

# Leviticus and the Sacrificial System

## Lesson 1 – Introduction and Overview

### Introduction

The Hebrew title for the book we call Leviticus is the first word of the book, “way·yiq·rā” meaning, **And He (the LORD) called**. Leviticus is the shortest book of the Pentateuch, but God speaks more in Leviticus than in any other book in the Bible; more than fifty times the book claims that God spoke to Moses.

Jesus endorsed the authority of the book and the authorship of Moses in **Matt 8:4**, when He sent a man healed of leprosy to the priest. In **Luke 2:22-26**, when Mary presented Jesus at the Temple, she was following the law of **Lev 12:6-8**. Leviticus is quoted or alluded to at least 14 times in the New Testament.

Leviticus is the third book of the Pentateuch. The events recorded in Leviticus took place over a one-month period, while Israel was still at Mount Sinai, between the events of Exodus and Numbers,

- Exodus ends with the completion of the tabernacle (tent of meeting) “*in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month*” (**Ex 40:17**).
- Numbers begins “*on the first of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt*” (**Num 1:1**).
- Read, **Lev 1:1; 25:1; 26:46; 27:34**

In his book The Pentateuch, James E. Smith <sup>(1)</sup> offers a 7-point summary of the teaching of Leviticus,

1. **The Great Problem: Sin** – The fact of sin is recognized in the whole book. By sin, man is excluded from nearness and communion with God.
2. **The Great Provision: Sacrifice** – Redemption is achieved through sacrificial substitution; the innocent animal sheds its blood and pays the death penalty for the guilty sinner.
3. **The Great Power: Priesthood** – Man can only approach God through a divinely appointed mediator.
4. **The Great Plan: The Day of Atonement** – Once each year, the high priest enters the holy of holies, with blood for himself and the nation.
5. **The Great Possibility: Access to God** – Through the sacrifices and atonement, man can come into fellowship with God.
6. **The Great Principle: Holiness** – God’s holiness demands the same from His people. The idea of cleanliness is closely related.
7. **The Great Privilege: The Presence of God** – When man approaches God in the prescribed manner, he enjoys the presence of God, and the consequent blessings.

In addition, it teaches the impossibility of living up to the standard to which they were called. The sacrifices were insufficient... The priests were inadequate... In fact, “the Mosaic law in its entirety was part of a system which anticipated its own replacement with a better system, a new covenant (**Jer 31:31-34**)” <sup>(2)</sup>.

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### Objectives

1. Identify the theme of the book and see that it is still relevant for us today.
2. Gain an understanding of the overall book.
3. Learn about the holiness of God and what He expects from His people.
4. Understand the sacrifices and their purpose (**Lev 1-1-7; Ex 12:1-13; Num 19:1-9**).
5. Understand the appointed times, feasts and sacred days.
6. See how Leviticus foreshadowed Christ (**Col 2:16-17; Heb 8:4-5; 9:22-24; 10:1**)
7. Identify lessons from Leviticus that we can apply today.

### Lessons

1. Introduction and overview
2. Introduction to the Sacrifices including the red heifer
3. The Burnt Offering
4. Grain and Peace Offerings
5. Sin and Trespass Offerings
6. Consecration of the Priests
7. Nadab and Abihu
8. Holiness in daily life / Punishment of a blasphemer
9. Appointed times, feasts, and sacred days
10. The Sabbath Year and Year of Jubilee
11. The Day of Atonement
12. The Blessings and the curses

### Theme of Leviticus

The theme of Leviticus can be summed up in **Leviticus 19:2**,

*“You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”*

Six times in the book, God called his people to be holy (**Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26: 21:8**) The idea of holiness permeates the book. God is holy, and those who would be God’s people must be holy also.

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### Relevance for today

We are no longer under the Law of Moses; Jesus did away with that at the cross, but that does not mean Leviticus has no value for us today.

In **1 Peter 1:15-16** we read,

*“(15) like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; (16) because it is written, YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”*

Peter quotes **Leviticus 19:2** to show us that we must be holy... The covenants have changed, but God does not. The sacrifices, priesthood, and feasts of Leviticus were shadows, pointing to Christ. He is the reality.

We can learn from Leviticus what it means to serve a holy God.

The people of the Old Covenant were supposed to live in a way that brought glory to God. They were supposed to be separate, unique, set apart; not like the nations around them. They possessed the knowledge of God (**Rom 3:2**, “*entrusted with the oracles of God*”). It was through them that the world would come to know God; and more important, would come to salvation through the Messiah. In the same way, we are the people set apart to live holy lives, glorify God, and bring the saving Word to the world. Consider the following passages:

**Matthew 5:16,**

*“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”*

**1 Corinthians 10:31,**

*“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”*

**2 Corinthians 6:16-17,**

*“(16) Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. (17) “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord. “AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. (18) “And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says the Lord Almighty. (7:1) Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”*

### NOTES:

- 1) Smith, James E; *The Pentateuch* (College Press Publishing Company; 1992) pg. 349-350
- 2) Ibid. pg. 351

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### Outline of Leviticus

#### 1) The sacrificial system (1-10)

##### a) The laws concerning sacrifices (1:1-6:7)

- i) Burnt offering
- ii) Meal (grain) offering
- iii) Peace offering
- iv) Sin offering
- v) Trespass offering

##### b) Instructions for the priests (6:8-7:38)

- i) For burnt offerings
- ii) For meal offerings
- iii) For priestly grain offerings
- iv) For sin offerings
- v) For trespass offerings
- vi) For peace offerings

##### c) Ordination of the priests (8:1-10:20)

- i) Consecration to serve
- ii) The first sacrifices
- iii) The sin of Nadab and Abihu

#### 2) Walking with God in holiness (11-22)

##### a) Cleanliness and purification (11:1-15:33)

- i) Laws regarding clean and unclean
- ii) Purification after childbirth
- iii) Laws concerning leprosy
- iv) Laws concerning bodily issues

##### b) The Day of Atonement (16:1-34)

- i) Rules about entering the holy place
- ii) Making atonement for the High Priest and his household
- iii) Making atonement for the people
- iv) Making atonement for the holy place

##### c) Holiness in daily life (17:1-20:27)

- i) Holiness in food, sacrifice, and blood
- ii) Holiness in marriage
- iii) Holiness in society
- iv) Be holy because the LORD is holy

##### d) Holiness and the priests (21:1-22:33)

- i) Holiness standards for priests
- ii) Physical standards for priests
- iii) Take care with the holy gifts
- iv) Instructions on acceptable offerings

#### 3) Worshiping and serving God (23-27)

##### a) Appointed times and feasts (23:1-23:44)

- i) The Sabbath
- ii) The Passover
- iii) The feast of unleavened bread
- iv) The feast of first fruits
- v) The feast of weeks (Pentecost)
- vi) The feast of trumpets
- vii) The day of atonement
- viii) The feast of booths
- ix) A special assembly

##### b) Tabernacle rules, blasphemy and punishment, sacred years (24:1-25:55)

- i) Oil and bread for the tabernacle
- ii) Punishment for a blasphemer
- iii) Rules about proper levels of punishment
- iv) The sabbath year
- v) The year of Jubilee

##### c) Obedience or judgment (26:1-46)

- i) Blessing of obedience
- ii) Curses for disobedience
- iii) Promises for those who repent

##### d) Vows and redemption (27:1-34)

- i) Vows concerning people
- ii) Vows concerning animals
- iii) Consecration of property
- iv) Exclusions regarding vows