

Leviticus

Purpose: To instruct the wilderness generation in proper worship both in the wilderness and in the Land.

Outline: 1:1-10:20 – Holiness in Worship

(The 5 main offerings, Levitical Priests)

11:1-27:34 – Holiness in Everyday Life

(Laws of cleanness, Day of Atonement, Moral Laws, Year of Jubilee)

Author: Moses

Date: 1446-1406 BC

Highlights:

Leviticus is all about holiness. The refrain “I am the Lord your God...be holy, because I am holy” occurs repeatedly throughout the book (11:44,45; 19:2; 20:7,26; 21:8,15; 22:9,16,32).

5 Main Offerings: (see “Old Testament Sacrifices”)

Burn Offering: Atonement for sin in general – Chapter 1

Grain Offering: Recognition of God’s goodness – Chapter 2

Fellowship Offering: Thanksgiving to God and fellowship with God – Chapter 3

Sin Offering: Mandatory atonement for specific sin – Chapter 4

Guilt Offering: Mandatory atonement for sin requiring restitution – Chapter 5

Ordination and setting apart of Aaron and his sons as the priests of Levi. If you can picture concentric circles moving toward the holiness of God it would look like this: Gentiles, Israelites, Levites, Aaronic Priesthood, High Priest, God.

If you can picture the tabernacle it also moves closer and closer to the holiness of God: Courtyard, the Holy Place, the Holy of Holies.

Expanded outline:

Holiness from uncleanness – Chapters 11-15

Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) – Chapter 16

Holiness from immorality and injustice – Leviticus 17-22

Holiness in seasonal life – Chapters 23-25

Consecration among the people – Chapters 26-27

Clean animals: Cloven-hoofed cud-chewers, scaly fish, non-carrion birds, jointed insects

Unclean animals: everything else, especially crawlers and swarmers. There may be a connection between unclean animals (crawl on the ground & eat dust) & the serpent in the garden.

Holy = Separate

Unholy = Common

Cleansed through purification, made holy through dedication

Seasonal life...Neighbor life...Hygienic life...Dietary life...Worship life

Ritual Laws, Dietary Laws, Moral Laws cf. Mt 5:17 and Heb 10:1-18 – we are made holy through Christ. Purified by the blood of Christ. Dedicated to life with Christ.

Sexual Sins – Chapter 18

Various (seemingly silly) sins – Chapter 19 (esp. v. 19,27,28)

Old Testament Feasts and Other Sacred Days: Sabbath, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Passover, Purim, Year of Jubilee (Happy Holi-days)

Reading Leviticus(February 13-22):

Chapters 1-7 – Old Testament Sacrifices (See Chart Below)

Chapters 1-5 contain instructions particularly for the people; chapters 6-7 are for the priests. The sacrificial system, along with the priesthood and ceremonial purity, are given for restoring humanity's lost fellowship with God – and point to the perfect (and necessary) sacrifice to come.

Name	References	Elements	Purpose
Burnt Offering	Lev. 1; 6:8-13; 8:18-21; 16:24 (Cf. <i>Heb 9:11 – 10:18</i>)	Bull, ram, or male bird (dove or young pigeon for the poor); wholly consumed; no defect	Voluntary act of worship; atonement for unintentional sin in general; expression of devotion, commitment and complete surrender to God
Grain Offering	Lev 2; 6:14-23	Grain, fine flour, olive oil, incense, baked bread (cakes/wafers), salt, no yeast or honey; accompanied burnt offering & fellowship offering (along with drink offering)	Voluntary act of worship; recognition of God's goodness and provisions; devotion to God
Fellowship Offering	Lev. 3; 7:11-34 (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-18)	Any animal without defect from herd or flock; variety of breads	Voluntary act of worship; thanksgiving and fellowship (included a communal meal)
Sin Offering	Lev. 4:1 – 5:13; 6:24-30; 8:14-17; 16:3-22 (Cf. <i>Heb 9:11 – 10:18</i>)	(1) Young bull: for high priest & congregation; (2) Male goat: for leader; (3) Female goat or lamb: for common person; (4) Dove or pigeon: for the poor; (5) Tenth of an ephah of fine flour: for the very poor	Mandatory atonement for specific unintentional sin; confession of sin; forgiveness of sin; cleansing from defilement
Guilt Offering	Lev. 5:14 – 6:7; 7:1-6 (Cf. <i>Heb 9:11 – 10:18</i>)	Ram or lamb	Mandatory atonement for unintentional sin requiring restitution; cleansing from defilement; make restitution; 20% fine

