

# Exploring the Old Testament

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## Leviticus

# Overview & Timeline

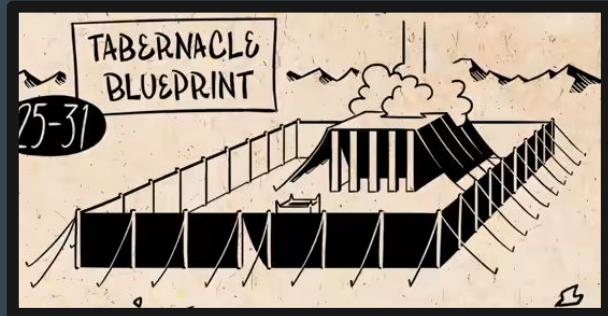
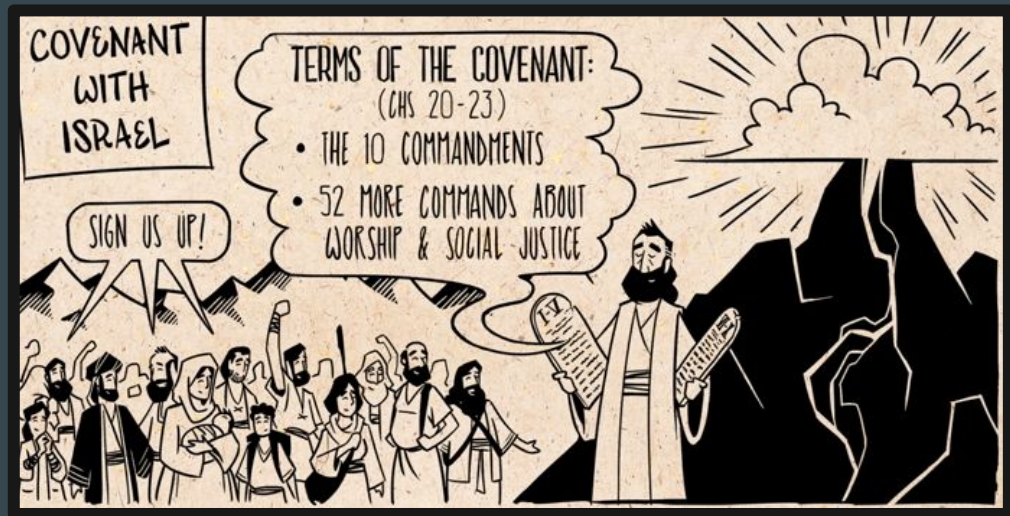
- Literally means “the book concerning Levites”
- **Primary purpose:** teach *congregation* how to offer sacrifices, observe holy days, and live as a holy people

# The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology

“The biblical teaching on offerings and sacrifices lies at **the heart of the redemptive history**. Any theological attempt to penetrate the mysteries of reconciliation, ecclesiology, and eschatology presupposes a proper understanding of what God requires from his people before and after Christ.”

# Overview & Timeline

- God wants to develop Israel into a PEOPLE for His glory, by placing them under His RULE, before He brings them into the PLACE He promised.





## Exodus 40:34-35 & Leviticus 1:1 (emphasis added)

“Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”

“The LORD called Moses and spoke to him *from* the tent of meeting, saying...”

# Major Theme

**God is holy, and therefore his people must be holy, too.**

- God is holy: Leviticus reminds us of God's unique identity
- His people must be holy: to have fellowship with Him & to fulfill His glorious motive



