

LEVITICUS

INTRODUCTION

TITLE AND CONTENTS

Called in Hebrew by its opening words, *vayiqra*, “and he called,” the centerpiece of the Pentateuch receives its popular English name “Leviticus” from the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament by way of the Latin Vulgate version. The Septuagint title *Levitikon* means “of the Levites,” hence referring to “things pertaining to the Levites.” More specifically, the book is concerned with the Levitical priesthood and its ministry of sanctification and instruction on behalf of the people of Israel. Accordingly, the rabbis called it תּוֹרַת קוֹהֲנִים (*tōrath qōhanīm*), the law (instruction) of the priests, i.e., “the priestly manual.” Actually, Leviticus instructs both people and priesthood in regard to sacrifice, priesthood, purification, atonement and holiness, and these words could almost provide a keyword outline of the book. Because of the intense importance of these vital concerns to the spiritual welfare of the Hebrew people, the rabbis called their early expansive commentary, the midrash on Leviticus, *Sifra*, i.e., “the book,” and Leviticus was once “the first book Jewish children studied in the synagogue.”¹

STRUCTURE AND SETTING

Leviticus is a unified composition with a distinctive organizational plan. Beginning with a logically arranged sacrifice manual (1:1–7:38), the text moves to the initial installation of the Levitical priesthood (8:1–10:20). With this foundation set the text treats various ceremonial impurities which call for sacrifices (11:1–15:33) and

¹Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. vii.

climaxes with the instructions for the great annual cleansing ceremony, the Day of Atonement (16:1-34). This chapter may be called “the keystone of the structure” of the book.² The last half of the book, sometimes called “the holiness code,” emphasizes holiness for a people and priesthood called into covenant with the holy LORD at Sinai (17:1-26:46). An appendix considers the important subject of vows (27:1-34). Thus the text seems to divide naturally into six units,³ including the appendix, although others have proposed as few as two or as many as nine divisions.⁴ However, scholars continue to debate the structural divisions of Leviticus.

The most dominant theory among critical scholars in the early twentieth century, and one that receives a great deal of attention today, was first proposed by K. Graf in 1866.⁵ Graf recognized chapters 18-23 and 25-26 to be independent of the rest of the book. In 1877, August Klostermann furthered the research of Graf by identifying chapters 17-26 as a separate work, and giving the section its enduring title: “the Holiness Code.”⁶ Julius Wellhausen, however, brought the thesis into the fore of scholarship, attributing the passage to priestly redactors of the late postexilic period.⁷

Although chapters 1-16 and 17-26 seem to treat different subjects for different purposes, there is no reason to assume that they were composed (or redacted!) independently of one another. Stylistic observations are perhaps the most cogent evidences offered on behalf of the old critical theory,⁸ but even they can be explained on the basis of different authorial intent. Wellhausen’s hypothesis that the section reached its final form in the fifth century B.C.,

²John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC, vol. 4 (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), p. xxxv.

³See *ibid.*, pp. xxx-xxxv.

⁴For a detailed discussion of structure, see W. Warning, *Literary Artistry in Leviticus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

⁵K. Graf, *Die geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments: Zwei historische-kritische Untersuchungen* (Leipzig: T.O. Weigel, 1866).

⁶August Klostermann, “Beiträge zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Pentateuchs,” *Zeitschrift für Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* 38 (1877): 416.

⁷Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1889), pp. 152-154.

⁸For a summary and excellent documentation of stylistic observations, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1991), pp. 1319-1367, although we disagree with the conclusions he reaches.

which has been feverishly accepted, cannot be corroborated with any sort of hard evidence.

Recently, a trend has developed in scholarship at large to locate chiasmic structures⁹ in the books of the Bible.¹⁰ These studies differ from those of form critics in that they base their conclusions on the integrity of the text as it now stands rather than finding editorial glosses.¹¹ Proponents of chiasm can also marshal ancient evidence from a host of cultures as support of their position.¹² Thus, on the whole, a chiasmic structure of Leviticus is more plausible than the source theories.

