EXPOSITION OF LEVITICUS

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by

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Canonical Context

All 66 inspired books of the Protestant canon relate to the progressively revealed Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible, but not in the same way. Each book either *carries* the metanarrative,[1] *contributes* to it but does not carry it,[2] or *contemplates* the metanarrative.[3] A book's placement into one of these three categories does not necessarily depend on genre, even though a correlation frequently exists. Rather, a book's categorization depends on its contents and its relationship to other books.[4]

In the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of Scripture, the following compose the major elements of the story:

Table 1: Elements of the Metanarrative of Scripture

Setting:	Heaven and earth	Gen 1–2
Hero:	God the Father	Gen 1–2
Hero's desire:	Image bearers to rule the earth	Gen 1:26–28
Problem:	Image bearers gave their rule to the serpent	Gen 3
Solution (the plot):	Promise seed will strike the serpent and restore rule to image bearers	Gen 3:15–Rev 19
Turning point:	The Cross	Gospels
Climax:	The Great Tribulation	Rev 6–19
Resolution / denouement:	Image bearers again rule the earth	Rev 20–22

[1] The carrier category refers to biblical books that carry the primary plotline of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Many books of historical narrative and certain parts of prophetic books fall into this category because they carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative. Such books describe the outworking of the promise in Genesis 3:15–16.

[2] The contributor category refers to biblical books that contribute to, but do not carry, the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Most prophetic books and certain parts of the NT epistles fall into this category because while they do not carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative, they contribute important (often prophetic) information about that metanarrative. Additionally, certain historical narratives run in parallel to one another (e.g., Kings and Chronicles, the four Gospels). In these cases, 1–2 Kings function as the carrier and 1–2 Chronicles as the contributor. Among the Gospels, Matthew functions as the carrier and the other three as contributors.

[3] The contemplator category refers to biblical books that neither carry nor contribute to the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Rather, these books reflect upon (contemplate) the realities of that narrative. Books of wisdom, poetry, and most NT epistles fall into this category, because in light of the Genesis 3:15 promised seed having come, they address how the people of God should live until he returns to establish his kingdom.

[4] For this reason, certain biblical books fit into more than one of these three categories.

As shown in Table 1, the Bible as a whole presents God as the hero of the story who desires his image bearers to rule the world on his behalf. This metanarrative begins in the book of Genesis and concludes in the book of Revelation. Genesis presents the setting,[5] the characters,[6] the plot problem,[7] and the beginning of the rising action. The problem identified in Genesis 3 did not change God's desire for his image bearers to rule the world. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15–16 indicates a war between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed. This battle is the central conflict in the entire biblical narrative; a conflict not resolved until Revelation 20. In this prophecy, God promised the seed of the woman—a man—would defeat the serpent, restore humanity to the garden, and restore rule of the earth to God's image bearers. The anticipation of this promised seed drives the plot of the biblical narrative. The entire plot of the metanarrative thus revolves around how Genesis 3:15–16 comes to fruition. This prophecy reaches the first phase of its fulfillment in Revelation 20 in the thousand-year kingdom of Christ on earth, and its final phase of fulfillment in Revelation 21–22 in the new heaven and earth.

In narrative (or a metanarrative such as the whole Bible), "The story is the meaning."[8] Every book must be interpreted in light of the plot problem, rising action, and resolution. Recent decades have seen advances in narrative criticism applied to biblical texts which have brought to light the complexity and skillful crafting of biblical narratives. Such complexity is not merely limited to individual biblical books. As one scholar noted, "Narrative structure, usually interconnected to plot or characterization, may extend across several books, supporting the evangelical concept that the divine author provides unity and continuity in the biblical story."[9] Thus, even though this paper will argue for Mosaic human authorship, it recognizes the place of Exodus in light of the divine author's total metanarrative. Indeed, "The Bible's total story sketches in narrative form the meaning of all reality."[10]

The book of Genesis traces the line of promise from Adam to Noah to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and Perez. God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 15) and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob highlighted their role to be a blessing to all nations (Gen 12). In the covenant ceremony, God also told Abraham, "You must surely know that your descendants shall be as aliens in a land not their own. And they shall serve them and they shall oppress them four hundred years. And also the nation that they serve I will judge. Then afterward they shall go out with great possessions … And the fourth generation shall return here [Canaan]" (Gen 15:13–14, 16)."[11] That prophetic statement provides a basic outline for the books of Exodus through Joshua. The concluding chapters of Genesis explain how the family of Jacob / Israel came to live in

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[5] Heaven and earth, Genesis 1–2.

