

# Leviticus

## Introduction

The book of Leviticus focuses on *holiness* - separation from sin, and set apart to God. Since God is holy, his followers must also be holy. This book taught the people how to live and worship, and to be a blessing to others, as God's holy people.

Under the *Old Covenant*, holiness was symbolized by *physical* perfection. Because of this, there are regulations related to bodily functions, diseases, physical imperfections, and more. There were also regulations about crops, and even the types of fabric that could be used in clothing - regulations which might not make sense to us today, but were intended to symbolize issues such as purity and separation. Under the *New Covenant*, an understanding of these regulations will help us to better understand the *unchanging* spiritual realities that the ceremonial practices symbolized.

- One of the misunderstood groups of regulations has to do with matters related to sexual functions and practices. God created sexuality as something that is *sacred*. And even though sin's curse (Genesis 3) has affected some aspects of it (as it has the rest of the human body), it remains sacred and must be treated that way. This is the reason for some of the regulations given in Leviticus - regulations which may seem strange to people who have been raised in a society that promotes sexuality as a merely biological activity, and a source of entertainment.

Also emphasized in Leviticus is the seriousness of approaching God. Because of this, there is much attention to the religious ceremonies and rituals that were a part of the Old Covenant. Again, an understanding of these practices teaches us spiritual principles that are still binding on us today. In the book of Hebrews, we learn that such things were a "shadow" of heavenly realities (Hebrews 8:5), which is why they had to be done exactly according to the pattern given to Moses (Exodus 25:40).

- The fact that we (under the New Covenant) don't have to practice these rituals *doesn't* mean that approaching God is a less serious matter. Back then, a disobedience in these matters meant being cast out of the assembly of believers, or sometimes being put to death. But we read in Hebrews that, if we despise the heavenly realities (which the ceremonial things symbolized), we can expect something far worse (Hebrews 12:18-25).
- It should be noted that there are *no* sacrifices provided for *deliberate* sin. Even under the New Covenant, we should take this to heart, when we are tempted to sin. (See the warning in Hebrews 10:26-27.)

## Interesting Features

These instructions may have been given to Moses over the space of a year, while the people were in the area of Mt. Sinai.

## Outline

### 1. Holiness in approaching God.

#### a. The sacrifices (1:1-7:38).

- 1. The burnt offering (voluntary, an act of worship, expression of devotion, atonement for unintentional sin in general, etc.).
- 2. The grain offering (voluntary, an act of worship and devotion).
- 3. The fellowship offering (voluntary, an act of worship and thankfulness).
- 4. The sin offering (mandatory, atonement for unintentional sins, etc.).
- 5. More about the sin offering; the guilt offering (mandatory, atonement for unintentional sins that require restitution, etc.).
- 6. More about the guilt offering; instructions for priests about the burnt offering, grain offering, and sin offering.
- 7. Instructions for priests about the guilt offering and fellowship offering. What may be eaten; what portion the priests get.

#### b. The ministry of the priests begins (8:1-10:20).

- 8. The priests are prepared for their sacred ministry.
- 9. The priests begin their sacred ministry.

- 10. Two of the priests ignore God's instructions and reap the consequences - fire from heaven.

c. Ceremonial purity - the distinction between "clean" and "unclean" (11:1-15:33).

- 11. Animals that may or may not be eaten; dealing with dead animals.
- 12. Matters related to childbearing.
- 13. Dealing with infectious skin diseases (on people), and mildew (on objects), etc.
- 14. Becoming ceremonially clean after an infectious skin disease is gone, or after the mildew is gone.
- 15. Dealing with uncleanness related to bodily discharges.

d. The Day of Atonement (16:1-34)

- 16. Requirements for the Day of Atonement.

2. Holiness in daily life.

a. Sacrifices and the eating of meat (17:1-16).

- 17. One place for sacrifices (the tabernacle); the sacredness of life (symbolized by the blood, so do not eat blood).

b. Moral conduct and holiness in interpersonal relationships (18:1-20:27).

- 18. Maintaining sexual purity, sexual prohibitions.
- 19. A variety of moral and ceremonial regulations (applications of the 10 commandments).
- 20. Punishments for various sins. (God is going to drive the wicked nations out of Canaan, because they commit these sins. Do not live like them or you will also be driven out of the land!)

c. Moral conduct and holiness - additional regulations for the priests (21:1-22:33).

- 21. Holy conduct required by the priests and high priest; physical disqualifications of a priest.
- 22. The priest's ceremonial purity; the attitude of non-priests toward what is holy; the need for perfect sacrifices.

d. Special feasts (23:1-44).

- 23. A description of the various feasts and ceremonies.

e. One's attitude toward what is sacred (24:1-23)

- 24. Sacred oil (for lights) and sacred bread placed in God's presence. Reverence for God's Name required by all, whether native born or foreigner; various laws of restitution, applicable to both native born and foreigner.

f. Special years (25:1-55).

- 25. The Sabbath Year (every seventh year); the Year of Jubilee (the 50<sup>th</sup> year).

g. Conclusion: Blessings for obedience; curses for disobedience - you must choose (26:1-46).

- 26. Description of the rewards for obedience and punishments for disobedience; the possibility for restoration after the disobedience and punishment. (These things proved to be prophetic.) God's promise to Abraham remains.

3. Freely-made offerings and vows to God (27:1-34).

- 27. Instructions regarding things that have been given to God; some things may be purchased back by the person.