



## THE BURNT AND GRAIN OFFERINGS

Leviticus 1–2

Any law or set of laws reveals something about its author—his priorities, morality, ethics, and character. God’s laws for Israel’s worship do not apply directly to believers today, but they do enlighten our understanding of our God, the one who gave these laws to Israel.

I have read that the average person on the street has never read an entire book from cover to cover. Even though people buy books every day, surveys indicate that most people never read past the third chapter of the books they buy.

Now if you consider the Bible as a book with sixty-six chapters, most people don’t get past the third chapter—in this case, the book of Leviticus. This is where the pages start sticking together.

People want to read the entire Bible. And they often start with Genesis, make it through the book of Exodus, and then hit the wall at Leviticus.

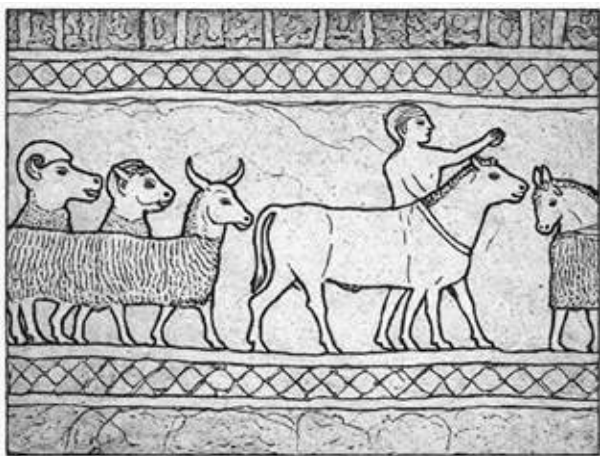
Now I admit, Leviticus appears to be slow reading—

with laws and sacrifices and rituals. It’s easy to think it’s just for people way back then. But God says that *all* of His Word is profitable (2 Timothy 3:16).

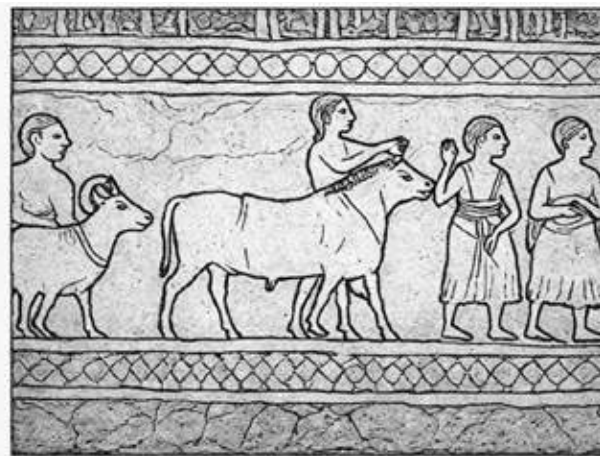
So, Leviticus *is* profitable for today. In fact, if you’ve ever wondered how to approach God—how to worship God—you’re going to discover some answers in Leviticus. And by the way, no other book in the Bible contains more direct quotes from God than the book of Leviticus.

The title Leviticus means, “belonging to the Levites.” The Levites represented the priestly system in Israel, and the book of Leviticus is their working manual.

Now in the Hebrew Bible, Leviticus 1 and verse 1



Standard of Ur depicting animals led for offerings





*If you've ever  
wondered how to  
approach God—  
how to worship  
God—you're going  
to discover some  
answers in Leviticus.*

literally begins with the Hebrew word for *and*—and then “the LORD called Moses and spoke to him.” So, you need to understand that Leviticus is the sequel to the book of Exodus. The book of Exodus closed with the glory of God descending on the finished tabernacle. Leviticus tells us what happens next and, most importantly, how to receive forgiveness from God.

Listen, how in the world do you think you're going to get along with God? How do you think you'll ever be allowed to live forever with a holy God when you can't get through one day without sinning against Him?

Well, God is going to give the Israelites the answer here through these laws, sacrifices, and offerings—all of which represent spiritual truths. Hebrews 10:1 says that this Old Testament sacrificial system was a “shadow of the good things to come.” Leviticus is a book of illustrations, so to speak, of the coming, sacrificial death of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who will be introduced later in the New Testament as the Lamb of God who came to pay the final sacrifice for your sins and mine.

Now in the first seven chapters of Leviticus, we're given five offerings, and the first one is the burnt offering. The details are given beginning here in verses 2-3 of chapter 1:

*“When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock*

*from the herd or from the flock. If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish.”*

I know these instructions sound strange, especially if this is a new subject for you. The main point here isn't so much about a ritual but about rebellion. Sin is rebellion against a holy God, and the penalty for sin has to be paid if we're to be right with God; sin has to be atoned for.

By presenting the burnt offering, the person is *agreeing* with God that he has sinned; he's taking the initiative in bringing an innocent, unblemished animal to die in his place, just as God instructed.

According to verse 9, this animal becomes “a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.” Now obviously God doesn't need anything to eat, and He doesn't need to smell the aroma of a good steak down there on the grill. What God wants is an honest admission of sin.

True confession takes place when we agree with God about sin. When the apostle John writes, “If we confess our sins” (1 John 1:9), that word “confess” means “to agree with.” When we agree with God that what we did was sinful, He forgives us.

I've talked to a lot of people who don't think they're sinners. “Somebody else is the sinner, not me. I'm not a bad person.” They will never agree with God that they've sinned. And beloved, that's why they remain unforgiven—they won't admit their sin to God.

Now you'll notice here that the offering needs to be an animal without blemish—without any defect. And this points ahead to the sinless Lord Jesus, who died for us.

Here in Leviticus chapter 2, we have the second offering called the grain, or meal, offering. In verses 1-3 we read:

*“When anyone brings a grain offering . . . to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour.*



*He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests . . . and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar . . . But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons."*

Now this meal offering was an act of gratitude, and it accomplished two things. First, it became food for the priests; this was their paycheck. Second, it gave someone a way to thank the Lord for accepting the earlier burnt offering for sin.

Here in verse 2, we're told that the offering had to be made of fine flour. It was ground up and sifted multiple times, which made it the finest flour available. Then it was to be sprinkled with frankincense, an expensive, fragrant oil. This sweet-smelling offering was a thank-you to God, who had accepted their offering for sin.

You might remember that Jesus was given gifts by the wise men, and one of the gifts was frankincense. This was a prophetic gift that pointed to the fact that Jesus would become the sweet-smelling sacrifice to God the Father, who had accepted the offering of Christ for our sin.

Now there's one more element involved in this grain offering. Here in verse 13, we find this command: "With all your offerings you shall offer salt."

Salt pictured cleansing and preservation; the relationship between a forgiven sinner and a holy God was clean and preserved. God isn't going to forget these atoning sacrifices—He doesn't throw us away without any hope.

I remember growing up with my three brothers, and just about every Sunday afternoon we had to take a nap—which I later figured out wasn't for us at all

but for our parents. After that nap, we would hop in the car with Dad and drive about eight blocks down Johnson Road to an outdoor basketball court next to an elementary school. One afternoon we finished our game and headed home, only to realize after we climbed out of the car that our youngest brother, six years old, had been left down there by accident. So back we went. I remember my little brother's question, over and over on the way back, "Daddy, why'd you forget me? Why'd you forget me?"

Well, whether you're six years old, or sixty-five, the last thing you want to be is forgotten by God the Father.

Leviticus is telling Israel—and us—God hasn't forgotten you; He's made a way for you to approach Him, to be forgiven by Him, to be cleansed and remembered by Him. And today, that comes through the final sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who paid for your sin and mine.

So, let's unstick the pages of this great book. The question isn't, "Why should we study the book of Leviticus?" The question is, "How can we afford not to?"

---

God simply requires us to agree with Him about our sin in order to forgive us. What does this reveal about God's heart towards you? Why is agreeing with God sometimes so hard even when we know we've sinned?

What practical purposes does saying "thank you" to God for His gracious forgiveness have in your daily relationship with Him?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## A PEACE TREATY FROM GOD

Leviticus 3, 7

Peace with God has been purchased for us through the sacrifice of the sinless Son of God. The peace offering described in the book of Leviticus not only looks forward to the coming Christ but also teaches us that ingratitude for His work is inexcusable.

