

Preachers' Gatherings 2017

Preaching Leviticus

Booklet 1

Introduction

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The teaching of Leviticus is like an X-Ray
plate of our salvation

It tells its inner story by means of images

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(**Booklet 2** provides five possible series of sermons,
and notes for 14 sermons in two sets of seven, plus a Review sermon.)

The Vision

For preachers to be thrilled by, keen to unfold and unleash, all-Leviticus; and to feel able to do so.

The Remit

‘To equip preachers, over four hours, to be able to start teaching a book of the Bible within two weeks.’

The Resource

This Booklet 1

- Précis of the text
- Background: religious, historical, archaeological, ...
- Themes: main issues dealt with
- Bibliography
- Exploration of the place of the OT Law for the Christian.

Booklet 2

- Outline of passages offering a way of preaching Leviticus in one of four ways:
 - All 27 chapters
 - Two series of 7 sermons
 - One series of 8 sermons
 - 4 sermons on ch. 25, Jubilee
- Sermon outlines: a brief account of each message.

Leviticus: summary of chapters

Ch.1	Burnt offering (+ ch. 6)	Ritual: The Sacrifices	
2	Grain offering (+ ch. 6)		
3	Fellowship offering (+ ch. 7)		
4.1-5.13	Sin offering (+ ch. 6)		
5.14-6.7	Guilt offering (+ ch. 7)	Priests: ordained	
6.8-7.21	Regulations about the above	Purity: ritual	
7.22-38	No fat or blood; the priests' share		
8	Ordination of Aaron and sons		
9	Priests begin their ministry		
10	Deaths of Nathan and Abihu	Purity: moral	
11	Clean and unclean food		
12	Purification after childbirth		
13	Regulations - skin diseases and mildew		
14	Cleansing from same	Priests: qualifications	
15	Discharges that make unclean		
16	The Day of Atonement		
17	Centralise worship; do not eat the blood		
18	Unlawful sexual relations	Ritual: The Feasts	
19	Range of laws built ✓ 10 commandments		
20	Punishments of sins esp. of ch. 18		
21	Regulations for priests about holiness		
22	Regulations for priests of sacred offerings	Looking ahead: Keeping in Covenant	
23	The Feasts: Sabbath, Passover, Weeks		
	Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles		
24	Oil and bread for the Lord; a blasphemer.		
25	Sabbath and Jubilee years		
26	Covenant - obedience → fruitfulness		
	- disobedience → punishment		
27	Redeeming what is the Lord's		

Précis

Chs 1-7 Ritual Sacrifices

Ch. 1: (Whole) Burnt Offering. = Ascension offering.

Must be a male animal. Present it at the Tabernacle. Lay hands so it is accepted to make atonement. Kill it; sprinkle blood against the altar. Skin the animal. The priests are to burn all of it: an aroma ‘pleasing to the Lord.’ Can be bull, sheep or goat, or dove.

Ch. 2: Grain Offering. = tribute offering.

Flour, oil and incense. Part is burnt: an aroma ‘pleasing to the Lord.’ The rest belongs to Aaron + sons. Can be made in different ways but:

- Never with yeast or honey. You can give these, but not on the altar
- Always with ‘salt of the covenant.’

Ch. 3: Fellowship Offering. = peace offering.

Animal can be male or female. Lay hand on, sprinkle blood, sacrifice all the fat by fire: an aroma ‘pleasing to the Lord.’ Don’t eat the fat, or blood.

Ch. 4.1 – 5.13 Sin Offering = purification offering:

a) 4.1-35 When different people sin ‘unintentionally: either because they are unaware of a law, or through not realising they have broken it eg not realising they are unclean’ (*or, in case they forget they have?* – Wenham)

- Priest – a bull
- Whole community – bull
- A leader – male goat
- Member of the community – female goat or lamb ... or two doves, or flour

Action: Present it; lay hand on; priest sprinkles blood in front of the curtain, and on the incense altar, and against the altar of burnt offering.

The fat is burnt on the altar. The hide etc – burn outside the camp

b) 5.1-13 When people sin in different ways:

- Failing to bear witness
- Touching something ceremonially unclean
- Touching human uncleanness
- Taking an oath thoughtlessly

Action: 1. Confess. 2. Sin offering.

Ch. 5.14 – 6.7 Guilt Offering = Reparation Offering.

For when a person ‘commits a violation.’

Action: Sacrifice a ram of given value AND make restitution: the value of what he has failed to do, plus 20%.

What constitutes a violation? When you break the Lord's command, deceive a neighbour, cheat him, lie about lost property, swear falsely. These call for restitution +20%, and a guilt offering.

Ch. 6.8 to 7.38 Leviticus goes back over the same offerings giving regulations about them:

6.8-13 burnt offering regulations: stays on the altar all night, etc

6.14-23 grain offering regulations: how to offer it. Aaron and sons can eat the remainder. It is also their anointing (ordination) offering, 'most holy' (v.17).

6.24-30 sin offering regulations: the priest must eat it in the Tabernacle courtyard. It is OK to eat it outside like that; but when he presents the blood in the Tabernacle (sin of High Priest or congregation) he must not eat it but burn it.

7.1-10 guilt (reparation) offering regulations. Offer on the altar. Sprinkle the blood, burn the fat. It belongs to the priest, as do sin and grain offerings.

7.11-36 Fellowship offering regulations.

- If offered as thanksgiving: add cakes. Belongs to the priest. Eat same day
- If offered as vow or freewill offering: eat same or next day.
- If the meat touches anything unclean, must not eat but burn it.
- If you touch anything unclean, don't eat the offerings, fat or blood, although you can use the fat for other purposes
- The priests' share of the offering: breast and right thigh.

7.37,38 Conclusion.

Chs 8-10 Priests ordained

Ch. 8: Ordination of Aaron & sons.

- Gather garments, oil, bull, 2 rams and the people
- Wash & clothe him incl. ephod, breast-piece with Urim + Thummim, turban with front plate.
- Anoint Tabernacle, altar, utensils, Aaron.
- Sin offering; burn the fat and entrails; burn the rest outside the camp.
- Burnt offering: 'a pleasing aroma.'
- Ordination offering. Blood on right ear, hand, foot.
- Wave offering: bread, oil, pieces of fat and thigh.
- Consecration: sprinkle Aaron, sons and garments with oil and blood.
- Eat bread and boiled meat. Not leave Tabernacle for 7 days of ordination. Makes atonement for you.

Ch. 9: The priests begin their ministry. On 8th day of above, they offered sin and burnt offerings for Aaron and sin, burnt, peace and grain offerings for the people. Aaron blessed the people, then Aaron and Moses did, and the glory of the Lord appeared. Fire consumed what was on the altar; the people fell on their faces.

Ch. 10: Nadab and Abihu offer unauthorised fire before the Lord. Fire came from him and consumed them: 'I will be sanctified and glorified before the people.' Aaron's cousins carry the corpses out of the camp. The people are to mourn; Aaron and sons may not do so.

Aaron + sons: no strong drink. Distinguish between clean and unclean, and teach the people God's decrees. Grain & wave offerings are theirs to eat.

10.16ff Moses rebukes them for not eating that sin-offering but then approves their reason: fear of the Lord because of Nadab and Abihu's deaths.

Chs 11 -15 Ritual Purity

Ch. 11: Clean and unclean foods

- Clean if split hoof and chews the cud.
- Unclean examples: camel, hyrax, rabbit (not split hoof); pig (doesn't chew the cud).
- Water creatures: only clean if have fins and scales.
- Unclean birds; flying insects (but locust family is clean).
- Unclean animals: those with paws; lizards; those already dead; animals that 'move about on the ground' (ASV 'swarm'; seems to mean rapid multiplication, says Sklar, p.170. (?)

Ch. 12: Purification after childbirth.

If a son, wait 33 days. If a daughter, 66 days. Then offer lamb for burnt offering and dove for sin offering to make atonement (*implied: to cleanse from the ceremonial uncleanness of bleeding*).

Ch. 13: Infections in skin and fabrics

(a) 1-46 Infectious skin diseases

1-8 Swelling, rash, bright spot: examine weekly. If no spread, OK after 2 weeks. If spreads – unclean.

9-11 White swelling with raw spot: unclean.

12-17 If it is all over the body and becomes white again – clean. Raw flesh – unclean.

