

Leviticus 21-22

Bible Study

Review

Chapter 17 (Continues the theme of holiness)

- Domestic animals must be offered only at the tabernacle
 - Prohibition against eating blood—
 - blood must be drained properly
- Special purpose for making (atonement for sin on the altar)

Chapter 18 (Laws regarding sexual immorality)

- Guidelines for holy living and behavior
- Israel to follow God's guidelines and not the pagans

Chapter 19 (Laws to maintain holy relationships with God and men)

- Several commandments reiterated
- Principles for dealing with neighbors
 - Several pagan customs to avoid

Chapter 20 (Punishments for not obeying God's principles)

- Child sacrifice to Molech—to be stoned
- Homosexuality and adultery—to be put to death

Chapter 21

Regulations concerning only the priesthood

¹And the Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: ‘None shall defile himself for the dead among his people,

“the priests, the sons of Aaron”—only occurs here

Touching a dead body brought uncleanness for seven days [Num. 19:11]

The priests were to avoid ceremonial uncleanness arising from contact with the dead [v.1], except in the case of a close relative (a blood relative within his household) [v.2-3]

²except for his relatives who are nearest to him: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother;

³also his virgin sister who is near to him, who has had no husband, for her he may defile himself.

⁴*Otherwise* he shall not defile himself, *being* a chief man among his people, to profane himself

v. 4 (Understanding the Bible Commentary)

“a priest is not to defile himself because he is a leader in holiness and handles holy things.”

⁵They shall not make any bald *place* on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh.

v. 5 These practices of self-disfigurement were forbidden to the priests because of their pagan origin

(Holman Com. OT) “The only place the priests would learn such practices was from the neighboring nations around them who incorporated such things in heathen rituals” v. 6

Circumspect in behavior

⁶They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God, for they offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire, *and* the bread of their God; therefore they shall be holy.

“bread of their God”

(Tyndale) “bread, being an ancient sacrificial term for flesh”

“bread of their God”

(Understanding the Bible Commentary) “any food that can be legitimately sacrificed and of which the priestly family can have a share”

Leviticus 3:11

¹¹and the priest shall burn *them* on the altar *as* food, an offering made by fire to the Lord.

(Companion) “food= (Heb. Bread), for food in general”

v. 7-9 Priests and their marriage

⁷They shall not take a wife *who is* a harlot or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for ^ε*the priest* is holy to his God.

⁸Therefore you shall consecrate him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you, for I the Lord, who sanctify you, *am* holy.

⁹The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the harlot, she profanes her father. She shall be burned with fire.

v. 7 “defiled woman”

(Understanding the Bible Comm.) “Those who have been defiled may be those who were forced into defiling acts.”
(pagan practices)

v.9 If the daughter of the priest turned to harlotry she was burned with fire, a way of discouraging sin that was associated with heathen worship

¹⁰*He who is the **high priest** among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes;*

¹¹*nor shall he go near any dead body, nor defile himself for his father or his mother;*

¹²*nor shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God *is* upon him: I *am* the Lord.*

v. 10 “shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes”

Uncover head—removing the turban; tearing clothes (mourning)—priestly clothing was consecrated

- The high priest had to maintain high grooming standards as represented by his priestly clothing

v. 11 The high priest could not participate in funerals even of close relatives (father or mother) (which was allowed for the regular priests [v.2-3])

v. 12 The high priest had to confine himself, mostly to the sanctuary

¹³And he shall take a wife in her virginity.

¹⁴A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman *or* a harlot—these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife.

¹⁵Nor shall he profane his posterity among his people, for I the Lord sanctify him.”

The wife of the high priest had to be a virgin, not even a widow was allowed

v. 14 “he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife’

(New Int. Com. OT) “It may mean the by marrying such a girl he will ensure her children are really his own. If he married a woman who was not a virgin, there would always be the possibility that the first child (and potential high priest) would not be of priestly stock”

v.16-24 physical qualifications for the
priesthood

¹⁶And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁷“Speak to Aaron, saying: ‘No man of your descendants in *succeeding* generations, who has *any* defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God.