## Isaiah 59:1-2

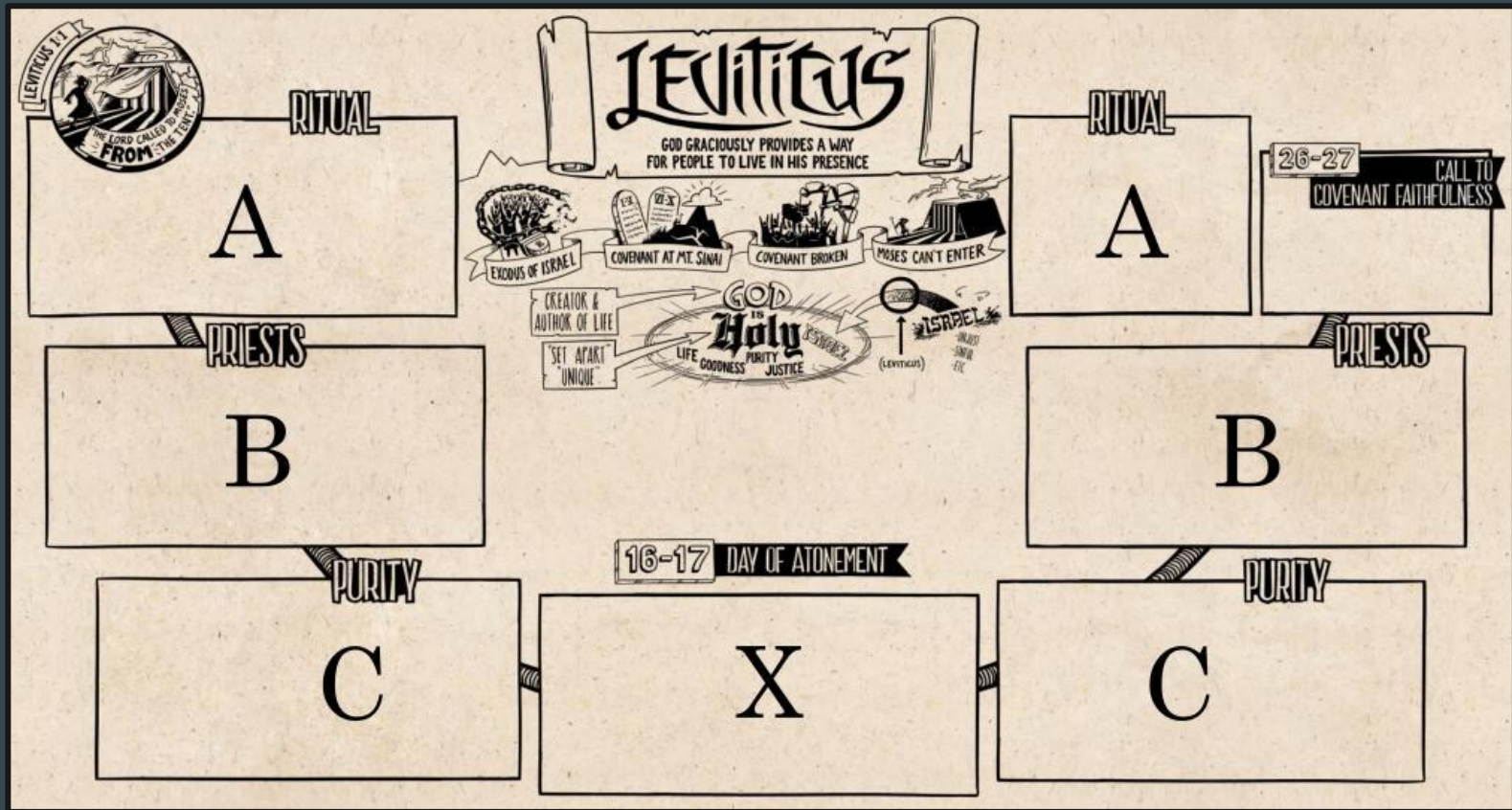
“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have **made a separation** between you and your God, and your sins have **hidden his face** from you so that he does not hear.”

## Excerpts from Isaiah 42 & 49

“I will give you a covenant for the people, **a light for the nations**”

“I will make you as **a light for the nations**, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

# Chiasm





# 1-7 RITUAL SACRIFICES

THANK YOU!

GRAIN & FELLOWSHIP OFFERINGS

I'M SORRY.

