

Leviticus Introduction

Bible Study

Review [Exodus]—God's glory

Exodus 24:16

¹⁶Now the **glory of the Lord** rested **on Mount Sinai**, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He ***called to Moses*** out of the midst of the cloud.

Exodus 40:34

³⁴Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the **glory of the Lord** filled the **tabernacle**.

Leviticus 1:1

¹Now the Lord ***called to Moses***, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying,

Review [Exodus]—God's
covenant purpose for Israel

Exodus 19:6

⁶And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and **a holy nation.**' These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Leviticus focuses on the way God's people should interact with His holiness, in their worship and other aspects of their life



Sacrifices—how to approach Him (Ch. 1-7)
What to eat—to consecrate them and be holy (Ch.11)
His feasts to keep—sacred times to worship God (Ch.23)

Leviticus Introduction

The name 'Leviticus' means—pertaining to the Levites
Comes from the Greek Septuagint [*Leuitikon*']

However, the book deals more with the **priests** than the Levites

➤ The priests were of the family of Aaron...**from** the tribe of Levi

The priests officiated over a system of sacrifices and rituals having been ordained by God as a mediator between Him and the people of Israel

Before this time the father of a family often acted as priest...but now Israel received from God instructions for worship in a certain amount of order and regulation

(Tyndale) "Leviticus enlarges upon matters involving the ordering of worship at the divine sanctuary that are mentioned only briefly in Exodus.

Whereas [Exodus] described the specifications and construction of the tabernacle, Leviticus narrates the way in which the priests are to care for the sanctuary and throne room of the Great King."

Moses

Moses the author of the book—apparently much of Leviticus was written in the 1st month of the 2nd year of Israel’s wandering...possibly finishing it in final form before his death, 40 years later

Christ referred to the law of cleansing of leprosy from Leviticus, mentioning Moses in the passage



Mark 1:42-44

⁴²As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.

⁴³And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once,

⁴⁴and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” [Lev. 14]

The book of Leviticus is referred to about 40 times in the New Testament (BKC)

Historical background

The instructions in Leviticus were given after the construction of the tabernacle and **before** Israel left the camp at Sinai to begin their journey in the wilderness

(Tyndale) "...Leviticus is linked with the final chapters of Exodus to form a continuous narrative.

It should be noted that the tabernacle had been prepared and the sanctuary set up before detailed regulations about specific sacrifices were given to Moses"

(New Int. Commentary, On the Old Test)

"It is important to recognize that the laws in Leviticus form part of a historical narrative.

They are recorded to show how Israel became the nation it did. They show what was involved in being called the people of God.

They illustrate how God's covenant purpose to make them a 'kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Ex. 19:6) was worked out in an all-embracing system of religious services and social law"

Exodus 25 through Numbers 10:10 — **while Israel is at Sinai...**

➤ The march from Sinai begins in Numbers 10:11

Exodus 19: 1—Israel comes to Mt. Sinai

1st day of the 3rd month after leaving Egypt...where they stayed almost a year

10 months

Exodus 40:1—The tabernacle set up
1st day of the 1st month of the 2nd year after leaving Egypt

Leviticus 1—26

At the foot of Mt. Sinai receiving God's instructions

1 Month

Numbers 1:1

1st day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year after leaving Egypt
Census taken

Numbers 10: 11—Israel leaves Sinai
20th day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year after leaving Egypt

Theme of Leviticus:
God's holiness and that Israel was to exemplify that holiness in their lives

Leviticus 19:2 (Key verse)

²“Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God *am* holy.’

(LASB) “Holiness is mentioned more times (152) than in any other book of the Bible”

(Word) “The call to be holy like God means that the people are to develop in themselves characteristics similar to his own. The process of developing these qualities is sanctification.

That process is reciprocal: Yahweh sanctifies and the people are to sanctify themselves”

Significance of Leviticus:

(NIV Application Commentary) “This book of twenty-seven chapters contains more **direct speech by God himself** than any other book of the Bible and is placed at the heart of the Pentateuch, which forms the foundation for all scripture”

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

(The Pentateuch, W.H. Griffith Thomas) “No other book has so many lessons on
access to God and worship”

Psalms 65:4

⁴ Blessed *is the man* You choose, And cause to approach *You, That* he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Of Your holy temple.

God's presence is central to the legislation given in Leviticus

(Tyndale)

“The reason the newly consecrated Israelite priests were given such detailed instructions about the care of God’s sanctuary was **to ensure his continuing presence with his people**”

Exodus 40:34-35

³⁴Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the **glory** of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

³⁵And **Moses was not able to enter** the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the **glory** of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

(Word) “When God manifests himself, his holiness is visible as glory. Vriezen defines *glory* as the radiant power of His being”

Psalms 15:1

¹ Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
[Who can approach God’s presence?]

