

Old Testament Survey
Lesson 4 – Leviticus
Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School
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The Book of Leviticus has been called a bore, a bother, and a blood bath. Some say it does not belong in the Bible, others say it is the greatest and most important book in the Old Testament. Seeing that it is a book given to direct Israel, a holy nation, and to guide its personal and national relationship with a Holy God, it merits our close attention. Leviticus is the worship manual of Israel. It lays out in detail the proper form for such things as the sacrifices, the priesthood, and Israel's holy days. Leviticus and Numbers are two books where we may be justified in studying every minute detail in order to gain insight into New Testament truth. Every detail of the sacrifices, celebrations, and the tabernacle is a type or foreshadowing of the coming of Jesus and His substitute sacrifice for our redemption. The book of Hebrews demonstrates this (Hebrews has been labeled "the divine commentary on Leviticus").

Ancient rabbis called the third book of the Bible "The Law of the Priests," or "The Law of the Offerings." The Hebrew word that starts the book is translated "and He called." When the Latin Vulgate was translated from Hebrew and Greek, the translators called this book Leviticus because it deals almost exclusively with the sanctuary service of the Levites. It is, in fact, the Levite's manual of rules for leading worship in Israel. The Book of Leviticus starts, "Then the Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting (tabernacle), saying 'Speak to the sons of Israel ... '"

In his book, *Exploring the Scriptures*, John Philips says, "In Exodus we see how God gets His people out of Egypt. In Leviticus we see how God gets Egypt out of the people." Every physical exercise was given to teach Israel a spiritual truth. All of Leviticus and the first 10 chapters of Numbers occurred between the first day of the first month (following the erection and God's filling of the tabernacle at the end of Exodus) and the twentieth day of the second month (departure from Sinai at end of Leviticus). Just 50 days! Historically there are only four events recorded in Leviticus:

1. Receiving of the Rules (Laws).
2. Consecration of Aaron and his sons.
3. Death of Nadab and Abihu.
4. Stoning of a blasphemer.

There are many lessons to be learned from Leviticus, the most practical and important ones may be:

1. The way to God is by sacrifice. (Atonement mentioned 45 times)
2. The walk with God is by sanctification. (Holiness 87 times)

God says again and again, "Be holy, as I am holy." (Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:8)

Section 1 – The Way to God – Sacrifice (Chapters 1-10)

I. The Laws of Offerings (Chapters 1-7)

We deride the Jews for not being obedient all the time, but it took real faith to follow through with the details of worship. There was no way they could understand the typological significance of all the details. They were, to them, a very practical provision under the law for the problem of sin and its guilt done over and over in sheer terror or love response to a very scary Holy God. These instructions were to help bring order and perhaps a degree of understanding to this complex process.

Question: Did any of these sacrifices satisfy God? Heb 10:4 -- "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls or goats to take away sins." Then why bother? Hebrews 10:3-- "But in those sacrifices there is a **reminder** of sins year by year."

¹For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? ³But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. ⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Heb 10:1-4

A. Sweet Savor Offerings (1-3)

These were called fragrant offerings because they were given unto God in obedience because God asked, not for benefit of persons presenting them and the aroma wafted up to heaven. They were voluntary.

1. The Burnt Offering (1)

This was to be a daily act of worship, offering a sacrifice of one's best to God (Like Rom 12:1-2). It was not meant to be pretty or pleasant (each person killed their own animal), but was to remind them of the seriousness of sin. This is the only offering to be totally consumed on the altar with nothing eaten by men. The worshiper always identified himself with the offering by laying hands on it.

Since bulls, sheep, goats, turtledoves, or pigeons were acceptable; the people learned that God accepts gifts that are in proportion with what they have. No less than their best, but no more than they have.

2. The Meal Offering (2)

This was a devotional gift to God and was a product of a person's own hard labor, a harvest product of meal or flour. This was the only offering made without the shedding of blood and without an animal sacrifice. This gave the Israelite a chance to thank God for His provision and blessing.

3. The Peace Offering (3)

This was a sacrifice of communion and thanksgiving. The priest and the offerer sat down in the presence of God and feasted together (Like communion). Only once a year the High Priest chose two spotless goats, kills one and sacrifices it then, takes its blood into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle it onto the "Mercy Seat" of the Ark of the Covenant. This is the supreme illustration of God's mercy. Even though they do not deserve it, God forgives the entire nation their sin.

B. Other Offerings (4-5)

These were acts of repentance to deal with sin.

1. The Sin Offering (4, 5)

The worshiper now becomes a convicted and repentant sinner. This blood sacrifice covered "unintentional" sins of error, weakness, omission, and ignorance, NOT DELIBERATE OR REBELLIOUS SIN. When the sin is made known to the sinner, they are to offer this sacrifice (confession and repentance). Everything was designed to show to God and the nation, a sinner who is serious, responsible, and repentant. Sin is a radical problem needing a radical solution.