ATONEMENT - COVERING THE SIN

BURNT, PURIFICATION, & RESTITUTION OFFERINGS

# LEVITICUS

GOD GRACIOUSLY PROVIDES A WAY FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE IN HIS PRESENCE



# 23-25 RITUAL FEASTS

SEVEN ANNUAL FEASTS

PASSOVER  
UNLEAVENED BREAD  
FIRST FRUITS  
PENTECOST  
TRUMPETS  
DAY OF ATONEMENT  
TABERNACLES

# 26-27 CALL TO COVENANT FAITHFULNESS

OBEDIENCE

PEACE & ABUNDANCE IN THE LAND

UNFAITHFULNESS

DISASTER & EXILE FROM THE LAND

# 8-10 PRIESTS ORDAINED

6-7 MOSES ORDAINS THE PRIESTS

AARON & SONS

10 AARON'S SONS VIOLATE GOD'S HOLINESS... AND DIE!

# 21-22 QUALIFICATIONS FOR PRIESTS

PEOPLE

PRIESTS REPRESENT

God

HIGHEST LEVEL OF MORAL INTEGRITY & RITUAL HOLINESS



# 11-15 RITUAL PURITY

1 CONTACT WITH REPRODUCTIVE FLUIDS

2 HAVING A SKIN DISEASE

3 TOUCHING MOLD

4 TOUCHING DEAD BONES

5 EATING IMPURE ANIMALS

ASSOCIATED WITH MORTALITY & THE LOSS OF LIFE

HYGIENE? CULTURAL TABOO?

SEE YOU IN TWO WEEKS!

IMPURITY IS ~~NOT~~ SINFUL... IT'S NORMAL & TEMPORARY.

CULTURAL SYMBOLS TO REMIND ISRAEL THAT GOD'S HOLINESS AFFECTS EVERY PART OF LIFE

# 16-17 DAY OF ATONEMENT

PURIFICATION OFFERING

TO ATONE FOR THE SONS OF ISRAEL

THE SCAPEGOAT

A SYMBOL OF GUILT REMOVAL OF SIN FROM ISRAEL

CAST INTO THE WILDERNESSES

CONFESS THE SINS OF ISRAEL

# 18-20 MORAL PURITY

CARE FOR THE POOR

SEXUAL INTEGRITY

SOCIAL JUSTICE

ISRAEL CALLED TO LIVE DIFFERENTLY THAN THE CANAANITES

# Rituals Chapters 1-7

## **Outlines five offerings and sacrifices**

- 2 ways to say “thank you” to God: grain offering & fellowship offering
- 3 ways to say “I’m sorry” to God: burnt offering, sin/purification offering, guilt/restitution offering

# Priesthood Chapters 8-10

## **Priests established as mediators between God & man**

- The Lord's glory appears at ordination ceremony
- Nadab and Abihu consumed for offering "unauthorized" fire before the Lord

# Purity Chapters 11-15

## **Free from the stain of death**

- Rules about contact with bodily fluids, skin disease, fungus & mold, dead bodies, etc.
- Death & mortality versus life & eternality
- Unclean  $\neq$  sin; a temporary and fixable problem

# Purity Chapters 18-20

## **A peculiar people**

- Leviticus 18:1-5
- Caring for the poor, maintaining high level of sexual integrity, establishing a just society
- Interplay between religious, civil, and moral law



# LaSor, Hubbard, & Bush

**“Faithful worship supports holy living, and a moral life finds fulfillment in worship.** Specific laws give context to this principle: a master is not to hold back the wages of a day laborer, causing him hardship (vs. 13), nor is one to put a stumbling block in the path of a blind person (v. 14). In short, one is not to prey on the vulnerability of the disadvantaged to enhance one’s own gain. It is no surprise then, that the great commandment to love a neighbor as oneself comes here (v.18). **Behavior governed by love is at the heart of holy living.”**

# Priesthood Chapters 21-22

## **Priesthood qualified**

- Outline the qualifications and demands of the priesthood
- Re-emphasize the need for holiness among the people chosen to be mediators between God and man

# Rituals Chapters 23-25

## **Outlines 7 times of remembrance**

- Meant to re-tell the story of God's work among Israel and establish seasons of worship

Passover

Unleavened Bread

First Fruits

Weeks/Pentecost

Trumpets

Day of Atonement

Tabernacles

# Conclusion Chapters 26-27

## **A call to faithfulness**

- Obedience to God's commands leads to peace and abundance in the land
- Disobedience leads to disaster and exile from the land

Numbers 1:1 (emphasis added)

**It worked!**

“The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, *in the tent* of meeting...”