One name towers above all others in consideration of the issue of chiasm in Leviticus: Mary Douglas. Although her 1999 publication, *Leviticus as Literature*,¹³ is more of a theological work than a literary one, Douglas presents a ring structure (chiasmus) that defends the literary integrity of the book as it now stands. She also argues that the key to understanding Leviticus is to recognize this structure. While her theories have been entertained by biblical scholars, her conclusions regarding structure have largely fallen on deaf ears. Let us examine her arguments.

Douglas maintains that the structure of Leviticus is based on the layout of the tabernacle. At the same time, it is a chiasm. She understands the “ring structure,” as she calls it, to open and close the lay-

⁹A chiasm, from the Greek letter chi (X), is defined as “a literary figure, or principle, which consists of ‘a placing crosswise’ of words in a sentence.” (Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942], p. 31). The parallel points of a chiasm are generally designated by letters as follows: a b c b' a' and arranged in indented form as on p. 15.

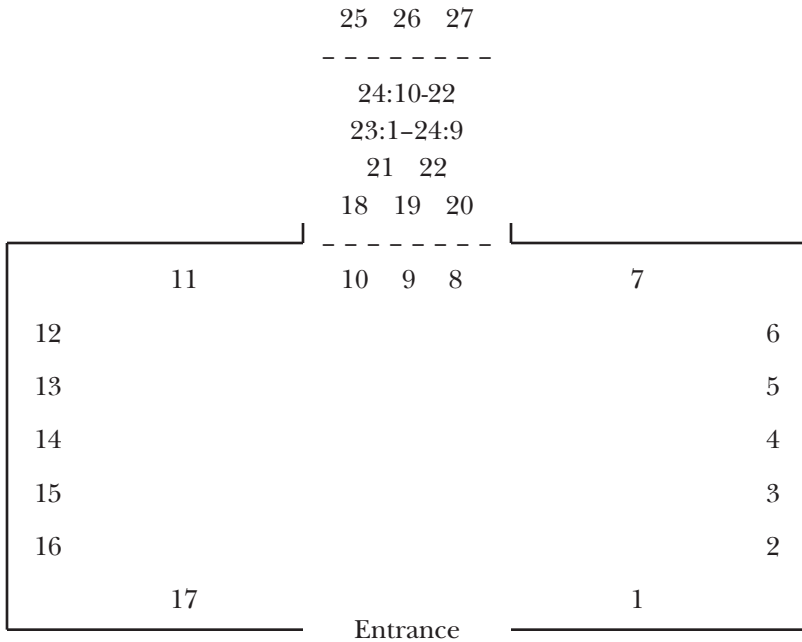
¹⁰On chiasmic structures in the Old Testament, see David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

¹¹Biblical works may have been edited (especially the prophets) and some were certainly translated (the Pentateuch, which was not authored in the classical Hebrew to which it is now known) at a time later than their original composition, but no material changes were made; rather explanations and clarifications were added. This process accords with the praxis of scribes in antiquity in general (see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1988], pp. 23-88).

¹²See J.W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), pp. 287-352.

¹³Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

ers of material that make up the tabernacle. Allow her diagram to illustrate:



The chapters correspond to the sections of the tabernacle. For example, all Israel is educated concerning the events in the tabernacle courtyard (chs. 1-17). Behind the first veil, however, information normally reserved for the priests is provided (chs. 18-24). Finally, the most holy place, the room only the high priest may enter, is illustrated in chapters 25-27.

This method of viewing Leviticus is brilliant as well as informative. However, the argument simply cannot support the final chapters of the book. Chapters 1-17 indeed pertain to the lay Israelites because they contain practical laws. However, chapters 18-20 are practical as well. Yet Douglas places them in the sanctuary. Why? Chapters 21-22 are clearly addressed to the priests, so there is no difficulty with Douglas's placement of them. However, chapter 23 returns to the matter of public (lay) feasts. Chapter 24 is priestly in makeup, as Douglas seems to recognize by her division of the chapter. Yet the whole of chapter 24 is placed inside the sanctuary. Equally dubious is the placement of chapters 25-26. The material in

each of these chapters is practical, clearly intended for the layman. Then there is the matter of chapter 27, which nearly all scholars consider to be an appendix to the book as a whole.

