

LEVITICUS

Intro / 1:1

- **Name:** *Leviticus* after the Levite priests
 - Also called the Book of Laws or Book of Atonement

SETTING/CONTEXT

- **Author:** Moses
 - The Lord spoke these things directly to Moses from the tabernacle
 - 90% is divinely dictated (Lev. 1:1, 4:1, 5:14)
 - Closes with a confirmation that this is what the Lord commands (Lev. 27:34)
- **Time:** 1446-1445 BC
 - Exodus
 - From Egypt to Mt. Sinai- 10 weeks
 - Build tabernacle – 9 months (Ex. 16-40, Num. 9:1-5)
 - They were ruined in Genesis, redeemed in Exodus, and now they desire to respond to God in worship.
 - “The need of man’s heart has always been to express his devotion, thanksgiving, and love to God, and to find a means whereby his sins might be forgiven so that he may once again have unbroken fellowship with Him.” (Merrill)
 - Leviticus
 - At Mt. Sinai – given over the course of 1 month
 - Ex. 40:17, Num 1:1
- **Location:**
 - The children of Israel are still camped at the base of Mt. Sinai. Moses finishes the tabernacle (Ex. 40:33) and God is saying now that you have a place to worship, here is how you worship.
 - Leviticus continues the narrative of the book of Exodus. The glory of God is no longer up on the mountain, inaccessible to all but Moses. He is now inhabiting the tabernacle and speaking to Moses from there, giving instruction on sacrifices and orderly worship.
- **Exodus 40:33-38**
 - ³³ “And he raised up the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the screen of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. ³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And 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. ³⁶ Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. ³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.”

- **Genre: Law**

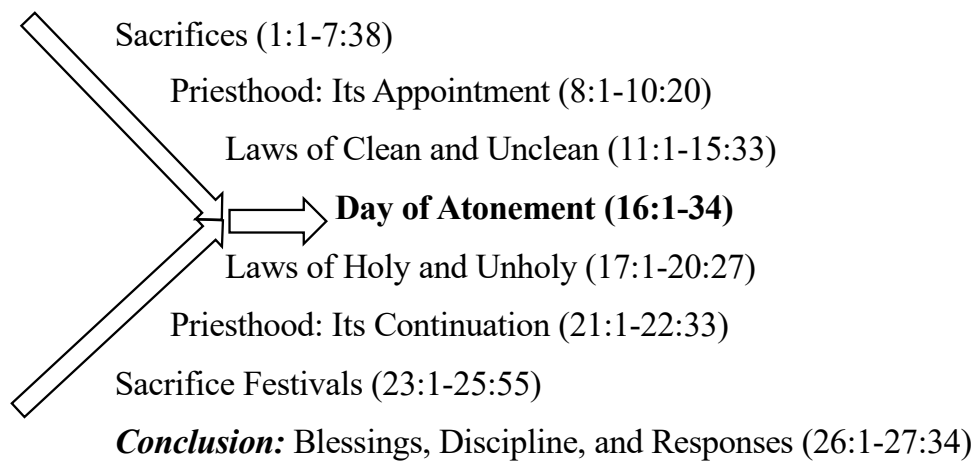
- Part of the *Torah* = “Instruction”
- Part of the legal covenant given to Moses at Sinai:
 - Covenant, 10 Commandments (Ex. 20-23)
 - Worship, Priesthood, liturgy (Ex. 24-Lev-Num)
 - Modifications given 40 years later
 - A renewal document with the next generation given before entering the land. (Deuteronomic Covenant)
- Different from other ancient bodies of law:
 - Not only apodictic (universal laws like the 10 Commandments), but also casuistic (case by case).
 - Theocratic: Given by God, not a king.
 - Hammurabi predates Moses but chronology does not equal causality.
- Three Different Kinds of Law within:
 - Civil (relating to society)
 - Ceremonial (relating to worship)
 - Moral (binding for all time)

INSIGHT

Outline

“The outline in Leviticus is based on a pattern called *chiasm*. In a chiasm, the first half of the text presents a series of topics, which the second half repeats in reverse order. The center of the chiasm (where the two halves meet, or what they point to) is the focal point of the text.”

~ LeFebvre, Packer



Summary:

- “God’s desire for fellowship with the children of Israel and His instructions to live a blessed life.” (Smith)
 - So Samuel said: “Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to heed than the fat of rams.” 1 Sam. 15:22
- Focuses on the worship (sacrifice) and walk (obedience and sanctification) of the children of Israel.
 - “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Eph. 5:2
 - Sacrifice: Heb. 9:25-26
 - Sanctification: Heb. 13:20-21
- The way to a holy God is through sacrifice, to walk with God requires separation.
 - “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.” Rom. 12:1

Why Study It?

