

## OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

### Leviticus

#### Leviticus

- "Leviticus" derived from the Septuagint, meaning "pertaining to the Levites"
  - deals with many matters pertaining to priests
  - Hebrew title, from initial words of the book: "And He called" (*wayyiqra*)
- primarily a listing/description of laws, with 2 brief narratives (chapters 8-10, 24:10-23)
- Structure of the book (adapted from Longman & Dillard, with some modifications):
  - I. Sacrificial laws (1:1-7:38)
    - A. Instructions for the laity (1:1-6:7)
      1. Burnt offering (chapter 1)
      2. Grain offering (chapter 2)
      3. Fellowship offering (chapter 3)
      4. Sin offering (chapter 4)
      5. Guilt offering (chapter 5)
    - B. Instructions for the priests (6:8-7:38)
  - II. Priestly narrative (8:1-10:20)
    - A. Formal beginnings of the priesthood (chapters 8-9)
    - B. Limits on the priesthood - Nadab & Abihu (chapter 10)
  - III. Laws to protect ritual cleanness (11:1-15:33)
    - A. Dietary prescriptions (chapter 11)
    - B. Birth laws (chapter 12)
    - C. Discernment & cleansing of skin diseases and mildew (chapters 13-14)
    - D. Laws about bodily discharges
  - IV. The Day of Atonement (16:1-34)
  - V. The "Holiness Code" (17:1-27:34)
    - A. Laws (17:1-25:55)
      1. Handling blood (chapter 17)
      2. Incest and other forbidden sexual relations (chapter 18)
      3. Miscellaneous laws (chapter 19)
      4. Punishments for various sins (chapter 20)
      5. Laws concerning priests and sacrifices (chapter 21-22)
      6. Sabbath and festivals (chapter 23)
      7. Tabernacle laws (24:1-9)
      8. Narrative: punishment of a blasphemer (24:10-23)
      9. Sabbath years and the Jubilee year (chapter 25)
    - B. Blessings and curses (26:1-46)
      1. Blessings for obedience (26:1-13)
      2. Curses for disobedience (26:14-46)
    - C. Gifts devoted to the Lord (27:1-34)

#### Leviticus - Overview

#### Leviticus 1-7 Sacrificial laws

- **General considerations**
  - Hebrew word "*qorban*" - "gift", or "something brought near"
  - intention/desire to draw near to God

- by restoring broken relationship by atoning for sins (expiation)
    - by bringing a gift to God
    - by entering into communion/fellowship with God
  - five different types of offerings prescribed (4 animal, 1 grain), with different purposes
  - animals offered had to be without defect (1:3; 22:19-25)
  - animal offerings followed a similar basic pattern, with some variations depending on the type of offering, including:
    - laying hands on animal's head - signifies transferring of sin/guilt
    - slaughter of the animal - the penalty for sin (i.e. death)
    - sprinkling blood on the altar - evidence that the penalty has been paid
    - burning all or parts of the animal - offering up the animal to God
    - +/- a meal (for some offerings only) - signifies peace/fellowship with God
- Sacrificial laws - outline
  - Instructions for the laity (1:1-6:7)
    - 1. Burnt offering (chapter 1)
    - 2. Grain offering (chapter 2)
    - 3. Fellowship offering (chapter 3)
    - 4. Sin offering (chapter 4)
    - 5. Guilt offering (chapter 5)
  - Instructions for the priests (6:8-7:38)
- Burnt offering (1:1-17; 6:8-13)
  - voluntary act of worship/devotion
  - atoning for sin, but also a 'gift' to God
  - several different animals could be offered
  - entire animal was burned up (except the hide of bulls, which went to the priest)
- Grain offering (2:1-16; 6:14-23)
  - voluntary act of worship/devotion
  - often (usually?) presented with other (animal) offerings
  - could include flour or baked bread; with incense, oil and salt, but no yeast
  - only part was burned up; the rest belonged to the priest
- Fellowship (Peace) offering (3:1-17; 7:11-34)
  - voluntary act of worship/devotion
  - expression of thanksgiving, and desire to be in communion with God
  - various animals could be offered
  - only part of the animal was burned; part went to the priest, part to the worshipper
  - sacrifice was followed by a 'fellowship meal' - idea of 'eating with God'
- Sin (Purification) offering (4:1-5:13; 6:24-30)
  - required offering to atone for unintentional sins (4:1)
  - different types of offerings required for different people
  - in the case of offerings for sins by the priest or the whole Israelite community, part of the animal was burned on the altar, and the rest burned outside the camp
  - for everyone else, part of the animal was burned on the altar and the rest belonged to the priest
- Guilt offering (5:14-6:7; 7:1-7)
  - required offering to atone for unintentional sins pertaining to "the holy things of the LORD" (5:15), or sins requiring restitution/reparation (6:1-3)
  - in addition to the offering, required repayment of an additional 20%
  - part of the animal was burned up and the rest belonged to the priest