2. The Trespass Offering (5, 6)

This offering was always accompanied by a repayment both to God, who is offended by sin among His people, and to the person defrauded. This was presented whenever a sin was committed or a duty neglected toward God or toward other persons (personal confession and correction).

Sacrificial System					
Offering Name	Portion Burnt	Other Portions	Animals	Occasion or Reason	Ref
Burnt Offering	All	None	Male without blemish; animal according to wealth	Propitiation for general sin; demonstrates dedication	Lev 1
Meal Offering	Token portion	Eaten by priest	Unleavened cakes or grains, must be salted	General thankfulness for first fruits	Lev 2
Peace Offering: 1. Thank Offering 2. Vow Offering 3. Freewill Offering	Fat portions	Shared in fellowship meal by priest and offerer	Male or female without blemish according to wealth; freewill: slight blemish allowed	Fellowship: 1. For an unexpected blessing 2. For deliverance when a vow was made on that condition 3. For general thankfulness	Lev 3; 22:18-30
Sin Offering	Fat portions	Eaten by priest	Priest or congregation: bull; king: he-goat; individual: she-goat	Applies basically to situation where purification of sin is needed	Lev 4
Trespass Offering	Fat portions	Eaten by priest	Ram without blemish	Applies to situation where there has been desecration or de-sacrilization of something holy or where there is objective guilt	Lev 5-6:7

(Source: Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament by John H. Walton)

C. Regulations (6-7)

These two chapters go over the offerings once more and give regulations guiding the manner in which they are to be offered. God is interested in not only what we offer but also how we offer what we present to Him. They also explain how the sacrifices meet the needs of the priests who have no land or other way to make a living. They are supported by the people.

II. The Laws of Consecration (Chapters 8-10)

A priest is one who represents the people to God, as opposed to a prophet who represents God to the people. The priesthood was perpetual and would be applicable to the Nation of Israel until Jesus, the "better Priest," the Great High Priest came.

A. Consecration of Priests (8)

Israel's first official priest was Aaron, the brother of Moses. They were both from the tribe of Levi, which was later set aside to minister to God in the more secular aspects of tabernacle service (upkeep of tabernacle, Choir, Teaching and Instruction, etc.). Elaborate instructions were given concerning the consecration, robing, office, and function of the priests. Aaron, the high priest, is inducted into his office and then his sons are consecrated as priests.

Command (Exodus 29)	Fulfillment (Leviticus 8)
Present one bull, two rams, unleavened bread, cakes, oil (1-4a)	One bull, two rams, basket of unleavened bread brought to tent of meeting (1-5)
Aaron and sons to be washed, clothed with priestly garments (4b-9)	Aaron and sons washed and clothed with priestly garments (6-9)
Bull to be offered as a sin offering (10-14)	Bull offered as sin offering (14-17)
First ram to be offered as burnt offering (15-18)	First ram offered as burnt offering (18-21)
Second ram to be offered as an ordination offering (19-28)	Second ram offered as an ordination offering (22-29)
Moses to anoint Aaron and sons (29-30)	Aaron and sons anointed (30)
Commands related to the eating of the ram of ordination (31-34)	Moses instructs Aaron and sons concerning the eating of the ordination ram (31-36)

B. Ministry of Priests (9)

The ministry of the priest consisted first of cleansing themselves, offering sacrifices for their own sins, and then presenting sacrifices for Israel, both as a nation and as individuals. It was a strenuous job and took many priests and assistants to offer daily ministry to the people. The High Priest, Aaron, was the only priest allowed to enter the Holy of Holies to atone for the sins of Israel once a year.

C. Restrictions on priests (10)

The two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, offered "strange fire" before the Lord (10:1). The nature of the offense is not documented in detail. However, it was "which He had not commanded them." The judgment is swift and complete. The price of disobedience is always high. The fire from the brazen altar was considered "Holy Fire" because God actually consumed the first offering Himself (see 9:24) and this fire was to be used in the censers to burn incense before the people. Nadab and Abihu found out how serious God was about this. The incident served as a reminder to Israel that God's commandments for worship are to be obeyed to the smallest detail.

There were a number of restrictions placed on priests:

1. No wine or strong drink while serving.
2. Rules for eating of things sacrificed.

Section 2 – The walk with God – Sanctification (Chapters 11-27)

I. The Laws of Holiness (Chapters 11-15 and 18-22)

The personal rules of cleanliness and dietary laws were medically sound as well as setting many valuable spiritual lessons of separation before the people of Israel. These laws were broken into three broad categories:

1. Food;
2. Disease;
3. Personal hygiene

Most people agree that, basically, these rules are sound and Jews following these rules have tended to be a very healthy people. With all its failings, practicing Jews still tend to be healthy and moral. The keeping of these laws became not only acts of obedience, but part of the Jewish culture. This is where the problem of legalism began.