[6] God, the hero of the story; mankind, the object of God's desire; and the antagonist, the serpent.

[7] Despite God's desire for mankind to rule the earth on his behalf, the man and woman gave their rule over to the serpent (Gen 3).

[8] Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 88.

[9] J. Daniel Hays, "An Evangelical Approach to Old Testament Narrative Criticism," *BSac* 166 (2009): 8.

[10] Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 64.

[11] Unless otherwise stated, all English Bible quotations come from the Lexham English Bible (LEB).

Egypt, and the book of Exodus picks up from that point and describes the outworking of that prophetic statement in Israel's sojourning, oppression, going out from that foreign nation with great possessions, and (the early stages of) returning to Canaan. Exodus also explains various important aspects of the metanarrative: (1) how a group of enslaved tribesmen became a unified nation, (2) the foundational place of Moses in delivering the Law of Yahweh, (3) Israel's place as Yahweh's treasured possession (סְגֻלָּה), (4) the nation's place as a kingdom of priests among all the Gentile nations (Exod 19:5–6), and (5) the covenant relationship between Yahweh and national Israel (Exod 19–24).

The books of the Pentateuch (and beyond) form a unified narrative. Genesis depends on further books to continue carrying the metanarrative, just as much as the latter books depend on the former. Jesus called the Pentateuch "the book of Moses" (Mark 12:26). These five books, then, form one successive narrative: the conclusion of Genesis portrays the blessing of Yahweh on the sons of Israel as they settle in Egypt, and Exodus begins in Egypt with the family growing over numerous generations. Exodus concludes with the Israelites' tabernacle in the wilderness being filled with Yahweh's glory, while Leviticus and Numbers open with Yahweh speaking to Moses from that tabernacle. Numbers closes where Deuteronomy begins and ends, on the plains of Moab. Just as humanity was banished east of the garden (Gen 3), now the nation of promise camped on the eastern shore of the Jordan River ready to head west into the Promised Land. Deuteronomy closes with the death of Moses, and Joshua begins, "After the death of Moses" (Josh 1:1) and recounts Israel's failed attempt to dispossess the Canaanites of the land, and closes with Joshua's death. Judges opens with, "After the death of Joshua" (Judg 1:1) and concludes with the failure of the judges. 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings successively trace Israel's history as the priests, kings, and prophets fail to produce covenant faithfulness in the nation. Just as post-flood humanity had descended into rebellion at the tower of Babylon (Gen 11), now the chosen nation was exiled east into the new Babylon, echoing the exile east of the garden.[12] Thus, Genesis through Kings *carry* the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-rule metanarrative.

While the Scriptures certainly have an overarching message based on the entire metanarrative, each book does indeed have a specific message and intended response for its original audience. In Leviticus, Moses built upon his identification of the Israelites as holy nation and kingdom of priests in Exodus. He expanded and explained the requirements for holy living for the people and the priests, detailing the sacrificial system, the calendar of feasts, and priestly ordination. Fulfillment of these instructions would lead to a holy nation. Like the laws written in Exodus, the instructions on holy living in Leviticus were intended for Israelite obedience in the Promised Land. The narrative in Leviticus portrays a deeper dive into everything the Lord told Moses to tell Israel, Aaron, and Aaron's sons regarding the requirements for holy living. The book of Exodus concludes with the Israelites located at Mount Sinai and having just crafted the tabernacle / tent of meeting. The majority of the narrative in Leviticus consists of what Yahweh spoke to Moses at the tent of meeting. Leviticus thus functions primarily as a *carrier* of the metanarrative begun in Genesis.

The books of the Pentateuch (and beyond) form a unified metanarrative that will describe the outworking of the Genesis 3:15 promise, and Leviticus contributes to that metanarrative by providing the required code of holy living for the Israelite nation in order to

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[12] Gary E. Schnittjer, *Torah Story: An Apprenticeship on the Pentateuch*, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2023), 38.

fulfill its function as a holy nation and kingdom of priests as they carry the line of promise and await the promised seed.

Occasion

Who?

