

# NOTES ON LEVITICUS

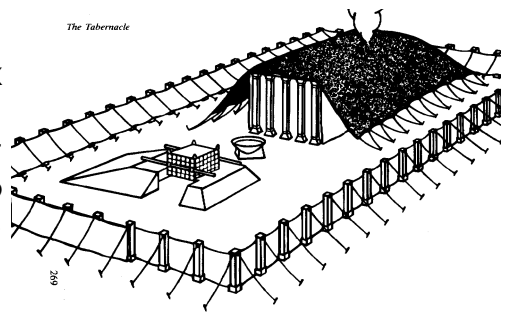
## BIBLE CLASS STUDY GUIDE

LEVITICUS  
Introduction

The book of Leviticus is the third book of the five commonly known as the *pentateuch* (Genesis-Deuteronomy). These first five books of the Old Testament give the history of the origin of the world and the people through whom God chose to send a Savior—the Israelites.

Leviticus often lies as a forgotten or overlooked book of the Bible. We do not often read from it in our church services, and some of us perhaps have not read more than a chapter out of it. It is sometimes viewed as a “long” or “tedious” book because of the countless ceremonial laws and regulations outlined in it for the nation of Israel.

Leviticus is really a continuation of the book of Exodus. The latter half of Exodus discussed the building of the tabernacle for Israel; now this book focuses on the *worship* at that tabernacle—the holy place where God came to dwell with His people.



Since the book describes a way of life and worship very much different from our own, we might ask ourselves, “Why bother with Leviticus anyway?”

Actually, there is much that can be gained from reading God’s Word in this book. For example,

- It helps us to develop a better understanding of the seriousness of sin
- It helps us to understand how God never changes
- It gives us a deeper understanding of the fact that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb 9:22)”
- It describes the worship of the Old Testament believers so we learn to appreciate and understand our own worship
- It points us to Jesus Christ and foreshadows much of the New Testament
- It stresses the life of holiness which we live in response to God’s love for us

## THE AUTHOR

Moses is certainly the writer of this book. Time and time again we find the phrase, "The LORD spoke to Moses."

## THE TIME-FRAME

Based on verses in Exodus and Numbers (the two books surrounding Leviticus), it can be determined that the what we read in Leviticus took place during a period of exactly one month—the month after the tabernacle was first set up.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN LEVITICUS

At first glance, the book might look jumbled and confusing, but there are a couple themes that keep coming back again and again.

- The Israelites were continually reminded that they were to be God's special people *set apart* from the world for God.
- The people were reminded that God demands holiness, but man is not holy by nature. If he is to have access to God, there must be payment for sin.

When the LORD appeared to the Israelites on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19 ff) the people were terrified. They asked Moses to speak on their behalf because they were so afraid of God's holiness and power. Leviticus shows how they can approach the LORD!

### ***Leviticus at a Glance***

FOCUS	SACRIFICE				SANCTIFICATION				
REFERENCE	1:1 — 8:1 — 11:1 — 16:1 — 18:1 — 21:1 — 23:1 — 25:1 — 27:1 — 27:3								
DIVISION	THE LAWS OF				THE LAWS OF SANCTIFICATION				
	THE OFFERINGS	CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS	CONSECRATION OF THE PEOPLE	NATIONAL ATONEMENT	FOR THE PEOPLE	FOR THE PRIESTS	IN WORSHIP	IN THE LAND OF CANAAN	THROUGH VOWS
TOPIC	THE WAY TO GOD				THE WALK WITH GOD				
	THE LAWS OF ACCEPTABLE APPROACH TO GOD				THE LAWS OF CONTINUED FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD				
LOCATION	MOUNT SINAI								
TIME	c. 1 MONTH								

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## OUTLINE

Leviticus breaks down into two major sections, chapters 1-16 and chapters 17-27. The first part details how the people were to approach the holiness of God. The second part details the holiness of life (sanctification) they were to lead as forgiven children of God.

- I. How Israel was to come near to God
  - A. By blood sacrifice
  - B. Through the priesthood
  - C. By avoiding defilement
- II. How Israel was to exhibit its relationship with God
  - A. Personal holiness
  - B. Holiness in regard to sexual behavior
  - C. Holiness in society
  - D. Holiness for priests
  - E. Holy festivals
  - F. Holiness of the land
  - G. Obedience and punishment
  - H. Redeeming what is the Lord's

## FOR STUDY IN CLASS

1. Read Leviticus chapter 16 and consider what it has to do with Jesus Christ.
2. Consider the perfect holiness God expects from His people. Is this fair?
3. Of the things mentioned (or not mentioned) in the previous pages, what interests you about the book of Leviticus?

