especially the loss of God's blessings to and confidence to use that power. This power is drawn from the natural resources – and it is those resources which God will target for curses.

2. Continuation post Worldwide Church of God

Over the years and decades, I have kept a keen eye open on the developments of, and doctrines taught by the various Church of God groups, including the 'daughter' churches or offshoots from the old Worldwide Church of God.

These include (but not limited to):

- Christian Biblical Church of God.
- Church of God, International.
- Church of God, Twin Cities.
- Church of the Eternal God.
- Eternal Church of God.
- Intercontinental Church of God.
- Living Church of God.
- Philadelphia Church of God.
- United Church of God.

Explanations of the Leviticus prophecy is replete throughout the literature of the above, some more so than others. Given this, I have decided not to include examples from these or other groups with the exception of a selection from the United Church of God (searching their website is easy).

- John R Schroeder. (2013). "America's Military Decline: What Does It Mean?", *Good News*, November–December, pp. 18-19.
- Darris McNeely. (2000). "The Geopolitics of Pride," *World News & Prophecy*, August, p. 4.
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- Good News Staff. (2012). "I Will Break the Pride of Your Power," *Good News*, July-August, pp. 12–17.
- Melvin Rhodes. (2010). "Has America Lost Its Way?", *Beyond Today*, October, pp. 10-13.
- Melvin Rhodes. (2007). "Demographic Trends: A Warning to the Western World," *World News & Prophecy*, September-October, pp. 12-15.

In the article "Pride of America's Power: How Long Will It Last?", *World News & Prophecy*, August 2006, Darris McNeely makes the following notable statement:

"A prophecy in Leviticus 26:19 foretells a national decline in power for disobedience to God's law. First Great Britain declined in power. Will America be next? ... 'I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like

iron and your earth like bronze' (Leviticus 26:14-19). Verse 19 says God will 'break the pride of your power.' What does this mean today when we look at American power? Could we see a time when this vast power, in all its forms, will be broken, no longer able to influence events? If that happens, what kind of world will we have?"

This is one of many examples of the doctrine and stance taken by the United Church of God on the subject, continuing the long Church of God tradition, post-World War 2.

Conclusions

As we have seen, in Leviticus God warns Israel that He will break the pride of their power - the wrong sort of pride or vanity which includes arrogance from the strength and military; excess confidence in the nation's resources; national self-sufficiency or independence from God. God would "break" that pride by removing the sources of this strength on which Israel relied.

This power that Israel had pride in refers to their agricultural prosperity with the subsequent statement regarding the heavens turning to iron and the earth to brass signifies drought and agricultural failure. Another is material wealth and economic success which fosters a feeling of independence and vanity.

This phrase refers to the things in which Israel placed its confidence, strength, and self-reliance on instead of depending on God Who would utilise the resources to His and their end. They relied upon the resources (the creation) instead of the Creator Who would use the resources in the appropriate way for Israel's blessings and safety.

Subsequent military strength is due to what the land can produce to this end. Trusting in military forces, strongholds, or treaties pushes God to one side. Instead, God can demonstrate that military might could not deliver them.

Sadly, our peoples can sometimes act like Herod:

"And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!"
Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, **because he did not give God the glory**, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last." (Act 12:22-23)

This wrong sort of pride – vanity – will be eliminated by God to enable Israel to repent and be trained for world leadership under the Messiah and the saints during the Millennium.

In the meantime, may our peoples repent of their national sins and turn to the Almighty.

Appendix. Meaning of "break your stubborn pride."

This is from Bible Hub and represents a good summary.

https://biblehub.com/q/Meaning_of_break_your_stubborn_pride.htm

What does Leviticus 26:19 mean by "I will break your stubborn pride"?

Text and Immediate Translation

“I will break your stubborn pride and make your sky like iron and your land like bronze.”

- [Leviticus 26:19](#)

The clause in focus is “I will break your stubborn pride” (וְשָׁבַרְתִּי אֶת־גְּאֹן עֲזָבְךָ, vešavartî 'et-ge'ōn 'azz^okem).

Literary Context: Covenant Blessings and Curses (Leviticus 26:1–46)

[Leviticus 26](#) forms the covenant “sanctions” section parallel to ancient Hittite and Neo-Assyrian treaty patterns. Verses 3-13 pronounce blessings for obedience; verses 14-39 list escalating curses for disobedience. Verse 19 sits in the first stage of judgment (vv 18-20) that intensifies if Israel refuses to repent. The structure underscores God’s righteousness and patience, yet emphasizes certainty of discipline.