## Leviticus 8-10 - Priestly narrative

- Formal beginnings of the priesthood (chapters 8-9)
  - Aaron and his sons (Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, Ithamar) ordained (set apart for service as priests) according to instructions in Exodus 29 (chapter 8)
    - washing with water
    - clothed in priestly garments
    - anointed with oil
    - sin offering, burnt offering, ordination offering (sacrifices) performed
    - Aaron and his sons stayed at the Tent of Meeting for seven days
  - after the 7 days, another sin offering and burnt offering presented (chapter 9)
    - the glory of the LORD appeared and fire comes out from the presence of the LORD and consumes the offerings
- Limits on the priesthood (chapter 10)
  - 2 of Aaron's sons (Nadab & Abihu) offer unauthorized fire, contrary to God's command
  - fire comes out from the presence of the LORD, and consumes them

"Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified." (10:3)

- Aaron and his remaining sons not permitted to mourn, but had to complete the ordination process

## Leviticus 11-15 - Laws to protect ritual cleanness

- Dietary prescriptions (chapter 11)
  - Laws on what kinds of animals could or could not be eaten (clean vs. unclean)
  - clean animals included
    - those with a split hoof *and* chews cud (e.g. cows, sheep, goats)
    - fish with fins *and* scales
    - certain kinds of birds
    - some kinds of insects
  - touching carcass of an unclean animal renders a person/object unclean --> need washing
- Birth laws (chapter 12)
  - a woman is unclean for 40 days after birth of a son (80 days after birth of a daughter)
  - after this period, she is to present a burnt offering to become clean
- Discernment & cleansing of skin diseases (chapters 13-14)
  - regulations concerning 'leprosy' (probably referring to a range of skin infections) and mildew
  - priests were to inspect those suspected to have leprosy, and possessions or houses with suspected mildew
  - those who were confirmed to have leprosy disease were unclean and had to live outside the camp until they were healed
  - possessions confirmed to have mildew were to be burned
  - mildew in houses had to be removed; if it returned, the house had to be destroyed
- Laws about bodily discharges (chapter 15)
  - various bodily discharges rendered a person unclean, including menstruation, emission of semen, other discharges
  - anything or anyone touching the person with the discharge was unclean - had to be washed
  - some discharges required offering burnt offerings to be cleansed

## Leviticus 16 - The Day of Atonement

- A day each year (10th day of the 7th month) set apart for making atonement for the entire nation

- The only day, once a year, when anyone (i.e. Aaron, or the High Priest) could enter the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle
    - had to start with a sin offering (a bull) to make atonement for himself and his household
    - then slaughter a goat for a sin offering for the people of Israel
      - some of this goat's blood taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled over and in front of the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant
    - after this, the high priest came out and lay hands on head of a second goat (the "scapegoat"), who would be led out into the wilderness and released
      - symbolizes carrying away of the nation's sins
    - finished with 2 burnt offerings, one for the high priest, and one for the people
- "For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins." (16:30)

### **Leviticus 17-27 - The "Holiness Code"**

- Various Laws (chapters 17-25)
- Blessings and curses (chapter 26)
- Gifts devoted to the Lord (chapter 27)
  