18-23 A boil more than skin deep: unclean. If only skin deep – 7 days' isolation -> clean.

24-28 Same with burns.

29-44 Similar with itchy sore on head or chin.

45 Action: tear clothes, dirty hair, cover lower part of face, cry ‘unclean’ and live outside camp.

(b) 47-59 Mildew in clothing, materials or leather: similar regulations. If spreads, or remains after washing, burn it.

Ch. **14** Cleansing from above: infections in skin and fabrics

(a) 1-32 infectious skin diseases

1-7. Priest is to go outside camp to examine. If healed – ceremony. Take 2 birds, kill one over water in a clay pot, dip the live bird + hyssop into dead bird’s blood, sprinkle the healed person 7 times, pronounce him clean and release the live bird.

8-32. Healed person is to wash clothes, shave hair, bathe, enter camp, stay 7 days outside tent, is then clean. Offer grain offering. Bring two male and one female lambs. One is the guilt and wave offering. Put its blood on the person’s right ear, thumb and toe. Sprinkle oil before the Lord and on the person’s right ear, thumb and toe; the rest of the oil on his head. Then offer sin, burnt and grain offerings (if poor: one lamb & two doves).

(b) 33-37 mildew

33-47 Priest to examine house. If it is mildew: demolish, take the materials out of town to an unclean place. If you enter it: unclean till evening.

48-57 If there is no spread and the house remains healthy after replastering, purify it as for skin disease: 2 birds, one killed over water *etc* as v1-7

Ch. **15** Discharges causing uncleanness

1-12 Bodily discharge contaminates anything you sit on and anyone who touches you. They must be washed and are unclean till evening.

13-15 Once cleansed wait 7 days then sacrifice 2 doves as sin and guilt offering to make atonement.

16-30 Male emissions, & women’s monthly blood: wash. The man is unclean till evening; the woman, for 7 days. Women’ discharges other than the monthly: unclean as long as has the discharge, then sacrifice 2 doves as v13-15.

31-33 summary: separate yourselves from what makes unclean lest you defile God’s holy place. (*Sin is never private. Remember its ramifications.*)

Ch. 16 THE DAY OF ATONEMENT - one day a year.

1 & 2 The Most Holy Place: Beware. Don’t enter just whenever you choose! *God* appears in the cloud over the atonement cover.

3-10 Preparation: bull, garments, two male goats for sin offering, ram for burnt offering. Bathe.

11-19 The sin offerings:

- Bull for himself: incense cloud for safety, sprinkle blood on and before the atonement cover (*hilasterion*: Jesus is ours, Romans 3.25).
- One of the goats for the people, same procedure. To make atonement for Most HP, Tent & Altar, because of their uncleanness and rebellion.

20-22 The scapegoat. The live goat. Put both hands on. Confess all the people's sins. Send the goat away. It carries on itself all their sins to a solitary, desert place. Let it go (*read that again!*). // 'He descended into hell.'

23-25 The burnt offerings. High priest to take off his Most Holy Place garments. Bathe. Sacrifice burnt offerings for himself and the people to make atonement. Burn the fat of the sin offering.

26-28 Clean up. Wash; burn the offal and the hides outside the camp.

29-34 summary. Do this, with fasting, once a year so as to be clean from all your sins. It is a 'Sabbath of Sabbaths.'

Ch. 17. More about sacrifices and animal life and death

1-9. No D.I.Y. sacrifices in places other than the Tabernacle, nor to idols

10-14. Eat no blood: a creature's life is in it. Drain the blood from anything you are going to eat.

15 & 16. If you eat anything found dead, wash your clothes and bathe.

Chs 18 – 20 Moral purity

Ch. 18. Principles of sexual behaviour: unlawful behaviours built round the principle: 'do not be like the world' (v.1-3).

Incest at various degrees of relation and consanguinity; sex during a woman's monthly period; adultery.

Child sacrifice; homosexual sex; bestiality.

For such things I will drive out the nations currently in the holy land. You keep my laws lest the land vomit you out too. Anyone who behaves like the above should be cut off from the people (= either driven from the land, or excluded from the community). I am YHWH your God.

Ch. 19. Principles of neighbourliness: Various laws built round the 10 commandments. Core principle: 'Be holy because I am' (v.1 & 2).

Respect your parents; no idols; perform your offerings properly; leave some harvest for the poor; do not steal / defraud / make it difficult for the blind and deaf. Show no favouritism whether to the poor or the rich.

Rebuke your neighbour openly rather than share their guilt. Eschew revenge. Do not sleep with a slave who is promised to another person. Do not eat a tree's fruit till it is 5 years old. No divination. Observe the Sabbath. Do not mistreat foreigners: you were foreigners in Egypt. Keep honest scales. In summary, keep all my laws: I am YHWH.

Ch. 20. Punishments for sin

Death penalty for child sacrifice, cursing your parents, adultery, incest, homosexual sex, bestiality and Spiritism. 'Cut off from their people' those who have sex with their wife during her monthly period. Keep my laws. Observe the distinction between clean and unclean foods.

Chs 21 -22 Qualifications for priests

Ch. 21 & 22 Rules for priests w.r.t. holiness and sacred offerings

Ch. 21. Priests, don't make yourselves unclean by dealing with corpses.

Don't shave your head or the edge of your beard. Don't marry a prostitute or a divorced woman. The High Priest must marry a virgin. No priest with a physical defect may offer sacrifices.

22.1-9. If ceremonially unclean, don't come near the sacred offerings; nor if you have infectious skin disease or bodily discharge. You will die if you treat my requirements with contempt.

22.10-16 Only priests, their family and their slaves may eat the sacred offerings. If someone else does in error, they are to compensate the priest to its value + 20%.

22.17-23 Unacceptable sacrifices: animal with defect or blemish. A deformed ox or sheep is acceptable as a *freewill* offering, but not if it is in fulfilment of a vow. Don't offer an animal less than a week old. I am YHWH your God

Chs 23-25 Ritual Feasts

Ch. 23 The appointed feasts.

v. 3 The Sabbath. Do no work.

4-8 Passover. Bread must be without yeast. No work on days 1 & 7

(*1Corinthians 5.7, 1 Peter 1.18f, Revelation 5.9*).

9-14 Firstfruits. Bring a sheaf of the first grain. Priest waves it before the Lord plus grain and drink offerings. Do not eat any new grain till you have done this.

15-22 Weeks (also called Pentecost). Wave offering of 2 loaves, burnt offering of a male goat, fellowship offering of 2 lambs, no 'regular' work (= ?). Leave the edges of the harvest for the poor.

23-25 Trumpets. On 7th month, 1st day, rest. Give offering by fire to the Lord

26-32 Day of Atonement. 7th month, 10th day. Fast and do no work.

33-44 Tabernacles (Shelters, Booths). 7th month, days 15-21, no work on days 1 & 7. Rejoice, live in shelters. On 8th day present offering by fire.

Ch. 24 Oil and bread before the Lord; a blasphemer is stoned.

1-9. Provision of oil for the menorah and bread for the showbread. The people are to bring clear olive oil to keep the lamps alight 24/7. Also bread every Sabbath.

10-23. The son of Shelomith curses God and is stoned to death by all who heard him. Murder is to attract capital punishment; lesser crimes eye for eye, tooth for tooth (the 'lex talionis').

Ch. 25: The 7th (Sabbath) and 49th (Jubilee) years.

1-7. The Sabbath year. The land is to be rested one year in seven.

8-55 The Jubilee year. One year in 49, proclaim liberty (→ Isaiah 61.1-3, Luke 4.16-21!!).

11, 12. The land is to rest

13-24. Each person returns to their ancestral property and clan. Between these times you aren't selling land, for it is God's property. You are selling the number of crops till the next Jubilee year, then returning the land to its hereditary tenant.

25-28. If a person has to sell property, (a) his nearest relative (go'el) is to redeem it; or (b) if he becomes prosperous again, he pays the balance to the purchaser and may return to the land; or (c) he returns at Jubilee.

29-34. Houses in walled cities can be redeemed during the first year. After that they become the permanent possession of the purchaser, except for Levites who can always redeem theirs.

35-43. To your own countrymen: lend without interest and make no slaves: treat them as hired workmen.

44-55. You can make slaves from other nations. An Israelite who sells himself to a rich foreigner retains the right of redemption.