During his travels down the Mississippi River some 350 years ago, an explorer discovered the tradition of the peace pipe among the Native Americans. The peace pipe was shared between tribes to signify they were establishing a peace treaty. It was so highly respected in these early days that presenting the peace pipe during a battle between warring tribes would immediately stop the fighting.

Well, the Bible reveals that mankind is actually involved in a losing battle against God. And our war with God is over the matter of sin. So, the question is, How do we as sinners make peace with God?

In the Old Testament, it didn't have anything to do with smoking a peace pipe but had everything to do with bringing a substitutionary sacrifice for sin. After the burnt offering was given, the peace offering was a way to restore fellowship with God.

The peace offering also was used to praise God with thanksgiving. I mean, peace with a holy God is good news, isn't it?

Now we're at Leviticus chapter 3, and let me say that the peace offering, according to verse 5 here, was always offered right after the burnt offering, never by itself. In other words, the burnt offering dealt with sin, and the peace offering celebrated the forgiveness of sin.

We are told in this chapter that the animal could be male or female from the herd—it didn't matter (verse 1). It could be a lamb, as noted here in verse 7, or a goat, as in verse 12; but every animal had to be without blemish.

In other words, it couldn't have a broken leg or some kind of skin disease. It could not be some old animal they were wanting to get rid of. No, they brought their blue-ribbon animal for sacrifice.

Why? Because these sacrifices pointed to the unblemished, sinless Lord Jesus, who would be sacrificed on the altar of a wooden cross 1500 years after the book of Leviticus was written.



Ancient Egyptian model of a bakery





Now verse 2 tells us the one making the offering had to take the animal to the entrance of the tent of meeting—that is, to the doorway of the tabernacle. There the priest would inspect the animal to make sure it was unblemished and acceptable.

Keep in mind that back in these days, coming to the tabernacle brought you into the presence of the Lord, who was manifested there in that pillar of fire by night and pillar of smoke by day above the tabernacle. You would have been within a few feet of the very presence of the God of the universe. That must have been an awesome, fearful, weighty experience!

And once you arrived there with your animal, verse 2 says you were to lay your hand on the head of the animal “and kill it at the entrance of the tent of meeting.” That meant you were admitting that this innocent animal was taking your place, receiving the death penalty for your sin against a holy God.

Verse 2 then tells us, “Aaron’s sons . . . shall throw the blood [of that animal] against the sides of the altar.” This was that bronze altar that stood out there in the courtyard. As the blood splashed up against that altar, you would have had the sense of peace and assurance that God had made a way for you to have your sin forgiven and to have a peace treaty, as it were, written in blood.

Now over in Leviticus chapter 7, we’re given some more details about this peace offering. There, in verse 11-12, we read:

*“And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the LORD. If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thanksgiving sacrifice unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil.”*

So, here’s someone who wants to thank the Lord for

a peace treaty with God. And you notice here that all kinds of bread are added to this offering—you’ve got wafers and fine flour and loaves of bread all lathered over with oil.

This is true, abundant gratitude! I mean, think about it: the absolute worst kind of “thanksgiving” to give to God is the kind that isn’t sincere, or real. We can just go through the motions and sing “Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul,” without any real sense of thanksgiving.

So, the Lord builds into this offering a reminder that He knows the difference. This bread is to be coated or sprinkled with oil, and oil symbolized gladness. Both Isaiah 61:3 and Hebrews 1:9 speak of the “oil of gladness” while describing the salvation of the Lord. And by the way, these loaves of bread were baked in nearby ovens at the tabernacle, so you can imagine how this aroma mixed with true confession of sin just brought someone’s heart to a sense of happiness and gratitude.

The truth is, we have so much to thank God for every single day. I have read that the average person takes approximately 23,000 breaths every day. One author writes, “We tend to thank God for things that take our breath away. And that’s fine. But we should thank Him for every other breath too!”

Now we read here that the thankful person bringing the peace offering has provided the animal to offer and then portions of it to barbecue, and there’s this baked bread. So more than likely, this person’s family has come along to enjoy God’s peace in their family member’s life.

Look at this scene here. They have all this roasted meat and freshly baked bread, so what are they going to do? Well, over again in chapter 7, we’re told that this peace offering is the only offering the worshipers themselves get to eat, and the priests join in too. They’re going to have a potluck right here on the spot!

Listen, when you have peace with God, the end result is a feast of joy—the joy of peace and fellowship with God.

These offerings mentioned in Leviticus 3 didn’t have anything to do with smoking a peace pipe, but they



*Listen, when you have peace with God, the end result is a feast of joy—the joy of peace and fellowship with God.*

did signal that a peace treaty was signed between a holy God and a sinful, yet forgiven, follower of God.

Again, this “Manual for the Levites,” Leviticus, points us to the ultimate and permanent means of peace with God, a peace treaty signed in red—blood red. And it’s established through the final sacrifice of Jesus Christ, whose body was given and whose blood was shed on our behalf.

You can’t have peace with God if you reject the Prince of Peace, the Savior, our Messiah and Lord. The Bible says in Romans chapter 5:

*Therefore, since we have been justified [made right] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God . . . while we were still sinners, Christ died for*

*us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.* (verses 1-2, 8-9)

No more war with God; no more fear of wrath from God—a peace treaty has been offered, and by faith in Christ alone we sign our name to it and have everlasting peace with God.

---

How does having or not having peace with God affect the way you live your daily life? What are the typical enemies to your peace with God? How does John 16:33 and Isaiah 32:17 influence your thinking about your peace with God?

Why does thanksgiving towards God sometimes become a mere formality rather than a sincere expression of our heart? What are some practical spiritual disciplines can you or do you practice to avoid such an attitude?

---

<sup>1</sup> Merrill Unger, ed. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Moody Press, 1988), 937.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Batterson, *All In* (Zondervan, 2013), 121.

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)



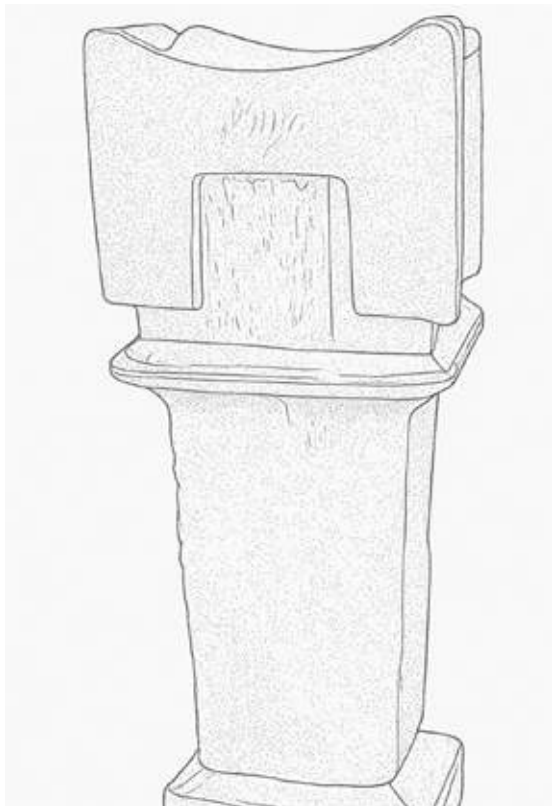


## THE TRUTH ABOUT SIN

Leviticus 4–6

Sin can enter our lives so quietly we hardly notice it. In fact, it is such a part of our lives, we tend to ignore or downplay it. The offerings outlined in Leviticus 4–6 remind us of the hideous nature and pervasiveness of sin. With it, there must be no compromise.

Just the other day I picked up my five-year-old grandson to take him to lunch. I always let him make the final decision, but I give him options that usually involve a chicken sandwich or a hamburger or an egg-and-cheese buttered biscuit with sweet iced tea—I'm trying to keep the standard high.



Horned incense altar from Megiddo

Well, he was excited that day to tell me that he had asked Jesus to become his Savior and to forgive his sins. Later on, I asked him what sin is. He told me it's doing something wrong but that God can forgive us.

Well, that's exactly right. And that's exactly what God spells out for us here in this inspired manual of operations for the Levites, called the book of Leviticus.

Here in chapter 4, God begins to lay out several characteristics of sin, and here's the first one: *Sin interrupts our fellowship with God.*

Chapter 4 and verse 2 opens with the Lord referring to "anyone [who] sins unintentionally [with regard to] any of the Lord's commandments."