A. Food and Hygiene (11-15) – Diet (clean and unclean foods), purification of women and diseased persons, and rules about blood.

Leviticus 11 deals with clean and unclean foods.

⁴⁶This is the law regarding the animal and the bird, and every living thing that moves in the waters and everything that swarms on the earth, ⁴⁷to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the edible creature and the creature which is not to be eaten. Lev 11:46-47

1. Mammals (11:1-8) – There were two requirements for mammals to be considered clean: 1) dividing the hoof making split hoofs and 2) chews the cud.
2. Water Animals (11:9-12) – There were two restrictions for water animals to be considered clean: 1) fins and 2) scales.
3. Birds (11:13-19) – In general birds of prey and scavengers are considered unclean.

4. Insects (11:20-23) – Four footed winged insects are unclean. Winged insects with jointed legs, which jump, may be eaten (locusts).
5. Unclean Animals (11:24-43) – Not only are unclean animals not to be eaten, but their carcasses are not to be touched. This section also prohibits the eating of mammals that walk on paws and rodents and reptiles. Also, here are the laws concerning dead animals.

Clean and Unclean Animals

Classes	Clean	Unclean	Reference
Mammals	Two qualifications: 1. Cloven hoofs 2. Chewing of the cud	Carnivores and those not meeting both "clean" qualifications	Lev 11:3-7; Deut 14:6-8
Birds	Those listed as forbidden	Birds of prey or scavengers	Lev 11:13-19; Deut 14:11-20
Reptiles	None	All	Lev 11:29-30
Water Animals	Two qualifications: 1. Fins 2. Scales	Those not meeting both "clean" qualifications	Lev 11:9-12; Deut 14:9-10
Insects	Grasshopper family	Winged quadrupeds	Lev 11:20-23
Basic Reasons: 1. Holiness demanded being like God. Many restrictions to Israelite diet are derived from restrictions to Yahweh's "diet" (i.e., animals that were unacceptable for sacrifice). 2. Unclean animals fail to conform in some way to the expectations of the group to which they belong. 3. Some animals were considered unclean because of their association with pagan cults.			

(Source: Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament by John H. Walton)

6. Childbirth (12) – This chapter lays out the laws regarding a woman being unclean due to the afterbirth discharge and the required sacrifices to again be permitted to worship.
7. Skin Disorders (13, 14) – Here we see the laws pertaining to skin diseases and diseased garments. Some commentators list up to 21 different skin ailments and 3 different cases of diseased garments from these passages.

⁵⁹This is the law for the mark of leprosy in a garment of wool or linen, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, for pronouncing it clean or unclean. Lev 13:59

³²"This is the law for him in whom there is an infection of leprosy, whose means are limited for his cleansing." Lev 14:32

⁵⁴This is the law for any mark of leprosy--even for a scale, ⁵⁵and for the leprous garment or house, ⁵⁶and for a swelling, and for a scab, and for a bright spot-- ⁵⁷to teach when they are unclean and when they are clean. This is the law of leprosy. Lev 14:54-57

8. Bodily Discharges (15) – This chapter deals with bodily discharges due to sex and the sexual organs. Here men and women each have one "normal" (men – 16-18; women – 19-24) and one abnormal (men – 2-15; women – 25-30) discharge.

³²This is the law for the one with a discharge, and for the man who has a seminal emission so that he is unclean by it, ³³and for the woman who is ill because of menstrual impurity, and for the one who has a discharge, whether a male or a female, or a man who lies with an unclean woman. Lev 15:32-33

II. Laws of Atonement (Chapter 16)

The Day of Atonement marked the most solemn of all the many days on the Israeli calendar.

A. Why A Special Day?

All year people sacrificed, confessed, tried to obey... to be good. But, what about the laws they forgot, did not know, omitted, etc.?

B. What Is It?

Israel needed a day when the sins of the entire nation are called to memory... and dealt with.