## FOR STUDY AT HOME

Read Leviticus chapters 1-7

## BIBLE CLASS STUDY GUIDE

LEVITICUS 1-7  
Approaching God  
(Blood Sacrifices)

The first seven chapters of Leviticus plunge directly into the topic of *sacrifice*. In particular, blood sacrifice—the offering of the lives of animals to God as part of worship. After reading this section, we might at first view the Israelite “worship” as a mere slaughterhouse, but in fact the animal sacrifices were God’s way of showing the people how serious their sins were and how radical a price needed to be paid for them.

Actually, people had offered sacrifices to God and to their gods long before the days of Moses. You might remember how Abel offered a burnt offering early in the book of Genesis. Apart from believers like Abel, the pagans regularly offered animal sacrifices in an effort to appease their “divine beings.”

For the Old Testament people, however, God commanded blood sacrifices not as a way whereby they would work to earn His favor, but as a way of preparing them for and turning them toward the work of Jesus Christ.

Through their sacrifices, Israel learned:

- ! That God is a just and holy God who demands perfection from anyone standing in His presence
- ! That sin is disgusting to God and leads to death (also Rom 6:23)
- ! That the shedding of blood is required to make *atonement* for sin (Lev 17:11)
- ! That God accepts the sacrifice of the victim instead of the death of the sinner (substitution principle)
- ! That God was sending a Messiah who would serve as the all-atoning sacrifice

Everything about the Old Testament blood sacrifices pointed to Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He would make on the cross. It is important to remember that the blood of bulls and goats did not really in and of themselves atone for sin (Heb 10:4, 11). These sacrifices were accepted by God only in light of Christ’s sacrifice. The Old Testament people were saved by their trust in the sacrifice Jesus would one day make for them.

## FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

As time went on, the Israelites lost sight of the real meaning and purpose of their sacrifices. They began to see sacrifice as an end unto itself, thinking that the outward sacrifice alone was really all that mattered; that if they simply offered the right animals, they had earned their way into God's favor. The prophet Isaiah spoke against this (1:11, 13) and so did other prophets. Is it possible for our worship also to become like that of the Israelites— a thoughtless repetition of ritual?

## LEVITICUS 1

### The Burnt Offering

Which animals were accepted for burnt offerings?

What do you suppose might be the significance of "male without defect" in v3?

What do you suppose might be the significance of v4?

The offerings were slaughtered, then cut in pieces and washed before sacrifice. The people were actively involved in the sacrifice. They brought it, killed it, prepared it, and watched the priest offer it. The offering was consumed by fire.

Instructions for offering birds is also given here (w14-17). When Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple at Jerusalem they offered the sacrifice of two turtle-doves because of their extreme poverty (Lk 2:22-24).

## LEVITICUS 2

### The Grain Offering

Unbaked grain offerings were to be of fine flour mixed with (olive) oil and incense. Baked offerings were to be made with fine flour, without yeast, and either spread or mixed with oil depending on whether or not the offering was prepared in an oven, on a griddle, or in a pan.

Do you find any significance in the material of these offerings— grain and oil? Why no yeast?

Notice how part of the offerings belonged to "Aaron and his sons." Since the Levites (the priests) did not farm or work the ground but rather took on the clergy duties, the LORD provided for them by allowing them to take portions of certain offerings.

w14-16 indicate an offering of first-fruits. God desired the worshiper to return some of what God had given him as an offering of thanksgiving. At certain times of the year, an Israelite would offer the first and best of what had come out of his field. It was the least he could do for God in response to all the blessings he had received.

What can we learn in this chapter about our own giving to the LORD? See also Rom 12:1-2; Heb 13:15-16?

## LEVITICUS 3

## The Fellowship (Peace) Offering

The Fellowship Offering was once again the burnt offering of an animal. Given in a similar fashion to that described in chapter one.

This offering was a reminder of the broken relationship between God and Israel (fellowship vs. broken). In this offering, some of the animal was offered and some was eaten by the priest and the people. The sacrifice reminded them of their sin, the eating of a portion was to remind them of the fellowship they still had with God.

The people were not allowed to eat any fat or blood on the animal. The fatty portions were for the LORD (v17).

## LEVITICUS 4

## The Sin Offering

The sin offering was a sacrifice designed to restore the relationship between God and the people. The word "sin" means *to miss the mark*— to miss the LORD's standard of righteousness and holiness. When the Israelites sinned, God had instructed them to offer blood for atonement.

w4-12 describe the sacrifice the priest must make when he sinned. The seriousness of a priest's sin is emphasized by the animal required for the sacrifice: a bull. A bull was the largest animal ever used.

The blood was sprinkled also on the horns of the altar of incense.