Unintentional sins are not ones you sit around planning. That sinful thought just suddenly occurs, but, by the way, it's just as sinful as any other sin. Well, God is making it clear that even the smallest sin affects our fellowship with Him, and it has to be dealt with.

Here's a second characteristic: *Sin entangles everybody it can.*

Here in verse 3, the Lord tells the priest what he has to do for *his* sin to be forgiven. Then down here in



verse 13, He speaks of “the whole congregation of Israel [sinning] unintentionally.” Then further down in verse 22, we read, “When a leader sins, doing unintentionally any one of all the things that ... ought not to be done.” And even further down in verse 27, we read, “If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the Lord’s commandments ought not to be done.”

In other words, from the highest levels of society down to the common people, nobody is exempt from the potential of sinning against God. And in

*From the highest levels of society down to the common people, nobody is exempt from the potential of sinning against God.*

each case—no matter who it was who sinned—an offering was required. Of course, this unblemished animal sacrifice pointed toward the unblemished Savior who would provide that substitutionary sacrifice on our behalf.

Over in chapter 5, the Lord will allow people who can’t afford to bring a bull or a lamb to be sacrificed to bring instead fine flour. If they can’t spare some flour, for a couple of pennies they can offer two pigeons instead. This was called the “offering of the poor.”

When Mary and Joseph offered a dedication sacrifice in the temple for baby Jesus, they offered two pigeons (Luke 2:24). This poor peasant couple couldn’t afford a lamb for the offering. But they *did* bring a Lamb, didn’t they? They were holding in their arms, the newborn Lamb of God.

Now back here in Leviticus, we also learn that *sin operates under the radar*.

We have already read the word *unintentionally* several times. Indeed, the idea of unintentional sin shows up six times in these chapters.<sup>1</sup>

This is how subtle sin can be. Some sins are so obvious they bang on the front door and rattle the windows, and you’re aware of the danger; but some sins slip in the back window so quietly they catch you off guard, and you find you weren’t as alert to the danger as you should have been.

Now here’s a fourth characteristic of sin: *The sins of influential leaders cause the greatest damage*. That’s why here in chapter 4, from verse 3 all the way to verse 21, the requirements for sacrifices are the most demanding for priests and leaders:

- The priest had to bring a bull for his sacrifice—not a little pigeon for him. This was the biggest and most expensive animal to sacrifice.
- The elders of the congregation also had to bring a bull.
- The leader of a smaller group of people had to bring a male goat to be sacrificed.
- The ordinary Israelite, however, could bring a female goat or lamb.

These aren’t just boring details written nearly four thousand years ago; the Lord is communicating a timeless truth here.

The more visible you are, the more damaging your sin becomes. Why? Because leaders influence so many people. This is exactly why Satan loves to go after those who have a wide influence over others.

Now let me point out one more characteristic of sin: *Sin disguises itself in a variety of ways*.

Here in chapter 5, sins mentioned in verses 1 through 6 include things like making an unwise promise or refusing to speak up when you have witnessed a crime. In other words, we can sin against God in big ways and in the smallest of ways. It may be just one little promise, one little phone call, or one little compro-





mise; but it's still sin, and even the smallest sin will destroy your fellowship with God.

There's only one solution: confessing your sin and finding forgiveness through blood sacrifice. And Leviticus points toward the final sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who shed His blood and paid the penalty for our sins.

So how do you deal with sin today? You're not going to bring a bull or a pigeon to church—at least I hope not!

**Let me give you four steps to take:** (I want to highlight these steps, maybe with bold?)

**Step 1: Do a heart check before God.** Ask Him to show you sinful motives and thought patterns that are flying under the radar—some small offense or situation where you are compromising your integrity.

**Step 2: Admit that it's sinful.** Don't deny it or justify it or manage it. Agree with God that it is sinful. The Spirit of God isn't convicting your heart of sin so that He can beat you over the head with it; He's inviting you to make things right.

**Step 3: Trust the sacrifice of Christ for that sin.** God never demands penance—you can't pay for your sin. So don't go light a candle or sit outside in the rain. God has provided payment for your crimes—your sins—through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe; sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow."<sup>2</sup>

**Step 4: Now the fourth step in dealing with sin is to provide restitution.** *This doesn't apply to every sin*, but here in Leviticus 5, verse 14, all the way through chapter 6 and verse 7, the Lord lays out the principle of restitution.

I knew a man many years ago who had stolen nearly a million dollars through financial fraud before he

was finally caught. When I asked him about paying it back, he said, "Oh, I don't need to pay it back; it's all under the blood." Well, let me tell you, forgiveness is free, because Christ paid for it; but making things right might demand restitution. And if you're not willing to pay back what you stole, you probably didn't mean it when you confessed your sin to God.

Now if you've taken these four steps, you need to believe God's promise of forgiveness. In these chapters here in Leviticus, the Lord says of the truly repentant person nine different times, <sup>3</sup> "he shall be forgiven . . . he shall be forgiven." You know, some of the most wonderful words you'll ever hear are the words, "I forgive you."

Well, when you confess your sin, He is faithful and just to forgive all your sin (1 John 1:9). So, I want you to hear the Lord saying to you today, "I forgive you . . . I forgive you; you *are* forgiven."

---

What specific weaknesses in your life does sin most often use to trip you up? How do you consider why these weaknesses exist? How might these truths help you shore up these areas of weakness? Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 3:5-6, Galatians 5:16-17.

Why does Satan (John 8:44) and your flesh (Galatians 5:16-17) work so hard to either not have you confess your sins or to not have believe you're forgiven when you do confess?

---

<sup>1</sup> 4:2, 13, 22, 27; 5:15, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Elvina M. Hall, "I Hear the Savior Say."

<sup>3</sup> 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7.

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## A PATTERN FOR WORSHIP

Leviticus 8–10

The forms of worship may change with time and location, but the unchanging principles that govern our worship are set forth in the Bible. This is the value of studying the worship God instituted in Leviticus and the regulations regarding those who led the nation in worship.

Several years ago, a best-selling novelist and intellectual surprised everyone by taking his life at the height of his fame. Sometime before his death he delivered a commencement address in which he said:

There is no such thing as atheism. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what we worship. If you worship money—you will never have enough; [if you] worship your own body and beauty . . . when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally [bury] you.<sup>1</sup>

Be careful what you worship. The tragedy is, as far as I know, this intellectual never came to worship the true and living God.

It should not be any surprise for us to discover that early on in the Bible we are given principles of true worship—who and how we are to worship. It has everything to do with leading us to true meaning and purpose and joy in life.

The worship of God in ancient Israel might seem strange to us today with its sacrifices, offerings, rituals, and priesthood. But the principles that guided the Israelites' worship give us some timeless truths for today.



Replica of a Philistine period oil jar

Now we've already covered chapter 7 in the book of Leviticus, where we combined it with chapter 3 in our discussion on the peace offering. So now we're in chapter 8, where we find Aaron and his sons officially becoming the ordained priestly family to Israel. Here in verses 7 to 13, they put on their priestly garments. Moses takes anointing oil and sprinkles some of it on the tabernacle furniture and pours some on Aaron's head as an act of consecration.

Down here in verses 23 and 24, Moses dabs some sacrificial blood on their right ears, signifying they are to listen to the word of God. Moses also dabs some blood on their right thumbs and right toes, signifying they are to do the right thing and walk in the right path.



This is a serious calling—they are serving as mediators between mankind and God. And they're illustrating the ministry of the final Mediator, Christ Jesus our High Priest (1 Timothy 2:5).

Now here in Leviticus chapter 9, we have the pattern of true worship, which provides some timeless principles for us today. Let me give you three of them.

The first principle is this: *True worship always has the right focus.* Chapter 9 records this special day in the life of the nation of Israel, as the worship of God at the tabernacle is introduced. And make no mistake about it, God is the focus of it all.

Moses says in verse 4, "Today the LORD will appear to you," and in verse 6, "that the glory of the LORD may appear to you." And then what happens? Down here at verse 23 we read: "The glory of the LORD appeared to all the people."

Now the Old Testament tabernacle is *not* the New Testament church. I don't want any of you waiting to see your church lit up with the visible glory of God; however, our focus should be the same: we gather to worship *God*. Our problem is we focus on the soloist and whether or not we liked the music; we're distracted by who's sitting around us and maybe even who's sitting in our usual seat!

