

Through the Bible Book by Book

Old Testament

by Myer Pearlman

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Leviticus

Title: The book of Leviticus is so called because it is a record of laws pertaining to the Levites and their service.

Theme: In Exodus we saw Israel redeemed; redemption of an enslaved people. Leviticus tells us how a redeemed people can approach GOD in worship and how the fellowship thus established can be maintained.

The message of Leviticus is: Access to GOD is only through blood, and access thus obtained calls for holiness on the part of the worshiper. Most of the types in the book relate to the atoning work of CHRIST, and are set forth in the various offerings there described. Exodus gives us the account of one offering that pointed to CHRIST our Passover. Leviticus gives us many offerings pointing us to the different aspects of redemption. The message of the book is well stated in Leviticus 19:2. Note the practical purpose of the book: it contains a divinely appointed code of laws designed to make Israel different from other nations, spiritually, morally, mentally and physically. In other words Israel was to become a holy nation - a nation separated from the ways and customs of the nations surrounding them and consecrated to the service of the one true GOD.

Author: Moses.

Scope: The book embraces the period of less than a year of Israel's sojourn at Sinai.

CONTENTS

Leviticus is a book of laws, so we may classify its contents with that thought in mind.

1. Laws Concerning Offerings (Chapters 1-7).
2. Laws Concerning Priesthood (Chapters 8-10).
2. Laws Concerning Purification (Chapters 11-22).
4. Laws Concerning Feasts (Chapters 23, 24).
5. Laws Concerning the Land (Chapters 25-27).

I. Laws Concerning the Offerings (Chapters 1-7)

Sacrifices were instituted as means whereby the people could express their worship of GOD:

1. The burnt offering signified entire consecration to the Lord.
2. The peace offering, part of which was eaten by the priest and part by the offerer, pictured fellowship with his GOD.
3. The meat offering, or food offering, consisting of flour, cakes or grain, represented the offering of a gift to the Lord of all in acknowledgment of His goodness.
4. By means of the sin offering the Israelite expressed sorrow for sin and the desire for pardon and cleansing.
5. The trespass offering was brought in the case of offences that called for restitution.

II. Laws Concerning the Priesthood (Chapters 8-10)

These chapters record the consecration of Aaron and his sons and their inauguration into the priestly office. The following are the main topics of this section:

1. Consecration (8). The consecration ceremonies included washing with water, clothing with priestly garments, anointing with oil, the offering of sacrifices, and the sprinkling of blood.
2. The service (9).
3. The failure (10). Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, instead of using fire taken from the altar, used ordinary fire for the burning of the incense. In order to impress the nation with the sacredness and responsibility of the priesthood, GOD made an example of these men by destroying them with fire. What probably led to their sin? See verses 8-11. Does I Corinthians 11:20-32 suggest some parallels?

III. Laws Concerning Purity (Chapters 11-22)

Let us sum up this section as follows. Israel as a holy nation has:

1. Holy food (11).
2. Holy bodies (12 to 14:32).
3. Holy homes (14:33-57).
4. Holy habits (15).
5. Holiness annually renewed (16).
6. Holy worship (17:1-16).
7. Holy morals (18).
8. Holy customs and costumes (19-22).

What does chapter 18 teach concerning the character of the nations surrounding Israel? (See verses 24, 28). Many infidels have taken exception to the contents of these chapters, characterizing them as improper. But let it be noted that the Bible, in describing moral diseases, does not resort to prudery or mock - modesty any more than does a medical text-book in dealing with physical diseases.

IV. Laws Concerning Feasts (Chapters 23, 24)

1. The Sabbath (23:1-3). We may consider this day as the weekly feast of the Israelites, on which they rested from all work, and on which they gathered for worship.

2. The Passover and the feast of unleavened bread. Notice that there were two feasts in one - the Passover (celebrating the passing of the death-angel over the houses of the Israelites), which lasted one day; and the feast of unleavened bread (commemorating the departure from Egypt), which lasted seven days.

3. Following close after the last named feast came the first-fruits, when a sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest was waved before the Lord. This was a type of the resurrection of CHRIST (I Corinthians 15:20).

4. Fifty days after the first-fruits came the feast of Pentecost (meaning "*fifty*"). On the fiftieth day, two wave loaves, with leaven (23:17) were offered before the Lord.

5. The feast of trumpets (23:23-25), "New Year's Day." Look up the following references and find out the typical signification of this feast (Isaiah 27:13; I Corinthians 15:52; Matthew 24:31; Revelation 11:15)

6. The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-32). (Read also Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 9:6-12). This was rather a fast than a feast. On that day the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, with blood, to make expiation for the sins of the people. This was done but once a year, and it typified CHRIST's entering heaven itself with His own blood to make eternal atonement for our sins. Besides the other sacrifices of that day, there were two goats. One of these was killed; upon the other, Aaron laid his hands, confessing over it the sins of the nation, and then sent it into the wilderness. These two goats represented two aspects of the atonement. The first typified CHRIST as paying the penalty for our sins - death; the second, as putting away our sins, never to remember them again.

7. The feast of tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-44) commemorated the days when the Israelites lived in tents, after their departure from Egypt. As this feast followed the harvest (23:39), we may take it to typify the rejoicing of the saints in the presence of the Lord, after the great gathering. (Compare the references to palms in verse 40 and Revelation 7:9).

Note the typical sequence of the feasts - how they give the history of redemption. We shall omit the Day of Atonement, for it is not a feast, but a fast.

Passover - The crucifixion.

First-fruits - The resurrection of CHRIST.

Pentecost - The outpouring of the Spirit.

Trumpets - The rapture of the living, and resurrection of the dead, saints.

Tabernacles - Our dwelling in the presence of the Lord after the great gathering.

V. Laws Concerning the Land (Chapters 25-27)

1. The year of the Jubilee (chapter 25).

2. Reward and punishment (chapter 26).
3. Vows (chapter 27).

The year of Jubilee was a sabbatical year held every fifty years and beginning on the Day of Atonement.

At that time, the land was given rest from cultivation, all debts were canceled, all Hebrew slaves were released, all estates reverted to their original owners. Houses in walled towns were an exception; they did not revert (25:30). The purpose of the Jubilee was to prevent the perpetual enslavement of the poor, and the accumulation of wealth by the rich; and likewise to preserve the distinction of the tribes and their tribal possessions. It was that year which CHRIST proclaimed as "**the acceptable year of the Lord**" (Luke 4:19) and by Peter as "**the times of the restitution of all things**" (Acts 3:21). As a type, the Jubilee finds its partial fulfillment in this Gospel dispensation, and its complete fulfillment during the Millennium.

In chapter 26, on what is Israel's blessing conditioned (v. 3)?

When were vv. 28-39 completely fulfilled (Luke 21:20-24)?

When will the Lord turn to Israel again (v. 40)?

When will that take place (Zechariah 12:10; Revelation 1:7)?

Even though scattered and under punishment, is Israel forsaken of the Lord (vv. 44, 45)?

What will He remember (42)?

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