Although Douglas defends the literary unity of Leviticus as we have it, it seems that she stretches the nature of the evidence in an effort to substantiate her argument. In the final analysis, her suggestions are brilliant – perhaps too brilliant – but they must be met with objections to which no answer has yet been given.

More plausible is the position of D.A. Dorsey, who not only defends the literary integrity of Leviticus, but situates the entire book in a context of Mosaic legislation. His chiasm reaches from Exodus 19:3 to Numbers 10:10, which covers every law by which Israel must live.¹⁴ In each chiastic section (of which there are seven), smaller, individual chiasms are located. Dorsey's arrangement of the greater headings is provided below.

- a Ten Commandments – and holiness on Mount Sinai (Exod 19:3–20:21)
- b civil laws – moral, ethical purity (Exod 20:22–24:11)
 - c tabernacle instructions – sacrificial altar (Exod 24:12–34:28)
 - d CLIMAX: tabernacle built and filled with Yahweh's glory! (Exod 34:29–40:38)
 - c' sacrificial instructions – for sacrificial altar (Lev 1–10)
 - b' purity laws – ritual, moral purity (Lev 11–18)
- a' holiness laws – most of Ten Commandments repeated (Lev 19:1–Num 10:10).¹⁵

If Dorsey is correct, not only must the unity of Leviticus be accepted, but the source theories are completely demolished. How could it be that different editors (J, E, P, D, H) could work independently of one another at different times and in different places, and yet accomplish such a cohesive product?

In conclusion, it appears as if Dorsey's hypothesis is the most plausible of the chiastic proposals. However, it is much simpler to adopt the six-section structure we have proposed here. Whatever arrangement one wishes to assign the book, one matter is certain:

¹⁴Dorsey, *Literary Structure*, pp. 72-83.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 81.

none of the laws of Leviticus focus on either priestly concerns or matters of holiness; rather, the entire book is concerned with holiness, and how one may achieve and maintain it (see “Theology” below).

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

Leviticus presents itself as the third book of Moses. No less than thirty-eight times the text reminds that the laws were given as “the LORD spoke to Moses” or “the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron.” The compliance report in 8:36 stresses that the installation of the priesthood was done entirely as “the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.” In 26:46, the conclusion of the main body of Leviticus states, “These are the decrees, the laws and the regulations that the LORD established on Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelites through Moses.” The appendix on vows also closes in 27:34 with the words, “These are the commands the LORD gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites.” By such language Leviticus emphasizes repeatedly that its priestly laws were revealed to Israel by the sovereign LORD of heaven and earth through his chosen servant Moses.

Not only is this emphasis maintained through all the twenty-seven chapters of Leviticus, but more significantly the affirmation “the LORD said to Moses” or its equivalent occurs at every significant juncture in the book. Hence the narrative framework clearly claims that the Levitical laws stem from Moses. While the book contains no express statement of its specific authorship and consistently refers to Moses in the third person, the fact remains that Leviticus repeatedly emphasizes its Mosaic character. This is tantamount to a claim of Mosaic authorship, or at least Mosaic provenance, within the text of Leviticus itself.

Although Genesis or Deuteronomy, rather than Leviticus, may be the more appropriate place to deal with the contested issue of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, it seems vital to emphasize the textual witness in favor of Moses’ authorship within Leviticus and to stress that the book contains absolutely nothing that necessarily postdates Moses. Only on the basis of evolutionary premises inconsistent with any high view of inspiration can one effectively repudiate the essentially Mosaic character of Leviticus and its laws. That Moses may have used scribes to record the LORD’s instructions to

him, or that they may have been transmitted in some other way is a somewhat secondary consideration. The text affirms clearly and consistently that Moses was, in the truest sense, the human “author” of the divine laws recorded within the sacred pages of Leviticus.

As far as external considerations, Moses certainly had the background to assemble a large collection of laws. As a son of Pharaoh’s daughter (Exod 2:1-10), Moses would have had access to certain Near Eastern law codes (e.g., Hammurabi’s, circa 1700 B.C.) that rendered him amply qualified to produce a substantial collection of laws for his own nation. In addition, Deuteronomy roughly correlates with Hittite treaties dating from Moses’ time.¹⁶ All of this evidence seems to point toward the conclusion that Moses was the substantive author of the Pentateuch material.