Listen, the question after the worship service shouldn't be, "Did I like it?" The question should be, "Did God like it?"

Israel—like you and me—is going to get into trouble when they start focusing on the ritual rather than

*Israel—like you and me—is going to get into trouble when they start focusing on the ritual rather than their Redeemer.*

their Redeemer.

A second timeless principle here is that *true worship always includes forgiveness.* Here in Leviticus 9, Moses gives some more details in verses 2 through 4 on the sin offering, then a burnt offering for sin and then a peace offering of restored fellowship, followed by the grain offering of joy; and beloved, to this day, that approach to God always follows in the same order. You begin with confession of sin; then you experience forgiveness from God and peace with God; and then you experience joy.

Now a final principle we see here is that *true worship always includes reverence.*

In verses 23–24 we read:

*And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting . . . and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering . . . and when all the people saw it, they . . . fell on their faces.*

If God walked into a church service today, you wouldn't run up and give Him a high-five or ask Him a tough question; listen, you would fall down and worship Him in reverence.

Now this, here in chapter 9, is a demonstration of true worship. In chapter 10, we're shown how true worship can be disrupted. Two ways are described here. The first is through *disobedience*.

In chapter 10 and verse 1, we learn that the two oldest sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, decide to bring God an offering that's different from what God ordered. The Bible says that they offered "unauthorized [or 'strange'] fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them." In other words, they're going to approach God their own way.

Verse 2 says, "And fire came out from before the



LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.”

Maybe you’re thinking, “That wasn’t very nice.” Beloved, the Bible tells us that one day, all of humanity who worshiped their own way—creating their own idols and rejecting their creator God—will be judged the same way in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

You don’t come to a god you have created; you come to the God of this Book. And you come to Him through God the Son, who gives you access into the presence of God the Father (Ephesians 2:18).

Now a second way true worship is disrupted is through *drunkenness*. The Lord speaks directly to Aaron here in verses 9-10:

*“Drink no wine, or strong drink,  
you or your sons with you, when  
you go into the tent of meeting . . .  
You are to distinguish between  
the holy and the common, and  
between the unclean and the  
clean.”*

In other words, you cannot be inebriated while serving in the tabernacle. When these priests went on duty, they needed to have clear minds.

This seems to be addressing what happened to Nadab and Abihu. The reason they made such a terrible decision to approach God with unauthorized sacrifices was because they had been drinking and had lost their sense of discernment.

Let’s be honest. A little alcohol can impair your thinking and lead to unwise decisions and actions. The apostle Paul will tell the Ephesians not to be under

the influence of wine but under the influence of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). And that’s the reason, I don’t touch it; I’m not about to drink something that could hinder my judgment and hurt my testimony.

And by the way, you happen to be a New Testament priest today, effectively representing God to the people around you. The apostle Peter wrote, “You are . . . a royal priesthood . . . that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

As a Christian, you are on duty, every day. So, let me encourage you—especially in a world that goes from one hangover to the next—serve Christ under the influence of the Holy Spirit as you worship the true and living God.

---

How would you evaluate your personal worship in light of these biblical principles and practices? If you fall short, what assurances has Leviticus taught you so far that encourages you to keep humbly moving towards God?

Nadab and Abihu were severely disciplined for ignoring God’s word. In what ways are prayer and God’s people a safeguard for believers against being disciplined by God for ignoring His word? Who in your life might you come alongside to serve as a “safeguard” as they struggle to obey God’s word? (1 Thessalonians 5:1)

---

<sup>1</sup> David Foster Wallace, “David Foster Wallace on Life and Work, The Wall Street Journal, September 9, 2008.

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)







## CLEAN AND UNCLEAN

Leviticus 11–15

Fellowship with the holy God demands holy lives of His followers. At the heart of the Levitical laws relating to what is clean and unclean is this truth, as well as the assurance that God Himself has provided the way to holiness.

Now in Leviticus chapters 11–15 we’re going to encounter laws that might seem very strange to us today. But they were designed to teach the Israelites to walk in fellowship with God. With the final sacrifice of Jesus Christ, these laws now have been set aside, but the principles behind them still have much to teach us about relating to a holy God.

Here in chapter 11, God distinguishes between animals that are clean, and animals that are unclean, or not to be eaten. But why is so much attention given to this issue of clean and unclean? Well, God wants His people to develop discernment in life. The same principle applies in the New Testament, where the growing Christian learns to distinguish between

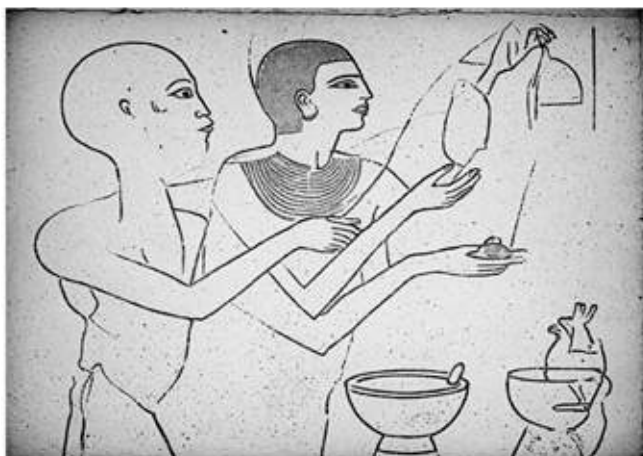
good and evil (Hebrews 5:14).

So, in Leviticus 11, the Israelite is taught the *spiritual discipline of making God-honoring distinctions* in daily life. The Lord says in verse 47 that the Israelite is to make a distinction “between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.” And all kinds of fish, birds, insects, and critters “that swarm on the ground” (verse 29) are referenced. And from each group of animals, the Lord tells His people, through Moses, which animals they can put on the menu.

For example, in verse 4 the camel is declared unclean and not to be eaten. The rock badger in verse 5 and the pig in verse 7 also are forbidden, along with birds of prey like the eagle and the vulture in verse 13.

What God is doing here is taking the normal activity of eating and using it to teach the spiritual discipline of making distinctions according to His Word. He doesn’t tell the Israelites why they can’t eat camel meat or a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich.

God knows why, and many times, He’s not telling. But the point was simple: whether they understood it or not, their obedience was a bigger issue than a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich. And by the way, lettuce and tomatoes were fine.



Priests making offerings from the Tomb of Userhet



*But the point was simple: whether they understood it or not, their obedience was a bigger issue.*

Now as we move into chapter 12, we discover some laws that teach the *spiritual truth of original sin*.<sup>1</sup> For instance, the Lord establishes a designated period after childbirth, when the new mother is considered unclean. As verse 4 tells us, “She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed.”

The blood related to childbirth would make the mother ceremonially unclean, but there’s more to her uncleanness here. It’s a reminder that the child she’s given birth to has been born with a sin nature—as sweet and cuddly as that baby might be. She has delivered a sinner into the world (see Romans 5:12).

That child has been born into the fallen family of mankind and needs to be redeemed in order to join the family of God. So, the Lord is teaching the truth about original sin—and that all of mankind is sinful and fallen.

Both in chapter 13 and over in chapter 15, God teaches the Israelite the *spiritual truth of the desperate condition of sin*. God illustrates that truth by cataloging a number of different diseases.

And let me say, very quickly, disease is not always related to someone’s personal sin; however, disease has indeed afflicted humanity because sin entered our fallen world.

Here in chapter 13, we have all kinds of laws related to ceremonial uncleanness caused by skin diseases and disorders. Verse 2 speaks of “a swelling or an eruption or a spot.” Verse 18 talks about boils, burns are mentioned in verse 24, and even itching is referred to in verse 30.

Any skin blemish was to be examined by a priest to determine if it was a leprous disease—or leprosy. And if the priest confirmed the presence of leprosy, the person was declared unclean. This required a minimum of seven days of quarantine from the rest of the community and from worship in the tabernacle.

The priest could not prescribe medicine or treatment because there wasn’t any. The only hope for healing was for God to intervene. Apart from God’s healing, this leprosy was permanent, and the person’s life was hopelessly cut off from the nation and from public worship.