- Handling blood (chapter 17)
  - sacrificing (shedding blood) outside of designated areas forbidden
  - eating blood forbidden
 

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." (17:11)
  
- Incest and other forbidden sexual relations (chapter 18)
  - sexual relations with close relatives forbidden
  - adultery, homosexual relations, and bestiality forbidden
 

""Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean.... lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you." (18:24,28)
  
- Miscellaneous laws (chapter 19)
  - wide range of laws pertaining to relationship towards God and towards other people
    - foundational principle underlying laws: "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." (19:2)
    - practical implications of holiness
  
- Punishments for various sins (chapter 20)
  - list of sins punishable by death
    - includes various sexual sins, e.g. adultery, homosexual sex, bestiality
    - also sacrificing to Molech; cursing parents
  - other sins (mostly sexual) for which the sinners were to be cut off from the people
  
- Laws concerning priests and sacrifices (chapter 21-22)
  - who priests could or could not marry
  - regulations about priests remaining clean or becoming unclean
  - requirement for priests to be without physical defect
  - requirement for sacrifices offered to God to be without defect
  
- Sabbath and festivals (chapter 23)
  - In addition to the weekly Sabbath, several festivals were to be observed

- Passover (14th day of 1st month) and Feast of unleavened bread (15th-21st day of 1st month)
  - Firstfruits - presentation of firstfruits of harvest to God
  - Feast of weeks (Pentecost) - 50 days after the Sabbath immediately preceding Firstfruits
  - Feast of Trumpets (later Rosh Hashanah) - 1st day of 7th month
  - Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) - 10th day of 7th month
  - Feast of Tabernacles - 15th to 21st day of 7th month
- Tabernacle laws (24:1-9)
  - requirements concerning olive oil for the lamps of the tabernacle, and bread & incense to be presented to the LORD in the tabernacle
- Narrative: punishment of a blasphemer (24:10-23)
  - account of judgment passed on a blasphemer - death by stoning
  - reiteration of principle of justice - exact retribution: "eye for eye, tooth for tooth"
- Sabbath years and the Jubilee year (chapter 25)
  - every 7th year was to be a Sabbath year - fields were not to be sown or reaped, but given rest
  - every 50th year (year after 7th Sabbath year) was a Jubilee Year
    - an additional Sabbath year (nothing sown or reaped)
    - on Day of Atonement, liberty was proclaimed throughout the land
      - land that had been sold returned to its original owner
      - Israelites who had sold themselves into servitude were set free
    - for those selling land or themselves (into servitude), the price was set according to the number of years until the Jubilee
      - justice preserved for both buyer and seller (not a 'redistribution of wealth')
    - principle of redemption established
      - someone who had sold land (or self) could redeem it back by paying the equivalent cost of the sale
      - alternatively, a relative (a "kinsman-redeemer") could redeem the land or the person
  - Sabbath years & year of Jubilee probably were never observed after the Israelites entered Canaan (2 Chronicles 36:21)
- Blessings and curses (chapter 26)
  - Covenant blessings for obedience: rain, bountiful harvests, peace, prosperity, victory over enemies
  - Covenant curses for disobedience: diseases, crop failures, devastation by wild animals and enemies, exile
    - increasing severity of punishments as God's people continue to persist in rejecting Him
- Gifts devoted to the LORD (chapter 27)
  - regulations pertaining to people or things devoted to the LORD
  - redeeming these, if permitted, required paying the full value, plus additional 20% (one fifth)

### **Major Themes and Concepts in Leviticus**

- Holiness
  - "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." (19:2)
  - God is holy, and His people must therefore also be holy, especially if they are to approach Him

- holiness includes notion of being set apart (consecrated) as well as purity
    - both concepts come together in who God is
    - both concepts to be reflected in God's people
  
  - only 2 "narrative" passages in Leviticus, both of which end in death for those who fail to treat God as holy
    - Nadab & Abihu (10:1-3)
    - the man who blasphemed God's name (24:10-16)
  