Chs 26-27 Call to Covenant faithfulness

Ch. 26: Rewards for obedience and disobedience

1-13. Follow my decrees will → good harvests, peace, I will walk among you.

14-39 Reject my decrees will → wasting diseases, defeat by your enemies, barren earth, wild animals destroying your cattle, plague, famine, you will end up eating your own children, ruin your cities, lay waste your land, scatter you among the nations, and fear. (Wow!)

40-46 Confess and humble yourselves will → I will refresh my covenant with you

Ch. 27: Redeeming what is the Lord's (*chapter 27 seems to be a postscript*)

10-25 Different values to pay if you dedicate someone to the Lord but instead give an equivalent of their value according to gender and age. Likewise if vow an animal or house, or part of the family land until the next Jubilee, or a field which is not family land.

26-34 You cannot dedicate a first-born because they are already the Lord's. Nor something irrevocably given over to God, nor someone devoted to destruction. You can redeem a tithe (eg of grain) by adding 20% to its value.

Introduction

The spiritual journey through Leviticus :

1. God unapproachable	(Exodus 40.34f)	<u>compare NT</u>
2. Silenced before God	(Lev. 9.22-24)	Romans 1.18f
3. Peace with God	(Lev. 16.12f)	Romans 3.19f
4. Walking with God	(Lev. 26.11f)	Romans 5.1f
5. Welcomed by God, into - <i>then</i> : the holy place		Romans 8.31-39
	- <i>now</i> : the most holy place	Numbers 1.1
		Hebrews 10.19-22

Exodus has ended with an impossibility. God is there but not even Moses can meet him (40.34f). So at the start of Leviticus **the Tabernacle is a dwelling-place, but not a meeting-place** (*a mishkan*, from *shakan* to dwell: whence, shekinah. But not an *ohel mo'ed*, a tent of appointments or meeting). Its opening verse shows God addressing this tension: 'So he called' (1.1) – God wants our friendship!

The sacrifices atone for sin and the High Priest performs the awesome introduction to Him (9.23f); the Day of Atonement gets a person into His Presence, though only one man, one day a year, (16. 12-16). It takes the whole book – including holy living (ch. 17-27) – to achieve the full transition to 'I will walk among you, I will be your God, and you will be my people' (Lev. 26. 11, 12). God has enabled fellowship with Himself .

Thanks to Leviticus, Numbers can open with "The Lord spoke to Moses **IN** the Tent of Meeting" (Num.1.1). 'Leviticus has worked!' (The Bible Project). Atonement & holy living **have made God's dwelling-place a meeting-place**. Wow! The principles there are as NT as OT, and in that sense prophetic of why Jesus comes. **Our** High Priest offered a sacrifice, Himself, atoning so as to bring a *relationship* with God; holy living maintains *fellowship* with him (Col. 3.1-17, Rom.12.1, 1 Thes.4.1ff, 1 Peter 1.15f). Leviticus is just full of Jesus.

Leviticus is a fabulous book, driven by grace. It is divided into two by its heart and fulcrum, the annual Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), ch. 16.

- Ch. 1-16 explore full atonement (NT: justification).
- Ch. 17-27 spell out holy living (NT: sanctification).

"Leviticus is good news. It is good news for sinners who need pardon, for priests who need empowering, for women who are vulnerable, for the unclean who covet cleansing, for the poor who yearn for freedom, for the marginalised who seek dignity, for animals that demand protection, for families that require strengthening, for communities that want

fortifying and for creation that stands in need of care. All these issues, and more, are addressed in a positive way in Leviticus.” – *Tidball* p. 17. The holiness of God is the constant background. What is special about Leviticus is the way the actions of sacrifice and ritual express theology. They tell the work of atonement / High Priest – and thus foreshadow the work of Jesus – in their ceremonies.

The Background

Historical. Abraham lived 2,000BC; Moses about 1,400; King David 1,000.

Religious. Among the religions of the Middle East, including the ‘monotheistic’ ones, Abraham’s shone out as different. Other gods were:

- capricious; YHWH, clear and dependable.
- local; YHWH was Creator, the God of all the earth.
- amoral, stirring up moral laxity and all sorts of cruel and libidinous practices to appease their caprice or lay hold of their fertility; YHWH was upright and taught honesty, family cohesion, self-control and neighbourly care.

YHWH was Other, and so attractively good.

Archaeological. The main contribution of archaeology is to support an early date for the composition of the Pentateuch. In the 18th century Jean Astruc used Elohim and Jehovah as a basis for identifying different assumed written sources of Leviticus. In the 19th century Graf and Wellhausen, taking this further, dated Lev. to the 5th century BC. None of them tested their ideas against the evidence. By the early 20th century, Abraham and Moses were held to be completely unhistorical. Yet Ch.1.1 and 27.34 say God gave Leviticus to Moses at Sinai and in 56 places Lev. says the Lord spoke to Moses. Leviticus itself does not say who did the actual writing as other Books of Moses do, although historically Jews and Christians have held that Moses was the author/compiler.

- It is now known that during the second millennium BC, written and oral versions of important events were promulgated at the same time. There is plenty of evidence for the kind of life recorded in Gen-Deut. The written form was normally inscription, monument or court records. eg The Nuzi tablets (Akkadian, mid 2nd millennium BC) have significant parallels with patriarchal customs. Gen 15.1-4 say that Abram was concerned that his servant Eliezer, not a son, was his heir. The Nuzi tablets show it was normal for childless parents to adopt a servant as a son; he would serve them until they died and became their heir.

- The form and manufacture of the Tabernacle lampstand do not correspond with the lampstands in Solomon's temple or later periods. They most closely resemble the design of lampstands in the late Bronze age. (Milgrom quoted in Sklar p. 34)
- Only documents from the second millennium BC or earlier show clear evidence of both blessings and curses. First millennium legal collections and treaties do not possess these elements. (Hess quoted in Sklar p. 34)

There is every reason to believe the natural meaning of the text: the content of Leviticus came from Moses, thus dating it “between 1440 and 1260BC (depending on the date of the exodus from Egypt):” J. Sklar, TOTC, IVP 2013 p. 31)

The Literary Context

- God has told Abraham that through his seed (Israel … Jesus) the nations of the world would be blessed (Gen.12.1-3)
- He has rescued the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt. They are camped at Sinai. God cuts the covenant (Ex.24.12). The Tabernacle is constructed (Ex.36.8 – 40.33). God comes down to it, but in such glory that Moses cannot enter (Ex.40.34ff).
- What will happen next? “And He called …” are Leviticus’ opening words (and the Hebrew title to the book). God takes the initiative; he wants to walk with us.

The Theme

The message of Leviticus is God opening the way for sinners to come into his presence and then to walk with him as adverts for his holy character. R.K. Harrison puts it (I'm modifying): Leviticus is a well-organised reference manual for the OT priests and people. It has two principal divisions or themes, which have as their pivot ch. 16: regulations governing the annual Day of Atonement. The first 15 chapters deal broadly with sacrificial principles and procedures for removing sin and restoring people to fellowship with God. The last 11 chapters emphasise ethics, morality and holiness. The unifying theme is the insistent emphasis on God's holiness and the demand that the Israelites show it in their lives. – RKH, ‘Leviticus’ TOTC, IVP, 1980, p.14.

The whole of Leviticus except ch. 8 – 10 and 24.10-23 consists of speeches by God from the Tabernacle. He is providing the way of reconciliation to his people so they may dwell in his presence and walk with him. Very NT!

Structure and Theology

As can be seen from the list of chapters (p. 2), Leviticus has a symmetrical (chiastic) structure:

- **A1** The sacrifices, ch. 1-7
 - **B1** The Priesthood, ch. 8-10
 - **C1** clean ↔ unclean, ch. 11-15 } } Approaching God
- **The Day of Atonement**, ch. 16 } makes both ↑ & ↓ possible.
 - **C2** holy ↔ profane, ch. 17-20 } } Living with God
 - **B2** The Priesthood, ch. 21 & 22 } }
- **A2** The festivals, ch. 23-24 } }

Looking ahead (chs 25-27) } *Call to covenant
faithfulness*

At the heart of Leviticus is **The Day of Atonement** (Yom Kippur), a cover-all by which to resolve all the remaining issues that separate God and man, and open the door to peace and friendship between them.