The old scholarly consensus that P is an independent document edited into the five books of Moses, especially Leviticus 1–16, has been challenged, even among the ambit of critical scholarship.¹⁷ Furthermore, no scholar would be so foolish as to claim that P or even H can be dated with any precision.¹⁸ Rendtorff concludes, “It must be conceded that we really do not possess reliable criteria for dating of the pentateuchal literature.”¹⁹ In addition, the reforms of Josiah in the seventh century B.C. have generally been the historical peg upon which scholars have hung the origin of the Pentateuch. However, recent scholarship has exposed the paucity of evidence for even this important presupposition.²⁰ Thus, it appears that the scholarly support for a late, certainly post-Mosaic, date of the Pentateuch is crumbling.

In conclusion, it should be noted that no evidence exists to deny Moses as the substantive author of the Pentateuch. In addition, even among scholars, it is becoming increasingly clear that no evidence supports a late date of the “Books of Moses.” Thus the general atti-

¹⁶See G.E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: Biblical Colloquium, 1955), pp. 24-50.

¹⁷Scholars debate whether or not P existed (see Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1973], pp. 293-325).

¹⁸Most scholars assign the final form of the sources to a postexilic date.

¹⁹R. Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*, trans. by J.J. Scullion, JSOTSupp 89 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), p. 201.

²⁰See J.G. McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, JSOTSupp 33 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984).

tude that the biblical authors take to the authorship of the Pentateuch must be maintained,²¹ and in the final analysis, Moses must be regarded as the substantive author.²²

THEOLOGY

Leviticus is one of the most theologically concentrated books in the biblical canon. Inherent in its laws is a realization that God wishes to maintain a covenant relationship with mankind. The covenant, which was initiated at Sinai, is described more fully in Leviticus as Moses provides the LORD's instructions for his chosen people.

The key theological concept of Leviticus is holiness. While many modern scholars argue that chapters 18–27 are a separate document termed the “Holiness Code,” the entire book presupposes the idea of “separateness” or holiness (from the root *qđš*). Roughly described, holiness is equal to the ancient Near Eastern concept of order, i.e., cosmic harmony between God and man. Whenever Israel is holy, they enjoy the state of purity, cleanness, and harmony with God. Whenever they are unholy, they are impure, unclean, and victims of cosmic chaos. In order to repair the broken covenant with a holy God and restore the cosmos to order, Israel must acquiesce to several ritual purifications, ranging from the least severe (bathing and laundering clothes, cf. Lev 15:10) to death (cf. Lev 24:10-16). We shall examine this concept in its ancient Near Eastern environment and proceed to discuss its relation to ancient Israel.

ORDER, CHAOS AND THEOLOGY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

In ancient Near Eastern paganism, the order/chaos dichotomy was always tense. The gods could send plagues upon mankind, and often did so (Exod 5:2; 9:16-17). However, mankind could strike

²¹See Matthew 8:4; Luke 16:31; 24:27; John 1:17; Acts 3:22; et al.

²²See the classic criticism of U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis*, trans. by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961). For a more recent discussion, see R.N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*, JSOTSupp 53 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987).

back at the gods with magic, which exercised power over the divine realm. Thus, in paganism, there is always a cosmic chess game at play. Who will gain the upper hand?

Order was established at the creation of the world. In Egypt the terms “Eternal Recurrence” and “Eternal Sameness” illustrate the creation of the sun, along with the daily life cycle.²³ However, the divine realm is bound by this cycle. Since the gods are anthropomorphic, they are projected onto mythological movie screens (or the ancient equivalents thereof) as examples of human frailty. They must, therefore, be governed by the same or similar natural occurrences as mankind. In other words, the gods grow old and die; they can be manipulated or can themselves manipulate other gods; they become jealous and seek revenge; they marry, procreate and commit adultery, and so on.

Chaos occurs when the natural course of events shifts. A seven-year famine, for example, might be deemed chaotic (cf. Gen 41:30-31). However, the gods would perhaps reveal signs of the coming chaos called omens, which could be revealed in a number of ways, from dreams (cf. Gen 41:1-8) to the flight of birds. Although the gods have means of predicting events that cause disorder in the world, they too are bound by, and thus suffer because of, the natural cosmic order.