The text itself never explicitly identifies its author, however, Moses would meet Yahweh at the tent of meeting (1:1) and they spoke face to face (Exod 33:11). The vast majority of the text in Leviticus consists of what Yahweh told Moses to tell the Israelites. No fewer than 33 times in the book does the phrase, "And Yahweh spoke to Moses," appear.[13] Moses, then, is by far the most likely candidate for the text's authorship. Jesus and other New Testament authors believed in Mosaic authorship.[14] In writing Leviticus, Moses thus gave direct testimony of what Yahweh said. Multiple places in the Pentateuch note Moses writing (Exod 17:14; 24:4; 34:27–28; Num 33:2; Deut 28:58, 61; 29:20–21, 27; 31:9, 22, 24). Joshua also noted the Mosaic origin of the written law (Josh 8:31–34). This paper, then, assumes Mosaic authorship, although allowance for later inspired revisions is acceptable.[15]

The name "Moses" is a wordplay on the verb מׁשׁה, "to draw out."

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[13] 4:1; 5:14, 20; 6:1, 12, 17; 7:22, 28; 8:1; 11:1; 12:1; 13:1; 14:1, 33; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:16; 22:1, 17, 26; 23:1, 9, 23, 26, 33; 24:1, 13; 25:1; 27:1.

[14] See Matthew 8:4; 19:7–8; Mark 7:10; 10:3; 12:26; Luke 5:14; 20:37; 24:44; Rom 10:19; 1 Cor 9:9; 2 Cor 3:15; etc.

[15] Presumably the editorial work, if any, was of the minor sort. This argument for Leviticus, as with all Bible arguments by this present author, reject wholesale the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis of JEDP composition of the Pentateuch / Hexateuch. The hypothesis suffers from several fatal flaws. First, they applied a biological evolutionary framework—all the rage in the nineteenth century—to the development of religion, from simple to complex. Second, they had rationalistic prejudices against the supernatural. Third, they committed the gross logical fallacy of begging the question, commencing (and concluding) with their *a priori* beliefs. They were selective in highlighting evidence if it aligned with their view and ignoring or downplaying that which that did not. Fourth, they blatantly ignored developments in archaeology and other fields that would have forced them to revise their views. Fifth, they freely emended or excised portions of text inimical to their theory. Sixth, the use of names of God as deterministic of authorship has long since been shown as fallacious. Lastly, Graf and Wellhausen, as with other German liberals of their century, exhibited an arrogant over-assurance in their own work. They employed circular logic, assuming their starting hypothesis as true and then forcing all the evidence to support it. See R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 505–42.

To Whom?

Table 2: Tabulation of Key Phrases in Leviticus

Phrase	References	Count
אֲנִי יְהוָה "I am Yahweh"	11:44, 45; 18:2, 4, 5, 6, 21, 30; 19:2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37; 20:7, 8, 24, 26; 21:8, 12, 15, 23; 22:2, 3, 8, 9, 16, 30, 31, 32, 33; 23:22, 43; 24:22; 25:17, 38, 55; 26:1, 2, 13, 44, 45	52
וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה "And Yahweh spoke to Moses"	4:1; 5:14, 20; 6:1, 12, 17; 7:22, 28; 8:1; 11:1; 12:1; 13:1; 14:1, 33; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:16; 22:1, 17, 26; 23:1, 9, 23, 26, 33; 24:1, 13; 25:1; 27:1	33
צִוָּה יְהוָה "Yahweh commanded"	7:36, 38; 8:4, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 29, 34, 36; 9:6, 7, 10; 10:15; 16:34; 17:2; 24:23; 27:34	19
דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל "Speak to the sons of Israel"	1:2; 4:2; 7:23, 29; 12:2; 18:2; 23:2, 10, 24, 34; 25:2; 27:2	12
דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בָּנָיו "Speak to Aaron and to his sons"	6:18; 17:2; 22:2, 18	4
צַו אֶת־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת־בָּנָיו "Command Aaron and his sons"	6:2	1
חֻקַּת עוֹלָם "Lasting statute"	3:17; 7:36; 10:9; 16:29, 31, 34; 17:7; 23:14, 21, 31, 41; 24:3	12
חָק־עוֹלָם "Lasting rule"	6:11, 15; 24:9	3
לְחָק־עוֹלָם "Lasting rule"	7:34; 10:15	2
כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי "Because I am holy"	11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:26; 21:8	5

Table 2 tallies the count of select key phrases in the book of Leviticus. It highlights how "Yahweh spoke to Moses" 33 times, "Yahweh commanded" 19 times, and Moses was told to "Speak to the sons of Israel" twelve times and "Speak to Aaron and his sons" four times. Mention that the commands of Yahweh through Moses are to be a lasting statute / rule / regulation throughout the generations of Israel occurs a total of 17 times.

