indent alien among you, or to an offshoot of an alien's family, 48he shall have the right of redemption even after he has given himself over. One of his kinsmen shall redeem him, 49or his uncle or his uncle's son shall redeem him, or anyone of his family who is of his own flesh shall redeem him; or, if he prospers, he may redeem himself. 50He shall compute with his purchaser the total from the year he gave himself over to him until the jubilee year; the price of his sale shall be applied to the number of years, as though it were for a term as a hired laborer under the other's authority. 51If many years remain, he shall pay back for his redemption in proportion to his purchase price; 52and if few years remain until the jubilee year, he shall so compute: he shall make payment for his redemption according to the years involved. 53He shall be under his authority as a laborer hired by the year; he shall not rule ruthlessly over him in your sight. 54If he has not been redeemed in any of those ways, he and his children with him shall go free in the jubilee year. 55For it is to Me that the Israelites are servants: they are My servants, whom I freed from the land of Egypt, I the LORD your God.

INDENTURE TO A NON-ISRAELITE

48. right of redemption The clan of the Israelite indentured to a non-Israelite bears the responsibility for redeeming its kinsman.

One of his kinsmen shall redeem him This is the order of obligation to redeem kinsmen within the clan: brothers, then uncles and cousins, then other blood relatives. These could even include grandchildren, also considered blood relatives in the laws of Lev. 18:10.

49. of his own flesh A clan is usually a fairly large unit, and not all relatives within it are of the same blood.

50. compute The computation is in terms of wages over a period of years.

53. To allow a fellow Israelite to remain indentured to a gentile would be a cruel humiliation. One was not permitted to remain indifferent in such a situation, which could lead to the forfeiture of land that had been mortgaged to debt and its seizure by non-Israelites.

54. The last recourse is the jubilee, when all other efforts have failed.

48. The obligation of a kinsman to redeem a relative from bondage to a non-Israelite would become the source in postbiblical times of the obligation to ransom Jews taken captive (pidyon sh'vuyim). Communities would go to great lengths to save their fellow Jews in that situation, even selling Torah scrolls to redeem hostages. In the last three decades of the 20th century, successful efforts were undertaken by the Jewish community to bring Jews out of Ethiopia, Syria, and the former Soviet Union. The guiding principle is "all Jews are responsible one for another" (kol Yisra-el arevim zeh ba-zeh).
26 You shall not make idols for yourselves, or set up for yourselves carved images or pillars, or place figured stones in your land to worship upon, for I the LORD am your God. You shall keep My sabbaths and venerate My sanctuary, Mine, the LORD's.

POSTSCRIPT (26:1–2)

2. Instead of worshipping improperly, Israelites should attend God's legitimate sanctuary.

CHAPTER 26

1-2. Why this denunciation of idolatry at this point? And why are Shabbat and the sanctuary mentioned as contrasts to idol worship? It is suggested that these verses raise the question: Is the visible world all there is? Or is that which is real but invisible ultimately the greatest reality? Hoffman considers these two verses, which seem to be an arbitrary postscript, as a deliberate echoing of the Decalogue, serving to introduce the theme of loyalty to the Covenant, which will be the subject of the book's concluding chapters.

* For the haftarah for this portion, see p. 758.