

Leviticus

I. The Main Idea of Leviticus

The book of Leviticus contains God's instructions to the Israelites about how to live holy lives under the Mosaic covenant. In this book the Israelites are given laws about how to follow God (Lev. 18:4) and people love (Lev. 19:18).

- *Leviticus 18:4 "You shall **follow my rules** and **keep my statutes** and walk in them. I am the LORD your God."*
- *Leviticus 19:18 "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but **you shall love your neighbor as yourself**: I am the LORD."*

II. Outline of Leviticus

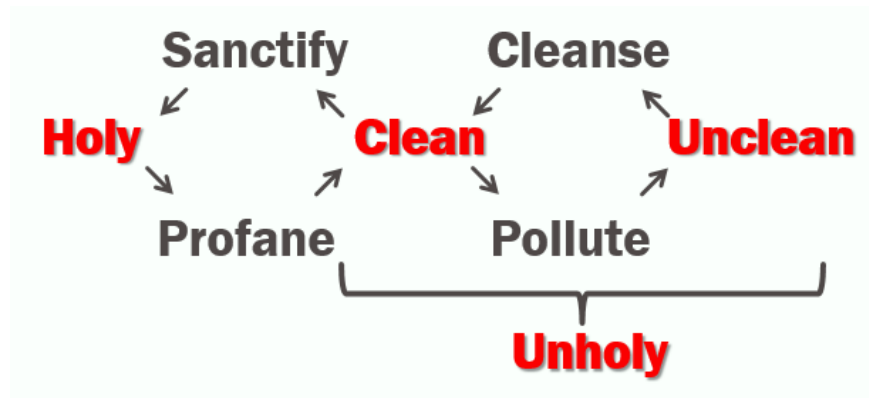
Leviticus 1-16 Covenant Worship
Leviticus 17-27 Covenant Ethics

III. Interpretive Keys to Leviticus

- Genre: Law
 - Unlike the surrounding books which are mostly historical narrative, the book of Leviticus is comprised mostly of law: instructions the Israelites were to follow as part of their covenant responsibilities.
 - Remember that the 10 Commandments set the trajectory for the rest of the laws. So the laws in Leviticus provide additional details on many of the concepts introduced in the 10 Commandments.



- The concepts of holy vs. unholy and clean vs. unclean provide the key to understanding the various laws about sacrifice and daily living.
 - Similar to how your family may have different levels of “cleanliness” based on the situation, the Israelites had to exhibit a higher level of “cleanliness” now that God was in their midst.
 - Lev. 26:12 “I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.” (God’s Ultimate Goal)



- Leviticus explains how people and things can move from one level to another.
 - Moving to an “unclean” status could be the result of sin, a discharge of blood, touching something that is dead, etc.
 - Moving to a “clean” or “holy” status could be the result of a sacrifice, a washing, time passing, etc.
- “Unclean” did not necessarily mean “sinful.”
- It carries the idea of “out of order.”
- It was the responsibility of the Priests to instruct the people on this issue and to make the judgment call on whether someone or something was holy, clean, or unclean.
 - Leviticus 10:8-11 “And the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying, “Drink no wine or strong drink, you or your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. **You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean,** and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the Lord has spoken to them by Moses.”

IV. Key Passages of Leviticus

- Lev. 10:3 “Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.”
 - The only narrative story in the book of Leviticus happens in chapter 10. The story emphasizes an important point:
 - Living with God required a high level of respect and reverence for God. The incident where Nadab & Abihu were killed by God are an indication of the seriousness of the situation.

- “Modern worship is often characterized by ethos, talent, polish, and celebration over an assumed love provided by God to his darling worshippers. In sharp contrast, worship in Leviticus is marked by danger, expulsion, personal and corporate ethics, burning flesh, dried blood, sin, impurity, death, and a marked distinction between Israel and their holy redeemer God.” – D. Jeffrey Mooney and Jason S. DeRouchie, *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus’ Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2013), 104.