You can imagine how this isolation was especially painful for a person—cut off from family and friends and the religious community. In verses 45–46 instructions are given concerning the person who has leprosy:

*“The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.”*

This is a powerful picture of sin! Can you imagine a leper as he walked through his village crying out, “Unclean, unclean!”? There was nothing anybody could do for him, and there was nothing he could do for himself. Cleansing had to come from God alone. That’s why leprosy served as a graphic illustration of the hopeless effects of sin and the need for a Savior.

Chapter 15 deals with various bodily discharges that made a person temporarily unclean. The prescription here would be bathing, a time of quarantine, and specific offerings for atonement.



A chronic discharge of some sort could result in long-term isolation. I can't help but think of the woman who had an ongoing hemorrhage and doctors had given up on her. She was perpetually unclean and without any hope or help. But she believed Jesus could heal her, and she came up behind Him and quietly touched His garment. Her faith in Jesus was rewarded as she was immediately healed (Mark 5:25-29). What a wonderful illustration of our need for Christ and the satisfaction that comes through faith in the Savior.

Now let's back up for a moment and notice how chapter 14 teaches the *spiritual truth of restoration*. This chapter opens with the isolated, leprous person in mind, but you will read more than twenty times in this chapter some form of the word clean and the repeated phrase "he shall be clean." Also, showing up seven times here is the word atonement, the covering of sin by means of a substitutionary sacrifice. The path of cleansing and restoration is through an atoning sacrifice.

From the time the leper goes to the priest to show that God has healed him, to that moment in verse 20 when "the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean," there's a sense of anticipation and even celebration! Why? Because there's someone very eager to share the news of God's mercy, and grace, and healing power and restoration to life and community and worship.

Beloved, this is our testimony. We have all been diagnosed with a terminal case of sin. We are isolated from God and true worship, we are hopeless and helpless, and there's nothing a medical doctor or religious leader can do to cleanse us. We come by faith to

the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and claim His healing for our sin-sick souls.

And with that, we are no longer isolated but included—cleansed, forgiven, and brought into the family of God, all by His amazing grace.

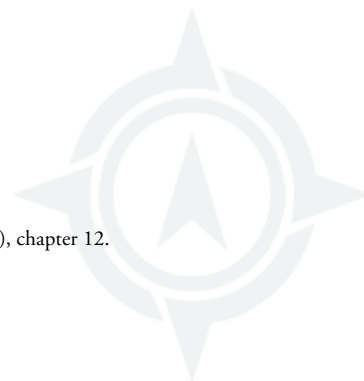
---

While it's true every person born is a sinner, what does Romans 8:5-8 teach about God's heart and provision to forgive sinners? Who in your life can you share this truth with to encourage them to trust God for their sins to be forgiven?

As a New Testament Believer how is your ministry to your yet to be saved family, friends and co-workers like that of the cleansed leper? What heart-attitudes would cause a New Testament "cleansed leper" to keep such good news quiet?

---

<sup>1</sup> adapted from: Andrew Bonar, *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), chapter 12.



Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

Leviticus 16

There is no greater joy than knowing we are forgiven and accepted by God. Israel got just a brief, yearly glimpse of that reality, which we who are in Christ enjoy today. Israel's Day of Atonement gives us deeper understanding of and appreciation for the work of Christ.

We have arrived at this amazing chapter in Leviticus, where we watch just one day in the life of Israel unfold. And what a day it is. This is *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, when God granted cleansing and forgiveness for the sins of the nation.

You might say that for one day God's people enjoyed a clean slate, not by any effort of their own, but through atonement and the grace of God. The high priest here will represent a sinful nation before a holy and yet forgiving God.

You might remember that inside the tabernacle, inside the inner room called the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place, God's presence is manifested by a cloud, hovering just over the mercy seat. The mercy seat is the lid on the golden box known as the ark of the covenant.

According to God's plan, once a year—on the Day of Atonement—the high priest made sacrifices for the entire nation. First, he's to take a bath and then put on those special garments of the high priest. In verses 3-5, he's told to bring a bull and a ram for his own sin and two goats and a ram for the sins of the nation.

We're told here in verse 8 that Aaron is to cast lots to designate one of the two goats as "for the LORD"; that is, to be presented to the Lord as a sacrifice. The

other goat is called "Azazel," which means, "the goat that goes away." This is the scapegoat. I'll refer to him in a moment.

Now in verse 11, Aaron is instructed to sacrifice the bull for his own sins and the sins of all the priests. He is to take some of the blood from the bull, along with some hot coals from the altar and two handfuls of incense, into the Most Holy Place. The smoke from the incense will fill the space, preventing Aaron from seeing the full glory of the Lord hovering above the mercy seat.

The Day of Atonement is a day of incredible gravity. Aaron isn't going in there whistling his favorite tune; he isn't going to casually approach a holy God.



The inner niche at the temple at Ain Dara





He had little bells sewn into the bottom fringe of his robe to make sounds as he moved around and, according to one tradition, a rope tied around his ankle. As long as people heard those little bells, they would know Aaron was still alive. And the rope would allow other priests to pull him out of there if God refused his sacrifice and struck him dead.

Now we read here in verse 14, “He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat . . . seven times.” Putting the blood on the lid of this ark symbolized the substitutionary death for sins. Inside that box—the ark—were the tablets of stone engraved with the commandments of God. God was essentially going to view the Israelites’ breaking of the law—their sin—through the blood of the atoning sacrifice.

*God was essentially going to view the Israelites’ breaking of the law—their sin—through the blood of the atoning sacrifice.*

I imagine as Aaron backed out of the Most Holy Place, his heart would be pounding, but he’s been obedient and forgiven, and he’s still alive to proceed with the ritual.

We’re told in verse 15:

*“Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull,*

*sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat.”*

Then in verses 18-19:

*“Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. And he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel.”*

Now the next step is crucial in symbolizing the forgiveness of God. After cleansing the tabernacle and its furnishings, Aaron brings forward the living goat, the scapegoat. The Lord says in verse 21:

*“Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness.”*

So, the sins of the nation are symbolically transferred to the scapegoat, which is then sent away into the wilderness.

Now picture this. Some two million people would be surrounding the tabernacle on Yom Kippur as Aaron sends this goat away, bearing *their* sins—out of the tabernacle court and far into the wilderness. What



relief—and what joy—would follow this special occasion.

And by the way, these two goats—the one dying as a sin offering and the scapegoat—picture the future atonement of Christ, who did both. He died to pay for our sin, and He also carried our sin away. (Psalm 103:11-12)

Now keep in mind that immediately the sins of the people of Israel are going to start collecting all over again. Aaron will be up at sunrise the next day. The altar will be prepared and the knives sharpened, and people are going to line up to bring their offerings and sacrifices to the tabernacle once more.

Everybody who stood in that line year after year, century after century, must have longed for the day when a permanent, perfect, and final sacrifice would be offered and the holiness and justice of God would be forever satisfied.

This all pointed to Christ. He is not only our Great High Priest, but He is also the permanent substitutionary Sacrifice. He fully paid for our sins and purchased our forgiveness forever.

Have you ever thought about the fact that there is one piece of furniture missing from the tabernacle? There was no chair anywhere in sight; and that's because the priests never sat down—their work was never finished.

But listen to the writer of Hebrews, who speaks of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our sins. He writes in Hebrews 10:10-12:

*We have been sanctified [cleansed] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at this service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can*

*never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.*

The final day of atonement took place at the cross of Christ, where Jesus paid in full the penalty for our sins. Hebrews 10:12 indicates that He later ascended back to heaven because He “sat down at the right hand of God” the Father.

The right hand pictures the place of divine authority. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the crucified, risen, ascended Savior, now sits in the place of divine authority. His work is finished; you simply have to believe. And if His Word says all you have to do is call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be saved (Romans 10:13), well, you have His word on the matter.

When you trust in Him, you are forgiven forever, and that promise comes directly from the throne of God.

---

What do the details of the Day of Atonement reveal about the nature of sin and the nature of God? Describe how these truths are or why these truths are not an influence on your life daily.

What new insights does the Day of Atonement ritual give you into the person of Jesus Christ and His work on your behalf? Who in your life would benefit from being introduced to Jesus and His work on the cross from them?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Leviticus 17–20

It is only as we seek to honor God by seeking holiness in all areas of life that we can expect to enjoy His fullest blessing and to be useful servants in His work in this world. Leviticus 17–20 sets forth God’s priorities for holy living.