  - Mankind, and even God's own chosen people, are separated from God because He is holy and they are not
    - we must worship as God desires to be worshipped - Nadab & Abihu
    - those seeking relationship/fellowship with God can only do so on His terms, and after their sins are dealt with
      - hence, the need for a constant stream of sacrifices/offerings, and the detailed requirements regarding offerings/sacrifices required to make atonement
      - the shed blood of the sacrifice represents the punishment of death inflicted on the sinner, removing (expiating) God's wrath on the sinner - a constant, graphic reminder of the cost of sin

"Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22)

    - only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, into God's presence once a year - and then very carefully and with the proper sacrifice  - those who fail to live up to His standards are under His curse (26:14-46)
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- Laws and regulations on clean vs. unclean
  - visible, tangible reminders of the principle of holiness among God's people

"You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and clean" (10:10)

  - God's people are to be distinct/set apart from the nations around them

"Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean." (18:24)

  - God's people are to be pure, as God is pure

"Every swarming thing that swarms on the ground is detestable; it shall not be eaten.... You shall not make yourselves detestable with any swarming thing that swarms, and you shall not defile yourselves with them, and become unclean through them. For I am the LORD your

God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." (11:41,43-45)

- a continual reminder that the defilement of uncleanness/sin is pervasive and spreads so much more easily than holiness/cleanness
  - persons/objects touching someone/something that is unclean, themselves become unclean
  - constant need for washing, purification, and in some cases of uncleanness, even sacrifices for cleansing
- holiness has implications for all of life
  - impacts on our relationships with God and with one another
  - e.g. Leviticus 19, which contains a range of laws encompassing worship and interpersonal relationships is prefaced by "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy." (19:2)
- The need for a New (and better) Covenant (cf. Hebrews 8-10)
  - pervasive tone developing in Exodus (starting with Exodus 32), Leviticus, and through Numbers that Israel is (and will be) unable to keep the Mosaic covenant
    - the constant need for sacrifices and the Day of Atonement presuppose the reality of ongoing sin and transgression
    - at the climax of the ordination of Aaron and his sons, Nadab and Abihu are put to death for their disobedience
    - the covenant curses listed in chapter 26 seem prophetic, and describe what will in fact happen to the nation of Israel through the rest of the OT
      - the curses also seem to be given much more weight than the blessings
        - 33 verses of curses, compared to 13 verses of blessings
    - the Law points out sin and its consequences, but comes without the power to overcome sin
    - yet in the midst of the curses of Leviticus 26, hope to be found in the faithfulness of God to His promises

"But if they confess their iniquity... then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land... Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sake remember

the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD." (26:40-45)

- the need for repeated sacrifices and Days of Atonement year after year suggest that the provisions for atonement of sin set out here are ultimately insufficient for dealing with sin

"For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (Hebrews 10:1-4)

- points to a need for a New Covenant
  - one that will deal decisively with the problem of sin
  - one that comes with the desire - and the power - to obey God's laws
  - anticipates the promise of a new covenant through the Prophets (e.g. Jeremiah 31:31-34), fulfilled ultimately in Jesus Christ

### Glimpses of Christ in Leviticus

- 'types' of Christ in Leviticus include
  - the sacrificial system
    - sacrifices without blemish --> Jesus Christ, the spotless lamb of God
    - anticipates sacrifice of Jesus Christ to atone for our sins and restore our fellowship with God (cf. Romans 3:21-26; Hebrews 10:1-10)
  - the High Priest, in particular entering the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement with blood to make atonement for the sins of the people
    - anticipates the High Priestly function of Christ, who entered the presence of God with His own blood (Hebrews 9)
- Jesus Christ, the mediator of the New and better Covenant (read the book of Hebrews!)
  - has atoned for sin once for all, through His own blood (Hebrews 9:1-10:18)
  - has given those who have faith in Him a new heart and the Holy Spirit to indwell them and enable them to obey God (Romans 8:1-17)
  - has opened the way for us to enter into God's presence with confidence (Hebrews 10:19-22)

"But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises." (Hebrews 8:6)

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and, all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:19-25)



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