- “God gave strict laws governing the diet, social life, and daily details involving every physical aspect of the lives of His people. These laws have a greater spiritual application to His people today.” (McGee)
- “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” 1 Cor. 10:11, speaking specifically of the children of Israel in the wilderness.
- “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Rom. 15:4

THEME

Holiness

- “The word holy is used 93x in the book of Leviticus.” ~ Wiersbe
- Hebrew: *qâdôsh* (kah-doe-sh)
- The Hebrew word for *holy* that Moses used in Leviticus means pure, clean, or set apart.
- Be holy: the redeemed ones need to be holy because their Redeemer is holy. (Mears)
 - “There are five basic themes that relate to the life of holiness: a holy God, a holy priesthood, a holy people, a holy land, and a holy Savior.” ~ Wiersbe

- **A Holy God:**

- "We cannot grasp the true meaning of the divine holiness by thinking of someone or something very pure and then raising the concept to the highest degree we are capable of. God's holiness is not simply the best we know infinitely bettered. We know nothing like divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible, and unattainable. The natural man is blind to it. He may fear God's power and admire His wisdom, but His holiness he cannot even imagine...Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is... God is holy and has made holiness the moral condition necessary to the health of His universe...Since God's first concern for His universe is its moral health, its holiness, whatever is contrary to it earns His eternal displeasure. When He arises to put down iniquity and save the world from irreparable moral collapse, He is said to be angry. Every 'wrathful' judgment in the history of the world has been a holy act of preservation. The holiness of God, the wrath of God, and the health of creation are inseparably united...God is holy with an absolute holiness that knows no degrees, and this He cannot impart to His creatures... [however] there is a relative and contingent holiness that He shares with redeemed men on earth as their preparation for heaven. This holiness God can and does impart to His children, made available through the blood of the Lamb...We must hide our unholiness in the wounds of Christ as Moses hid himself in the cleft of the rock while the glory of God passed by."

~ Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 104-107, paraphrase

- "Our English word *holy* comes from the Old English word *halig* which means 'to be whole, to be healthy'. What health is to the [physical] body, holiness is to the inner person [soul]. The similar word *sanctify* comes from the Latin *sanctus* which means 'consecrated, sacred, blameless.' We use the word sanctification to describe the process of growing to become more like Christ, and holy to describe the result of that process." ~ Wiersbe
- "Happiness, not holiness, is the chief pursuit of most people today, including many professed Christians. They want Jesus to solve their problems and carry their burdens, but they don't want Him to control their lives and change their character." ~ Wiersbe. What people don't realize is that God desiring us to be holy is Him desiring the greatest possible health for our soul.
- "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. 7:1

- “Only the Spirit of the Holy One can impart to the human spirit the knowledge of the holy. Yet as electric power flows only through a conductor, so the Spirit flows through truth and must find some measure of truth in the mind before He can illuminate the heart....Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Theological knowledge is the medium through which the Spirit flows into the human heart, yet there must be humble penitence in the heart before truth can produce faith. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth. It is possible to have some truth in the mind without having the Spirit in the heart, but it is never possible to have the Spirit apart from truth.” Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 104

SCRIPTURE

1:1

“Now the LORD **called** to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying,”

- **“Called”** – Hebrew *qārā’* (kaa-raa).
 - Can also be translated as “summoned”, “called out”, “proclaimed”, or “chosen”.
 - Moses is not only being summoned, he is being proclaimed as a “called out one”. The word “church” in the Greek, *ekklesia*, literally means “those called out to gather”. Moses is being called to worship, just as we are called to worship.
 - He is also being proclaimed as a “chosen one”. 1 Peter 2:9-10 says, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness [Egypt] into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”
 - Consider the idea of being called. If you want the benefits a Caller has to offer, you have to answer the call. The “called” in the Bible refers not to those who hear only, but those who have heard AND responded. In order to come out of the darkness, you must step into the Light. John 8:12 says, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”
 - When looked at from this perspective, Leviticus very much applies to us today.
- **“From the tabernacle”** – Notice also that as mentioned before, God is no longer up on the mountain, far away from His people. He is now dwelling in the midst of them, from an earthly tent. This also foreshadows Jesus, as the transcendence of God becomes immanent in an earthly tent.
 - “In the Gospels we find that when He died, the veil of the temple was torn in two. It was His death which opened the way to God... you see, the veil represents His flesh, (Heb. 10:20).” The life of Christ cannot save us, it was perfect, but we are not. It is only through His death that we are saved. ~ McGee

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did you think or know about Leviticus before this study?
2. What is one major difference between Levitical Law and other ancient bodies of law? Why is this difference important?
3. According to the chiasm pattern in Leviticus, what is the focus of the book? Why do you think that is?
4. In your own words, explain why we should study the book of Leviticus.
5. Considering what Tozer says about holiness, how can we correct misconceptions people have about God's wrath?
6. How are physical health and holiness related to each other?
7. What is the difference between holiness and sanctification?
8. What is our responsibility as someone who hears God's call?
9. Why is it significant that God is now speaking from the tabernacle, as opposed to Mt. Sinai?
10. What does the tabernacle foreshadow?