While narrative texts are rarely explicit in identifying their audience, the audience of Leviticus is virtually certain: (1) the second generation of Israelites—those who would enter the Promised Land under Joshua, (2) future generations of Israelites, (3) Aaron and his sons in the priesthood, and (4) future priests in the line of Aaron. Moses wanted all of Israel and all the priests to know the requirements of holiness for a holy nation in covenant relationship with a holy God.

When?

Moses most likely wrote Leviticus during the forty years of wilderness wanderings. The two most commonly accepted dates for the Exodus and subsequent wilderness wanderings are either the late 15th century BC or the late 13th century BC. Table 3 identifies the date stamps of major events relative to the Exodus as described in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and

Numbers. Certain events, like the setting up and anointing of the tent of meeting, are described in all three books.

Table 3: Date Stamps Relating to the Exodus

Date (in relation to the Exodus)	Event	Reference
Year 1, month 1, day 15	Israelites depart Rameses	Num 33:1
Year 1, month 2, day 15	Israelites depart Elim for Desert of Sin	Exod 16:1
Year 1, month 3, day 15(?)[16]	Israelites arrive at Sinai	Exod 19:1
Year 2, month 1, day 1	Tabernacle set up and anointed	Exod 40:2, 17; Lev 8:10
Year 2, month 1, day 1[17]	Moses finished setting up the tabernacle	Num 7:1
Year 2, month 2(?),[18] day 1	Command for first census	Num 1:1
Year 2, month 2, day 1	First census	Num 1:18
Year 2, month 1, day 14	Israel celebrates the Passover in the Desert of Sinai	Num 9:1–4
Year 2, month 2, day 20	Departure from Sinai	Num 10:11
Year (?), Month 1, day (?)[19]	Death of Miriam in Desert of Zin	Num 20:1
Year 40, month 5, day 1	Death of Aaron at Mount Hor	Num 33:38

Where?

Moses most likely wrote Leviticus in the wilderness of Sinai.

[16] Exodus 19:1 does not provide an ordinal for the day, but rather mentions, בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה "on this day," possibly meaning exactly two months after departing. Since the departure was on the 15th of the first month, the arrival at Sinai, in this case, would be the 15th of the third month.

[17] No date stamp is given in Numbers 7:1. However, the date stamp for the exact same event is provided in Exodus 40:17, thus the date is known.

[18] The month is not given in Numbers 1:1. However, 1:18 records that it was the first day of the second month, and it seems unlikely that the command in 1:1 and the carrying out of that command in 1:18 would be spoken of in such proximity while referring to different months.

[19] As the departure from Sinai occurred in the second month of the second year, and Miriam was still alive at that point, her death in the "first month" must be in the third year at the earliest, if not later.

Why?

The major inciting events for which Moses wrote Leviticus were his upcoming death[20] and the upcoming entry into Canaan.[21] Knowing of his inability to lead the second generation of Israelites into the Promised Land, he wanted to ensure that the current and future generations of Israelites would know the role and purpose of the Aaronic priesthood, and how the nation should function with regard to holiness by keeping the Law. This would allow Israel to function as a holy nation and kingdom of priests in covenant with Yahweh, the holy God. The narrative in Exodus had already established Moses' credibility as the lawgiver and the mediator who spoke to Israel on behalf of Yahweh. Exodus thus demonstrated the foundational role Moses played in delivering Israel from Egypt and in giving the Law to the nation. The book of Leviticus then revealed what Yahweh told Moses to tell the Israelites regarding the laws of holiness first introduced in Exodus. Looking ahead to after his death, Moses knew that through keeping the Law,[22] the Israelites would ensure a continued knowledge of the character of the God with whom they had entered covenant, their identity as a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, and the treasured possession of that God (Exod 19:5–6). Ultimately, Moses wrote Leviticus so that following his death, the Israelites would follow the Law, fulfill their covenant obligations to Yahweh, and function as a kingdom of priests and holy nation. Without obedience to the Law as revealed in Leviticus, Israel would fail to be a holy nation and kingdom of priests, and so the surrounding nations would never see Yahweh's holiness.

Genre

The book of Leviticus was written as an historical narrative. Significant portions of legal and ritual text do not change the narrative genre to a legal / law genre. Rather, the ritual texts form a part of the narrative.