# Day of Atonement

## **Evangelical Dictionary of Theology**

“The day of atonement speaks of the Lord’s gracious concern both to deal fully with his people’s sins and to make them fully aware that they stand before him, accepted and covered in respect of all iniquity, transgression, and sin.”

# Day of Atonement

## Once a year ceremony

- To atone for the sins of the whole nation of Israel
- High priest atones for his own sins, then enters the Holy of Holy with the blood of the sacrifice
- Two goats: one offered as a sin offering; the other symbolically took sins as the scapegoat

# Sacrifice & Atonement

- Scholars widely agree sacrifices were meant to atone for unintentional sins
- Numbers 15:29-31
- “High-handed” or premeditated sins were mostly beyond the power of the sacrificial system



# Sacrifice & Atonement

- Prophets emphasized the importance of obedience rather than sacrifice, praise of the Lord rather than offerings, and humility

“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.”

1 Samuel 15:22

“Take words with you,  
And return to the LORD.  
Say to Him, “Take away all  
iniquity;  
Receive us graciously, For  
we will offer the sacrifices  
of our lips.””

Hosea 14:2

“He has told you, O man,  
what is good; and what  
does the LORD require of  
you but to do justice, and  
to love kindness, and  
to walk humbly with your  
God?”

Micah 6:8

# Sacrifice & Atonement

- The whole of scripture testifies to the insufficiency of sacrifice, the glorious work of Christ, and the necessity of God's grace

“For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”  
Hebrews 10:4

“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God”  
Hebrews 10:12

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”  
Ephesians 2:8-9

# Group Discussion

Truths to consider:

- 1) God established the Old Testament sacrificial system as an act of grace to allow Israel to approach and worship Him
- 2) The sacrificial system was really only meant to atone for unintentional sins
- 3) The Old Testament is filled with admonitions to have a correct heart attitude and avoid empty legalism
- 4) The full counsel of Scripture is clear: God must accomplish salvation and offer forgiveness

Which commands apply to us?

## **The challenge of Leviticus 19:19?**

“You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor shall you wear **a garment of cloth made of two kinds of material.**”

## Robert Plummer, “40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible”

“We first need to distinguish between commands linked to the old covenant that have been **superseded in Christ** and commands that are **still to be lived out** on a daily basis by God’s people. Though a bit of an oversimplification, it can be helpful to think of God’s commands in the Old Testament as divided into civil (social), ceremonial (religious), and moral (ethical) categories.”

# Moral Commands

- 1) Commands that transfer from one culture to another with little or no alteration
- 2) Commands that embody timeless principles that find varying expressions in different cultures

Ultimately, understanding and applying Biblical commands requires good **hermeneutics** (the theory and method of interpretation).

# Basic Rules of Biblical Hermeneutics

- 1) Scripture interprets scripture
- 2) Context interprets scripture
- 3) Intent interprets scripture
- 4) The clear interprets the obscure

# Group Discussion

Read Mark 7:14-23, Romans 7:4-6, and Romans 3:31

What role does the written law play in our lives as 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians?



# Application of Major Themes

What does Leviticus teach us about:

- 1) The character of God
- 2) The seriousness of sin
- 3) Our role as the people of God
- 4) Our need for Jesus
- 5) The preciousness of God's presence

# Scripture Reference Cheat Sheet

- 1) The character of God: Leviticus 11:45; 22:32-33; 26:9, 14 and following
- 2) The seriousness of sin: Leviticus 10:1-2; 20:22-23; 17:11; Hebrews 9:22
- 3) Our role as the people of God: Leviticus 20:7, 26; Isaiah 42:6-7, 49:6; 1 Peter 2:9-12
- 4) Our need for Jesus: Leviticus 22:20; 16:2-3; Hebrews 9:24, 10:11-12
- 5) The preciousness of God's presence: Leviticus 16:16-17; 26:11-12, Romans 8:9-11

## Hebrews 10:19-23 (emphasis added)

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have **confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus**, by the new and living way that he opened for us **through the curtain**, that is, through his flesh, and since we have **a great priest** over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with **our hearts sprinkled clean** from an evil conscience and **our bodies washed with pure water**. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for **he who promised is faithful.**”

To Do

Watch: Bible Project Video on Numbers

Memorize: Numbers 14:11