This precursory information leads us to a discussion of cosmic maintenance. In the ancient Near East, as noted above, the gods were not omnibenevolent nor were they omnipotent. They were themselves the source of many undesirable events. However, the gods were kept in check by cosmic order. This is why ancient Near Eastern religions focus not only on the divine realm, but also on the cosmic realm in ritual. Yehezkel Kaufmann observes, “The distinctive mark of all pagan rituals is that they are not directed toward the will of the gods alone. They call upon self-operating forces that are independent of the gods, and that the gods themselves need and utilize for their own benefit.”²⁴

²³See W.W. Hallo and K.L. Younger, eds., *The Context of Scripture* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1:11.

²⁴Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel from Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. by Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 40-41. The highly complicated theory that Kaufmann succinctly

In the ancient Near East, the three-tiered hierarchy is ordered as follows: (1) the cosmic realm, (2) the divine realm, (3) the human realm. The cosmic realm governs everything. Included in it are day and night, life and death, seasons – eternal recurrences. The divine realm is of course the operating ambit of the gods. Finally, the human realm includes all earthly organisms – humans, plants, and animals. The divine realm attacks the human realm with its own powers, and the human realm strikes against the divine realm by invoking cosmic forces, which bind the gods. Thus magic (the means of calling the cosmos into action) is the most powerful force in the ancient Near East, utilized by both humans and gods (see chart on p. 21).

ORDER, CHAOS, AND THEOLOGY IN ISRAEL

In contrast to pagan theology, Israel's system is much simpler. There is an omnipotent and omnibenevolent being that is greater than, and the creator of, all cosmic systems. This being is known as YHWH. No human can manipulate him, and every human is bound by him. Magic is of no consequence because YHWH himself is non-magical. Thus we encounter something altogether distinct from paganism.

Because God is omnipotent, he sets the rules to which his covenant people must comply. When Israel's relationship with YHWH is ideal, they are in a state of holiness. The phrase "holiness to the LORD" occurs approximately 150 times in the book.²⁵ Thus, there is no doubt that the theology of Leviticus revolves around a question of holiness.

Leviticus also prescribes the formula for restoring cosmic order (holiness), and repairing chaos. There are various ways this can be accomplished: (1) Holiness can be achieved through minor washings and purifications. In extreme cases, washings are combined with sacrifices (Lev 14:1-20). Normally, however, uncleanness is not as severe and can be repaired with a ritual bath (cf. Leviticus 15). (2) Sacrifice is a means of restoring or improving a relationship with

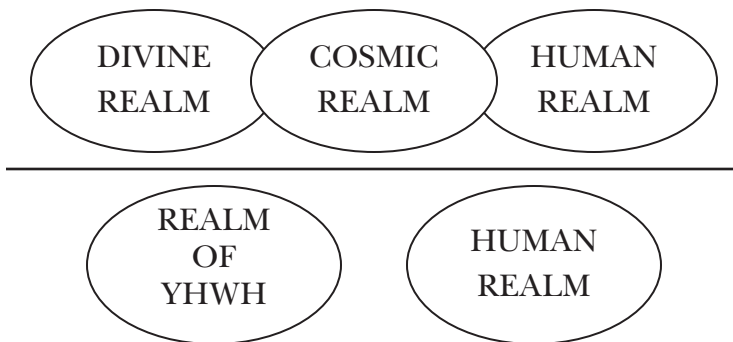
describes is treated in detail in Justin M. Rogers, "Aspects of Sacrifice," Masters Thesis, Freed-Hardeman University.

²⁵Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Leviticus-Introduction," *NIB* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 1:997.

God. Sin occasions sacrifice, namely those characterized by the root כִּפַּר (*kpr*) meaning “to atone.”²⁶ However, sacrifices are brought for other reasons as well (for thanksgiving, Lev 7:15; for vows, Lev 7:16; Acts 21:26; and out of free will, Lev 7:16). In these sacrifices, deemed “fellowship offerings,” the worshiper, rather than the priests, receives the meat. (3) The most severe penalty for violating holiness is death. In Leviticus 24:10-16, a pericope regarding the punishment for blasphemy is explicated. A man “blasphemed the Name”²⁷ with a curse.”²⁸ All those who heard the man are to lay their hands on him (v. 14) and stone him to death (v. 16).