We make a lot of decisions every single day. Many of them are little ones: What am I going to eat for breakfast? What am I going to wear today? Shall I cut the grass today or go fishing? Fishing sounds a lot more spiritual, if you ask me.

Now these decisions aren’t necessarily life changing, but there are those major intersections in life where the decisions you make can impact the rest of your life. The Israelites are at that kind of intersection here in Leviticus chapter 17, where they are less than three

months away from entering the promised land.<sup>1</sup> And when they get in there among all those morally and religiously corrupt Canaanites, they’re going to have some major decisions to make.

But the bottom-line decision is whether they are going to follow God in this world or follow the world against the word of God. Their decision ties directly to the laws and guidelines detailed for us here in chapters 17–20; so as we work through these chapters, let me offer some timeless principles for us today.

The first principle is this: *God is honored when people worship Him alone.* Now you might think the Israelites already had that figured out—that God alone is to be worshiped. However, God delivers a new law, as chapter 17 opens, a law that forbids the sacrifice of any animal apart from the tabernacle system. He says in verse 7, “So they [Israel] shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore.”

Now I have to tell you, this is a shocking revelation! God is graciously preparing to settle Israel in the promised land, and they are out there in the wilderness sacrificing to superstitious, dark forces.

You have to be kidding! Now I would expect God to finally have enough of them and strike them all down



Wall painting in the tomb of Panehmen depicts metal-workers weighing gold on scales



and start over. But then again, aren't you glad God is a covenant-keeping God and that He gives them this new law, and even more grace?

God also forbids the consumption of blood, which was common practice in false worship. The people of Israel were to drain the blood before eating meat.

We're told here in verse 11, "The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls." Listen, before anybody knew what we know today—that our very life is dependent on our blood—the Lord used the blood of the sacrificial animal for atonement because the blood represented its very life.

This all pointed to Jesus Christ and His precious blood (1 Peter 1:19). Indeed, we talk about the fact that we've been purchased by His blood (Acts 20:28). Why? Because He gave His life for us. Blood represents the very essence of life. Jesus shed His blood, laying down His life so that we could have eternal life.

Now we move on to Leviticus chapter 18 and discover another timeless principle: *God is honored when we follow His word alone.*

Here in verse 3, God makes a clear contrast between *His* laws and the laws of people:

*"You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes."*

Isn't it interesting that the Egyptians and the Canaanites had their laws and statutes as well? But what they considered legal or lawful wasn't necessarily what God considered lawful. In fact, today, what our country considers legal isn't necessarily biblical.

And so throughout the rest of this chapter, the Lord lists specific sexual sins that He forbids—sins that Egypt and Canaan would have practiced. God describes these sins as "depravity" in verse 17, "abomi-

nation" in verse 22, and "perversion" in verse 23.

God concludes in verse 30, saying, "So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs." God is effectively saying, "Live according to *My* word, and you will enjoy a life of satisfaction in the land; but if you live like those people in Egypt and Canaan, you will be as unsatisfied and hopeless as they are."

Now we discover another timeless principle in chapter 19: *God is honored when we imitate His holy character.* Verse 2 sets the theme for this chapter: "You shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy." Now what does it mean to be holy? We need an answer to that question because none of us will ever arrive at holy perfection.

Holiness is not your perfection; it is your pursuit in life, your priority in life. I like to think of holiness as the direction your toes are pointed.

Holiness is expressed here in chapter 19 by such things as respecting your parents (verse 3), not making idols (verse 4), and offering help to those who are poor (verses 9-10). And fifteen times throughout this chapter you will read, "I am the LORD" or "I, the LORD, am your God." In other words, this isn't man's word; this is God's word. And God's word is non-negotiable.

I remember reading about a famous actor who was on his deathbed. His wife came in one day and found him reading the Bible. She was shocked and said,

*When God calls us to holy living, He isn't trying to take all the fun out of life; He's wanting to protect us from the deceitfulness of sin.*





“I’ve never seen you reading the Bible before. Why are you interested now?” And he said, “I’m not interested; I’m looking for loopholes.” Well, God doesn’t have any loopholes.

But don’t misunderstand. When God calls us to holy living, He isn’t trying to take all the fun out of life; He’s wanting to protect us from the deceitfulness of sin, which leads us to defeat and despair and dissatisfaction in life. God’s Word is an expression of His concern and love for His people.

Now in chapter 20, God reinforces this principle of holiness by describing fifteen different sins He wants His people to avoid. There’s everything here, including, verse 2, worshiping the god Molech, which involved child sacrifice; going to “mediums and necromancers”—that is, seeking contact with evil spirits and the dead—in verse 6; cursing one’s father or mother in verse 9; and a host of sexual sins listed here in detail.

Let me just add this: God actually has a lot to say about sexual activity. Let me tell you, it’s not a little decision you make. It’s not a casual thing; it’s actually an intersection of great significance that can impact your entire life.

God has actually created us for sexual activity so long as it follows His direction for marriage. But He delivers here some serious warnings about disobeying His created design for sex and marriage. This issue is going to be a crossroads experience for individuals, and for nations as well, just as it was for Israel here. Are the people of Israel going to act like the Egyptians

and the Canaanites or as God’s people? God warns His people and delivers His verdict of holy justice.

This reminds me of one of the founding fathers of our country, who wrote more than two hundred years ago, “I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; [and] that his justice cannot sleep forever.”

Listen, these timeless principles are true, not just for Israel, but for every generation. And beloved, there’s no greater investment of your life than to walk with God and then join God in His work of reaching our lost, confused, unsatisfied world, as we live out the gospel of forgiveness and freedom in Christ.

---

How might satan use a love for “the law of the land” to distract Christians from valuing God’s word in its proper place? What does God call anything valued greater than Himself?

How do these negative expressions of practical holiness above and throughout Leviticus, relate to the holiness of your character? How does Proverbs 4:23 help you understand the importance of holiness in your life?

---

<sup>1</sup> Numbers 1:1, 10:11, 12:15, 13:25

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## SUITABLE LEADERS . . . SPECIAL FESTIVALS

Leviticus 21-23

Israel's worship was tightly regulated so that the people were led by godly leaders and constantly reminded of God's blessings. We have greater freedom in how and when we worship today, but we too must be concerned with properly honoring God and setting an example for others.

If you hear the word *holiness* today, you probably think of some odd person who goes through life without smiling. Holiness, however, is synonymous with satisfaction in life and sweet communion with God. And it happens to be a central theme of the book of Leviticus.

We arrive today at chapter 21, where God emphasizes the need for leaders to be holy men. The Lord tells Moses in verse 6, to speak to the priests and tell them, "They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God." Because of their unique position as representatives of God, these Old Testament priests needed to be examples of holy living.

At its root, the word *holiness* means separation. Israel's priests were to be separated *to* God and *from* sin. They were also to marry women who followed after God (verse 7).

It's important to note here that a priest could not have a physical disability. Verses 18-19 read:

*"For no one who has a blemish shall draw near, a man blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long*



The priest Remi with his wife and child. Remi is depicted with a shorter and thinner right leg, while priests with physical defects could not serve in Israel

*. . . an injured foot or an injured hand."*

Now you might think this is somewhat ungracious. But these Old Testament priests were not only bringing animal sacrifices to God that were without phys-



ical disabilities or injuries, which signified the unblemished sacrifice of the coming Savior; they were themselves representing the Lord, who was without any spiritual blemish, or sin.

God isn't making a blanket statement that physically disabled people cannot serve Him. For one thing, we

*Someone wrote that  
a beautiful soul  
often lives in a  
suffering body, and  
people like that can  
be greatly used today  
by the Lord.*

are no longer in the Old Testament era. We are in the New Testament, where, as Peter wrote (1 Peter 2:9), we *all* now serve as priests, representing God to our world. And not one of us is without aches and pains of some kind.

Someone wrote that a beautiful soul often lives in a suffering body, and people like that can be greatly used today by the Lord. Think of Fanny Crosby, the blind hymnwriter; or Amy Carmichael, who served in India for years with a crippling disability; or even Charles Spurgeon, who spent weeks at a time away from his church in London recovering from persistent ailments.

Now in chapter 22, the priests are told in verse 2 to “abstain from the holy things of the people of Israel.” That means that everything is to be treated with respect and great care. They're to be careful not to turn their sacred ministry into a “shallow routine.” That's a danger for anybody serving the Lord in vocational ministry today—getting so accustomed to sacred duty that it becomes a program instead of a privilege.