¹⁸For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred *face* or any *limb* too long,

^{19a}a man who has a broken foot or broken hand,

²⁰or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or *a man* who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch.

²¹No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near **to offer the offerings made by fire to the Lord**. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God.

Those priests with a physical defect may not serve in the offering of sacrifice—he remains in the priestly family but cannot offer sacrifices

(Holman Com. OT) “The Lord did not allow any priest who had a physical defect or deformity to officiate in the sanctuary. Just as the Lord required the animals destined for sacrifice to be without blemish, so he required the same for priest who represented him”

(Understanding the Bible Comm.) “The conditions aim again to maintain holiness in these priests who will be in contact with holy things”

²²He may eat the bread of his God, *both* the most holy and the holy;

²³only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the Lord sanctify them.”

²⁴And Moses told *it* to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel.

v. 22

(Understanding the Bible Comm.) “The member of the priestly family with the defect may, however, continue to eat of the priest’s portions of the sacrifices.
The most holy food needs to be eaten in a holy place”

v. 23 The priest with a defect could not do service near the altar by the curtain of the most holy place

Chapter 22

Instructions to the priests about the care of the offerings

¹Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,
²“Speak to Aaron and his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they do not profane My holy name *by* what they dedicate to Me: I *am* the Lord.

The sacred offerings are to be treated with respect
“separate themselves from the holy things”= priests who are unclean not to touch the sacrificial food

³Say to them: ‘Whoever of all your descendants throughout your generations, who goes near the holy things which the children of Israel dedicate to the Lord, while he has uncleanness upon him, that person shall be cut off from My presence: I *am* the Lord.

An unclean priest who goes near the sacrificial food would be cut off from God’s presence—a divine penalty

List of causes of being unclean:

⁴Whatever man of the descendants of Aaron, who *is* a leper or has a discharge, shall not eat the holy offerings until he is clean. And whoever touches anything made unclean *by* a corpse, or a man who has had an emission of semen,

⁵or whoever touches any creeping thing by which he would be made unclean, or any person by whom he would become unclean, whatever his uncleanness may be—

⁶the person who has touched any such thing shall be unclean until evening, and shall not eat the holy *offerings* unless he washes his body with water.

v. 4 “shall not eat the holy offerings until he is clean”—verse six explains the method of cleaning

v. 6 The uncleanness lasts until evening...the priest must bathe...afterwards he may eat the priestly portion of the sacrifice

⁷And when the sun goes down he shall be clean; and afterward he may eat the holy *offerings*, because it *is* his food.

⁸Whatever dies *naturally* or is torn *by beasts* he shall not eat, to defile himself with it: I *am* the Lord.

⁹They shall therefore keep My ordinance, lest they bear sin for it and die thereby, if they profane it: I the Lord sanctify them.

v. 7 After having bathed, and the sun goes down he will be declared clean

v. 8

(Understanding the Bible Comm.) “The concern is that the priest might consume blood, That would also incur impurity. (Blood not properly drained)

v. 10-16 Further instructions concerning the priestly portions of the sacrifices

¹⁰No outsider shall eat the holy *offering*; one who dwells with the priest, or a hired servant, shall not eat the holy thing.

¹¹But if the priest buys a person with his money, he may eat it; and one who is born in his house may eat his food.

¹²If the priest's daughter is married to an outsider, she may not eat of the holy offerings.

¹³But if the priest's daughter is a widow or divorced, and has no child, and has returned to her father's house as in her youth, she may eat her father's food; but no outsider shall eat it

v.10 The priestly portion of the food was restricted to the family or household of the priest

'one who dwells' = a guest/ 'hired servant' — cannot partake

v. 11 "buys a person" = a purchased slave—considered part of the household along with one born in the house—they may partake

v. 12 priest's daughter marries—cannot partake...her new family now provides... Unless she returns to the priest's home [v. 13]

¹⁴And if a man eats the holy *offering* unintentionally, then he shall restore a holy *offering* to the priest, and add one-fifth to it.