God gave three means of grace each side of the central one, the Day of Atonement:

- **A liturgy** at the beginning and end: at the beginning for bringing reconciliation to his people; and at the end, giving them regular time off to remember his mercy and enjoy his company at festivals through the year.
- **A priesthood** near the beginning and end: at the beginning to mediate reconciliation, and at the end to show a high standard of holiness, behaviour and reverence because of their leadership and mediatorial roles.
- **Purity laws** before and after the instructions about the Day of Atonement: before them, to know whether they are clean or unclean and therefore in a state to be in his presence; and after them, now they are forgiven, to know the principles of moral behaviour.

Clearly the OT Day of Atonement is the heart of Leviticus just as **THE** Day of our Atonement by Jesus – its antitype and fulfilment – is the heart of the NT and of all history. Each is the step that gave people entrance into the Holy of Holies, the very Presence of God: Lev. 16. 12-14 → Heb. 9.11-12. Leviticus is just full of Jesus.

Is the whole Pentateuch also so designed? The primary flow of thought in the Pentateuch is linear: Genesis, the book of beginnings and first principles. Exodus, the book of redemption. Leviticus, the steps which put things right, and keep them right, between God and his redeemed people. Numbers, the lessons in journeying to the promised land. Deuteronomy (*deutero* = second, *nomos* = law), the reminding and reinforcing of the covenant as they prepare to enter the land.

On the other hand, notice the ‘*inclusio*’ (a key phrase at beginning and end of a passage indicating its extent):

- **Gen:** *The Lord hovers, 1.2*; separation from the nations, see the land, patriarch blesses, dies outside it.
 - **Ex:** Journey from slavery *to Sinai*. Desert, apostasy, *build* Tabernacle
 - **Lev:** *At Sinai*. Sacrifices, Atonement, holiness, *use* Tabernacle
 - **Num:** Journey *from Sinai* towards promised land. Desert, apostasy, *dedicate* Tabernacle
- **Deut:** separation from the nations, see the land, patriarch blesses, dies outside it. *The Lord hovers, 32.11f.* - Morales p.33

Was this a conscious design? If the pattern is valid, full atonement is the very heart of the Law. What a gracious God.

Leviticus spells out theological principles in the way it is constructed.

To enter into fellowship with God:

- We need forgiveness – and God provides for sacrifices (ch. 1-7)
- We need a mediator – and God provides the High Priest (ch. 8-10)
- We need to be clean – and God provides for cleansing (ch. 11-15)

Day of Atonement – full atonement removes every obstacle (ch. 16, 17)

To remain in fellowship with God,

- We shall live holy lives: (ch. 17-20)
- We shall ensure godly leadership (ch. 21, 22)
- We shall make times with God together (ch. 23-27)

The message of Leviticus

The Flow of chapters 1-16.

God's coming to his dwelling place (end of Exodus) faced him with a paradigm problem which is no different today. How is he to be reconciled to sinners? What can make for forgiveness and enable reconciliation? Four steps are given:

- (a) Substitutes are provided to die for their sins, ch. 1-7
- (b) Mediators are provided to present these to God and pray for them, ch. 8-10
- (c) Ways of cleansing are provided to make it safe for them to come near him in worship, ch. 11-15
- (d) An annual day of atonement is provided to cover all the sin, spiritual contamination and guilt that remains, ch. 16

1. We need forgiveness; God provides the sacrifices, (ch. 1 – 7).

God first spells out the five main offerings that make and celebrate peace with his people. The making of atonement (kpr stem) has two dimensions: ransom from the Lord's judgement (cp Richard II: pay a cost to free from that imprisonment), and purification from sin's defilement. The death of the innocent substitute makes amends for sin and brings those who are estranged to a unity.

There are four elements essential to the ritual of sacrifice: God; the sinner; the sin that alienates them; and the animal which must die (D.M.Loyd-Jones, *Romans 3.20-4.25*, p.70, drawing on John Owen). The ritual has seven stages:

1. Choose a blemish-free animal. *The saviour must have no sins of his own.*
2. Hand pressure symbolises transfer of sin and vicarious substitution: this animal is me. *Isaiah 53.6*
3. Death. The blameless one dies, life for life.
4. Sprinkle or smear blood. The life is given up to God in that death, that we may be forgiven: Lev. 4.26
5. Burning. The sacrifice becomes a pleasing aroma, appeasing and pleasing God: a propitiating savour. 'I see Him lay his anger by and smile, in Jesus' face.' (John Ruskin)
6. Communion: 1-5 above → fellowship, eating with friends and family in God's Presence.
7. Benediction. The Lord's blessing.

Why the need to kill an expensive animal? Is the whole process not bizarre and gory? All flows from God's covenant with the race of Adam. 'Here is a lovely world to enjoy; with just the fruit of this tree forbidden, to show me your love. But in the day you eat of that, death will enter (Gen.2.17).' He repeats it, OT and NT: 'the soul that sins, it shall die;' 'the wage of sin is

death' (Ezk.18.4 & 20; Rom.6.23). So sin can never be dealt with apart from a death. If we ask why, the answer lies in the stunning goodness of God: he cannot, and will not, abide with evil. But in love he steps in, resolving the problem of sin by providing a death: Heb.9.22. So in his justice he punishes the crime; in his love he provides the solution.

Just as the liturgy has seven stages, seven speeches instruct about the sacrifices (ch.1-7). God's revealed will is Sabbatical, the symbol of the covenant with him, Ex.31. 12 - 17: spared work one day a week to withdraw from all else, to him.

The overview of sacrifices for all the people (1.1 – 6.7) is followed by regulations for the priests on how the rituals are to be carried out: (6.8 – 7.38).

a) **General, daily:** Whole Burnt offering or ascension offering, *'olâ:* (ch1 and 6.8-13). The word means to ascend: the smoke ascended, 'an aroma pleasing to the Lord (1.9,13). It was the daily, 'general' sacrifice and combined both the giving by God to the people and the giving by the people to God. God was giving the means of absolution by the shedding of blood (1.4,5) so the worshipper is accepted. In presenting the whole animal the worshippers were symbolically giving their whole lives to God, which gave him pleasure (1.9). Like Sklar I like adding 'whole' to 'burnt offering' because 'the priest is to burn *all* of it on the altar (1.8,9,12,13).' None was kept for priest or worshipper to eat. The commitment is total, the whole person, religious and business and family. It undertakes to 'wholly follow the Lord,' like Caleb (Num.14.24, 32.12; Deut.1.36; Jos.14.14). So the core and daily ritual symbolises atonement and consecration in one offering. It could also be offered at other times voluntarily, by men or women. The Christian also lives by both: atonement daily appropriated (Eph.5.2 with Heb.10.8-10) and dedication daily engaged: Rom.12.1.

b) **'Thank You':** Grain, meal, cereal or tribute offering, *minhâ:* (ch. 2 and 6.14-23). The word means gift or tribute as in 1 Kings 4.21 when nations brought Solomon tribute. The worshipper brought God the produce of the land as a gift. It is a memorial – you are not forgetting that every good gift comes from him, and that is pleasing to him (2.2). The remainder was a gift of food for the priests. The Christian has just the same loyalty, offering God sacrifices of praise and good lives (Heb.13.5; 1 Peter 2.4-10), setting aside a proportion of their income for God's work and providing for God's 'full-time' servants: 1 Cor.16.2, Gal.6.6

c) **'Thank You'** Peace or fellowship offering, *sh'lammim* (plural in 89 of its 90 occurrences): (ch. 3 and 7.11-36). The Hebrew root means to be complete or healthy (same root as shalom), relationships included. So the

feast, shared between priest, worshipper, his family and guests, celebrated the joy of shared communion with God and one another. A thoroughly Christian principle: (1 Cor.11.23-34).

d) **‘Sorry:’ Sin or purification offering, *batta’t*:** (4.1-5.13 and 6.24-30).

The root means to miss the (behavioural) mark and so incur guilt. The word itself means both sin, the reality of disobedience to God; and sin-offering, the means of removing the guilt and penalty of sin through this sacrifice. It was mandatory for the particular sin described as ‘doing unintentionally what is forbidden in any of the Lord’s commands’ and was offered by either the individual or the community: for missing the mark can be a church thing as well as an individual thing.

e) **‘Sorry:’ Guilt, trespass or reparation offering, *‘asam*:** (5.14-6.7 and

7.1-10). The sense of the root is to be guilty or acknowledge a trespass. The reparation offering is the sacrifice that atones for this. The sins are described in more detail: breaking God’s commands or wronging your neighbour, especially if you lied about it.