Historical-Cultural Background

1. Treaties. Near-Eastern suzerain treaties threatened agricultural devastation and enemy invasion if vassals rebelled—mirrored here.
 2. Agrarian Setting. “Sky like iron... land like bronze” evokes drought. Ugaritic texts likewise pair sky/earth closing. In Syro-Palestinian archaeology, pollen cores (Megiddo, Tel Dan) reveal multi-year drought events ca. 1200–1000 BC consistent with such imagery.
 3. National Pride. Following the Conquest period, Israel’s temptation was to credit military and agrarian success to itself ([Deuteronomy 8:17](#)).
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Theological Significance: Divine Discipline, Not Caprice

The LORD’s purpose is remedial: “If despite these things you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins” (v 18). Discipline serves to awaken repentance ([Proverbs 3:12](#); [Hebrews 12:6](#)). God’s breaking is an act of covenant faithfulness (תּוֹנָה, ḥesed); He will not allow His people to idolize self-sufficiency.

Pride in Biblical Theology

Pride precipitated the Fall ([Genesis 3:5](#)), the Tower of Babel ([Genesis 11:4](#)), Nebuchadnezzar’s madness ([Daniel 4:30-37](#)), and Pharisaic blindness ([Luke 18:11-14](#)). Consistently, God “opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” ([1 Peter 5:5](#)). [Leviticus 26:19](#) therefore inaugurates a theme fulfilled ultimately in Christ, who “humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death” ([Philippians 2:8](#)), reversing Adamic pride.

Agricultural Imagery Explained

- “Sky like iron” - impenetrable, withholding rain (cf. [Deuteronomy 28:23](#)).
 - “Land like bronze” - hard, unyielding soil; also conveys heat glare. Experiments at Tell Halif show bronze-hard crust in prolonged aridity. God orchestrates ecological feedback to highlight spiritual drought.
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Historical Fulfillment

- Judges era: cycles of oppression followed pride ([Judges 2:11-19](#)).
 - Elijah’s drought ([1 Kings 17](#)) specifically ties idolatry to withheld rain, fulfilling Leviticus.
 - Assyrian and Babylonian Exiles: The Babylonian Chronicle tablets (BM 21946) confirm Nebuchadnezzar’s 597 BC siege; [2 Kings 24](#) attributes it to covenant violation. The “Lachish Letters” (c. 588 BC) describe famine conditions, matching “land like bronze.”
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- Post-exilic humility ([Ezra 9:6](#); [Nehemiah 9:33](#)) shows the intended breaking produced repentance.
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Intertextual Echoes

- [Isaiah 2:12-17](#)-“The pride of men will be humbled.”
 - [Jeremiah 13:9](#)-God “will ruin the pride of Judah.”
 - [Amos 6:8](#)-The LORD “abhors the pride of Jacob.”
 - [James 4:6](#)-New Testament reaffirmation that divine opposition targets pride.
-

Christological Fulfillment and the New Covenant

Christ bears the covenant curse ([Galatians 3:13](#)). At the cross, cosmic signs (darkened sky, torn veil) symbolize broken pride and open access. The resurrected Christ offers the Spirit, enabling the humility God requires ([Ezekiel 36:26-27](#); [Romans 8:3-4](#)).

Application Today

Personal: God still opposes self-reliance—whether intellectual, financial, or moral. Corporate: Churches and nations boasting in technology or military strength repeat Israel’s error. National humility can avert judgment ([2 Chronicles 7:14](#)).

Behavioral science corroborates: narcissistic entitlement predicts relational collapse; true well-being correlates with humility and gratitude-principles embedded in [Leviticus 26](#).

Pastoral Implications

Counseling hardened hearts should emphasize God’s right to dismantle idols but also His eagerness to restore ([Leviticus 26:40-45](#)). Discipline is redemptive, not vindictive. Encourage voluntary humility to pre-empt forced humbling.

Summary

“I will break your stubborn pride” announces God’s loving resolve to dismantle any confidence that supplants Him. Through historical droughts, military defeats, and exile, He demonstrated that pride invites His opposition. The cross and resurrection of Christ provide the ultimate antidote, calling all to humble faith. Voluntary surrender secures blessing; obstinate pride guarantees divine breaking-yesterday, today, and until every knee bows.

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What is “the pride of your power” in Leviticus 26:19?

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