Leviticus shows **how** God’s people were able to approach God’s presence and be in fellowship with him....God begins with instructions on **sacrifices**

Chapters 1-7: **Sacrifices**— Why the sacrifices?

Since the garden of Eden God has made it clear that it is sin that separates him from mankind [Adam and Eve banished from garden....flood because of wickedness]

Isaiah 59:2

² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, So that He will not hear.

(LASB) “Because all have sinned [Rom. 3:23] God designed sacrifice as a way to seek forgiveness and restore a relationship with him.

In the Old Testament times animal sacrifice and shedding of blood pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ

Origin of the priesthood

Genesis—God teaches Adam

Genesis 3:21

²¹Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and **clothed** them.

“clothed them”

(Word) ‘clothed’ [Heb. *Labas*] “One of the main uses for the verb—for dressing of priests in their sacred vestments...here again the terminology of the garden of Eden runs closely parallel with worship in the tabernacle”

(Keil and Delitzch) “Man’s first clothing was the work of God, who gave the necessary directions and ability...this act laid the foundation for the sacrifices”

(BKC) “God is a saving God, and the fact that he clothed...Adam and Eve testifies to that. An animal was sacrificed to provide garments of skin and later all Israel’s animal sacrifices would be part of God’s provision to remedy the curse—a life for a life”

Sacrifices—taught in OT times

Offerings/sacrifices brought by Cain and Abel...Noah and Abraham—the head of the family acted as priest in OT times

God was going to destroy mankind because of wickedness and sent the flood. After the flood was over Noah offered a sacrifice [First record of a burnt offering]

Genesis 8:20-21

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

²¹And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

(New International commentary, OT)

“Though man was unchanged in his sinfulness, God’s attitude to man altered, thanks to the burnt offering. “Sacrifice is the appointed means whereby peaceful coexistence between a holy God and sinful man becomes a possibility”

Sacrifice— culture of OT
times

Animal sacrifices were commonly practiced in many cultures and religions in the ancient Middle East

Sacrifice was nothing new to Israel—Passover sacrifice [Exodus 12]—killed the lamb and put blood on the doorposts

A problem is most became corrupt and cruel in their methods of sacrificing to their pagan gods

Exodus 34:26 (last part)
²⁶“ You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.”

Leviticus records God’s instructions on correct and humane methods of sacrificing (throat slit to quickly go unconscious from loss of blood)

Sacrifice in Bible times:
Presentation of a gift

(Gen. 18)—Abraham cooked fresh bread and had a calf killed and roasted for three special visitors...and gave them a feast

(Guide to the Pentateuch, Wenham) “animal sacrifice was like serving an excellent meal to an important guest, namely God himself...an act of generous hospitality to the heavenly guest”

(Word) “Sacrifice was the presentation of a gift to God...in recognition of his sovereign lordship.

A citizen would not presume to enter presence of a king without a gift; neither would a worshipper approach Yahweh, the king of Israel, without a gift.”

Leviticus teaches by means of the sacrifices

Sacrifices taught:

1) By requiring animals without blemish and holy priests, the sacrifices taught reverence for a holy God

2) By demanding exact obedience, the sacrifices taught total submission to God's laws

3) By requiring an animal of great value, they showed the high cost of sin and demonstrated the sincerity of their commitment

(LASB) "In Leviticus, sacrifices, priests and the sacred Day of Atonement opened the way for the Israelites to come to God. God's people were also to worship him with their lives"

Sacrifices: The Cost

Israel was instructed to bring their very best animal—a male without blemish to be sacrificed

(Wenham) “In a poor peasant culture, where animals were your long-term savings, sacrificing them to God was a mark of great generosity, devotion and penitence.

That is why they are frequently said to be a ‘pleasing aroma to the Lord’ [Lev.1: 9]”

(LASB) “Sin needed to be taken seriously. When people saw the sacrificial animals being killed, they were sensitized to the importance of their sin and guilt”

(LASB) “The unblemished animal symbolized the moral perfection demanded by a holy God and the perfect nature of the real sacrifice to come—Jesus Christ”

Role of the sacrifices

Leviticus 17:11 [key verse]

¹¹For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul.'

(Tyndale) "The cardinal importance of blood-shedding in substitutionary atonement is indicated in Lev. 17:11, for without it there can be no forgiveness of sin.