- The first, the burnt offering, is the daily core. It makes atonement and expresses consecration.
- the next two, the grain and fellowship offerings, are voluntary thanksgivings and covenant affirmations: ‘offerings by fire, a sweet aroma.’
- the final two, the purification and reparation offerings, are expiatory, obligatory remedies for particular sins. 1 John 1.7, Heb.9.14, Rom.8.3(!), Rev.7. 14.

Although listed in that order in ch. 1-6, the purification and reparation offerings were made first: eg 9.15,16. They cleared away the sin and guilt before proceeding to the burnt offering and then celebrating fellowship over a meal.

The wave offering is mentioned as part of other offerings eg 7.30, 8.27. The verb stem indicates to lift, wave or shake, probably symbolising dedication of the item to God.

The ministry opportunity of expounding ch. 1-7.

*Through the sacrifices God opened the way to full atonement and personal consecration, as he does in the Gospel (Romans ch. 1-8 → 12-16). ‘If grace is proclaimed, it means demand and claim upon man’ (K. Barth, essay ‘Gospel and Law’ in *Community, State and Church*’ 1960, p.71-100.*

Expounding these passages is the opportunity to ransack the ways the different sacrifices cater for the dimensions of sin and its entail in our lives; to ease the hearers into knowing the rich pardon available in Christ who is the fulfilment of them; and to the surrender to God in Christ which that makes possible.

2. We need a mediator: Ch. 8-10 The ordination of Aaron and sons.

Conciliation and arbitration services have seen a sharp rise in recent years. There are times when estranged parties need a safe middleman, an honest broker to bring about reconciliation. The process is often painful; skill is needed. A significant finding of the conciliation industry is that both parties must be willing if a good outcome is to be expected. God enabled reconciliation by providing:

A). A High Priest, Aaron

Estrangement was writ large into the relation between YHWH and humankind when we were banished from Eden for our sin. Iniquities separate us from God (Gen.3.23, Is.59.2). Job longed for a mediator to put him in touch with YHWH (Job 9.33). It was to address this difficulty that God arranged for mediation. Lev. ch. 8 records the form he laid down for it in the life of Israel: the appointment and equipping of the High Priest. The chapter is full of theological principle.

1. The High Priest must be washed (v. 6). By submitting to the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins – unnecessarily, as John the Baptist thought, but ‘to fulfil all righteousness’ – Jesus fulfilled this requirement for becoming High Priest (Matt.3.13-15). There IS a conciliator between God and us, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim.2.5).
2. He must be specially clothed, endued for his ministries (v. 7-9). Note especially:
 - i) The Ephod. Ex.28.9-12 says it had the names of all 12 tribes on its shoulder straps ‘as a memorial before the Lord.’ This combines the thoughts of support and intercession. Our Lord Jesus likewise ever lives to pray for us (Heb.7.25).
 - ii) The breast piece. Ex.28.17a, 29a. Their names were written over his heart, and again the purpose of reminding God of them is stated. Jesus our high priest, says Hebrews, is full of sympathy for us; giving us confidence to approach the throne of grace (Heb.4.15,16).
 - iii) The gold head-plate. Ex.28.36-38 states its purpose: ‘he will bear the guilt involved in whatever the Israelites give God: it will be on his forehead continually so that they will be acceptable to the Lord.’ How much more does its fulfilment, Jesus’ atoning death, clear our consciences (Heb.9.14).

3. He must be anointed (v. 10-12, 30). The Holy Spirit himself performed this task for Jesus (Matt.3.16,17). Jesus, taking up the prophecy of Isaiah about this event, spelt out the fruitfulness of his anointing (Luke 4.17-21 quoting Isaiah 61.1-3):
 - a) To bring good news to the needy
 - b) To comfort and heal the broken hearted
 - c) To set the inhibited and limited free
4. He must sacrifice. In Aaron's case, both for his own sins (8.14, 18) and then for the people's (9.15, 16). In Jesus' case, only for ours (Heb. 9. 27, 28).
5. He must spend time apart, clarifying and committing himself to his vocation (v. 33-36). Jesus did exactly the same, spending 40 days in the wilderness to do so (Matt.4.1-11).

Looking back, we see in Lev. ch. 8 so much that tells of Jesus the Mediator, our wonderful High Priest: baptised to represent us, endued with ministries for us, anointed by the Holy Spirit to free us, and who finally sacrificed his life for us. What a great Saviour.

B. The priests, Aaron's sons

Aaron's sons, the priesthood, went through most of the same ritual. Since the church constitutes a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2.9) there is much to learn about our vocation from what is said here.

- Seven times we are told it was done 'as the Lord commanded.' When we obey his word, we may expect to enjoy receiving his promises (John 14.23).
- Washing: we need cleansing (v.6), and Christ washes us clean (Titus 3.4-6).
- Clothing: we need equipping (v. 7-9), and the Holy Spirit endues each of us with a gifting for the service to which we are called (Rom.12.3-8; 1 Cor.12-14).
- Anointing: we need empowering (v. 10-13). Our Lord gives us power through the Holy Spirit, an anointing which we are responsible to maintain (John 20.22; Acts 1.8; Eph.3.16, 5.18).
- Dedicating: we need consecration, to be spelt out in ear, hand and foot: what we choose to hear, do and where we go (v. 14-30). This was celebrated in the peace offering of oil and blood. This combination – anointing following redemption – is to be fulfilled by Christians who likewise are Spirit-filled and blood-bought.
- Feasting in fellowship with God, v. 31. 1 Cor. 11.17-34.
- Waiting: time with God to get it right, v. 32-36. Eph.6.18; Ps.119.164.

When the High Priest exercised this ministry, his sons the priests helping him, the blessing of God fell and he showed his glory (9.23, 24). May we be such a priesthood.

Ch. 10. God has given sacrifices to atone, priesthood to officiate: what can possibly go wrong?. But then Aaron's sons offer by fire contrary to the Lord's command. Fire comes from him and consumes them. Yet Aaron's response is reverent (10.16-20). That is good; now what is to happen?

The ministry opportunities of expounding ch. 8-10

- 1) *A sight of Jesus.* As Hebrews reminds us, Lev. ch. 8 tells us much about our Lord Jesus and his high priesthood. In putting him and his many-coloured ministries to us on display, we give our hearers opportunity to admire and appreciate him and appropriate both him and his consoling benefits.
- 2) *A sense of our priesthood.* Israel were to be a priestly kingdom, distinctive in being God's possession with access to him and the mediatorial responsibility to represent him to the nations (Ex. 19.6). Even so, in this BC era only a few were called to the priesthood (Lev. ch. 8 & 9). It is different now. Jesus has made us all priests (Rev. 1.6), and these chapters spell out some of the dignity of this and the importance of treating our calling reverently.

3. We need to be clean – and God provides for cleansing (ch. 11-15)

Again, how may we meet the Lord?

- 1) Step 1: forgiveness through the sacrifices (ch. 1-7).
- 2) Step 2: a mediator to present them and stand between God and sinners, praying for them (ch. 8-10). This took us from God unapproachable (Ex. 40.35) to God displaying his glory outside the Tabernacle (Lev. 9.23).
- 3) **STEP 3:** Now the cleansings commanded in chapters 11-15 show the way to 15.31: separating the Israelites from all that is unclean, so as not to defile the Tabernacle. It spells out the difference between a clean and unclean status before God.
 - a. clean and unclean animals (ch. 11)
 - b. cleansing after childbirth (ch. 12)
 - c. unclean diseases of skin and materials / houses (ch. 13)
 - d. cleansing these (ch. 14)
 - e. diagnosing and cleansing bodily discharges (ch. 15)

The condition 'unclean' does not come from doing wrong. It is a decree by God on what makes it unsafe to enter his holy presence. The *status* of a thing or person might be either common or holy; their *condition*, either clean or unclean:

<u>Status</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Common: unclean	{ if cleansed, makes clean
	or
	clean (10.10) } to pollute it/him/her, makes them unclean
	} to sanctify it, makes it holy
or Holy	} if defile a holy thing, makes it merely clean
	+ it can be sanctified.
	} if pollute it, makes it unclean + it must be cleanse

Sklar illustrates from visiting a hospital. We can propose the three conditions *ill*, *well* or *aseptic*. If you are *ill* with the ‘flu, you are infectious: don’t do hospital visiting. If you are *well*, it’s OK to visit; but before entering the operating theatre, you need to scrub up and take that general health a stage further to *asepsis*. Likewise items or people might be unclean, clean or holy.

