

# LEVITICUS

## Outlined Bible

**Introduction:** For the casual reader Leviticus is a difficult book to wade through seemingly endless details about laws, statutes, feast days, festivals, and sacrifices can be more than a little boring. However, the book contains vital background information for a genuine appreciation for the saving work of Jesus.

**Name** - "Leviticus" derives its name from the work of the priestly tribe of Levi. It literally means pertaining to the Levites.

**Author** - The book was written by Moses. He likely wrote it about one year after the exodus.

1. Several times the phrase "the Lord spoke to Moses" appears in the book. (Leviticus 1:1; 4:1; 5:14; 6:1, etc.)
2. The New Testament attributes the book to Moses. (Matthew 8:4; Luke 2:22; Hebrews 8:5)

**Purpose** - The purpose of the book is two-fold:

1. To teach the nation of Israel the way to God.
2. *To teach them how to walk with God.*

### I. Background of the book

- A. The contents of Leviticus were likely given to Moses during the year Israel is camped at Sinai.
- B. It is not a historical narrative; it is a lengthy description of types of sacrifices, commands for proper living, and rules for the observance of feasts, festivals, and holy days.

### II. Main Message of the book

- A. The primary message of Leviticus is holiness.
  1. Leviticus is sometimes referred to as the holiness code.
  2. The message is summarized best by Leviticus 11:45 "I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore, be holy, because I am holy."
- B. The people would be holy (set apart or consecrated) by:
  1. Following divine law.
  2. Offering sacrifice to atone for sin.
  3. Punishing sin within their community.

### III. Outline of the book

- A. Laws dealing with sacrifices - Leviticus 1-7:
  1. The burnt offering. (1:1-17)
  2. The grain offering. (2:1-16)
  3. The peace offering. (3:1-17)
  4. The sin offering. (4:1-5:13)
  5. The guilt offering. (5:14-6:7)
  6. Special instructions to officiating priests. (6:8-7:38)
- B. The role and responsibilities of priests. - Leviticus 8-10.
- C. Israel's walk with God - Leviticus 11-27:

1. Rules of cleanliness. (11-15)
2. The Day of Atonement. (16)
3. Rules for personal behavior. (17-20)
4. Rules for the behavior of priests. (21-22)
5. Rules for festivals and holy days. (23-25)
  - a. The Sabbath. (23:1-4)
  - b. The Passover. (23:5)
  - c. Week of Unleavened Bread. (23:6-8)
  - d. Pentecost (or Feast of Harvest). (23:15-21)
  - e. The Feast of Trumpets. (23:23-25)
  - f. Day of Atonement. (23:26-32)
  - g. Feast of Tabernacles. (23:33-44)
  - h. The Sabbath Year and Year of Jubilee. (24:1-25:55)
- D. Promises and warnings to God's people - Leviticus 26-27.

#### IV. Key Themes of the book

##### A. The concept of sacrifice

1. The practice of sacrifice goes all the way back to Genesis 4:4 and pervades all scripture,
2. Leviticus 17:11 is a key verse to understanding the concept of sacrifice. "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."
  - a. Atonement means a payment for someone else or a substitute.
  - b. A sacrifice signified a payment or substitute.
3. Five types of sacrifice are outlined in Leviticus:
  - a. **The burnt offering** (1:1-17) - The most common of the sacrifices, an unblemished animal would be totally consumed by fire as a symbol of one's total devotion to the Lord.
  - b. **The grain offering** (2:1-16) - An offering of flour or grain was made to express thanksgiving to God. It was generally offered in connection with a blood sacrifice.
  - c. **The peace offering** (3:1-17) - This voluntary offering provided the Israelites an opportunity to express their desire to fellowship with the Lord. The worshipper received part of the sacrificed animal to enjoy as a festive meal.
  - d. **The sin offering** (4:1-5:13) - This offering was made for most offenses against the law. Most of the animal's carcass was burned outside the camp.
  - e. **The guilt offering** (5:14-6:7) - If an individual violated the law by taking something that belonged to the Lord (e.g. - tithe) or man (e.g. - property), he was required to bring a ram without blemish as a sacrifice. This offering was to be accomplished by proper restitution.
4. The first three of these sacrifices (burnt offering, grain offering, and peace offering) were voluntary. The last two (sin offering and guilt offering) were required under certain circumstances.
5. The entire system of sacrifice pointed to the ultimate and fulfilling sacrifice of Jesus.

##### B. The priesthood - Leviticus 8-10:

1. When the Tabernacle was completed, Aaron and his sons were set apart as priests by Moses. (8:1-36)
2. All priests had to be from the tribe of Levi.

- a. Only the direct descendants of Aaron could serve as priests: other Levites assisted in related duties.
  - b. A special tithe supported them.
  - c. Their role was to offer sacrifices and teach the law to the people. (cf. Deuteronomy 33:8-10)
3. Priests served as mediators between the people and God. They were a "type" of the intercessory work of Christ. (Hebrews 9:1-15)
  4. The story of Nadab and Abihu (10:1-8) indicates the reverence and obedience God seeks in worship.
- C. The Festivals and Feast Days of Israel (Leviticus 23):
1. **Sabbath** - Every seventh day (Sabbath) was a sacred day of rest and worship. It was also an assembly time for the people. (23:1-3)
  2. **Passover** - The most important of all the festivals, Passover reminded Israel of God's deliverance. (23:5)
  3. **Unleavened Bread** - Observed the week following Passover, the feast of unleavened bread prolonged the Passover celebration. (23:6-8)
  4. **Pentecost (or Feast of Harvest)** - Celebrated 50 days after Passover, Pentecost was a thanksgiving holiday. It coincided with the harvest. (23:15-21)
  5. **Trumpets** - This holiday marked the start of the Hebrew new year. (23:23-25)
  6. **Day of Atonement** - This was the one day each year when the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifice for the sin of all the people. Unlike the other feast days, this was a time of fasting and mourning. (23:26-32)
  7. **Feast of Tabernacles** - To commemorate the 40 years of wilderness wandering, the Israelites would live in tents for a week. (23:33-44)
  8. **The Holy Days** of the Hebrews were symbolic of the wonderful aspects of God's nature:
    - a. **Sabbath** – God as Creator.
    - b. **Passover** – God as the deliverer.
- c. **Pentecost** – God as Provider.
- d. **Day of Atonement** – God as Holy and Gracious

