

## The Book of Leviticus

### The Author, Title, and Date of Leviticus

1. Author: God, through Moses
  - a. 1.1; 4.1; 6.1, 8, 19, 24; 7.22; 8.1 . . . (56x in 27 chapters)
  - b. Jesus – Mt 8.4; Mk 1.44
2. Title is taken from the first phrase of the book
  - a. Hebrew — *w<sup>e</sup>yyigra'* = “And He called”
  - b. Greek — *λευιτικος* = “concerning the Levites”
  - c. Leviticus is “The Book of Holiness” – the holiness of God in contrast with the sinfulness of Man.
3. Date: c. 1444 B.C.

### The Background and Setting of Leviticus.

1. Background: A sequel to Exodus.
  - a. Leviticus follows Exodus 25-40, where the tabernacle is set up and consecrated and God’s glory enters the tabernacle. n.b. *Le 1.1 “from the tent”*
  - b. Leviticus precedes Numbers 1-10, where the nation moves out into what will be the wandering.
2. Geographical setting – There is no geographical movement in the book of Leviticus
  - a. The nation camps at the foot of Mount Sinai for about a year.
  - b. Leviticus records the content of that year. *7.37-38; 26.46; 27.34*
3. Historical Setting — God establishes for His covenant people true and proper worship of Himself.
  - a. During that year, God organizes and solidifies Israel as *His covenant nation*.
    - 1) Previously, they had no presence of their God resident with them, not a central place of their worship. The book of Exodus remedies this. cp. *Ex 19.6*
    - 2) Previously, they had not established system of sacrifices and feasts, nor a priesthood to serve in that, but they did have a distorted view of worship (living in Egypt). The book of Leviticus remedies this.
  - b. In Leviticus, God establishes how His redeemed covenant people are to interact in their relationship with their God.
    - 1) Worship is their response to God’s gracious work in their lives (Covenant).
    - 2) Sacrifice is their response to God’s call to holiness (as God’s covenant people).

### The Purpose of Leviticus

1. Exodus established the *place* Israel is to meet with, and worship, their God; Leviticus establishes *how* the people are to meet with, worship, and fellowship with their God.
2. A holy God saved this people for special relationship with Him (*Ex 19.6*). Such a demand *requires* the nation’s culture and society and worship to *display the holiness of God in themselves*.
3. The purpose of the book of Leviticus is to answer the question: *How can an unholy people approach, and worship, and have fellowship with . . . an inconceivably holy God?!*
  - a. It is for this that God lays out an entire system for His people to be able to approach Him in true worship.

- b. Key verses: *11.44-45; 19.1-2; 20.22-26; 26.11-12 . . . n.b. 1 Pe 1.14-16*

## The Structure of Leviticus

### 1. Simple structure

- a. Chapters 1-17 — *Worship*: approach to YHWH through appropriate worship — *Sacrifice*.
- 1) ch. 1-7 — Laws of sacrifice and offerings: *for the people, for the priests*
  - 2) ch. 8-10 — Laws of inauguration and cleansing: *for the priesthood*
  - 3) ch. 11-16 — Laws of cleanness and uncleanness: *animals, people, Tabernacle*
  - 4) ch. 17 — Law of the Life and Blood: *17.14 . . . He 9.22*
- b. Chapters 18-27 — *Walk*: fellowship with YHWH through practice of holiness in daily life — *Separation*
- 1) ch. 18-20 — Laws of morality: *Regulation for the people - sexual, social, criminal*
  - 2) ch. 21-22 — Laws of holiness: *Regulation for the priests*
  - 3) ch. 23 — Laws of appointed feasts and Festivals: *Regulation for the nation*
  - 4) ch. 24 — Laws of ceremonial and moral areas: *Regulation for the nation*
  - 5) ch. 25-27 — Laws of living in Canaan: *Sabbatical & Jubilee years, Blessing & Curse, Vows & Tithes*

### 2. Important: Leviticus has a *narrative* structure

- a. “The Lord spoke to Moses, saying” begins nearly every chapter.
- 1) The book is God’s account of His personally giving to His people the standard for their personal interaction with God, so that He could bless them instead of destroying them.
  - 2) This is the point of the Hebrew title of the book.
- b. This structure corresponds with the overall theme of the book: “*How does an unholy people approach a holy God?*” i.e. Fellowship with a Holy God demands a Holy People!

### 3. Interaction with God

- a. Annual Feasts — ch. 23
- 1) *Passover* — At the start of the barley harvest, for seven days.
  - 2) *Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)* — 50 days later, following wheat harvest, for one day.
  - 3) *Feast of Booths (Tabernacles)* — At the end of harvest season, for seven days.
- b. Regular events of Redemption
- 1) *The Day of Atonement* — Every year — Two goats: sin offering, scapegoat 23.26-32
  - 2) *Sabbatical year* — Every seventh year — Redemption/release 25.1-13
  - 3) *Jubilee year* — Every 50th year — Release/return 25.1-13
- c. Sacrifices and Offering
- 1) *Burnt offering* — Voluntary, sweet savor offering — *Approach God in fellowship*
  - 2) *Meal offering* — Voluntary, sweet savor offering — *Approach God in fellowship*
  - 3) *Peace offering* — Voluntary, sweet savor offering — *Approach God in fellowship*
  - 4) *Sin offering* — Compulsory, non-sweet savor offering — *Approach God in repentance/restoration*
  - 5) *Trespass offering* — Compulsory, non-sweet savor offering — *Approach God in repentance/restoration*

## The Message of Leviticus

1. Leviticus is a record showing God's covenant people:
  - a. *Who* their God is.
  - b. *How* they may have fellowship and relationship with their God.
  - c. *How they need Him, and His grace.*
2. Leviticus is an extensive revelation *of the character of God*, in His holiness, election, and grace.
3. Leviticus teaches Israel, by the Levitical system, *How to approach a holy God.*

## The Themes of Leviticus

1. The Holiness of God
  - a. God is holy. He has chosen Israel to be His people. His people must be holy.
  - b. Approach of a holy God must be done *His way*.
    - 1) Recognizing *who He* is, *who you* are, and *what we need*.
    - 2) Recognizing *His standard* – no improvising, non-negotiable, a clear standard. cp. 10.10
2. The Cost of Sin
  - a. Because a holy God dwells in your midst, the offense and guilt of sin must be dealt with. cp. 20.22-26; 26.11-12
  - b. This requires the *life* of the sinner: *Blood*. cp. 17.14 (86x)
  - c. *Substitutionary sacrifice*: Blood is shed to pay the price; the sinner is forgiven. cp. 1.4; 17.11; He 9.22
  - d. *True forgiveness is through the blood*. 4.20, 26, 31, 35; 5.10, 13, 16, 18; 6.7
3. The Necessity of Faith
  - a. All of the sacrifices and offerings required faith. The *form* is meaningless, without personal faith.
  - b. This is because the Levitical system was limited:
    - 1) in Moral effectiveness – the *system* does not change people, God does
    - 2) in Scope – the *system* could not cleanse or transform the sinner's *nature*.
    - 3) in Purpose – the *system* was for *Israel*, in context of the Abrahamic Covenant (to teach grace)
    - 4) in Application – one sin per sacrifice, could not remove all of my sin
    - 5) in Efficacy – the sacrifices of the system were not *inherently effective*, nor could they *permanently deal with sin*. All were validated, in God's mind, by Christ's future cross. Ro 3.25; He 10.4