The basis of the clean/unclean distinction has been much discussed. It seems to be based on what is regarded as normal / healthy and so have an aura of life. If (eg) an animal is not regarded as such (shellfish don’t have scales and swim, so they aren’t ‘normal’ fish), there is an aura of death about them.

Hence, ‘unclean’ animals include predators, scavengers, association with pagan worship (pigs).
 ‘unclean’ humans are those with physical defects, skin diseases, bodily discharges.

This does not imply ‘sinful.’ Whereas sin needs a sin-offering to bring *forgiveness*, uncleanness needs an offering to make the person *ritually clean*: whole, normal, healthy, appropriate for the Presence.

The principle is: do not bring unclean things into contact with the holy. Eg a priest must not pollute himself by touching a corpse. If he does, he must offer sacrifices to cleanse himself and start consecration all over again (Num.6.9-12). Some uncleanness can be cleansed so the person or thing is clean again. But some animals are permanently unclean, so may not be eaten. Unclean people, eg with leprosy, must stay outside the camp unless cleansed. All this to underline: God is *holy*.

The ministry opportunity of expounding ch. 11-15

For the Christian, the importance of whether our lives are clean or unclean remains; but its basis is different. Jesus changed it from ritual to moral purity (Mark 7.19ff) and the apostles followed him in this (Eph.1. 3 & 4; 1 Peter 2. 9 & 12).

Expounding this section gives the opportunity to our hearers to travel the equivalent road: not now of avoiding unclean foods, but of turning from all known sin: a John the Baptist ministry as in Luke 3. 1-18.

4. Ch. 16. The Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur.

CH. 16 =



THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (YOM KIPPUR).

15.31 has reminded Israel that uncleanness defiles God's dwelling-place. How are it and they to be cleansed? Even though daily sacrifices have taken place, issues of cleanness and forgotten or unrecognised sin are bound to remain. God provides the Day of Atonement to cover all their sin and impurity: 'atonement is to be made once a year for *all* the sins of the Israelites' (16.33). It is the annual spring-clean (in the autumn!), picking up on anything not yet covered by the regular sacrifices and cleansing everything that sin has defiled, from the holy of holies outward. For the stages of the liturgy see *Précis* above. Of particular importance are the carefulness required, the preparation, the three sacrificial stages to full absolution:

1. sin (purification) offering, **expiating** sin and its contamination
2. scapegoat, **eliminating** them. Release them, believer (v. 22).
3. burnt offering, **propitiating** God and expressing personal **consecration**

"I see Him lay His anger by and smile in Jesus' face" (John Ruskin)

The two goats - the people's sin-offering that dies and the scapegoat taken into the wilderness - form a single sin (purification) offering. The first goat dies, *cleansing* Tabernacle and people from sin's pollution; then the scapegoat is taken away, *removing* sin's guilt. Note the lovely ending to that: 'let it go'! A gracious command for all of us. Such a day is to be a 'Sabbath of Sabbaths' (16.31), with fasting: it is crucial, concentrate on it alone, make atonement your own.

The Day of Atonement fulfils at least four functions:

1. To cleanse God's house, 16.16-18. The culmination of the clean/unclean laws of ch. 11-15. Cleansing takes place from the inside out: holy of holies, holy place, the altar in the courtyard, and all the people in respect of all their sins.
2. To remove sin's guilt.
3. To enable humankind to approach God's Presence.
4. To re-enter the state before God of humankind in Eden. Adam and Eve were thrown out of Eden; on the Day of Atonement the high priest is welcomed back in. All Christians have the now-fulfilment of this, the new and living way right into God's presence (Heb.10.19-22). Its full experience will be in the life to come. The cleansing of the Tabernacle on the Day of Atonement is prophetic of that greater one: 'Through the Son, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his

Son's sacrificial death on the Cross and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven' (Col.1.20).

'Saviour of Calvary, costliest victory,
Darkness defeated and Eden restored' (T. Dudley-Smith)

The ministry opportunity of expounding ch. 16

The twenty-first century potential for our hearers of expounding the Day of Atonement: Full atonement, can it be? Hallelujah, what a Saviour' (Philip Bliss, 'Man of Sorrows')

God in his grace has made a way of reconciliation to his people. Now what?

The Flow of chapters 17-27.

Thanks to the activities of ch. 1-16 the people have access to God. Now Leviticus sets out life with Him. How are Israel to behave in the promised land, as a kingdom with priests? Ch. 17-27 spell this out as

- (a) *holy lifestyle, ch. 17-20, starting with all the people;*
- (b) *godly leadership, ch. 21,22, the higher standards looked for from leaders in God's work,;*
- (c) *sacred time directly with God, ch.23-27: just to be with him. Again the text emphasises the momentousness of God's covenant with them. The showbread is the only offering called a lasting covenant (24.8). It is to be constantly replenished, always fresh, and the light is to shine on it day and night (24.1-9).*

5. We shall live holy lives, (chs 17-20)

The commands in these chapters do not project directly into New Testament Christianity. They were the practical implications of God's character for that nation, place and time. The implications for our day and time are related but different (Gal.3.21 – 4.7). Christian believers constitute an international community living under the civil laws where they live (Rom.13). Jesus has 'abolished in his flesh the law with its commandments.' He has 'cancelled the written code with its regulations that was against us. He took it away, nailing it to the Cross' (Eph.2.15; Col.2.14). And yet God has not changed and his character has implications still. 'Until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter will disappear from the Law. Anyone who breaks even the least of these commandments will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.' Declares the Lord, 'I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts'" (Matt.5.18 & 19; Heb.8.10). See Appendix 'The Christian and the Law,' below: p. 32-35.

Ch. 17: The proper slaughtering of animals (no sacrifices outside the Tabernacle) and the proper use of their blood: for the life is in the blood.

Ch. 18-20 contrast the evil ways of Egypt whence they came and Canaan whither they go (ch. 18 and 20), with the good statutes of the Lord (ch. 19). The emphasis is on the contrast between YHWH and their gods: this is a God-character issue. The chapters form a chiasm:

Ch. 18 ('Family Health': Tidball) *forbid* sexual offences and idolatry.

Ch. 19 (Society's welfare: Tidball): positive holiness based on the Decalogue, centred on loving our neighbour as ourselves

Ch. 20: *punishments for* sexual offences and idolatry.

Ch. 18 & 20 start with marriage and move out to relations with one's family, countrymen, resident aliens, the poor and infirm. **Ch. 18** is framed as apodeictic law (Gk *apodeiknumi* to demonstrate or proclaim, hence meaning clearly established, beyond dispute). The laws are expressed as direct commands in the form *Do* or *Do not*. **Ch. 20** is framed as casuistic or case law expressed in the form: if you do x, y will follow. The prohibitions of ch. 18 fit the punishments of ch. 20:

Ch. 18 prohibitions

- 16-18 incest
- 19 sex-during-period
- 20 adultery w neighbour's wife
- 21 sacrificing children to Molech
- 22 homosexual practice
- 23 bestiality

- 24-30 be unlike the other nations,
lest the land vomit you out.

Ch. 20 punishments

- 11-21 incest
- 18 sex-during-period
- 10 adultery w neighbour's wife
- 2-5 sacrificing children to Molech
- 13 homosexual practice
- 15, 16 bestiality
- 6-8 mediums and wizards
- 9 cursing father or mother
- 22 be unlike the other nations,
lest the land vomit you out.

In **ch. 19** the words 'I am the Lord (your God)' mark the end of each paragraph, giving 16 paragraphs in 3 sections of 4, 4 and 8 paras: religious duties (2b-10), neighbourliness (11-18), and miscellaneous duties (19-37). The 10 commandments form the basis of their thinking:

1 & 2: v. 4

The Lord, not idols

3: v. 12

His name and reputation

4 & 5: v. 3, 30

Respect for Sabbath and parents

6: v. 16

Against slander: it murders a person's reputation

7: v. 20-22 & 29

Holding man-woman marriage in honour

8: v. 11, 13

Against theft and fraud

9: v. 15, 16

Ensure justice

10: v. 17, 18.