C. The Day's Events (from MacArthur Study Bible)

1. The High Priest washed in the laver in the courtyard and dressed in the tabernacle (v.4).
2. The High Priest offered the bull as a sin offering for himself and his family (v3, 6, 11).
3. The High Priest entered the Holy of Holies with the bull's blood, incense, and burning coals from the altar of burnt offering (v12-13).
4. The High Priest sprinkled the bull's blood on the mercy seat 7 times (v14).
5. The High Priest went back to the courtyard and cast lots for the two goats (v7-8).
6. The High Priest sacrificed one goat as a sin offering for the people (v5, 9, 15).
7. The High Priest reentered the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat and also the Holy Place (Ex 30:10; v15-17).
8. The High Priest returned to the altar of burnt offering and cleansed it with the blood of the bull and goat (v11, 15, 18-19).
9. The scapegoat was dispatched to the wilderness (v20-22).
10. Afterward, the goat keeper cleansed himself (v26).
11. The High Priest removed his special Day of Atonement clothing, rewashed, and put on the regular High Priest clothing (v23-24).
12. The High Priest offered two rams as burnt offerings for himself and the people (v23-24).
13. The fat of the sin offering was burned (v25).
14. The bull and goat sin offerings were carried outside the camp to be burned (v27).
15. The one who burned the sin offering cleansed himself (v28).

III. Application of Commandments and Priests Standards (17-22)

B. Application of Commandments (17-20)

Practical applications of laws and punishments for disobedience.

1. Laws regarding sacrifices and eating blood (17)
2. Laws regarding sexual immorality (18)
3. Various laws regarding idolatry, family relationships, interpersonal relationships, the occult, and the poor (19)
4. The penalties for breaking the laws (20)

C. Priests' Standards (21-22)

General rules and laws of purity for the priest are spelled out. They are held to a much higher standard. The greater the privilege a person had in the worship of Israel, the greater his responsibility.

IV. The Laws of Holidays (Chapter 23)

A. Purpose of Festivals

The purpose of the sacrifices was to draw Israel near to God; to renew their personal relationship with Him. The purpose of the festivals or holidays or feasts was to remind Israel of God's faithfulness and care and thus keep them close. Sacrifice (build relationship) / Festivals (keep relationship). All these events included gathering for fellowship, feasting, patriotism, and worship. The following are God's appointed times for the nation of Israel.

1. Sabbath (23:3)
2. Passover (23:4-5) – Details of the Passover are given in Ex 11-12.
3. Unleavened Bread (23:6-8) – The Feast of Unleavened Bread began the day after Passover. A careful search was made through the house to purge out any trace of the corrupting leaven.
4. First Fruits (23:9-14) – The first products of the barley harvest were brought and offered to God on the morning after the Sabbath.
5. Pentecost (Feast of Weeks) (23:15-21) – Another “first fruits” festival of the wheat harvest.
6. Feast of Trumpets (23:23-25) – Called Israel to respond during the seventh month.
7. Day of Atonement (23:26-32) – Pointing to the forgiveness and cleansing of sin.
8. Feast of Tabernacles (Feast of Booths or Feast of Ingathering) (23:33-44) – A reminder of Israel's journey in the wilderness.

V. The Laws of Sabbaths (Chapters 24:1-25:7)

Even God himself "rested" (stopped working) after creating our known world. A Sabbath was, and is, a time for reflection on a week of hard, honest labor. It was for the Israelite, as it should be for us, a time of recapping our walk with God as we do all the stuff we must do. Sabbath is, like everything else in our lives, an act of worship.

A. The Penalty for Blasphemy (24)

God makes it clear that the penalty for blasphemy is death. He goes on to give the laws of retribution.

B. Seventh Year Rest For Land (25:1-7)

v4 -- Every seventh year you rest the land

1. Land to lay fallow--renew its potency
2. Remind them they do not really own it, it is a stewardship
3. Rely on God for their existence (Manna in wilderness)

Ultimately, GOD GIVES THE INCREASE.

C. Seventh Year Rest For People

v5 -- The natural produce of the land goes to the people, the poor, the slaves, and their cattle so they do not have to work and can focus on their relationships with God and others.

VI. The Laws of Jubilee (25:8-55)

A Jubilee year was planned for the entire nation of Israel to happen every 50 years. This could have been the most glorious event in the history of mankind, let alone the history of Israel.

A. The Fiftieth Year

v10 -- The playing field was leveled as welfare can never do

1. Each person returns to his own family to his originally apportioned land.
2. Land reverted back to original owners (every family had).
3. Debts were to be cancelled and personal property returned.

B. Provision

v20 -- What will we eat?

v21 -- Same as sabbatical, God will bless

Answer: *"I will order my blessing for you in the sixth year if you do not sow or gather in your own crops."*

VII. The Blessings of Obedience; The Penalty for Disobedience (26)

Here God tells the Israelites how He will bless them for obedience and punish them for disobedience.

VIII. Instructions on the Use of Vows (27)

Here are laws related to promises of giving to God (a type of "credit card" worship).

Homework

1. Read and outline Numbers
2. Answer the following question:
 - Describe the different forms of unbelief of the Israelites and the result of that unbelief in Numbers.