Thus, Israelite theology is something totally different from that of the pagans. It is based on completely different presuppositions and principles, and ultimately speaks of a moral divinity who is involved in and who cares about his creation. This is why God must demand holiness (order). In order to commune with his covenantal observers, they must be in a state of purity. Holiness is thus organized into clearly delineated systems in an effort to assist mankind in his search for such order.

The following diagram helps to illustrate the difference between pagan concepts of the universe, and the Israel system:



²⁶Scholars generally feel comfortable associating the term with an Arabic cognate, meaning “to cover.” In other words, the expiatory sacrifices of Leviticus did not remove sin, but simply covered them for a time. This point also informs the Hebrews author in his affirmation that “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (10:4).

²⁷This doubtless refers to the Name, YHWH (cf. KJV). “The Name” became a common appellation of later Jewish literature (see *m. Avoth* 4:4).

²⁸In ancient Near Eastern magical spells, the name of the one to be cursed is considered central to the power of the spell (see *ANET*, p. 13).

As is clearly seen, the pagan concept of the world allows all three realms to combine, thus empowering human kind to take charge over the entire cosmos. Israel, by contrast, is altogether separate from God and can at best mimic his attributes. They may never, however, use his powers against him, or manipulate him in any way. They can only hope to be a mirror image of God's holiness.

LEVITICUS AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Because Christians believe that the Levitical system of ritual and sacrifice has been superseded by the unique sacrifice of Jesus, Leviticus does not occupy for the church the central position in life and thought that it held for ancient Israel. Accordingly, the book of Leviticus is for Christians one of the more neglected portions of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Leviticus, however, provides important background for New Testament worship, thought, and life. The temple worship pictured in the New Testament can be properly understood only against the dual background of the Levitical portrayal of worship in the tabernacle sanctuary and the rabbinic understanding of the Levitical system. Furthermore it was according to the principles described in Leviticus that Jewish priests in the New Testament era attempted to fulfill their God-given roles of instruction and ritual judgment as depicted in Leviticus 10:10-11: "You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the clean and the unclean, and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses." Thus, directly or indirectly Leviticus is foundational for understanding the religious situation of Palestinian Judaism which the reader encounters in the pages of the New Testament, especially the Gospels.

Particularly instructive for Christian faith is the sustained contrast between the Levitical priesthood and that of Christ which is developed at length in the New Testament book of Hebrews. Depicting Jesus as our unique high priest of the order of Melchizedek and as our totally sufficient once-for-all sacrifice for sin, the book of Hebrews leans heavily upon Leviticus, especially upon its climactic description of the annual Day of Atonement in chapter 16.

The keyword of Hebrews is "better," and key verses are 8:6 and 4:14. The former of these passages declares, "But the ministry Jesus

has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.” The latter verse states, “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.” The book presents Christ forever (7:1-28) and describes his superior ministry in “the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man” (8:1-5). This takes place as the heart of the new covenant predicted by Jeremiah (8:6-13; cf. Jer 31:31-34) and features the Lord’s atoning sacrifice (9:1-28) exalting it as eternally effective (10:1-18).

According to Hebrews Christ’s priesthood is superior because it was sealed by divine oath and because the sinless Jesus sacrificed himself once for all time and now lives forever to provide a permanent priesthood. All this stands in marked contrast to the human Levitical priesthood, which was not sealed by oath and whose human representatives were sinful and mortal (7:1-28).

Further, the earthly tabernacle, for all its sanctity and greatness, was but a shadowy copy of the heavenly reality in which Christ ministers (8:1-5). Hence, the new covenant Jeremiah predicted is fulfilled through Christ and is superior in three ways – greater internality, fuller knowledge of God, and fully accomplished forgiveness (8:6-13). Hebrews affirms that the tabernacle (9:1-5) with its ritual (9:6-10) involved restricted access, partial cleansing, and limited pardon, while Christ’s superior redemptive ministry involves full access, full cleansing, and full pardon (9:11-14). Thus Christ mediates the new covenant, sealing it with his death (9:15-22). His sacrifice is final (9:23-28) and, in contrast to the somewhat impotent offerings of the past, establishes the new covenant and brings into reality the full forgiveness Jeremiah promised for it (10:1-18).