When more than one kind of offering was presented (cf. Numbers 6:16-17); the procedure was usually (1) sin or guilt offering, (2) burnt offering, (3) fellowship & grain offering (w/drink

offering). This sequence displays part of the spiritual significance of the sacrificial system: (1) expiation, (2) consecration, (3) communion. Laying your hand on the animal indicated that the death you deserve for your sin is being passed on to the animal sacrificed in your place.

Chapter 8 – Ordination of the High Priest Aaron, and his Sons

-The priests are set apart (made holy) for their task by the act of ordination. Clothed in holy garments, dressed in God's holiness, and connected to the holiness of the temple. Aaron carried the names of God's people on the ephod; as Christ carries our names on his lips and heart.

-The people are gathered for a sacred assembly (vv.1-4), Aaron and his sons are prepared (vv.5-13), a bull and then a ram are slaughtered (vv.14-21), concluding with the ordination of (vv.22-36) that includes an "ordination offering."

Chapters 9-10 – The Beginning of the Priest's Ministry, and Two Who Do it Wrong

-In chapter 9 we see the priest's ministry begin, as they correctly carry out the tasks commanded in the opening chapters.

-Chapter 10 shows the two sons, Nadab and Abihu, present "unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command" and dying because of it. This vividly displays the holiness of God, as defined by God; along with the depth of human sin and the nature of divine worship. We see the necessity of doing things as God commands – without taking away from it, or adding to it.

-Jesus Christ as our perfect High Priest perfectly fulfilled the requirements of the law by his "passive" obedience (being the atoning sacrifice) and "active" obedience (doing all of what God commands).

-Sin includes "omission" (not doing or being what God requires) and "commission" (doing what God forbids. Israel was regularly guilty of adding to what God requires – which may seem silly when you consider on much was required; but Christians have displayed the same tendency especially in adding elements and aspects to worship.

Chapters 11-15 – Laws to Protect Ritual Cleanness

-These "purity" laws (cleanness) were not about hygiene, since Jesus declared all foods clean in the gospel age. They were mainly to keep Israel separated from idolatry, and separate/distinct from other nations. You were supposed to be able to see, hear, smell, and tell that Israel was different not only by their morality, but also by outward ceremonial aspects. However, due to our sinful nature, Israel not only practiced idolatry; but also made idols out of the ceremonial laws. Christ fulfills the moral and ceremonial law; therefore, in the gospel age the ceremonial law is abrogated but the moral law continues as an outworking of faith.

-*Chapter 11: Clean and Unclean Food.* Clean animals are those that both chew the cud and had a split hoof (i.e. not pigs). Clean fish are those that have fins and scales (i.e. not shellfish). Instructions regarding birds and insects (flying creatures) are included. The frequent refrain in the Book of Leviticus, "I am the Lord your God...be holy, because I am holy" is first used in 11:44,45.

-*Chapter 12: Purification after Childbirth.* Blood loss during childbirth signifies that one is unclean, and must become clean. There is no explanation given as to why a longer period of time is needed for the birth of a daughter. There is also no indication that this is because she is inferior or less pure.

-*Chapters 13-14: Skin Diseases.* Traditionally translated as "leprosy" but applying to more, these chapters cover the ceremonial uncleanness with regard to skin diseases. It is translated as "infectious skin disease" in the NIV and others, but the concept of infectiousness was not likely understood. The uncleanness likely applies to the fact that blood is involved at the skin level. Chapter 13 addresses the various cases in skin, clothes, and articles. Chapter 14 gives the purification rituals for the afflicted person and the afflicted house.