Among other things, obtaining forgiveness involves cost, and the taking of life"

Hebrews 9:22

²²And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

(New Bible Commentary) "The sacrificial system was not a means of buying favors, but of receiving grace....only by appropriate response to God's grace could Israel continue to enjoy **their greatest blessing**, which was the **presence of God in their midst...**"

The sacrifices and the work of the priests were a shadow of things to come—of Christ's sacrifice

Hebrews 9:24-28

²⁴For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

²⁵not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—

²⁶He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

²⁷And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
²⁸so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.

The tabernacle and the work of the priests (sacrifices) pointed to the work that Christ would do for all of us...his blood sacrifice for all of us

Priests—officiated the sacrifices

The priests were ordained to officiate over a system of sacrifices and rituals. Hebrews teaches that these were symbolic, pointing to the time of Christ's redemption



Hebrews 9: 9-10

⁹It *was* symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—

¹⁰*concerned* only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

'the time of reformation'—the time of Christ's death and resurrection which was followed by the Holy Spirit being given to the Church

Comparison: Types of Leviticus—the work of Christ

(The Law of Offerings, Andrew Jukes) “the types of Leviticus...give us the work of Christ, in its bearing on worship and communion.

We have not here, as in an earlier part of Exodus, the sprinkled blood to redeem from Egypt; but we get definite instruction respecting the offering and priest, to meet the need of a saved people in their approaches to God their savior”

(Tyndale) “The author of the epistle to the Hebrews saw in Leviticus much that foreshadowed the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

In Hebrews 7, Christ was depicted as the eternal High Priest whose work far surpassed that of Aaron and his successors in office.”

(NIV Application Commentary) “The fact that the New Testament refers to the Old Testament ritual system in order to explain what Christ has accomplished and is continuing to accomplish indicates that knowledge of the rituals should be helpful...for comprehending the richness of salvation through Christ”

The sacrificial system was ordained by God and served a purpose—of what was ultimately intended to lead people to Christ

Galatians 3:24-25

²⁴Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

²⁵But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

(LASB) Animal sacrifice “continued throughout Old Testament times. It was effective in teaching and guiding the people and bringing them back to God.”

Jesus Christ was and became the true sacrifice for mankind....therefore there is no need for animal sacrifices today

The words 'sacrifice' and offering appear 91 times in the book of Leviticus

Is there a difference between a 'sacrifice' and an 'offering'?



(LASB) "In Leviticus the **words are interchanged**.

Usually a specific sacrifice is called an offering (burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering). Offerings in general are called sacrifices. The point is that each person *offered* a gift to God by *sacrificing* it on the altar."

(Word) "Sacrifice was the presentation of a gift to Yahweh. The first rite in a sacrificial gift is 'present' which of course, comes from the same root as 'gift'"

Offerings [sacrifices] divided into two classes:

1) Sweet savor offerings [gift offerings]

Ch. 1 Burnt offering
Ch. 2 Grain offering
Ch. 3 Peace offering

Offered on the bronze altar in the courtyard

Sin not seen or thought of—but is a sweet offering to the Lord

The offerer came as a **worshipper**

2) Sin and Trespass offerings

Ch. 4 Sin/Purification offerings
Ch. 5 Trespass/Guilt offerings

Not completely consumed on the altar

Offering charged with the sin of the offerer

The offerer came as a **sinner**—to pay the penalty for sin and trespass

Time sequence

1st day of the **1st month** (2nd year after leaving Egypt)—Ex. 40: 2,17

- The day God's presence entered the tabernacle

That **same day** is covered in chapters **1-8** of Leviticus

- Chapters 1-7 –instructions on sacrifices given
- Chapter 8—ordination of the priests begins

Followed by **7 Days** of consecration [Ch. 8:33]

8th day of the **1st month** (2nd year after leaving Egypt)

- Lev. 9:1 “eighth day”—Ordination of the priests completed


14th day of the **1st month** (2nd year after leaving Egypt)

- Passover kept—Numbers 9: 1-2

Last part of Exodus
Tabernacle finished—God’s presence enters the tabernacle:

Exodus 40: 34 “Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle”

Next event—same day



Leviticus 1:1 [OKJ] “And the Lord called to Moses”

- God’s first instructions from the tabernacle (still at the foot of Mt. Sinai)
- On the same day God’s presence entered the tabernacle the instructions in Chapter 1 of Leviticus begins

(JSB, Tanakh) “The first group of laws, on sacrifice (Chs. 1-7) are given on the first day of the month, the day the Presence entered the tabernacle.”

(NSB) “God was now ready to instruct Moses on how the Israelites should approach Him in the earthly dwelling they had built for Him”