Love our neighbour

The ministry opportunity of expounding ch. 18-20

In days of moral confusion like ours the momentous-ness of teaching holy living is beyond calculation. People need to know the difference between right and wrong, and its rationale. Many long to. Positive exposition of these chapters can save much heartache and regret. Clarity as to their current currency is crucial. See 'The Christian and the Law' below.

6. We shall ensure godly leadership, (chs 21, 22)

Ch. 21 & 22 concern the higher standard of holiness required of leaders.

Special reverence is due to the priesthood (ch. 21), the food portions from sacrifices (22.1-16) and the offerings themselves (22.17-30). Priests and their mourning, marriage, physical defects and sacrificial animals are covered. The heart of it is reverence for God's reputation: 21.6, 22.32.

The ministry opportunity of expounding ch. 21 & 22

The tone of the leaders' lives is the major factor in the quality of life of a community. The NT likewise looks for higher standards from leaders: 1 Tim. 3, Titus 1.5-16, James 3.1, 1 Peter 5.1-4. Hence the value of expounding this section.

7. We shall make times with God together, (ch. 23 & 24).

Ch. 23 and 24 continue the theme of reverence for the things of God: the holy times (ch. 23), the holy place (24.1-9) and the holy Name (24.10-23). They direct our eyes to our Lord.

Ch. 23 begins with the Sabbath, the engagement ring or sign of being in covenant with God (Ex.31.12-17). "On the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul" AJ Heschel, *The Sabbath*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005, p. 1, 4. In addition the year contains seven rest-days during the festivals: the whole year has a Sabbath feel. The yearly cycle of worship is outlined:

- v.4-22, the first half of the year
- v. 23-44, the second half.

In the first month, Passover: they started the year by declaring that God was their Saviour. Then unleavened bread, first-fruits, weeks/harvest/Pentecost; and in the second half of the year Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Booths (Shelters; Tabernacles) followed by its closing ceremony. Each had and has its special significance. Other nations might never have a day off; Israel and their servants had one every week and regular extra ones, learning to rest in the Lord and honour the Father who gave them their food in due season.

Ch. 24.1-9 note the ceaseless maintenance of the showbread and Menorah light. Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from

God's mouth; He was their souls' nourishment and enlightenment. He is ours.

Ch. 24.10-23 underlines these chapters' inculcation of reverence. A deliberate blasphemer is executed via a process which ensured that justice was both done and seen to be done. *Hallowed be Thy name.*

The ministry opportunity of expounding ch. 23 & 24.

In a society frantically unable to take a day away from commercialism and rush, the blessings of resting in the Lord offer much. Jesus instituted a regular feast together for his followers (Luke 22.19f; 1 Cor.11.17-34). The early Christians followed the OT's weekly pattern and were taught to encourage one another in this way (Heb.10.24f). In addition there are the blessings in the lessons of the festivals to ransack and offer. Passover: thanks to the blood of God's lamb he passes over us when acting to judge. The shelters / tabernacles remind us we are but pilgrims here, marching to Zion: this world is not our home.

8. Looking ahead: Covenant faithfulness (chs. 25-27).

Ch. 25 – 27 focus more than earlier chapters on life in the promised land. The Sabbath year (25. 1-7) and 'Sabbath of Sabbaths' Jubilee year (25. 8-55) emphasise 'stay in covenant with me!' Again, typical of Leviticus, the arrangement is chiastic:

- 25: laws about redemption involved in the Sabbath and Jubilee years
- 26: obedience and disobedience: blessing and curse
- 27: laws about redemption

Ch. 25, the Sabbath and Jubilee years, is massively significant. Its core concerns are

1. Care for God's earth
2. God's ownership of the land
3. The importance of the family unit, to be preserved by the go'el
4. To prevent the ruin of debtors

The end-marker for each division is 'I am the LORD your God' (17, 38, 55) and each then ends with a theological explanation of its core concern: 17-22, 35-38 and 55. This gives the chapter structure:

- 2-22 a Sabbath for the land (risky faith!)
- 1-7 and 18-22 Rest for the land in the 7th and 49th years
- 8-18 Outline of year of Jubilee / restoration
- 23-38 the redemption of property
- 39-55 the redemption of slaves

Hence Tidballs's chapter heading: 'God's Word About Radical Economics.' 'The demands of holiness embrace our economic decisions as much as our

church activities' (p. 293). It demonstrates the welfare to a society of giving opportunity to the entrepreneur at the same time as limiting the rich-poor gap and giving the struggling a new start in life, all debts cancelled. Lev. 25 is magnificent.'

Ch. 26 emphasises the fraught nature of being in covenant with God and the glory of his mercy.

- Obedience brings blessing (v. 1-13).
- Disobedience brings discipline: perhaps severe (v. 14-39).
- But mercy is always available to the penitent (v. 40-46).

Ch. 27 is perhaps something of a postscript, leading us towards the promised land. But its core is vital: commitments to the Lord are to be honoured. Leviticus has answered the great question facing every man and woman:

O YHWH, who may abide in your tent? (Ps. 15. 1)

By the processes spelt out in Leviticus we have been taken from 'could not enter' (Ex. 40. 35), via frightening encounter (Lev. 9. 23 &24) and dangerous entrance (16. 12 & 13) to personal fellowship:

I will set my Tabernacle among you,

And my soul will not abhor you;

I will walk to and fro among you,

I will be your God, and you will be my people (Lev. 26. 11, 12)

The journey can safely resume, now they are in fellowship with God: 'The Lord spoke with Moses IN the tent of meeting' (Number 1.1) Thanks to the salvation worked through Leviticus, God's dwelling place has become God and man's meeting place Ex.40.35, Num.1.1.

The ministry opportunity of expounding ch. 25 – 27

Christian ecology, economics and equity; taking the risk of faith in the face of common sense in allowing the land a Sabbath year and trusting God for our daily bread; the significance of Jesus being our kinsman-redeemer; the power of the covenant to bless or harm us as we march into the future with God: the potential of ministering these chapters is incalculable.

Leviticus, like the whole Bible and all history, is driven by the theme, the Lord God opening a way for people to walk with him. The OT believer gets it on credit, to be paid for later by Messiah; the NT believer receives it, paid in full. Leviticus gave a typological and temporary, but real, engagement with God; Jesus gives us the same, permanently and fulfilled. The Tabernacle is a model of God's heavenly dwelling. Aaron entered the man-made tent, part of this created world; Jesus, the true one, THE Most Holy Place in heaven (Heb.9.1-15). His humanity ascended to heaven; his Spirit unites us to him

there. He will come back and take us home there, to be with him where he is (John 14.6).

But in the OT, Day of Atonement notwithstanding, the curtain between God and his people remained. Only the High Priest entered, and even he only once a year. Whereas by Jesus' death God split the veil that had hidden his face (Markan sandwich, Mk.15.37f: died-torn-died). Thanks to that death we have freedom to go into the Most Holy Place, the very holy of holies (Heb. 10. 19-22). 'Within the veil I now would come' (Ruth Dryden, *'Within the veil'*).

God's plan for mankind, we discover, will be fulfilled. 'After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us that we may live in his presence' (Hosea 6.2). Jesus, true Israel, went through that for our sake. After two days God revived him; on the third he was raised from the dead; he ascended into THE Holy of Holies. 'Who then shall ascend?' Jesus, and we after him:

And I heard a loud voice out of heaven saying,
The Tabernacle (skene) of God is with men
He will dwell/tabernacle (skenesei) with them, and they will be his people
God himself will be with them – Rev.21.3

There will be nothing unclean there (Lev; Rev 21.27). We will be back in Eden, but better: full of thanks to him who loved us and gave himself for us.

For Christ and his in that bright glory
One deep joy shall share:
Theirs to be for ever with him
His that they are there.

Isn't that absolutely astounding?

Appendix

The Christian and the laws in Leviticus

“If grace is proclaimed, it means demand and claim upon man” (Karl Barth, quoted p.21 above). We find ourselves grateful beyond words to the sinner-justifying God who reveals himself in Type in Leviticus, and in Antitype or fulfilment in the person of our Lord. The desire to please him wells up in us. How shall we please him in respect of the laws in Leviticus? Are Christians to obey them? It requires thought. Some of the laws are glorious ('love your neighbour as yourself'), some are puzzling ('no tattoos') and some are definitely not NT ('if anyone curses father or mother they must be put to death; how to conduct animal sacrifice). What are we to make of this? As the Westminster divines comment, 'All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all' (I.7).