¹⁵They shall not profane the holy *offerings* of the children of Israel, which they offer to the Lord,

¹⁶or allow them to bear the guilt of trespass when they eat their holy *offerings*; for I the Lord sanctify them.”

v. 14 If someone unintentionally ate the priest's portion of the sacrifice—he must restore what he ate plus one-fifth in restitution

v. 15 A warning to the priests to be careful that the wrong persons partake of the food

v. 16 (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series)

“The priests cannot use the offerings as favors or payments. To do so would desecrate these holy offerings and bring upon them the guilt requiring payment.”

v. 17-25 These verses maintain that the sacrificial animals are to be without blemish

➤ [I Peter 1: 19] “but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”

¹⁷And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁸“Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, who offers his sacrifice for any of his vows or for any of his freewill offerings, which they offer to the Lord as a burnt offering—
¹⁹*you shall offer* of your own free will a male without blemish from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats.

²⁰Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf.

²¹And whoever offers a sacrifice of a peace offering to the Lord, to fulfill *his* vow, or a freewill offering from the cattle or the sheep, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.

²²Those *that are* blind or broken or maimed, or have an ulcer or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to the Lord, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to the Lord.

(Holman OT Comm.) “The connection between priest and sacrifice becomes clearer in this section. Some of the same defects mentioned for the priests are repeated here for animal sacrifices.”

²³Either a bull or a lamb that has any limb too long or too short you may offer *as* a freewill offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted.

²⁴You shall not offer to the Lord what is bruised or crushed, or torn or cut; nor shall you make *any offering of them* in your land.

²⁵Nor from a foreigner's hand shall you offer any of these as the bread of your God, because their corruption *is* in them, *and* defects *are* in them. They shall not be accepted on your behalf.'"

v. 23 "freewill offering"—a voluntary offering (not one of the five offerings)...more latitude was given

v. 24 (Holman OT Comm.)

"The Lord even outlawed animals that had their reproductive organs damaged or removed, no doubt because they represented the reproductive creation of God."

"in your land"—looking forward to the land of Canaan

v. 25 "from a foreigner's hand"—animal of unknown origin

v. 26-28 Limitations concerning young sacrificial animals

²⁶And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

²⁷“When a bull or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall be seven days with its mother; and from the eighth day and thereafter it shall be accepted as an offering made by fire to the Lord.

²⁸*Whether it is a cow or ewe, do not kill both her and her young on the same day.*

v. 27 Young animals were not acceptable before the eighth day...
▪ “seven days” —would allow the animal to develop some size

v. 28 Not to kill the mother and its young on the same day—as was done in some pagan cults....and possibly the concern for the continuation of the herd or flock

A reminder concerning the thanksgiving offering

²⁹And when you offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord, offer *it* of your own free will.

³⁰On the same day it shall be eaten; you shall leave none of it until morning: I *am* the Lord.

The thanksgiving offering must be eaten on the same day

Leviticus 7:15

¹⁵'The flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day it is offered. He shall not leave any of it until morning.

³¹“Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and perform them: I *am* the Lord.

³²You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I *am*
the Lord who sanctifies you,

³³who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I *am* the Lord.”

v. 31 (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series)

“Commands is a general term to designate the instructions in the holiness code.”

v. 32 ‘not profane My holy name’ (Understanding the Bible Comm.)

“The people are called to maintain that relationship by way of these instructions in living
a life as God’s holy people.

In doing so Israel would acknowledge God as holy. To do otherwise would profane God’s
holy name, that is, would profane God.”

Lessons

The priests who ministered at the altar were given personal prohibitions to promote priestly purity and motivations for holiness

1 Peter 2:5

⁵you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

All of God's people were set apart and they exemplify holiness in their lives...the **priests** to set the example for the rest of the nation