-*Chapter 15: Bodily Discharges.* Again, blood and other discharges cause a person to become ceremonially unclean. This is not to be understood as someone becoming “sinful” but “unclean.” The purification rituals encouraged a person and a community to experience restoration to a condition of cleanness, as sacrificial worship allowed a person to experience restoration from sin.

Chapter 16 – Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement)

-This chapter on the Day of Atonement is to be viewed as the climax of the sacrificial system and purification rituals that we’ve seen so far. In chapter 10, Nadab and Abihu died because they offered unauthorized fire. Chapter 16 begins by citing that event. The sin offering is made in the innermost part of the tabernacle. All the other sacrifices and purifications hinge on the ceremony of this day. Hebrews 9:7-14 provide a Christ-centered interpretation.

-The first goat, which is sacrificed points to Christ bearing our sins (expiation).

-The second goat, the scapegoat, points to Christ bearing God’s wrath (propitiation).

Chapters 17-22 – The Holiness Code

-These chapters outline moral laws and ceremonial laws, as well as elaborating on the priest’s holiness. The moral and ceremonial laws are mixed together, although it is not hard to distinguish them apart from each other. Showing them as intertwined points, again, to the sense in which Israel is to be a holy/separate/distinct people by their morality and their outward appearance/actions. Israel, as God’s people, are simply supposed to be different than all other nations. In the gospel age, God’s people are different from all other nations (while being comprised of people from all nations) in our morality and confidence in Christ – because of the person and work of Christ.

-*Chapter 17: The Place for Sacrifice & Eating Blood is Forbidden.* Sacrifices were to be made at the Tabernacle, as one means to avoid idolatry. Much of Israel’s idolatry were a result of building “high places” where they practiced idolatrous worship at idolatrous places. This is not unlike Christians who say “they don’t need to go to church” but can worship anywhere and anyway they prefer. The “regulative principle of worship” means that we are to worship as God has revealed that he wants to be worshiped, and only the way he has revealed he is to be worshiped.

-*Chapter 18: Unlawful Sexual Relations.* Sexual immorality has always been, and continues to be, evident in sinful nations. Old Testament Israel, and the New Testament Church (the New Israel – cf. Galatians 6:16) distinguishes themselves in part by sexual morality.

-*Chapter 19: Various Laws.* Moral and ceremonial laws intertwined. Look holy, be holy. Look different, be different. Be holy/different because the Lord is holy/different.

-*Chapter 20: Punishment for Sin.* There is much that is repeated from chapter 18, and shows the death penalty as a result for most. In this we also see that some sins are “more heinous in the sight of God than others” (cf. Westminster Shorter Catechism #83; Larger Catechism #150-151).

-*Chapters 21-22: Rules for Priests.* Priests serve as mediators between God and man, pointing to Christ as our eternal priest. The priests were “outwardly holy” (separate from other Israelites), but were not inwardly more holy or pure than others. Jesus is the perfect priest in every way.

Chapters 23-25 – Happy Holi-days (Sacred Feasts and Festivals)

-The holy-days begin with every Sabbath Day. We are still to keep the day holy/separate, but the ceremonial aspects of the day have changed in the gospel age.

-The holy-days include annual feasts & festivals that happen throughout the agricultural year. These, along with the Sabbath Year (every 7th year) and The Year of Jubilee (every 50th year), provided rest for the land and celebrated the reality that God provides.

Chapters 26-27 – Obedience, Disobedience, and Redemption

-The Covenant of Works & Cultural Mandate promise blessing for obedience (Genesis 1:28-30), and judgment for disobedience (Genesis 2:15-17). The Book of Exodus concludes with promises connected to obedience, and threats connected to disobedience. Chapter 26 of Leviticus does the same, and concludes the legislation from Mount Sinai. Chapter 27 serves as a sort of appendix or epilogue that underscore the importance of funding the sanctuary in the case of persons, animals, house, land, firstborn, devoted things, and tithes.