- Lev. 19:2 “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”
 - The phrase “Be holy for I am holy” (or a similar phrase) occurs several times in Leviticus: Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:6.
 - Something that was “holy” was dedicated to the Lord and was usually used in the Tabernacle in some way. So the call for an Israelite to “be holy” was a call to think of themselves as being dedicated to the Lord. Just as the Lord is sinless, Israel was called to live lives free from sin.
 - There were two dimensions to the holiness Israel needed:
 - The first dimension was symbolic, in which Israel symbolized their separateness from the nations through the regulations about animals, foods, and other daily situations.
 - Second, holiness took an ethical dimension, calling for personal holiness with integrity, justice, and compassion in all areas of life.
 - These two dimensions worked together: foreigners first would notice the symbolic differences, and as they got to know the Israelites would later notice the ethical differences. In this way, Gentiles could be drawn to Israel’s God.
 - Applications to today? We should strive to be different and make others say “What is different about them?”
 - This concept of “be holy” is picked up by the New Testament writers and applied to the church:
 - Ephesians 1:3-4 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”
 - 1 Peter 1:14-16 “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, **‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’**”
 - Ephesians 5:25-27 “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”

- Lev. 19:18 “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but **you shall love your neighbor as yourself:** I am the Lord.”
 - When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He quoted two commandments. According to Jesus, this is the second greatest commandment.



Good Samaritan inn on road to Jericho

- Matthew 22:34-40 "But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: **You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.'"
- Later in the New Testament, Paul explains the concept more fully:
 - Romans 13:8-10 "Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: '**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."
- James refers to this as the "Royal Law":
 - James 2:8 "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, '**You shall love your neighbor as yourself,**' you are doing well."

V. Messianic Elements within Leviticus

Prophecies: None.

Foreshadowing Events: The Sacrifices

Similar to how your shadow casts a different shape when light hits it from a different angle, the various sacrifices in the book of the Leviticus foreshadows different elements of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.



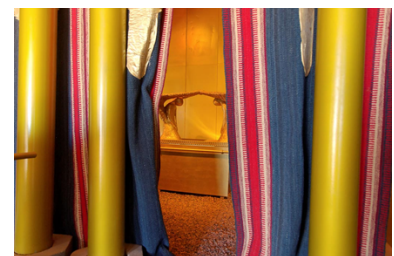
Tabernacle model

Sacrifice	Purpose	NT Connection
Burnt Offering Lev. 1:1-17; 6:8-13	Forgiveness/ Atonement for Sin	Jesus was male and without defect (1 Pet. 1:18-19), sacrificed entirely, and was a pleasing aroma (Eph. 5:2). But Christ died only once (Heb 10:12).
Grain/Meal Offering Lev. 2:1-16; 6:14-23	Optional Gift to God. Dedication of one's labor to God (firstfruits).	Paul uses firstfruit grain offering as analogy for Jews: "If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump" (Rom. 11:16). No leaven was to be used in this offering; Jesus warned the disciples to beware of the leaven of the

Sacrifice	Purpose	NT Connection
		Pharisees & Sadducees (i.e., their teaching & hypocrisy: Matt. 16:6-12; Luke 12:1; cf. 1 Cor. 5:6-8 & Gal. 5:9).
Peace/Fellowship Offering Lev. 3:1-17; 7:11-36	Celebrated fellowship with God. Communal Meal.	Shared meal is similar to communion, which celebrated Christ's presence and was designed to praise God (1 Cor. 10:16). The participant must be pure (Lev. 7:20; 1 Cor. 11:27).
Sin/Purification Offering Lev. 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30	Restore relationship with God by atoning for sin.	Jesus was the sin offering who reconciled God and man (2 Cor. 5:20-21). Jesus' blood made the atonement (Heb. 2:17; 9:11-14).
Guilt/Reparation Offering Lev. 5:14-6:7; 7:1-10	Restore relationship by means of repayment of a debt. Debt could be caused by mistreatment of fellow man or offense against God's sacred property.	Sin places a person in debt to God (Matt 18:21-35). Sin is described as a debt in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our debts ..." Matt. 6:12. Jesus' death is explained as a guilt offering in Isa. 53:10, thus it removes the debt we owe to God. In the NT, Jesus "paid" for the sins of man (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 6:20; Rev 5:9).

Types of Christ: The High Priest on the Day of Atonement

- The Day of Atonement – Lev. 16
 - Significance: Holiest day of the year.
 - Purpose: to cleanse the tabernacle from pollution.
 - Necessary so that God could continue to dwell in their midst (16:16, 19). Annual ceremony.
 - Leviticus 16:15-16 "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleanness."
- The New Testament book of Hebrews goes into great detail explaining how Jesus is our High Priest. He is not a high priest under the Mosaic Covenant because he is not a descendant of Aaron. Instead he has a better priesthood because he is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20; Ps. 110:4). In his function as our high priest, he makes atonement for our sin.
 - Hebrews 2:17 "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become



Tabernacle model. Ark of the

a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, **to make propitiation [a.k.a., propitiation] for the sins of the people.**"

- Hebrews 8:1-2 "Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such **a high priest**, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, **a minister in the holy places, in the holy places the Lord set up**, not man."
- Hebrews 9:11-14 "**But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places**, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."