The part of the bull that was not sacrificed was burned outside the camp.

w13-21 a similar sin offering is prescribed if the "community" sins

w22-26 If a leader of the people sins, he should bring a sin offering. The blood of this offering was placed by the priest on the horns of the altar of burnt offering.

w27-35 if a member of the community sinned, he would bring a sin offering of a female goat or lamb. The blood of the animal was placed on the altar of burnt offering.

In the sin offerings, only the fatty portions of the animals and the blood were used on the altar. These were not "whole" burnt offerings as described in chapter one.

The sin offerings find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ who offered Himself as the payment for all sin (Heb 7:27).

## FOR THOUGHT

How do the Roman Catholics wrongly offer "sin offerings" today? (Hint: it has to do with the Sacrifice of the Mass.)

## LEVITICUS 5

## The Sin Offering

Chapter five now lists offerings for specific sins— notably, sins of *omission* (not doing what you should do.)

Instructions are given for what to offer if a person could not afford a lamb or a goat. If a person could not even afford two young pigeons, they could bring fine flour for the sin offering (v11). Although the flour was not a blood sacrifice, it was burned by the priest on the altar along with other sin offerings, thus it was given the “status” of a blood sacrifice.

After the coming of Jesus, sin offerings were no longer of any use. See Heb 9:25-28; 1 Pet 1:2; Heb 9:12-14. The sin offering was a clear picture of Jesus’ offering on the cross.

## The Guilt Offering

A guilt offering was required for sins regarding “any of the LORD’s holy things.” If a previous offering to the LORD had been inferior or if there was a failure to abide by certain provisions of offering sacrifice, an offering of this type would be necessary. Furthermore, restitution was added to the guilt offering as a reminder that there was a responsibility to restore the rights or property of another.

Only a ram could be used as a guilt offering.

In the guilt offering, the worth of the animal was more important than the way it was sacrificed.

## LEVITICUS 6

## The Guilt Offering

v1-7 describe another case in which a guilt offering was necessary. The case: a person steals or robs someone else; when he is challenged, he claims he is innocent. Such a person must make restitution in full (plus 1/5) and present a guilt offering.

As with the sin offering, Jesus is the fulfillment of the guilt offering (see Isa 53:5, 6, 10).

- ! A guilt offering included making things right with the one sinned against, plus an offering to God. What might this teach us about sin?

## More on the Burnt Offering

v8-13 Notice how the priest was never to let the fire on the altar of burnt offering go out. Why do you suppose God wanted it this way?



## More on the Grain Offering

w14-23 This section adds more detail to the grain offering introduced in chapter two. After a portion of the grain offering had been sacrificed, the priests were allowed to keep and eat the rest with their families. They were not, however, allowed to keep back and eat a portion of their own offering. Those must be burned completely.

## More on the Sin Offering

If any blood of the sin offering was spilled accidentally on clothing or the like, it must be cleaned in a holy place—similarly for the pots that were used to cook any meat from the sin offering. The blood of the sin offering was precious.

## LEVITICUS 7

### Details on the Guilt and Fellowship Offerings

Guilt Offering — Fat, tail, kidneys, and covering of the liver were burned to the LORD. The remainder became the property of the priests. The officiating priest kept the hide of the animal.

Fellowship Offering — Three kinds of fellowship (peace) offerings are mentioned. 1) For Thanksgiving; 2) Those brought in connection with a vow; 3) general thanksgiving and consecration. The Fellowship Offering was the only one in which the lay people were able to eat some of the meat. Any meat leftover had to be burned up on the third day. The Fellowship Offering was a *voluntary offering*—a response to God's blessings.

Nobody was to eat the blood or fat from any offering. The fat was for the LORD, the blood was the means of atonement in the animal sacrifices.

w28-36 contain a few additional notes about the portions for the priests. The LORD wanted to make sure that His workers were well taken care of. That way they could devote their time and energy to the service of God.

## REVIEW

- ! The Israelites approached God by means of blood sacrifices
- ! There are five types of sacrifices given in this section (burnt, grain, fellowship, sin, and guilt)
- ! At certain sacrifices, the priests were permitted to keep part of the offering
- ! At the Fellowship Offering, the people could eat what was not burned on the altar
- ! All the sacrifices pointed toward the great sacrifice, Jesus Christ