Proposed Message Statement

In order to address his upcoming death and the Israelites' upcoming conquest of Canaan after decades of wandering in the wilderness, Moses wrote an historical narrative for the generation of Israelites about to enter the Promised Land—and future generations—in order that the priests and the people of Israel would know the requirements of holiness in their respective roles so that the Israelites would live in covenant faithfulness according to the Law and fulfill their role as a kingdom of priests and holy nation.

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[20] Moses knew he would die prior to entering the Promised Land. Yahweh had declared as much: "But Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not trusted in me, to regard me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this assembly into the land that I have given to them"" (Num 20:12); and Moses repeated that idea elsewhere: "And Yahweh was angry with me because of you, and he swore that I would not cross the Jordan and that I would not go to the good land that Yahweh your God is giving you as an inheritance. For I am going to die in this land; I am not going to cross the Jordan, but you are going to cross, and you are going to take possession of this good land" (Deut 4:21–22).

[21] As per Genesis 15:13–16.

[22] This includes all elements of the Law, such as keeping the feasts, offering the required sacrifices, and distinguishing between clean and unclean.

Proposed Outline[23]

I. Regulations concerning sacrifice (1:1–7:38)
II. Consecration of priests (8:1–10:20)
III. Clean and unclean differentiated (11:1–15:33)
IV. The day of atonement (16:1–34)
V. Ritual laws (17:1–26:2)
VI. Concluding blessings and punishments (26:3–46)
VII. Regulations concerning vows and offerings (27:1–34)

[23] This proposed outline is adapted from R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 37–39.

Use of Rhetoric in Leviticus

Classical rhetoric employes three modes and three species of rhetoric. The three modes of rhetoric include *logos*,[24] *pathos*,[25] and *ethos*.[26] The three species include judicial,[27] epideictic,[28] and deliberative[29] rhetoric.[30] As will be demonstrated in the proposed argument exposition below, Moses primarily made use of ethical rhetoric by appealing to authority: the Israelites should conform to the Law (1) because of the authority of Yahweh as the God who delivered them from Egypt, and (2) because of the authority of Moses, Yahweh's authorized mediator and prophet who delivered the Law to Israel. The section above had described how the phrase, "Yahweh spoke to Moses," occurs 33 times in Leviticus. Many of those 33 are followed by a command to Moses to tell the Israelites what Yahweh had said. Moses also employed ethical arguments by appealing to Yahweh's character: Yahweh repeatedly emphasized obedience because (1) he had delivered them from Egypt,[31] and (2) Yahweh himself is holy.[32] Furthermore, logical (*logos*) and emotional (*pathos*) arguments apply with the blessings and curses (ch. 26) in order to elicit obedience. Since Moses intended his audience to obey the decrees written in Leviticus, his overall rhetorical purpose is deliberative. Thus, his ethical, logical, and emotional rhetoric all serve a deliberative purpose: that the Israelites be holy by following the Law.

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[24] The rhetoric of *logos* employs logical arguments intended to appeal to rational principles found within the author's discourse.

[25] The rhetoric of *pathos* employs arguments intended to arouse an emotional reaction and play upon the audience's feelings.

[26] The rhetoric of *ethos* makes ethical appeals on the basis of credibility: good character or authority.

[27] With judicial rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade the audience to make a judgment about events that occurred in the past. This judgment often deals with questions of truth or justice, and can be positive (a defense or "apology" of correctness / innocence) or negative (a prosecution, emphasizing guilt).

[28] With epideictic rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade his audience to hold or reaffirm a certain point of view in the present time. The author wants to increase (or decrease / undermine) his audience's asset to a certain value or belief. To this end, epideictic rhetoric will frequently use examples of *praise* and *blame*.

[29] With deliberative rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade the audience to take (or not take) some action in the (often near) future. Deliberative rhetoric deals with questions of self-interest and future benefits for the audience, and appears in the form of exhortation (positive) or warning (negative).

[30] For a complete discussion of classical rhetoric in biblical studies, see George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, Studies in Religion (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

[31] Such statements occur in 11:45; 19:36; 22:33; 23:43; 25:38; 25:42, 55; 26:13, 45.

[32] See 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:26; 21:8.

Proposed Argument Exposition

That the book of Leviticus begins with a waw consecutive, וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־מֹשֶׁה, connects it literarily to Exodus 40:38, the immediately preceding verse.[33] Thus, it establishes the ongoing narrative genre and unity of the text from Genesis to Leviticus.

