

Leviticus

Name	Leviticus means “pertaining to the Levites.” The Levites were the priestly tribe of Israel. In Joshua, they were allotted no portion of land as an inheritance because they had a “go between” function among the people of God. In essence, they were the clergy.
Significance	“Pertaining to the Levites” also gives us an idea of what the scope of the book is about. The Laws of the Pentateuch start in the middle of Exodus and run through the first part of the book of Numbers. Leviticus is the particular section of that narrative that will focus on <u>how</u> the Levites were to function and <u>what</u> that implied for the rest of the tribes. They were the ones called by God to make intercessions and sacrifices <u>on behalf</u> of the people at the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle).
Where We Are in the Narrative	Israel has left Egypt and is now encamped at the base of Mt. Sinai. They got here in Exodus 19 and they will stay here until Numbers 10. Think about it like this: God saved his people. Then he gave them the major commands. Now he’s going to reveal what the Levites must do to maintain the relationship between God and his people.
Levites Major Function	What major function do the Levites have? They are called – primarily – to lead the Israelites in worship. The main way they did this was to make sacrifices to the Lord on behalf of the rest of the tribes. There are several types in the Book of Leviticus: Burnt Offering, Grain Offering; Fellowship (Peace) Offering; Purification Offering, and the Guilt Offering.
The Major Themes of Leviticus	There are two major themes in Leviticus: (1) Holiness towards God in worship; and the (2) Holiness of the People in worship. Worship, then, has <u>both</u> a vertical and a horizontal component, at the same time and in the same relationship.
In a Phrase	Be holy.
Jesus Our Priest	Leviticus may be somewhat of a confusing and boring read. But it has direct relevance to Jesus. Jesus is our (1) High priest, who (2) lives to make intercessions for his people. The greatest of his intercessions, of course, was his (3) sacrifice on Calvary. It was an offering that was a fragrant aroma most pleasing to God the Father.
The Best Way to Learn Leviticus	Leviticus is quite challenging to read. It’s even more challenging to learn. As a result, the best way to journey through it is through concepts.

Holiness

In the Book of Leviticus, words like “consecrate,” “offering,” and “fragrant aroma pleasing to the Lord” occur throughout the book. All of these and others like them denote Israel’s call to be Holy as the Lord is Holy. To be Holy is to be set apart. Out of all the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the descendants of Shem – from the line of Jacob, not Esau – were call to be holy.

⁴⁴ 'For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth. ⁴⁵ 'For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy.' (Leviticus 11:44-45)

Consequently, the Much of Leviticus Tells Us How this Call to Holiness is Achieved

It came from sacrifices. There are several types of sacrifices in Leviticus:

1. Burnt offering - sacrifice of an unblemished animal for the atonement for sin.
2. Grain offering - offering of fine flour as gift to the Lord.
3. Fellowship (peace) offering - sacrifice of an unblemished animal for fellowship between the worshiper, God, and neighbor.
4. Purification offering - for unintentional sin.
5. Guilt offering - for outright rebellion against God / required an additional payment

The Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1)

1. Purpose – The burnt offering was a sacrifice that concerned making atonement for sins.
2. Process – The worshipper brought an unblemished animal to the priest. The type of animal varied depending on economic class. The commonalities were that it had to be (a) the best of what you had, and (b) a blood sacrifices. For without the shedding of blood, there can be no remission of sin.

- The wealthy brought cattle/bulls (1:3-9); The “middle class” (to borrow our terminology) brought sheep and goats (1:10-13); The poor brought birds (1:14-17)
 - Worshiper laid hand on the head of the sacrificial animal as an act of identification between the worshiper and the animal before it is slaughtered.
3. In Christ - ¹⁸ *knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19)*

The Grain Offering (Leviticus 2; 6:14-23)

1. Purpose – The grain offering gets its name from the ingredient of fine flour. It was a tithe offering to the Lord.
2. Process – It could be uncooked grain (2:1-3) or cooked grain (2:4-10). Whatever the form, the gift of the worshiper was what was important. It wasn't an offering that expediated sin (because there was no blood). But it did say to the Lord “thank you.”
3. In Christ – We like to use the word “tithe,” which means “tenth,” for obvious reasons. The N.T. principle is to give according to what you may have. It could be more. It could be less. The attitude towards it is the most important: joyful and cheerful.

The Fellowship Offering (Leviticus 3; 7:11-38)

1. Purpose – (1) The Hebrew worship denoting fellowship is *shalom*, which means peace. As a result, some people refer to this sacrifice as a peace offering. (2) This sacrifice is vertical towards God and horizontal towards one's neighbor.
2. Process – (1) In a burnt offering, the worshiper brought a blood sacrifice. In this offering, a sacrifice of Cattle, Sheep, or Goat was left to the discretion of the priest. (2) It was a community sacrifice and everyone got a piece of the offering through a communal meal that had to be totally consumed. If someone ate it in an unworthy manner, he was guilty of sin.
 - The Lord got a peace (3:3-4); The Priest (7:31-32); and the Individuals in the community did as well (7:18)
 - It wasn't a sacrifice made in isolation. It was made as a community.
3. In Christ - ²³ *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." ²⁵ In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. (1 Cor. 11:23-26)*

The Purification (Sin) Offering (Leviticus 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30)

1. Purpose – The purification offering was for unintentional sin. It was a blood sacrifice. But like the fellowship offering, it was a communal, not individual, sacrifice.
2. Process – (1) If the priest sinned unintentionally, he himself must bring a bull (not a lamb or pigeon) because he brought guilt on all the people. (2) If the community sinned unintentionally, they brought a blood sacrifice from within the assembly.
3. In Christ – He forgives us for all our sin, intentional and unintentional.

The Guilt Offering (Leviticus 6:1-7)

1. Purpose – The guilt offering was for intentional rebellion against God, like the name suggests.
2. Process – (1) If someone intentionally rebelled against the Lord or intentionally deceived and/or wronged their neighbor, they were required to bring a blood offering of a ram – now they don't have a choice like in the burnt offering – to his/her sin. (2) Then, they must make full restitution to his/her neighbor. (3) Then they must add a fifth to that restitution and give it to their neighbor. (4) It wasn't enough to ask for forgiveness from God when they wronged a neighbor. They had to make it right and then some.
3. In Christ - ²³ *“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)*

Fulfillment of the Whole System in Christ

¹² *He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. ¹³ The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (Hebrews 9:12-14)*