Six times in these chapters, in various ways God says

to the priests, “I am the LORD who sanctifies you.” God has set them apart to represent Him before the nation and the world; so, they are to live clean, unblemished lives.

Frankly, there's a higher standard for those who represent the Lord in a public role. Even over in the New Testament, you will find twenty-four qualifications for the pastors and elders who lead the church today.

Now in chapter 23, God not only requires special qualifications for the priests; He also establishes special days for the people. In verse 2 the Lord tells Moses to inform the nation, “These are the appointed feasts of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts.”

Notice that God calls them “*my* appointed feasts.” They are *for* the people, but they are *about* the Lord. In fact, they point to wonderful truths about God's plan of redemption throughout history.

For instance, as chapter 23 opens, it refers to Israel's special day, the Sabbath. The word *Sabbath* comes from the Hebrew word that means “rest.” Nehemiah 9:14 reveals that Israel was not given this Sabbath law until they arrived at Mount Sinai, where it became a special sign between God and His covenant people. And like all these other special days and festivals and ordinances, it points to its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Through faith in Him, Hebrews chapter 4 tells us, we now find our Sabbath rest, not in a day of the week, but in the person of Jesus Christ.

Now here in verse 5, “the LORD'S Passover” is highlighted. God wants Israel to remember their freedom from Egyptian bondage through this annual feast. Then in verse 6, Passover is combined with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which commemorates Israel leaving Egypt so quickly that their bread didn't have time to rise. So, they act this out annually, in the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Then in verse 10 we find the Feast of Firstfruits, when Israel offered the Lord the first portion of their harvest. Their wheat and barley seed had been buried in the ground—in death, so to speak—but then it had come to life and risen from the grave, as it were, in a great harvest of fruit.



Again, this pointed to Jesus Christ, who is the “first-fruits” of those who have died (1 Corinthians 15:20). The resurrection of Jesus on Sunday marks the beginning of a great resurrection harvest. And to this day, we worship Him on Sunday. In fact, the apostle John called Sunday, “the Lord’s Day” (Revelation 1:10).

Now the next Jewish feast, here in chapter 23 and verse 15, is the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, which was a day of rejoicing over the harvest. Pentecost is also celebrated on Sunday, and in the New Testament, this was the very day the Holy Spirit descended and the harvest began to arrive, as the New Testament church was born (Acts 2).

Then there are three more festivals here, all celebrated during the months of September and October. First is the Feast of Trumpets, mentioned in verses 23–25, when the priest would blow the trumpet and call the people together for prayer and sacrifices. This trumpet call began the new year for the Jewish people.

Again, while this is related to Israel, it finds fulfillment in the coming sound of the trumpet when God calls His followers together, rapturing the church to the Father’s house and beginning a new era in redemptive history (1 Thessalonians 4:15–17; 2 Thessalonians 2:1). Beloved, God embedded in these feasts wonderful features of His ongoing redemptive plan.

Next on Israel’s calendar is the Day of Atonement, mentioned here in verse 27. This ultimately pointed to the final sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our once-for-all, atoning sacrifice for sins.

And then five days after the Day of Atonement is the Feast of Booths, the final festival of the year. The people would make temporary shelters—little lean-tos—out of branches. The Lord says here in verse 42–43:

*“You shall dwell in booths for seven days. . . . that your genera-*

*tions may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.”*

Camping outdoors once a year would be a reminder of the Lord’s provision as the nation of Israel journeyed through the wilderness toward the promised land.

All these festivals are wonderful illustrations of God’s plan through the ages. And that plan makes you want to stop and thank Him for the precision and beauty and timing of His redemption. Let’s live with gratitude for our salvation, our spiritual rest in Christ, His grace, and His faithful Word.

---

Since all true believers are Priests today (1 Peter 2:5–9), what principles for your own life can you draw from the requirements for Israel’s priests? Why would Satan work to blind you to the realities and blessings of this priesthood truth?

How might the New Testament principles found in Israel’s feasts make your worship more meaningful today? Israel’s worship feasts were drawn from their history with God, how is your own worship influenced by your history with God?

---

<sup>1</sup> See Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy* (Victor Books, 1994), 95.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>3</sup> 21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 33.

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)







## FAITH 101

Leviticus 24–25

Following God means working alongside others in everyday tasks. God's regulations for Israel regarding worship, punishment for various crimes, and the observance of Sabbath and Jubilee years remind us of His desire that we serve with others and encourage one another.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon writes: “A threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Now Solomon is not talking about going down to the hardware store and buying some good rope; he’s talking about what can happen when we allow God to bring several strands together and weave them into our lives to make our faith stronger.

And that is exactly what God is doing here in Leviti-

cus chapter 24 as He strengthens the faith of the nation of Israel. The Lord says to Moses here in verse 2, “Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil from beaten olives for the lamp [in the tabernacle], that a light may be kept burning regularly.”

The Lord is assigning His people to an ongoing task. They are to bring the best olive oil for the tabernacle lamp—not the cheap stuff, but pure olive oil. This candelabra more than likely represents the light of truth Israel was to shine to their world. It also points to Jesus, who will stand in the temple and announce that He is the Light of the World (John 8:12).

Now here in verse 5, the people are told to bring fine flour every week for the priests to make twelve loaves of bread. Fresh loaves were placed on the golden table inside the Holy Place every week, and they represented the twelve tribes of Israel. This also pointed to the coming Savior, who is the Bread of Life (John 6:35).

The Lord is assigning these tasks to the people so that they will work together with the priests. The Lord could give all the work to the priests, but He chooses to involve all the people in the work of the tabernacle.

So, here we see one strand of truth God weaves into our lives is that we *serve the Lord together with others*.



Depiction of an offering of bread in bottom register



God never intended believers to live in isolation but in cooperation with others.

Today, the church is called a body—and you’re a foot or a hand, an ear, or a muscle. God designed you to fit into a community of believers, and you find where you fit when you find a way to serve.

Now it almost seems like Moses and the Lord are having this conversation about the Holy Place, when they get interrupted here in verse 10:

*Now an Israelite woman’s son, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the people of Israel. And the Israelite woman’s son and a man of Israel fought in the camp, and the Israelite woman’s son blasphemed the [Lord’s] Name and cursed. Then they brought him to Moses.*

Here’s a man who gets into a fight with another man, and he curses the Lord’s name. This Hebrew verb for cursing doesn’t mean he let a bad word slip out of his mouth. It refers to denouncing and defying the character of God. In other words, this man is defying the God of Israel.

And in verse 14 God delivers the verdict on the blasphemer, demanding capital punishment at the hands of all the people. In doing so, the Lord is delivering a second strand of truth here that will make the people of God even stronger—and here it is: God’s people don’t just serve the Lord together; we *honor the name of the Lord together*.

Dishonoring God’s name brought an immediate sentence of death. Now you might think that isn’t fair. Well, let me tell you, the entire human race is under this same sentence of judgment; we just don’t see it applied immediately. And because of the delay of God’s final judgment, the world thinks they can dishonor God and get away with it.

No, there’s a coming judgment at the end of human history as we know it; and every sin will be uncovered, and those who have defied, and dishonored God will have an eternal sentence delivered in the courtroom of God (Revelation 20:11-15). Judgment eventually takes place.

God goes on to expand on the idea of capital punishment. We read here in verse 17, “Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death.” Now this is not a reference to the casualties of war or accidental manslaughter. God is referring here to what we call “first-degree murder”—premeditated murder.

*And because of the delay of God’s final judgment, the world thinks they can dishonor God and get away with it.*

The death penalty for murder follows from the fact that humans are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Among other things, this image means that humans are able to interact with God on a personal level, worshiping Him in spirit and in truth. In addition to being given an immortal spirit, according to Genesis chapter 2, mankind is to serve as God’s representatives on earth, carrying out His desires as stewards of His creation. No animal was created with an immortal spirit or this unique responsibility as God’s representatives.

So, the murder of a human being is effectively killing a representative of God on earth. And that’s serious business.

You will also notice the principle here in chapter 24 is that the punishment matches the crime. So, the crime of taking a human life warrants the death sentence. Beloved, capital punishment is simply the declaration that human life is special.<sup>1</sup>



Now this does not mean murder is an unforgivable sin. The consequences might be severe, but the sin can be forgiven, and even a murderer can go to heaven, a forgiven, redeemed believer.