In his regulations for **offerings to Yahweh (1:1–7:38)**, Moses described Yahweh's requirements for various types of offerings so that the priests and the people who know what, how, and under which circumstances to present offerings to Yahweh.[34] Instructions for the burnt offering (1:3–17; 6:8–13),[35] grain offering (2:1–16; 6:14–23),[36] fellowship offering (3:1–17; 7:11–21),[37] sin offering (4:1–5:13; 6:24–30),[38] guilt offering (5:14–6:7; 7:1–10),[39] and general regulations of the offerings informed the priests and the people of their responsibilities. This section contains rhetorical features of royal and oracular texts, which seek to persuade based on the authority of the sources of the rituals (*ethos*).[40] Specific techniques include (1) frequent repetition and repetitive structures framed by refrains such as עֹלָה אִשֵּׁה רֵיחַ־נִיחוֹחַ לַיהוָה, "a burnt offering by fire, as an appeasing fragrance for Yahweh" (1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9, 11, 16; 3:5, 16) and וְכִפֶּר עֲלֵהֶם הַכֹּהֵן וְנִסְלַח לָהֶם, "The priest shall make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven" (4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 18, 26), and (2) frequent use of second-person address which would speak directly to the audience.[41] Moses thus used the speech of Yahweh in a manner which aided the memorization of the procedures and contributed to persuading his Israelite audience to fulfill the regulations. Doing so would contribute to Moses' overall deliberative purpose that the Israelites be a holy nation by following the Law.

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[33] Harrison, *Leviticus,* TOTC, 14.

[34] קָרְבָּן is the general term for "offering" is frequently the cognate accusative of קָרַב, "to approach, offer." A descriptive modifier may be added to קָרְבָּן in order to specify the type of offering (burnt, grain, fellowship, etc.).

[35] The burnt offering, עֹלָה קָרְבָּן, was first offered by Noah in Genesis 8:20.

[36] The grain offering, קָרְבַּן מִנְחָה, was first offered by Cain in Genesis 4:3–5.

[37] Fellowship offering, שְׁלָמִים קָרְבָּן, also "peace offering" (from the root שלם), first appeared in Yahweh's instructions to the Israelites at Sinai (Exod 20:24).

[38] Sin offering, חַטָּאת, is cognate with the verb חָטָא, "to sin." The word חַטָּאת may refer to either "sin" (155x) or a "sin offering" (135x). The first clear use of חַטָּאת as a sin offering is in conjunction with Yahweh's instructions to Moses on how to atone for the altar when it first comes into service (Exod 29:36).

[39] Similar to חַטָּאת, the word אָשָׁם can refer to either "guilt" or "guilt offering." As noted by one scholar, "The relationship between the two offerings is obscure, but the חטאת seems to have referred more to offenses against God and the אשם to violations of a general social nature" (R. K. Harrison*, Introduction to the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969], 600).

[40] James W. Watts, *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus: From Sacrifice to Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 52.

[41] Watts, *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus*, 57–61.

In his section on **consecration of priests (8:1–10:20)**, Moses' description of the ordination of priests would inform each successive generation of priests how to enter the priesthood via the consecration process. The repeated emphasis on obedience to Yahweh's commands during ordination[42] would demonstrate for the audience the legitimacy of the priesthood in the sight of Israel, as well as the warning to obey in order not to die (8:35). This emphasis on obedience in chs. 8–9 also functions as a juxtaposition to Nadab and Abihu who "presented before Yahweh illegitimate fire, which he had *not* commanded them" (10:1, emphasis added). Moses had warned against offering "strange incense," קְטֹרֶת זָרָה (Exod 30:9), but the brothers offered "strange fire," אֵשׁ זָרָה, anyway (10:1). The deaths of Nadab and Abihu (10:2) demonstrated the severe cost of disobeying Yahweh in cultic matters. The phrase וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה וַתֹּאכַל, "and fire went out from before the presence of Yahweh and it consumed …" (author's translation) occurs in 9:24 and two verses later in 10:2. In 9:24, the object of consumption included the offering on the altar, which was accepted by Yahweh's consuming fire. By contrast, Nadab and Abihu were not accepted. Thus, Moses employed the epideictic rhetoric of praise and blame by portraying the brothers as censurable examples. All future priests could read this account and recognize the importance of performing priestly duties as Yahweh had commanded. The contrast between the fire of Yahweh consuming the offering on the altar (9:24) and the two brothers (10:2) would demonstrate for the audience the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate priestly service. The audience of priests would know the importance of following their duties exactly as Yahweh had commanded. Only the High Priest was to offer incense to Yahweh each morning and evening (Exod 30:7–8) and during the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement (16:12–13)—Nadab and Abihu had thus overstepped the bounds of their role. Multiple warnings to follow Yahweh's commands lest the priest die (8:35; 10:6, 7, 9) carry greater weight because of what happened to Nadab and Abihu. As summarized by one author, an important message for the Israelites from this section is, "We [the priests] do a dangerous but necessary job, and the rarity of fatalities shows that we do it well! So don't begrudge us its perks!"[43] The threat of death for priests who performed their duties illegitimately would contribute to Moses' overall deliberative purpose that the Israelites be a holy nation by following the Law.