## Summarized Bible

### Sacrifices and Offerings

These slaves freed from Egyptian bondage were still in southern Arabia near Mt Sinai being instructed in God's ways, learning to depend upon Him while being organized into a nation. During this time specific instructions were given regarding sacrifices and offerings as their worship to God. There were burnt offerings, sacrifice of animals for sins and peace offerings of thanksgiving and praise.

The instructions were very specific and involved active participation by the one making the offering; e.g.:

- a) his animal sacrifice was to be without blemish,
- b) he brings it to the entrance of the meeting,

- c) he lays his hands on the head on the offering for it to be accepted as an atonement offering and
- d) he kills it.

Aaron's sons are to; a) throw blood on the sides of the altar, b) flay the offering, c) place it on the altar and d) arrange wood for the fire. There are also specific offerings and sacrifices for atonement of unintentional sins of the priests, the congregation as a whole and the common man. Other acts, failure to act, or failure to promote justice by not testifying, require specific sacrifices for atonement.

Any deviation from what was specified was not acceptable. However, the one making the offering had a choice as to the animal selected; e.g., livestock, sheep, goat or bird. But it was to be without blemish, not weak or sickly. (Leviticus 1 – 7)

#### Key Points from Sacrifices and Offerings

- Offerings to God under the Covenant made by God through Moses were personal for the offeror and his family.
- He actively participated in his worship until the priest completed the offering.
- When Christ came and offered His body without the stain of sin, He also gave specific instructions. Man is to offer himself to God to have the stain of sin removed by burial into Christ's cleansing blood – immersion also referred to as baptism - and resurrected by God from their burial and then placed in Christ's Body. (Romans 6)

#### Old Covenant Priest

After giving specific instructions for sacrifices and offerings, God gives instructions about priests' purification, their garments, the ephod, breastplate, Urim, Thummim and turban. The formula for making incense was given by Moses for burning on the altar of incense. Coals from the fire of the altar were put into censers with incense and then taken inside the veil before God's presence.

“Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire [fire not from the altar of incense] before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.” (Leviticus 10:1-2) God had specified.

In the Covenant given by God through Moses priests served by offering sacrifices for atonement for His people. In the Covenant given by Christ, He offered himself as the sacrifice and His people are priest to serve Him. (Leviticus 10:8-10)

#### Key Points from Old Covenant Priest

- Sin has consequences and man is in need of forgiveness.
- Under the Law of Moses sin offering and burnt offering sacrifices were animals brought by the people, place their hands on it, kill it and give to the priest.
- Under the covenant brought by The Son of God, Christ was and is the only atoning sacrifice, sin offering, for the people.

#### Health, Cleanliness and Purification

The attention of the Children of Israel is now directed to living together as God's children. Again, God gives specific instructions about food they can or cannot eat, cleansing after child birth, and treating of people with diseases, especially leprosy. These regulations were to keep a new nation of people healthy while learning to be free from taskmasters and foreign rulers.

Since Noah knew about clean and unclean animals (Gen 7:1-10), this distinction was part of an ancient tradition that antedated the Mosaic Law. Whether a creature was "clean" or "unclean" had nothing to do with the quality of the beast; it all depended on what God said about the animal. When He gave these laws, no doubt the Lord had the health of His people in mind (Deuteronomy 7:15; Exodus 15:26), but the main purpose of the dietary code was to remind the Israelites that they belonged to God and were obligated to keep themselves separated from everything that would defile them. "Be holy, for I am holy." (The Bible Exposition Commentary) In Christ's new covenant, the clean people have had their sins washed away by the blood of Christ. The unclean are people still stained with sin.

#### **Key Points from Health, Cleanliness and Purification**

- Rules for sacrifices, purifications and healthy living are specified.
- To many of the Israelites, these rules may have been unreasonable. But they were God's commanded and not following them resulted in being put outside the camp - ceasing to be included as His people.
- Today many people consider commands given by Christ unreasonable. But they are Christ's commands and by not following them one is left out of the eternal presence of God.

#### **Day of Atonement**

Requirements were given for the annual Day of Atonement. Failure to comply resulted in death. These commands were strict to impress holiness before God. They included the cleansing, a ceremonial washing, the ritual attire of the priest before entering the place of God's presence, the Most Holy Place with His Mercy Seat. God must be highly respected, honored and praised by man's actions.

Annually specific offerings and sacrifices were made for the priest and for the people. One significant offering was not a blood sacrifice, the priest laid his hands on a goat transferring the sins of the people to the goat which was taken far outside the camp and released carrying their sins into the wilderness. (Leviticus 16) Sins were not forgiven but transferred – delayed until Christ offered the perfect sacrifice, His own body to God.

#### **Key Points from Day of Atonement**

- Their sins were not forgiven but Placed on a goat to be carried away.
- Once a year the High Priest was to make an atoning sacrifice for his and the sins of the people and enter in the Most Holy Place in the presence of God with the blood of the atoning sacrifice.

Forgiveness would occur much later by the perfect sacrifice the sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ. He took His blood sacrifice cleansed those faithful under the Old Covenant and will cleanse everyone who hears his message of reconciliation, understands it, puts his trust in Him and obeys