# The Levitical Offerings

Name	Scripture References	Purpose	Consisted of	God's Portion	Priests' Portion	Offerer's Portion	Prophetic Significance
(1) Burnt Offering ( <i>olah</i> , Heb.): a. Sweet aroma; b. Voluntary.	Lev. 1:3-17; 6:8-13.	(1) To propitiate for sin in general (1:4). (2) To signify complete dedication and consecration to God; hence it is called the "whole burnt offering."	According to wealth: (1) Bull without blemish (1:3-9); (2) Male sheep or goat without blemish (1:10-13); (3) Turtledoves or young pigeons (1:14-17).	Entirely burned on the altar of burnt offering (1:9), except the skin (7:8).	Skin only (7:8).	None.	Signifies complete dedication of life to God: (1) On the part of Christ (Matt. 26:39-44; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; Phil. 2:5-11). (2) On the part of the believer (Rom. 12:1, 2; Heb. 13:15).
(2) Grain Offering ( <i>minchah</i> , Heb.): a. Sweet aroma; b. Voluntary.	Lev. 2:1-16; 6:14-18; 7:12, 13.	The grain offering accompanied all the burnt offerings; it signified one's homage and thanksgiving to God.	Three types: (1) Fine flour mixed with oil and frankincense (2:1-3); (2) Cakes made of fine flour mixed with oil and baked in an oven (2:4), in a pan (2:5), or in a covered pan (2:7); (3) Green heads of roasted grain mixed with oil and frankincense (2:14, 15).	Memorial portion burned on the altar of burnt offering (2:2, 9, 16).	Remainder to be eaten in the court of the tabernacle (2:3, 10; 6:16-18; 7:14, 15).	None.	Signifies the perfect humanity of Christ: (1) The absence of leaven typifies the sinlessness of Christ (Heb. 4:15; 1 John 3:5). (2) The presence of oil is emblematic of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18; 1 John 2:20, 27).
(3) Peace Offering ( <i>shelem</i> , Heb.): a. Sweet aroma; b. Voluntary.	Lev. 3:1-17; 7:11-21, 28-34.	The peace offering generally expressed peace and fellowship between the offerer and God; hence it culminated in a communal meal. There were three types: (1) Thank Offering: to express gratitude for an unexpected blessing or deliverance. (2) Votive Offering: to express gratitude for a blessing or deliverance granted when a vow had accompanied the petition. (3) Freewill Offering: to express gratitude to God without regard to any specific blessing or deliverance.	According to wealth: (1) From the herd, a male or female without blemish (3:1-5); (2) From the flock, a male or female without blemish (3:6-11); (3) From the goats (3:12-17).  Note: Minor imperfections were permitted when the peace offering was a freewill offering of a bull or a lamb (22:23).	Fatty portions burned on the altar of burnt offering (3:3-5).	Breast (wave offering) and right thigh (heave offering; 7:30-34).	Remainder to be eaten in the court by the offerer and his family: a. Thank offering —to be eaten the same day (7:15). b. Votive and free-will offerings—to be eaten the first and second day (7:16-18).  Note: this is the only offering in which the offerer shared.	Foreshadows the peace which the believer has with God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20).

Name	Scripture References	Purpose	Consisted of	God's Portion	Priests' Portion	Offerer's Portion	Prophetic Significance
(4) Sin Offering ( <i>hattat</i> , Heb.): a. Non-sweet aroma; b. Compulsory.	Lev. 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30.	To atone for sins committed unknowingly, especially where no restitution was possible. Note Num. 15:30, 31: The sin offering was of no avail in cases of defiant rebellion against God.	(1) For the high priest, a bull without blemish (4:3-12). (2) For the congregation, a bull without blemish (4:13-21). (3) For a ruler, a male goat without blemish (4:22-26). (4) For a commoner, a female goat or female lamb without blemish (4:27-35). (5) In cases of poverty, two turtledoves or two young pigeons (one for a sin offering, the other for a burnt offering) could be substituted (5:7-10). (6) In cases of extreme poverty, fine flour could be substituted (5:11-13; cf. Heb. 9:22).	(1) Fatty portions to be burned on the altar of burnt offering (4:8-10, 19, 26, 31, 35). (2) When the sin offering was for the high priest or congregation, the remainder of the bull was to be burned outside the camp (4:11, 12, 20, 21).	When the sin offering was for a ruler or commoner, the remainder of the goat or lamb was to be eaten in the tabernacle court (6:26).	None.	Prefigures the fact that in His death: (1) Christ was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21); (2) Christ suffered outside the gates of Jerusalem (Heb. 13:11-13).
(5) Trespass Offering ( <i>asham</i> , Heb.): a. Non-sweet aroma; b. Compulsory.	Lev. 5:14-6:7; 7:1-7.	To atone for sins committed unknowingly, especially where restitution was possible.	(1) If the offense were against the Lord (tithes, offerings, etc.), a ram without blemish was to be brought; restitution was reckoned according to the priest's estimate of the value of the trespass, plus one-fifth (5:15, 16). (2) If the offense were against man, a ram without blemish was to be brought; restitution was reckoned according to the value plus one-fifth (6:4-6).	Fatty portions to be burned on the altar of burnt offering (7:3-5).	Remainder to be eaten in a holy place (7:6, 7).	None.	Foreshadows the fact that Christ is also our trespass offering (Col. 2:13).