In his section on **clean and unclean differentiated (11:1–15:33)**, Moses repeatedly emphasized, "Yahweh spoke to Moses …" (11:1; 12:1; 13:1; 14:1, 33; 15:1). Several of these were followed by, "Speak to the Israelites" (11:1; 12:1; 15:1). Moses intended his audience of Israelites and priests, as well as future generations of each, to (1) recognize Yahweh as the source of the commands, (2) recognize the distinction between clean and unclean,[44] and (3) follow the required regulations. The entire section closes with a stark reminder that death (as exemplified in Nadab and Abihu) would be the result for any who defiled Yahweh's tabernacle in a state of uncleanness (15:31). Proper differentiation of clean and unclean would contribute to Moses' overall deliberative purpose that the Israelites be a holy nation by following the Law.

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[42] Or similar—there exist variations in the phrasing, although they still convey the same idea (8:4, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 29, 34, 35, 36; 9:6, 7, 10).

[43] Watts, *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus*, 113.

[44] Distinction of clean and unclean animals began with Noah taking seven pairs of all the clean animals on the ark (Gen 7:2–3).

In his description of the rituals for **the day of atonement (16:1–34)**, Moses intended the priests to obey the required commands on an annual basis as a lasting statute (16:29) so that Israel would be cleansed of their sins (16:30). Even though these instructions in ch. 16 are separated from the deaths of Nadab and Abihu (10:1–2) by the section on clean and unclean (11:1–15:33), the placement of these instructions in the narrative "after the death of Aaron's two sons" (16:1) and the double mention of strict adherence so "that he [the priest] might not die" (16:2, 13) demonstrate the extreme importance of following the cultic rituals exactly as prescribed.[45] Moses intended that no innovation take place in the priestly rituals. The goat for Azazel[46] driven into the wilderness "symbolically carried away the sins of the Israelites."[47] This section also reinforced the concept that only Aaronic priests can perform the required rituals.[48] The Israelites thus learned from the requirements of the day of atonement rituals that an individual cannot resolve his sin problem alone. Each would need the mediation of a priest and a sin offering. But since the day of atonement happened annually, the Aaronic priest would never be able to ultimately resolve the sin problem. The Israelites must therefore wait for a greater priest and a greater sacrifice. But while waiting, their performance of the day of atonement rituals would contribute to Israel's holiness as a nation by following the Law.

With his description of **ritual laws (17:1–26:2)**, Moses intended the priests and the Israelites to fulfill the required commands (positive rules) and avoid the prohibitions (negative rules) pertaining to sacrifices, sexual relations, the Sabbath, feasts, and the year of Jubilee. The repeated phrase "Yahweh spoke to Moses …" (17:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:16; 22:1, 17, 26; 23:1, 9, 23, 26, 33; 24:1, 13; 25:1) emphasized Yahweh as the divine source of the laws, and Moses as the intermediary through whom the Law came to Israel. The example of the blasphemer being put to death (24:10–16) serves as a narrative demonstration[49] of a censurable example and how the Israelite community should respond. In the ultimate use of ethical rhetoric, the nation of Israel is to be holy כִּי קָדֹושׁ אֲנִי, "because I [Yahweh] am holy" (19:2; 20:26; 21:8) (*ethos*).

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[45] "Additional sacrificial rites concluded the ceremonies of the day, which had the effect of reminding Israel that the various sacrifices made at the altar of burnt offering were not of themselves sufficient to atone for sin" (Harrison*, Introduction to the Old Testament*, 602).