Now, chapter 25 gives us a third cord to weave into our lives. We not only serve the Lord together and honor the Lord together, but we also *trust the Lord together*.

For the Israelite this trust involved a real-life event called the Sabbath *year*. Verses 1 through 7 command the Israelites to allow the land to rest every seventh, or Sabbath, year. In other words, there is to be no planting or harvesting a normal crop.

So, every seven years, the Israelites had to enroll in this required class—we will call it Faith 101—and they were to watch as God provided for their needs as He promised. Imagine every seven years going without a paycheck!

And if you think that would be a challenge, the Lord goes on here in verse 10 to institute the Year of Jubilee, which is to take place every fifty years. During this Jubilee year, the Israelites are to wipe off the books any debt owed them. They are to return any parcel of land to its original owner. And all their farmhands who are working to pay off their debts are to be released—all their debts eliminated.

Now these regulations were designed to protect the Israelites from each other. They prevented anyone from monopolizing the land. They also developed compassion for those who had fallen on hard times. This law had a way of curbing greed and materialism.

In fact, chapter 25 goes on to urge Israelites to redeem, or buy back, the property of their brethren who, in their poverty, are forced to sell it. Likewise, one who is forced to sell himself into servanthood because of debts may be redeemed by a relative and released from his debts. These provisions protected

the poor and promoted compassion, and we have evidence that those who acted upon them were uniquely blessed. Years later a godly man named Boaz redeemed the property of a poor relative and ended up getting a wife out of it! Her name was Ruth.

Maybe God has you right now enrolled in a course called Faith 101. You didn't really want to sign up for it, but here you are. God isn't out to destroy you or even discourage you. He's wanting to strengthen you with this threefold chord of faith as you serve Him, honor Him, and trust Him today

---

Using these verses (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Galatians 5:13-14) Why is it personally important for you as a believer that you serve the Lord with others? What practical steps can you take this week to either join or include a fellow believer as you together make a difference in someone's life?

In what particular areas of life is God challenging you to trust Him? What lies is Satan telling you to get you to doubt God's good intentions toward you? How would a growing knowledge of God through His word help in such growing times?

---

<sup>1</sup> See Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy: Leviticus* (Victor Books, 1994), 120.

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## ANSWERING THE “IF” QUESTION OF LIFE

Leviticus 26–27

Leviticus ends with a prophetic preview of Israel’s history. They would be secure in their land and enjoy God’s blessings when they obeyed Him but would suffer devastation and exile if they disobeyed. Israel serves as both a warning and an encouragement to us to follow the Lord.

If you have flown on a commercial airline, you’re familiar with that little card that spells out the safety instructions. Most passengers ignore it as they look out the window or read a magazine. No one pays much attention to the flight attendant going through the emergency instructions. But let me tell you, if an emergency were to take place, everybody would be scrambling for that little card, wondering what to do next.

So it is with God’s instruction card for Israel. It’s called the book of Leviticus, and in it, God tells His chosen people exactly *what* to do and what *not* to do to walk in fellowship with Him. God also spells out the benefits of obedience and the consequences of disobedience.

Now, here in Leviticus chapter 26, we have some basic commands that pretty much summarize the law presented in this manual for the Levites. Here in the first two verses, the Lord says, “You shall not make idols for yourselves” and “You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary.”

The Lord then proceeds to list the blessings if the people obey Him. And these blessings look ahead to when the nation is going to dwell in the promised land.

But keep this in mind—these blessings of promise

will be given to the nation *if* they make God their priority—if they obey the Lord. In fact, if you decide to circle the word *if* in chapters 26 and 27, you will circle it thirty-two different times. *If* you walk with Me, God says, then these blessings will follow:

- In verse 4, God says, “I will give you your rains in their season ... and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.”



Clay tablet from Ugarit with imprint of the stamp seal of King Muršili II





- In verses 5 to 10 God promises peace and security, victory over their enemies, and even removal of predatory animals from the land.
- God promises in verse 11, “I will make my dwelling among you.” This refers to God’s unique presence in the tabernacle. This Hebrew word for “dwelling” comes the word *shekinah*, which describes the Lord’s glorious, shining presence in the tabernacle.

This list of blessings for obedience ends in verse 13 with the Lord’s reminder: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.”

There’s a timeless truth in all of this for the believer today. If you’ve trusted Christ as your Savior, you are part of His chosen people today, and that will never change now that you are saved.

But let me tell you, if you want fellowship with God today, if you want His wisdom today, if you want a sense of His presence, there’s a big *if* you need to answer when you get out of bed in the morning. You must decide *if* you will obey the Word of God—*if* you will walk according to God’s will; *if* you will follow God’s wisdom rather than the wisdom of the world. In other words, that *if* question needs to be answered every day.

*In other words,  
that if question  
needs to be answered  
every day.*

Now God’s promises to Israel also include a warning of consequences if they disobey. The list begins in verse 14.

It’s important to remember that these punishments are from God and have a disciplinary purpose for the nation. God will use these consequences to warn the people. And if they don’t listen—if they ignore God’s instruction card for living—these consequences are

going to become more severe. In fact, they’re given to us here in six steps.

First, verses 16-17 say the nation’s disobedience will bring disease and defeat in battle. If they don’t repent, then secondly, God will bring famine and drought. God says in verse 19, “I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.” We’re going to see this happen over in the book of Judges, where it stops raining and famine devastates the land.

If they still don’t repent, God will take a third step of disciplining them; in verse 22, the Lord says, “I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock.”

If the people still don’t turn back to God, the Lord promises in verse 25 the fourth step in His discipline. God will allow “a sword” to fall on them to “execute vengeance for the covenant.” In other words, enemy nations will devastate the land, and food will become scarce.

The fifth step is tragically severe. Enemy nations will surround them and literally starve them into submission. God says in verse 29, “You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.”

If they still don’t repent and follow God, Israel will be removed from their land and carried into exile. This sixth and final act of discipline is accompanied by further devastation. In verse 31 the Lord promises, “I will lay your cities waste,” and in verse 33, “I will scatter you among the nations.”

Now the final verses of chapter 26 remind the people of God’s enduring faithfulness—He isn’t going to forget His covenant with the children of Abraham. That covenant is unconditional; it’s written in permanent, nonerasable ink, so to speak. But the blessings of the covenant made with Israel here at Mount Sinai are conditional and result from obedience.

We know from the record of Scripture that God will ultimately bring the nation to repentance and restore them in the land under King Jesus, when He returns and rules the nations of the world in His coming millennial kingdom.



Now, in the meantime, the Lord is building another nation. It's not a physical nation like Israel but a spiritual nation of believers called the bride of Christ, the church. It's made up of believing Jews and Gentiles from all around the world.

But the principles we can draw from Leviticus 26 are still applicable to us today. *If* we walk with God in obedience, we experience the blessing of fellowship with Him; *if* we don't follow Him, God has many ways of getting our attention.

Now we come to the final chapter in Leviticus—chapter 27. Here the Lord gives Israel instructions about making vows, or promises, to God. These vows take the form of dedicating to God their houses, their land, their cattle, their own bodies—virtually anything they have.

In some instances, they can substitute financial offerings. And you need to understand that these vows were not required by the Lord; they were voluntary expressions of commitment and thanksgiving. This all might seem strange to us, but these vows gave God's people a way to express their dedication to Him.

And with that, this manual for the Levites—God's manual on how the nation of Israel was to walk with God—comes to a close.

Leviticus ends with these words in verse 34:

*These are the commandments  
that the LORD commanded*

### *Moses for the people of Israel on Mount Sinai.*

This book is the instruction card on how to live a holy life. For Israel, they will soon travel on from Mount Sinai, into the promised land.

As you and I move forward in life, let's make sure we're taking God's instruction card, His Word, along with us. If we will—there's that little word *if* again—if we will obey the Lord and follow His Word, life can become a wisdom journey.

---

Once you receive God's grace through faith in Jesus His Son, you experience His discipline when you sin, not His wrath (Hebrews 12:3-11). How does this truth impact your motivation to follow God daily through His word?

For believers, obedience brings blessing, and disobedience brings discipline. How have you seen this principle illustrated in your own life? Why is it a good idea to wisely share with your yet to be saved friends and family that God is disciplining or blessing you?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)