Hebrews features the longest sustained argument in the New Testament. This survey of its more relevant chapters clearly demonstrates that the unknown inspired author of Hebrews draws upon Leviticus time and again to establish his contrast and to move to his triumphant conclusion in 10:19-22:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near

to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

In all of this Leviticus provides the essential resource for understanding Jesus' death as sacrifice for sins and for recognizing Jesus as the sinless and eternal high priest. Through studying Leviticus we come to appreciate more deeply the great spiritual realities of sin, sacrifice, atonement, and holiness.

Thus, while the specifics of Leviticus are frequently time-bound, mostly limited to the dispensation Moses inaugurated and its Jewish proselyte adherents, many of its spiritual principles are timeless. God still calls to purity with the words, "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (Lev 19:2), a call perhaps echoed in Jesus' "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:48). Peter also appeals to Leviticus with the words, "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:15-16; compare Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7).

The LORD calls for loyalty to the new covenant just as he called for obedience to the Mosaic legislation. The call for purity among the LORD's people and single allegiance to his will still resonates, and Christians can learn from Leviticus to reverence the sacred space within their hearts created by the presence of their sovereign holy LORD. As priests ourselves among God's holy spiritual house, the church, we are called upon "to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5) and even to consider our bodies "as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" as our "spiritual act of worship" (Rom 12:1). In different frame then, Leviticus can instruct us concerning human sinfulness and God's gracious provision for atonement healing and hope so that we can truly be "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God," fit for God's holy and sacred presence within us (1 Pet 2:9).

LEVITICUS

OUTLINE

PART ONE: APPROACHING GOD – 1:1-16:34

- I. SACRIFICE INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN – 1:1-7:38**
 - A. Regulations for Burnt Offerings Given – 1:1-17**
 - 1. Superscription – 1:1-2
 - 2. Cattle as Burnt Offerings – 1:3-9
 - 3. Sheep, Goats as Burnt Offerings – 1:10-13
 - 4. Birds as Burnt Offerings – 1:14-17
 - B. Regulations for Grain Offerings Given – 2:1-16**
 - 1. Flour as Grain Offerings – 2:1-3
 - 2. Baked Grain Offerings – 2:4-10
 - 3. Accompaniments for Grain Offerings – 2:11-13
 - 4. Grain Offerings of Firstfruits – 2:14-16
 - C. Regulations for Fellowship Offerings Given – 3:1-17**
 - 1. Fellowship Offerings of Cattle – 3:1-5
 - 2. Fellowship Offerings of Sheep – 3:6-11
 - 3. Fellowship Offerings of Goats – 3:12-17
 - D. Regulations for Sin Offerings Given – 4:1-5:13**
 - 1. Sin Offering for the High Priest – 4:1-12
 - 2. Sin Offering for the Congregation – 4:13-21
 - 3. Sin Offering for a Leader – 4:22-26
 - 4. Sin Offering for a Common Person – 4:27-35
 - 5. Instances Demanding a Sin Offering – 5:1-6
 - 6. Sin Offerings for the Poor – 5:7-13
 - E. Regulations for Guilt Offerings Given – 5:14-6:7**
 - 1. As Reparation for Things Belonging to God – 5:14-19
 - 2. As Reparation for Things Belonging to Men – 6:1-7
 - F. Special Instructions for Priests Given – 6:8-7:38**
 - 1. The Burnt Offering – 6:8-13
 - 2. The Grain Offering – 6:14-23
 - 3. The Sin Offering – 6:24-30
 - 4. The Guilt Offering – 7:1-10
 - 5. The Fellowship Offering – 7:11-21

- 6. Prohibition of Fat and Blood – 7:22-27
 - 7. The Priestly Portions – 7:28-36
 - 8. Summary – 7:37-38
 - II. LEVITICAL SACRIFICES BEGIN – 8:1-10:20**
 - A. Aaron and Sons Consecrated – 8:1-36**
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