[46] Azazel, אֲזָאזֵל, appears only three times in the OT, all in this chapter (16:8, 10, 26). The word's meaning remains speculative and highly debated. Three major interpretations include the following: (1) the name of a wilderness demon / fallen angel to which the author of the sins of Israel are returned, (2) a rare noun meaning, "complete destruction," and (3) a noun meaning "rocky precipice" (Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], 234–35).

[47] Harrison*, Introduction to the Old Testament*, 602.

[48] Watts, *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus*, 134.

[49] A "narrative demonstration" is a rhetorical technique whereby one's propositional statements are strengthened by a narrative demonstration of those propositions. In 4 Maccabees for example, the author offered his propositional statements in the opening chapters, and then described the rest of his work as a "narrative demonstration." He followed such a strategy to elicit the proper response from his audience: "The present occasion now invites us to a *narrative demonstration* of temperate reason" (4 Macc 3:19, NRSV, emphasis added).

Furthermore, the phrase אֲנִי יְהוָה, "I am Yahweh," appears 47 times in this section.[50] Yahweh appealed to his own holiness as the basis for Israel's holiness (*ethos*). As such, the laws revealed for the audience the very character of Yahweh and the imperative to imitate that holy character. These ritual laws therefore contributed to Moses' overall deliberative purpose that the Israelites be a holy nation by following the Law.

In his section on **concluding blessings and punishments (26:3–46)**, Moses' description of the blessings for obedience (26:3–13) and curses for disobedience (26:14–39) function as incentives for adherence to the Law. The rhetoric of this section employed emotional appeals (*pathos*) and logical appeals (*logos*) by showing the benefits for obedience and the curses for disobedience. Strong emotions are associated with the blessings and the curses such that the blessings (and therefore obedience) are more desirable. Logically, it would also serve the self-interest of the audience to obey and receive the blessings because that is the more expedient path with a superior outcome. Moses' description of restoration following judgment of the curses for disobedience (26:40–45) also demonstrated the inviolability of the Abrahamic Covenant[51] even in the case of disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant.[52] Thus, the blessings and curses constitute emotional and logical appeals for obedience to the Law. In these ways, this section contribued to Moses' overall deliberative purpose that the Israelites be a holy nation by following the Law.

With his section on **regulations concerning vows and offerings (27:1–34)**, Moses intended his priestly and Israelite audience to follow Yahweh's detailed instructions for vows, the redemption of persons and animals, and tithing. The phrase, "These are the commands that Yahweh commanded Moses for the Israelites on Mount Sinai" (27:34) concludes and summarizes the book: Yahweh told Moses the commands, and Moses told them to Israel. The intention of the entire Law was that Israel be holy just as Yahweh is holy, thus reflecting his character as citizens in the holy nation constituting a kingdom of priests to the Gentiles. In this way, this section contribued to Moses' overall deliberative purpose that the Israelites be a holy nation by following the Law.

If Exodus begins—and Deuteronomy concludes—the definition of what a holy nation is, the book of Leviticus adds significant amounts of information about how the Israelite nation was to operate in the Promised Land in a way that made them that holy nation and kingdom of priests.

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[50] 18:2, 4, 5, 6, 21, 30; 19:2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37; 20:7, 8, 24, 26; 21:8, 12, 15, 23; 22:2, 3, 8, 9, 16, 30, 31, 32, 33; 23:22, 43; 24:22; 25:17, 38, 55; 26:1, 2.

[51] In 26:42, Moses explicitly refers to the covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the Abrahamic Covenant. In this verse, God not only remembered the covenant, but also, "I will remember the land." Even if Israel should sin and be removed from the land, the Abrahamic Covenant and its land promises (Gen 15) still remain valid.

[52] The Land Covenant of Deuteronomy 29–30 synthesizes the eternal and irrevocable nature of the land promise in the Abrahamic Covenant with the conditional nature of the Mosaic Covenant's blessing in, and enjoyment of the land, by prophetically covenanting the land to Israel's possession *despite* sin and exile. It ultimately assures Israel its regathering in the land (Deut 30:4–5). This is an important principle for (1) the Babylonian exile (586 BC) and return (539 BC), and (2) the dispersion under Emperor Hadrian (c. AD 130) and re-establishment of national Israel (AD 1948). According to Isaiah, only two regatherings of Israel occur (Isa 11:11) followed by the salvation of the nation and the kingdom age (Isa 11–12).

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