Revelation has been progressive:

1. Adam and Eve, before the Fall, will have lived as God intended. Only after the Fall was it necessary to promulgate the ten commandments in mostly negative terms ("Thou shalt not ..."). Possibly, if we knew enough about Israel and her then neighbours, we could trace the Decalogue principle behind each commandment.
2. God gave the people of Israel those laws, for living in the holy land, surrounded by desperately pagan neighbours, while they were 'under age' (Gal.3.21 – 4.5) before Christ, under the ceremonial and civil jurisdictions that applied then.
3. The laws are no longer 'over us' with their requirement and condemnation. 'A person is justified by faith apart from observing the Law ... now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the Law' (Romans 3.28, Galatians 3.25).
4. And yet in the new covenant, God has put his laws into our minds and written them on our hearts. Anyone who breaks even the least of them and teaches others to, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. If we love Jesus, we will keep his commandments (Heb.8.10; Matt.5.19; John 14.15)

What are we to do with the law written into our minds and hearts, the mixture of commandments?

Traditionally, Christians have recognised moral, ceremonial and civil dimensions to the laws. The *ceremonial* laws are ended: 'there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.' But the principles they stand on – the need for forgiveness,

for a mediator, for a lifestyle – remain for all time. The *civil* laws applied to that BC society not ours, although the principles of neighbourliness remain for all time. But in the sermon on the mount Jesus strongly affirmed the continuation of the law's *moral* dimension; and his apostles followed him in this, as the ethical imperatives within the epistles make plain.

This gives us a handle on the Christian way of relating to these dimensions of the Torah.

- **The ceremonies**, God tore up as Jesus died (Mark 15.38, Col. 2.13 & 14; Eph.2 14-16). They are over; there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. But they tell us much about God, forgiveness, Jesus and his mediation. They reward reverent consideration, as study of Leviticus shows, teaching us much about the principles underlying the process of our salvation.
- **The civil dimensions of the Law**, were for that BC kingdom. They were only intended for that Israel (Malachi 4.4). God has now given his kingdom to a different, *international* society whose members are citizens where they live, and subject to the laws there (Matthew 21.43; Romans 13; 1 Peter 2.12ff). The Levitical civil laws do not apply to us in our different situation. But there is much that is of value if we discern the principle involved and the commandment that lies behind it. To put a parapet on our roof lest the person resting there in the evening falls off (Deut.22.8), still makes sense in Mediterranean housing, but is scarcely needed with a pitched roof and in our UK climate. The principle flows from the respect for life enshrined in the 6th commandment, and we might well apply it by putting netting round the trampoline in the garden before the children play on it. As the Westminster Confession comments:

'To them (Israel) as a body politick God gave sundry judicial laws which expired together with the State of that people, not obliging any other now, further than the general equity thereof may require.' (xix.4)

- As to the **moral law**, Jesus and the apostles not only thoroughly reaffirmed it; they deepened it.
 - Not only don't murder; don't hate or insult.
 - Not only don't commit adultery; eschew lust.

Not only the surface command but the inner intention is the standard to live by. The NT is full of the moral law's claim on Christians; compare the Sermon on the Mount and the many places in the epistles where its principles are so practically applied.

It is not always straightforward to discern the Christian implications of particular laws and Jay Sklar gently modifies the traditional divisions in the following table:

Category of law	Repeated in NT?	Does the underlying value still apply?
1	Yes	Yes
2	No, for cultural reasons	Yes
3	No because Jesus set them aside or they concern rituals he has fulfilled	Yes
4	No, because they were related to Israel being a theocracy	Yes

Thus

- Category 1: eg do not lie; love your neighbour as yourself
- Category 2: eg do not sacrifice to Molech. But the value remains: the Lord remains the only proper object of worship: Matt.4.10.
- Category 3: eg unclean foods. Jesus declared all foods clean; but the value stands: in the same breath our Lord warned about inner uncleanness, Mark 7.19ff.
- Category 4: eg death for idolatry because it is treason. Now it is the State which determines the punishment for treason. But idolatry is still wrong: the value stands, and excommunication might follow, after appeal and warning, for living idolatrously.

- Jay Sklar, Leviticus, IVP 2013 p. 57-69; table on p. 58.

But the law is not intended to be a box-ticking exercise. Even the 603 laws set out between Genesis and Deuteronomy were not exhaustive, and were never intended to be. Grain was to be tithed – but that didn't mean that the olive harvest was not, just because it was not mentioned. The laws were paradigms: patterns that taught believers about the heart of God, patterns which they extrapolated intelligently to other situations not mentioned.

Christians have an advantage over OT believers. For us, the Law is in a new way a living experience built into our regenerate consciences, written on our hearts (Heb.8.10)

Given the above it is normally possible, with thought, to discern the value of a Levitical law. Some are included to distinguish Israel's lifestyle from the very pagan ones of surrounding nations. Even when we are left unsure we

know that all scripture, even the part of the Law now left behind, is useful for doctrine, reproof, correction and training in righteousness (2 Tim.3.16) and worth preaching after due thought.

Christians approach the Levitical laws, therefore, in the spirit of 2 Tim 3.16: as useful for doctrine and Christian living. They provide a way of thinking to guide our evangelical, justified, cheerful, liberated aim of living so as to give God pleasure: of showing by our lives how thankful we are to be in the right with him.

Power to live by the Law's standards

The Sermon on the Mount standard is high. *Can* we live this way? This is where God comes to our rescue by pouring his Spirit into our hearts. Jesus broke the power of sin “*in order that the righteous requirements of the Law might be met in us who live according to the Spirit.*” (Romans 8.4). Having put forward Jesus to the Cross to purchase our justification, God pours out his Spirit to empower our sanctification. ‘The law’s requirement will be fulfilled by the determination of the direction, the set, of our lives by the Spirit’ (Cranfield on Rom.8.4).

Ruth Fowke in ‘*Coping with Crises*’ shines a light on actually living this way:

“There is a way for weakness to become strength. This happens when that weakness, whatever it may be, is consciously accepted and given over to Jesus Christ. This giving must be a deliberate act, undertaken with expectation of its efficacy. Many people find it helpful to pray audibly about this, because they then have to be quite definite about their intentions and their requests. Having committed the weakness, and the worry about it, to Christ, one must not sit back and expect to feel different. It is only as one gets on with living, and does the difficult things, that strength to do them comes. *The power of God only becomes available as one draws upon it in the time of need;* it is not given in advance.’ (italics mine)

The OT laws, therefore:

- Reveal God’s character to us;
- Drive us to Christ to be saved as we realise how far short we fall;
- Guide our behaviour;
- Drive us to the Holy Spirit for the power to fulfil them.

Nigel Barge’s guidance about the Law in his ‘Hearing the Word’ booklet on Leviticus is warmly recommended.

Recommended commentaries.

(1) **For exegesis**, with a very helpful ‘the NT and this passage’ given at each stage: *Gordon Wenham*, Leviticus, NICOT, Hodder 1979.

I haven’t seen C. Wright’s ‘Leviticus’ in New Bible Commentary, 21st Century edition but it is well spoken of.

J Sklar, Leviticus, TOTC IVP 2013 is just excellent. His section ‘Which laws of Leviticus apply today, and how do they apply’ is thorough. If you can only afford one, buy Sklar.

(2) **For overview and exposition**, clear, balanced and helpful:

Derek Tidball ‘The Message of Leviticus’ in IVP’s Bible Speaks Today series. Vivid, easy to read, alive. Great also on difficult issues like thinking through the place of the Law for the Christian.

(3) **For the theology** of Leviticus and its flow of thought: Michael Morales ‘Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord?’ Apollos’s NSBT series, 2015, IVP.

(4) **Online** I recommend *The Bible Project* (<https://thebibleproject.com>), a non-profit work that utilizes short, animated videos to make the biblical story admirably accessible.

Ligonier ministries (www.ligonier.org), the online ministry of R.C.Sproul gives a brief and clear, trustworthy summary of the teaching of a few sections of Leviticus.

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